

Hiring Faithful Agents, Expertise, or Connections? A Conjoint Survey Experiment on Lobbyist Hiring Decisions*

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Abstract

Despite most research treating organized interests as unitary actors, they are not. Organized interests rely on lobbyists to advance organizational preferences, creating the possibility that lobbyists may not act as faithful agents of their employers. In this paper, we use a conjoint survey experiment of federal lobbyists to examine the hiring preferences of organized interests. We find that organized interests prefer to hire lobbyists with valuable policy expertise and the necessary connections to get access to decision-makers, but that there is no clear evidence that connections are more valuable than expertise. We also find that organized interests prefer lobbyists who share their political ideology, but that preferences for in-partisan lobbyist candidates disappears when the hiring organization is unaligned ideologically with the party in unified control of government. Overall, Our study paints a less dire picture of the role of partisanship and connections in lobbying than many would expect.

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*The analysis for this project was pre-registered and is available at [redacted]

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Individual lobbyists...are an afterthought in most accounts of interest groups and policy making. Lobbyists are assumed to promote their clients' interests

—Rogan Kersh (2000, 239)

Lobbyists act as gatekeepers for organized interests wishing to supply resource-constrained decision-makers with information (Hirsch et al. 2021). Thereby, they play a large role in the development (Baumgartner et al. 2009), passage (Hall and Deardorff 2006), and implementation (Yackee 2006) of public policy. Additionally, the actions of organized interests provide clear indications that certain lobbyists are viewed as more effective than others (LaPira and Thomas 2014, 2017; McCrain 2018).

Despite the vast quantities of ink spent on the role of lobbyists in the formation of public policy, the relationships between lobbyists and the organizations they represent have largely remained in the shadows. Studies of lobbying tactics, strategy, and policy impact typically consider the actions of organized interests as unitary actors (Schlozman 1984; Lowery and Gray 2004).¹ However, interests' retention of lobbyists is best described as a principal-agent relationship and is fraught with the collective action problems that are associated with that relationship. The leadership of organized interests does not dictate every action involved in the lobbying process because they lack both the time and the expertise. This forces them to delegate responsibilities to individual lobbyists who act as agents, implying that many lobbyists have significant autonomy over their actions (Kersh 2000; Lowery and Marchetti 2012). Under certain conditions, this allows lobbyists to pursue actions that are at odds with the goals of their clients, when it improves the lobbyists' own standing with legislators (Holyoke 2021; Hirsch et al. 2021).

However, organized interests may use the hiring process to overcome this principal-agent problem. Largely unaware of the nature of lobbying themselves (Drutman 2015; Lowery and

¹For some exceptions see Holyoke (2021), LaPira and Thomas (2014, 2017), Leech (2014), Stephenson and Jackson (2010), and Schiff et al. (2015)

Marchetti 2012), organized interests' lobbying success hinges on the selection of agents who both have the necessary skills and connections to carry out their responsibilities effectively. In addition, organized interests want agents who can be trusted (or effectively monitored) to faithfully advance the preferences of the organization.

Our work focuses explicitly on organized interests' selection of agents to act as lobbyists. This focus creates a better understanding of the principal-agent concerns they prioritize in the selection process and how those priorities vary depending on party control of government. First, we examine the relative value organized interests ascribe to various skills of potential lobbyists to effectively carry out their delegated responsibility. The extant literature suggests that lobbyists derive their labor market value both from expertise (LaPira and Thomas 2017; Salisbury et al. 1989) and connections (McCrain 2018; Blanes i Vidal, Draca, and Fons-Rosen 2012; Furnas, Heaney, and LaPira n.d.). However, no existing studies have been able to estimate the *relative* value organized interests place on these dimensions of lobbyist skill. While both types of skills likely contribute when organized interests select their lobbyist-agents, understanding the relative value will shed light on the role of lobbyists in interest representation. Ultimately, whether it is whom or what lobbyists know that decides their value (Bertrand, Bombardini, and Trebbi 2014; Salisbury et al. 1989) has important implications for American political economy. Second, because of information asymmetries, organized interests will want assurances that their agents are acting faithfully. As such, we also estimate the importance that organized interests place on the ideological alignment of their agents, and specifically whether that emphasis changes as party control of government changes.

In this paper, we develop an argument based on principal-agent problems in the lobbying industry. To test our pre-registered hypotheses, we estimate the relative value of lobbyists' political preferences, expertise and skills by examining the hiring decisions of organized interests. Doing so is complicated, because we need to simultaneously draw causal inferences about the role of several factors in a process on which there exists no public data. To address

this inferential problem, we field a survey with an embedded conjoint experiment completed by federal lobbyists.² In the experiment, we simulate the hiring process by confronting the respondents with a series of profiles of job applicants, randomly varying partisan leanings, policy expertise, procedural expertise, and connections (traits identified by the lobbying literature) to persons in government in addition to the legislative context. The respondent lobbyists are then asked to evaluate whether they would choose the candidate for a job interview. Through the conjoint framework, we are able to isolate the independent causal effects of lobbyists' characteristics on their "value."

We find strong evidence that organized interests select lobbyists in an effort to minimize both types of principal-agent problems noted earlier. First, we find that organized interests select lobbyists both for their substantive and procedural expertise, and also for their connections to people in government. Interestingly, while expertise and connections both have large effects, we find no clear evidence that one dominates the other. Second, we find that organized interests clearly avoid hiring lobbyists of the opposing partisan leaning. This effect, however, is only present in situations where the hiring organization is aligned with the party in unified control of government. In contrast, when organizations' interests are not aligned with the party in government, we do not find any evidence that organized interests prefer lobbyists whose ideological and partisan preferences align with the organized interest. In short, an organization's preference for lobbyists whose ideological leanings align with the organization's depends on the partisan control of government, suggesting that questions of ideological faithfulness are secondary to other principal-agent problems.

This paper adds to our understanding of American government and how organized interests navigate principal-agent relationships in two ways. First, existing research has painted a normatively troubling picture of the role of political connections in lobbying (Blanes

²As noted in the online appendix, almost 85% of respondents indicated they were "sometimes," "often," or "always" involved in the hiring of new lobbyists for their organization (58% indicated "always" involved).

i Vidal, Draca, and Fons-Rosen 2012; Egerod 2019; McCrain 2018). However, to make such a normative judgement about the role of organized interests, we need to benchmark the value of connections against other important lobbyist characteristics. Our findings show that while connections are important, they do not clearly dominate expertise. Further, we assess the relative value of these traits in an experimental setting unique to this literature, facilitating direct comparisons and alleviating concerns that typically plague observational studies of lobbying, such as unobserved lobbyist ability (De Figueiredo and Richter 2014).

Second, in a time of hyper-partisanship, we find that while organized interests do prioritize the hiring of lobbyists with similar ideological and partisan preferences, these preferences depend on the larger political environment and whether the organized interest and the party controlling government are ideologically aligned. This shows that the right political environment can work to pop partisan information bubbles, where politicians and organized interests only exchanged information with co-partisans. Taken together, these two findings suggest that lobbyists play a positive role as information mediators, despite the unequal ability of organized interests to control them.

Lobbying as a Principal-Agent Problem

Principal-agent problems arise when one entity acts as an agent on behalf of another but behaves (either intentionally or unintentionally) in ways that do not advance the goals of the principal. The challenges the principal must overcome are to first select an agent with the expertise and resources to effectively perform the assigned task and, second, to ensure the agent will act according to the principal's wishes either through careful selection to ensure goals align or through constraint.³

For organized interests (the principal in our particular case), the selection of an agent is

³The ability to which the principal can effectively monitor and constrain a potential agent affects the importance of goal alignment in the selection process (Besley 2006).

the selection of a lobbyist to interact with government and to advocate for their preferred policy outcomes. An organized interest chooses to delegate that responsibility of lobbying to the lobbyist because the individual leaders in the organized interest do not have the time, specialized skills, nor connections required to perform the action effectively. Firms or organized interests hire agents or lobbyists because the delegation of those responsibilities to lobbyists confers efficiencies. This is because the leaders of organized interests have higher opportunity costs (other responsibilities to which they must attend) and lack the abilities (connections in government or expertise) that would allow them to act effectively to lobby government for preferred policy outcomes.

Some have argued that the contract lobbyists will not deviate from their clients' interests because of reputational concerns or because in-house lobbyists are subject to hierarchical monitoring (Heinz et al. 1993; Rosenthal 2000). In reality, however, much of what lobbyists do is private information. Groups rely on the information and advice of lobbyists about what to support and how to best proceed with advocacy because these individuals have extensive knowledge advantages in navigating the legislative and administrative decision making process (Kersh 2000; Stephenson and Jackson 2010). As such, groups should be incentivized to select lobbyists whose preferences lead them to naturally work on their behalf of those of the interests.

However, at the same time, lobbyists' misaligned ideological views (and the connections that are likely associated with those views) not only represent a potential problem, but also a potential advantage. A lobbyist's views, if different from the predominant views of the organization, may provide opportunities for interests to expand government connections to important actors, especially when government is controlled by the party that is less aligned ideologically with the organized group. Lobbyist ideological preferences, thus, represent a potential area where lobbyists' attributes may represent the conflicting priorities that organized groups have in hiring an agent; lobbyists with differing ideological views may represent both an opportunity for hiring skills that the organization itself may not be able to

acquire otherwise, while also representing potential challenges in ensuring the lobbyist acts as a representative agent.

Thus, when selecting a lobbyist, organized interests have to balance skills and the risk of agency drift. In doing so, they first need to identify lobbyists with the required skill set. However, hiring a competent lobbyist is not enough: the principal also needs to ensure that she acts as a faithful agent. We now discuss each of these concerns facing an organized interest in the selection process.

Lobbyist Expertise and Connections

Organized interests seek to hire an agent with the skill set that will effectively enable that agent to perform the required tasks. The extant literature tends to theorize lobbyist skill along two dimensions: expertise and connections.⁴

Expertise

Given the fundamental reasons for delegating authority (a lack of time or expertise), we expect that organized interests will prioritize the hiring of lobbyists who have the expertise necessary to be effective lobbyists. We can distinguish between substantive and procedural expertise. The resources of legislators are notoriously scarce, and they cannot obtain all relevant information needed for policy-making. Rather, they have to rely on input from firms and organized interests to figure out the state of the world (Grossman and Helpman 2001) and to design policy that advances their legislative goals (Hall and Deardorff 2006). This makes substantive policy expertise valuable for a lobbyist. On the other hand, politicians have the power to wipe out entire industries with the stroke of a pen. Since the typical firm or interest group has relatively little political capital, to them, the political system represents an unnavigable morass. Thus forced into the role of policy-takers, many firms and groups

⁴All of our hypotheses in this section were pre-registered. That pre-registration is available at [redacted]

hire lobbyists to interpret interactions with the political system and to extract information about what’s coming, thereby guarding themselves against “legislative drive-by’s” (LaPira and Thomas 2017; Finer 2018). This makes procedural expertise – knowing the political game – valuable (LaPira and Thomas 2017; Salisbury et al. 1989)

Each of these accounts will hold true for different types of organized interests – some will be in a position to shape policy through legislative subsidy, while others are fated to receive policy with no chance of influencing it. In either case, more experienced and knowledgeable lobbyists will be more valuable to them. Therefore, our first pre-registered hypothesis is:

H1: As applicants’ years of lobbying experience increase, the probability of their selection increases.

Intuitively, it is likely to be more important that the lobbyist holds expertise within the relevant field than just any form of experience.

H2: Lobbyists with lobbying experience in a policy area that matches the focus of the hiring organization will be more likely to be selected for an interview than applicants without lobbying experience or applicants with lobbying experience in areas that do not match the focus of the organization.

Connections

We also expect that, in their efforts to hire effective agents, organized interests will prioritize legislative connections. The value of expertise is conditional on the lobbyist first getting her foot in the door. The policy-maker needs information, but the pool of groups that are willing to offer it is large, diverse, and with high transaction costs associated with determining credibility of a given group. Without further knowledge of the group, the policy-maker has no way of gauging the quality of the information (Grossman and Helpman 2001; Hall and Deardorff 2006). Social connections play a key role in reducing the transaction costs facing decision-makers when they seek to validate the information presented by organized interests (McCrain 2018). The lobbyist’s motivation to maximize revenue implies that she cannot

commit credibly to only introducing decision-makers to groups with high quality information (Hirsch et al. 2021). However, when the decision-maker knows the lobbyist, they can build a relation based on trust. The legislator gives access to lobbyists they can rely on to validate the information presented by their clients – these tend to be the lobbyists to which they are personally connected. Thereby, connections in lobbying are valuable, because they facilitate the transmission of information between organized interests and policy-makers by lowering transaction costs (Austen-Smith 1993).

Drawing on congressional staff backgrounds as a way of capturing connections in Congress leads us to the following hypothesis:

H3a: If an applicant previously worked as congressional staffer, the probability of their selection will be higher than that of an applicant without such experience.

Prioritizing Expertise or Connections?

Our next set of pre-registered hypotheses seek to disentangle the effect of expertise and connections. Importantly, if organized interests prefer to use policy experts as their agents, we expect them to hire applicants with the type of backgrounds as congressional staff that would make them specialists in the topic they would be lobbying on. Conversely, applicants with backgrounds that would make them generalists or legislative strategists should be in lower demand than the specialists on the topic in question. Finally, former staffers that did not work substantively with developing policy should be in lowest demand if organized interests prefer expertise over connections.

Following this reasoning, our next hypothesis states that:

H3b: Among applicants with previous experience as congressional staffers, those who worked in positions making them topic specialists have the highest probability of selection, followed by those who worked as policy generalists, and finally by those who did not work with policy development.

Congressional insiders, however, have both policy expertise and strategic connections. As such, we are interested in teasing out the differences attributable to policy knowledge

and those attributable to connections. An alternative way of gauging this is to compare a) demand for those with past experience in policy related fields but no insider connections with b) those who have both policy expertise and insider connections and c) with those who have insider connections but more limited policy expertise.

Our pre-registered expectation is that while policy expertise is important, it is less vital to organized interests than the connections to policymakers and procedural expertise – which are included in a lobbyist with political expertise’s background. Thus we should see a preference for former generalist staffers over individuals with experience as domestic policy experts. While these two positions convey relatively similar policy expertise, they include substantively different levels of connections and procedural expertise. This hypothesis, derived from informational and subsidy theories of lobbying (Austen-Smith 1993; Hall and Deardorff 2006), argues that the most successful and/or valuable lobbyists have the traits that match most closely with what lobbyists do – make connections and provide information to allied policymakers.

H4: If an applicant previously worked as as a policy expert (with no background in Congress), the probability of their selection will be lower than that of an applicant who previously worked as a congressional staffer of any kind but higher than that of an applicant who did not previously work in a position dealing with domestic policy.

It is important to note that testing H3a, H3b, and H4 requires that we impose assumptions about which applicant backgrounds imply policy expertise, political connections and procedural knowledge. Later, we outline our measurement strategy to capture this at length.

Faithful Agents

In addition to hiring effective agents, organized interests should also be concerned about the principal-agent problems caused by the combination of misaligned goals and asymmetric information. Organized interests also have to assess the likelihood that the lobbyist will perform her actions as a faithful agent (Stephenson and Jackson 2010). While it could be that

reputational costs or monitoring effectively constrain lobbyists to act faithfully (Heinz et al. 1993; Rosenthal 2000), lobbyists have substantial knowledge and information advantages over their clients and lobbying targets (Kersh 2000; Stephenson and Jackson 2010; Hirsch and Shotts 2015). As such, groups should be incentivized to select lobbyists whose ideological preferences lead them to naturally work on behalf of those of the organized interests. This leads us to the following hypothesis.

H5: If an applicant previously worked for an employer that shares the ideological/partisan affinity of the hiring organization, the probability of their selection will be higher than that of an applicant who worked for an employer who does not share the ideological/partisan affinity of the hiring organization or for whom no information about their ideology/partisanship is available.

Having lobbyists whose ideological preferences are aligned with the organization makes it easier for the organized interest to trust that the lobbyist will faithfully act in a way that advances their preferences.

The Legislative Context and Lobbying

Above, we have outlined some of the concerns that organized interests might have as they work to effectively select an agent to act as a lobbyist. However, we also must consider that the weight that groups put on each of these factors may change depending on the legislative context. Control of government affects the ability of lobbyists to work effectively because partisans are more responsive to fellow partisan lobbyists (Hirsch et al. 2021; Furnas, Heaney, and LaPira n.d.).

Although we outlined previously that we would expect organized interests to prefer lobbyists whose ideological preferences align with the organization to ensure the agent acts faithfully, ideological preferences also represent potential connections to government actors. As such, the partisan control of government may change the incentives for organized interests to choose agents whose ideological preferences align with their own. An organized interest's

preference for an agent whose ideology aligns with that of the organization should be highest when government is controlled by the ideologically aligned party.

H6: When the hiring organization is aligned with the party holding unified control of government, the probability of selecting an applicant is higher when that applicant is also aligned with the organization's ideological preferences (and with the party in control).

However, while unaligned ideological preferences between the organized interest and the lobbyist in these instances may increase agency loss, the connections that the lobbyist provide are more valuable when those connections are to the majority party in government. Thus, we might expect organizations to be willing to increase agency loss in exchange for the potential for increased access and connection to the governing party in instances when the organization's ideological preferences are not aligned with the party in power.

H7: When the hiring organization is not aligned with the party holding unified control of government, the probability of selecting an applicant is higher when that applicant is aligned with the party holding unified control (but not aligned with the organization).

Research Design

Discerning what characteristics make lobbyists successful at advancing organizations' interests, and therefore make them more desirable to those organizations, is difficult for several reasons. First, systematic information about lobbyists' characteristics is often difficult to amass; while the Lobbying Disclosure Act (LDA) requires organizations to report some information about their lobbyists, such as their names and previous government service, information about other characteristics central to our hypotheses, such as the lobbyists' areas of policy expertise, is absent.⁵ Second, given the multiplicity of actors involved in any single policymaking

⁵Further, even the scant information lobbyists are required to report about themselves in LDA filings, such as their previous government service, is often presented inaccurately (LaPira and Thomas 2014).

effort, from members of Congress and their staffs to executive branch officials and other organizations and their lobbyists, it is difficult to isolate the effect that any single lobbyist might have on outcomes. To be sure, some studies have tried to isolate such lobbyist-level effects using the proportion of an organization’s lobbying expenditures allocated for each lobbyist (Blanes i Vidal, Draca, and Fons-Rosen 2012; McCrain 2018), but doing so requires strong assumptions about how well organizations’ aggregate lobbying expenditures reflect the value they place on individual lobbyists. Third, studies relying on lobbyists registered through LDA reports alone to discern the importance of those lobbyists’ characteristics contend with selection bias concerns because they observe only the characteristics of those who become registered lobbyists rather than the characteristics of the broader population of persons from which lobbyists are drawn.

Acknowledging these challenges, we test our expectations through a conjoint experiment completed by political elites with intimate knowledge of what lobbyist characteristics are valued by organized interests—federal lobbyists and policy advocates working for those interests (henceforth “lobbyists”). Through this framework, we avoid issues posed by data and measurement limitations, instead utilizing treatments tailored to measure our characteristics of interest. Further, whereas the natural correlation of some lobbyist characteristics, such as their procedural and substantive expertise, can make it difficult to determine the importance of any one characteristic, the conjoint design allows us to isolate the independent effects of our characteristics of interest.

Our survey sampling frame consisted of the individuals listed as points of contact or lobbyists on organized interests’ Lobbying Disclosure Act (LDA) reports filed between the first quarter of 2019 and the third quarter of 2020. Of the 11,341 persons in our sampling frame, 888 participated in our experiment for an overall response rate of 7.8%, which compares favorably to those in other survey experiments of American political elites (see Miller 2021).⁶

⁶Please see Online Appendix Section B for more information on LDA reporting requirements and our sampling procedure and response rate.

While agents of interests themselves, lobbyists are a favorable respondent sample for learning about interests’ hiring choices for two reasons. First, interests themselves are generally naive about the details of lobbying, hence their reliance on lobbyists to perform the work necessary to promote their preferences—including selecting agents to perform that work (e.g., Drutman 2015; Kersh 2002). Second, most of lobbyist respondents reported that they are typically involved in the hiring process when their employer seeks new lobbyists; 508 respondents (57.2%) indicated that they are “always” involved in the process, and another 244 (27.5%) indicated that they are “sometimes” or “often” involved (see Table A4). Thus, our respondents have the requisite knowledge and experience with the hiring process to shed light on interests’ preferences over lobbyists’ characteristics.

After completing pre-treatment questions, respondents are asked to complete two conjoint tasks. In brief explanatory prompts offered before these tasks, respondents are randomly assigned to imagine that they are completing the tasks during a period of unified Democratic or Republican control of Congress and the White House. Then, respondents complete the two tasks sequentially. In each task, respondents are first asked to imagine working for an organization looking to hire a new lobbyist and that they have been asked to assist in the hiring process. These vignettes include three pieces of randomized information about the organization: its structure as a lobbying firm or a national association, the policy area on which it focuses, and its ideological inclination.^{7,8}

⁷All respondents see one task where the organization specializes in real estate policy and one task where the organization specializes in tax policy. The variation in policy content and the organization’s structure encourages respondents to consider each task independently as required by the stability and no carryover effects assumption (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014). We leverage the organization’s randomly assigned ideological inclination to determine whether applicants’ partisan affiliation (if any) align with the organization’s ideological inclination.

⁸We considered that Republican (Democratic) respondents may not appropriately assume

Next, respondents are provided with summaries of the resumes of three applicants the organization has received for the position.⁹ Each summary includes levels for six attributes: the applicant’s gender, race/ethnicity, languages spoken, community involvement, previous political employment, and previous lobbying employment.¹⁰ After reviewing these resume summaries, respondents are asked to indicate their interest in interviewing each applicant on a five-point ordinal scale and to select the applicant they would most like to interview. Overall, respondents completed 1741 choice tasks with 3 profiles each, yielding 5,223 observations.

We use respondents’ forced choices to estimate average marginal component effects (AMCEs), which indicate “the marginal effect of [a given attribute] averaged over the joint distribution of the remaining attributes” (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014, 10).¹¹ Substantively, each of our AMCEs represent the effect a particular applicant attribute-level on the probability a respondent will choose to interview that applicant relative to a randomly selected profile with the baseline level of that attribute. We estimate AMCEs using linear

the preferences of liberal (conservative) firms. As such, we also ran models (shown in Table A9 in the Online Appendix) that excluded instances when respondents were asked to evaluate hiring preferences for organizations that did not align with their political predispositions. Those results are substantively similar to those presented here, but with reduced statistical power.

⁹While conjoint experiments often include only two profiles per task, we utilize three profiles per task to increase our number of observations. Jenke et al. (N.d.) show that unbiased average marginal component effects can be estimated when tasks include more than two profiles.

¹⁰See Online Appendix Table A1 for a full description of the attribute-levels included in the resume summaries.

¹¹Because the substantive results we obtain are substantively similar when using either the forced choice or ordinal rating outcomes, we present only those using the forced choice outcome. See Online Appendix Table A6 for our analyses using the ordinal ratings.

regression as implemented by the `cregg` package in R (Leeper 2020), with our forced choice outcome regressed on a series of indicator variables representing each of our non-baseline attribute-levels and standard errors clustered at the respondent level. Finally, in light of our large number of hypotheses, we implement Bonferroni corrections to account for multiple comparisons.¹²

Disentangling Connections, Policy Expertise, and Procedural Knowledge

We previously laid out how certain types of applicants should be preferred if organized interests place more weight on the aspects of the principal-agent problem related to policy expertise, procedural knowledge, connections, and faithfulness. Matching these hypotheses to observable attributes in a job applicant in a simulated hiring process is not straightforward, however. Below, we outline our measurement strategy.

First, to test H3a, we need to capture connections to political decision-makers. To do so, we follow the existing literature (LaPira and Thomas 2017; McCrain 2018; Blanes i Vidal, Draca, and Fons-Rosen 2012; Bertrand, Bombardini, and Trebbi 2014; Salisbury et al. 1989), and use variation in backgrounds as a congressional staffer. We do this based on staffer job titles and personal office versus committee-based positions. This process is based on Congressional Research Service reports that describe the role of staffers based on their job titles (e.g., Petersen 2011), as well as detailed qualitative accounts on the role of staff in Congress (e.g., Hall 1996; Curry 2021). It is also supported empirically by previous work that finds different values in connections for different types of staff once they revolve into

¹²Our pre-registered hypotheses invoke 27 comparisons between specific attribute-levels and their baselines as well as between specific pairs of attribute-levels. Thus, we correct the α level used to evaluate our hypothesis tests and construct our confidence intervals to $\frac{0.05}{27} \approx 0.002$.

lobbying (McCrain 2018). We focus on three specific types of staff: a committee staffer, a personal office legislative director, or a personal office communications director.

Second, testing H3b requires comparing specialists, generalists, and non-experts. We do this by looking only at former congressional staffers and exploring the effects of different backgrounds on desirability as a lobbyist (and the different levels of policy expertise and the different levels of knowledge of the political process and strategies associated with those backgrounds). This allows us to we can make inferences about what organized interests value more highly among applicants that all have high-level political connections.

However, this requires assumptions about how lobbyists perceive expertise and connections to be distributed across different types of staffer roles. Our expectations about this are based on previous work and on a survey responses of individuals working in federal lobbying (more details below). We would expect committee staffers to have the highest level of expertise on a topic, since they assist the work of Members of Congress in developing bills, conducting hearings and doing regulatory oversight on the specific topics within the purview of the committee. In other words, they are specialists in a given policy area (Malbin 1980).¹³ On the other hand, a legislative director for a Member of Congress is a generalist who works on the broad legislative strategy and supervises the work of legislative staff across as they draft bills and take policy positions in wide spectrum of policy areas. For personal office staff, this necessarily entails following all legislative activity, even in areas in which the member does not have a committee assignment. Thus, substantive expertise acquired by legislative directors will be distributed across a variety of areas. Finally, the communications director for a Member of Congress, we posit, has relatively the lowest level of policy expertise among our congressional staff position options.

To confirm these assumptions, we used a brief survey of lobbyists sent out in the spring

¹³McCrain (2018) and Bertrand, Bombardini, and Trebbi (2014) find that committee staff are specialists once they become lobbyists, based on a measurement strategy that examines how many types of policy areas they work on as lobbyists.

of 2022.¹⁴ Our results indicated these perceptions are shared by the 610 individuals working in the field of lobbying who responded to our survey. When asked to rank the substantive expertise in tax policy and real estate policy (the two areas we focus on here) on a scale of zero to ten with zero representing no expertise on that area and ten indicating that the individual has extensive expertise, committee staff on the House Ways and Means committee consistently ranked higher in expertise in tax policy ($\mu = 9.0$) and real estate policy ($\mu = 5.55$) than a legislative director for a member of the House ($\mu = 5.8$ and $\mu = 4.6$, respectively) or a communications director for a member of the house ($\mu = 3.1$ and $\mu = 2.6$, respectively). Each of these differences are significantly different from each other at $p < 0.01$.

Finally, in order to test H4, we need to identify applicants with expertise obtained without a background in politics. To do this, we compare case policy experts at think tanks, because they have past experience in policy related fields but no insider connections to former legislative directors and committee staffers. This is because the latter have both policy expertise and insider connections. We also compare think tank specialists with congressional communication directors, who have insider connections but more limited policy expertise.

These assumptions about the relative parity in policy expertise but fundamental differences in strategic connections are born out in our survey of 610 lobbyists as well. While respondents did not view any substantive or significant differences between the policy expertise of legislative directors ($\mu = 4.6$ on real estate policy and $\mu = 5.8$ on tax policy) and think tank directors

¹⁴Our survey sampling frame is the same as used for the main results presented below and consisted of individuals who were listed as points of contact or lobbyists on organized interests' Lobbying Disclosure Act (LDA) reports filed between the first quarter of 2019 and the third quarter of 2020. This follow up survey was sent out a little over a year after the main survey results (on February 22, 2022). Only one invitation to participate was sent. The invitations to this survey and to the main survey were also sent by two of the authors working at different universities. The 610 responses for this survey used to test our assumptions represent a 5.4% response rate.

($\mu = 4.8$ and $\mu = 5.9$, respectively) – neither differences being statistically significant – there are substantive and significant differences in the perceptions of lobbyists about level of network connections. Respondents were asked to indicate how well connected individuals in these positions were “with policy makers (e.g. members of Congress, congressional staff, and relevant bureaucrats, etc)” on an 11-point scale and to indicate the level of “procedural expertise” on the same scale. Respondents rated the connectedness and procedural expertise of legislative directors at $\mu = 7.8$ and $\mu = 7.9$ respectively and the connectedness of think tank directors at $\mu = 5.5$ and $\mu = 5.4$, both differences being significant at $p < 0.01$. Thus, while having relatively similar expertise on the policy topics, these positions have vastly different insider procedural expertise and connections with relevant policy makers.

Results

We begin by analyzing the average marginal component effects (AMCE), or change in the probability that a given profile would be chosen to interview if that profile is assigned a given attribute-level (as compared to the baseline level of that attribute; Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014). In the sections below we focus on individual ACMEs specifically related to our hypotheses when using the forced choice outcome; the full model of effects can be found in Online Appendix Figure ??, which includes the estimates for a number of other traits of lobbyist applicants.^{15,16}

¹⁵In supplemental analyses, we interacted several of our respondent characteristics, such as the respondents’ own partisan identification and role as an in-house or firm lobbyist, with our attribute-levels to assess whether any of our AMCEs obscure important heterogeneous effects. We do not detect any consistent, substantively important interactive effects.

¹⁶As we noted earlier, we also ran models (shown in Table A9 in the Online Appendix) that only allowed lobbyists to indicate hiring preferences for organizations that aligned with their ideological preferences (Republicans evaluating conservative groups, Democrats evaluating

Results: Policy Expertise and Political Connections

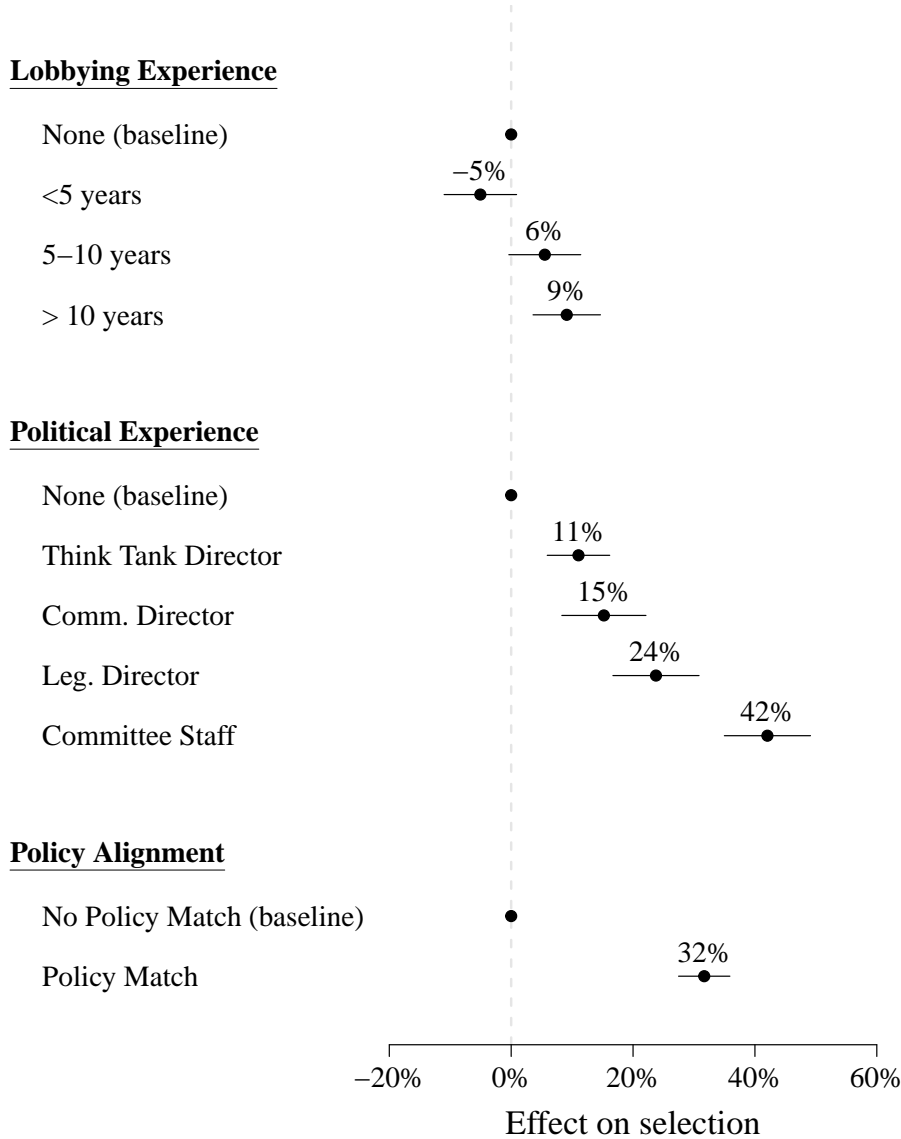
We begin by examining how individual expertise and experience affects respondents preference for potential interview candidates. As outlined in Hypothesis 1, we expect that increased lobbying experience would result in a higher likelihood of an individual being chosen as the preferred applicant to be interviewed. As shown in Figure 1, this is what we find. Applicants who had more than 10 years of lobbying experience were significantly more likely to be selected for an interview than applicants without lobbying experience. Having more than 10 years of lobbying experience, increased the likelihood of being chosen by for an interview for a position as a lobbyist by 9 percentage points. However, we do not see significant effects for applicants with more limited experience relative to candidates without any experience.

We also find support for our second hypothesis, namely that applicants with expertise in the policy area that aligns with the policy focus of the hiring organization are more likely to be selected as a preferred candidate. As shown in Figure 1, candidates whose policy experience is in the same policy issue on which the hiring organization focuses (coded in the figure as “Policy Match”) are 32 percentage points more likely to be selected for an interview.¹⁷ This particular finding suggests that, in their search for agents, one of the strongest preferences that organized interests have is for lobbyists with the relevant expertise in the policy area where they will be working. It appears that these particular preferences that far outweigh any concerns that organizations might have over other principal-agent problems.

While previous research has struggled to separate out the influence of policy expertise, legislative process expertise, and political connections, our design also allows us to separately liberal groups, and independents evaluating bipartisan groups) because we were concerned that respondents might not be able to evaluate out-party aligned groups effectively. Those results are almost identical to what is shown here, but with reduced statistical power.

¹⁷The baseline category includes both applicants with non-matching experience and no experience at all.

Figure 1: Interest in Potential Lobbyist Candidates by Experience and Expertise



Note: Effects of political and lobbyist experience and policy expertise alignment on the likelihood of being chosen to interview for lobbyist position. Bars are Bonferroni corrected 95% confidence intervals. **Takeaway:** Policy expertise, political experience, and lobbying experience are all positively related to the likelihood an applicant will be selected by an organization as a potential lobbyist.

identify the effects of relevant policy expertise and the effects of legislative connections and procedural expertise, by explicitly giving information on a potential lobbyist’s policy expertise through their substantive expertise and providing information about lobbyists legislative connections through their previous experience working on Capitol Hill.

Specifically, the five different potential political backgrounds presented vary significantly in dimensions of the political connections and policy expertise that they suggest, findings confirmed, as we noted previously, in the follow-up survey sent to lobbyists a year later.¹⁸

- Those with experience as a director of a think tank provide legislative policy expertise but provide fewer political connections.
- Those with experience as a communications director in the office of a member of the House of Representatives, in contrast, provide political connections, but imply less policy expertise.
- Individuals with experience as legislative directors in the office of a member of the House of Representatives have both the legislative policy expertise and also the political connections.
- Lastly, those whose previous political experience involves working as a committee staffer of the House Ways and Means committee provide more detailed legislative policy expertise compared to a legislative director and also a wider set of connections to legislative policy makers.

Viewing preferences for political experience in this particular light, we can isolate the effect of policy experience by looking at the effect of being a director of a think tank relative to having no political experience.¹⁹ Similarly, we can isolate the effect of political connections by looking at the effect of being a legislative director relative to being a domestic policy expert at a think tank.²⁰

¹⁸See the text immediately before and after Hypothesis 3b for more details

¹⁹As noted previously, these both have low political connections, but the director of a think tank has higher policy expertise

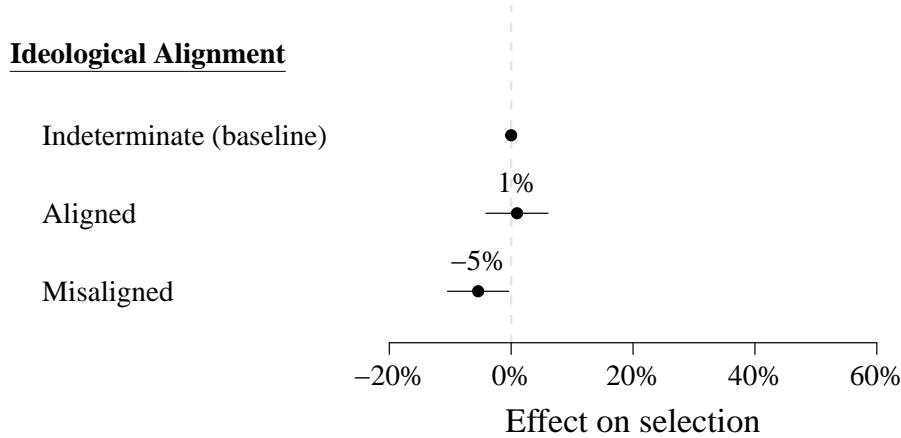
²⁰Again, as noted previously, our subsequent survey of lobbyists indicated that individuals in these two positions were likely to have the same level of policy expertise, but vastly different political connections. See the text around Hypothesis 3b for more details.

Consistent with hypothesis 3a, we find that the effect of personal connections are important. Figure 1 shows that organized interests have strong and significant preferences for lobbyist candidates that have previously worked as a congressional committee staffer, or a congressional office legislative director or communications director relative to candidates without any experience working in congress. Specifically comparing those with political experience as a communications director to those with no political experience, we can estimate the overall effect of political connections to increase an organization's preference for a potential candidate by 13 to 17 percentage points.

We can also directly compare that effect to the effect of legislative policy expertise. We find that the isolated effect of legislative policy expertise is 12 percentage points (by comparing a director of a think tank to an individual with no political experience) which is slightly smaller, but not significantly different.

We also find, as expected, that congressional legislative directors, with both policy expertise and political connections, committee staff members, with both extended political connections and legislative policy expertise, are significantly more preferred as potential lobbyists relative to other designations of previous political experience. While the effect of being a legislative director is not quite significantly different than the effect of being a communications director, it is significantly different from the effect of having previously been a director of a think tank. Most notably, though, respondents strongly preferred individuals with experience working as a staff member on House committees where they were likely to have extensive policy expertise and legislative connections. On the whole, a former committee staff member was 18 percentage points more likely to be selected than a legislative director, 26 percentage points more likely to be selected for an interview for the lobbyist position than a communications director, 31 percentage points more likely to be selected than a think tank director, and 43 percentage points more likely to be selected than an individual without any political experience. On the whole, however, these results show that there are similar independent effects of both political connections and also legislative policy expertise.

Figure 2: Interest in Potential Lobbyist Candidates by Ideological Alignment



Note: Effects of ideological alignment on the likelihood of being chosen to interview for lobbyist position. Bars are Bonferroni corrected 95% confidence intervals. **Takeaway:** Applicants who share an ideology/partisan affinity with the hiring organization are more likely to be selected than applicants who do not. Applicants who do not share an ideology/partisan affinity with the hiring organization are less likely to be selected than applicants whose ideology/partisanship is not available.

Results: Faithful Agents

We now turn to concerns that principals might have regarding the faithfulness of their agents in an organization-lobbyist relationship. In our fifth hypothesis, we outlined expectations that applicants whose ideological preferences matched those of the organization would be more likely to be selected for interviews relative to individuals

Figure 2 shows evidence in support of Hypothesis 5. We find that while there is a slight (insignificant) preference for potential lobbyists who are aligned with the ideological mission of the organization, relative to individuals whose ideological affiliation is indeterminable, potential lobbyists whose ideological preferences are opposed to the parent organization are significantly less likely to be chosen as the preferred candidate to interview for the lobbyist position. Relative to a potential lobbyist whose ideological preferences are indeterminable from their past employment history, potential lobbyists whose ideology is misaligned from the organization are roughly five points less likely to be selected for an interview. Overall, our evidence shows that organizations have a strong preference for lobbyists whose ideology

aligns with the organization for whom they will be working.

Results: Skill Sets or Connections

The design of the conjoint experiment also allows us to directly compare the relative importance of policy expertise relative to the importance of connections in hiring. As we noted previously, most of the previous work has highlighted the importance of connections in interest groups' interests in employing lobbyists (Blanes i Vidal, Draca, and Fons-Rosen 2012; McCrain 2018). This work, however, has not attempted to evaluate the relative importance that organized interests place on connections compared to policy expertise.

In Figure 3, we limit the sample to choices where potential lobbyist hires had post political experience and also policy expertise. Using that information we can compare the relative importance of lobbyist skills (having a policy match with the organization) to the importance of political connections through past political experience. Figure 3 shows that policy expertise is as important or more important than political connections. The effect of having policy expertise that matched the interest groups substantive policy interests had as big of an effect as previous work as a committee staff member (compared to an individual without congressional staff expertise) and a bigger effect than being a communications or legislative director. While most research on lobbyists has highlighted the importance of connections, our research suggests that policy expertise that lobbyists have is just as, or even more important than those connections. While connections and procedural expertise are important (see the difference between a legislative director and a think tank director in Figure 3 where there are differences between those positions in connections to policy makers and procedural expertise but no differences in perceptions of substantive knowledge as noted previously),²¹ these effects

²¹As we reported previously on in the text surrounding Hypothesis 3B, while respondents to our follow-up survey did not view any substantive or significant differences between the policy expertise of legislative directors there are substantive and significant differences in the perceptions of lobbyists about level of connections to policy makers and procedural expertise.

are dwarfed by the effect of having policy expertise (see the difference between having a policy match versus not having a policy match in Figure 3).

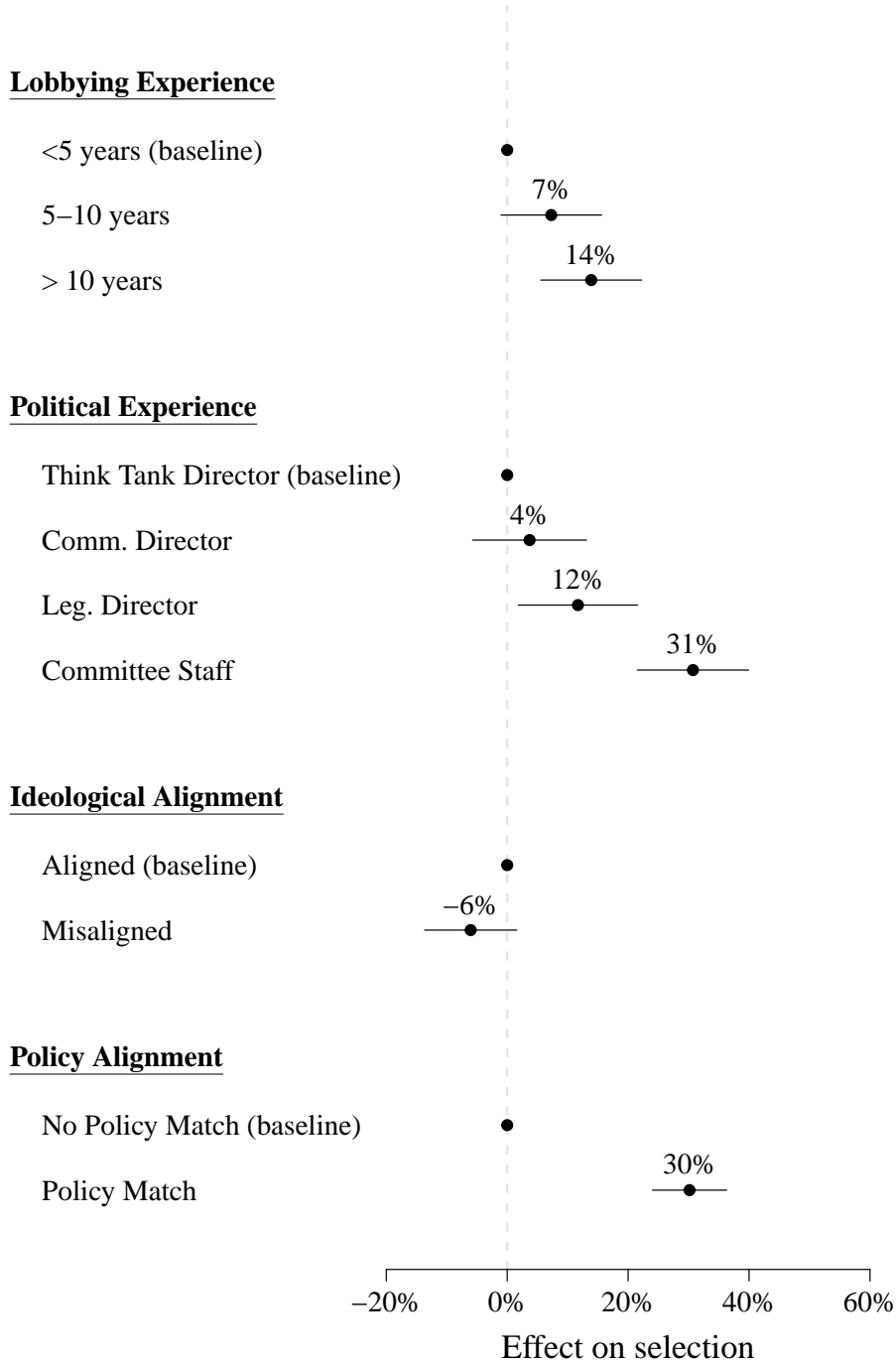
Results: Variation by the Legislative Context

Whereas we see clear preferences for lobbyists whose ideological viewpoints align with the ideology of the organization, in hypotheses 6 and 7 we specifically outlined expectations that these preferences for ideological alignment in the lobbyist an organization selects would decline during times when the opposition party controlled government. In Figure 4, we subset the data to only those profiles where the applicant has previous political experience and thus can be clearly denoted as affiliated with one ideological perspective or the other. Figure 4 shows the effects of individual applicant characteristics broken down by whether the party aligned with the organization interested in hiring a lobbyist was in the majority or in the minority in the legislature (the full results are available in Figure ?? in the Online Appendix). We find a strong preference for co-partisan lobbyists when government is controlled by the party aligned with the organizational interest (consistent with Hypothesis 6). In these situations, co-partisan lobbyist applicants are almost 18 percentage points more likely to be selected than candidates whose ideology does not match the organization's ideology.

In contrast, candidates for the lobbyist position whose ideology matches the ideology of the organization are not preferred over candidates whose ideology is misaligned when the organization is not aligned with the party in power. Consistent with Hypothesis 7, we find a slight preference for lobbyist candidates whose ideology is not aligned with the organization when the organization's ideological preferences are not aligned with the party in power (although the difference is not statistically significant). However, our results show clear evidence that organizations are more willing to interview applicants whose ideology does not accord with their own when the organization is aligned with the minority party than with the majority party in government.

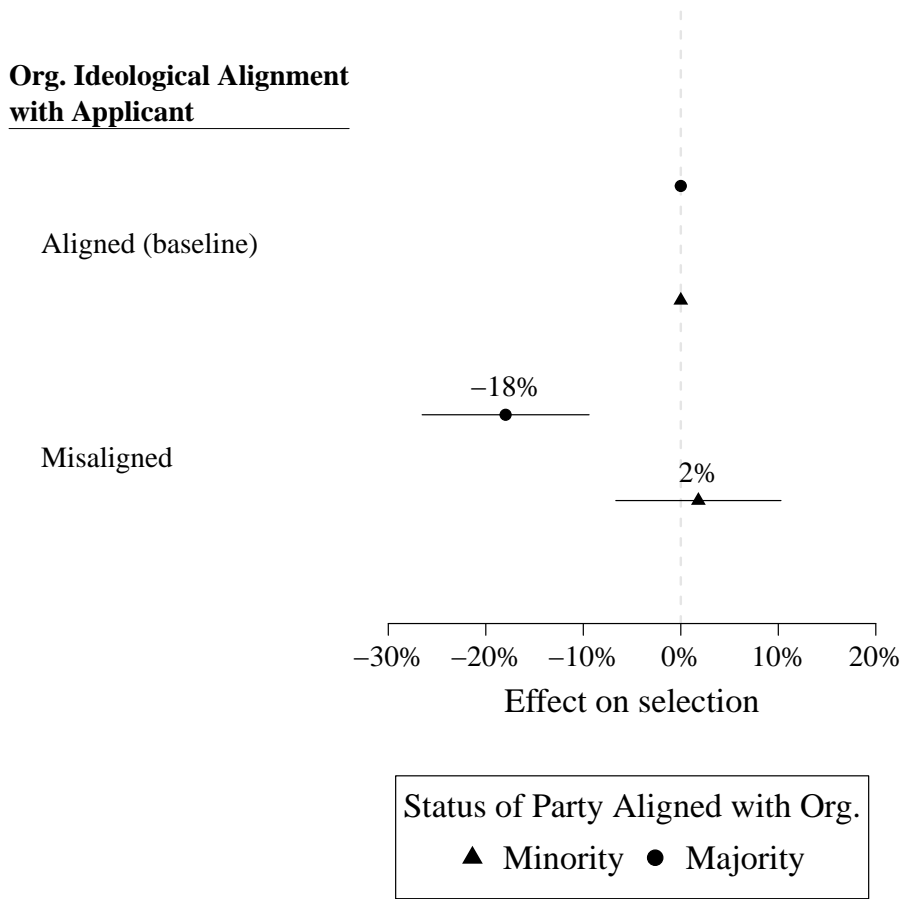
These results suggest that preferences for lobbyists with a particular partisan alignment

Figure 3: The Relative Importance of Skill Sets and Connections



Note: Predicted probability of being chosen to interview for lobbyist position by potential lobbyist characteristics. Choices limited to individuals with political experience and policy experience. Bars are Bonferroni corrected 95% confidence intervals. **Takeaway:** The policy expertise that lobbyists have is just as, or even more important than political connections.

Figure 4: Preferences for Lobbyist Ideological Alignment by Party Control of Legislature



Note: Predicted probability of being chosen to interview for lobbyist position by ideological alignment with organization and with the party in control of the legislature. Bars are Bonferroni corrected 95% confidence intervals. **Takeaway:** Preferences for lobbyists whose ideology aligns with the organization is dependent on the organization’s alignment with the party in the majority in government.

are largely dependent on the nature of the political environment and control of government. In situations where co-partisans are more likely to have access to the corridors of power, organizations strongly prefer to have co-partisans as lobbyists. In contrast, when the other party controls government, organizations do not have a strong preference for lobbyists with ideological leanings in one direction or another. In these cases, concerns of faithful representation of the organization’s interest are balanced with concerns about the ability of an organization’s lobbyist to gain access to those in power.

Discussion and Conclusion

Discerning the relative value that the lobbying industry places on lobbyist characteristics, which provides insight into the often-opaque actions of lobbyists, has important representational and policy implications and sheds light onto the principal-agent relationships between organizations and lobbyists. By learning, for instance, that lobbyists are primarily hired for their connections, the primary finding in previous research, the implication is that lobbyists primarily work with allied lawmakers in an informational subsidy role. While somewhat less normatively troubling than a purely persuasive role, where lobbyists seek to push policy outcomes away from the ideal points of legislators, there are still concerns that an expertise monopoly among lobbyists (especially in low capacity legislative settings) can produce policy that favors special interests (Hirsch et al. 2021).

Empirically assessing what lobbyists do, while challenging, is not impossible. However, assessing the *relative* value of set of traits among lobbyists is extremely difficult in any observational setting, leaving a number of problematic unobservables unaccounted for in empirical studies of lobbying (De Figueiredo and Richter 2014). Understanding the relative importance of whom or what you know in lobbying sheds light onto the role lobbyists have in the policy process (Bertrand, Bombardini, and Trebbi 2014; Salisbury et al. 1989). For instance, while it may appear that lobbyists gain or lose value in the industry based on changes to their connections, the number and/or strength of the connections may be confounded by an unmeasured policy expertise. Ideally, we would be able to hold fixed individual unobservables and be able to assess whether lobbying firms are more or less likely to hire an individual (and what value they place upon that individual once they are hired) conditional on variation in connections or policy expertise. In this paper, leveraging a unique conjoint experiment to registered lobbyists, we are able to do exactly this.

This paper pushes the literature forward in two important ways. First, the conjoint experimental design on an elite population permits us to separate out the relative values of

different lobbying traits in a realistic way. We find that both connections and expertise are valuable, with higher relative value placed on backgrounds that are more associated with a combination of the two. However, two pieces of evidence suggest that *expertise* might even be more valuable: organized interests have a much stronger preference for hiring a) congressional staff with committee experience—typically a very specialized profession on Capitol Hill—and b) lobbyists with the policy expertise required by the interest group. The strength of the preference for lobbyists with relevant policy expertise was particularly striking. Second, we argue and show evidence for lobbying firms attempting to mitigate a principal-agent problem, where the organized interests that hire agents (lobbyists) do not have the time or specialized knowledge to understand the day-to-day task of lobbying. In support of this hypothesis, we find interests have a preference for hiring lobbyists that align ideologically with their interests.

These findings suggest an important avenue for future work is to examine the *hiring* patterns of organized interests that employ lobbyists. Little is known about the political economy of the demand side of lobbying, which holds implications for better understanding who the people are that influence politics behind the scenes. Further, shedding additional light onto this labor market will facilitate understanding revolving door lobbying, particularly what motivates individuals to leave government for private sector roles, when, and why. A better understanding of these things is necessary for policy reformers seeking to decrease the draw of the revolving door and increase the retention of public institutions.

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**Online Appendix for “Hiring Representative Agents or
Skill Sets? Principal-Agent Problems in Lobbyist
Hiring Decisions”**

(Not intended for print publication)

Contents

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A Conjoint Experiment Protocol

After providing consent and completing pre-treatment questions, respondents were provided with the following preface to the two conjoint tasks:

The following two hypothetical scenarios will ask you to assume the role of a lobbyist working for a client or firm and to help organization hire a new lobbyist to join your team.

For the purposes of these scenarios, assume that you are working in a context of unified government where [Democrats/Republicans] control the House, Senate, and the White House.

Note that in this preface, respondents were randomly assigned to imagine that either Democrats or Republicans had unified control of the federal government and that this randomization was fixed across both of respondents' tasks. We included this randomization to encourage respondents to abstract away from the real-world political context that existed at the time and idiosyncratic features that might inform their decisionmaking in an actual hiring process, and instead to draw on their general evaluations of the job candidates we presented to them Gaines, Kuklinski, and Quirk (i.e., pre-treatment; see 2007).²²

²²Our survey was fielded between December 1, 2020 and January 3, 2021. During this period lame duck period of the 116th Congress, Democrats held the House of Representatives while Republicans held the White House and the Senate. Prior to the outcome of the Senate elections in Georgia held on January 3, 2021 and not called until after response collection ceased, it was unknown whether the 117th Congress would see a unified Democratic government or a divided government where Democrats controlled the House and the White House but Republicans controlled the Senate. Our abstraction was intended to draw respondents away from thinking about this particular moment in American politics and how it might influence their hiring decisions and instead consider how they utilize information about job candidates

A1 Conjoint Vignette and Randomization Details

Each conjoint task presented respondents with the following text, followed by three applicant profiles with randomly assigned levels for each attribute:

Imagine that you work as a lobbyist for a [**lobbying firm/national association**] that focuses on [**real estate/tax**] policy. Your organization is generally considered to be [**liberal/conservative/bipartisan**].

Your organization is hiring a new lobbyist to join your team, and you have been asked to participate in the hiring process. Your organization wants the new hire to help analyze new legislation and regulations affecting [**real estate/tax**] policy and lobby members of Congress on its behalf.

You are currently screening applicant resumes to decide which applicants you would like to personally interview for the position. Below are the summaries of 3 resumes you are considering.

Note that in addition to the profile attribute-levels, this text randomizes three other facets.

- First, the substantive policy focus of the organization featured in each task was randomly assigned to be either real estate or tax policy. In order to encourage respondents to consider each task independently and to account for potential task-ordering effects, each respondent completed one task with each substantive policy focus and the order in which policy focuses were presented was randomized for each respondent.

to make hiring decisions in a general sense. For instance, our abstraction precludes the possibility that a respondent might have an expectation about which member of Congress was likely to hold a committee chair relevant for the issues area we identified in our experiments in the upcoming 117th Congress and thus chose a specific job candidate profile because they thought that type of candidate would be best able to lobby that member of Congress.

- Second, the structure of organization featured in each task was randomly assigned to be either a national association or a lobbying firm. This randomization occurred at the task-level, such that respondents could have completed two tasks in which they were asked to imagine themselves employed by a national association or by a lobbying firm, or one task in which they were asked to imagine themselves employed by an association and another in which they were asked to imagine themselves employed by a firm.
- Third, the organization’s ideological leanings expressed in each task was randomly assigned to be liberal, conservative or bipartisan. Like the structure of the organization, this randomization occurred at the task-level.

Each applicant profile was populated with the attribute-levels provided in Table A1. To mitigate potential attribute-ordering effects, we randomized the order in which attributes appeared for each task (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014). For analysis, we recoded the attribute-levels as shown in Table A2. In order for the non-restricted attribute-levels in Table A2 to appear with equal probability and for the restricted attribute-levels to appear with equal probability within their applicable strata, the attribute-levels in provided in Table A1 appeared in profiles with the following probabilities:

- The unique levels of the applicant’s gender, race/ethnicity, and community involvement appeared in the profiles with equal probability.
- For the languages spoken attribute, applicants were assigned “English” with a probability of $\frac{1}{2}$ and one of the three bilingual options with a probability of $\frac{1}{6}$ each. Thus, at the analysis stage, half of the applicants are identified as monolingual and half are identified as bilingual.
- For previous lobbying employment, applicants were assigned “None” with a probability of $\frac{1}{3}$ and “Less than 5 years in [real estate/tax] policy”, “5-10 years in [real estate/-tax] policy”, “More than 10 years in [real estate/tax] policy”, “Less than 5 years in

[defense/education] policy”, “5-10 years in [defense/education] policy”, and “More than 10 years in [defense/education] policy” with a probability of $\frac{1}{9}$ each. Thus, at the analysis stage for policy expertise, $\frac{1}{3}$ of applicant have no lobbying experience, $\frac{1}{3}$ of applicants have experience in the organization’s substantive field of expertise, and $\frac{1}{3}$ of applicants have experience in a substantive field other than that of the organization’s expertise. Further, at the analysis stage for length of time of lobbying experience, $\frac{1}{3}$ of applicants have no experience, $\frac{2}{9}$ have less than 5 years of experience, $\frac{2}{9}$ have 5-10 years of experience, and $\frac{2}{9}$ have more than 10 years of experience.

- For the previous political employment attribute, applicants were assigned “None” with a probability of $\frac{1}{3}$, “Director of Domestic Policy for a Liberal Think Tank” or “Director of Domestic Policy for a Conservative Think Tank” with a probability of $\frac{1}{6}$ each, and “Legislative Director for a Democratic House Member,” “Communications Director for a Democratic House Member,” “Professional Staffer for House Ways and Means Committee Democrats,” “Legislative Director for a Republican House Member,” “Communications Director for a Republican House Member,” and “Professional Staffer for House Ways and Means Committee Republicans” with a probability of $\frac{1}{18}$ each. Thus, at the analysis stage, $\frac{1}{3}$ of applicants have no previous political employment, $\frac{1}{3}$ have experience at a think tank, and $\frac{1}{3}$ have experience in one of the three congressional staff roles (with equal probability in each role), and applicants with think tank or congressional experience have an equal probability of being associated with Democrats/liberals or Republicans/conservatives.

Table A1: Conjoint Experiment Attributes and Levels

Attribute	Levels	Restrictions?
Gender	Male (baseline)	None
	Female	None
Race/Ethnicity	White (baseline)	None
	Black	None
	Hispanic/Latino	None
	Asian	None
Languages Spoken	English (baseline)	None
	English, [Spanish, Portuguese]	None
	English, [French, German] English, [Chinese, Japanese]	None
Community Involvement	None (baseline)	None
	Volunteer at local food bank	None
	Docent at local museum	None
	Youth sports coach	None
Previous Lobbying Employment	None (baseline)	None
	Less than 5 years in [real estate/tax] policy	None
	5-10 years in [real estate/tax] policy	None
	More than 15 years in [real estate/tax] policy	None
	Less than 5 years in [defense/education] policy 5-10 years in [defense/education] policy More than 15 years in [defense/education] policy	None None None
Previous Political Employment	None (baseline)	None
	Director of Domestic Policy for a Conservative Think Tank	None
	Director of Domestic Policy for a Liberal Think Tank	None
	Legislative Director for a Republican House member	None
	Legislative Director for a Democratic House member	None
	Communications Director for a Republican House member	None
	Communications Director for a Democratic House member	None
Professional Staffer for House Ways and Means Committee Republicans Professional Staffer for House Ways and Means Committee Democrats	None None	

Table presents the attributes, attribute-levels, and attribute-level restrictions for each of the six characteristics included in the applicants' resume summaries used in the conjoint experiment tasks. In each task, respondents are presented with three profiles which consist of randomly assigned levels for each of the six attributes; unless otherwise noted in the table, attribute-level assignments are completely randomized (i.e. no restrictions conditional on assignment of other attribute-levels). The ordering of the attributes is also randomized across respondents and tasks. Where elements of attribute-levels appear in brackets, the first element in brackets can appear when the policy specialty of the hiring organization is real estate policy, and the second element in brackets can appear when the policy specialty of the hiring organization is tax policy.

Table A2: Conjoint Experiment Attributes and Levels (Recorded)

Attribute	Levels	Restrictions?
Gender	Male (baseline)	None
	Female	None
Race/Ethnicity	White (baseline)	None
	Black	None
	Hispanic/Latino Asian	None None
Languages Spoken	English Only (baseline)	None
	Bilingual	None
Community Involvement	None (baseline)	None
	Volunteer at local food bank	None
	Docent at local museum Youth sports coach	None None
Years of Lobbying Experience	None (baseline)	None
	<5 years	None
	5-10 years >15 years	None None
Policy-Relevant Lobbying Experience	No	None
	Yes	Years of Lobbying Exp. must not be “None”
Previous Political Employment	None (baseline)	None
	Think tank	None
	Congress	None
	Legislative director	None
	Communications director Committee staff	None None
Ideological/Partisan Alignment of Applicant/Organization	Indeterminate	Prev. Pol. Emp. must be “None”
	Match	Prev. Pol. Emp. must not be “None”
	Mismatch	Prev. Pol. Emp. must not be “None”

Table presents the attributes, attribute-levels, and attribute-level restrictions for each of the ten characteristics extracted from the applicants' resume summaries present in the conjoint experiment tasks. Unless otherwise noted in the table, attribute-level assignments are completely randomized (i.e. no restrictions conditional on assignment of other attribute-levels). For the original codings of attribute-levels, please see Table A1.

A2 Pre-Treatment Questions

- What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other (please specify)
 - Prefer not to say

- How old are you?
 - 18-29
 - 30-49
 - 50-64
 - 65 and over

- How much school or college have you completed?
 - Some high school or less
 - High school graduate or GED
 - Some college, no 4-year degree
 - College graduate
 - Post-graduate degree

- Which best describes your household income?
 - Less than \$25,000
 - \$25,000-\$50,000
 - \$50,000-\$75,000
 - \$75,000-\$100,000
 - \$100,000-\$200,000
 - \$200,000 or more

- Which best describes your race?

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African-American
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- White
- Other (please specify)
- Are you Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino?
 - Yes
 - No
- When it comes to politics, would you describe yourself as liberal, conservative, or neither liberal nor conservative?
 - Very liberal
 - Somewhat liberal
 - Slightly liberal
 - Moderate
 - Slightly conservative
 - Somewhat conservative
 - Very conservative
- Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Democrat, Republican, Independent, or what?
 - Democrat (subsequent questions to distinguish between “strong” and “not so strong”)
 - Republican (subsequent questions to distinguish between “strong” and “not so strong”)
 - Independent (subsequent questions to assess whether “closer to Democratic Party,” “closer to Republican Party,” or “neither”)

- Other
- How many years have you worked in lobbying, government relations, policy advocacy, or a related field? Please do not include any time during which you worked for the federal government.
 - Less than 5 years
 - 5 to 10 years
 - 10 to 15 years
 - 15 to 20 years
 - More than 20 years
- Have you ever worked or served in the federal government in any of the following capacities? Select all that apply.
 - Member of Congress
 - Staffer of a member of Congress or congressional committee
 - Presidential appointee in a federal agency
 - Employee of the Executive Office of the President
 - Civil servant in a federal agency (outside the Executive Office of the President)
 - Other (please specify)
- Which of the following best describes your role in working for your current client(s)?
 - Lobbyist or government relations/policy advocacy professional
 - Executive officer with ultimate responsibility for lobbying/government relations/policy advocacy
 - Executive officer without ultimate responsibility for lobbying/government relations/policy advocacy
 - Other (please specify)
- When your employer hires new lobbyists or government relations/policy advocacy professionals, how often are you involved in the hiring process?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

A3 Post-Treatment Questions

- How interested would you be in interviewing each of these applicants? (*Asked separately for each applicant*)
 - Not at all interested
 - Slightly interested
 - Somewhat interested
 - Very interested
 - Extremely interested
- If you could only interview one of these applicants, which applicant would you prefer to interview?
 - Applicant 1
 - Applicant 2
 - Applicant 3
- Are there any additional pieces of information typically provided in applicants' resumes that you use when making hiring decisions that were not included in the previous tasks? [PRESENTED ON A SEPARATE SCREEN ONCE BOTH TASKS ARE COMPLETED]
 - No
 - Yes (please describe) [TEXT BOX PROVIDED]

B Sampling Procedure and Descriptive Statistics

Under the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 (LDA) and subsequent amendments, individuals who meet the thresholds for designation as a lobbyist must complete and submit a quarterly report, known as an LD-2 form, for each of their clients detailing their lobbying activities on behalf of the client. The sampling frame for our survey is the full universe of individuals listed as 1) lobbyists 2) or points of contact on quarterly LD-2 reports from the first quarter of 2019 through the third quarter of 2020.

- **Registered Lobbyists** Under the LDA, a lobbyist is an individual who, in working on behalf of a client, makes a “lobbying contact,” or an “oral, written, or electronic communication” regarding the conduct of public policy, with more than one “covered official,” which includes most members of the executive and legislative branches—include the president, vice-president, and members of Congress—and spends 20 percent or more of her time working for the client on lobbying activities within a quarterly period. As of January 2017, a lobbyist employed directly by a client that spends \$13,000 or more, or a lobbyist contracted by a client that spends \$3,000 or more on lobbying activities in a given quarter, is required to file an LD-2 report (or be listed as a lobbyist on their organization’s LD-2 form) for that quarter.
- **Points of contact** Each LD-2 report identifies a point of contact for the lobbyist or for the organization employing the lobbyist, or the registrant. While this point of contact can be an individual who is not a registered lobbyist under the LDA, the vast majority of points of contact are LDA lobbyists, and those individuals who are not LDA lobbyists often perform government relations or policy advocacy functions and are familiar with lobbying activity (see Miller 2021).

For each individual, his or her most recent appearance on a report was selected so as to obtain the most up-to-date contact and employment information; in cases where the same

individual appeared on more than one LD-2 report in a given quarter, one report on which that individual appeared as the point of contact was randomly sampled to be associated with that individual.

While each LD-2 report provides an email address for the designated point of contact, it does not provide email addresses for the registered lobbyists listed on that LD-2 report who are not the point of contact.²³ To expand the size of our sample and to include more potential respondents who are themselves registered lobbyists, we assumed that the email addresses of the lobbyists followed the same format as the email address provided for the point of contact and imputed for those lobbyists email addresses following the organization's apparent format; for instance, if the point of contact's email address was "[first name].[last name]@[organization name].com," we assumed that the lobbyists' email addresses were similar in structure and used the names provided to impute email addresses of the same pattern. After combining the email addresses imputed for lobbyists with those provided on LD-2 forms for points of contact and de-duplicating the list of individuals and email addresses, our final sampling frame consisted of 14,404 lobbyists and points of contact.

Initial survey invitations were distributed to all 14,404 unique recipients on December 1, 2021 and reminders were sent to all persons who had not yet completed the survey on December 10, December 21, and between December 27 and January 3 . The email addresses for 3,063 intended recipients were deemed invalid when initial invitations were sent, leaving a sampling frame of 11,341 lobbyists and points of contact and an overall response rate of 7.8% $\frac{888}{11341}$. This response rate compares favorably to those achieved in other survey experiments of

²³While most email addresses provided for points of contact are unique, some lobbying firms provide generic email addresses for all reports they file (e.g., LDA@Venable.com). To minimize email bounces and improve response rates, we identified instances in which generic email addresses were used and made every effort was made to obtain a unique email address for that individual (searching the organization website, LinkedIn, other social media platforms, etc.).

American political elites (see Miller 2021)

It is difficult to assess the representativeness of our respondents to the lobbyists and points of contact in the sampling frame because scant systematic information is available regarding them and the clients for which they work; unlike more publicly visible political actors in Washington, DC, such as members of Congress, whose personal information is collated in the Biographical Directory of the United States Congress and can be systematically coded for inclusion in research, no central repository for similar personal information, such as partisanship and career history, exist for lobbyists and policy advocates. However, four pieces of information about the lobbyists and points of contact and their clients can be gleaned from their LDA filings and the Center for Responsive Politics (CRP), which cleans and aggregates the LDA filings: the client's quarterly lobbying expenditures with that lobbyist or point of contact's employer (i.e. the client's own expenditures if the lobbyist or point of contact is employed directly, or the client's expenditures with a given firm if the lobbyist or point of contact is a contract employee); whether the filer is the client or a lobbying firm contracted by a client; the client's sector coding, as assigned by CRP; and whether the person, if a point of contact, is also a registered lobbyist under the LDA.²⁴ Table A3 compares the distribution of these four characteristics in both the full sampling frame and the sample of respondents who took part in the experiment. These comparisons reveal differences for two of the four characteristics (Lobbying Expenditures and CRP Category) that are substantively small but

²⁴The first three of these pieces of information are easily observable from CRP's aggregated LDA filings, but the fourth can only be determined by assessing whether points of contact listed on LD-2 forms are also listed as registered lobbyists. To determine whether each point of contact is also a registered lobbyist, I used approximate matching techniques to compare the name of the point of contact on each LDA filing to the names of all of the registered lobbyists also appearing on the filing, and visually inspected the best match for each LDA form to determine if the point of contact was also listed as a registered lobbyist.

statistically distinguishable at the $p < 0.05$ level.²⁵ Thus, while the sample of respondents differs from the sampling frame, it contains a sizable number of respondents with each unique level of these characteristics.²⁶

Finally, Table A4 provides information on the descriptive characteristics of the individuals who completed conjoint experiment tasks. This descriptive information was collected as part of the survey, and thus only provides information about respondents. The high proportions of respondents who report education levels of “post-graduate degree” (68.1%), income levels of “\$200,000 or more” (58.1%), experience levels of “more than 20 years” (41.1%), and professional roles as “lobbyists” or “executive officers responsible for lobbying” (88.6%) suggest that most survey respondents were themselves members of the population of interest—political elites who play a substantive role in lobbying and policy advocacy—rather than low-level employees who may respond to emails but lack significant lobbying experience. Further, that the majority of respondents indicated that they are “Always” involved in their organization’s hiring of new lobbyists (508 respondents, or 57.2%), and that most respondents reported being “Sometimes,” “Often,” or “Always” involved in hiring (752 respondents, or 84.7%), indicates that our respondents have the requisite knowledge and expertise to complete our conjoint hiring tasks.

²⁵The $|t|$ and χ^2 test statistics from the difference in means and χ^2 tests are: $|t| = 1.00$ for Lobbyist Employer; $\chi^2_3 = 61.33$ for Lobbying Expenditures; $\chi^2_{13} = 51.33$ for CRP Category; and $|t| = 1.96$ for Registered Lobbyist.

²⁶To account for these differences between our sample and the sampling frame, we also replicated our analyses by weighting our observations to mirror the distribution of these four characteristics in the sampling frame. These analyses (not shown) are substantively similar; the point estimates closely resemble those presented here, though the confidence intervals widen and decrease our statistical power in a few cases.

A1 Sample Descriptive Statistics

Table A3: Comparison of Respondents with Sampling Frame

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>% of Respondents (N)</u>	<u>% of Sampling Frame (N)</u>
<u>Employer Type</u>		
Client	54.4% (483)	56.0% (6350)
Firm	45.6% (405)	44.0% (4991)
<u>Lobbying Expenditures</u>		
First Quartile	32.4% (288)	25.0% (2836)
Second Quartile	29.3% (260)	25.0% (2835)
Third Quartile	22.1% (196)	25.0% (2835)
Fourth Quartile	16.2% (144)	25.0% (2835)
<u>CRP Category</u>		
Agribusiness	5.1% (45)	4.1% (468)
Communications and Electronics	6.5% (58)	7.5% (853)
Construction	1.0% (9)	2.0% (231)
Defense	0.9% (8)	1.8% (199)
Energy and Natural Resources	6.0% (53)	7.1% (807)
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	7.2% (64)	10.6% (1198)
Health	19.4% (172)	19.6% (2218)
Ideological and Single-Issue	12.6% (112)	10.0% (1132)
Labor	2.6% (23)	2.2% (247)
Lawyers and Lobbyists	1.4% (12)	0.6% (69)
Misc Business	11.5% (102)	12.7% (1445)
Other	6.9% (61)	5.7% (642)
Transportation	7.4% (66)	7.1% (807)
Unknown	11.6% (103)	9.0% (1025)
<u>Registered Lobbyist</u>		
Yes	77.9% (692)	75.3% (8540)
No	22.1% (196)	24.7% (2801)

Table A4: Descriptive Statistics of Respondents

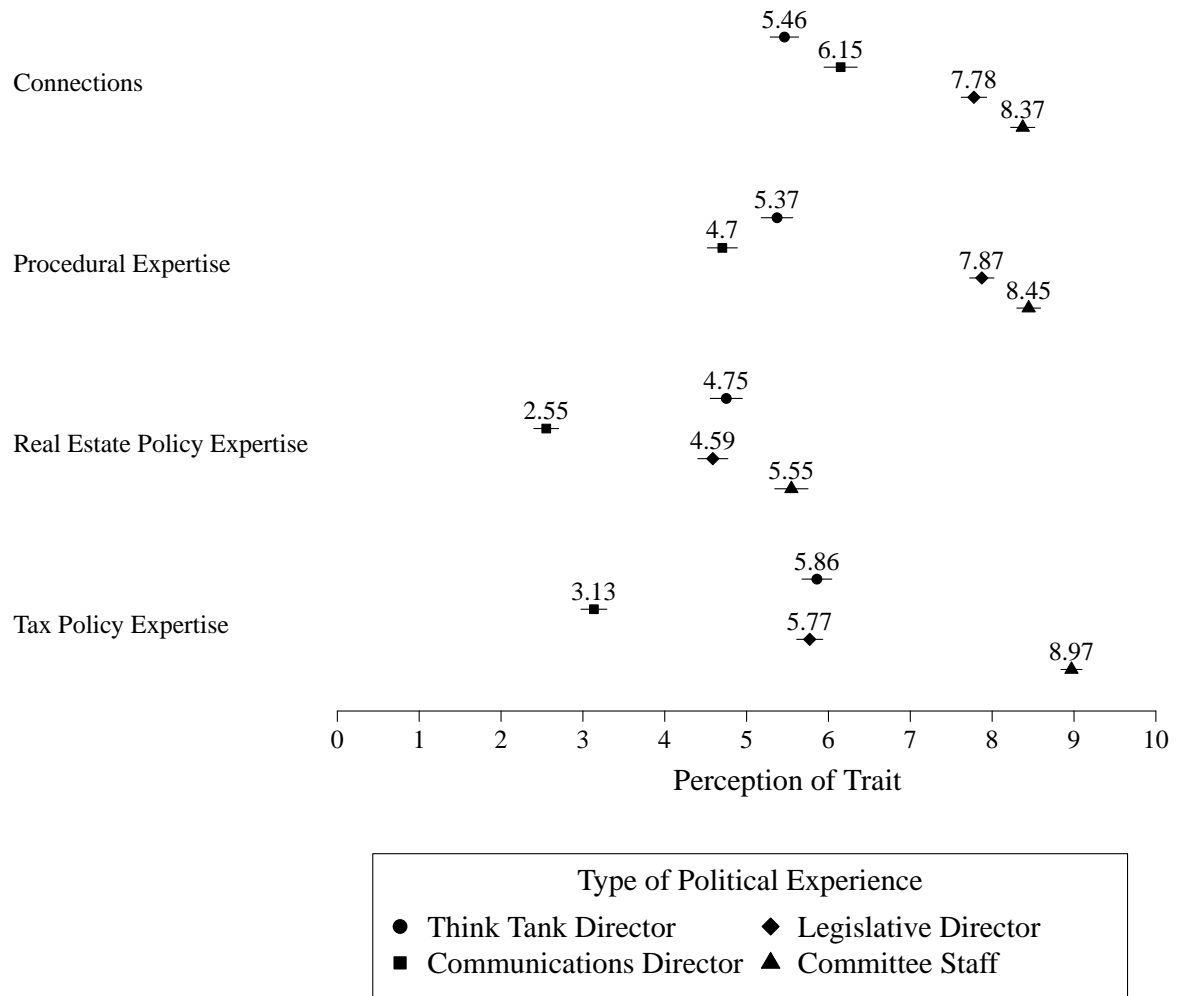
<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>% of Respondents (N)</u>
<u>Gender</u>	
Female	32.4% (288)
Male	67.5% (599)
NA	0.1% (1)
<u>Age</u>	
18-29	7.2% (64)
30-49	39.2% (348)
50-64	38.0% (337)
65 or over	15.3% (136)
NA	0.3% (3)
<u>Education</u>	
Some college, no 4-year degree	1.5% (13)
College graduate	35.0% (311)
Post-graduate degree	63.4% (563)
NA	0.1% (1)
<u>Race</u>	
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.2% (2)
Asian	1.6% (14)
Black or African-American	3.0% (27)
White	91.6% (813)
Other	3.0% (27)
NA	0.6% (5)
<u>Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino?</u>	
Yes	3.6% (32)
No	95.4% (847)
NA	1.0% (9)
<u>Income</u>	
Less than \$25,000	0.1% (1)
\$25,000-\$49,999	0.3% (3)
\$50,000-\$74,999	4.5% (40)
\$75,000-\$99,999	4.4% (39)

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>% of Respondents (N)</u>
\$100,000-\$199,999	21.1% (187)
\$200,000 or more	67.2% (597)
NA	2.4% (21)
<u>Ideology</u>	
Very liberal	14.0% (124)
Somewhat liberal	26.7% (237)
Slightly liberal	14.9% (132)
Neither liberal nor conservative	12.5% (111)
Slightly conservative	10.9% (97)
Somewhat conservative	15.2% (135)
Very conservative	5.3% (47)
NA	0.6% (5)
<u>Party Identification</u>	
Strong Democrat	44.6% (396)
Not a very strong Democrat	9.8% (87)
Lean Democrat	7.0% (62)
Independent	6.9% (61)
Lean Republican	4.8% (43)
Not a very strong Republican	9.7% (86)
Strong Republican	14.5% (129)
Other	2.4% (21)
NA	0.3% (3)
<u>Lobbying Experience</u>	
Less than 5 years	11.6% (103)
5-10 years	18.8% (167)
11-15 years	17.3% (154)
16-20 years	14.6% (130)
More than 20 years	37.5% (333)
NA	0.1% (1)
<u>Past Government Experience</u>	
Member of Congress	4.8% (43)
Congressional staffer	47.3% (420)
Presidential appointee	8.7% (77)

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>% of Respondents (N)</u>
EOP staffer	4.2% (37)
Civil servant	12.3% (109)
Other	10.8% (96)
No experience	31.9% (283)
<u>Current Role with Client</u>	
Lobbyist	68.5% (608)
Executive officer responsible for lobbying	23.1% (205)
Executive officer not responsible for lobbying	3.3% (29)
Other	4.4% (39)
NA	0.8% (7)
<u>Frequency of Involvement in Hiring Lobbyists</u>	
Never	6.9% (61)
Rarely	5.6% (50)
Sometimes	13.2% (117)
Often	14.3% (127)
Always	57.2% (508)
NA	2.8% (25)

C Empirical Results

Figure A1: Survey Respondent Perceptions of Traits Associated with Types of Political Experience



Note: Mean levels of connections, procedural expertise, real estate policy expertise, and tax policy expertise respondents in our follow-up survey perceived individuals with each of the four types of experience indicated to possess. Bars are 95% confidence intervals.

Table A5: Conjoint Experiment Attributes and Levels (Binary Choice, All Profiles)

Attribute/Level	Estimate (SE)	95% CI
Gender		
Male (baseline)	-	-
Female	0.06* (0.01)	[0.02, 0.09]
Race		
White (baseline)	-	-
Black	0.08* (0.02)	[0.03, 0.13]
Hispanic	0.07* (0.02)	[0.02, 0.12]
Asian	0.01 (0.02)	[-0.04, 0.06]
Bilingual		
No (baseline)	-	-
Yes	-0.00 (0.01)	[-0.04, 0.03]
Community Involvement		
None (baseline)	-	-
Museum docent	0.02 (0.02)	[-0.03, 0.07]
Youth sports coach	0.03 (0.02)	[-0.02, 0.08]
Food bank volunteer	0.04 (0.02)	[-0.01, 0.09]
Years of Lobbying Experience		
None (baseline)	-	-
< 5 years	-0.05 (0.02)	[-0.11, 0.01]
5-10 years	0.06 (0.02)	[-0.00, 0.11]
> 10 years	0.09* (0.02)	[0.04, 0.15]
Policy Alignment		
No policy match (baseline)	-	-
Policy match	0.32* (0.01)	[0.27, 0.36]
Ideological Alignment		
Indeterminate (baseline)	-	-
Aligned	0.01 (0.02)	[-0.04, 0.06]
Misaligned	-0.05* (0.02)	[-0.10, -0.00]
Political Experience		
None (baseline)	-	-
Think Tank Director	0.11* (0.02)	[0.06, 0.16]

Attribute/Level	Estimate (SE)	95% CI
Comms. Director	0.15* (0.02)	[0.08, 0.22]
Leg. Director	0.24* (0.02)	[0.17, 0.31]
Committee Staff	0.42* (0.02)	[0.35, 0.49]

Number of observations=5223 (888 unique respondents). This table presents the average marginal component effects (AMCEs) presented in Figures 1 and 2 which indicate the effect of each of the applicant attribute-levels included in the conjoint experiment tasks on the probability of selection as an interview candidate. AMCEs are estimated using linear regression (accounting for design restrictions). To account for multiple comparisons (27 comparisons collectively associated with our pre-registered hypotheses), a Bonferroni correction is implemented to conduct null hypothesis significance tests and to construct 95% confidence intervals ($\alpha = \frac{0.05}{27} = 0.0018$). Null hypothesis significance tests and Bonferroni-corrected 95% confidence intervals utilize cluster robust standard errors (clustered on respondent). * $p < 0.0018$.

Table A6: Conjoint Experiment Attributes and Levels (Ordinal Rating, All Profiles)

Attribute/Level	Estimate (SE)	95% CI
Gender		
Male (baseline)	-	-
Female	0.07 (0.03)	[-0.02, 0.17]
Race		
White (baseline)	-	-
Black	0.11 (0.04)	[-0.02, 0.25]
Hispanic	0.15* (0.05)	[0.01, 0.29]
Asian	0.00 (0.04)	[-0.13, 0.14]
Bilingual		
No (baseline)	-	-
Yes	0.01 (0.03)	[-0.09, 0.10]
Community Involvement		
None (baseline)	-	-
Museum docent	0.03 (0.04)	[-0.10, 0.17]
Youth sports coach	0.10 (0.04)	[-0.03, 0.24]
Food bank volunteer	0.09 (0.04)	[-0.05, 0.23]
Years of Lobbying Experience		
None (baseline)	-	-
< 5 years	-0.01 (0.06)	[-0.17, 0.15]
5-10 years	0.38* (0.06)	[0.22, 0.55]
> 10 years	0.41* (0.06)	[0.24, 0.58]
Policy Alignment		
No policy match (baseline)	-	-
Policy match	0.97* (0.04)	[0.84, 1.09]
Ideological Alignment		
Indeterminate (baseline)	-	-
Aligned	0.12 (0.06)	[-0.04, 0.28]
Misaligned	-0.22* (0.05)	[-0.38, -0.06]
Political Experience		
None (baseline)	-	-
Think Tank Director	0.61* (0.06)	[0.45, 0.78]

Attribute/Level	Estimate (SE)	95% CI
Comms. Director	0.65* (0.07)	[0.45, 0.86]
Leg. Director	0.97* (0.07)	[0.76, 1.17]
Committee Staff	1.40* (0.07)	[1.20, 1.60]

Number of observations=5348 (902 unique respondents). This table presents the average marginal component effects (AMCEs) indicating the effect of each of the applicant attribute-levels included in the conjoint experiment tasks on respondents' five-point ordinal ratings of interview candidates. AMCEs are estimated using linear regression (accounting for design restrictions). To account for multiple comparisons (27 comparisons collectively associated with our pre-registered hypotheses), a Bonferroni correction is implemented to conduct null hypothesis significance tests and to construct 95% confidence intervals ($\alpha = \frac{0.05}{27} = 0.0018$). Null hypothesis significance tests and Bonferroni-corrected 95% confidence intervals utilize cluster robust standard errors (clustered on respondent).

* $p < 0.0018$.

Table A7: Conjoint Experiment Attributes and Levels (Binary Choice, Head-to-Head Comparison)

Attribute/Level	Estimate (SE)	95% CI
Gender		
Male (baseline)	-	-
Female	0.06* (0.02)	[-0.01, 0.14]
Race		
White (baseline)	-	-
Black	0.10* (0.03)	[0.00, 0.20]
Hispanic	0.09* (0.03)	[0.00, 0.20]
Asian	-0.01 (0.03)	[-0.11, 0.10]
Bilingual		
No (baseline)	-	-
Yes	-0.01 (0.02)	[-0.08, 0.06]
Community Involvement		
None (baseline)	-	-
Museum docent	0.02 (0.03)	[-0.08, 0.13]
Youth sports coach	0.01 (0.03)	[-0.09, 0.11]
Food bank volunteer	0.05 (0.03)	[-0.05, 0.15]
Years of Lobbying Experience		
< 5 years (baseline)	-	-
5-10 years	0.07 (0.03)	[-0.01, 0.16]
> 10 years	0.14* (0.03)	[0.06, 0.22]
Policy Alignment		
No policy match (baseline)	-	-
Policy match	0.30* (0.02)	[0.24, 0.36]
Ideological Alignment		
Aligned (baseline)	-	-
Misaligned	-0.06 (0.03)	[-0.14, -0.02]
Political Experience		
Think Tank Director (baseline)	-	-
Comms. Director	0.04 (0.03)	[-0.06, 0.13]
Leg. Director	0.12* (0.03)	[0.02, 0.22]

Attribute/Level	Estimate (SE)	95% CI
Committee Staff	0.31* (0.03)	[0.22, 0.40]

Number of observations=1548 (699 unique respondents). This table presents the average marginal component effects (AMCEs) presented in Figure 3 which indicate the effect of each of the applicant attribute-levels included in the conjoint experiment tasks on the probability of selection as an interview candidate, using only those profiles with lobbying experience and political experience and that were embedded in tasks where the hiring organization is identified as liberal or conservative. AMCEs are estimated using linear regression. To account for multiple comparisons (27 comparisons collectively associated with our pre-registered hypotheses), a Bonferroni correction is implemented to conduct null hypothesis significance tests and to construct 95% confidence intervals ($\alpha = \frac{0.05}{27} = 0.0018$). Null hypothesis significance tests and Bonferroni-corrected 95% confidence intervals utilize cluster robust standard errors (clustered on respondent). * $p < 0.0018$.

Table A8: Conjoint Experiment Attributes and Levels (Binary Choice, Org. Ideology/Party Control Correspondence)

Attribute/Level	In Minority		In Majority	
	Estimate (SE)	95% CI	Estimate (SE)	95% CI
Gender				
Male (baseline)	-	-	-	-
Female	0.04 (0.03)	[-0.04, 0.12]	0.09* (0.03)	[0.01, 0.17]
Race				
White (baseline)	-	-	-	-
Black	0.08 (0.04)	[-0.04, 0.20]	0.05 (0.04)	[-0.06, 0.16]
Hispanic	0.06 (0.04)	[-0.06, 0.18]	0.11 (0.04)	[-0.00, 0.23]
Asian	-0.01 (0.04)	[-0.13, 0.10]	-0.01 (0.04)	[-0.12, 0.10]
Bilingual				
No (baseline)	-	-	-	-
Yes	0.00 (0.03)	[-0.08, 0.08]	-0.03 (0.03)	[-0.11, 0.06]
Community Involvement				
None (baseline)	-	-	-	-
Museum docent	0.07 (0.04)	[-0.05, 0.19]	0.00 (0.04)	[-0.11, 0.12]
Youth sports coach	0.07 (0.04)	[-0.04, 0.19]	-0.05 (0.03)	[-0.16, 0.06]
Food bank volunteer	0.12* (0.04)	[0.01, 0.23]	-0.04 (0.04)	[-0.15, 0.07]
Years of Lobbying Experience				
None (baseline)	-	-	-	-
< 5 years	-0.03 (0.05)	[-0.17, 0.10]	-0.09 (0.04)	[-0.22, 0.04]
5-10 years	0.03 (0.04)	[-0.10, 0.15]	-0.00 (0.05)	[-0.14, 0.13]
> 10 years	0.09 (0.04)	[-0.04, 0.21]	0.07 (0.04)	[-0.06, 0.20]
Policy Alignment				
No policy match (baseline)	-	-	-	-
Policy match	0.29* (0.03)	[0.20, 0.38]	0.30* (0.03)	[0.21, 0.39]
Ideological Alignment				
Aligned (baseline)	-	-	-	-
Misaligned	0.02 (0.03)	[-0.17, 0.010]	-0.18* (0.03)	[-0.27, -0.09]
Political Experience				
Think Tank Director (baseline)	-	-	-	-

Attribute/Level	<u>In Minority</u>		<u>In Majority</u>	
	Estimate (SE)	95% CI	Estimate (SE)	95% CI
Comms. Director	0.03 (0.04)	[-0.09, 0.14]	0.02 (0.04)	[-0.09, 0.14]
Leg. Director	0.11 (0.04)	[-0.00, 0.22]	0.11 (0.04)	[-0.01, 0.23]
Committee Staff	0.31* (0.04)	[0.19, 0.43]	0.31* (0.04)	[0.19, 0.43]

Number of observations=2274 (764 unique respondents). This table presents the average marginal component effects (AMCEs) which indicate the effect of each of the applicant attribute-levels included in the conjoint experiment tasks on the probability of selection as an interview candidate conditioned by the organization's alignment with the party in control of Congress, using only those profiles with political experience and that were embedded in tasks where the hiring organization is identified as liberal or conservative. AMCEs are estimated using linear regression (accounting for design restrictions). To account for multiple comparisons (27 comparisons collectively associated with our pre-registered hypotheses), a Bonferroni correction is implemented to conduct null hypothesis significance tests and to construct 95% confidence intervals ($\alpha = \frac{0.05}{27} = 0.0018$). Null hypothesis significance tests and Bonferroni-corrected 95% confidence intervals utilize cluster robust standard errors (clustered on respondent). * $p < 0.0018$.

Table A9: Conjoint Experiment Attributes and Levels (Binary Choice, Only Profiles Evaluated by Respondents Whose Partisan Alignment Matches with the Hiring Organization)

Attribute/Level	Estimate (SE)	95% CI
Gender		
Male (baseline)	-	-
Female	0.07* (0.02)	[0.01, 0.13]
Race		
White (baseline)	-	-
Black	0.05 (0.03)	[-0.03, 0.14]
Hispanic	0.08 (0.03)	[-0.01, 0.17]
Asian	0.01 (0.03)	[-0.08, 0.10]
Bilingual		
No (baseline)	-	-
Yes	0.01 (0.02)	[-0.05, 0.07]
Community Involvement		
None (baseline)	-	-
Museum docent	0.02 (0.03)	[-0.07, 0.11]
Youth sports coach	0.05 (0.03)	[-0.03, 0.14]
Food bank volunteer	0.06 (0.03)	[-0.02, 0.15]
Years of Lobbying Experience		
None (baseline)	-	-
< 5 years	-0.05 (0.04)	[-0.15, 0.06]
5-10 years	0.06 (0.04)	[-0.05, 0.16]
> 10 years	0.07 (0.03)	[-0.02, 0.16]
Policy Alignment		
No policy match (baseline)	-	-
Policy match	0.32* (0.02)	[0.25, 0.39]
Ideological Alignment		
Indeterminate (baseline)	-	-
Aligned	0.10 (0.04)	[-0.00, 0.20]
Misaligned	0.06 (0.03)	[-0.04, 0.16]
Political Experience		
None (baseline)	-	-

Attribute/Level	Estimate (SE)	95% CI
Think Tank Director	0.17 (0.07)	[-0.04, 0.38]
Comms. Director	0.16 (0.06)	[-0.01, 0.32]
Leg. Director	0.21* (0.06)	[0.03, 0.39]
Committee Staff	0.44* (0.05)	[0.29, 0.59]

Number of observations=1734 (479 unique respondents). This table presents the average marginal component effects (AMCEs) presented in Figures 1 and 2 which indicate the effect of each of the applicant attribute-levels included in the conjoint experiment tasks on the probability of selection as an interview candidate. AMCEs are estimated using linear regression (accounting for design restrictions). To account for multiple comparisons (27 comparisons collectively associated with our pre-registered hypotheses), a Bonferroni correction is implemented to conduct null hypothesis significance tests and to construct 95% confidence intervals ($\alpha = \frac{0.05}{27} = 0.0018$). Null hypothesis significance tests and Bonferroni-corrected 95% confidence intervals utilize cluster robust standard errors (clustered on respondent). * $p < 0.0018$.

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