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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The game of goodwill: an exploratory study of discursive goodwill strategies of interest organizations in a consensus democracy

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Abstract
In consensus democracies, interest organizations are likely to pursue their goals by attempting to create *goodwill* to strengthen their relationships with politicians. Through an exploratory analysis based on interviews with representatives from 58 organizations, a typology of seven strategies for such goodwill is suggested: Lobbyists will convey an understanding of the politician's professional needs, while also recognizing constraints for what is possible to achieve. Several interviewees maintained that they avoided coming across as self-centered. Instead, they would be on the lookout for the politician's interests, express empathy, provide public recognition of the politicians when 'deserved,' and they would keep a friendly and respectful tone. The first two of these strategies—emphasizing professional needs and recognizing constraints—were mentioned most frequently. The NGOs in the sample pointed to constraints more often than the other organization types, while the work-life organizations stated the importance of understanding professional needs the most. The use of such strategies increased with the level of organizational resources.

Keywords Lobbying · Relations · Goodwill · Discursive strategies

Introduction

In general, having *good relations* with politicians is seen as a key asset for interest groups (Godwin et al. 2013; McGrath 2006; Oberman 2017). Good relations can provide a number of benefits, be it access to talk to politicians or that a politician

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trusts the information a lobbyist provides. Furthermore, since lobbying is seldom a one-off activity, an important goal is to have *lasting* good relations with politicians (Grant 2018; McGrath 2006). A number of studies explore ways that lobbyists attempt to achieve this (e.g., Naurin 2007; Nothhaft 2017; van Schendelen 2002). A lobbyist will strive to become 'the committed partner' that is 'an engaged fellow problem-solver involved in a constructive dialogue' (Naurin 2007, p. 83). Some even try to pass themselves off as not only the 'helpful professional' but also the 'helpful friend' (Nothhaft 2017, p. 132). An interest group lobbying in Brussels 'invests consciously in its image of charm. It likes to be seen as interesting, pleasant and friendly, and ultimately trustworthy' (van Schendelen 2002, p. 248).

Still, there are few studies that provide an overview, systematize, or go into detail about *the lobbyists' perspectives on discursive strategies to create goodwill,* that is, how the lobbyists strategize what they will say when they seek to build good relations with politicians. We approach this subject indirectly by interviewing 58 lobbyists and asking them about success and failure, tone, and arguments (abridged interview guide in "Appendix"). From this interview material, we extrapolate a typology of strategies intended to create goodwill or 'perceived caring' (McCroskey and Teven 1999, pp. 90–91).

Next, we present the theoretical approach to analyze the goodwill strategies and develop some specific research questions in this regard, before we present our methodological approach and analysis.

Theory

The good relations mentioned in the introduction can also involve an element of trust—the coping mechanism used when sufficient information or expertise is lacking but a decision needs to be made (Siegrist and Cvetkovich 2000). Should for instance lobbyists be trusted when they run Astroturf campaigns, advocate self-regulation or engage in the phenomenon of 'revolving doors' (Holman and Luneburg 2012; Lock and Seele 2017; Ron and Singer 2019)? Trust involves a moral dimension, but should not be confused with trustworthiness (Hardin 1996, 2002). The latter is typically evaluated through the trustor's perception of the ability, integrity and benevolence of the trustee (Mayer et al. 1995). Or, as the ancient rhetoricians would have it, the way to establish your trustworthiness is through demonstrating your competence, integrity and goodwill toward the audience (Aristotle, trans. 2007; McCroskey and Teven 1999). In this paper, we focus on the latter aspect and argue that goodwill strategies can go beyond single encounters to establish credibility and potentially contribute to long-term beneficial relationships. Thus, understanding how lobbyists attempt to create goodwill through discursive strategies sheds light on a crucial and also undertheorized lobbying activity.

Lobbyists want politicians to perceive that they care about the interests of the politicians and that they wish them well. This is at least one possible strategy in order to establish, maintain, and strengthen the relationship bond with politicians. The ideal lobbyist comes across as a charming person that 'above all, does not threaten the cherished self-perception of the elected representatives' (Nothhaft 2017, p. 142).

To create goodwill can be a goal of the professional lobbyist. Non-aggressive lobbying strategies are mentioned in much of the literature and said to be best suited (Mahoney 2008; Naurin 2007; Nothhaft 2017; van Schendelen 2002; Woll 2012).

One prominent perspective on the relationship between interest groups and legislators relies on an exchange perspective (Berkhout 2013; Godwin et al. 2013). The basic idea here is that the interest group will provide the politician with something that is useful for the latter and vice versa. There might be several different resources involved, for instance "acceptable policy frames," and also contextual factors that constrain the exchange, such as group system (Berkhout 2013, p. 234). The notion of "legislative subsidies" has also been suggested and direct attention to how lobbyists could provide political intelligence or manpower to the extent that the lobbyists become "adjuncts to staff" (Hall and Deardorff 2006, p. 74).

While we refrain from conducting a thorough literature review of the exchange tradition, we do conclude that it has undoubtedly helped to illuminate the strategic and rational relationship between lobbyists and politicians. Still, however, we maintain that it is usefully supplemented by a perspective drawing on communication theory. There are at least three reasons for this: A communication perspective will (1) go beyond the "pure" economic, rational perspective, to entangle more profound human motives and communication involved in the lobbying process; (2) highlight how the involved actors themselves might be changed and come closer to each other as a result prior or during the lobbying encounter; (3) demonstrate what discursive strategies are used in attempting to establish, maintain or improve the relationship.

The mentioned exchange tradition can highlight how a lobbyist can strategically target a proposal in order to create goodwill based on being useful for a politician from an economic or game theoretic perspective. A communication-oriented perspective, however, emphasizes how the proposal also is a signal of *understanding* the politicians' needs and hence might produce goodwill. Communication theory will include a focus on how the lobbyists frame a proposal to fit this purpose and signal a shared goal. This could potentially mean changing a position before or during the lobbying process. An even clearer contribution from communication theory is seen when the focus is on *how* proposals are put forward. An exchange perspective might provide a rich investigation of the supply and demand side for policy support, but, we argue, will not necessarily give attention to politeness or expressed empathy as discursive strategies to create goodwill.

Several studies have confirmed the centrality of goodwill for persuasive attempts (e.g., Hunt and Wald 2020; McCroskey and Teven 1999), particularly exploring the context of science (Xu et al. 2020). Some have also studied organizational efforts to create goodwill (Ihlen 2009; Jørgensen and Isaksson 2015), but primarily as related to consumers or the general public. For instance, a study of corporate social responsibility communication described the goodwill strategies of corporations under the moniker 'we care about you' (Ihlen 2009). This strategy was exemplified with how the auto-company Toyota provided advice for how drivers could reduce environmental impact and save money at the same time. Another example included how General Electric used the strategy of the transcendent 'we' (Cheney 1983) and talked about 'our' mutual challenges and opportunities for improvement.

Still, to our knowledge, the notion of goodwill strategies has not been used to analyze lobbying. One caveat is in order, however, when transferring the ancient concept of ethos and goodwill to a strategic activity such as lobbying: Ancient rhetoricians argued that goodwill should not be conceptualized as befriending the audience. Friendship requires reciprocation, and credibility would be harmed if the audience perceived it as a strategic operation rather than whishing good for others for their sake (Smith 2004). Aristotle expressed it this way: 'Goodwill is inoperative friendship, which when it continues and reaches the point of intimacy may become friendship proper—not the sort of friendship whose motive is utility or pleasure, for these do not arouse goodwill' (Aristotle, trans. 1996, 9.5.3). We argue, nonetheless, that whether, how, and why lobbyists use goodwill strategies and how politicians perceive these are empirical questions. If the lobbyist succeeds or not is beyond the scope of this paper. As indicated above, 'true' goodwill entails some form of identification (Kinneavy and Warshauer 1994). The rhetor should 'somehow identify with the audience, by for instance holding some of their basic aspirations, speaking their language, and if necessary sharing and affirming their prejudices' (p. 177). Such a perspective on goodwill invites a discussion of the so-called Burkeian understanding of identification or consubstantiality:

> A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is identified with B. Or he [sic] may identify himself with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes they are, or is persuaded to believe so.… In being identified with B, A is 'substantially one' with a person other than himself… To identify A with B is to make A 'consubstantial' with B. [italics in original] (Burke 1950/1969, pp. 20–21)

The lobbyist that attempts to create a 'common ground' between him or herself and the politician would be a prime example. An explicit argument of sorts could be that '*We share the same interest in creating jobs, which this particular proposal will help.'*

In the persuasion literature, goodwill is defined as having the listeners' interest at heart, or more specifically, as 'dimensions of person perception' (McCroskey and Teven 1999, p. 91). To this end, it has been suggested that there are three main elements that may result in a 'person being seen as more caring' (p. 91):

Understanding: When someone shows behavior that indicates that they understand our ideas, feelings, and needs. This involves a sensitiveness of the other, which in turn make us 'feel closer to them because we think they care about us' and 'know what we are talking about' (p. 92). In the lobbying setting, we would expect a lobbyist to tell the politician that he or she understands how the politician needs to satisfy his or her constituencies and or the political leadership and thus has to vote in a particular fashion.

Empathy: When someone identifies with our feelings and accepts them as valid. Thus, empathy goes beyond understanding, but also makes us feel closer to the other person since 'we perceive them as caring about us' (p. 92). A lobbyist could, for instance, express empathy by talking about a particular political battle where the politician lost and thus how the politician now needs a win.

Responsiveness: When someone acknowledges our communicative attempts, how fast they react, and how attentive they listen in meetings with politicians, the lobbyist would engage in a dialogue with the politician, rather than a monologue, and utilize basic interpersonal communication skills like asking relevant follow-up questions that engage with the matter at hand.

These elements have been operationalized and tested with scales involving statements such as 'cares about me/doesn't care about me,' 'has my interests at heart/doesn't have my interests at heart,' 'self-centered/not self-centered,' 'concerned with me/unconcerned with me,' 'sensitive/insensitive,' and 'not understanding/understanding' (McCroskey and Teven 1999, p. 95). Still, there are very few attempts to theorize goodwill beyond the use of such scales, and, perhaps needless to say, even fewer such attempts in the context of lobbying. Thus, in the following, we will use the theories above as a springboard to analyze and develop a typology of goodwill strategies as used by lobbyists. Our first research question is *If the lobbyists in our sample try to create goodwill, what kind of discursive strategies do they employ* (RQ1)*?* As will be evident from our analysis, researching a particular type of strategic communication like lobbying can produce additional types of goodwill strategies specific to the genre.

Based on extant literature (e.g., Mahoney 2008; Naurin 2007; Nothhaft 2017; van Schendelen 2002; Woll 2012), we expect goodwill strategies to be widely used. Still, previous research has indicated that *organization type* is crucial for the communication strategies lobbyists choose (Binderkrantz 2020; Daugbjerg et al. 2018; Klüver et al. 2015). Perhaps an NGO is less in need to employ goodwill strategies since they are working in the public interest? And vice versa for businesses? Similarly, trade unions could perhaps adopt a more combative stance, less reliant on goodwill strategies (Valentini et al. 2020). On the other hand, given the importance of relationships, it could perhaps be expected that most organizations will employ goodwill strategies. Furthermore, existing research has indicated that different groups (cause groups and sectional groups) have become more professionalized (Klüver and Saurugger 2013). In this regard, we maintain that use of goodwill strategies is a trait of professionalism, indicating how rational choices are made to attempt continued influence on policy proposals (Woll 2012). Still, there is reason to ask: *To what extent is the use of goodwill strategies influenced by organization type* (RQ2)*?*

Organizational resources have been shown to have an effect on lobbying success through choice of strategies (Binderkrantz et al. 2014; Binderkrantz and Pedersen 2019). It is often assumed that business interests have an advantage in this sense (Schlozman et al. 2012), while other studies show that citizen groups are more successful, at least in the EU system (Dür et al. 2015). The notion 'privileged pluralism' has been used to describe the situation in Denmark where a small but diverse group of organizations have good access to the media, the bureaucracy, and the parliament (Binderkrantz et al. 2014).

To study organizational resources, we will use the concept of *capital,* adapted from the work of Bourdieu (1986). In line with this, and based on extant research we conducted (Ihlen 2002, 2004), we found the notion of economic resources to be too narrow a concept. A case in point is, for instance, how relatively poor membership organizations in the field of energy and environment have been able to outcompete rich businesses through clever use of strategic communication (Ihlen 2006). Thus, there is reason to look beyond financial capital and also include a focus on other types of resources, including organization size, political capital (individual and organizational involvement in parties/public committees, as well as number of people working with strategic communication/lobbying). The basic assumption is that high levels of capital might contribute to communication professionalism in the form of increased use of goodwill strategies. Here, perhaps, smaller NGOs might be less inclined to employ goodwill strategies, while large businesses could be expected to have cultivated this aspect of strategic communication and lobbying. Similarly, perhaps, if the organization has a large number of people working with communication, one might expect a greater degree of specialization and professionalism (Tench et al. 2017). The final research question then is *What is the influence of organizational capital (resources) on the use of goodwill strategies* (RQ3)*?*

Method

Rather than focusing on interest groups in the strict sense (as involving associations only), we rely on the term *interest organization* to allow us to study a wider range of actors that try to influence public policy (Beyers et al. 2009). To answer the research questions, we used the list of organizations participating on an annual democracy festival in the consensus democracy of Norway (Lijphart 2012). The festival *Arendalsuka* has succeeded in establishing itself as an important arena in Norway to establish or maintain relations with politicians (Raknes and Wollebæk 2019). In 2019, 1200 organizations participated (https://arendalsuka.no/6240). We divided the participant list into four categories and focused on organizations with a national presence: (1) private, for-profit companies (excluding public relations agencies and media houses), (2) non-governmental organizations (public interest organizations like Red Cross, as well as patient organizations), (3) work-life organizations (unions and industry associations), and (4) the public sector (including ministries, directorates, and research institutions).

Each organization was assigned a number, and http://www.random.org was used to pull 40 in each category. We then issued interview requests with the aim of having 15 informants from each category. A total of 58 organizations agreed to interviews and were included in the final sample: 22% businesses (13), 33% NGOs (19), 24% work-life organizations (14), and 21% public sector organizations (12). All interviewees filled in a form, including information about their gender, age, and education.

After developing an interview guide for semi-structured interviews, it was tested with one organization. The "Appendix" contains an abbreviated version of this guide.

Four research assistants were recruited.[1] Using discussions and role play they were trained in interviewing relying on principles from the methods literature

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(Alvesson and Sköldberg 2017; Kvale 1996). Fifty-three interviews of approximately one hour were conducted during the festival, and the team met for daily debrief sessions to discuss challenges. Five organizations had to cancel and were interviewed later by one of the research assistants. All interviews were transcribed, and informants checked them for potential mistakes. Some minor requests for changes were made, mostly concerning clarification of facts. All quotes that are used in the final analysis have been translated by the lead author.

A research assistant coded the transcribed interviews in NVivo marking the instances where goodwill statements could be found and tied to *understanding, empathy, and responsiveness*. Working with the dataset, however, it quickly turned out that the latter category appeared to be less important since we are interviewing lobbyists that *talk* about their strategies. Hence, we looked for statements of other forms of goodwill expressed as 'perceived caring.' A codebook was developed by going back and forth between this deductive and inductive approach.

To answer research questions 2 and 3, we cross-tabulated the instances of coded goodwill strategies with the variables of organization type and with the total capital of the organizations. To get an expression of the latter, we first assessed the *economic capital* of the organizations based on the annual accounts submitted to a public database (Brønnøysund Register Centre). Drawing on a classification of non-governmental organizations (Deloitte 2015), organizations were defined as having little economic capital if they had a revenue of less than 2 MNOK, 2,1–10 MNOK as having medium, and 10,1 MNOK as having high economic capital. Many organizations (21) had not submitted annual accounts to the mentioned register. Here, we relied on our basic knowledge of the organizations and classified them accordingly. Thus, this measure is less reliable than the others. Then again, the organizations where we lacked information fell in two different categories—small non-governmental organizations and large public organizations—thus making the classification easy. Furthermore, Norway is a small country (5,3 million people) and the organizational landscape is relatively lucid.

Second, we focused on *human capital* calculated based on the number of employees or members. Based on an established categorization from the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO 2018), small organizations were defined as having 1–20 employees, mid-size as having 21–100, and large organizations as having more than 100 employees.

Third, we assessed the level of *political capital* of the organizations through a combination of two individual level variables—the lobbyist's membership in a political party (yes/no) and/or political position of trust (yes/no)—with the organizational level variable of membership in public committees (yes/no). This information was collected in the mentioned interview forms. For each yes-answer, we assigned the value 1 and for no-answers the value 0. Summarizing the scores on the three variables produced a list that allowed us to trichotomize political capital as being either low, medium, or high based on a 33%-split for each category. This measure, we confess, is probably the weakest of the indicators. First of all, it treats the components as equal, which is troublesome. Case in point is that being a passive party member is obviously less important than holding a political position. Similarly, an organization could be a member of a more or less influential committee. Furthermore, political

Table 1 Levels of capital forms (% of organizations)

	Economic	Human	Political	Comm	Total
High	66 (38)	36 (21)	22 (13)	19 (11)	28 (16)
Medium	16 (9)	31 (18)	19 (11)	45 (26)	50 (29)
Low	19 (11)	33 (19)	59 (34)	36 (21)	22 (13)
(N = 58)	101	100	100	100	100

capital might also be understood as working with an potent issue that is conceived as important. In short, our operationalization of political capital has weaknesses. Still, we maintain that it carries some value in giving at least a cursory indicator of whether or not the organizations are insiders or outsiders.

Finally, we established an indicator for *communication capital:* low communication capital as equaling 0–1 employees, medium level as 2–5, and high as 6 or more people working specifically with communication.

Given the exploratory character of the study and the practical challenges of discussing the strategies in relation to too many different resource variables, we decided to use a rather crude combined measure for organizational resources. We assigned low levels of capital types the number 1, medium the number 2, and high the number 3. We then summarized the scores and trichotomized the resulting list in categories of low (4–6), medium (7–9), and high (10–12).

An intercoder-test was carried out by another assistant, re-coding 12 of the interviews (21%). This resulted in a Kappa value of 0.875 which is considered strong (McHugh 2012). Thus, taken together, we argue that this approach is well suited for an exploratory analysis of goodwill strategies. We emphasize, however, that the low numbers within the categories of organization type and low/medium/high capital lead us to be very cautious about drawing strong conclusions. Ultimately, despite applying some quantitative measures, the study is by and large qualitative.

Overview of the sample and capital forms

The sampled organizations are relatively resourceful with 78% in the high and middle category and 22% in the low category (N = 58) (see Table 1). Looking more closely at economic resources—66% had high economic capital. This could be seen in relation to the discussion of the political festival itself and how it primarily is dominated by resourceful actors (Raknes and Wollebæk 2019).

More surprising to us was that so many of the organizations had low political capital (59%). Given the corporatist tradition of Norway (Rommetvedt 2017b), we had expected higher levels of political capital among the organizations.

Among the organizations with low total capital, the category unsurprisingly includes eight NGOs, but also two organizations from the public sector and two organization from the private sector, as well as a work-life organization. Interestingly, the very top echelon, defined as those that have top scores on all capital forms, is evenly composed of all the four organization types. This could be read as an illustration of the Nordic model that is characterized by a strong public

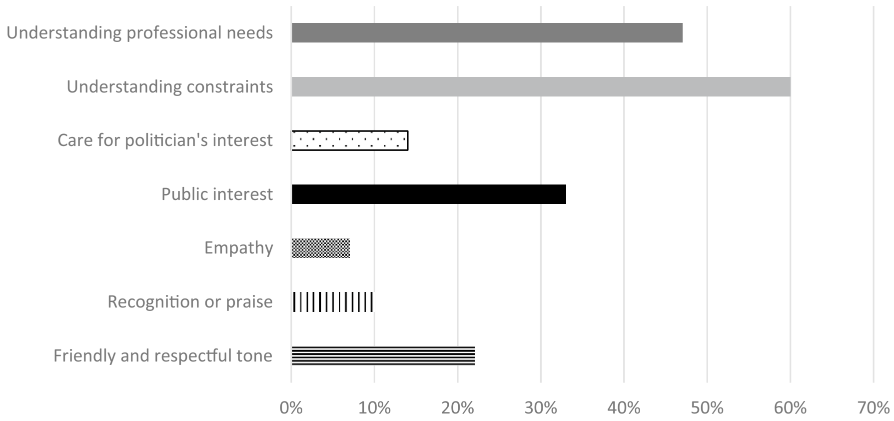

Fig. 1 Goodwill strategies (percentage using)

sector, as well as strong industry associations and unions (Knutsen 2017). But it is also in line with findings from Denmark that have demonstrated diversity among the group of the most resourceful organizations (Binderkrantz et al. 2014).

As for the two other sub-variables—human capital and communication capital—the results were more in line with our expectations. The sample includes organizations of all sizes as illustrated by the more or less even split among the categories (high—36%; medium—31%; low—33%), while most of them (45%) have a medium-sized communication staff.

Typology of goodwill strategies

Based on the deductive and inductive approach to the interviews, we point to seven goodwill strategies mentioned by the informants (Fig. 1). Some of the strategies are peculiar to the political setting, while others can be labeled as strategies that are applicable in all settings where a communicator wants to build goodwill. Given the findings in the literature (e.g., Naurin 2007; van Schendelen 2002; Woll 2012), however, we were surprised that the informants did not mention goodwill strategies more frequently. Only one of the strategies (understanding constraints) was mentioned by more than half of the organizations, and two of the strategies (empathy and recognition) were only mentioned by 10% or fewer. Then again, *all* of the interviews contained one or several mentions of goodwill strategies.

In the following, we present the strategies alongside quotes from the interviews and integrate a discussion of organization types (Fig. 2) and resources (Fig. 3). Again, we stress how the findings regarding these variables must be interpreted with caution given the small N of each category.

(1) Understanding professional needs—provide workable solutions and improvements

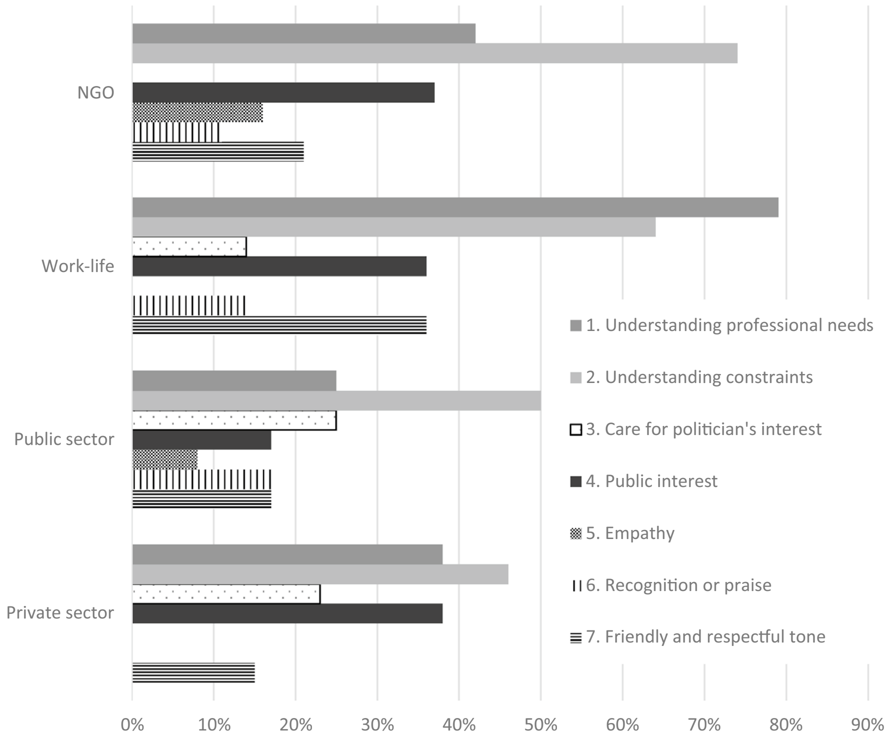

Fig. 2 Goodwill strategies and organization type (percentage using)

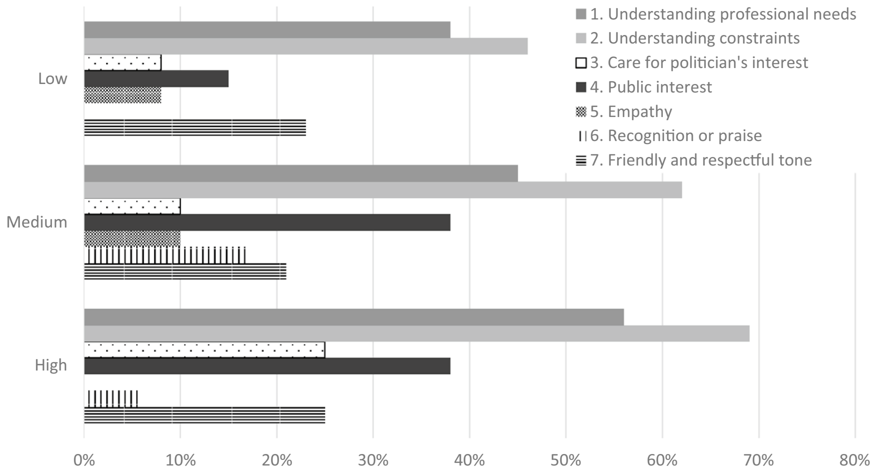

Fig. 3 Goodwill strategies and total capital (percentage using)

The first strategy to create goodwill that is mentioned in the literature relates to understanding the ideas, feelings, and needs of the other (McCroskey and Teven

1999). Here, there is a clear link to the lobby literature that mentions how successful lobbyists provide politicians with workable solutions in the policy areas where the politicians operate (Naurin 2007). There is a big difference between the lobbyists that just complain and ask the politicians to do something, and those that show up with detailed solutions to policy problems. Nearly half (47%) of the informants also mentioned some version of this strategy (Fig. 1), for instance formulated the following way: ‘get [the proposal] ready for the pot’ (Public sector #7).

> In the conversations, we will talk about a situation and: ‘Here is the solution!’. If you succeed in creating a description of the problem and the solution at the same time, then you have come a long way. If you, in addition, are able to provide a political solution that the politicians can bring forward in a meeting… This is really the best advice or tip, I would say, to provide solutions. (NGO #13)

Workable solutions might also be those that are tailored to money saving needs. Similar sentiments were expressed by others, spelling out the need to provide a consequence analysis:

> I have been working with communication in the public sector all my adult life. And it is always like this. Suggestions for regulations. Improvements. Clear and good suggestions that are possible to execute. And you need to work not only on the idea, but ‘this is the way it can be executed.’ ‘It can have these consequences.’ ‘Here you can save on this and this.’ ‘Doing it this way, will mean that you save so and so much time, but to achieve this it is necessary to change the regulations.’ Obviously, these are [suggestions] that politicians are eager to get from the professional milieus. (Public sector #1)

Eleven of the 14 work-life organizations used this strategy (Fig. 2), making it the most frequently mentioned strategy by this type of organization. No other strong pattern appears, but looking at capital forms (Fig. 3), it becomes clear that the higher the levels of capital, the more prone the organizations are to use this strategy. Among those organizations with high levels of capital ($N = 16$), it was used by over half. This is in comparison with the ones with low levels, where 38% ($N = 13$) mentioned it.

(2) Understanding constraints—stay within the limits of what can be done when and how

Again, a route to goodwill goes through understanding of ideas, feelings, and needs (McCroskey and Teven 1999). Intimately linked to the need for workable solutions, comes the need to understand the conditions under which the politician operates. Of all the strategies, understanding constraints was the most frequently mentioned (60%) (Fig. 1). Successful lobbyists monitor what the politicians are doing, not least to identify the policy window where the political stream, the problem stream, and the policy stream converge (Godwin et al. 2013).

> I am frequently surprised by how little some understand of how budget processes, governmental process, the whole wheel of the government apparatus, and administration works. … [Lack of such understanding] results in really great suggestions being launched at the wrong time. … And then you have to wait two more years before a window [opens up again]. (Public sector #6)

Part and parcel of the lobbying game is thus to understand what constraints and what opportunities are offered at what time, and to use this understanding to inform what you say. The lobbyist should not ask for too much, and those that are most successful seldom push for big changes (Nownes 2006). This was also a view reflected by one of the NGOs, 'As a politician you have to take the whole picture into consideration, and you have to see what can actually be achieved practically' (NGO #4).

Informants also pointed to how public servants in the bureaucracy, particularly from the Ministry of Finance, cannot be presented with financial speculations or guesses.

> Of course, there are some policy areas where you can make appeals to emotions … but when you are in a meeting with four top bureaucrats from the Ministry of Finance, you cannot present your [loose ideas] about figures, you have to provide concrete figures. (Private sector #12)

The strategy was particularly used by the NGOs (74%, $N=19$) (see Fig. 2). When looking at total capital and goodwill strategies (Fig. 3), this strategy was the most frequently mentioned across all categories. Again, this tendency is stronger the more capital an organization has. 69% ($N=16$) of the organizations with high capital mentioned this, compared to 46% ($N=13$) of the organizations with low capital.

(3) Interests at heart—be on the lookout for the politician

An important goodwill strategy is, as mentioned, to have the other's interest at heart (McCroskey and Teven 1999). Lobbyists might, for instance, supply information that might be career-relevant for the politician personally (Nownes 2006). Still, only a few (14%) of the organizations in the sample used this strategy (Fig. 1). One of them did, however, mention how he alerts the politicians about possible negative news stories, for instance regarding new taxes that would hit families:

> And then we show some specific examples. 'Now we have talked about this, but it really implies that [the family car] Skoda Octavia will be influenced in this way, and for [the family car] Volvo V60, it means this.' And then, they realize what the headlines will be if they don't do something about this. (Worklife #3)

Curiously enough, none of the NGOs mentioned this as a strategy (see Fig. 2). Several of the other organizations did, but it was not brought up as frequently as professional needs or constraints. There is a slight tendency that the organizations used this strategy more the more capital they have. As shown (Fig. 3)—25% ($N=16$) of those with high capital versus 8% ($N=13$) of those with low capital employed this strategy.

(4) Not self-centered—present proposals that serve the public interest

The egotistical, self-centered lobbyist does not seem to fare well, and organizations typically downplay their immediate self-interests when arguing in public (Naurin 2004; Uhre and Rommetvedt 2019). Instead, organizations try to align 'with a view of the public interest held by at least some influential segments of society' (Oberman 2017, p. 484). A total of 33% of the organizations alluded to the importance of this to build good relations. One of the informants even used a term from the research literature—'the generalization of interests' (i.e. Rommetvedt 2017a—a staple of the reading lists in political science in Norway for decades):

> You take the argument about 'the generalization of interests' and say, for instance, that this is good for the democracy, which it is. And we get better and better data saying that participation in organizations is good for democratic participation [in general]. And this is beneficial for everyone in a time of fake news and polarization and those kinds of things. And it provides important skills and furthers social inclusion. (NGO #8)

As argued elsewhere (reference omitted to facilitate anonymous review), the usual discursive operation is to construct a 'common ground' between the lobbyist and the politician. The lobbyist tries to create *identification* (Burke 1950/1969) to illustrate how he/she is not self-centered, but works to further society's interest:

> When you are arguing in lobbying, it is beneficial if you can show your counterpart or those that you are talking with, that you share some interest. Find a common ground that you can work toward, something that lets your counterpart think there is reason to what you are saying since he or she has an own interest in [seeing the proposal] come through. (Private sector #9)

We could not discern much difference between the organization types regarding appeals to the public interest (see Fig. 2), which perhaps lends support to the claim that this way of arguing is part and parcel of lobbying and the democratic process (Bitonti 2017). Still, it was not as frequently mentioned in general as we expected. Looking at the differences in capital, this strategy was the third most frequently used by the organizations with medium and high capital (see Fig. 3); 38% in both categories ($N = 29$ and 16). Whereas only 15% among the organizations with low capital ($N = 13$) reflected on this in the interviews.

(5) Empathy—the politician is also a human being

Another basic strategy to create goodwill is to exhibit empathy (McCroskey and Teven 1999). This also speaks to the idea of identification, recognizing feelings and seeing them as valid (Burke 1950/1969). An umbrella NGO sought to identify with the challenges of being a professional politician the following way.

> It might seem like a dream job, but, really, it is a hard position to be in, because you meet discontent people all the time. So I am not going to turn the half hour you are giving me into something that will make you grit your teeth and

> be pissed off for the rest of the day. It is supposed to be a pleasant encounter resulting in a re-invitation later. (NGO #9)

Still, this strategy was not mentioned often (only 7% indicated they used it), thus it makes little sense to talk about difference between the organization types or according to the differences in capital.

(6) Recognition—praise when it is due

A finding in lobbying research is that some lobbyists grasp the opportunity to let the politician 'shine' in the media (Figenschou and Fredheim 2019; Trapp and Laursen 2017). Although a certain proposal might be theirs originally, they let the politician get the credit. Still, only 10% of the informants in our sample mentioned using somewhat similar strategy (Fig. 1). One of them talked about providing a *stage* for the politicians (Work-life #2), another mentioned heaping deserved praise:

> We really made sure that [the politicians] received a lot of praise. We threw a party after each budget agreement … to celebrate that they had allocated [a specific sum] and highlight that this really paid off [for the politicians]. We invited several other interest organizations, and we had between 50 and 70 people at our office. We had balloons, cake, and a small show, to strengthen the image of [the politicians] as the heroes of our sector, and we showed them examples of what this money would be used for. (NGO #8)

With the small number of organizations using this strategy, however, it is difficult to say something about the influence of organization type and capital. Interestingly, however, this strategy is not for everyone. As emphasized by one informant—they should *not* give the politicians praise in public:

> 'The car industry praises [the Minister of Finance] for positive decision on car taxes,' of course we do not [announce this]. We have nothing to gain from this. [The Minister] has nothing to gain from this either. 'Now she has done what the car industry wanted her to do.' Nobody has anything to earn from this. (Work-life #3)

This latter statement could also be said to reflect an understanding of the needs of the politicians as well as the constraints of the political system.

(7) Friendly and respectful tone— ***don't be a bully***

Rather commonsensical perhaps is that a respectful tone is needed to build goodwill (Woll 2012). Over a fifth of the informants mentioned this (Fig. 1). One of them talked about the necessity to avoid dressing down the politicians. 'And we are not like the ones telling the politicians to get their act together' (NGO #5). Instead, they, and others argued that a friendly, positive tone would carry the day:

> In general, my experience is that you have more influence if you are positive in everything you are doing with regard to lobbying. There should not be any

> grumpiness tied to it. You should always a have solution or something that will give them the possibility to show how you can change things. ... We are not going to war against the politicians. (Work-life #5)

Attempting to find patterns according to organization type was difficult for this strategy as well (see Fig. 2). Still, the work-life organizations (35%, $N=14$) seemed more prone to this strategy than the others. As regards capital forms, a fifth of the organizations in all categories (Fig. 3) mentioned that they used this strategy reflecting the overall percentage use (see Fig. 1).

Discussion and conclusion

This exploratory study first aimed to assess the prevalence of goodwill strategies in lobbying and what such strategies look like. Some studies have indicated that particular lobbyists do apply an aggressive style (Mahoney 2008; Nothhaft 2017; Woll 2012). However, when our informants talked about their successes and failures in lobbying and how they behave toward politicians, they frequently emphasized more gentle approaches oriented toward long-term relationship building based on identification and perceived caring. While all informants mentioned some type of goodwill strategy, the preceding section demonstrates that the informants emphasized different approaches. Most of all they pointed to the need to understand the politicians' needs and the constraints. Thus, we argue that our first finding corroborates the conclusions from the literature about the importance of a 'softer' orientation of lobbyists in a consensus-oriented democracy like the Norwegian (Mahoney 2008; Naurin 2007; Nothhaft 2017; van Schendelen 2002; Woll 2012).

A systematic analysis of the interview transcripts resulted in the suggestion for the following typology that can be tested further: The lobbyists aim to have the politicians think as follows: *(1) the lobbyist understands my professional needs and (2) the political and systemic constraints under which I operate; (3) the lobbyist has my interest at heart and (4) is focused on what is in the public interest; (5) he or she has empathy for me, (6) gives me due recognition when deserved, and (7) is friendly and respectful*. Again, the first two strategies were most frequently mentioned by our informants, with emphasis on public interest trailing behind. Particularly, the latter is something that the research literature has emphasized as a commonplace lobbying strategy (Baumgartner et al. 2009; Oberman 2017; Raknes and Ihlen 2019; Uhre and Rommetvedt 2019). Again, we were rather surprised that we did not find more instances of this thinking as a form of goodwill strategy, but it might also be the result of a strict definition focusing on society as such, rather than larger social groups or individuals outside the organization. It was, nonetheless, also unexpected that many of the other strategies mentioned in the literature, such as caring for the politician's interest, expressing empathy, recognition, or praise, were not mentioned more frequently. Perhaps additional probes could have led to a different result. Alternatively, the findings point toward how there are several different routes to the goal of achieving goodwill and that the informants differ in their individual strategies and preferences in this regard.

While we consider the above as the most important contribution of the paper, we also wanted to look for the potential importance of organization type. We see, for instance, that the NGOs in the sample pointed to constraints more often than the other organization types, while the work-life organizations stated the importance of understanding professional needs the most. While the small sample size for each organization is limiting, it can be stated that the private sector organizations are not dominating. The results lend somewhat cautious support to the finding that different organization types are not as different any longer, perhaps as a consequence of isomorphism and how they have all become more professionalized (Klüver and Saurugger 2013). Furthermore, the lack of strong patterns concerning the organization variable, might point to the importance of the third research question.

Addressing the possible influence of resources on the use of goodwill strategies, there is a tendency that the more resourceful organizations are, the more they use goodwill strategies. This seems to support the research that emphasizes the importance of resources. The 'privileged pluralism' described in Denmark indicates a link between access to important arenas and resources (Binderkrantz et al. 2014; Binderkrantz and Pedersen 2019). By extension, it could be hypothesized that level of resources is also linked to professionalism in the form of well-crafted communication strategies. Here too, however, caution must be exercised in interpreting the data.

As argued previously, existing research ably demonstrates how certain resources are wielded, exchanged, and appreciated by actors in the political system and by implication can create goodwill (Berkhout 2013; Godwin et al. 2013). The added value of the goodwill framework drawing on communication theory, however, sees, for instance, provision of "workable solutions and improvements" as something that is not "only" useful, but something that signals *understanding*. Furthermore, the introduced goodwill framework demonstrates how lobbyists attempt to create identification, target the public interest, and also introduces elements of empathy, recognition and friendly tone as additions. In short, the framework helps unpack the discursive strategies that lobbyist potentially might use to create goodwill.

While the literature from rhetoric and persuasion have unpacked the goodwill construct and indicated its importance, scholars frequently point to how *context* is a complicating factor (Perloff 2003). What creates goodwill in one context is not necessarily what creates goodwill in another. In this paper, we have discussed a professional setting where we would argue that the notion of goodwill as 'inoperative friendship' (Aristotle) might hold true in the short run, but where the involved participants have a common understanding of what kind of game lobbying is. If the data do not support the 'helpful friend' conclusion, the material certainly shows how many lobbyists attempt to become partners of the politicians, working on particular policy issues 'to the best of the public interest.'

Further research should test the introduced typology, as well as the possible influence of organization types and capital forms. The first goal, however, would be to assess that extent the strategies are employed. As shown above, some of the strategies were infrequently mentioned in our sample. Testing could be carried out in the form of additional qualitative interviews in different national contexts and different political systems using other sampling strategies, for instance, based on lobby registers. Such interviews could start open-ended, also with the purpose of identifying possible goodwill strategies we did not find in our material. Obviously, we could also conduct a follow-up study applying the same methodology as used in this paper, but also include politicians in the sample in order to get a better picture of how politicians perceive and interpret the goodwill strategies lobbyists employ. From a rhetorical perspective, identification or persuasion is not only dependent on the rhetor, but also the active cooperation of the audience. Another viable option to test the typology, would be to develop a number of statements operationalizing the different goodwill strategies. Such statements could be distributed in a survey among lobbyists, but also politicians allowing for a comparison of the existence and rated importance of the different dimensions between the two groups.

Further research could also try to theorize the different positions of power and to what extent the organizations are reliant on goodwill strategies or not. In addition, there is need for research looking into the democratic consequences of the use of goodwill strategies. Politicians do not want to come across as being influenced by lobbyists, so such processes are toned down by the latter who also takes steps to not irritate the former. To this end, 'professional interest representatives are prepared to go quite far with their adjustments and, in some cases, to more or less obscure their identity, clearly to the detriment of transparency and democracy' (Nothhaft 2017, p. 141). Importantly, 'too successful' goodwill strategies can dissolve the line between the different roles of lobbyists and politicians representing private and public interests, respectively. Then again, this line might not always be clear-cut in the first place, hence the usual call for 'light, more light' (Finer [1966] as cited in Binderkrantz et al. 2014, p. 223) can be issued here as well. There is need for attention and critical discussions in the public sphere as well as in academia of the relationship between lobbyists and politicians.

Appendix—Abbreviated interview guide

1. Could you mention a specific case that you are working with—what is it that you want to achieve, and what do you do to make that happen? It does not have to be something related to media coverage but an issue that you have spent time on and that involved attempts to influence politicians.
2. What is your most successful lobbying attempt?
3. When have you failed?
4. In general, what do you think are good arguments for lobbyists?
5. What tone do you use when addressing politicians? (Probe: please think of a specific issue and whether you were criticizing or praising)

Declarations

Conflict of interest On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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