



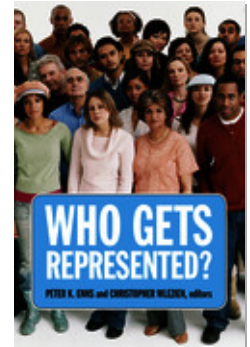
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## Who Gets Represented?

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# Chapter 6

## Segmented Representation: The Reagan White House and Disproportionate Responsiveness

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN the government and the public is commonly used to characterize the nature of a political system. Populist theories of democracy define this relationship as the close association between the wishes and wants of the country's citizens and the substantive policy decisions of elected government officials. Political representation also can be viewed in symbolic terms; kings, for instance, "stand for" the country (Pitkin 1967). American presidents are often said to "speak for the people." Although political representation has been defined in quite different ways, nearly all portrayals share a focus on the government's relationship with its citizenry. For instance, kings or presidents represent the country as a whole, a member of Congress represents all residents within his or her legislative district, and so on.

Empirical research on political representation tends to focus on the nation or other aggregate populations, such as the congressional district or the state. A large body of work has studied the degree of consistency or congruence between the opinions or actions of political elites and the opinions of the public. For example, one body of research studies the dyadic relationship between the actions taken by a member of Congress and the public's attitudes in the member's district or state (for example, Bartels 1991; Erikson, Wright, and McIver 1993; Miller and Stokes 1963). Other work examines collective or systematic political representation—

namely, the relationship between aggregate national public opinion and the decisions of government through collective efforts or separate institutions, such as Congress (Page and Shapiro 1983; Weissberg 1978; see, for review, Manza, Cook, and Page 2002).

Despite significant differences in research design, the dyadic and collective approaches to studying political representation have two similarities. First, they both focus on the government's relationship with largely undifferentiated populations—the attitudes of the public in a congressional district, a state, or the nation. Second, research typically treats the relationship between the public and government officials as one-dimensional—studying aggregated policy rather than variations across distinctive policy domains and focusing either on specific policy preferences or on global liberal or conservative “mood” (but see Wlezien 2004).

The result is that political representation research has become oddly apolitical and neglects inequalities in influence and the calibration of strategy by political elites (also see Bartels 2005, 2008; Gilens 2005). Ample evidence shows that distinct subgroups of citizens, particularly the wealthy and the educated, participate in elections and a range of other political activities at far higher rates than others (Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995). Yet few have studied the extent and nature of affluent influence on actual public policy or policymakers' issue positions. Even less attention has been dedicated to better understanding the impact that social and political subgroups not defined by economic advantage—such as religious groups—have on government decision makers. A comprehensive political analysis of representation needs to address not only possible disparities in influence but also the distinct strategies of elites to cultivate and to mobilize segments of the electorate through differentiated appeals based on policy domains. Research on political representation has thus far failed to take into account the changing motivations of government officials, who target specific subgroups and specifically craft public messages to satisfy their interest.

We explore segmented representation across policy domains by studying how President Ronald Reagan responded to a unique dataset—the private public-opinion polling conducted by his White House. Studying segmented representation in presidential behavior cuts across the grain of a long tradition, from the Federalist Papers to contemporary presidents, which emphasizes the chief executive's political and constitutional responsibilities to serve the collective national interest (Jacobs 2005). Yet presidents also often have strategic reasons to attend to the preferences of specific groups to build stronger electoral coalitions.

Archival research demonstrates that the Reagan White House conducted extensive private polling that focused particularly on the interests of specific demographic and political subgroups (Jacobs and Burns 2004). Reagan sought to capitalize on the demise of the Democrats' New

Deal coalition by building a new conservative Republican coalition that appealed to political independents and extended the party's traditional conservative base. The movement targeted those likely to support smaller government, supply-side economics (which accepted higher budget deficits in exchange for lower taxes), social-conservative values, and hawkish military policies. This chapter seeks to systematically determine whether and how Reagan calibrated his public policy statements (and positions) to respond to interests of these particular subgroups.

## Studying Segmented Representation

An enduring question in the study of political representation concerns the disproportional influence of economically advantaged citizens. The conclusion that the most advantaged influence government is as old as the United States itself. Charles Beard (1913) argued that the U.S. Constitution was designed by and for the wealthy. C. Wright Mills (1959) argued that a coherent "power elite" directed America's major economic and governmental institutions to serve its interests. Critics of the pluralist account of government point to the influence exerted by economically powerful semiautonomous elites on the political agenda and on decentralized decision making within Congress and the bureaucracy (Bachrach and Baratz 1962; McConnell 1966; Schattschneider 1960). These conclusions, however, have been criticized on the claim that they are based on limited cases rather than systematic evidence.

In this light, a new and growing body of research has begun to supply systematic evidence of the influence of the economically advantaged on government policy. One study of income-weighted preferences and roll-call votes cast by U.S. senators in the late 1980s and early 1990s found that senators are consistently much more responsive to the views of affluent constituents than to the views of the poor (Bartels 2005, 2008). Another study found that the American political system is a great deal more responsive to the preferences of the rich than to the preferences of the poor (Gilens 2005). A third reported that the policy stands of foreign-policy decision makers were most influenced by business leaders, with the general public exerting no significant effect and policy experts largely serving as conduits for the views of other elites, including business (Jacobs and Page 2005).

Virtually no work, however, has explored disproportional influence of noneconomic decisive political forces. The early 1970s was a period of significant change in the electorate and the organization of political parties, with the goal of altering political incentives. In particular, changes in the process for selecting candidates substantially enhanced the influence of single-issue and ideologically extreme party activists. Within the

Republican Party, for instance, social conservatives (especially born-again Protestants and Baptist fundamentalists), economic conservatives (especially supply-side advocates favoring sharp reductions in government taxation), and philosophical conservatives all gained new prominence in candidate selection and thereby in government circles (Aldrich 1995; Edsall and Edsall 1991). Even as ideologically oriented party activists gained more sway, both political parties competed to appeal to the growing ranks of independent voters. As the Democratic Party's New Deal coalition unraveled and stalwart supporters, such as Catholics, drifted from the party, the proportion of voters who described themselves as independent in surveys by the American National Election Studies rose from 23 percent in 1952 to 34 percent by 1980.<sup>1</sup>

These significant changes in the electorate and party organization generated incentives for national political leaders to win over politically critical segments of the electorate. With leaders in both parties maneuvering for advantage, Republican government officials were motivated to construct a new conservative coalition—one that would expand Barry Goldwater's economic libertarianism to include social conservatives, supply-siders who favored sharply lower taxes (even at the risk of higher budget deficits), and more general philosophical conservatives.

Changes in the political incentive structure, along with shifts in the electorate, motivated government officials to devote particular attention to distinct economic and political segments of the electorate. We would expect Republican party-leader policy decisions to be particularly attentive to higher-income groups, social conservatives (namely, fundamental Baptists and Catholics as they defected from the Democratic Party), and political independents (given the nature of the times and attempts to build a conservative coalition). Democratic leaders, meanwhile, gravitated toward social liberals and economic liberals who favored greater government intervention in market distributions, though the pressure to raise campaign contributions also placed a premium on higher-income groups among their supporters (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

Another challenge facing research on segmented representation is accounting for variations across policy domains and the public's global and policy-specific attitudes. Previous research suggests that politicians and presidents in particular distinguish between domestic and international issues based on political considerations (Druckman, Jacobs, and Ostermeier 2004; Wildavsky 1994a, 1994b). For instance, bold and aggressive foreign-policy initiatives (such as hawkish defense policy) offer an opportunity to promote a portrait of strength, whereas conciliatory positions on defense issues can project, or be portrayed by their opponents as revealing, a soft, timid, or passive personal character (DeRouen 2000; Foyle 1999; Nincic 1990; Ostrom and Job 1986). In general, domes-

tic issues offer—under normal conditions—an opportunity for government officials to respond to the public's most intense concerns.

In addition, strategic political actors differentiate public attitudes along two distinct dimensions—ideology and policy-specific preferences (Druckman and Jacobs 2006). When the public harbors strong concerns and intense preferences, policymakers tend to behave as “splitters”—they collect and respond to the public's preferences for or against specific policies (see Geer 1991, 1996; Heith 1998, 2003; Monroe 1979, 1998; Page and Shapiro 1983; Soroka and Wlezien 2005; Wlezien 2004).<sup>2</sup> When not facing intense concerns and strong preferences, government officials act like “lumpers” by collecting and using public opinion information to form summary judgments of the liberal or conservative contours of public opinion (Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002; Kingdon 1984, 68–69, 153). Under normal circumstances, for domestic issues (where the public often forms more intense views given its direct knowledge and experience) government officials are expected to focus on splitting. Conversely, foreign policy is considered more distant and less directly apparent in the public's daily lives and lumping is viewed as a more acceptable practice as a result (Druckman and Jacobs 2006; Wlezien 2004).

Recent research on segmented representation across policy domains and dimensions of public attitudes poses five broad expectations in investigating political leadership and, specifically, President Reagan's positions on key issues. First, we expect political leaders to differentiate their approaches by relying on general ideological data on public attitudes in crafting their foreign policy positions (that is, lumping) and using policy-specific data in fashioning their domestic positions (that is, splitting). Second, we expect that the intense concerns of the affluent regarding specific economic issues will focus the attention of political leaders. Specifically, Republican leaders like President Reagan are expected to be acutely responsive to higher-income groups when fashioning his public position on taxes, government spending, and Social Security (for example, opposition to expanding or even maintaining Social Security). Third, we expect community groups with strong social networks—mainly Baptists and Catholics for Republican leaders—to exert a disproportionately strong influence on Reagan's specific public positions on family values and crime. Fourth, we expect Reagan to be attentive to the domestic issue-specific policy preferences of political independents. Finally, we expect general conservatism to have a strong impact on Reagan's public positions on defense spending (where lumping and ideology play a larger role).

## Data and Methods

We test our expectations with a unique body of evidence: President Ronald Reagan's extensive private data on public opinion during his tenure

in office, from 1981 to 1989. Although focusing on a single president raises questions about generalizability (that is, from Reagan to politicians more generally), the use of targeted empirical research to generate broader theoretical insights has a distinguished tradition (for example, Conover and Sigelman 1982; Miller and Stokes 1963; Riker 1996). The main advantage of the Reagan White House's polling data is that it provides unparalleled access to actual political decisions about the collection and use of distinct types of public opinion information. Virtually all prior research on public opinion and political action (for example, Cohen 1997; Wlezien 2004), as well as previous analysis of the disproportionate government responsiveness to the economically affluent (Bartels 2005; Gilens 2005; Jacobs and Page 2005), relies on publicly available polls from survey organizations or other secondary sources. This approach lacks direct evidence regarding whether or what kind of public opinion information that government officials actually track or use.

Is there a consistent and systematic relationship between the public policy statements of politicians (Reagan, in our case) and their (that is Reagan's) private polling data on distinct policy domains and electoral subgroups? Research using case studies of various administrations, policy areas, and pressure groups suggests that such a relationship exists (for example, Beard 1913; McConnell 1966; Mills 1959; Schattschneider 1960). Although this work offers valuable insights about the disproportionate influence of distinct groups on government policymaking, case studies cannot detect general patterns of influence. We search for these patterns of influence by studying the relationship of Reagan's White House polling and his specific policy statements. In particular, we use two datasets to investigate the extent and nature of the association between a president's polling information on the core policy concerns of distinct electoral subgroups and the president's public statements on those policy issues; these datasets are Reagan's privately collected polling data and a systematic content analysis of the president's public statements on policy issues.

### *Public Opinion Data*

The Reagan White House developed two distinctive sets of polling questions to track the public's opinions. First, it relied on an item that asked respondents to report their ideological self-identification, producing a percentage who declared themselves conservative. We label this measure the Public's Ideological Identification, with higher scores representing the conservative end of the scale.<sup>3</sup> For example, this measure might report that, at a given point in time, 60 percent of the voters view themselves as ideologically conservative.

The White House's ideological self-identification data provide an appropriate independent variable for the lumpers account. While this mea-

sure differs from other lumping measures—such as James Stimson’s (1991) “public mood” that aggregates over numerous policy areas—the critical point is that archival records show that Reagan treated the data as measuring the public’s ideological orientation (see Druckman and Jacobs 2005).

The second set of data from the White House polling measures public opinion toward specific policies (for example, particular positions on Social Security, taxes, defense spending). What we label the Public’s Policy Opinions serve as the relevant independent variable for the splitter account. The Public’s Policy Opinions items report the percentage of the public holding the conservative position on the given policy proposal (running from 0 percent through 100 percent).<sup>4</sup> For example, this measure might report that 40 percent of voters take a conservative position on taxes. Another of these measures might show that 70 percent report conservative positions on defense spending.

Given our focus on government attention to discrete electoral subgroups, we also used the data on the policy preferences of four distinct segments of voters: party identifiers/nonidentifiers (Democrats, Republicans, and independents who did not identify with either major party), high-income earners,<sup>5</sup> born-again Protestants or fundamental Baptists, and Catholics. (Some of these subgroups—such as Republican identifiers—may reflect the general attitudes associated with conservative mood as described by the lumpers account.) These data report the percentage of the particular subgroup taking a conservative position on a given issue—such as 80 percent of Baptists taking a conservative position on crime.

Although the measurement of these subgroup categories is neither consistent nor necessarily comparable with contemporary social science research standards, the White House clearly treated information about these subgroups as valid and politically important (see Druckman and Jacobs 2005). More specifically, we collected the White House’s data on the preferences of subgroups toward policy issues that align with its interests and values. For instance, we assembled White House data on the preferences of high-income earners toward lower taxes, less government spending, and Social Security reform.

### *Politician Behavior Data*

We measure behavior by analyzing Reagan’s public statements—what we call Presidential Policy Positions.<sup>6</sup> Modern presidents carefully calibrate their public statements to signal their policy positions to congressional committees, interest groups, and voters (Cohen 1997; Riker 1996). In terms of the Reagan White House, the president and his senior advisers crafted the president’s public statements to communicate specific



messages to the country and to rally public support (see Druckman and Jacobs 2005; Jacobs 2005).

Our specific measure comes from a rigorous content analysis of Reagan's statements on the full range of domestic and foreign policy issues in all news conferences and addresses to the nation as well as a random selection of 50 percent of other oral and written statements.<sup>7</sup> The president's statements were retrieved from the *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States* and the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*. Our unit of analysis was each distinct public utterance by the president regarding a specific policy. For each document in the *Public Papers* or the *Weekly Compilation* that we analyzed, we first coded whether Reagan addressed a substantive policy issue (for example, increased defense spending, support for family values, or support for cracking down on crime). We categorized each of Reagan's substantive policy statements as referring to one of 229 particular policy issues, which constitute the universe of distinctive issues that the president addressed throughout his term.

In addition to coding the policy issue that Reagan addressed, we coded the date of the comments and the number of lines of text devoted to the issue. We also coded the ideological direction of each policy statements on a scale of 1 to 5: higher scores indicate increasing conservatism (that is, policy statements favoring less government responsibility and activity) and lower scores represent liberalism (statements indicating greater government involvement). When necessary, to determine the conservative direction of a proposal, we consulted contemporary accounts in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* as well as memoirs and other historical analyses. We carefully assessed the content analysis and found it highly reliable (that is, nearly 75 percent agreement among independent coders).<sup>8</sup>

We collapsed Reagan's statement data by merging the hundreds of distinct issues that the president addressed into a smaller set of aggregated (but substantively related) clusters of ninety-eight policy areas. For some of our analyses, we further aggregated data into domestic issues and foreign policy issues.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Analysis of Public Opinion and Politician Behavior***

Our expectation is that the president's policy statements will be significantly and positively related to data on the Public's Ideological Identification, the Public's Policy Opinions, and subgroup policy-specific preferences. To analyze the data, we create monthly aggregated measures of each of the variables. For each month for which data were available, we created measures of Presidential Policy Positions, measures of the Public's Ideological Identification, measures of the Public's Policy Opinions,

and the policy preferences of the key subgroups for each of the merged ninety-eight policy areas.<sup>10</sup> As mentioned, we coded all variables so that higher values indicated congruent movements in a conservative direction. Because of the directional nature of the analyses, we exclude issues on which positions could not clearly be classified in a conservative-liberal direction.

We potentially have a substantial number of observations. Reagan could have discussed ninety-eight issues over the course of ninety-seven months from January 1981 to December 1988, which totals 9,506 observations. In practice, however, Reagan did not make a statement on every issue in every month; he made a total of 3,261 statements on different policies in the given months. In addition, Reagan did not collect public opinion data on every issue over time. Our analysis depends on the availability of relevant public-opinion data before the president's statement (that is, we can only analyze the relationship between statements and public opinion data when the public opinion data exist).<sup>11</sup>

We deal with the time-line aspect of our data in several ways. First, in all our analyses, we include a lagged value of our dependent variable, Presidential Policy Positions. We expect a strong positive relationship between prior and present Presidential Policy Positions given the incremental nature of policy movement (Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002, 285). Including a lagged dependent variable provides a tough test of our models: it serves as a control for various other influences that may have affected the prior position of presidents (for example, interest-group activities).

Second, we use lagged versions of the Public's Ideological Identification, the Public's Policy Opinions data, and the subgroup policy-preference data so as to reflect the White House's operations and decision-making process. This lag captures the time that it took for the survey organizations to enter and analyze their results, and for the White House to weigh the results and incorporate them into presidential activities. White House records and other evidence (such as memoirs and diaries) suggest that Reagan used the previous set of results—even if this meant going back in time. Accordingly, our lagged variables used the most recent data completed at least one month earlier, though most of the data were quite timely.<sup>12</sup> For instance, we related Reagan's policy statements on increasing defense spending in April 1982 to his polling data in March 1982 or, if data were not available in March 1982, in the previous month for which data were available.<sup>13</sup>

## Empirical Analyses

Our quantitative analysis proceeds in three steps. First, we begin by examining what types of public opinion data that the Reagan White House collected. Second, we test whether the White House engages in

splitting or lumping, with all else constant. Third, we explore whether and how political independents and conservative subgroups impacted his public statements.

### *Strategic Investments in Information*

The White House recognized that space on survey instruments was limited and that collecting and processing data imposed substantial financial and organizational costs on the time and attention of its staff, senior officials, and the president. These costs in conjunction with strategic considerations motivated the White House to calibrate its collection of the Public's Policy Opinions data that required a distinct question for each issue. (This contrasts with the much cheaper Public's Ideological Identification data, which was simply one self-identification ideology question on the survey.) Also, given the potentially large number of demographic, political, and other subgroups, the White House carefully pinpointed certain components of the electorate as especially important strategically and worthy of investment in terms of tracking them.

The White House took a dynamic approach in selecting the domestic and international issues to track in its polling. Rather than asking about the same set of policy issues, Reagan's advisers added and dropped issues in reaction to new events, public concerns, and anticipation of future administration policy and action. Consistent with our earlier expectations about the direct relevance of domestic policy, the White House committed 65 percent of its polling on issues to domestic policy as opposed to foreign policy.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the attention to individual areas of domestic and foreign policy varied over time, receiving more or less polling depending on events, public concerns, and administration policy development.

The White House devoted particular attention to tracking the reactions of critical segments of the electorate.<sup>15</sup> On domestic issues which presumably have particular relevance to these segments, 71 percent of the White House's polling results broke out the findings for independents, the affluent, Baptists, and Catholics. Specifically, it broke out results for different income groups 46 percent of the time, with 34 percent of these devoted to core economic issues that would be most relevant to income earning—taxes, government spending, and Social Security reform. Of particular interest, the White House concentrated its polling on detecting the views of the highest income earners on these issues: 84 percent of polling on core economic issues, which provided data by income, included specific data from the affluent.

In addition, on domestic issues, the White House broke out results for Baptists and Catholics 53 percent of the time. Fifteen percent of these data were on the social conservative issues of family values and crime that might of particular interest to these subgroups. Finally, across both

domestic and foreign policy domains, the White House collected data on the specific views of political-base Republicans 65 percent of the time. In tracking public thinking on defense spending, it broke data down by Republicans 99 percent of the time.

### ***Policy Domain and the Public's Ideological and Policy Attitudes***

We now explore how Reagan used these datasets in crafting his policy position statements. In all of the following analyses, we include subgroup opinion data selectively. In part this is due to the methodological reality that, as explained, Reagan did not break out opinion data by subgroup across all issues. Instead, he collected subgroup data only in areas where there was a presumed need to attend to these opinions. Thus, we cannot include many subgroups without substantially reducing the number of our observations. More important, however, substantively it is sensible to include the subgroups that Reagan clearly was prioritizing in certain areas. This is one of the advantages of using private polling data—we know these were the data being used in fashioning responses.

We begin our analyses by looking at the relative impact of the Ideological Identification and the Public's Policy Opinions data on domestic and foreign policy statements. Recall that we earlier suggested that Reagan will rely on Ideological Identification when it comes to foreign policy (which is more distant to the public) and the Public's Policy Opinions on domestic issues. Table 6.1 reports the regression results, for domestic and foreign policy, of Presidential Policy Positions on the Public's Policy Opinions and the Public's Ideological Identification, which the White House possessed. Both variables report the percentage of respondents moving in a conservative direction standardized on scales of 0 to 1. As mentioned, we also include lagged Presidential Policy Positions to capture the incremental nature of policy movement. (The number of cases in all our analyses varies based on the missing lag values for the dependent variable as well as the smaller number of cases for particular policy areas.)<sup>16</sup>

Table 6.1 reveals the predicted domain effect. The Public's Policy Opinions drove Reagan's statements on domestic policy ( $p \leq .05$ ) and exerted no statistically significant effects on his foreign policy comments.<sup>17</sup> In contrast, the Public's Ideological Identification influences Reagan's foreign policy comments ( $p \leq .05$ ) but not his domestic statements. These results seem to suggest that Reagan was playing to his partisan and philosophically conservative base on the Cold War and building a strong defense as the best approach to securing peace. Moreover, the significant and strong effects of the lagged dependent variables suggest that Reagan's foreign and domestic policy positions tended to "lock

**Table 6.1** Impact of Public Opinion Data on Domestic or Foreign Policy Positions (Domain Effect Model)

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable: Presidential Policy Positions	
	Domestic Policy	Foreign Policy
Public's Ideological Identification	-.07 (1.08)	3.39** (1.55)
Public's Policy Opinions	1.13** (.14)	-.16 (.21)
Presidential Policy Positions, <i>t</i> -1	.73** (.02)	.76** (.02)
Constant	.44 (.65)	-1.13 (.93)
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.68	.58
<i>N</i>	1,339	716

Source: Authors' compilation.

Note: OLS coefficients, standard errors in parentheses.

\*\**p* ≤ .05, \**p* ≤ .10, one-tailed test.

in" once he had staked them out publicly. Put simply, he stuck with what he said. In terms of substantive impact, if the public moves 10 percent over the average conservativeness score, Reagan becomes about 8.5 percent more conservative in his statements on foreign policy (as measured by the Clarify program; see King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000). By comparison, when the public changes 10 percent over the average Policy Opinions score, Reagan becomes about 4 percent more conservative in his domestic policy statements.

The findings for Reagan suggest a bifurcated approach to how he used his polling information: he turned to disaggregated information on domestic issues on which voters had more knowledge and direct experience, while he relied on aggregated, ideological data on foreign affairs. Political and strategic calculations appear to have conditioned the use of different types of polling information across policy domains: under normal circumstances, electoral risks and rewards are more intense and direct in domestic affairs than in foreign affairs, increasing the political incentives to track and respond to the public's specific policy preference in particular.

### *The Impact of Subgroups*

The next logical question is whether the White House further segmented its responsiveness, particularly on domestic issues that were important to

**Table 6.2** Impact of Policy Preferences of Independents on Domestic Policy Positions

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable: Presidential Policy Positions on Domestic Policy
Public's Ideological Identification	-.14 (1.18)
Public's Policy Opinions	.68** (.23)
Policy Opinions of Independents	1.60** (.22)
Presidential Policy Positions, $t-1$	.56** (.03)
Constant	.49 (.71)
$R^2$	.74
N	847

Source: Authors' compilation.

Note: OLS coefficients, standard errors in parentheses.

\*\* $p \leq .05$ , \* $p \leq .10$ , one-tailed test.

subgroups that were targeted as essential to building a new Republican majority. With the erosion of the Democrat's New Deal Coalition and the rise of political independents, Republican leaders paid particular attention to these relatively unattached voters in the hopes of recruiting them. To investigate this, we regressed Presidential Policy Positions regarding domestic issues on the White House's polling data on the Public's Policy Opinions, the Public's Ideological Identification, and the Policy Opinions of Independents (as well Presidential Policy Positions lagged).<sup>18</sup> The Policy Opinions of Independents variable is also measured on a scale of 0 to 1, and reflects the percentage of independents who held a conservative position on a given issue. (In other words, it is the same as the Public's Policy Opinions but includes only independents.)<sup>19</sup>

Our analysis finds evidence of notable effects by political independents on Reagan's domestic positions. Table 6.2 suggests that specific policy preferences are statistically significant, and that the Public's Ideological Identification is not. In particular, the policy preferences of independents were substantially stronger than the policy preferences of the general public—evidence of the White House's attentiveness to this critical segment of the electorate. A key emphasis to note is that the effects of independents emerge even after controlling for the Public's Policy Opinions and the Public's Ideological Identification.

**Table 6.3**     **Impact of Policy Preferences of High-Income Americans on Economic Policy Positions**

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable: Social Security Reform, Taxes, and Government Spending
Public's Ideological Identification	-.45 (1.58)
Public's Policy Opinions	.70** (.38)
Policy Opinions of Higher Income Americans	4.06** (.85)
Presidential Policy Positions, <i>t</i> -1	.50** (.07)
Constant	-.79 (1.06)
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.84
<i>N</i>	173

Source: Authors' compilation.

Note: OLS coefficients, standard errors in parentheses.

\*\**p* ≤ .05, \**p* ≤ .10, one-tailed test.

The White House devoted particular attention to broadening the Republican Party's conservative coalition. If this effort were systematic, we would expect evidence that the policy preferences of economic, social, and military conservatives had a significant impact on Reagan's statements on issues of particular concern to each of these factions. The affluent have been principal supporters of the modern Republican Party. We would therefore expect the Reagan White House to demonstrate efforts to lock down their continued support. To investigate this possibility, we regressed Presidential Policy Positions on issues of intense interest to high-income Americans (lower taxes, less government spending, and reforming Social Security) on the Public's Policy Opinions, the Public's Ideological Identification, and the Policy Opinions of the affluent (as well as a lagged measure of Presidential Policy Positions on core economic issues).<sup>20</sup>

Table 6.3 presents evidence confirming the striking impact of another segment of the electorate—high-income earners. The Public's Ideological Identification is not statistically significant; the White House did not tailor Reagan's public comments on core economic issues to an overriding conservatism among Americans. Instead, Reagan's public statements on core economic policy were driven by the Public's Policy Opinions on these issues but much more strongly by the views of the most

**Table 6.4** Impact of the Policy Preferences of Baptists and Catholics on Social-Conservative Policy Positions

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable: Family Values and Crime
Public's Ideological Identification	-.10 (.53)
Public's Policy Opinions	-.24 (.20)
Policy Opinions of Baptists	1.38* (.85)
Policy Opinions of Catholics	-.27 (.70)
Presidential Policy Positions, $t-1$	-.11 (.10)
Constant	4.78**
$R^2$	.07
N	104

Source: Authors' compilation.

Note: OLS coefficients, standard errors in parentheses.

\*\* $p \leq .05$ , \* $p \leq .10$ , one-tailed test.

affluent. In other words, the impact of the wealthy registered far above whatever impact of the general public's policy preferences and ideological orientations.

One of the most important new groups that the Reagan White House targeted for recruitment to the conservative Republican coalition were social conservatives—namely, Baptists and Catholics who harbored strong views about family values and a law-and-order approach to crime. Table 6.4, which presents regressions on these issues and includes the Policy Opinions of Baptists and Catholics, indicates that Reagan did not systematically tailor his comments on social-conservative policies to Catholics.<sup>21</sup> However, the social-conservative policy preferences of Baptists registered as an important influence on Reagan's statements and were in fact the only statistically significant force in shaping Reagan's public comments on these policy issues. Of particular note, Reagan appeared to be adopting new positions in response to Baptist preferences; the statistical insignificance of the lagged dependent variable suggests that his previous positions did not "lock in" his comments. This evidence demonstrates that Reagan's White House worked hard to update Republican policy stances to target and expand its conservative base.

One of the Reagan administration's most dramatic policy changes was to substantially increase defense spending. Our earlier analysis sug-



**Table 6.5**     **Impact of Policy Preferences of Republicans on Defense-Spending Policy Positions**

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable: Increased Defense Spending
Public's Ideological Identification	3.31* (2.11)
Public's Policy Opinions	-.32 (.43)
Policy Opinions of Republicans	5.00** (1.74)
Policy Opinions of Independents	-3.88** (1.51)
Policy Opinions of Democrats	-2.06* (1.29)
Presidential Policy Positions, <i>t</i> -1	-.03 (.10)
Constant	3.15** (1.57)
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.15
<i>N</i>	90

*Source:* Authors' compilation.

*Note:* OLS coefficients, standard errors in parentheses.

\*\**p* ≤ .05, \**p* ≤ .10, one-tailed test.

gests that the White House pursued a lumping approach on matters of foreign policy and national security—namely, that it tended to rely on more general ideological and partisan polling results. Table 6.5 shows that Reagan's comments on defense spending were tailored to the views of Republicans, but not those of independents and Democrats (Reagan moves in a significantly contrary direction to independents and Democrats).<sup>22</sup> The results also show, not surprisingly, that the ideological mood of the electorate continued to influence defense-spending positions. In short, Reagan honed his public statements on defense spending to respond to partisans and conservatives, while in essence turning against other segments of the electorate.

## Conclusion

In two significant respects, the findings of this chapter offer a pointed revision of the long-standing treatment of the president as serving the overall national interest. First, the president differentiates how he han-

dles domestic and foreign policy, rather than pursuing a consistent approach based on some objective notion of the country's best interests. In particular, this study and other research (see Druckman and Jacobs 2006; Wlezien 2004) demonstrate that the president treats domestic and foreign policy differently, relying on discrete policy preferences to shape his domestic policy statements and on aggregate public mood in crafting his foreign policy positions.

Second, this chapter extends research on segmented representation by expanding on the set of forces that disproportionately influence government policy. These findings, in conjunction with previous research (Bartels 2005; Gilens 2005; Jacobs and Page 2005), demonstrate that government officials disproportionately respond to the preferences of the highest income earners. This challenges the tendency to associate political representation with strong government responsiveness to the general public (see, for example, Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002). In some respects, these findings should not be surprising; they are compatible with extensive and long-standing research about the asymmetrical distribution of resources among citizens, organizations, and groups, and the biasing effects that this distribution has on government policy (Beard 1913; McConnell 1966; Mills 1959; Schattschneider 1960). Moreover, this finding is also consistent with a new generation of research that links rising economic inequality with political disparities (American Political Science Association 2004; Bartels 2005, 2008; Gilens 2005; Jacobs and Page 2005; Jacobs and Skocpol 2005).

One of this chapter's key contributions is to identify noneconomic processes that generate disproportionate influence on government policy. In particular, Reagan's public policy positions were particularly shaped by political independents along with religious conservatives and base Republicans. The emergence of these political forces may indirectly or, in interaction with economic groups, serve as pathways by which rising economic inequality impacts government policy. This is an important topic for future research.

The Reagan White House's strategic use of its private polling on electorally significant subgroups played a notable role in reshaping contemporary American politics. Reagan's careful calibration of his public positions to reflect his subgroup polling contributed to the formation of a new and broader conservative coalition—one that widened its appeal from the affluent and philosophical conservatives to political independents and, most strikingly, religious conservatives. The result was a broader and more enduring coalition for future Republican presidential and congressional politicians.

More generally, presidents—like other politicians—attempt to advance their policy objectives (such as by appealing to distinct political subgroups) while minimizing the risk of alienating centrist opinion.

Presidents need to appeal to the median voter to deal with the electoral pressures that come with a national constituency as well as ensure the support of heterogeneous members of Congress. As a result, presidents will also engage, while appealing on particular issues to distinct subgroups, in crafted talk so that their policy proposals resonate with the median voter (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000). In using crafted talk and conveying particular personal images (Druckman, Jacobs, and Ostermeier 2004), presidents appeal to the median voter without touching on policy. Segmented representation combined with determined efforts to base political representation on personal image and crafted presentations raise serious questions about the possibility of the kind of responsive democracy that many accounts of popular sovereignty, including the median-voter theory, both predict and seek (Jacobs and Skocpol 2005).

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## Notes

1. The proportion that is independent includes both "independent independents" as well as respondents who indicated after declaring themselves as independent that they were "closer" to one party.
2. Although the "splitter" scholarly tradition shares a common focus on the specific policy preferences of citizens, there are variations in the data sources and the methodological approaches taken (for example, archival-based research of presidents and quantitative analyses that correlate published polls and government policy decisions).
3. The Ideological Identification measure has an overall mean of .60 and variance of .03.
4. The average conservative score for specific issues was .47, with a standard deviation of 0.22, for all issues; .44 for domestic issues with a standard deviation of 0.22; and .52 for foreign affairs, with a standard deviation of .20.
5. Reagan measured income in two ways. Sometimes he asked respondents to classify themselves as low, middle, or upper class. Other times, he asked respondents to report which of three earning categories applied to them (for example, under \$15,000 a year). We combined these measures by splitting the three numeric responses into three income-level groups—one below \$15,000, one between \$15,000 and \$30,000, and one above \$30,000. This seemed like the most sensible way to reconcile the two measures because each question form offered three response categories. We therefore ordered and combined them from low to high.
6. Although this measure of political activity provides a direct indicator of a

critical strategic form of presidential behavior, it differs from those deployed in some past work (for example, Page and Shapiro 1983; Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002).

7. Oral statements include bill signings, addresses to the nation, press conferences, and speeches to interest groups, administration officials, state and local government officials, Republican Party leaders, and foreign nations. Written statements include messages to Congress, administration officials, foreign nations, interviews with domestic and foreign news media, proclamations, bill signings and vetoes, and press secretary releases.
8. One coder conducted the content analysis. Accordingly, our reliability analysis focused on external comparisons of lines of text that were coded in common; there was no need to examine intercoder reliability. A second coder who had not been involved in this project analyzed a sample of documents examined by the first coder. A third coder compared the analysis by the first two coders. Comparisons between the first coder and the second showed levels of agreement of 71 percent for identification of the specific policy issue addressed by Reagan. In terms of the directionality of presidential comments, the coders agreed that a policy statement was pro, neutral, or con on 85 percent of the statements by Reagan.
9. The average ideological direction of Reagan's domestic statements was 3.50 (with a standard deviation of 1.80), versus 3.46 (with a standard deviation of 1.80) for his foreign policy statements. The scores are based on a scale of 1 to 5, with  $t_{2258} = 9.81$  and  $p < .01$ , and  $t_{1434} = 11.98$  and  $p < .01$ , respectively. Note that these scores exclude the few issues that could not be classified in an ideological direction, such as position on outer-space exploration.
10. We created monthly aggregated scores by averaging White House polling items on similar issues across geographic areas (state and national) within the same month. Our decision to produce monthly aggregated averages was based on White House memoranda and other evidence in which the president and his aides concentrated on trends and patterns across a number of states and within the nation as a whole. We also took average monthly scores for our Presidential Policy Positions measure; results are generally robust if we instead used weighted averages (that is, weighted by space of the statement).
11. We do not impute missing values in any of our analyses. Our decision was based on an examination of archival evidence suggesting that presidents and their aides did not try to impute missing data, and thus any such imputed data cannot be expected to impact presidential behavior.
12. The interval between presidential statements and prior polling data was generally brief. Details are available from the authors.
13. Our focus on how White House polls influenced subsequent presidential behavior follows how they in fact used the polling data. The White House repeatedly emphasized that the purpose of its polls was to analyze public opinion to form policy and political decisions. In short, they were responding to the polls and not using the polls to systematically measure their effect on public opinion. Although we do not deny the possibility of a reciprocal process (see Hurley and Hill 2003; Druckman and Holmes 2004), it is neither our focus nor how Reagan primarily viewed the polls.

14. All the data reported in this section focus on issues for which an ideological direction could be classified and the availability of data before Reagan actually made a statement. It does not include data collected but not used in fashioning statements. The statistics in this section refer to the most recently available data, which are at least one month old.
15. The number of separate poll results for the subgroups discussed here may differ from the number of observations in later regression analyses; the addition of variables may reduce the number of cases.
16. We do not include policy dummy variables because our Public's Policy Opinions data change over time very slowly or not at all. In this situation, to ensure analysis of between-unit effects, it is preferable not to use policy dummies (see Beck 2001, 285). Also, for all analyses, we checked whether collinearity was a problem; unless otherwise noted, we found it not to be a problem.
17. Because the hypotheses posit directional predictions, we use one-tailed tests (see Blalock 1979, 163).
18. We analyzed the impact of independents on domestic issues generally on the assumption that independents, who typically are less well-informed and interested in politics than partisans and other identifiable political groups, would focus on policies that were closer to their daily lives. Indeed, our findings from analyses of foreign policy reveal no significant impacts by independents.

Additionally, archival evidence makes it clear that, when it came to domestic issues, Reagan focuses specifically on the opinions of independents, paying scant attention to other subgroups, including Democratic and Republican segments. This also is evident in his decisions regarding data collection (Druckman and Jacobs 2006). Indeed, as mentioned, for much of the data that we analyzed, the segmented opinions of both Democrats and Republicans are not available in the data (that is, Reagan did not provide data on these subsamples). If we nonetheless analyze the subsample of domestic issues for which all types of segmented partisan opinions are available, the opinions of independents continue to exhibit a significant and positive effect. (We can do this in the case of domestic issues because the number of observations remains reasonable; on the other specific issues, however, including additional subgroups would have too dramatic an effect on the number of observations.)

19. Our subgroup measures do not face the scale issues identified in chapter 8 of this volume because we do not multiply our measures by the percentage of respondents in each subgroup. Further, while there is undoubtedly measurement error in the public opinion measures, this is not a problem per se for us insofar as we are interested in how Reagan reacted to the data that he saw (which is what we have).
20. As was the case with the data on domestic issues more generally, archival evidence makes clear that targeted strategic decisions drove data-collections decisions. In the case of the economic issues that we analyze here, little data on middle- and lower-income groups were collected. This reflects the White House's strategic decision to use these economic issues to target the more affluent. It also implies that the White House could not di-

- rectly respond to other economic groups since they did not explicitly gauge their opinions.
21. We do not include separate variables for other religious affiliations because Reagan rarely collected such data for other groups, especially in relation to family values and crime, again reflecting the aforementioned strategy to target specific groups.
  22. We are able to include separate variables for each partisan group here because Reagan collected such data for all questions on defense spending. (The collection of the data suggests that Reagan was attending to all partisan groups to some extent.) The opinions of the three partisan subgroups do significantly correlate. If we exclude the Democratic variable from the regression, our results stand; however, if we exclude the Republican variable, that impacts of the independents and the Democrats are no longer significant. The most important implication of these results is that our result for Republicans does not change, regardless of which variables we include.

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