PRESIDENTIAL-LEGISLATIVE RELATIONS AND PRESIDENTIAL SCANDAL

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ABSTRACT

Studies on Presidential-Executive relations fails to empirically analyze whether or not modern presidential scandal can impact presidential-congressional relations. Meinke and Anderson (2001) find that presidential scandal impacts House of Representatives voting behavior on key votes cited by Congressional Quarterly. A slight revision and replication of Meinke and Anderson’s research finds presidential scandal impacts Senate aggregate key votes reported by Congressional Quarterly. In addition, political party plays a more important role than scandal in determining the logged odds of Senate key votes and presidential agreement.
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For my parents
There is a tragic flaw in our precious Constitution, and I don’t know what can be done to fix it. This is it: Only nut cases want to be president.

– Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., “Cold Turkey,” 2004
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Scholars of the Congress and the presidency have rarely systematically considered the impact of presidential scandal on a president’s support and capital within Congress. Presidential scandal is not a new phenomenon, dating back to the early days of the Republic, when President Thomas Jefferson faced accusations of misconduct with his slave, Sally Hemmings. Other subsequent notable presidential scandals included the Whiskey Ring scandal during President Ulysses S. Grant’s administration as well as the Teapot Dome scandal during President Warren G. Harding’s term in office. However, presidential scandal and the impeachment process subsequently became somewhat infrequent, leading presidential scholar George B. Galloway to state “The impeachment-trial procedure is so cumbersome and time consuming that it will probably never again be employed” (1955, 582).¹ It seems as if Galloway’s conclusions were too preemptive at the time, given the highly publicized Watergate, Iran-Contra, and Lewinsky scandals and calls for impeachment of Presidents Nixon, Reagan, and Clinton, respectively, in the modern era. Moreover, modern presidential scandal is defined as public knowledge presented by the news media of presidential allegations or indiscretions that eventually leads to congressional investigative action or legitimate congressional calls for impeachment.

Political science researchers in the past have suggested that political scandal can have an adverse effect on the system of operations or functions of government. Yet, a review of scholarly literature in presidential and congressional studies indicates there have been very few empirical findings to suggest a relationship between presidential scandal and congressional policy making. This could be a result of the relative recent occurrence of presidential scandal in comparison to presidential scandal throughout American history. Meinke and Anderson
however, study the effects of presidential scandal on the House of Representatives and find that scandal has a negative effect on the president’s relationship with Congress. A replication and slight modification of Meinke and Anderson’s research can help scholars of the presidency determine the impact scandal has on presidential support in the United States Senate.

**Research Questions and Hypotheses**

This study tries to answer the question of how political scandal within the presidency can affect outcomes of the president’s legislative policy initiatives. In other words, to what degree, if any, does presidential political scandal affect presidential influence on congressional voting on presidential policy initiatives in the Senate? In addition, how can other factors such as partisanship, a president’s year of office, nature of legislation, as well as presidential approval ratings affect presidential and senatorial agreement or disagreement? Can these variables substitute or enhance the measurement of political scandal for predicting a president’s leverage in Congress? Further empirical analysis needs to be conducted to satisfy the gaps in current research of the presidency and the legislative branch.

For this study, I hypothesized that because of presidential political scandal, presidential leadership or influence in Congress will be negatively affected. In other words, scandal will foster presidential and Senate disagreement. In particular, it is proposed that the presence of presidential scandal will have a negative effect on Congress’s support for the president’s positions on “key votes.” The study of presidential success and leadership is operationalized by studying *Congressional Quarterly’s* annual key votes in Congress. It is also hypothesized that divided/united government is a major factor in predicting support for the President’s position on Senate key votes. Finally, it is hypothesized that other factors such as the year of the president’s
tenure in office, presidential approval rating, and the policy nature of the vote may have an effect on presidential position success in Congress. Table 1.1 lists these hypotheses.

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<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Presence or absence of scandal will have an effect on Senate key votes</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Partisanship (whether or not the president and the majority of Senate are of the same political party) will have a major impact on presidential and Senate agreement or disagreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Controlling for scandal, other variables (the year of presidential tenure in office, public opinion, and the policy nature of the key vote) will affect Senate and presidential agreement or disagreement.</td>
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**Operationalization**

It is somewhat difficult to measure presidential support in Congress. Chapter 3 will further discuss the research methods involved in measuring presidential success and influence in the Senate. Meinke and Anderson operationalize presidential success in the House of Representatives by measuring key votes. Because of this and other assets gained when measuring key votes, this study will operationalize presidential success and support in the Senate by measuring presidential agreement or disagreement with the Senate on key votes measured by *Congressional Quarterly*. *Congressional Quarterly* examines all public statements made by the president relating to a roll-call vote cast in each chamber of Congress. Because annual key votes represent issues that are contentious in the policy debate in Congress, the president tends to have publicized positions on most key votes. As a result, presidential positions are then taken and compared to whether or not each member of Congress agreed with the President’s position on “key votes.” All annual Senate aggregate key votes were collected for each modern president involved in presidential scandal (President Nixon, President Reagan, and President Clinton).
Data were collected using the *Congressional Quarterly Almanac* for each year of office for Presidents Nixon, Reagan, and Clinton. Data were entered into the statistical software program *SPSS* in order to calculate correlations between variables and measure statistical significance of the relationship between Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement and scandal. The dependent variable is presidential agreement/disagreement on Senate key votes. The primary independent variable is the presence or absence of scandal.

Other independent variables (covariates), controlling for scandal, are divided/united government (whether or not the president’s party and Senate’s majority party are the same (united government) or different (divided government) during the key vote), the president’s year in office, the policy nature of the key vote, as well as the presidential public approval rating (measured by the Gallup Organization) at the time of the key vote. Table 1.2 indicates the variables included in the study.

<table>
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<th>Table 1.2 - Variables Analyzed</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dependent</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Covariates</strong></td>
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As stated above, it is hypothesized that presidential support in Congress is somewhat diminished by the presence of political scandal within the presidency, particularly during congressional investigations into activities of the president. Furthermore, it is speculated that the President’s political agenda in Congress is subsequently restrained by the presence of
presidential political scandal. However, because the presidential agenda cannot be narrowed down to key votes and key votes cannot completely assess the depth and breadth of a president’s agenda, there are limitations to restricting the analysis to \textit{CQ} key votes. Nevertheless, it is posited that as presidential scandal becomes more visible in the public arena or relevant in national politics, the less likely a member of Congress will support the President and his agenda. A possible reason for this is that a congressional members’ association with the president in the time of presidential scandal would be detrimental to the congressional members’ careers. The President, as a result, would furthermore lose the ability of rallying Congress to his side in times of presidential scandal. Other factors such as a congressional members’ political party affiliation, the point in presidential term, and presidential public approval may also have interactive or additive effects on the “presence of political scandal.”

\textbf{Significance of Study/Theory}

Although presidential scandal is not an entirely new phenomenon, its frequency of occurrence and possible impact have been noteworthy in recent decades. As a result, political scientists should pay greater attention to how presidential may affect institutional roles of government. In particular, the executive and legislative branches may become strained or diverted from normal or routine operations of government and policymaking during presidential scandal.

The framers of the Constitution, particularly Madison, knew that no person could be entirely virtuous. As a result, misdeeds by public officials might occur, even at the highest level of government—the presidency. Citizens could not be held completely accountable to choose the most virtuous candidate for president; as a result, the Electoral College was formed to initially check the popular choice for president through state represented electors. However, the
Electoral College and other institutional mechanisms could not entirely guarantee a system absent of a tyrannical commander-in-chief who could subsequently break the law in order to achieve certain ends. As a result, the framers devised a system of checks and balances to regularly oversee presidential power through the legislative and judicial branches. If the president engaged in “high crimes and misdemeanors,” Congress through the powers invested to it by the Constitution would be able to investigate, impeach, and remove the president from office. Consequently, the president would be held accountable to the people indirectly through the actions of Congress. The constitutional system would work theoretically, but it would result in the strain of normal government activity. What the Constitution could not anticipate, however, were the political consequences such as investigation and oversight from alleged presidential misconduct.

Presidential scandal is important to study because it implicates a different mode of government operation—both within the executive branch and within Congress—which shall be called “scandal mode.” Although scandal could not completely debilitate the ordinary system of governance, it could deflect resources typically enjoyed during normal processes of government. Whereas presidents would introduce initiatives to Congress and Congress would respond by either favoring or opposing these initiatives under normal circumstances, in scandal mode, the president would operate in a defensive manner by trying to prevent the appearance of misdeed or misjudgment, while Congress would operate it an investigative manner to try to ensure to the American people that the president be held accountable in his actions as a public official.

“Scandal mode” would in effect divert presidential resources to deny or defend past actions deemed inappropriate or beyond the confines of law. Instead of brokering and compromising with Congress on the particulars of presidential priority or policy goals, the office
of the president would become heavily involved in investigative hearings conducted by Congress to hold the president accountable. Most likely, the office of the president would try to project a positive and uncontroversial position (denial or defense) to the Congress, the media, and the people. Legislative liaisons would be primarily geared not to push presidential initiatives, but to prevent further decline in presidential political capital as a result of scandal. Furthermore, the White House counsel’s office would become preoccupied with defending the president in times of presidential scandal.

Similarly, Congress would react to counter or check the president’s actions during the presence of presidential scandal. Instead of focusing on presidential priorities set by State of the Union messages or by means of “going public,” Congress would be deterred from presidential goals or mandates through congressional investigation of the president’s actions or misdeeds. It is Congress’s inherent nature to check the power of the executive branch, in fear that the president may not be executing the laws passed by Congress. In addition, congressional oversight is normal to investigate presidential designation of funding and resources to programs passed by law. However, scandal would further amplify Congress’s need to investigate the president, especially along the lines of whether or not the president manipulated the power of the presidency through unconstitutional or illegal means. While Congress could be making national policy, it becomes immersed in “scandal mode,” engulfed in investigations, oversight committee hearings, or impeachment hearings and trials. The system could thus become somewhat crippled, even rocked into a position of constitutional crisis if the president is unwilling to cooperate with hearings or proceedings appropriately investigating scandal and disputed matters important to the rule of law.
During presidential scandal, Congress might tend to vote against initiatives or positions outlined by the president for a variety of reasons. First, members of Congress may be dissuaded by allegations of wrongdoing by the president, thereby politically distancing themselves from any appearance of controversy. After all, members of Congress have to face reelection; supporting the president during times of presidential scandal therefore would not seem to appeal to voters. Presidents are apt to think that their popularity with the public can influence the way members of Congress vote on presidential legislative initiatives. Indeed, Richard Nixon stated “No leader survives simply by doing well. A leader survives when people have confidence in him when he’s not doing well” (quoted in Edwards 1989, 108). As a result, one would think that legislative success is contingent upon presidential approval; higher approval ratings would yield success in presidential initiatives in Congress, and vice versa. A small portion of scholarly literature, namely Rivers and Rose (1985) and Ostrom and Simon (1985), suggests that public support of a president is related to congressional support. Ostrom and Simon state, “Presidential effectiveness in the legislative arena is an important component maintaining public support…More ambitious legislative agendas demand higher levels of approval to sustain a given level of success” (1985, 350-351). However, there is debate as to how much presidential approval can influence congressional action. Edwards contends, “Despite its utility, presidential approval is not a resource that in most instances will dominate executive-legislative relations. Like party leadership, it works at the margins, within the confines of other influences on Congress, yet it is an important background resource for leadership” (1989, 125). Moreover, “One should not expect public approval to translate directly into support in Congress. No matter how low a president’s standing with the public or how small the margin of his election, he still receives support from a substantial number of senators and representatives” (Edwards 1989,
As a result, other issues such as divided/united government and the point in president’s term in office may influence congressional support for presidential initiatives during presidential scandal.

Political party in Congress is a key factor that could determine legislative support for presidential initiatives during scandal. The president serves as the leader of his political party. Presidents and members of Congress who share the same political party are, for the most part, able to agree on issues under their party platform. Moreover, members of Congress who share the same political party as the president may agree on policy agendas and legislative goals for the party. As a result, members of the president’s party are more likely to approve of presidential goals and priorities. Unified government would foster the most cooperation and agreement between the legislative and executive branches, while divided government would result in the opposite. Party discipline in the House of Representatives remains a key characteristic of the lower house, while the Senate is a more independent body. Whereas most votes in the House of Representatives are mainly on the basis of party line, votes in the Senate tend to be less partisan and more compromising and independent in nature. During presidential scandal, House and Senate members would less likely agree or vote for presidential initiatives. The Senate would be more likely to differ from the president on an aggregate basis on presidential agenda items, but at the same time be more aware of presidential scandal and controversy. For the most part, it can be expected that the Senate would align itself based on party lines when voting on impeachment trials, but have divisions among the president’s opposition party as witnessed in the Clinton impeachment trial. Because the Senate has more constitutional mechanisms to check the power of the president (having to approve treaties, federal judges and cabinet secretaries that the
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president appoints), the Senate may be more apt to disagree with the president and further “check” the president’s power by disagreeing through key votes.

A president’s term may influence the likelihood of presidential scandal as well as congressional votes on key issues. For all of the scandals being studied, each presidential scandal took place during the second term in office. The president is a “lame duck” during his second term, since there are constitutional term limits in place for the office of the president. Consequently, it may be harder for the president to get legislative goals passed through Congress if the president has run out of newer ideas for legislative initiatives.

In addition, the president would tend to be under more critical media scrutiny during the second term. There is virtually no honeymoon period at the start of second term presidencies, therefore the media may be more alert, critical, and skeptical of the president’s campaign promises. Consequently, the media may be more likely to pick up on controversy—either through the misdeeds by the president’s administration or through misdeeds directly by the president himself. The media could consequently have an impact on presidential popularity and public approval of the president. A skeptical media could result in lower presidential approval ratings and consequently less congressional support for presidential initiatives. However, as stated above, one must use caution and not assume that congressional support for presidential initiatives is absolutely and solely contingent upon presidential approval ratings. Nevertheless, presidential scandal depicted by the media could lead to more congressional oversight of the president and more investigation of presidential activities. The presence of presidential scandal could mutually fuel the fire for both the media and Congress, thus intensifying the degree of political scandal.
Due to lack of public support or approval for the president, the president may be forced to “go public” to try to alter public perceptions and opinions of political scandal. Presidents have commonly overestimated the ties between public opinion and success in Congress. As a result, presidents assume that “going public” could potentially turn the tide in Congress through indirect means. If the president has enough political clout, he may be able to encourage the public to push Congress to pass presidential initiatives. Success of going public to influence congressional voting behavior, however, is debatable among scholars. Edwards, in On Deaf Ears: The Limits of the Bully Pulpit (2003), argues that “going public” remains unsuccessful,10 while Barrett in “Gone Public: The Impact of Going Public on Presidential Legislative Success” (2004) states the opposite.11

Nevertheless, popularity of the president during presidential scandal may decrease as the public is informed by the misdeeds of the president. During revelations of presidential scandal, the president may be seen by the public as manipulative of the powers of the office of the presidency. People may consequently view the president as trying to act “above the law,” and therefore distrust him more, driving down popularity. However, this was not the case from revelations of the Clinton-Lewinsky affair. Despite the intense degree of scandal, Clinton’s approval ratings remained high. Kagay (1999) suggests that citizens were able to distinguish personal character from presidential job performance.12 Kagay goes on to state that “people could be sharply critical of the man and of his behavior even at the same time they thought that as a president he was doing a pretty good job” (1999, 451).13 Approval of Clinton remained high, partly because citizens did not think that the president was manipulating the powers of the office of the presidency.
Whereas the framers modeled the American constitutional system to withstand the tests of political scandal by ensuring through checks and balances that no crime or misdeed goes unpunished, it may ultimately strain the system during the scandal itself and ultimately lead to paralysis of effective policymaking and compromise between the legislative and executive branches. Scandal could limit Congress’s power to make policy and the president’s ability to guide initiatives through Congress. As frequently seen by citizens and the news media, “effective government” rests on the idea that there exists a degree of cooperation between the executive and legislative branches; in other words, the president and members of Congress serve the American people by making public policy in a generally cooperative fashion. If ineffective government or “gridlock” exists within the institutional framework when presidential scandal is intensified, this may be a cause of concern to the citizen. Scandal could decrease a president’s political capital or leverage in Congress through a variety of ways, mainly through public opinion, lack of bipartisanship, and ultimately congressional investigation. Presidential scandal is an important phenomenon and worth examining when studying executive-congressional relations.

Conclusion

This study tries to enhance the understanding of presidential scandal and its impact on presidential-congressional relations. Chapter 2 includes a comprehensive literature review, examining other factors that are quantitatively difficult to measure which could determine presidential influence in Congress. The literature review finds a gap in research pertaining to presidential scandal, particularly in relation to Congress and presidential leadership or support in Congress. Chapter 3 reviews the research methods employed in the study. It also discusses limitations in the study’s research. Chapter 4 examines the results of the study. Through
subsequent data analysis, I found a statistically significant relationship between presidential scandal and Senate/presidential agreement or disagreement on key votes reported by CQ. Although statistically significant, presidential scandal is not as strong as divided/united government in predicting Senate/presidential agreement or disagreement on key votes. An analysis of the other measured variables (divided/united government, the president’s year of tenure in office, the policy nature of the vote, as well as presidential approval) for all three presidencies combined failed to yield statistically significant relationships with Senate/presidential agreement or disagreement on key votes. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the conclusion of the research and emphasizes the importance of further research to enhance understanding of presidential-Congressional relations during times of presidential scandal.

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2 U.S. Constitution. 1787. Article II, Section 4.
7 Ibid
9 Ibid
13 Ibid
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Introduction

Scholarship in presidential-legislative relations indicates a wealth of information on the restraints of executive leadership in U.S. Congress. Executive success in Congress depends on a range of factors which include eras of history, partisanship, member ideology, public opinion, and the policy nature of legislation (domestic, foreign, or intermestic). In addition, the House of Representatives and the Senate have institutional differences that may affect the rate of success in passing presidential legislative initiatives in each respective chamber. While several factors may limit the president’s role of leadership in Congress, the president may choose to “go public” to indirectly influence Congress through public opinion. However, most scholars determine that the margin of success for this is strategy is only minimal. As a result, the president must rely on the State of the Union address as a formal mechanism to influence the agenda in Congress.

Upon closer examination of the literature on presidential-congressional relations, one will find that little research has been done to understand the implications of presidential scandal on presidential initiatives in Congress. Meinke and Anderson (2001) find that presidential scandal does indeed impact a president’s influence in the House of Representatives. Limitations in Meinke and Anderson’s study restrict understanding of the impact of presidential scandal. Furthermore, scholarship in executive-legislative relations should be enhanced through the study of presidential scandal’s impact and influence in the U.S. Senate.

Constraints on Presidential Power in the Legislative Branch

It is important to recognize that the president is not the primary actor in the legislative branch. Indeed, the framers of the Constitution crafted a separation of powers between the three branches of government, while also ensuring checks and balances so that no one branch would
become too powerful. The president, as a result, has an inherently constrained influence on congressional decision making. Based on previous presidential studies, scholars acknowledge that the president is not always the dominant actor in the legislative branch (Meinke and Anderson 2001, 642, Peterson 1990, and Edwards 1989). Scholarship has demonstrated that “events and forces in which a president ‘plays no part,’ as well as factors closer to his control all may conspire to sap the executive of his presidential capital in dealing with Congress” (Neustadt 1990, 835 as quoted in Meinke and Anderson 2001, 642, and Edwards 1989). The president has considerable power compared to any one senator or representative, but that does not necessarily mean that presidents will achieve their desired goals in Congress (Loomis and Schiller 2006, 116). The Congress and the president are thus forced to compete for power: “Their [presidential and congressional] powers are so intertwined that neither will accomplish very much, very long, without the acquiescence of the other” (Neustadt 1990, 32).

Furthermore, the president’s ability to achieve “even limited agenda support from Congress depends on a complicated web of factors, only some of which lie within his control” (Meinke and Anderson, 2001, 642). Such elements that are beyond the president’s power include “a president’s margin of victory in the previous election, the partisan balance of congressional seats, and the president’s standing with the public, all of which contribute to his ability to pressure Congress into passing his proposals” (Loomis and Schiller 2006, 118-119). Loomis and Schiller contend that these factors can “shape the content and scope of executive initiatives, as well as the strategies the president constructs for winning congressional majorities” (2006, 119). Peterson states that “malleable contexts” such as election results and current conditions of the economy “contribute significantly to the substance of the president’s political capital” or influence in Congress (1990, 92-93).
A president’s second term may also have an impact on legislative success on initiatives in Congress. Loomis and Schiller state that presidents may have difficulty getting initiatives enacted in Congress even after their first year in office: “Beyond the initial year, presidential agendas face increased skepticism in the halls of Congress. Delay is the enemy of change, and the very nature of the policy process in Congress—one that requires a succession of majorities in both chambers in committee, on the floor, and in conference—encourages delay” (2006, 118). Furthermore, a president’s second term agenda may be compromised “because he cannot run for reelection, and this limitation diminishes his role as a political power broker between members of Congress and voters” (Loomis and Schiller 2006, 119). Common problems of two-term presidents, particularly within their sixth year of office, include “scandals, weakened political coalitions, and midterm electoral defeat” (Shogan 2006, 90). Since presidents are under a more hostile Congress and press during their second terms in office, they might be prone to unfavorable situations in the presidency such as scandal. Conversely, presidential scandal may not matter as much in a president’s second term given that the hostile congressional environment may not produce presidential agenda accomplishments.

Skowronek suggests that in order to understand a president’s relationship with Congress, one must understand the context of “political time” or cycles in which presidents serve (2008). Skowronek goes on to state that history is characterized by a “recurrent sequence of change—of political breakthroughs, followed by political breakups, followed by political breakdowns—and it identifies typical reconfigurations of the relationship between the presidency and the political system along the way” (2008, 28). According to Skowronek, sequences of political time reveal “several distinct contexts for presidential leadership” (2008, 29). Most scholars suggest, however that other factors such as presidential persuasion, public opinion, the type of legislative
initiative (domestic, foreign, or intermestic), and partisanship are more important factors that may determine support for presidential initiatives in Congress.

**Presidential Persuasion and “Going Public”**

In recent decades, scholars of the presidency have noticed a shift in presidential leadership in Congress. Instead of using traditional methods of coalition building for agenda support in Congress, modern presidents have increasingly used the strategy of “going public” through “permanent campaigning” as a means of indirectly influencing Congress. “Going public” is essentially a presidential public relations strategy to influence congressional policymaking through direct appeals to the governed public and specialized interest groups by emphasizing presidential priorities in Congress. Presidents engage in this form of “permanent campaigning” as a means to bypass the media and directly appeal to the public. It is the president’s hope that the public, convinced of the president’s policy objectives, will in turn contact their member of Congress to voice support for presidential initiatives. Consequently, the president expects that members of Congress will make policy consistent with the president’s agenda. “Going public,” “permanent campaigning,” or alternatively known as using the “bully pulpit” has many forms. It can include formal institutional responsibilities such as the president’s State of the Union Address, or very informal arrangements such as travel, public appearances, press conferences, or public addresses via mass media outlets such as television and radio addresses.

The literature sampled in relation to “going public” explores the methods and strategies, impacts, and reasons for the chief executive’s use of “the bully pulpit” as a means to influence the public who may consequently persuade Congress to support the president’s agenda. In addition, several studies investigate particular aspects of the president’s efforts in “going public.”
There seems to be considerable disagreement among scholars as to the extent of influence, if any, of the president’s use of permanent campaigning. Samuel Kernell and George C. Edwards, in particular, have published extensive research on the topic. Kernell and Edwards both argue that despite increased efforts of “going public,” presidents are ineffective in achieving legislative objectives in Congress through public persuasion. Other scholars take issue with the work done by Kernell and Edwards and argue that presidential efforts to influence Congress are, in fact, successful. In addition, several scholars have researched particular features of “going public.” Literature focusing on “going public” further advances scholarship and research on presidential-congressional relations; however, there are particular areas within the topic that need to be further explored.

* A Brief History and Theoretical Foundations of “Going Public”

In the fifth chapter of the book, *Going Public* (2007), Samuel Kernell traces trends of modern presidents since Nixon in their efforts of “going public” to indirectly influence Congress by using direct appeals to the public. Although past presidents have “gone public,” especially Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, and John F. Kennedy, presidents since Richard Nixon have substantially increased use of this strategy and have made it routine. Moreover, Nixon was the first president to devote a large portion of the White House Office toward polling activities to research public opinion on virtually every issue under consideration by the White House. These activities were largely inspired by his hopes of being reelected in 1972. As a result, President Nixon was able to adjust stated positions and priorities to merge his message with public opinion. Campaigning on issues has had an effect on the “character of [presidential] leadership” within Congress (Kernell 2007, 144). *Going Public* further traces other factors that may have
contributed to the tendency of presidents to use the bully pulpit, including a more hostile media environment in Washington and the prevalence of individualized pluralism within Congress.

Some scholars have provided a theoretical basis as to why presidential appeals to the public for congressional action have become the norm in national politics. Kernell (2007), in particular notes that the traditional system of institutionalized pluralism, whereby politicians rely on formal mechanisms such as political parties and bargaining to achieve goals in Congress, has been replaced by a system of individualized pluralism. Through this mechanism, members of Congress are increasingly susceptible to the demands of individuals, either through formally organized interest groups or other less organized constituencies with common goals or concerns. Interest groups and constituents have further mitigated individualized pluralism, which has encouraged the president to try different routes, including permanent campaigning, to influence congressional decision making. Consequently, presidents must appeal to the public rather than their political parties to succeed in legislative policy goals. Similarly, Tulis argues that “the rise of the rhetorical presidency reveals important inadequacies in previous strategic analyses” (1987, 11). Kernell speculates as to why individualized pluralism has become prevalent in recent decades. First, the emergence of “welfare state” entitlements and policies have resulted in “organized constituencies having a stake in national policy” (Kernell 2007, 30-31). Second, advances in mass communication technologies have made it easier for individuals to organize interests and lobby members of Congress (Kernell 2007, 31). Finally, the polarization of political parties in Congress has “seriously weakened affinity relations among political leaders that in the past had made exchange easier and occasionally necessary” (Kernell 2007, 31).

There is relative disagreement as to the extent and prevalence of individualized pluralism within Congress. Most notably, Bodnick (1990) emphasizes that traditional modes of bargaining and
compromise within Congress have *not* been replaced by individualized pluralism. Bodnick uses evidence of compromise from Reagan’s 1981 budget plan to suggest that individualized pluralism has not completely replaced traditional methods of presidential bargaining in the legislative branch. Bodnick believes Kernell puts too much emphasis in the importance of individualized pluralism and states that going public “was important, but not nearly so influential and crucial as Kernell would have us believe” (1990, 4).

*The Nature of “Going Public”*

Barrett (2004) typifies the nature of presidential agendas when appealing to the public for congressional action. The president is more likely to give addresses based on their own initiatives, “those bills for which the president has the most at stake politically” (Barrett, 2004, 343). If a president initiates a bill in Congress, “no other political actor has more to gain by its passage—or more to lose by its failure—than the president, whose reputation as a leader is influenced by the success of his legislative proposals” (Barrett 2004, 343). Moreover, “the president is more likely to focus his public remarks on his own initiatives—on which his hope for reelection as well as his legacy is built—than on congressional initiatives for which he may have no direct political stake (especially if Congress is controlled by the president’s opposition party)” (Barrett 2004, 352). Presidents often queue their initiatives based on election campaign platforms. Presidents often try to advance policy initiatives early on in their term in office as Midterm elections and the campaign for reelection may prove to be obstacles for original presidential initiatives. Nixon’s foreign policy initiatives in Vietnam (namely the plan of Vietnamization), Reagan’s budget and tax cuts of 1981, 1982, and 1983, and Clinton’s health care reform proposal in 1993 are examples of early initiatives in which the president used public rhetoric as a means to achieve congressional goals.
Aaron Wildavsky finds that presidents tend to have more leverage and authority in Congress in relation to foreign policy objectives than with domestic objectives (1991). Drawing from Wildavsky’s research, Lewis (1997) finds that a similar situation exists in analysis of the rhetorical presidency. Lewis (1997) discovers that the president’s success in going public with economic policy differs from foreign policy. Through content analysis of all major televised speeches between 1947 and 1991, Lewis contends that presidents are more successful in going public with economic issues than going public with issues that involve foreign policy. An explanation for this might be that the public is more willing to respond to matters that directly affect them (economic policies) rather than those that do not (Lewis 1997, 389). Lewis states, “Because material self-interest often serves as the springboard to political activity, it is plausible for presidents to expect that citizens may heed a call to arms if they can be persuaded that they have a pocketbook interest at stake” (1997, 389).

A president’s success in using the bully pulpit depends on his ability to prime and frame issues in his favor. Druckman and Holmes find the president can have a “substantial effect on his own approval by priming the criteria on which citizens base their approval evaluations” (2004, 755). In addition, presidential success in going public also depends on the president’s ability to frame an issue in such a way that would be most favorable to his goals in Congress. For example, part of President Reagan’s success in Congress with the 1981 budget can be attributed to how cuts in government spending were framed as “savings” for the American people. His address to the nation on September 24, 1981, is a good example of this tactic. Through the use of the phrase “budget savings,” Reagan was able to positively spin his proposed program to viewers. Reagan continued to use the phrase “budget savings” instead of “budget
cuts” throughout his address to the nation. Ultimately, the skills employed in framing and priming issues are likely to have an effect on the success in presidential efforts of going public.

**Forms of “Going Public”**

There exists a wealth of scholarly literature on the president’s use of televised addresses, press conferences, and travel as means to influence public opinion and Congress. Nationally televised presidential addresses, particularly State of the Union addresses and prime time addresses, have the potential to influence the public at large, since Americans spend much of their free time watching television. Jeffery Cohen in his article “Presidential Rhetoric and the Public Agenda,” studies stated presidential policy initiatives in the president’s annual State of the Union Address. State of the Union Addresses, like any nationally televised address, are vehicles presidents use to project their power to influence public opinion, particularly in areas of foreign, economic, and civil rights policy (Cohen 1995, 87). State of the Union addresses are also useful in identifying the president’s agenda in broad terms (Cohen 1995, 90). The State of the Union address, like other nationally televised presidential addresses, allows the president to control the agenda and thus potentially secure success with Congress (Cohen 1995, 88). Because the public is sometimes dependent on the president as a “leader” of policy, especially during a crisis (Cohen 1995, 89), framing public policy through addresses may be effective for a president. Moreover, Larocca argues that the State of the Union address is the most “foremost agenda-setting influence in Congress” (2006, 13). Furthermore, the president may use the State of the Union address to “engage in credit claiming for reelection and legacy purposes” and to take positions on policy initiatives by “setting the stage for their policy recommendations” (Hoffman and Howard 2006, 109).
However, there are also barriers that exist to achieving a president’s goals. An unmediated, direct televised address furthermore allows the president to frame issues important to his policy initiatives without intervention or comment by the media during his address. The mass media, in particular, can be barriers to the president in framing agendas. Television commentators may unfavorably spin stories after the president’s address. Cohen found that mere presidential mention of policy during State of the Union addresses results in “heightened public concern with policy problems,” regardless of presidential popularity (1995, 102). Presidential leadership agendas, excluding foreign policy, decay among the public’s concern within a year, which may lead to presidential persistence on sticking with issues until they are resolved (Cohen 1995, 103). The success rate for congressional enactment of policy priorities set by State of the Union addresses is relatively low but also varies from president to president (Hoffman and Howard 2006, 177).

Like Cohen, Kim Quaile Hill argues that publicly televised addresses such as State of the Union speeches are proper indicators for presidential policy goals in Congress. The president may use televised addresses to cue public response to policy agendas. Hill finds that through time series regression analysis with State of the Union addresses, Gallup polls, and other “real world phenomena” like public crises, the president can influence the public but not vice versa (1998, 1328).

Canes-Wrone’s study investigates the success of the president’s use of speechmaking “and other rhetorical activities” (2001, 314) from President Eisenhower to President Clinton in shaping public opinion and consequently obtaining success with policy agendas in Congress. If the president has raised an issue through speeches or addresses, changes in public salience may affect a legislator’s voting behavior in Congress (Canes-Wrone 2001, 314). Canes-Wrone
finds that presidents are able to attain significant legislative influence by promoting their proposals in nationally televised speeches.\textsuperscript{57} According to Canes-Wrone, presidential influence on the legislative branch in this area is “independent of that deriving from presidential priorities, presidential approval, expected public support for the policy, and the prior salience of the issue” (2001, 326).\textsuperscript{58} Canes-Wrone states that presidents are more likely to publicize an issue which is already popular among the public. Indeed, achieving influence depends on the president’s particular strategy in choosing issues for public advocacy (Canes-Wrone 2001, 326).\textsuperscript{59}

Welch (2000) discusses the president’s eagerness to achieve a large amount of support for policy goals.\textsuperscript{60} An important method of achieving public support is by appeal through the electronic media, particularly television. President Nixon was one of the first presidents to deliver televised addresses to the nation. However, televised addresses have increasingly become insufficient in motivating public opinion. Baum and Kernell state, “In the 1960s and 1970s, when more homes in America had television than indoor plumbing and virtually all viewers (including early cable subscribers) depended on the networks for programming, presidents possessed an enviable tool of persuasion…Gone are the days when a president could ‘appear simultaneously on all national radio and television networks at prime, large-audience evening hours, virtually when whenever and however the president wishes’” (1999, 110).\textsuperscript{61} Because of the emergence of cable networks and other mass media innovations such as the internet, presidents have less success in achieving public support because of increased competition among media outlets during televised presidential addresses. Average audience ratings for presidential addresses have declined since Reagan (Baum and Kernell 1999, 99).\textsuperscript{62} As a result, the president has a less significant opportunity to influence the public directly in major speeches. Welch concludes that factors such as political attitudes, political participation,
demographics (age, sex, income, etc.,) and personal concerns correlate to viewership of presidential televised addresses (2000, 41). Although viewership of presidential addresses has declined over the decades, presidents may still use televised addresses to their advantage, since a significant portion of viewers who watch televised addresses are politically active (Welch 2000).

News coverage of presidential addresses has decreased as well: “Network television news no longer allows presidents to speak for themselves about their policies. The average presidential sound bite on the network evening news has shrunk from 42 seconds in 1968 to less than 7 seconds in 1996” (Baum and Kernell 1999, 99). Consequently, “With reporters and anchors on camera more, and presidents less, how reporters and their editors decide to frame a story greatly influences how the audience will consume it” (Baum and Kernell, 1999, 99). Finally, the emergence of soft news has contributed greatly to how Americans respond to presidential initiatives, especially in times of international crises and war (Baum 2003).

Although there are limited data on the effectiveness of presidential travel and presidential press conferences in respect to efforts of going public, Kernell contends that presidential appearances convey visual images that may contribute to their effectiveness (2007, 123). In addition, “appearances before select audiences offer the president an opportunity to target his appeals” (Kernell 2007, 123). Presidents use travel to narrowly frame issues before targeted constituencies (Kernell 2007, 125) and to give minor speeches. Presidential travel overseas represents convenient opportunities for the president to appear “presidential” (Kernell 2007, 125). Examples of overseas travels include Kennedy’s visit with Khrushchev in Vienna in 1961 and Nixon’s visit to China in 1972. Both cases were regarded as presidential public relations successes.
Does “Going Public” Work?

Most of the scholarly debate centers on the question of whether or not the use of the bully pulpit is an effective and useful strategy for presidential leadership in the legislative arena. There is significant literature on the perceived effects of the president’s manipulation of the media through “going public,” but there is disagreement over whether or not public opinion can shape presidential initiatives and outcomes in Congress. Because of the thesis’s purpose of examining presidential leadership within the legislative branch, the literature review sample is limited by excluding the president’s influence through the mass media. As discussed above, in hopes of reaching audiences who may be filtered through the mass media, presidents attempt to avoid the media through public addresses and appearances. Whether or not this strategy is successful is subject to considerable debate. Kernell (2007) and Edwards (2003) state that presidents only receive limited success as a result of campaigning for a particular goal or policy. Both books further examine presidential prospects and include data analysis to support their theses. Lawrence Jacobs also concludes that “pounding the press” through a “communications war” of “going public” produces adversarial relations with the press that hinders success. He contends that cooperative media relations are more likely to produce successful strategies that provide desired results (2003, 305). In particular, Jacobs cites Clinton’s unsuccessful health care and Social Security reform proposals to further his argument. Although Edwards in “Building Coalitions” (2000) argues that presidents have a limited effect on coalition building among the public, he concludes that the president has a major impact on building congressional coalitions as a result of going public (2000, 72). Corrigan (2000) analyzes President Clinton’s efforts to influence Congress by going public with his health care reform package over an eleven month period. Corrigan concludes that a going public strategy “may not provide a forum to
explain sophisticated policies and to build alliances in support over these policies over a substantial period of time” (2000, 149).  

A pool of scholars disagrees with Kernell and Edwards’s findings. Andrew Barrett (2004) argues the opposite of Kernell. In his article “Gone Public: The Impact of Going Public on Presidential Legislative Success,” Barrett studies data from presidential remarks on legislation from 1977 to 1992 regarding legislative strategy on presidential initiatives and bills supported by the chief executive. According to Barrett’s findings, there is a relationship between the number of presidential remarks per month and presidential legislative success (2004, 355-356). Therefore, Barrett finds that going public is an effective legislative strategy for presidents. Canes-Wrone discusses the president’s legislative influence from public appeals, particularly televised addresses. Although Canes-Wrone finds that presidents are able to attain significant legislative influence by promoting their proposals in nationally televised speeches, presidents are also more likely to publicize issues which are already popular among the public (2001, 326). Canes-Wrone also states that influence depends on presidential strategies in choosing issues for public advocacy (2001, 326). Additionally, Cohen (1995) contends that although presidential success in Congress in policy agendas is debatable, the public reacts to the president’s message with a “heightened public concern with policy problems” (1995, 102). Finally, Ostrom and Simon (1988) claim that the president is able to pressure public attitudes on policy agendas for a limited amount of time (1988, 1116). Although there are a variety of influences that are interplayed with presidential influence, change in support for presidential initiatives in Congress is expected (Ostrom and Simon 1988, 1116). Ostrom and Simon maintain that “Whether or not there exist feasible strategies for presidential influence remains a question of debate in the literature” (1988, 1117-1118).
Scholars have used presidential case studies on successful or failed agendas by presidents as a means of furthering their arguments. Scholars who tend to say that “going public” only has limited effects on policy outcomes in Congress cite President Clinton’s failed efforts to influence public opinion toward his plans to reform health care in 1993. After almost a year of campaigning throughout the country, the House of Representatives effectively killed the proposed health care reform bill by refusing to vote on the issue. There are several possible explanations for failure in Clinton’s efforts for a nationalized health care policy, most of which involve party polarization and cohesiveness by the opposition (Republicans) in Congress and interest group efforts denouncing an expansive health care plan.

Scholars who tend to argue that the use of bully pulpit is a successful method of presidential manipulation in congressional outcomes frequently cite Reagan’s 1981 tax and budget plan.89 President Reagan eventually had his budget and economic package adopted in Congress, but approval came with considerable compromises. Bodnick argues that a “strong bargaining dynamic played a part in the 1981 process” (1990, 1).90 Furthermore, Bodnick states that going public is a limited strategy of the president to influence Congress (1990, 7).91 In the promotion of Reagan’s economic recovery plan, going public “did not act as an unusually powerful resource for presidential coercion of Congress, but largely served as a tool for the president to complement the coalition building and bargaining strategies already in place. Public strategies are potent tools for presidents in that they give them one more source of incentives to persuade congressmen to pick the President’s compromise over the opposition’s. However, the President still must offer a viable compromise appealing to a majority’s primary constituent interests. Going public is a resource that can be used sparingly and then only when a victory is already possible” (Bodnick 1990, 7).92
Discussion on Limitations and Further Research

There are limitations of the sampled research studied on “going public.” First, some of the research studied neglects external factors (independent variables) such as media influence, presidential popularity, and divided versus unified government that may change the dependent variable, outcomes in Congress (votes) on the president’s legislative agenda. Also, there seems to be a gap in research on presidential strategies of going public during presidential scandals. Presidents may try to divert attention from scandals by using the strategies of going public. For instance, Bill Clinton’s visit to Africa during major revelations of the Lewinsky scandal can be seen as a public relations tactic to divert interest away from scandal.

Evaluating presidential efforts of “permanent campaigning,” scholars have demonstrated that there is still considerable debate as to whether or not presidential attempts of going public are successful. Success in going public may depend on a web of factors, both institutional and non-institutional, that complicate understanding presidential efforts to lead the public and Congress.

There are two areas in which scholarship on “permanent campaigning” should be continued. One could study whether or not going public is a successful tool for presidents during presidential scandal and subsequent investigation by Congress. It would also be useful to continue scholarship on presidential attempts to “go public” with case studies on particular items or agendas of importance for the president. Woodrow Wilson’s campaign to join the League of Nations, Franklin Roosevelt’s attempts to “go public” with fireside chats on the New Deal, Kennedy’s attempts to gain southern support on his “New Frontier” legislation package, Nixon’s attempts to gain public support and congressional approval on his Vietnamization plan, Clinton’s health care reform campaigning, and George W. Bush’s “No Child Left Behind” and Iraq War
lobbying can be further analyzed for future research on the success of “going public.” One may never know whether or not the bully pulpit is an effective tool for presidential leadership in Congress, but the study of historical contexts on a case by case basis will contribute to the scholarship of the phenomena of permanent campaigning.

Consequently, “going public” is a tactic of unpredictable value. Scholarship in presidential-legislative relations is further advanced through analyzing methods, strategies, reasons for, and consequences of going public. While persistent debate continues on the perceived effects of presidential leadership by going public, amplification of the understanding of presidential usage of permanent campaigning is possible. Case analyses and presidential attempts to use the bully pulpit during presidential scandal can be examined for further contribution to “going public” scholarship.

**Presidential Approval and Congressional Response**

Presidential approval is also a feature that may enhance or decrease presidential influence in Congress. Indeed, Richard Nixon stated “No leader survives simply by doing well. A leader survives when people have confidence in him when he’s not doing well” (quoted in Edwards 1989, 108). As a result, one would think that legislative success is contingent upon presidential approval; high approval ratings would yield success in presidential initiatives in Congress, and vice versa. A small portion of scholarly literature, namely Rivers and Rose (1985) and Ostrom and Simon (1985), suggests that public support of a president correlates with congressional support. Ostrom and Simon state, “Presidential effectiveness in the legislative arena is an important component maintaining public support…More ambitious legislative agendas demand higher levels of approval to sustain a given level of success” (1985, 350-351). An exception to this generalization is the Clinton political scandal. Public approval
of President Clinton remained high throughout the height of the scandal depicted by the news media because the Clinton White House was able to differentiate the effectiveness of his administration from the stigma of a personal blunder. In this case, the differentiation may have been possible because the Clinton-Lewinsky affair was more of a personal scandal instead of relations involving “secretive government wrongdoing” that “implicated major administrative actors” (Meinke and Anderson 2001, 652). However, favorable public approval ratings of President Clinton did not translate into favorable and significant presidential influence within Congress.

However, there is a debate as to how much presidential approval can influence congressional action. Edwards contends, “Despite its utility, presidential approval is not a resource that in most instances will dominate executive-legislative relations. Like party leadership, it works at the margins, within the confines of other influences on Congress, yet it is an important background resource for leadership” (1989, 125). Moreover, “One should not expect public approval to translate directly into support in Congress. No matter how low a president’s standing with the public or how small the margin of his election, he still receives support from a substantial number of senators and representatives” (Edwards 1989, 109). Presidential approval can give a president “leverage, but not control” (Edwards 1989, 113). As a result, other issues such as partisanship and a president’s term may influence congressional support for presidential initiatives during presidential scandal.

The Two Presidencies

This study also rests on the acknowledgement of the “two presidencies” thesis articulated by Aaron Wildavsky. Wildavsky states that the president typically has considerable capital and control of policy agendas within Congress in terms of dealing with matters of foreign policy.
As far as domestic policy issues are concerned, the president has far more of a limited role in terms of presidential influence and executive leadership within Congress. Although congressional scrutiny and involvement in foreign policy making have increased since Wildavsky’s original proposition in the 1960s, studies have suggested that presidents still have considerably more influence in prevailing on foreign affairs than on domestic agendas (Edwards and Wayne 2003, 492). 

**The Senate vs. the House of Representatives**

The United States Senate and the House of Representatives are two distinct chambers in their institutional nature which may contribute to presidential success rate of presidential initiative enactment. There are several institutional differences between the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Senate was designed originally to be “out of harmony with the popular majority” (Galloway 1955, 543), since prior to the Seventeenth Amendment, the senators were elected by their respective state legislatures. Even after senators became popularly elected, they still remain to be least in touch with their constituents and only face reelection every six years, in contrast to members of the House of Representatives. Longer terms in the Senate may result in senators being more flexible in their party leanings and disciplines, consequently decreasing party cohesion. Frequently, senators must reach across the aisle to pass legislation. In addition, while House members serve districts within their states with population roughly apportioned accordingly, senators (two for each state) represent each state collectively. Moreover, the Senate fosters individualism because “the smaller size of the Senate enhances the value of each voice and vote” (Galloway 1955, 544). Unlimited debate (along with filibuster power) and amendment can enhance the minority party’s power, as well (Galloway 1955, 544). In addition, senators are not as burdened with chamber rules as representatives are:
“Overall, formal rules play a more important role in the House, whereas norms are more important in the Senate” (Loomis and Schiller 2006, 131). Senate leadership is traditionally weak “not for want of individual talent, but because the various functions of leadership have been scattered among many committees and individuals” (Galloway 1955, 548). Furthermore, Senate power is decentralized, since the majority leader can serve on committees, unlike the Speaker of the House (Galloway 1955, 550). The Senate’s decision for President Clinton’s acquittal as a result of House impeachment is such an example. Although the Senate had a clear Republican majority, the Senate voted to dismiss or acquit Clinton of all charges of impeachment brought on by the Republican ruled House of Representatives. Party loyalty is therefore weak (Galloway 1955, 552), but has increased in recent decades (Loomis and Schiller 2006, 143). As a result, it may difficult to predict Senate responsiveness to presidential initiatives because of weak party loyalty and concern for initiatives important to a senator’s state. There has been virtually no research to indicate how the Senate would respond to presidential scandal. However, despite the institutional indicators mentioned above that could cause each house of Congress to react differently, Senate support of presidential initiatives might dwindle as a result of presidential scandal.

Partisanship

Research has suggested that the party and ideology of congressional members have a relatively large role in determining presidential influence or agenda success within Congress (Edwards 1989 and Edwards, Barrett and Peake 1997). As discussed above, partisanship or party loyalty is stricter in the House of Representatives than in the Senate. Because the minority party has more leverage in the Senate, it may be harder to forecast legislative outcomes:

“Depending on the size and cohesiveness of the majority party [in the Senate], the behavior of
minority party legislators can be critical to legislative outcomes” (Smith 2007, 74). Smith goes on to state that “the minority party can make little difference if the majority party is large or cohesive, particularly in the House, but minority party leaders may have opportunities to influence outcomes when the majority party is not large or cohesive” (Smith 2007, 78).

Because of the possibility of filibusters and the lack of monopolistic majority power control, the minority party has an extreme advantage and thus “the Senate pattern of voting on final passage motions will differ from the House pattern” (Smith 2007, 186).

Nevertheless, Edwards contends that “party identification is the best predictor of sources of support for members of Congress” (1989, 119). Furthermore, “party leaders and the organizations they supervise are involved in every stage of the legislative process” (Smith 2007, 2). They work either with or against the president to achieve collective goals, which can be either electoral or policy oriented (Smith 2007, 4). The president and his congressional party leaders are interdependent in the sense that they develop joint strategies for policy or electoral goals (Smith 2007, 73). Mayhew, in his seminal work America’s Congress, acknowledges that party plays an important role in determining support or opposition to a president’s program (2000). Additionally, Mayhew recognizes that presidents are almost always “countered by an opposition centered in a congressional majority party” (2000, 117).

It is noteworthy to point out the relevance of divided versus unified government in regards to passing the president’s program in Congress. Put rather simply, unified government is a situation in which the president and the congressional majority (both houses of Congress) are of the same political party. Divided government, on the other hand, is the predicament of the president and at least one house of Congress as members of opposite political parties. Conley (2003) finds that divided or unified government can play an important role in passage of
presidential agendas. Unified government typically results in a president’s shared agenda with Congress. In addition, unified government results in high floor success rates for the president’s agenda. Presidents often seek aid of party leaders to galvanize support for legislative agendas. As a result, presidents frequently maximize these advantages of party control and support with an experienced legislative liaison office staff. Divided government, on the other hand, results in a president’s more adversarial relationship with Congress. As a result, presidential strategy tends to be diversified, often resulting in presidents “going public” as mentioned above to shore up support, or use negative leverage such as the veto/veto threat. Scholars acknowledge that party can make a difference in passage of the president’s program, but it is not the sole determinant of presidential success in Congress.

Limitations on the Scholarship of Presidential-Congressional Relations

In 1955, before the specter of the Watergate impeachment proceedings, Galloway stated that “The impeachment-trial procedure is so cumbersome and time consuming that it will probably never again be employed” (Galloway 1955, 582). Nixon’s Watergate affair, Reagan’s Iran-Contra affair, and Bill Clinton’s affair with Monica Lewinsky suggests that scandal has been a modern phenomenon in recent decades. Despite the increased phenomenon, little scholarly attention has been given to presidential scandal and its effects on congressional outcomes on presidential initiatives in Congress. Larry Sabato’s research depicts an increased atmosphere in American society that preys on scandal, resulting from a hostile press and media competitiveness (1991). However, like many other studies on the increased phenomenon of “gotcha politics” (Lyons 1996, Garment 1991, Davis 2006, and Wilson and Seaman 1986), little research has been done to study implications of presidential misconduct for the president, specifically his role as chief legislator in Congress. Meinke and Anderson (2001)
seem to be the only scholars who have studied presidential scandal’s impact on the president’s legislative goals in Congress. What follows is a detailed analysis and critique of their work published in *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, identifying potential causal factors absent from their research and detailing how the authors could have strengthened the contextual evidence and resultant findings.

“Influencing from Impaired Administrations”

Meinke and Anderson’s article entitled “Influencing from Impaired Administrations: Presidents, White House Scandals, and Legislative Leadership” tries to evaluate the chief executive’s influence on the House of Representatives in times of White House scandal. Meinke and Anderson argue that presidential scandal can reduce presidential influence including their power in Congress.\(^{130}\) Although Meinke and Anderson’s study hypothesize that presidential scandal can have a negative effect on policy initiatives in Congress, their research design is flawed in some aspects.\(^{131}\)

Meinke and Anderson acknowledge the impact of traditional predictor variables such as presidential public standing, the number of House members who are members of the president’s political party and the ideological characteristics of House members.\(^{132}\) Public approval, House members of the president’s party, ideological characteristics of House members, as well as congressional district location (i.e., North or South) are the control variables in the study. The authors examine how Congress votes by using individual voting decisions by House members on key votes during three periods in recent American history that were marked by presidential scandal. These periods are the Watergate scandal during the Nixon administration, the Iran-Contra affair during President Reagan’s second term in office, and the Lewinsky scandal of President Clinton’s second term. In the first two cases, the scandalous activities were political in
nature, involving other branches and agencies in government. In the case of the latter, Meinke and Anderson focus on how presidential personal scandal may affect the president’s agenda support in Congress. Meinke and Anderson’s hypothesis states, “Heightened scandal intensity will decrease likelihood that an individual member will support the president’s position” (2001, 643). This means that as scandal becomes more visible in the public arena or intense in national politics, a member of Congress is less likely to support the President’s agenda.

The dependent variable is House members’ voting patterns for or against the president’s position, or to put it more simply, legislative voting behavior. Meinke and Anderson did not study policies proposed by each president in their annual State of the Union addresses. Taking policy initiatives outlined in State of the Union addresses and correlating them to key votes outlined in Congressional Quarterly would help focus the study. Four independent variables are examined as control variables while one independent variable is included to test the hypothesis. The most relevant independent variable is the relative presence and strength (seriousness) of White House scandal. The other four independent variables that are used as control variables are the President’s public standing (determined by Gallup polls), House members’ ideology and House members’ partisan affiliations, and North or South congressional membership. There are several ways to determine “presence and strength of White House scandal.” Meinke and Anderson examined this variable by measuring the mean number of front-page “Washington Post stories on each relevant scandal during the month prior to each vote in question” (2001, 647). This indicator assumes that legislators are not immediately malleable by the press and “instead require events over time to affect their decision to support or not support the president” (Meinke and Anderson 2001, 647). Meinke and Anderson examine and observe periods of time before a scandal is present in order to provide a basis for determining the resulting impact
of the scandal. Meinke and Anderson, however, examine the Clinton scandal by looking at the stories in the headlines in 1998, only when the scandal was most salient.

Meinke and Anderson found that the President’s public opinion readings for the two earlier scandals did not affect legislative voting behavior, as would be expected from previous research on public opinion.\(^\text{137}\) The authors did find, as would be expected, that member ideology and party affiliation did affect voting behavior in the House of Representatives.\(^\text{138}\) Most importantly, they found a relationship between congressional voting and the presence and strength of White House scandal.\(^\text{139}\) Meinke and Anderson do not provide detailed quantitative findings in their article other than explaining their findings in a table within the text of their article (2001, 649).\(^\text{140}\) They do indicate that the “presence and strength of White House scandal” variable was statistically significant.\(^\text{141}\) From their analysis, it seems that “degree of presidential scandal” and House member voting behaviors in all three scandals were related, but do not indicate the strength of the relationship between these two variables.\(^\text{142}\)

There are some strengths in Meinke and Anderson’s research. First, the authors used the findings derived from other work on presidential and congressional studies that concluded that the president had a varying but only marginal degree of influence in Congress.\(^\text{143}\) The authors also took other independent variables into consideration when analyzing their primary independent variable (presence and strength of White House scandal). By doing so, they offer a statistical comparison with the dependent variable entitled “House members’ votes” controlling for the other independent variables.\(^\text{144}\) The use of the elaboration model in assuming that additive relationships exist such as House member ideology and party affiliation is useful to include in the analysis of presidential scandal. The research done by Meinke and Anderson has internal validity.\(^\text{145}\) The influence of the independent variable, presence and strength of White
House scandal, on the dependent variable, legislative votes, is isolated from other plausible explanations. The research findings also have external validity to some degree. The research could possibly be carefully applied to other presidential scandals in the past and future.

There were several limitations to the research presented in the article by Meinke and Anderson. The authors only used the Nixon and Reagan political scandals, as well as the Clinton personal scandal to some degree. The research could have included other scandals (political and personal) from other presidential administrations to support their arguments or to further test the hypothesis. The analysis of the Clinton scandal was not consistent with the standards used in the analyses for the Nixon and Reagan scandals. Although the authors mention that the Clinton scandal was more of a personal scandal instead of involving “secretive government wrongdoing and implicated major administrative actors” (Meinke and Anderson 2001, 652), the analysis did not compare President Clinton’s legislative success or failure in the time periods preceding the Monica Lewinsky scandal. In the case of the Clinton scandal, Meinke and Anderson simply examine the 1998 time frame when the issue was prominent but offer no means of comparison to legislative voting behavior before or after a reduction in the perception of the strength or intensity of the scandal. In fact, in none of the scandals analyzed did the authors compare and contrast the legislative behavior after each scandal to that which existed before to analyze how each scandal affected the longer term support of the Presidential agenda in Congress. The research and accompanying article also did not examine the effects of news media coverage on the perception of the scandal. However, news media coverage is hard to measure. The congressional voting statistics that were evaluated in the article were limited to key votes in the House of Representatives. No explanation was offered for the exclusion of Senate key votes.
The article addresses the relevant issue of the fate of policy initiatives and outcomes when scandal rocks a presidency. Meinke and Anderson state, “Scandal, and events more generally that affect the president’s reputation, can be expected to add a crucial ‘presidency-centered’ factor to the mix of congressional and presidential variables that shape members’ decisions to support the president” (Meinke and Anderson 2001, 642). A more in-depth analysis to encompass more presidential scandals while also analyzing Senate key votes would further illuminate the phenomena. That executive branch scandal impacts the legislative process is unquestionable according to Meinke and Anderson’s research. However, further research is needed to establish the empirical value of these impacts. It would appear that this will not be possible unless further characterization of the scandal typology is accomplished. A better understanding of these ingredients could lessen the negative impacts on the public policy process by issues and behaviors that are elevated to “scandal” status. As history teaches, complete avoidance of the appearance of scandal in the presidency is difficult, if not impossible, to attain. However, publicized personal presidential scandal that has elevated to the rankings of the president is rare. The Clinton scandal has become the only salient personal scandal; therefore, one cannot make generalizations of the patterns or nature of personal presidential scandal. Furthermore, a better understanding of the mechanisms involved during presidential scandal may result in strategies and tactics for better management of the consequences.

**Conclusion**

Research has indicated that presidential leadership within Congress is inherently constrained by the institutional framework set by the United States Constitution. Constraints may contribute to a president’s reliance on public opinion and “going public” to try to influence congressional support for presidential initiatives. Scholars of presidential-legislative relations
have contended that several factors contribute to a president’s legislative success on initiatives supported in Congress. These factors include public opinion, the nature of legislation proposed, and partisanship. In addition, Senate and House differences add to the complexity of presidential agenda support in Congress. However, the absence of research on presidential political scandal has limited findings on executive-legislative relations. Meinke and Anderson (2001) try to address this gap by researching House votes on presidential positions during times of presidential scandal. Nonetheless, the absence of studies on Senate key votes and strict definitions of presidential priorities inherently limit their research. As a result, this study was designed to address some of the limitations of Meinke and Anderson to further equip the investigation of the impact of presidential scandal on the Senate.

2 Ibid
12 Ibid
15 Ibid
18 Ibid
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Chapter 3: Research Methods

Introduction

In order to determine the impact, if any, of presidential scandal on legislative votes, it is pertinent to devise a systematic template or methodology for data collection and analysis. Scholars of presidential-congressional relations frequently have cited Congressional Quarterly indices to calibrate such interactions between the two branches. Depending on the nature of the study, some CQ indices are more advantageous than others. Furthermore, it is necessary to evaluate these indices and determine which is best suited for analysis.

Previous scholarship studying Congressional Quarterly indices found that CQ’s yearly key vote index is the most useful to indicate relations of political power on issues of national importance. Presidential positions are listed in Congressional Quarterly if the president indicated if he supported or opposed listed key votes. Usually, a president’s position is listed for each key vote, but is not required. As a result, there are limitations on translating presidential initiatives into key votes. Furthermore, my original intention that only key votes on presidential initiatives outlined in State of the Union messages should be used to calibrate presidential relations was a faulty one. Consequently, an examination of alternative approaches to gauge presidential support on key votes was necessary. Nevertheless, analysis of key votes by the U.S. Senate and listed presidential positions is sufficient in calculating presidential-congressional agreement or disagreement.

The specific time frames for the study include the Nixon, Reagan, and Clinton presidencies, those in which significant presidential scandals occurred. In addition, unlike Meinke and Anderson’s analysis of presidential scandal in relation to House of Representative votes that measured scandal by intensity, the definition of scandal in this study is dichotomized
to indicate presence or absence of scandal for a variety of reasons discussed below. It is also essential to review other possible independent or control variables that may have an impact on the dependent variable, Senate key votes. Other variables include divided or united government, year of the president’s tenure in office, the nature of the Senate key vote (whether the vote involved domestic, foreign, or intermestic public policy), and the president’s approval rating at the time of the Senate key vote. Further details on the measurement of these variables will be explored later in this chapter. Finally, limitations on the methods of data collection are discussed before continuing to analysis of the effects of presidential scandal in the U.S. Senate.

**Measures of Presidential-Congressional Relations**

*Congressional Quarterly Weekly Reports* aim to provide the public with information on legislative outcomes in the United States Congress. The topics and legislation covered in the reports are then annually indexed in the *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*. In addition to reporting on legislative activity, the *CQ Almanac* reports on relations between the executive and judicial branches of national government. In particular, the *Almanac* catalogues four indices that specifically measure presidential support in Congress, which include Overall Support, Non-unanimous Support, Single-Vote Support, and Key Votes (Edwards 1985, 671-674).¹

Overall Support is determined by tracking all public statements by the president on issues considered in Congress and matching them to all measures the president originally supported, including appropriations bills and all votes to “recommit, reconsider, or table” measures in consideration (Edwards 1985, 671).² Although Overall Support is comprehensive, it is too inclusive: “Such an index may include lopsided votes and many votes on the same issue, and it weighs issues equally. To deal with each of these limitations of an inclusive measure of presidential support, we must develop a series of increasingly restrictive indices” (Edwards 1985,
Non-unanimous Support is gauged by examining presidential positions on all measures in Congress that received less than 80 percent of the vote (Edwards 1985, 672). Non-unanimous Support is problematic because it excludes near unanimous and unanimous votes, which may have been a result of presidential bargaining and influence, thus excluding crucial instances of presidential leverage within Congress (Edwards 1985, 672). Single-Vote Support is “an index of the support for the president’s stands on the most important non-unanimous vote on each bill” (Edwards 1985, 673). However, choosing the “most important” vote on a measure is difficult, since it may exclude other votes in which the president had considerable influence in deciding the outcome. Furthermore, Edwards states, “Although passage is often the crucial vote, at other times hotly contested amendments or even procedural votes may become more significant. Moreover, by choosing among amendments on the basis of how closely contested they were, there is the possibility of choosing the votes on which the president was simply less successful and excluding votes on which he was more influential. We simply cannot tell” (1985, 673).

Because of the potential problems that one may run into when collecting data from the Overall Support, Non-unanimous Support, and Single-Vote Support indices, I turned to the study of Congressional Quarterly’s Key Votes index. CQ constitutes the Key Votes to determine presidential support in Congress by selecting a series of key votes on “major issues, judged by the extent it [the roll call vote] represents one or more of the following:

- A matter of major controversy
- A test of presidential or political power
- A decision of potentially great impact on the lives of Americans” (CQ Weekly Jan. 15, 1971, 115).

Furthermore, “for each issue or series of related votes on an issue, only one key vote is ordinarily chosen. This vote is the roll call, that in the opinion of Congressional Quarterly editors, was the most important in determining the outcome” (CQ Weekly 1971, 115). According to Edwards,
“A measure of presidential support relying on key votes is attractive because these votes represent only significant issues, and thus help us to avoid the problem of distorting measurements of presidential success with less important issues” (Edwards 1985, 673). Although Shull and Vanderleeuw claim that CQ’s definition of key votes seems vague (1987, 579), key votes “exhibit greater conflict than do all [roll-call] votes” (1987, 576). In addition, when comparing key votes with all roll call votes, Shull and Vanderleeuw found that “congressional support for a president’s positions seems an important and a more consistent criterion for classifying a roll-call vote as a key vote during Republican administrations than Democratic administrations” (1987, 577). Shull and Vanderleeuw also suggest that for measures of “‘power’ [as defined by CQ], key votes are an adequate (a representative) stand-in for all votes at a higher level of aggregation” (1987, 580-581). Moreover, the authors found that key votes “better measure the balance of power between Congress and the president than controversy within Congress” (1987, 581).

There are a few limitations in studying key votes. One problem is the concern for missing data on the key votes listed that did not include presidential positions, although most key votes each year indicate presidential positions. Consequently, this can be construed as a “modest basis for generalizations about presidential influence in Congress” (Edwards 1985, 674). However, the other systematic indices listed in Congressional Quarterly do not suggest any better generalizations about presidential influence in Congress. In addition, presidents take positions on key votes more frequently than on all roll call votes (Shull and Vanderleeuw 1987, 579), which gives rise to speculation that the key votes sampled more accurately represent a president’s support on issues raised in Congress. Edwards also warns that there may be more than one key vote listed on a single issue in the case of the previously mentioned Overall Support
and Non-unanimous Support indices. However, through this study’s analysis of key votes, most issues that had been brought up multiple times were brought up in different sessions of Congress, unlike the Overall Support and Non-unanimous Support indices.

Possibly the most important limitation of the CQ Key Votes Index is the fact that it does not take outside variables or issues into consideration when collecting key votes, such as historical circumstances. Furthermore, Edwards cautions that “it is possible that a president’s success on relatively inconsequential issues may mask his failure to obtain support on more major matters” (1985, 673). Although this complicates the study of presidential influence in Congress, other traditional measures (listed above) have not satisfied this standard. In addition, Edwards acknowledges that “involvement of the president and his staff is only one of several potential sources of influence” (1985, 674). Consequently, the president’s measured influence on measures in Congress may have to do with the political party of Congress, approval rating, and other factors; “thus, we should not assume that presidential tactical efforts are dominant in determining congressional votes” (Edwards 1985, 674).

Despite differences in the methodology for collecting the four indices tapping presidential success in Congress (Overall Support, Non-unanimous Support, Single Vote Support, and Key Votes), they were found to be consistent with each other as well as highly correlated (Edwards 1985, 681-682). Gathering data from Key Votes indices in Congressional Quarterly is the most logical way to gauge presidential support in Congress and compare the data to presidential scandal.

There also are a variety of ways to measure presidential support in Congress. Since one may never know what the president thinks privately, scholars have to rely on public statements given by the president. These public statements may appear in a variety of media. First and
foremost, the most comprehensive and influential format in which a president may articulate his positions on issues is the annual State of the Union address. As the previous chapter stated, a president cannot only set the public agenda, but reveal his administration’s positions and goals for the upcoming year in State of the Union messages. An unmediated, live television audience is also useful to the president in framing and articulating his goals and positions on issues of public policy. Other forms of public statements include addresses, press conferences, travel, and presidential signing statements. As stated in the previous chapter, presidents have increasingly turned to the specter of “going public” in recent decades as a maneuver to outflank news media scrutiny and directly appeal to the public. The president’s hope is that the public will in turn influence their members of Congress to vote on particular issues of public policy. As scholars have pointed out, going public is largely variable, if not altogether unsuccessful depending on situations outside the president’s margin of influence. Nevertheless, Congressional Quarterly records all public statements by the president for appropriate indexing and then relates them to corresponding roll call votes in each chamber of Congress. This methodology is widely accepted by presidential and congressional scholars alike.

However, scholars may run into problems and limitations in collecting the data for presidential support on key votes. First, because the State of the Union messages is the most important indicator of presidential initiatives, I thought that the most advantageous way of gauging presidential support in Congress would be through collecting and analyzing presidential State of the Union addresses. The amount of key votes was originally understood to be sufficient enough in size so that the results could be narrowed down to match them to each yearly State of the Union address. However, this was not the case when subsequently researching congressional key votes in Congressional Quarterly. As a result, a president’s position in key votes listed may
not indicate expressed initiatives. Some key votes may *not* have been a result of presidential leverage or agenda setting in Congress. Nevertheless, it was accepted that Meinke and Anderson’s methods could be replicated by collecting data for all key votes annually listed in *Congressional Quarterly Almanacs*. In addition, as mentioned above, the president’s position is not always listed for every key vote. However, most key votes analyzed the president’s position (approximately 64.2 percent for Nixon, Reagan and Clinton), unlike most roll-call votes.

Collection of key votes for each presidential administration was systematic. Key votes were collected on an aggregate rather than an individual basis. Previous studies have made use of aggregate data, particularly when studying “political eras (Cohen 1982),”

<ref>Hammond and Fraser 1984,</ref>

or the success of proposals introduced at various points in the electoral cycle (Light 1982)" (Edwards 1985, 669). Although Edwards suggests that measures of presidential support be calculated separately for each member of Congress (1985, 670), such rigorous documentation of individual Senate members need not be calculated when comparing and contrasting presidential time periods of presence or absence political scandal. Feasible investigation for all 307 key vote cases was not possible for this particular research. Nevertheless, employing aggregate key vote data rather than individual key votes must be considered as a significant limitation to this study in its comprehensiveness.

**Presidential Scandal**

It is difficult to determine the “degree or strength of a presidential scandal,” as Meinke and Anderson did in their study. Determining the degree or strength of presidential scandal is potentially difficult to research and would require extensive studies not only among print media sources, but television coverage as well as the particular dates in which Congress or congressional committees were involved in investigating presidential scandal. The ranking
measurement for “presence and strength of White House scandal” was created by measuring the
mean number of front-page “Washington Post stories on each relevant scandal during the month
prior to each vote in question” (Meinke and Anderson 2001, 647). Ranking scandal is
potentially problematic. First, ranking of scandal is more subjective and easily open to
interpretation, causing problems of measurement. Secondly, ranking presidential scandal by
“mean number of front-page Washington Post stories on relevant scandal” is difficult to
undertake. An easier, less problematic, and more efficient way to determine presidential scandal
would be to make the variable dichotomous, coded either “yes” or “no” indicating the presence
or absence of presidential scandal at a given time period.

The modern presidential scandals included the Nixon Watergate scandal, the Reagan Iran
Contra affair, and the Clinton-Lewinsky affair. Although two members of the Carter White
House (Bert Lance and Hamilton Jordan) were involved in minor personal scandals, these issues
were not major scandals integral to the operation and implementation of public policy goals in
Congress. Similarly, the George W. Bush/Valerie Plame scandal, because it implicated the
office of the Vice President (Dick Cheney) more significantly than the office of the President,
was not be included in the study. Moreover, not much is known yet about the degree to which, if
any, President George W. Bush was directly involved in the Plame scandal. Nevertheless, the
Plame scandal was not serious enough for calls for impeachment as well as significant
congressional investigation and oversight, mostly because it happened under unified government.

The definition of presidential scandal was kept relatively simple. Scandal arguably began
on the dates listed in Table 3.1, when knowledge of the alleged activities became available to the
public. Scandal ended on the dates mentioned in Table 3.1 when all congressional action and
investigation were complete. This section includes a brief summary of each respective scandal and the relative time frame in which the scandals were most prominent. A briefer listing of specific dates used in the study can be found in Table 3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scandal</th>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Specific Dates in Categorization of Scandal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watergate (Nixon)</td>
<td>Pre-Scandal</td>
<td>January 20, 1969 to June 17, 1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scandal</td>
<td>June 18, 1972 to August 8, 1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-Scandal</td>
<td>N/A due to resignation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran-Contra (Reagan)</td>
<td>Pre-Scandal</td>
<td>January 20, 1981 to November 1, 1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scandal</td>
<td>November 2, 1985 to November 18, 1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-Scandal</td>
<td>November 19, 1987 to January 19, 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton - Lewinsky Affair</td>
<td>Pre-Scandal</td>
<td>January 20, 1993 to January 21, 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scandal</td>
<td>January 22, 1998 to February 2, 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-Scandal</td>
<td>February 3, 1999 to January 19, 2001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Nixon Watergate scandal arguably began when *The Washington Post* reported on June 17, 1972 that five burglars, one of whom stated that he worked for the CIA, was arrested in connection with the break-in of the Democratic National Committee Headquarters located in the Watergate office complex in Washington, D.C. It was also revealed on June 19, 1972 that a GOP security aide was one of the burglars. On August 1, 1972, it was reported that a Nixon campaign check ended up in the bank account of one of the Watergate burglars. On October 10, 1972, FBI agents established that the Watergate burglary was connected to President Nixon’s Committee to Re-Elect the President (CRP). Several members of the Committee to Re-Elect the President were subsequently indicted and convicted of conspiracy in connection to the Watergate break-in. It was further established that members of the Nixon White House and perhaps President Nixon himself were directly involved in the break-in and subsequent cover-up that
followed. On May 18, 1973, the Senate Watergate Committee began hearings that were nationally televised. By July 27, 1974, the House Judiciary Committee passed articles of impeachment on President Nixon. On August 8, 1974, President Nixon became the first president in history to resign from office. (“The Watergate Story” 2007, n.p.)

The Reagan administration’s Iran-Contra affair began in February of 1985 when high-ranking officials within the administration illegally arranged secret sales of arms to Iran. However, public knowledge of the scandal did not come until November 1985. The rationale for the sale of arms was purportedly to improve relations with Iran and to encourage the release of American hostages held by pro-Iranian terrorists in Lebanon. The money profits from the arms sales were then illegally transferred to the Nicaraguan right-wing contra rebels who were conducting a guerilla war insurgency against the communist Nicaraguan Sandinista government. As the scandal materialized with new information regarding administration officials, Congress created a series of congressional and legal investigations regarding the incident. On January 6 and 7, 1987, a joint congressional investigative committee of the Senate and the House was created. On February 26, 1987, a presidential commission (the Tower Commission), led by former Senator John Tower, issued a report that blamed President Reagan and his top advisers for the implementation of the sale of arms and subsequent channeling of money to the Nicaraguan guerillas. On November 18, 1987, the joint congressional investigative committee found the president responsible for the implementation of the sale of arms to Iran but did not find strong evidence linking him with the laundering of money to the Nicaraguan rebels. Although the illegal sale of weapons and subsequent supply of arms to Nicaraguan rebels could have become impeachable offenses, Congress decided not to proceed with impeachment given the

The Clinton scandal is unique because it did not involve administrative misconduct or what Meinke and Anderson would call “secretive government wrongdoing;” nor did it implicate major administration actors (2001, 652). Instead, the Clinton scandal, at least at first, was a highly personal affair. In addition, the Lewinsky scandal stemmed from the Whitewater investigation starting in 1994 by independent counsel Kenneth Starr. Because the Whitewater investigation did not draw enough attention by the public and Congress to impeach President Clinton, it will not be analyzed in this study. Subsequent to the investigation of the Clintons’ Whitewater tax returns and properties, Kenneth Starr found unrelated evidence of a sexual harassment case during President Clinton’s tenure as governor of Arkansas brought against him by Paula Jones. The sexual indiscretions of President Clinton with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky allegedly began in November 1995. On January 17, 1998, President Clinton was forced to testify under oath in the sexual harassment suit brought against him by Paula Jones. During this time, President Clinton was asked whether or not he had had an affair with Monica Lewinsky. Clinton denied the charges. The Jones lawyer subsequently subpoenaed Lewinsky, and she submitted a sworn affidavit stating that there was no affair between her and the President. By January 21, the scandal officially erupted as news organizations reported that an extramarital affair had occurred between Clinton and Lewinsky, while Clinton denied the allegations. Despite intense personal scrutiny of the President by news organizations, Clinton’s approval ratings remained high. This may have been due to the fact that most Americans believed the Clinton affair was a personal matter rather than an issue to be discussed publicly. (Johnson 2007, n.p.) 36
White House Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr investigated the matter, which required sworn testimony from both Clinton and Lewinsky. This time, however, neither denied the extramarital affair. Through investigation and evidence submitted by Linda Tripp, a one-time friend of Lewinsky’s, Starr had evidence that the affair had, in fact, occurred. As a result, Starr brought a case against Clinton for perjury. On September 11, 1998, the Starr Report was submitted to the House of Representatives. On September 24, 1998, the House Judiciary Committee considered a resolution to begin an impeachment inquiry against President Clinton. On December 11, the House of Representatives approved four articles of impeachment against President Clinton. Clinton officially apologized for his indiscretions. On December 19, 1998, the House of Representatives approved two of the four articles of impeachment. On February 2, 1999, the Senate voted for Clinton’s acquittal on the two articles of impeachment. (Johnson 2007, n.p.)

Chapter 2 mentioned limitations involving the lack of systematic key vote analysis with respect to presidential scandal in Meinke and Anderson’s research. Nevertheless, a revision of the research methods used in Meinke and Anderson’s study can be better employed to study the relationship between Congress and the president during the presence and absence of presidential scandal.

**Other Important Variables for Consideration**

Other key variables may interact with scandal when added to the analysis of presidential scandal and Senate key votes. Several congressional researchers have acknowledged that one single independent variable can not entirely account for the effects on the dependent variable. As a result, many scholars have used measures such as partisanship, public opinion, North versus Southern (Democratic) membership in Congress, and political ideology to track as possible
determinants for relationships among variables. This study is no different. However, unlike Meinke and Anderson, political ideology and Northern versus Southern Democratic membership in Congress are not analyzed. Because Senate key votes are collected on an aggregate basis, the study is less concerned with ideological shifts and Northern versus Southern congressional membership. In addition, ideological shifts and Northern versus Southern congressional membership in recent decades have declined, thus reducing its significance for study. As mentioned in Chapter 2, divided/united government, presidential approval ratings, year of presidential term, and the nature (domestic, foreign, or intermestic) of a key vote may be important factors in determining the relationship between presidential key vote and Congress.

Public opinion information (presidential approval rating) was gathered from Gallup Poll data found on the American Presidency Project’s webpage. The president’s approval rating listed before the time of the key vote was recorded into the dataset. The policy nature of the respective key votes was determined by the key vote’s description. Foreign and domestic policies are self-explanatory, but a key vote was termed as “intermestic” if it included budget appropriations (which include both spending on defense and domestic appropriations) or if the vote contained aspects that were both foreign and domestic in nature. For example, measures such as education, minimum wage increases, and Social Security were coded domestic policy. Likewise, measures involving military involvement in Vietnam, antiballistic missile treaties, and missile production were coded as foreign policies. Divided/united government was gauged by the political party in the Senate versus the political party of the president at the time of the key vote. As stated in the previous chapter, divided government was said to exist in the data collection if the president’s party was the opposite of the Senate’s party at the time of the key vote, and vice versa for united government. Finally, because all scandals studied occurred during each president’s second terms
as president, the year of the president’s tenure in office at the time of the respective key vote was recorded. For a more complete listing of coding methods, please refer to the appendices.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Data were collected for 307 Senate key votes during the presidential administrations of Nixon, Reagan, and Clinton. Senate key votes and presidential positions on those votes were recorded and entered into the **SPSS** statistical software program. Using **SPSS** recoding tools, Senate key votes and presidential positions on the Senate key votes were combined to detect “agreement” or “disagreement” between the two branches. Dichotomous ranking of the presence or absence of presidential scandal and general categorizations of presidential scandals differ from Meinke and Anderson’s research on the influence of scandal on House members’ key votes.

In sum, key differences between this study and Meinke and Anderson’s study are as follows:

- Dichotomous variable tapping presence of presidential scandal instead of ranking the intensity of presidential scandal
- Studying Senate aggregate key votes instead of House members’ key votes
- Analyzing key votes before, during, and after each respective presidential scandal (the exception is not studying key votes after the Richard Nixon scandal, in which President Nixon resigned amid congressional calls for impeachment)
- Collecting and analyzing Gallup polling data for public approval ratings
- Adding the variable “year of presidential tenure” to the analysis to be used as an interactive or additive variable
- Excluding variables “congressional members’ ideology” and “North vs. South membership” in the analysis, since Senate aggregate key votes are used.
Although key differences exist between this study and the Meinke and Anderson research to minimize limitations, there still are noteworthy limitations in this study. First, key votes were collected on an aggregate basis, although it seems appropriate for studying eras of presidential scandal relationships with Senate/presidential agreement on key votes. Secondly, some key votes that were recorded seemed to make it apparent that the president would support certain measures but the index did not record a presidential position for those bills. A more comprehensive study by *Congressional Quarterly* of presidential positions on key votes would yield additional data and would further minimize the missing data on presidential positions on key vote measures.

Although dichotomous ranking of scandal simplifies the research, it also makes possible interpreting scandal without greater bias as in Meinke and Anderson’s study. In addition, inclusion of other independent variables that could further influence Senate key votes is necessary to control for understanding of other factors that might be as important as presidential scandal when interpreting the results of key votes. Furthermore, the analysis of the results will suggest a better understanding of presidential-congressional relations during times of presidential scandal. Next, attention turns to applying the appropriate statistical tests to analyze the aggregate data on Senate key votes.

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2 Ibid
3 Ibid
4 Ibid
5 Ibid
6 Ibid
7 Ibid
9 Ibid


Edwards (1985) mentions that key votes are appropriate to analyze when studying historical eras.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis

Introduction

To investigate whether or not presidential scandal has an effect on Senate key votes, I now turn to testing the hypotheses mentioned in Chapter 1. As mentioned earlier, the dependent variable was Senate key votes in general, but after recoding the data to correspond Senate key votes to presidential positions on key votes, the dependent variable becomes Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement on key votes. The independent variable is presidential scandal. Controlling for presidential scandal, the other independent variables, or covariates, include the presence of united or divided government, the president’s year in office, the president’s approval rating, and policy nature of the key vote in question. The first and central hypothesis states that the presence or absence of presidential scandal will have an effect on Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement on key votes. In particular, one would expect that the presence of presidential scandal suggests that scandal has a negative effect on agreement/disagreement on key votes. The second hypothesis states that divided or united government has a major impact on Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement. Furthermore, divided government will result in a greater amount of disagreement with the president’s position on key votes, while united government will result in a greater amount of agreement with the president’s position on key votes. According to the third hypothesis, the year of tenure in a president’s term in office, public opinion, and the type of public policy agenda will further affect agreement/disagreement on key votes in the U.S. Senate. In particular, one would expect that as time progresses during a president’s tenure in office, more disagreement will result between the president and the Senate on key votes. Secondly, it is predicted that higher approval ratings of the president will result in a higher level of agreement between the president and the Senate on key votes. Finally, the type
or nature of key vote may have to do with whether or not the president and the Senate agree or disagree. One would expect more disagreement between senators and the president if the nature of the key vote in question is domestic policy. One would also expect, on the other hand, that there be more agreement between the president and the Senate when the key vote in question is foreign policy oriented. Intermestic policy, such as budget appropriations and legislation involving foreign trade, should be characterized as unrelated to the extent of agreement between the Senate and the president. Table 4.1 summarizes the hypotheses.

The results indicate that there is a relationship between presidential scandal and Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement on key votes and that presidential political scandal does indeed have a negative effect on Senate/presidential agreement, therefore rejecting the null hypothesis for Hypothesis 1. The results also indicate a relationship between party control of government (divided or united government) and Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Presence or absence of scandal will have an effect on Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement on key votes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>United or divided government has a major impact in Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement on key votes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Controlling for scandal, the year of presidential tenure in office, public opinion, and nature of key vote will affect Senate key voting behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>The longer the president serves in office, the greater the disagreement between the president and the Senate on key votes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Higher presidential approval ratings translates into greater agreement between the president and the Senate on key votes, and vice versa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>The policy nature of the key vote affects agreement or disagreement in key votes between the president and the Senate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3-1</td>
<td>Key votes involving domestic policy result in more disagreement than agreement between the president and the Senate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3-2</td>
<td>Key votes involving foreign policy result in more agreement than disagreement between the president and the Senate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3-3</td>
<td>Key votes involving intermestic policy do not yield predictions on presidential and Senate agreement or disagreement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
therefore one may reject the null for Hypothesis 2. Thirdly, controlling for presidential scandal, the independent variables for year of a president’s tenure in office, presidential approval ratings, and nature of key vote do not have a statistically significant relationship with Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement on key votes. This chapter examines the specifics of these findings and the effects of scandal on presidents Nixon, Reagan, and Clinton.

**Statistical Analyses**

First, a simple crosstabulation was examined to detect whether or not Senate and presidential agreement/disagreement was correlated with the presence or absence of scandal (see Table 4.2). Furthermore, upon statistical significance testing using Pearson’s Chi-Square (Table 4.3), the relationship between presidential and Senate agreement/disagreement and scandal is statistically significant (p < 0.000). The relationship between Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement and scandal is moderate (Somer’s d = -0.281) as evidenced in Table 4.4.

The independent variable, presidential scandal, is a binary variable, meaning that it assumes only two values, presence of scandal or absence of scandal. The dependent variable, Senate and presidential agreement (or disagreement), is also binary; the Senate and president can

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Senate and President Agree * Scandal Dichotomy Crosstabulation</th>
<th>Scandal Dichotomy</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Scandal</td>
<td>Scandal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senate and President Disagreement Count</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Scandal Dichotomy</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senate and President Agreement Count</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Scandal Dichotomy</td>
<td>71.8%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Count</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Scandal Dichotomy</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
either agree or disagree on the listed key roll-call vote. Logistic regression can be used if one needs to analyze the relationship between a dichotomous variable (Senate/President agreement)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.3: Chi-Square Tests for Senate/presidential Agreement and Scandal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Value</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity Correction(a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher's Exact Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- a Computed only for a 2x2 table
- b 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 16.81.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.4: Directional Measures for Senate/presidential Agreement and Scandal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Value</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinal by Ordinal Somers' d Symmetric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senate and President Agree Dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandal Dichotomy Dependent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- a Not assuming the null hypothesis.
- b Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

and an independent variable, or covariate, of any level of measurement (nominal, ordinal, or interval). As a result, the bivariate model here is:

\[
\text{Logged odds (Senate and presidential agreement)} = a + b(\text{scandal}).
\]

In logistic regression, “coefficients of interest are expressed in terms of the logged odds of the dependent variable” (Pollock 2005, 172). Therefore, the constant (a) represents the logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement when there is no scandal. The regression coefficient (b) estimates the change in the logged odds for each unit change in Senate voting. Table 4.5 shows the model with only the scandal variable included.
According to the initial results, the constant says that in the absence of scandal, the estimated logged odds of agreement increases by 0.935. If there is a presence of scandal, the logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement decrease by -1.186. The p-value for the Wald statistic (based on chi-square) is 0.001. “If the p-value is greater than 0.05, then do not reject the null hypothesis” (Pollock 2005, 174). The null hypothesis is rejected: scandal has a statistically significant effect on Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement. The percentage of change in the odds of Senate/presidential agreement would be equal to = (0.305-1)*100, which is -69.5 percent. This indicates that a change of +1 in the independent variable decreases the odds of Senate/presidential agreement by 69.5 percent. However, one cannot conclude that scandal, alone, simply has an effect on Senate and presidential agreement. One must determine if other independent variables such as divided or united government, presidential year of tenure, approval rating, and nature of vote have influence on levels of Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement.

**Logistic Regression Models**

When adding the divided or united government, president’s year in office, presidential approval, and the nature of public policy in question, the logistic regression model appears in Table 4.6.
Therefore, when adding the other independent variables, or covariates into the model, the equation is:

\[
\text{Logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement} = 0.899 + (-1.070(\text{scandal})) + 1.369(\text{divided or united government}) + 0.016(\text{president's year in office}) + (-0.005(\text{president's approval rating})) + (-0.298(\text{nature of vote})).
\]

However, one must use caution, since several variables (president’s year in office, president’s approval rating, and public policy nature of vote) are not statistically significant at \(p < 0.05\). Even when controlling for scandal, divided/united government remains a predictive value. It seems that the other covariates (\(p > 0.05\)) may not have an important statistical effect on Senate/presidential agreement on key votes while controlling for scandal.

I ran correlations testing among the independent variables and dependent variable. There seems to be a relationship between Senate/presidential agreement and divided/united government. When there is united government, there is a wider margin of agreement (82.7 percent) between the president and the Senate than in divided government (52.6 percent). This seems possible since the number of Senate/presidential agreement cases was 128 or 65% of the total key vote count, while the total number of cases for Senate/presidential disagreement was only 69 or 35% of the total key vote count. In addition, the number of missing
cases (where the president did not indicate whether or not he had an opinion on a Senate key vote) was 110, or 35.8 percent of all 307 cases of reported Senate key votes by Congressional Quarterly. In addition, measures for statistical significance indicate that the null hypothesis must be rejected for Senate/presidential agreement and divided/or united government. How strong of a relationship exists between Senate/presidential agreement and divided/united government? The value, 0.301 suggests that there is a positive relationship between Senate/presidential agreement and divided/united government and that the divided/united government variable improves the ability to predict the level of presidential agreement by 30.1 percent (0.301*100), compared to not knowing that there is unified/divided government.

Therefore, Hypothesis 2’s general assumption that there is a strong relationship between united/divided government and Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement is supported. In addition, when measured alone using logistic regression in Table 4.9B, the constant is 0.104. If one simply analyzes united/divided government with Senate/presidential agreement, the constant, 0.104, says that for divided government, the estimated logged odds of agreement increases by 0.104. If there is united government, the logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement increases by 1.462. However, because the constant value’s significance is 0.578, greater than 0.05, the constant for divided/united government does not have a significant effect on the dependent variable alone. In other words, the constant is not a statistically significant specification in deciding Senate/presidential agreement, meaning that the constant value could have happened by chance, or the amount of missing cases may have been large enough to skew the statistical results.

For president’s year in office, it seems that Senate/presidential disagreement peaks at year 5 or year 6, while Senate/presidential agreement peaks during the first year and second
years in office, and then again in year 8. Therefore, one cannot say that presidential
disagreement becomes dominant as the years of the president’s term progress (Hypothesis 3.1).
One can infer, however, that Senate/presidential agreement and president’s term in office is
variable. Statistical significance is 0.007 for Pearson’s chi-square.

Presidential approval ratings are measured to examine correlation with
Senate/presidential agreement or disagreement. The group statistics for Table 4.12 indicate that
Senate/presidential Disagreement’s mean approval rating is 52.2174, while Senate/presidential
Agreement’s mean approval rating is 52.3750. This slightly supports Hypothesis 3.2, by
0.1576ths of one point. Clearly, there does not seem to be a great difference between means of
presidential approval ratings and Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement. However, the null
hypothesis (that denies a relationship between Senate/presidential agreement and presidential
approval rating) can only be rejected if the difference between disagreement and agreement is
statistically significant (Brians 2008, 45). It seems that because the t value is -0.119 and the
significance is 0.905, one must fail to reject the null hypothesis (Table 4.13); therefore,
Hypothesis 3.2 must be rejected.

Finally, I checked to see if the nature (foreign, domestic, or intermestic) of a key vote is
related to Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement. It seems that measures that reflect
domestic policy result in a greater percentage of disagreement, while measures on foreign policy
result in a greater percentage in agreement between the Senate and the president. The
relationship is as expected in Hypotheses 3.3-1 and 3.3-2. Contrary to Hypothesis 3.3-3, it seems
that there is a larger amount of Senate and presidential agreement on key votes for intermestic
public policy issues. However, when looking to see if a statistically significant relationship
exists between Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement and the public policy nature of the
key vote, the null hypothesis must be accepted, as Table 14.5 indicates that Pearson’s chi-square value is 0.194, greater than 0.05, the widely accepted value for statistical significance between two variables. As a result, Hypothesis 3.3 must be rejected altogether, at least in the bivariate case.

Testing individual correlations between independent variables and Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement suggests that there seems to be no statistically significant relationship between the president’s year in office, presidential approval rating, or the policy nature of the key vote and Senate and presidential agreement/disagreement. There is a statistically significant relationship, however, between senate government (the indication of divided or united government) and Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement (as seen in logistic regression). As a result, the sengovt (divided or united government) variable is kept in the logistic regression model.

The covariates must be tested absent from the significant control variable (scandal) to assure that there are no multicollinear relationships among independent variables. Testing individual correlations between independent variables suggests that presence of scandal was more likely to occur during divided government (74.8%) than united government (25.2%). The occurrence of scandal increased from 15.1 percent during the president’s 4th year in office to 25% in the 5th year, to 100% in the 6th year. There seems to be a collinear relationship between scandal and president’s year in office. There was no collinear relationship between scandal and presidential approval ratings. In addition there was no collinear relationship between scandal and policy nature of key vote. Divided/united government was tested for collinearity with presidential approval ratings, year of president’s tenure in office, and policy nature of vote. These variables were not related to one another. The other independent variables, nature of vote,
presidential approval, and year of president’s term in office were tested to see if there were collinear relationships, but none were found.

For president’s year in office (Table 4.7), it seems that Senate/presidential disagreement peaks at year 5 or year 6, while Senate/presidential agreement peaks during the first year and second years in office, and then again in year 8. This suggests a curvilinear relationship between presidential year in office to Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement; therefore, one cannot say that presidential disagreement becomes dominant as the years of the president’s term progress (Hypothesis 3.1). One can infer, however, that Senate/presidential agreement and president’s term in office is variable. Statistical significance is 0.007 for Pearson’s chi-square, meaning that it is 99.7% certain that the relationship did not happen by chance. The curvilinear relationship thus puts a limitation on the logistic regression model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Senate and President Agree</th>
<th>Senate and President Disagreement</th>
<th>Year of president's term</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>% within Year of president's term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senate and President Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senate and President Agree</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Agreement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Testing individual correlations between independent variables and Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement suggests that there seems to be no statistically significant relationship between the president’s year in office, presidential approval rating, or the policy nature of the key vote when analyzed with Senate and presidential agreement/disagreement. There is a statistically significant relationship, however, for political party (the indication of divided or united government) and Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement. As a result, the sengovt (divided or united government) variable is kept in the logistic regression model.
Final Logistic Regression Model

The divided/united government variable, sengovt (the indication of whether the president’s party and the Senate majority party was united or divided at the time of the key vote), is the only statistically significant covariate besides presence or absence of scandal (scandal2). As a result, the regression model becomes:

\[
\text{Logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement on key votes} = a + b(\text{scandal}) + c(\text{divided or unified government}).
\]

As a result, the final logistic regression model is tested, with the results in Table 4.8. The final model or regression equation is

\[
\text{Logged odds of Senate/presidential Agreement} = 0.414 + (-1.003(\text{scandal})) + 1.343(\text{divided or united government}).
\]

The constant’s significance, 0.059 is barely insignificant at the 0.05 level. If one were to change the p-value from 0.05 to 0.06 for statistical significance, the constant, 0.414 would be statistically significant. It is known that the statistics indicate with 99.4 percent confidence that the constant’s value did not happen by chance. Furthermore, in the presence of presidential scandal, one will expect a 63.3 percent decrease \((0.367-1)*100\) in logged odds of agreement (Senate/presidential) on key votes. Controlling for scandal, divided/united government is positively related to likelihood of Senate/presidential agreement. Scandal produces an increase of 1.343 in the logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement. According to Wald and the P-value, each independent odds of Senate/presidential agreement. According to Wald and the P-value, each independent variable is significantly related to the dependent variable, which was not the case in Table 4.6. After controlling for scandal, the effect of divided/unified government is
weaker than its uncontrolled effect, found in Table 4.9B. If there is unified government (when the president’s party equals the Senate majority party), one will expect a 283 percent increase \(((3.830-1)*100)\) in the logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement.

But how strong are the relationships of scandal and united/divided government with logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement? The Final Logistic Regression Model Summary, as referenced in Table 4.9 indicates the strength of the model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>-2 Log likelihood</th>
<th>Cox &amp; Snell R Square</th>
<th>Nagelkerke R Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>227.173(a)</td>
<td>.132</td>
<td>.182</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For logistic regression, researchers use

“pseudo R-square that seeks to communicate the strength of association between the dependent and the independent variables. SPSS reports two of these: The Cox and Snell R-square and the Nagelkerke R-square. These measures are designed to return a value of between 0 (no relationship) and 1 (perfect relationship). However, Cox-Snell can be rather conservative. The Nagelkerke measure adjusts for this, and so it generally reports a higher pseudo R-square than Cox-Snell. These two measures are never wildly different, and they do give the researcher a ballpark feel for the strength of the relationship” (Pollock 2005, 175).

The values ranging from 0.132 to 0.182 demonstrate that presence of scandal and type of government (divided or united) indicate a weak relationship to logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement.

However, Pollock states that there is another important measure reported to indicate strength of relationship produced by logistic regression (2005, 175). The “-2 Log likelihood”
value in Table 4.9, which is 227.173, can be compared to the “Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients” and “Iteration History.” Pollock states, “In figuring out the most accurate estimates for the model’s coefficients, logistic regression uses a technique called maximum likelihood estimation (MLE). When it begins the analysis, MLE finds out how well it can predict the observed values of the dependent variable without using the independent variable as a predictive tool” (Pollock 2005, 176). MLE first determined how accurately it could predict whether or not the Senate and president agreed by not knowing whether or not scandal was present or if united/divided government existed present through “Initial -2 Log Likelihood,” summarizing the “‘know nothing’ prediction. MLE then brings the independent variable into its calculations, running the analysis again—and again and again—to find the best possible predictive fit between [presence or absence of scandal, divided or united government] and [the likelihood of the Senate and president agreeing and disagreeing]” (Pollock 2005, 176). However, this Iteration History table was not produced by SPSS, possibly meaning that MLE only had to go through one step to find “the best possible predictive fit between [presence or absence of scandal, divided or united government] and [the likelihood of the Senate and president agreement or disagreeing]” (Pollock 2005, 176). The Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients Table, labeled Table 4.10, confirms that MLE went through only one step to find the best predictive fit. The value of 27.983 in Table 4.10 after step 1, or “change in -2 log likelihood” is a chi-square statistic, with the P-value significance at 0.000. As a result, the conclusion is that compared with how well one can predict Senate/presidential agreement without knowing presence of scandal and united/divided government, including scandal and united/divided government as a predictor significantly enhances the performance of the logit model (Pollock 2005, 176).
Table 4.10: Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1 Step</td>
<td>27.983</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block</td>
<td>27.983</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>27.983</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scandal in Perspective

The initial logit model (including scandal and all other covariates) was used to compare each presidential scandal (Table 4.11) as Meinke and Anderson did (2001). Scandal is statistically significant at the 0.02 level, except for President Clinton’s case. The Lewinsky scandal had the least amount of negative impact, 14 percent, on the logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement. This is possibly because the Democratic-majority Senate did not believe that the scandal was a clear manipulation of presidential power, and was instead personal in nature. In addition, public opinion remained high for Clinton throughout the scandal and embattled Congress. This factor could have altered the results testing for significance of presidential approval ratings during the times of the each key vote in question. The Watergate scandal, by contrast, had a 95.6 percent negative influence on the logged odds of Senate agreement with President Nixon. This percentage is statistically significant (0.019) at the 0.02 level. The Iran-Contra affair resulted in 88.6 percent of negative influence on the logged odds of Senate/Reagan agreement on key votes, with statistical significance at the 0.000 level.

Divided/united government’s impact could not be tested for President Nixon. There are a lack of data or a more proportionate amount of missing variables when analyzing Senate agreement with Nixon. Whether government was divided or united did not seem to have a statistically significant influence on the logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement for
President Reagan. For President Clinton, however, divided government increased logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement by 796.1 percent. As a result, Senate government had an extreme impact on determining the logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement (controlling for scandal) for President Clinton.

As noted earlier for the aggregate results of presidential key vote support and scandal analysis, the president’s year in office, the policy nature of the key vote, and the president’s approval rating did not have a statistically significant impact on Senate/presidential agreement for any of the three presidents. In Nixon’s case, however, year of office had a statistically significant effect (162.2 percent, at the 0.046 level). One can expect this since President Nixon resigned from office in 1974.

Oddly enough, the policy nature of the key vote in question, after controlling for scandal, had a statistically significant impact on Senate/presidential agreement in President Reagan’s case. The limited number of cases for each president may have and influence on the statistical significance measures for the coefficients.

After it was determined that there was some statistically significant influence in president’s year in office and policy nature of key vote, logistic regression tests were repeated for each president. The results appear in Table 4.12. Table 4.13 below lists the model estimates and model summary for all variables, while Table 4.14 lists the model estimates and summary for the significant variables found in the initial model, presence or absence of scandal and divided/unified government.
Table 4.11: Key Vote Support for Nixon, Reagan, and Clinton (Senate Aggregate)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nixon</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Reagan</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Clinton</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exp(B)</td>
<td>Sig</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
<td>Exp(B)</td>
<td>Sig</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
<td>Exp(B)</td>
<td>Sig</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandal</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>1.335</td>
<td>0.114</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.603</td>
<td>0.856</td>
<td>0.759</td>
<td>0.508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divided or United</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.139</td>
<td>0.230</td>
<td>0.954</td>
<td>8.961</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President's Year of Office</td>
<td>2.622</td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>0.482</td>
<td>1.010</td>
<td>0.956</td>
<td>0.175</td>
<td>1.303</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>0.150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Nature of Key Vote</td>
<td>0.835</td>
<td>0.759</td>
<td>0.587</td>
<td>0.415</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.329</td>
<td>1.310</td>
<td>0.339</td>
<td>0.283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential Approval</td>
<td>1.049</td>
<td>0.224</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>1.058</td>
<td>0.204</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>0.933</td>
<td>0.080</td>
<td>0.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>0.189</td>
<td>2.975</td>
<td>0.222</td>
<td>0.444</td>
<td>1.962</td>
<td>10.785</td>
<td>0.175</td>
<td>1.754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Cases</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;-2 Log Likelihood&quot;</td>
<td>61.393</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>133.144</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>256.997</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.12: Senate Aggregate Key Vote Support for Nixon, Reagan, and Clinton

Significant Variables Only in Addition to Scandal and Divided/United government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nixon</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Reagan</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Clinton</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exp(B)</td>
<td>Sig</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
<td>Exp(B)</td>
<td>Sig</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
<td>Exp(B)</td>
<td>Sig</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandal</td>
<td>0.079</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>1.182</td>
<td>0.177</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.456</td>
<td>0.691</td>
<td>0.387</td>
<td>0.427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divided or United</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.782</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.483</td>
<td>6.045</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President's Year of Office</td>
<td>1.779</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td>0.347</td>
<td>0.422</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.332</td>
<td>1.158</td>
<td>0.417</td>
<td>0.181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Nature of Key Vote</td>
<td>0.509</td>
<td>0.419</td>
<td>0.836</td>
<td>3.139</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.513</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential Approval</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.509</td>
<td>0.419</td>
<td>0.836</td>
<td>3.139</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.513</td>
<td>1.158</td>
<td>0.417</td>
<td>0.181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Cases</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;-2 Log Likelihood&quot;</td>
<td>63.258</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>135.186</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>261.206</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.13: Model Estimates and Model Summary:

Logged Odds (Senate/Presidential Agreement) = a + b(scandal) + c(Senate government) + d(president's year in office) + e(nature of vote) + f(presidential approval rating)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model Estimates</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Exp(B) (or odds ratio)</th>
<th>Percentage of Change in Logged Odds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.899</td>
<td>0.376</td>
<td>2.457</td>
<td>-62.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandal</td>
<td>-1.070</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.343</td>
<td>-65.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divided or United Government</td>
<td>1.369</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>3.930</td>
<td>293%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential Year</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>0.860</td>
<td>1.016</td>
<td>1.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of Vote</td>
<td>-0.298</td>
<td>0.272</td>
<td>0.742</td>
<td>-25.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential Approval</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>0.772</td>
<td>0.995</td>
<td>-0.50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model Summary</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Square (Change in -2 Log Likelihood)</td>
<td>29.292</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cox-Snell R-Square</td>
<td>0.138</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagelkerke R-Square</td>
<td>0.190</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.14: Model Estimates and Model Summary: 
Logged Odds (Senate/Presidential Agreement)= a + b(scandal) + c(Senate government)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model Estimates</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Exp(B) (or odds ratio)</th>
<th>Percentage of Change in Logged Odds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.414</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td>1.512</td>
<td>51.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandal</td>
<td>-1.003</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.367</td>
<td>-63.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divided or United Government</td>
<td>1.343</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>3.830</td>
<td>283.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Model Summary
- Chi-Square (Change in -2 Log Likelihood): 27.983, Significance: 0.000
- Cox-Snell R-Square: 0.132
- Nagelkerke R-Square: 0.182

Conclusion

Based on logistic regression analysis, I conclude that scandal has a negative impact on logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement on key votes. Controlling for scandal, whether or not government was united or divided at the time of the key vote is also a useful tool in predicting Senate/presidential agreement on key votes. Variables including the president’s term in office, presidential approval rating, and policy nature of key vote were determined not statistically significant, and thus taken out of the regression equation. Although scandal, controlling for divided or united government, is weakly related to logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement, it is still a valuable factor that can be used to predict the logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement on key votes.

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2 Ibid
3 Ibid
6 Ibid
7 Ibid
8 Ibid
9 Ibid
10 Ibid
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

Scholars have speculated that presidential scandal can have an impact on relations between the executive and legislative branches. However, there are limited empirical findings to suggest the influence a presidential scandal can have in relation to the normal processes of government. Because of the modern phenomenon of presidential scandal, scholars must examine the potential impact that scandal may have on presidential-congressional relations. In addition to the creation of a potentially hostile environment between the executive and judicial branches regarding legal proceedings in relation to presidential misconduct, scandal can create tensions between the executive and legislative branches. Although scandal is unlikely to completely debilitate the system of governance, scandal can create a diversion of resources formerly used in normal governmental operation to become preoccupied with scandal. Congress would become less interested in engaging and compromising with the executive branch on presidential priorities and more interested in investigation of alleged presidential misconduct and abuses of power to assure accountability for the president’s actions. The president, in reaction to public and congressional concern about scandal, would deflect resources on policy initiatives in Congress to deny or defend alleged misconduct and abuses of power. To empirically test the effects of presidential scandal in the House of Representatives, Meinke and Anderson (2001) conclude that there is a negative relationship between the degree or intensity of presidential scandal and House members’ key votes on stated presidential positions.¹ Replication and slight modification of Meinke and Anderson’s research suggests that the presence of presidential scandal also negatively influences presidential leadership in the United States Senate as determined by Senate aggregate key votes.
Summary of Research Methods

To determine whether or not presidential scandal had an impact on the legislative branch, a survey of *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*’s Senate key vote indices during the Nixon, Reagan, and Clinton administrations was conducted. Unlike Meinke and Anderson’s research that measured individual members’ key votes, this study measured Senate key votes on an aggregate basis. Presidential positions on accompanying key votes were reported by *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*. Although presidential positions were not indicated for all key votes recorded, the majority of key votes analyzed, roughly 64.2 percent, indicated presidential positions. After the survey of key votes, presidential positions were then related to Senate positions and recorded as Senate/presidential agreement or disagreement.

The measurement of scandal was dichotomized to decrease problems of measurement and the likelihood of subjectivity that would have resulted from ranking the degree or intensity of presidential scandal. The presence of scandal, as a result, was defined as public knowledge of alleged presidential misconduct that resulted in congressional investigation and serious calls for presidential impeachment. A review of literature in presidential-congressional relations resulted in recording additional variables to indicate whether or not political party, year of president’s tenure in office, the policy nature of the key vote, and the president’s approval rating (using Gallup data) at the time of the key vote had additive or interactive effects in Senate/presidential agreement or disagreement, controlling for presence or absence of presidential scandal.

Summary of Findings

The findings from logistic regression revealed impressive results. The presence of scandal and party control of government (divided/united government) yielded a statistically significant relationship with Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement on key votes. In
addition, presidential year in office, the policy nature of the key vote, and presidential approval
ratings at the time of the key vote did not yield statistically significant relationships to odds of Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement on key votes.

As mentioned above and in Chapter 1, it would be expected that scandal fosters an environment between the president and Congress that is not conducive to cooperation and compromise. Serious cases of presidential scandal (Watergate, Iran-Contra, and the Clinton-Lewinsky affair) have always resulted in congressional investigation of presidential misconduct. As a result, each president has taken actions within the executive branch to cover, deny, or deflate alleged misbehavior. This naturally causes disjunction between the two branches. Although normal political disagreement is routine and expected during absence of scandal, it may become inflated somewhat as a result of the presence of scandal. Scandal mode becomes apparent, as the normal system of governance is weakened. Congress may decide to further its own agenda, absent of the president’s input. As a result, scandal could lead to heightened disagreement. Indeed, the results indicate the expected outcome if scandal is present. Scandal mode results in this decrease of executive-legislative cooperation with respect to the public agenda. The presence of presidential scandal results in a 63.3 percent decrease in the logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement on key votes. An analysis of each individual scandal suggests that scandal is a statistically significant variable in predicting Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement in President Nixon’s and President Reagan’s cases, but not for President Clinton. As mentioned in Chapter 4, given the highly personal nature of the Clinton scandal, senators, a majority of whom shared the same party as Clinton, may not have categorized Clinton’s wrongdoings as impeachable offenses. Moreover, the Senate decided to acquit President Clinton of all articles of impeachment. Perhaps this insight reflects one of the main
reasons why senators were less likely to disagree with Clinton during the scandal. However, scandal cannot be singled out as the sole factor for logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement. Other variables must be taken into account when determining odds of Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement.

Political party has always been expected to be a factor in determining executive influence in the legislative branch. As found in previous studies of presidential-congressional leadership, political party has been a major determinant of a president’s legislative success. Unified government, whereas the majority party in Congress is of the same as the president, typically results in higher legislative success rates for the president. Divided government, where the majority party in Congress is different than the president’s party, on the other hand, results in lower legislative success rates. Instead of measuring united/divided government for both houses of Congress, here the variable was measured only with respect to the Senate. As expected, it was found that united or divided government resulted in a 283 percentage change in the logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement, statistically significant at the 0.000 level, controlling for scandal. For scandal in perspective, analysis of political party did not yield any results for President Nixon. This may be because there were only 50 cases of key votes to analyze, compared with 73 for Reagan and 74 for Clinton. Political party, however, was found to be a statistically significant predictor for Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement for both President Reagan and President Clinton when controlling for scandal.

It would be expected that year of president’s tenure in office can impact the odds of Senate/presidential agreement or disagreement. It was expected that the longer a president holds office, the less likely the Senate would agree with the president’s positions. This may have to do with an increasingly hostile press and skeptical public on issues that matter most to the president.
In addition, the president can be seen as a lame duck after midterm elections during his sixth year in office. With midterm elections, the president may experience an even more hostile Congress that is more critical of the president’s agenda. As a result, the president may not have success in setting the agenda for initiatives. In addition, year of term in office may impact presidential scandal and increase the likelihood of public knowledge suspecting alleged presidential misconduct. With all three administrations analyzed, year in office did not yield statistically significant results to the logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement. Senate/presidential agreement tended to peak during the president’s first two years in office, while disagreement peaked around the president’s fifth or sixth year in office. When analyzing President Nixon’s case alone, however, it was found that presidential year in office had a statistically significant effect on Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement. This is no surprise because President Nixon resigned amid congressional calls for impeachment as result of the Watergate scandal. For Presidents Reagan and Clinton, there was no statistically significant relationship between year of presidential tenure in office and Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement. The reason seems to point to the last two years in office for both presidents. Both Reagan and Clinton had higher levels of agreement with Senate key votes after each respective presidential scandal. This may be because Presidents Reagan and Clinton lost considerable leverage in cooperation and compromise with Congress as a result of political scandal. The loss of presidential leverage in leadership of Congress may have resulted in fewer presidential initiatives sent to Congress, and thus more congressional control over the national agenda.

The variable “policy nature of key votes” was predicted to have an effect on presidential/congressional agreement or disagreement. Wildavsky (1991) concluded that
presidents have more leverage in Congress on foreign policy issues than domestic policy issues. Because members of Congress seem to be more concerned with policies that directly affect their constituents, it seems that less presidential leverage or influence of domestic policy key votes would be more apparent than foreign policy key votes. Intermestic policy issues, comprised of both domestic and foreign policy issues (such as budget appropriations and foreign trade), were thought to yield mixed results on Senate/presidential agreement or disagreement. However, when key votes were analyzed for all three presidents, the nature of policy did not return statistically significant relationships with Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement. When analyzed by the individual president, it was found that the policy nature of each key vote had a statistically significant relationship to logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement for Reagan but not for Presidents Nixon or Clinton. Reagan’s foreign policy key vote success could be a result of his expansive agenda of arms expansion to compete against and later cripple the Soviet Union.

Finally, presidential approval ratings (as tapped by Gallup polling data) were gauged to examine its possible relationship to the logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement. Logically, one would think that Congress reacts to public approval ratings of the president when voting. Higher presidential approval ratings would thus result in higher Senate/presidential agreement on key votes, whereas lower presidential approval ratings would result in lower Senate/presidential agreement on key votes. However, as noted in Chapter 2, studies disagree about the extent of impact, if any, that presidential approval ratings have on congressional voting. When tracing key votes for Nixon, Reagan, and Clinton, no statistically significant relationship was found between presidential approval ratings and Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement. In addition, individual presidential analyses indicate that there is no
statistically significant relationship between presidential approval ratings and Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement.

As a result, only statistically significant variables, presence or absence of scandal and united or divided government, were included in the final model equation for all three presidents in predicting the logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement. The model is:

$$\text{Logged Odds of Senate/Presidential Agreement/Disagreement} = a + b(\text{scandal}) + c(\text{Senate government}).$$

When coefficients are plugged into the equation, it becomes:

$$\text{Logged Odds of Senate/Presidential Agreement/Disagreement} = 0.414 + (-1.003(\text{scandal})) + 1.343(\text{Senate government}).$$

The constant coefficient (a, or 0.414) is statistically significant at 0.059. We are thus 95.1 percent confident that the constant coefficient did not appear by chance in the equation. The presence or absence of scandal and divided/united government were found to be statistically significant at the 0.005 and 0.000 levels, respectively, meaning that we are confident by 99.5% and 100% that presence/absence of scandal and divided/united government, respectively did not happen by chance in discovering the logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement. Consequently, the Cox-Snell R-square and the Nagelkerke R-square values range from 0.132 to 0.182, respectively, which supports the conclusion that scandal and political party together account for only some of the variation in Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement. Although these values show weak relationships to Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement, scandal and the unified/divided government variable as a covariate are useful predictors in determining the logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement or disagreement.
Implications of Findings

The findings that suggest a relationship between presidential scandal and Senate key votes have several empirical and normative implications. Empirically, scandal is a variable that should be included when studying presidential-congressional relations. Researchers must consider the presence or absence of scandal, along with other important variables such divided/unified government in examining congressional-presidential relationships for Presidents Nixon, Reagan, and Clinton. A simple logistic regression model was used to determine whether or not scandal, along with political party (divided/united government), year of president’s tenure in office, the policy nature of the key vote, and presidential approval ratings at the time of the key vote had an effect on the logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement. Subsequent analysis found that presence or absence of presidential scandal as well as divided/united government were statistically significant influences on logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement. As a result, scandal, along with political party, can have an effect on Senate key votes. Within the context of Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement, however, presidential scandal has a limited negative effect (-65.70 percent compared to 293 percent for united/divided government) in predicting the logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement. Empirically, these results amplify as well as extend the study of presidential/congressional relations in accounting for scandal as a significant impact on Senate key votes.

These findings have several normative implications. In particular, presidential leadership, leverage, or political capital are weakened in Congress as a result of presidential scandal. Presidential initiatives of public concern in Congress as a result may be in jeopardy when presidential scandal becomes apparent. The president, who is already constrained by
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partisanship and other factors within Congress, becomes further limited in legislative leadership by the presence of scandal. Presidential scandal thus damages the president’s reputation in Congress and consequently contributes to decreased leverage in Congress, since Congress becomes preoccupied with scandal mode, i.e. in investigative hearings, trials, or serious calls for presidential impeachment. “Where scandal dominates presidential-congressional relations, the Congress retains greater control over the president’s legislative fate, the president is further weakened, and public disillusionment with government may increase” (Meinke and Anderson 2001, 653). Scandal implicates a diversion of resources, within both the executive and legislative branches so much that the normal operations of executive-legislative cooperation cease to exist. Presidential scandal can produce gridlock at the least and a constitutional crisis at the most. Scandal, as a result can breed a culture of mistrust in and potential disillusionment of the entire American political system.

Discussion of Limitations

The study includes several limitations. Limitations include the narrow definition of scandal, key votes index measurements, the aggregation of Senate key votes, the simplified nature of dichotomizing the scandal variable, and the curvilinear relationship exemplified in the president’s year in office and Senate/presidential agreement/disagreement. The narrow definition of scandal which restricts analysis to the Watergate, Iran-Contra and Clinton-Lewinsky scandals is problematic. First, this study’s definition of presidential scandal assumes the involvement and publication of presidential misconduct by the media so much that it results in congressional investigation and subsequent serious calls for presidential impeachment. Secondly, this study narrowly defines scandal to begin during the first sign of public knowledge of alleged presidential misconduct. Third, scandal defined in this research does not necessarily
implicate administrative actors unless it was shown that the president had any involvement or say in the alleged misconduct. The Plame scandal, for instance involved Vice President Dick Cheney. It is not yet known the extent to which President George W. Bush was involved in the leak of the C.I.A. officer’s information. Moreover, congressional investigation and legitimate calls for impeachment did not exist because of unified government in the CIA leak/Plame affair. As stated above, rarely does this study’s definition of scandal and subsequent investigation for alleged presidential misconduct occur in times of unified government. The restrictive and narrow notion of scandal has the likelihood of returning favorable findings that would suggest that scandal is an important factor in determining the logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement. Including other minor scandals, such as the Plame/CIA Leak scandal or the Bert Lance and Hamilton Jordan scandals reduces the likelihood suggesting that there is a relationship between scandal and Senate/presidential agreement.

There are limitations in restricting analysis to the key votes measure in *Congressional Quarterly*. First and foremost, just because a key vote lists the president’s position does not mean that the president pushed an agenda or policy as an initiative or presidential goal in Congress. While the key votes index measures stated presidential positions, it does not require that the key vote be initiated by the president in Congress. As a result, this may allow me to question the key votes index as a valid measurement of presidential initiative success in Congress. Although key votes may be contentious issues given the historical circumstances in the nation at the time of the vote, they may not completely and accurately represent the full potential of presidential power in Congress. At first, the proposed research presumed that number of key votes per year would be sufficient to narrow the analysis by comparing key votes with stated presidential initiatives outlined in annual State of the Union addresses. Because
*Congressional Quarterly*’s key votes indices averaged from 10 to 15 votes per year, narrowing the results to indicate only presidential initiatives from State of the Union messages would have severely restricted the study’s number of cases, possibly undermining the importance of statistical significance from subsequent data analyses. Secondly, the key votes indices measure roll-call votes, which may restrict the analysis since they exclude committee and subcommittee votes, where much of the initial action on the presidential and congressional agenda takes place. Nevertheless, roll-call vote measurements are systematic and uniform over time. Finally, *Congressional Quarterly* considers no outside issues or variables considered when deciding upon the selection of key votes, which may limit the historical implications of the listed key votes. Other measured variables, such as divided/united government, presidential approval rating, presidential year in office, and the policy nature of the key vote as a result need to be included to fully understand a influences on a key vote’s impact.

A second significant limitation of the study is the aggregation of Senate key votes rather than the analysis of individual senators’ votes on issues. Aggregation of Senate key votes limits the analysis because it excludes variables such as individual ideology and Northern versus Southern Democratic membership. Nevertheless, party polarization has increased over decades, which has decreased the importance and relevance of political ideology and Northern versus Southern Democratic membership. In addition, individual member analysis would have required DW-nominate scoring, which is unnecessary for exploratory research studying presidential scandal’s impact on Senate key votes.

A third limitation is the dichotomous categorization of the presidential scandal variable. Simplifying scandal to indicate its presence or absence has disadvantages. Simplifying presidential scandal presence to indicate the date of public knowledge of alleged presidential
misconduct could misconstrue congressional knowledge of scandal and subsequent action taken to investigate and inform the public of the president’s wrongdoing. For example, although the Watergate break-in was reported by the *Washington Post* on June 19, 1972, serious congressional action and investigation did not occur until almost a year later, on May 18, 1973 when the Senate Watergate Committee began hearings. However, dichotomizing presidential scandal is justified since measuring the degree or intensity of presidential scandal could result in problems of measurement, notably measurement bias or subjectivity, since one would have to investigate not only print sources, but also televised programs and other forms of media.

It was noted in Chapter 4 that variation was found between Senate/presidential agreement and president’s year of term in office. The fact that Senate/presidential agreement decreases after the first two years of the president’s tenure in office, then increases around the seventh or eighth year of the term indicates that there is a curvilinear relationship. Since agreement increases in the last couple of years, *SPSS* has built in the statistical arrangement and therefore it may skew the results.

Finally, this research restricted scandal analysis, only including major presidential scandals that have occurred in the modern era. What would one find if studying all major presidential scandals, including Ulysses S. Grant’s Whiskey Ring scandal and Warren G. Harding’s Teapot Dome scandal? A problem would arise since *Congressional Quarterly* does not date back to 19th Century America. Moreover, what would one find if studying all minor scandals occurring within administrations, such as the Hamilton Jordan and Bert Lance scandals of the Carter administration and the Valerie Plaime/CIA Leak scandal of the Bush administration? It might be that because there were no serious congressional calls for impeachment and because the scandals were minor, it should not result in analyses comparing
the relatively simple scandals to legislative key votes. Future research can minimize the limitations that this study’s analysis created.

**Discussion of Future Research**

Future research can be conducted to further enhance knowledge of the impact of presidential scandal in the legislative branch. A massive collection of data for longitudinal analysis can be implemented. All roll call votes relating to presidential initiatives outlined in State of the Union addresses can be collected, in addition to incorporating some congressional committee and subcommittee votes for analysis. In addition, votes on an individual level basis using DW nominate scoring would be essential to the longitudinal analysis. Furthermore, both houses of Congress could be studied using the same systematic methods for each to determine possible differences between House of Representatives and Senate voting on presidential initiatives.

In addition, case studies of analyzing each major presidential scandal would result in a more longitudinal and routine historical angle in determining impact of presidential scandal on Congress. Studies of the changes and trends in the mass media throughout the three major modern presidential scandals could be conducted to try to gauge media influence on presidential scandal and congressional voting. Quantitatively, other variables may be added to determine further possible interactive or additive effects on presidential scandal and presidential initiatives in Congress. The opportunities for future research are limitless. Because scandal has become a relatively frequent phenomenon, studies must continue to gauge the possible impacts it can have on levels of public apathy and distrust of the American political system, the level of media scrutiny of public officials, and the level of presidential success on initiatives in Congress.
Conclusion

Many historians have suggested that presidential scandal has had a negative influence on presidential-congressional relations and presidential leadership in Congress. However, a review of scholarly literature indicates a lack of empirical findings that link presidential scandal to legislative outcomes. Meinke and Anderson (2001) suggest that the degree or intensity of presidential scandal has an impact on presidential support in the House of Representatives. A replication and slight modification of Meinke and Anderson’s research methods was conducted to investigate the impact presidential scandal can have on presidential support in the United States Senate. By examining key votes listed in Congressional Quarterly Almanac, it was found that the mere presence of political scandal has an effect, along with divided/united government, on the logged odds of Senate/presidential agreement. Furthermore, this finding suggests that the scandal variable be included in future analyses of presidential-congressional relations. Consequently, future research must be geared to further investigate the claim that presidential scandal has an impact on presidential influence in Congress.

The Watergate scandal was indeed a “national nightmare” (Nixon’s successor, President Gerald Ford, in an address to the nation in 1974, as quoted in McPherson 2000, 274). However, Ford’s statement on the resignation of President Nixon in 1974 was overshadowed by the fact that he later pardoned Nixon within a month from the time of his oath of office. In addition, it was overshadowed by the consequent scandals or “nightmares” that plagued the Reagan and Clinton presidencies. As one Wall Street financer keenly quoted after the resignation of President Nixon, “What we have is the same play with different players” (quoted originally in The New York Times, taken from Zinn 2003, 546). Is the American constitutional system of democracy flawed as taking place on the same stage, playing the same play, with the same
presidential political actors that are susceptible to scandal? One may never truly know, but the subsequent study suggests that scandal results in the “same play” during public revelations of major presidential misconduct. Theodore Sorensen, adviser to President Kennedy, wrote at the time of the Watergate scandal, “The underlying causes of the gross misconduct in our law-enforcement system now being revealed are largely personal, not institutional. Some structural changes are needed. All the rotten apples should be thrown out. But save the barrel” (quoted in Zinn 2003, 546). First, whether or not the system should be reformed is open to interpretation. And secondly, it should be noted that the Watergate scandal resulted from Nixon and his administration in taking extra steps to ensure chances of being reelected as President at the most and discrediting personal political enemies at the least. The Clinton scandal, however, resulted from personal misconduct, unlike the Nixon and Reagan scandals. Nevertheless, one must view the prospect of presidential scandal, as a whole, as damaging the interactions and relationship between the executive and legislative branches. Major presidential scandal not only casts public doubt into America’s constitutional system of democracy as a whole, but also casts public doubt in the legislative process, at the least. Scandal mode creates disjunction between the two branches, which leads to cynicism on the nature of the legislative process involving the presidency. Nevertheless, the American system of democracy continues despite presidential political scandal. As a result, one should not look too dimly on the prospect of American democracy. The Greek play, Antigone, noted, “Gentlemen, I have the honor to inform you that our Ship of State, which recent storms have threatened to destroy, has come safely to harbor at last, guided by the merciful wisdom of Heaven” (Sophocles’s Antigone, Scene I, as quoted in Sitts and Fitzgerald 1977, 196).


4 Ibid


7 Ibid

References Consulted


APPENDIX

Presidential Scandals for Nixon, Reagan, and Clinton and Congressional Quarterly Senate Key Votes

CODEBOOK

Documented by Miranda E. Canody

March 14, 2009
These data on key votes in the United States Senate were published by *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*. Each case number is referred to the particular key vote in the United States Senate.

According to *CQ Weekly*, a key vote is defined as follows:

The editors of *Congressional Quarterly* each year select a series of key votes on major issues.

Selection of Issues. An issue is judged by the extent it represents one or more of the following:

- A matter of major controversy.
- A test of Presidential or political power.
- A decision of potentially great impact on the lives of Americans.

Selection of Votes. For each issue or series of related votes on an issue, only one key vote is ordinarily chosen. This vote is the roll call, that in the opinion of *Congressional Quarterly* editors, was the most important in determining the outcome (*CQ Weekly* Jan. 15, 1971, 115).

The research parameters included each president’s terms in office. All Senate key votes were recorded during the presidential administrations of Richard M. Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and William J. Clinton, starting with their oath of office and ending the day before the oath of their predecessor.

In addition to publishing aggregate information on Senate positions on key votes, *Congressional Quarterly* publishes the President’s position, if any, on key votes. The president’s position for each key vote was also recorded.

All data was collected by Miranda E. Canody.
Presfavor  Presidential position (nay, yea, or Not Available) on Senate key vote

VALID CODES:
------------
0. President did not favor key vote, or voted no
1. President favored key vote, or voted yes
2. The president did not give a position (not available) on key vote

Senvote  U.S. Senate (aggregate) favorability or vote on Senate key vote

VALID CODES:
------------
0. No (nay)
1. Yes (yea)

Sengovt  United or divided government during the time of the U.S. Senate key vote

DESCRIPTION: United government is indicated if the president’s party and the U.S. Senate majority party is the same during the time of the key vote. Divided government is indicated if the president’s party and the U.S. Senate majority party is different during the time of the key vote.

VALID CODES:
------------
0. Divided government
1. United government

Presyr  Year of the president’s tenure in office during the time of the U.S. Senate key vote

VALID CODES:
------------
1. Year 1
2. Year 2
3. Year 3
Scandal  The definition or identification of, presence or absence of presidential scandal

DESCRIPTION: The parameters for determining the presence or absence of scandal were determined by the approximate date of when the scandal began to when the scandal ended according to historical accounts. Scandal arguably began on the dates mentioned in Table 3.1, when knowledge of the alleged activities became available to the public. Scandal ended on the dates mentioned in Table 3.1 when all congressional action and investigation was complete. Please refer to the table below on the specific time periods of presidential scandal.

Scandals, Time Periods, and Specific Dates for Study Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scandal</th>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Specific Dates in Categorization of Scandal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watergate (Nixon)</td>
<td>Pre-Scandal</td>
<td>January 20, 1969 to June 17, 1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scandal</td>
<td>June 18, 1972 to August 8, 1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-Scandal</td>
<td>N/A due to resignation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran-Contra (Reagan)</td>
<td>Pre-Scandal</td>
<td>January 20, 1981 to November 1, 1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scandal</td>
<td>November 2, 1985 to November 18, 1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-Scandal</td>
<td>November 19, 1987 to January 19, 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewinsky Affair</td>
<td>Pre-Scandal</td>
<td>January 20, 1993 to January 21, 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scandal</td>
<td>January 22, 1998 to February 2, 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-Scandal</td>
<td>February 3, 1999 to January 19, 2001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VALID CODES:
-------------
0. No Scandal (pre-scandal)
1. Scandal
2. No Scandal (post-scandal)

Naturevote The nature (foreign, domestic, or intermestic) of the key vote policy

DESCRIPTION: Parameters were used to measure the nature of the policy of key vote or motion for roll call votes. Foreign key votes/legislation refers to measures that involve or implicate the United States outside of its borders. Domestic key votes/legislation refers to measures that involve or implicate the United States within its borders. Intermestic key votes/legislation refers to measures that involve or implicate the United States both within and outside of its borders.

VALID CODES:
----------
0. Foreign
1. Domestic
2. Intermestic

Approval Presidential approval ratings at the time of the key vote

DESCRIPTION: Parameters were used to measure the president’s approval rating during each key vote or the president’s latest approval rating according to the Gallup Organization. Access to this source was found online on March 14, 2009 at http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/data/popularity.php.

VALID CODES:
----------
0. 0 percent approval rating
1. 1 percent approval rating
99. 99 percent approval rating
100. 100 percent approval rating
Agree                Senate and presidential agreement

DESCRIPTION: Variables “presfavor” and “senvote” were combined using SPSS recoding tools. If presfavor = 1 and senvote = 1, the variable was coded as “agree,” or 1. In addition, variables were coded “agree” if “presfavor” = 0 and “senvote” = 0. Likewise, if “presfavor” = 1 and “senvote” = 0, the variable was coded as 0, or disagree. In addition, variables were coded 0 if “presfavor” = 0 and “senvote” = 1.

VALID CODES:
-------------
  0. Senate and president disagree
  1. Senate and president agree

Scandal2                Presence or absence of scandal dichotomous variable

DESCRIPTION: The “scandal” variable was dichotomized using SPSS recoding tools. Before and after scandal was recoded to represent absence of scandal, while presence of scandal was kept the same.

VALID CODES:
-------------
  0. Absence of presidential scandal
  1. Presence of presidential scandal

President                President in Office

VALID CODES:
-------------
  1. President Nixon
  2. President Reagan
  3. President Clinton