Bully Pulpit or Ham Radio? Receptive Audiences and Presidential Messages

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President Bush's attempt to reform Social Security provides an opportunity to test the ability of presidents to shift public opinion on policy proposals. We argue that although the bully pulpit perspective offers a reasonable explanation of presidential efforts of public persuasion, modern presidents are more likely to engage in a selective attempt to mobilize portions of the public. We employ survey data of American adults to examine whether President Bush's influenced the public or portions of the public over the course of his campaign to reform Social Security. Our analyses suggest that although overall public support for reform declined, Bush's efforts did successfully increase support for the Social Security reform proposal among his core constituents. We conclude that our findings support the notion that modern presidents employ a narrow bully pulpit that is directed at their electoral base.

Introduction

Presidents are in a unique position to influence legislative outcomes. As the national representative they can influence the content of national news with relative ease (Kernell 1986; Kingdon 1995; Young and Perkins 2005). The president seems to be particularly influential over the national news agenda when dealing with domestic policy (Edwards and Wood 1999) and salient issues (Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake 2011). By publicly advocating policy proposals popular with the broader public, presidents can use the news media to increase the salience of particular issues and pressure Congress to enact legislation (Canes-Wrone 2006; Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004).

However, presidents may have personal preferences that are closer to that of their ideological base rather than the general public. If so, presidents might engage in an ideological rather than a centrist public campaign (Wood 2009, Eshbaugh-Soha and Rottinghaus 2013). Using the bully pulpit to appeal to his core constituents helps a president turn his electoral coalition into policy supporters and – when properly timed – can allow the president to push for his ideologically preferred policies before the opposition is clearly defined. This gives the president strategic advantage over potential opponents and increases the probability of achieving his preferred legislative outcomes (Wood 2009, p.34).

Though the competing approaches are theoretically defined, each lacks significant evidence to link the theory with actual political outcomes. For instance, theory expects a popular president to engage in ideological campaigns for public policy during his second term honeymoon (Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004, p.702; Wood 2009, p.34), but evidence suggests that this does not happen (Eshbaugh-Soha and Rottinghaus 2013). In addition, the evidence suggests that presidents are equally likely to engage in centrist as they are ideological public campaigns despite the likelihood that centrist public campaigns will end in defeat (Edwards 2009; Eshbaugh-Soha and Rottinghaus 2013).

The problem is two-fold. First, ideological (centrist) campaigns are defined by the congruence between the president's proposal and majority public opinion. Appeals congruent with majority opinion are considered centrist while appeals incongruent are labeled ideological (Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004; Eshbaugh-Soha and Rottinghaus 2013). This measure lacks specificity. A proposal favored by 90% of Republicans and 51% of the general public would be coded as both a centrist and an ideological appeal. This coding decision could make it seem like presidents engage in centrist public campaigns more often than they actually do.[1]

Second, very few presidents experience a second-term honeymoon period with conditions ideal for an ideological campaign. This necessitates examining the theoretical expectations using case-studies rather than systematic generalized evidence. There are simply not enough presidents in the last 40 years that faced a second-term honeymoon with the theoretical conditions that would lead them to engage in an ideological public campaign. This makes it difficult to systematically examine the impact of an ideological, rather than a centrist public campaign. Understanding the total impact of an ideological public campaign (both on the public and the core constituents) yields insights into the relative merits of an ideological (centrist) public campaign. It is possible that ideological outcomes are best accomplished in private, rather than through public campaigns (Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004), which is why we examine a particular ideological campaign to assess the merits.

This article makes two contributions to the literature. First, we show that presidential appeals to their core constituents have a substantively significant influence on their support for a particular policy. Using innovative post-estimation techniques, we move the literature beyond a mere discussion of statistical significance and generate predicted levels of actual support for a particular policy that result from a presidential public campaign. Second, we demonstrate the negative effect this approach has on the general public. As the idea of presidential appeals to narrow segments of the population grows in popularity (Wood 2009), it is important to remember that this strategy does not always lead to the president's preferred policy outcome and, if the narrow appeals become publicized to the broader public, may lead to greater public polarization on the policy issue. For this reason we examine a presidential public campaign for a policy that most consider an abysmal failure – Bush's 2005 campaign to reform Social Security (for a discussion on this see Kernell 2007 and Edwards 2009).

We begin with an overview of the literature on presidential rhetorical influence and the mechanisms through which local campaigns generate public policy support. We then describe George W. Bush's 2005 Social Security reform campaign, which was an integral part of his effort to garner support among his core constituents (Edwards 2007; Jacobson 2011). We then examine individual-level support for Bush's proposal to reform Social Security by employing data from three national surveys; one conducted before Bush began his mini-campaign and the other shortly after he began his mini-campaign. We use these surveys

[1] For instance Eshbaugh-Soha and Rottinghaus (2013) find George W. Bush to be far more centrist than Edwards (2007) or Jacobson (2011) suggest.

to examine the short-term effects of the public campaign. The third national survey was conducted at the end of the mini-campaign and contains an embedded experiment that we use to examine the total effect of the public campaign. We explore the implications of our findings and offer suggestions for future research.

Presidential Rhetorical Influence

Going public on an issue is a risky proposition for any president. Once an issue becomes publicized, defeat is also publicized. 'Staying private,' or limiting the scope of conflict, may be the best option, depending on the goal a president seeks to achieve (Baum 2004; Covington 1987). The literature is unclear about how modern presidents target their public campaigns for policy. Since most people hold policy preferences near the ideological center (Fiorina and Abrams 2008), it makes sense for presidents to target their policy appeals towards the ideological center. Presidential leadership of broader public opinion provides the best opportunity for presidential leadership of policy outputs, because positions consistent with majority opinion are the most likely to influence Congress (Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004; Kernell 1986). In this view, presidential public campaigns are less about bolstering the popularity of the president and more about increasing the salience of issues that are already popular to motivate congressional action. (Canes-Wrone 2006; Canes-Wrone 2004). Even unpopular presidents can persuade Congress to enact legislation when the broader public supports the proposal (Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004).

However, for a variety of reasons, modern presidents do not seem to appeal to the ideological center as much as the centrist model expects (Eshbaugh-Soha and Rottinghaus 2013). Some argue that this is because public opinion is too stable for presidents to shift through public campaigns (Edwards 2003, 2009). Public views about issues differ from that of political leaders and public opinion tends to change dramatically, in response to world events (Edwards 2009; Page and Bouton 2006; Page and Shapiro 1992; Stimson 2004). Moreover, as citizens that attend to politics develop stronger political views (Abramowitz 2010; Abramowitz and Jacobson 2006; Abramowitz and Saunders 1998), the size of potential converts to a presidential appeal may be shrinking (Zaller 1992).

Presidents may choose to target their appeals towards partisan supporters because they are more receptive to presidential messages (Heith 2004; Rottinghaus 2006). A president may not persuade the broader public to support his policy proposal but can use targeted appeals to his core constituents to convert his electoral coalition into policy supporters (Eshbaugh-Soha and Rottinghaus

2013). Moreover, a president's partisan base is likely to have policy preferences closer to that of a president's own preferred policy (Wood 2009). As such, presidents may choose to appeal to their core constituents because it allows them to craft policy that is more congruent with their own political views and build a lasting party legacy.

The appeal to the center versus partisan base calculus is determined in large part by the political reality a president faces. All things being equal, the self-interested president would choose to appeal to the partisan base because it provides the highest probability of enacting policy that aligns with his personal preferences and strengthens his own party (Wood 2009, p.36). However, if the president's approval ratings a re low, elections are looming(Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004), or Congress is closely divided, a president may need to appeal to the center to achieve his policy objectives (Wood 2009, p.33). This is largely confirmed by the data. Using data from 1990-2006, Eshbaugh-Soha and Rottinghaus (2013) find that presidents propose policies that are more congruent with partisan, rather than centrist public opinion. And when presidents have above average approval ratings, they are more likely to take positions congruent with a majority of their partisan supporters (Eshbaugh-Soha and Rottinghaus 2013).

Though the conditions that determine a presidential appeal to the center versus partisan base are theoretically defined, some of the conditions lack empirical support. For instance, Eshbaugh-Soha and Rottinghaus (2013) find no evidence for centrist (partisan appeals) during conditions of divided government, or during the honeymoon period. In addition, their findings suggest that George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush were equally likely to appeal to their core constituencies as they were to the center. Indeed, because of data limitations, their findings leave the impression that George W. Bush's second term was the most centrist of the five terms they analyzed (Eshbaugh-Soha and Rottinghaus 2013, Table 1).

However, we think that there is good reason to expect presidents to pursue a partisan public campaign during presidential honeymoons. First, these periods provide the best opportunity to translate electoral coalitions into support in Congress (Eshbaugh-Soha and Rottinghaus 2013). Second, after presidential elections there is not a cohesive out-party representative stating issue positions that compete with the president; the out-party is leaderless (Wood 2009, p.31). Moreover, the president is likely to use the same rhetoric advocating policy that he did during the campaign (Olson et al. 2012) which makes it easier to stay on message and the president's rhetorical skills are honed by a recent election

campaign. Finally, the president's supporters are easily identified after an election and their level of support was recently gauged. As such, the honeymoon may be the period in which it is easiest to target a message to core supporters.

There seems to be substantial theoretical support for popular presidents to publicly promote policies targeted toward their ideological base during the honeymoon period at the beginning of the second term, with little empirical support. Indeed, most evidence suggests that ideological appeals are on the decline (Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004; Eshbaugh-Soha and Rottinghaus 2013). Yet, we know that modern presidents are among the most polarizing figures on record (Jacobson 2010, 2011). Though a variety of mechanisms contribute to this (Hetherington 2009), it may also be caused by an increasing number of presidential appeals targeted toward the ideological base of the president, rather than the center (Welch 2003, 2007). The current focus on broad measures of ideological congruence between the president's proposal and the public's preferred outcome places too strong an emphasis on broader public opinion to gauge the influence of a public campaign on particular constituents. We demonstrate that in his honeymoon of his second term, President Bush—a popular president—chose to target his public campaign for social security reform toward his ideological base, rather than the ideological center.

The News Media

Changes in technology have also shaped the ability of presidents to appeal to the center versus his base. Most people get their political information from the news media. The rise of cable television news has fragmented the viewing public (Baum and Kernell 1999; Iyengar and Hahn 2009). Indeed, as viewers have more selection in television programming, those that disapprove of the president are among the most likely to watch something other than a presidential speech (Kernell and Rice 2011). At least as far back as the Reagan presidency, presidents have faced dwindling audiences (Welch 2003). Thus, even if presidents might persuade those that attend to a speech (Cavari 2013), it is increasingly difficult for a modern president to speak to potential converts.

Presidents have begun using a variety of tools at their disposal to reach their intended audience. For instance, when the president uses the Oval Office to make a short speech advocating a single policy, he is the most likely to persuade the public to support his policy position (Tedin, Rottinghaus, and Rodgers 2010). This is one of the reasons that modern presidents frequently use speeches from the Oval Office to target their messages to specific audiences (Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake 2011).

In addition, presidents have found ways to use targeted local news coverage to get

their message to particular audiences (Cohen 2010; Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake 2006). A presidential visit is a high-profile local event, which leads local newspapers to devote significant coverage to the presidential address (Eshbaugh-Soha 2008). And because the tone of local news coverage is determined, in large part, by the local audience (Eshbaugh-Soha 2010), presidents can generate positive local news coverage by giving speeches in cities where majorities support the president. Additionally, because the national news media often build stories based on local news (Cohen 2010) a president can "go local" and overcome some of the obstacles presented by the current media environment and deliver an largely undiluted message to those that may not attend to his message otherwise.

Presidential Influence: The Case of President George W. Bush

Our discussion provides a foundation for thinking about a president's use of his rhetorical powers to solidify support among his core constituents. Sometimes it makes sense for a president to target his public policy proposals toward the ideological center. This is particularly true if his public approval numbers are low or if divided government necessitates a move toward the center. However, a president's preferred option would be to target his public policy proposals toward his core constituents and mobilize them. He is most likely to do this when he has recently won an election, his approval numbers are high – particularly among his base—and under unified government (Wood 2009).

President Bush's 2005 mini-campaign for Social Security reform is instructive for a couple of reasons. First, Eshbaugh-Soha (2006, 2008) use this case to validate the influence presidents have on local news coverage, but stop short of examining its effect on public opinion. We think that this is an excellent opportunity to test the influence of a targeted local campaign on national public opinion. Second, Edwards (2009) uses this as an example of presidential failure, arguing that neither the public nor Congress supported the president's plan (p. 198) and Kernell (2007) concurs. Thus, we think it is the appropriate case to test the influence of the public campaign on the president's core constituents. Some suggest that ideological appeals could lead to ideological policy outcomes (Wood 2009), while others suggest that ideological policy outcomes are best achieved in private (Canes-Wrone 2006; Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004). This is an ideal test case because we can demonstrate that the ideological public campaign succeeded by all measures, except that it did not result in the president's preferred policy outcome. Thus, the merits of an ideological public campaign may need to be reexamined.

The 2005 Mini-Campaign to Reform Social Security

By the end of 2004, the public was growing tired of the war in Iraq, and support was fading. Rather than focus on foreign policy initiatives, as many previous presidents have in their second terms, Bush had campaigned in 2004 on his domestic policy agenda (Alberts 2005). Polls taken in late 2004 indicated that there was some support for Bush's proposal to reform Social Security. A Fox News poll conducted Dec. 14-15, 2004 showed that 60 percent of adults thought that people should have the choice to invest their Social Security contributions. In addition, 74% of those surveyed by ABC News/Washington Post between Dec. 16-19, 2004 thought that the Social Security program was either "in crisis" or had "major problems"(2004).

Bush began his 2005 campaign with some specifics in his State of the Union Address (Edwards 2007). He argued that people should be able to put part of their Social Security contributions into individual accounts that they could personally manage. He promised that over time this money would grow at a greater rate than anything the current system could produce. He also suggested that people would be able to pass on the earnings from these accounts to their children or grandchildren and promised that the plan would be fiscally responsible (Edwards 2007, p.219). In the two months before the 2005 State of the Union address, there were roughly 97 news stories about the president's plan to reform Social Security for an average of 48.5 stories a month.[2]

In the month following the speech there were roughly 98 stories on Social Security reform with an average of 89 stories per month through May, 2005; roughly a two-fold increase. By June, 2005 only 38 news stories mentioned Social Security or private accounts. One of the reasons for the sustained increase in news attention to the Social Security issue was Bush's schedule. He spent more than 60 days in a series of public addresses, town hall meetings, and targeted rallies. President Bush likely used internal polls to identify the language and symbols he should use to construct his message (Heith 2000, 2004), and then used a series of carefully managed town hall style meetings to frame the issue for his core constituents.

The vetting of audience members for the town hall meetings helped to ensure that the President and participants would stay 'on message' about the need to reform the system and the desirability of partially privatized accounts. And although

[2] These counts were obtained searching all news sources in Lexis-Nexis Academic for the terms Social Security and private accounts for the months described. Stories in international outlets were excluded.

we would not argue that Bush only intended to rally his core supporters in these meetings, the targeted nature of where and when these events were held clearly suggests that Bush was focused on his supporters and Republicans in key congressional districts and states around the country (Edwards 2007; Weiner 2007). President Bush was not the only member of the Executive Branch engaging the public. By the end of this 60 day campaign, 31 administration officials had made 166 stops outside the beltway visiting 40 states and 127 cities. They had also participated in 61 town hall meetings with 30 members of Congress and their constituencies (Edwards 2007, p.233).

In general, the 60 plus day mini-campaign Bush pursued in early 2005 seemed to increase public opposition to reform rather than decrease it. Congruent with the dominant view on presidential rhetoric, Edwards (2007) argues that Bush failed because he misread the public agenda and did not have high enough approval ratings to move public opinion. Yet, the public's preferred policy outcome at the beginning of the campaign was closer to the President's than it was to Congress' and Bush had above average approval ratings. According to the Canes-Wrone (2006) model, Bush's public campaign should have expanded the visibility of the issue and forced Congress to comply with the wishes of their constituents. Yet, Bush failed to achieve his preferred policy outcome.

At the beginning of the public campaign 90% of Republicans approved of President Bush compared to 43% of Independents and 18% of Democrats (Jacobson 2011, p.153). The public was equally divided when asked who the president was trying to help with his proposal to reform Social Security—average Americans or Wall Street. In January 2005, only 19% of Republicans thought that he was trying to help Wall Street compared to 54% of Independents and 75% of Democrats (Jacobson 2011, p.159). Given the partisan divergence in attitudes, we might expect the president to pursue a more partisan approach to his public campaign. Based on the polls conducted at the beginning of this public campaign, Bush might reasonably have concluded that an appeal to the base would be likely mobilize his core constituents and possibly some independents; even though it would be unlikely to generate support among the opposition. He didn't need the support of the opposition. His party controlled Congress and he had relatively high public approval ratings.

In early 2005, the conditions were ideal for an ideological public campaign. We think that Bush failed to achieve his policy goals because he chose to engage in an ideological public campaign. This suggests a few specific hypotheses. First, an ideologically framed proposal in a national address will persuade

the president's ideological supporters to support the proposed policy. Here the focus is on the impact that a particular proposal will have on individual support for particular policies. We would expect opposing ideologues (in this case, liberal Democrats) to be less supportive of an ideological proposal following a single address. We also expect supportive ideologues (in this case, conservative Republicans) to be much more supportive of the president's proposal when it is targeted toward his ideological base (H1).

Second, we expect supportive ideologues (in this case, conservative Republicans) to be more supportive of the president's ideological proposal at the conclusion of a sustained ideological campaign. The general public may be less supportive as might opposing ideologues (liberal Democrats), but this would not affect the attitudes of supportive ideologues. In fact, support (opposition) for an ideological proposal may become more solidified as public debate engages the relative merits of a particular ideological proposal because people are likely to engage in some form of motivated reasoning that crystalizes their previously held beliefs (Kunda 1987, 1990; Taber and Lodge 2006; Taber, Lodge, and Glathar 2001). Thus, while people may not recall the specifics of the proposal they support, they will know which side they are on. Supportive ideologues will be more supportive of Bush's plan, while opposing ideologues would be less supportive of Bush's plan (H2).

Data and Methods

Our first hypothesis is tested using pooled responses from two different surveys collected for the Pew Research Center by Princeton Survey Research International. The first survey was conducted from December 1 to 16, 2004 by telephone with a nationally representative sample of 2,000 adults in the U.S. The second survey was conducted from February 16 to 21, 2005 by telephone with a nationally representative sample of 1,502 adults in the U.S. Each survey asked: How much, if anything, have you heard about a proposal which would allow younger workers to invest a portion of their Social Security taxes in private retirement accounts, which might include stocks or mutual funds – a lot, a little or nothing at all?" Respondents were then asked: "Generally, do you favor or oppose this proposal?" The responses for this question were coded one if they favored the proposal and zero if they do not.

Central to our analysis is that the survey in December 2004 was conducted before Bush began his mini-campaign for his Social Security reform proposal. The second survey was taken in February 2005, just after President Bush gave

his State of the Union address, which kicked off his "60 stops in 60 days" campaign to promote his Social Security proposal. We use these surveys to assess the degree to which the State of the Union address influenced supportive ideologues to support the president's proposal at the beginning of the campaign.

Independent Variables

We capture the effect of Bush's State of the Union address and the start of the mini-campaign with a variable coded zero for respondents who took the December 2004 survey, and one for respondents who took the February 2005 survey. Because the proposal is ideological rather than centrist, we expect that Bush's attempt at going public will be associated with lower overall support for Social Security reform among those surveyed in February.

We measure Bush's core constituency in two ways. First with variables for partisanship; we code respondents identifying as Democrat as one, with all others at zero, and respondents identifying as Republican as one, with all others at zero. With these two variables in each model the coefficients are interpreted relative to independents. Second, we account for core constituents based on approval of President Bush. For those respondents who approved of the job the president was doing we assigned a one, for those who disapproved we assigned a two.

We include other variables that might include Bush's core constituents. In the 2004 presidential election, four out of five of those who attended church at least once a week voted for Bush (Langfitt 2004). We measure church attendance with a scale from one to six, with one indicating that the respondent never attends church and a six indicating that the respondent attends church once a week or more. Likewise, born-again Christians and evangelicals were some of Bush's strongest supporters in 2000 and 2004 (Goodstein, Yardley, and Connelly 2004). We measure evangelical Christians with a variable coded one for those identifying as born-again Christians and zero for all others. Finally, the Bush coalition was decidedly conservative. We capture respondent ideology with a seven-point scale, with one being very conservative and seven being very liberal. We expect President Bush's core constituents--those who attend church often, are born-again, and conservative--will be more likely to support Social Security reform after the State of the Union speech (H1).

Although our modeling of combining a pre-State of the Union survey with a post-State of the Union survey attempts to assess exposure to the start of the Bush mini-campaign on Social Security reform, we do not have a direct measure of exposure to the State of the Union Address. We include a surrogate measure

of exposure to the Social Security reform campaign with responses to the question: "How much, if anything, have you heard about a proposal which would allow younger workers to invest a portion of their Social Security taxes in private retirement accounts, which might include stocks or mutual funds – a lot (coded three), a little (coded two), or nothing at all (coded one)?"

Central to our assessment of the impact of presidential appeals is the notion that the president might be targeting his core constituency rather than the general public. To assess Bush's impact on core constituents we need to interact respondent sub-groups with our exposure measures (Brambor, Clark, and Golder 2006). To test whether Bush's 2005 State of the Union address influenced the attitudes of his core constituents we test four interaction variables: 1) an interaction between survey period and Republican, 2) an interaction between hearing about the proposal and Republican, 3) an interaction between survey period and Bush approval, and 4) an interaction between hearing about the proposal and Bush approval.

Beyond the theoretical variables of interest we also included a variety of traditional control variables in our models. These include measures of gender, age, education, race, income, and parental status.

Results and Discussion

Our dependent variable is dichotomous so we estimate our equations with Logit (Agresti 2007; Long 1997). The results in Table 1 fit our expectations. Our measures of exposure to Bush's appeals – being surveyed after the State of the Union and whether the respondent had heard much about the reform proposal – both are statistically significant and negative. This suggests that on average respondents that had heard more about the Social Security proposal were less likely to support the proposal and those that were surveyed after the State of the Union address in February 2005 were less likely to support the proposal. In the short-term, the president's effort to build support for reform may have actually decreased support in the general public.

However, the president's core constituents, Republicans and those who approved of the job his was doing, were more likely to support the reform proposal. Other potential core constituents, including those identifying as Born-again and conservatives, were also more likely to support the reform proposal. This pattern is consistent with our expectations, but the key question remains: did the president influence his core constituents with his public appeal?

Table 1 displays the model with the interaction variables that account for

Bush's core constituents and exposure to the president's reform campaign. Model 2 (column 2) shows the interaction between exposure to the State of the Union and Bush approval. Here the interaction approached the standard .05 probability level and is statistically significant in a one-tailed test. The coefficient suggests that those who approved of Bush were more likely to support the reform proposal following the president's appeal than they were before the appeal. But as noted, we do not know if respondents were directly exposed to the State of the Union address.

The second set of interactions might better capture exposure to Bush's appeal for Social Security reform. Model 3 (column 3) displays the coefficient for the interaction between Republican and how much the respondent had heard about the proposal. The interaction term is statistically significant and positive, suggesting that Republicans who had been exposed to more information about the policy proposal were more likely to support it, relative to Republicans who had less exposure. This indirect measure of the beginning of the campaign suggests that the president's initial public appeal may have increased support among Republicans – some of his core constituents. Model 4 (column 4) supports this notion – the interaction between how much the respondent had heard about the proposal and approval of Bush is also statistically significant and positive. These findings suggest that Bush supporters were more likely to support the proposal the more they heard about it. Thus, in both cases we find evidence that Bush may have been able to increase support among particular core constituent groups by going public (H2).[3]

Substantive Impact

Logit coefficients are not readily translated into substantive significance. To get a better sense of the substantive significance of some of these relationships we simulated predicted probabilities for each independent variable in our models (Kosuke 2008). We used the mean value for each independent variable in our model and changed the value for the independent variables reported in Tables

[3] We also included interactions between the variable measuring how much respondents had heard about the Social Security reform proposal and ideology (interaction coefficient -.477, p=.000) and born-again (interaction coefficient .469, p=.001). Recall that conservatives and born-again evangelicals were a key part of the Bush coalition. Estimating interaction variables with these sub-groups and exposure suggests that conservatives who had heard more about the proposal were more likely to support it than conservatives who had heard less, and born-again respondents who had heard more about the proposal were more likely to support it than born-again respondents who had heard less. These results are consistent with the pattern we observed among Republicans and those who approved of President Bush.

Table 1: Support for Social Security Reform: Before and after 2005 State of the Union

Independent Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
February Respondent	-0.375**	-0.543**	-0.387**	-0.383**
	(0.102)	(0.135)	(0.103)	(0.105)
Heard about Proposal	-0.282**	-0.280**	-0.507**	-0.817**
	(0.0765)	(0.0765)	(0.0859)	(0.100)
Female	-0.0552	-0.0504	-0.0518	-0.0439
	(0.102)	(0.102)	(0.103)	(0.104)
Age	-0.0352**	-0.0351**	-0.0356**	-0.0364**
	(0.00354)	(0.00354)	(0.00356)	(0.00360)
Education	0.0291	0.0279	0.0253	0.0173
	(0.0355)	(0.0356)	(0.0358)	(0.0363)
African American	0.00427	0.00489	-0.0399	-0.143
	(0.164)	(0.165)	(0.166)	(0.170)
Have Children	-0.0829	-0.0809	-0.0744	-0.0892
	(0.114)	(0.114)	(0.114)	(0.116)
Born Again Christian	0.110	0.107	0.111	0.111
	(0.117)	(0.118)	(0.119)	(0.120)
Church Attendance	0.0129	0.0139	0.0222	0.0300
	(0.0352)	(0.0353)	(0.0357)	(0.0363)
Income	0.0539*	0.0529*	0.0560*	0.0572*
	(0.0253)	(0.0254)	(0.0256)	(0.0259)
Republican	0.857**	0.847**	-1.325**	0.750**
	(0.143)	(0.143)	(0.369)	(0.144)

Table 1: Continued

Independent Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Democrat	-0.231+	-0.241*	-0.260*	-0.245*
	(0.121)	(0.121)	(0.123)	(0.124)
Ideology: ^ liberal	-0.148*	-0.151*	-0.123*	-0.0801
	(0.0606)	(0.0607)	(0.0612)	(0.0622)
Approve of Bush	1.311**	1.146**	1.312**	-1.342**
	(0.126)	(0.153)	(0.128)	(0.314)
Bush Approval * February Respondent		0.382+ (0.201)		
Republican * Heard Proposal			0.959** (0.155)	
Approve of Bush * Heard Proposal				1.259** (0.139)
Constant	2.066**	2.148**	2.478**	3.050**
	(0.350)	(0.354)	(0.362)	(0.381)
Chi-Square	682.39**	686.02**	720.05**	766.36**
Pseudo R-Squared	.22	.22	.23	.24
Observations	2,358	2,358	2,358	2,358

*Note: Coefficients are logit coefficients estimated in Stata 11. Standard errors are in parentheses. The Dependent variable is whether the respondent favors or opposes a plan to put some Social Security benefits into individual retirement accounts. **p<.01; *p,.05; +p<.10, Two-tailed test. Data are from December 2004 and February 2005 Pew Research Center surveys of national adults.*

2 and 4. For example, the predicted level of support for someone identified as "very conservative" from Model 4 of Table 2 was derived by placing values for all independent variables at their mean and placing the value for the interactive variable (ideology and attribution to Bush) at 1, to represent those that were "very conservative." We ran the simulation 100,000 times to generate predicted levels of support for George W. Bush's Social Security proposal and a margin of error. The same method was used to calculate the predicted level of support for each independent variable listed in Tables 2 and 4.

Table 2 displays the probability of supporting President Bush's reform proposal in February 2005. All of the predicted probabilities assume that an individual has heard "a lot" about the proposal. This keeps the focus on how the speech influenced ideological subgroups. Those that approved of President Bush and had heard "a lot" about his proposal to reform Social Security were three times as supportive of the proposal than those that did not approve of him. In addition, the model predicts that a Republican that had heard about the proposal would favor the president's proposal 82% of the time compared to a Democrat (26%). The findings presented in Table 2 suggest that President Bush's early efforts in his public campaign had a substantial influence on support for his policy proposal among his core constituents (H1).

Table 2: Predicted Levels of Support for Plan after State of the Union Address

Independent Variable	Probability of Supporting Proposal in Feb. 2005	
	Those that Do (Are)	Those that Do (Are) Not
Interaction: Approve of Bush and February Respondent	0.70	0.42
Interaction: Republican and Heard About Proposal	0.82	0.26
Interaction: Approval of Bush and Heard About Proposal	0.79	0.24

Notes: Post estimation using the Zelig package in R to simulate predicted probabilities and margin of error. Based on full model and interactions from Table 1.

The Influence of a Sustained Ideological Campaign

What influence did the sustained ideological campaign have on the attitudes of the president's core supporters? A unique survey conducted after Bush's mini-campaign in the spring of 2005 offers an opportunity to test this specific component of presidential influence. From May 11-15, 2005 Princeton Survey Research Associates conducted a national telephone survey of 1,502 adults for the Pew Research Center Respondents were randomly asked one of the following two questions: 1) "One proposal for dealing with Social Security's financial situation is to keep the system as it is now for lower income retirees, but limit the growth of future benefits for wealthy and middle income retirees. Would you favor or oppose this proposal?" or 2) "George W. Bush has proposed dealing with Social Security's financial situation by keeping the system as it is now for lower income retirees, but limiting the growth of future benefits for wealthy and middle income retirees. Would you favor or oppose this proposal?" [emphasis added in each question]. This experiment allows us to test whether a Bush appeal can garner more support than the same proposal without a specific messenger. Those favoring the proposal were coded as one, those opposing as zero.

The variable of interest measures the effect of the experimental treatment. We include a dichotomous variable coded one for those who were exposed to the Social Security proposal question attributed to Bush, and zero for those who were read that same question without attribution to Bush. We use the same independent variables employed in previous analyses (questions wording and coding are the same), with one exception; the May 2005 survey contained an additional relevant question on retirement plans. Respondents were asked: "Do you have a retirement plan besides Social Security?" Possible responses were yes, in the stock market through stocks, mutual funds or a 401k plan (coded three), yes, but not in the stock market (coded two), and no (coded one). Because the reform proposal specifically dealt with the issue of allowing individuals to take some portion of their Social Security benefits and invest them in the stock market we expected that those people that already held such investments would be more supportive of the plan.

Table 3 displays the results from a Logit model predicting support for the proposal in May 2005. Attributing the Social Security proposal to President Bush did not increase support for the proposal, those respondents exposed to the treatment attributing the reform proposal to President Bush were actually less likely to support the plan than respondents who heard the proposal with no attribution to any specific messenger. The sustained ideological campaign

Table 3: Support for Social Security Reform: Embedded Survey Experimental Treatment with Attribution to Bush and No Attribution, May 2005

Independent Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Attribution: Bush	-0.324*	-0.989**	-0.914**	0.159	1.777**
	(0.140)	(0.204)	(0.177)	(0.174)	(0.467)
Female	-0.175	-0.214	-0.199	-0.214	-0.192
	(0.142)	(0.144)	(0.145)	(0.145)	(0.144)
Age	0.00175	0.00188	0.00173	0.00281	0.00261
	(0.00479)	(0.00484)	(0.00488)	(0.00486)	(0.00488)
Approve of Bush	0.176	-0.462*	0.184	0.137	0.176
	(0.186)	(0.233)	(0.189)	(0.188)	(0.188)
Heard About Proposal	0.109	0.125	0.127	0.109	0.114
	(0.110)	(0.112)	(0.113)	(0.112)	(0.112)
Have a Retirement Plan	0.00173	-0.0102	-0.0240	0.0176	-0.0111
Other than Social Security	(0.0903)	(0.0914)	(0.0922)	(0.0915)	(0.0916)
Education	0.0508	0.0423	0.0549	0.0397	0.0439
	(0.0511)	(0.0520)	(0.0524)	(0.0520)	(0.0520)
African American	-0.371	-0.368	-0.341	-0.342	-0.322
	(0.249)	(0.255)	(0.254)	(0.257)	(0.253)
Have Children	0.0725	0.0921	0.0645	0.113	0.131
	(0.165)	(0.167)	(0.168)	(0.168)	(0.168)
Born-Again Christian	0.325*	0.300+	0.291+	0.261	0.299+
	(0.166)	(0.168)	(0.169)	(0.168)	(0.167)
Church Attendance	-0.103*	-0.104*	-0.0904+	-0.103+	-0.104*
	(0.0520)	(0.0526)	(0.0530)	(0.0525)	(0.0526)

Table 3: Continued

Independent Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Income	-0.115**	-0.116**	-0.117**	-0.118**	-0.115**
	(0.0389)	(0.0394)	(0.0396)	(0.0394)	(0.0394)
Republican	0.122	0.127	-0.737**	0.139	0.135
	(0.195)	(0.196)	(0.246)	(0.195)	(0.196)
Democrat	-0.293	-0.257	-0.309+	0.399+	-0.296
	(0.183)	(0.187)	(0.187)	(0.238)	(0.187)
Ideology ^ liberal	0.0223	0.0263	0.0199	0.0217	0.417**
	(0.0890)	(0.0901)	(0.0906)	(0.0904)	(0.125)
Interactions					
Bush Approve *		1.306**			
Attribution Bush		(0.284)			
Republican *			1.695**		
Attribution Bush			(0.299)		
Democrat *				-1.411**	
Attribution Bush				(0.303)	
Ideology *					-0.769**
Attribution Bush					(0.164)
Constant	0.809	1.159*	1.104*	0.597	-0.267
	(0.527)	(0.540)	(0.539)	(0.534)	(0.576)
Observations	887	887	887	887	887

*Note: Coefficients are logit coefficients estimated in Stata 11. Standard errors are in parentheses. The dependent variable is whether the respondent favors or opposes a plan to put some Social Security benefits into individual retirement accounts. **p<.01; *p,.05; +p<.10, Two-tailed test. Data are from a May 2005 Pew Research Center survey of national adults.*

diminished overall support for the president's proposal. Interestingly, in this model the best predictors of support for the proposal were somewhat different than in the analyses above. Besides the treatment variable, only church attendance, being born-again, and income had a statistically significant influence on the likelihood of support. Meanwhile, partisanship, approval of Bush, ideology, and how much the respondent had heard about the proposal did not significantly influence the likelihood of a particular response. In large part we suspect that support for the proposal was so low and so solidified by May 2005 that there was little difference among groups (see also Edwards 2007; Jacobson 2011).

But our main concern here is whether the president can increase support for his proposals among his core constituents. Given the experimental conditions in the survey we expect that core constituents who heard the proposal attributed to President Bush should be more likely to support the reform than core constituents who heard the proposal with no attribution (H2). To assess Bush's impact on core constituents we need to interact respondent sub-groups with our exposure measures (Aiken, West, and Reno 1991; Brambor, Clark, and Golder 2006). To test whether the Bush attribution influenced the attitudes we test four interaction variables: 1) an interaction between the experimental condition and Republican, 2) an interaction between the experimental condition and Bush approval, 3) an interaction between the experimental condition and Democrat, and 4) an interaction between the experimental condition and ideology. The final two models are included because we suspect that the overall negative response we observed (above) in attitudes towards Bush's Social Security reform was largely driven by Democrats and liberals.

Model 2 (Table 3) shows the coefficient for the interactive term that combines the treatment variable with Bush approval. The coefficient is statistically significant and positive, suggesting that Bush supporters in the treatment group Bush were more likely to support the reform proposal than were Bush supporters in the control group. In addition, Republicans in the Bush treatment group were more likely to support the reform proposal than were Republicans in the control group (Model 3 in Table 3). All things being equal, this pattern of findings suggests that after a sustained ideological public campaign a president's core consistency is more likely to support policies advocated for by the president (H2).

Model 4 (column four) shows the coefficient for the interaction between Democrat and the treatment attribution. The coefficient is statistically significant and negative, suggesting that Democrats in the Bush treatment group were less likely to support the reform proposal than were Democrats in the control group.

It has been firmly established that Democrats were more likely to oppose the reform proposal in the first place, but this finding makes it clear that the attribution to President Bush led Democrats to oppose the measure. In part we suspect this interaction reflects what occurred during the Bush mini-campaign—as Bush advocated for the reform measure, Democrats became increasingly opposed to the measure.

Finally, Model 5 (column five) shows the coefficient for the interaction between ideology and the treatment attribution. The coefficient is statistically significant and negative, suggesting that liberals in the Bush treatment group were less likely to support the reform proposal than were liberals in the control. As we observed with Democrats, the attachment of Bush to the reform proposal appears to have increased the likelihood that liberals would oppose the measure.

Table 4: Predicted Levels of Support for Social Security Plan and Attribution to Bush

Independent Variable	Probability of Supporting	Margin of Error
Interaction: "Very Conservative" and Attributed to Bush	0.66	0.02
Interaction: Approve of Bush and Attributed to Bush	0.78	0.04
Interaction: Republican and Attributed to Bush	0.85	0.03
Interaction: "Very Liberal"* Attributed to Bush	0.09	0.05
Interaction: Democrat* Attributed to Bush	0.31	0.05

Notes: Post estimation using the Zelig package in R to simulate predicted probabilities and margin of error. Based on full model and interactions from Table 3.

Substantive Impact

What are the differences in predicted support among ideologues? The probability that a supportive ideologue will support the president's proposal at the conclusion of a sustained ideological campaign is 0.66 with a margin of error of plus or minus 0.02. Conversely, the probability that an opposing ideologue will support a proposal attributed to the president at the conclusion of a sustained ideological campaign is 0.09 with a margin of error of plus or minus 0.05. By the end of the sustained campaign, a conservative is 21 percent more likely to support a plan that included Bush's name than the rest of the population. Likewise, those who approve of George W. Bush are 33 percent more likely to approve of a plan attributed to Bush and Republicans are 40 percent more likely to approve of a plan attributed to Bush.

Overall the predicted probabilities suggest that the differences we observed among sub-groups and exposure conditions are substantively large and not simply statistically significant differences. We find that Bush's public appeals to reform Social Security drove down general public support for the proposal, and drove away potential supporters among liberals and Democrats. However, Bush's public campaign for the measure also tended to increase support among his core constituents, especially when they heard more about the measure and it was specifically attributed to President Bush.

Conclusion

What is the impact of a president's ideological public campaign for a policy proposal? Some argue that at the beginning of a second-term honeymoon a popular president could use an ideological public campaign to achieve legislative outcomes more congruent with his own self-interest (Wood 2009). Though theoretically plausible, the 2005 campaign to reform Social Security suggests that president's engage in ideological campaigns at their own peril. In many ways, Bush achieved the goals of an ideological campaign. His core constituents were more supportive of the proposal after the State of the Union address, and he retained this support throughout the sustained campaign. And although opposing ideologues became more entrenched in their opposition, support from Bush's core constituents did not waver. But this core support did not translate into legislative success. No doubt, issue salience increased and those targeted in the public appeals were mobilized in support of the president's proposal, but this did not yield policy success. Future research might examine ideological campaigns that result in policy accomplishments to identify the mechanisms that yield success.

In addition, our findings are consistent with the view that presidents use local news media to influence national public opinion (Cohen 2010). By visiting locations with strong supporters of the president, Bush influenced the content and tone of the local news coverage (Eshbaugh-Soha 2008; Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake 2006), which we infer influenced national news coverage and resulted in stronger support from his ideological base for his ideological proposal. Our findings suggest that going local can spillover to the broader public and influence national public opinion, but perhaps not in the direction the president would prefer. However, since this is only a single case, future work should examine this link more systematically.

Finally, our results indicate that one of the reasons that President Bush was such a polarizing political figure was his ideological approach to the office. At least in the case of Social Security reform, President Bush could have chosen either a centrist or an ideological campaign (Eshbaugh-Soha and Rottinghaus 2013). He had sufficient approval ratings to propose Social Security reforms closer to that of the ideological center, increase the salience of the issue and persuade Congress to enact legislation (Canes-Wrone 2006). It was also the ideal moment to engage in an ideological public campaign that could result in policy that was closer to his preferred outcome (Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004; Eshbaugh-Soha and Rottinghaus 2013; Wood 2009). Regardless of the positive impact this ideological campaign had on Bush's core constituents, our results suggest that his decision to engage in an ideological rather than a centrist public campaign led to public polarization on the issue of Social Security reform and may have contributed to the proposals failure in Congress.

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