2010

Measuring an Elite Opinion Rally in the House of Representatives: President George W. Bush and the 107th Congress

Lauren Sheram

University of Redlands

Follow this and additional works at: https://inspire.redlands.edu/cas_honors

Part of the American Politics Commons

Recommended Citation

Measuring an Elite Opinion Rally in the House of Representatives: President George W. Bush and the 107th Congress

A thesis presented
by
Lauren Sheram

Presented to the
Department of Government

The University of Redlands
April 2010
Table of Contents

Introduction ............................................................................................................. 3

Literature Review .................................................................................................... 7

Methodology ........................................................................................................... 13

Statistical Results

  Overall Support .................................................................................................... 17
  Support by Party Affiliation .................................................................................... 19
  Support by Seniority ............................................................................................... 23
  Support by Seat Marginality ................................................................................... 26
  Support by Ideology ............................................................................................... 28
  Multivariate Analysis ............................................................................................ 32

Conclusion ................................................................................................................ 36

Bibliography ............................................................................................................ 38
Introduction

September 11, 2001 was a catastrophic day. Americans all across the nation watched as jet liners crashed into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, into the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, and into a field in rural Pennsylvania. Fear gripped the nation as the major newscasters continuously aired the Twin Towers collapsing to the ground and the Pentagon burning. The public looked to their government for assurance and safety; President George W. Bush, the Commander in Chief of the United States, became the national spokesperson. Before September 11, the Gallup Poll reported that President Bush had an approval rating of 51%. President Bush’s approval rating increased to 90% a week after the attacks. The outpouring of public support for President Bush following the attacks is one illustration of how the American public tends to unite behind their leader after a devastating national event.

The public’s tendency to support the president following a crisis has been termed by John Mueller as the “rally ‘round the flag” effect (1970). The public’s predisposition to support the president following a dramatic and major event directly involving the United States is a widely recognized and studied effect in American politics. Scholars often use presidential approval ratings gathered by the Gallup Poll and other similar polls to study rallies. However, these polling devices solely measure the opinion of the general public, or as mass opinion presidential approval ratings. The polls do not measure the presidential approval rating amongst members of Congress, or elite opinion presidential approval ratings. Likewise, while much scholarly literature on the “rally ‘round the flag” effect addresses mass opinion rallies, only a fraction of it addresses elite opinion rallies.
Although rallies in Congress are an underdeveloped study topic, numerous scholars have examined and researched the relationship between the executive and legislative branches of government more broadly, and have established important correlations between the two. Richard Neustadt, a well-established executive and legislative scholar, identifies a correlation between a president's success in Congress and a president's public approval rating (1960). While Neustadt's research does not directly acknowledge that Congress tends to increase their support of the president after a crisis event, it may imply that a mass opinion rally will increase the president's chances of success in Congress. This is measured by the congruent congressional votes to the president's position on a particular policy. Since both the executive and the legislative branches are necessary for enacting and affecting change and reform, scholars like Neustadt (1960), Arnold (1990), Peterson (1990), and Barrett and Eshbaugh-Soha (2007) arduously attempt to comprehend how the president is able to influence and gain support in Congress.

Measuring and explaining elite opinion support levels of a president after a crisis event are important in understanding the nature of the executive-legislative branch interaction over time and under particular conditions. If a rally does in fact occur in Congress, the president may experience a span of increased influence where more members of Congress are less likely to disagree with his policies. A president may be more likely to push his agenda through a Congress with high presidential approval ratings, even if only temporarily. Rallies may be unique windows of opportunities for presidents to quickly introduce and pass laws. A president is more likely to achieve policy success with a favorable elite opinion. Studies that examine the behavior of Congress during a rally have the potential to
demonstrate that rallies affect elite opinion and that the president does have a temporary allotment of time where his policies have a higher probability of approval.

This study focuses on addressing the question on whether the rallies which Mueller identifies as affecting mass opinion also affect elite opinion. The study will examine the changes in President Bush's support levels within the 107th Congress following the terrorist attacks of September 11; the study will only examine the House of Representatives during the 107th Congress. September 11 is a unique case as the public rally is unparalleled in size and is not representative of any previously measured rally. Nonetheless, September 11 is potentially not an anomaly amongst rallies; future rallies have the capability to be comparable in magnitude. The September 11 rally demonstrates that not all rallies share the same length or intensity and that rallies may not be as temporary as scholars have noted (Brody 1991; Meernik and Waterman 1996). The September 11 rally may be useful to make generalizations about future large-scale attacks, such as those using weapons of mass destruction. September 11 is the case of this study in order to extend the research on both rallies and the executive-legislative relationship.

The following sections examine the rally effect in the House of Representatives following a crisis. The first section combines the literature on rallies with the literature on the impact of presidential popularity on presidential influence in the House to develop new testable hypotheses on the effect that a rally should have on presidential success in the House. This section also combines the literature on rallies with the impact of congressional subgroups on elite opinion to develop hypotheses on the subgroups that should be more inclined to change their level of support following a crisis event. The second section addresses the methodology of the study, laying out the basic definitions and analytical
approach. The third section will test the hypotheses using statistical analyses. The fourth and final section imparts the conclusions of the study, along with possible explanations and additional questions for future research.
The "rally 'round the flag" phenomenon is first attributed to John E. Mueller. Mueller (1970) finds that international crises generate a "rally 'round the flag" effect, whereby the president receives a sudden and temporary boost in his popularity. Mueller defines a "rally 'round the flag" effect to be a response to a crisis that is international in nature, that involves the United States and the president directly, and that it is specific, dramatic, and sharply focused. Mueller finds that the president experiences a sudden increase in popularity following such an event. He theorizes that the public rallies behind the president in fear that a disunited public will convey weakness to other international actors, which could endanger the nation's chances of success. In turn, the public will support the president, despite the merits of his policies (Polsby 1964). Mueller uses a specific question through the Gallup poll, which asks whether the public approves of the way that the president is handling his job in order to measure presidential approval. Although there were scholars before Mueller who found a correlation between mass opinion and a crisis (Waltz 1967; Wicker 1967), Mueller was the first to define and extensively study the rally effect.

Two schools of thought have emerged since Mueller's original theories published in 1970 that indentify the principal causes of the rally effect: the patriotism school of thought and the opinion leadership school of thought. The patriotism school of thought first identifies patriotism to be the leading reason of a rally (Mueller 1970; Parker 1995). The president symbolizes national unity and power, naturally causing the public to rally behind him in a unified and uncritical manner. However, patriotism is both difficult to define and difficult to measure. Thus while the patriotism school of thought might be the reason for a rally effect,
the lack of definite forms of measurement compels scholars to search for more explicable causes of rallies. The scholars who form the second school of thought hold that opinion leadership is a primary contributor to a rally phenomenon. Brody (1991) and Zaller (1991) claim that the absence of criticism from opinion leaders is mirrored in the media, which positively reflects on the mass opinion’s approval of the president. In separate studies, Brody and Zaller both find that during rallies, opposition leaders refrain from comment altogether or attempt to issue only cautiously supportive statements.

Despite the clash between the approaches, patriotism may play a role in the reasoning of both. A possible explanation of why opposition leaders refrain from negative comment is that they want to appear patriotic at a moment when the American public rallies behind the president with a common sentiment. If true, patriotism strongly affects the leadership opinion school of thought.

Hetherington and Nelson (2003) affirm the role of patriotism in the two schools of thought by suggesting that the constitutional design of the presidency creates a surge of patriotism in the development of a rally, resulting in the tendency for opinion leaders to refrain from negative comment. Hetherington and Nelson attribute the opinion leadership school of thought to the duration of a rally. The Constitution divides the government into three branches: the executive, the legislative, and the judicial. One individual controls the executive branch, whereas multiple individuals control the legislative and judicial branches. As the sole individual over the executive branch, the president has the unique ability to act as the nation’s spokesperson. The nation automatically looks to the only identifiable national spokesperson in times when unified leadership is needed; this occurrence is witnessed at the start of a presidential term, or the “honeymoon period.” Mueller (1973) finds that the
president receives a rally in the onset of a new term, as the term once again unifies the nation behind their chief of state. Pfiffner (1988), Lockerbie, Borelli, and Hedger (1998), and Barrett and Eshbaugh-Soha (2007) likewise suggest that presidents tend to achieve their highest rates of legislative success during their honeymoon period, when they are in the good graces of the public. The passage of time and occurrence of polarizing events lessen the level of public unification and create a less enthusiastic evaluation of the president, which might indicate that the president’s time in office is tied to the intensity of a rally. In addition, a decrease in presidential approval from the public shapes the willingness of opposition leaders and the media to criticize the president, which also may determine the intensity of a rally (Brody 1991).

At this point, it is important to mention a study by Edwards and Swenson (1976) on who rallies. The scholarly literature on the two schools of thought suggests the principal causes behind the rally, but the literature does not address the question of who rallies. Edwards and Swenson find that those who are most disposed to support the president are more likely to rally. However, their study solely examines mass opinion and does not examine elite opinion. Further examination of the literature on rallies at the elite level and this study may determine whether Edwards and Swenson’s finding apply in Congress.

To continue, Brody’s (1991) research concerning the lack of criticism from opposition leaders during a rally comes from an extensive array of studies on presidential support at the elite decision making level; numerous scholars have examined the relationship between the executive and legislative branch. In *Presidential Power*, Richard Neustadt (1960) finds that the President’s public prestige is an important source of influence on Congress. Although Neustadt only uses limited examples that may make his work non-generalizable,
further research by Edwards (1976), Crespi (1980), and Rivers and Rose (1985) find that as presidents experience mass opinion support, they encounter less resistance and less criticism from Congress.

Edwards’ (1976) study about the relationship between presidential popularity and overall presidential support in the House of Representatives examines the level of support within congressional subgroups. He investigates congressional support for the president based on a member’s partisanship, seniority, and seat marginality. Freshmen members and members from marginal seats are more positively correlated with presidential support than non-freshman members and members from safe seats.

Bond and Fleisher (1980) extend Edward’s study of the subgroups within the House and Senate by identifying ideology as an important determinant of presidential support on congressional roll call votes. They find that the president’s popularity has a positive impact on support from members of his party, but it has a negative impact on support from members of the opposition. Therefore, even though the president’s public prestige enhances his support within Congress, the measure of this support varies across the different subgroups within Congress.

Although a positive correlation between presidential prestige and congressional support exists, the correlation is limited (Meernik 1993). Bond and Fleisher (1984) find that the president’s mass opinion levels affects his congressional success as it influences the number of members elected to Congress from the president’s party. Additional research concurrently shows that voters’ evaluations of the president affect the re-election chances of members of his party in Congress (Tufte 1975; Pierson 1975; Kernell 1977). These findings suggest that a president’s ability to alter the voting behavior of members of Congress is
limited and further promotes the importance of subgroups in determining the president’s support in Congress.

The literature cited thus far has not measured the correlation between elite opinion and presidential support levels during rallies. Rohde (1991), Hristoulas (2000), and Baker and Oneal (2001) all find that Mueller’s (1970) theory on rallies applies at the elite level, meaning that the levels of support in Congress parallel the surges in public approval. Additionally, Fleisher and Bond (1988) find that Republican presidents experience remarkably higher elite opinion support levels from liberal Democrats in Congress. Baum (2002) similarly finds that Republican presidents, more so than their Democratic counterparts, experience significantly larger rallies in Congress, especially if Democrats control Congress. This literature suggests that Mueller’s “rally ‘round the flag” phenomenon does occur at the elite opinion level and that partisanship affects the extent of the rally.

However, there is little literature analyzing presidential support within other congressional subgroups during a rally. This study will analyze if the conclusions from the literature concerning presidential support in Congress during normal times are applicable during rallies on the House of Representatives. Edwards (1976), and Bond and Fleisher (1980) identify party, seniority, seat marginality, and ideology to have identifiable impacts on presidential support on elite opinion. Although other subgroups may have an impact on presidential support on elite opinion, this study will only examine the four subgroups identified by Edwards, and Bond and Fleisher.

This study accepts Mueller’s (1970) theory about the rally effect that predicts and explains a surge of presidential popularity that occurs in response to a crisis. This study also accepts Edwards (1976) findings that presidential prestige positively influences the
president's level of support within the House of Representatives. These studies will extend Mueller's and Edwards's studies by examining presidential support levels in the House after a crisis event.

Given the suggestions and findings reviewed here, this study draws upon the literature that crisis events provoke mass opinion support levels for the president and the literature on the positive impact of presidential popularity on a president's influence in Congress, and tests the hypothesis that the House of Representatives rallies behind the president following a crisis event. This study also merges the literature on the rally effect with the literature on the impact of congressional subgroups on elite opinion to hypothesize that particular subgroups are more likely to rally than other subgroups. The subsequent sections lay out the methodology, the tested hypotheses, and the analyzed results.
Methodology

In order to test the assumptions that the House of Representatives rallies and that particular subgroups are more likely to rally, I focused on the House during the 107th Congress. Due to time and resource restraints, I chose to study only one crisis event, and September 11, 2001 provided a “natural experiment” for testing rally events since the terrorist attacks occurred towards the middle of the two year session of the House of Representatives. For this reason, I only focused on the House; the Senate was not examined in this study. The dates of recorded votes examined from the 107th Congress span from January 3, 2001 to November 15, 2002.

The data used to test my assumptions were from Keith Poole’s 107th House Roll Call Data. The original data set entailed the voting record of every (voting) House member on each recorded vote. The data set included an entry for each member, the position each member took on each vote, along with their basic information including state, district, and party affiliation. In addition to the voting record of each House member, the original data included President Bush’s position for each recorded vote. However, in order to measure presidential support levels, the data needed to be augmented to reflect whether the member’s votes were aligned with or in opposition to the President’s position.

This study uses Edwards’ (1976) measurement of presidential support in order to test the assumptions. This measurement depends on calculations of individual levels of support based on voting record; in other words, whether they voted in favor of the president’s position. The data was narrowed to include only the recorded roll call votes on which

---

President Bush took a position. Out of the 990 roll call votes from Keith Poole’s original data, the 72 roll call votes on which President Bush took a position were selected. The data set I constructed therefore included the voting record of each House member, yielding a total of 72 cases.

This new data was sufficient to test the assumption that a rally did occur in the House of Representatives. However, it was insufficient to test the assumptions on the increase likelihood of particular subgroups to rally. The data was further expanded to include relevant personal background characteristics of each House member: seniority, seat marginality, and ideology.

Seniority was determined by the number of terms a member has served in office: freshmen members are classified to have less than one term in office and non-freshmen members are classified to have one or more terms in office (Edwards 1976). Seat marginality refers to the security of a member’s seat. The distinction between marginal seats and non-marginal seats is determined on the winning percentages from a member’s previous election. Members achieving 60% of more of the vote are classified as non-marginal and members with less than 60% of the vote are classified as marginal (Gross and Garand 1984). This study uses Keith Poole’s W-Nominate scores on ideology to divide members into three sets: conservative, moderate, and liberal (Bond and Fleisher 1980). Keith Poole locates Congress members on an ideological scale that ranges from +1 to -1, with +1 being the most conservative and -1 being the most liberal. Members with a range from .33 to +1 were classified as conservative, members with a range from -1 to -.33 were classified as liberal, and all members with a range between -.32 and .32 were classified as moderate.
Table 1 shows the overall number of House of Representatives who served the 107th Congress, along with the percentages and total number of House members classified for each subgroup. Out of the four subgroups, Democrats and Republicans are split the most evenly with Democrats having a slight majority of 2.8%. The seniority and seat marginality subgroups are split less evenly with non-freshmen members having 75.6% majority over freshmen members and non-marginal seat members having a 50.4% majority over marginal seat members. For the ideological subgroups, conservative members have the majority with 46.2%, followed by moderate members with 36.5%, and then liberal members with 17.3%.

Table 1. Composition of the House of Representatives during the 107th Congress by Subgroup and Overall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subgroup</th>
<th>Total number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seniority</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshmen</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-freshmen</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>87.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seat marginality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginal seat</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-marginal seat</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>75.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>444</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 also shows that there were 444 overall number of House members in the data set. However, the House is only supposed to be comprised of 435 members. This inconsistency is due to changes of membership throughout the 107th Congress. In total, there were eleven changes, but only nine actual changes of membership, accounting for the inconsistency.²

² Jim Traficant of the 17th district of Ohio was expelled and Tony P. Hall of the 3rd district of Ohio was expelled; their seats remained vacant for the remainder of the session.
The final data set included the voting behavior of 444 members for 72 roll call votes. However, there are limitations to this data. Firstly, the data only examines one case event during one congressional session. Secondly, the data only examine select roll call votes from the House during the 107th Congress. President Bush took positions on a small sample number of votes during the 107th Congress, creating sample restrictions. Lastly, only four subgroups are examined, although additional subgroups may potentially be more inclined to rally; I focused on these four because the literature suggests that they are the variables most likely to matter in the rally effect. Despite these limitations, this study will extend the research on the executive-legislative relationship following a crisis.

The study used two forms of analysis to test the final data and to examine presidential support levels in the House of Representatives. Before the analyses, bar graphs are employed to show the aggregate percentage of presidential support both before and after September 11, along with the difference in support levels. The first analysis on the data was the t-test. The t-test analyses show the difference in voting percentages represented in the bar graph, but it determines whether there is enough of a statistical relationship between the data being analyzed and the corresponding level of support to be statistically significant. The second form of analysis was a multivariate regression. This statistical test allows for the simultaneous testing of each variable controlling for the effects of the other variables. The following section analyzes presidential support levels in the House of Representatives in the aftermath of September 11 using these three forms of analysis.
Statistical Results

Overall Support

The assumption from the scholarly literature suggests that Congress may rally behind the president after a crisis event. More specifically, the analysis will examine if President Bush received an increase in support levels from the House of Representatives during the 107th Congress. The hypothesis is the following:

H1: Presidential support amongst members of Congress increases following a crisis event.

When comparing the aggregate percent of support for President Bush before and after September 11, the results show that support levels did increase. From the start of the 107th Congress on January 3, 2001 to September 11, 2001, President Bush had a 56.3% overall support rate in the House of Representatives. From September 11, 2001 to the end of the 107th Congress on November 15, 2002, President Bush had a 63.7% overall support rate after September 11. Figure 1 displays these percentages. The difference of overall support between pre-September 11 and post-September 11 was 7.4%. The bar graph shown in Figure 1 supports the hypothesis that there was a general increase in presidential support within the House after the September 11 attacks.
Though Figure 1 shows that there was in fact an increase in presidential support, it does not show whether the increase, which was relatively small, did not occur randomly. To further investigate whether the observed difference actually exists in the tested population, a t-test was performed on the data, where the results can be seen in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th>90% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported</td>
<td>5.326</td>
<td>.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>1.686</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. T-test: President Bush’s Support Pre 9/11 and Post 9/11
This t-test uses a difference in means test to determine the statistical significance of the results shown in Table 2. The t-test identifies a specific variable as a predictor and examines the effect that the predictor has on a specific response. In this case, the response being examined is the elite opinion level of presidential support and the predictors are whether the votes occurred before or after September 11.

The t-test in Table 2 yields inconclusive results. There is a one-in-ten chance or greater that these results occurred randomly, as the significance level is .096, well above the standard 95% level of confidence. While the t-test does not lead to an outright rejection of H1, it does not strongly support it either. Despite the inconclusive results on overall support from the t-test, overall president support levels in the House did increase following September 11. This increase suggests that a conclusive rally may have occurred in congressional subgroups, if not in the overall House. The following analyses will examine whether rallies conclusively occurred in four congressional subgroups: party affiliation, seniority, seat marginality, and ideology.

Support by Party Affiliation

Partisanship establishes critical subgroups within Congress; a members’ identifiable party may affect that members voting choices (Bond, Fleisher, and Wood 2003). This study accepts that party affiliation may play a dominant role in determining the elite’s presidential support levels. Fleisher and Bond (1988) suggest that rallies in Congress are party specific. They find that Republican presidents experience higher levels of support during rallies from

---

3 The value in the column labels "sig." is known as the p-value. The p-value represents the level of error within the specified confidence interval for the analysis. The 90% confidence level is not considered a strong correlation; a strong correlation would need to be significant within a 95% confidence level.
liberal Democrats. Baum (2003) similarly suggests that Republican presidents experience larger rallies with a Democratic-controlled Congress. Since the case in this study involves a Republican president and a Democratic-controlled House of Representatives, this study tests Fleisher and Bond's, and Baum's findings that Democrats increasingly support a Republican president after a crisis; the hypothesis for party affiliation is the following:

\[ H_2: \text{Democratic House members' levels of support for a Republican president are more likely to increase than Republican House members' levels of support following a crisis event.} \]

Using the data on party affiliation, the results show that President Bush received an 84.2% support rate from Republican members and a 25.3% support rate from Democratic members before September 11. After September 11, he received an 87.1% support rate from Republican members and a 39.4% support rate from Democratic members.

Republicans tended to have higher support rates for President Bush throughout the House of Representatives during the 107th Congress than Democrats. However, Figure 2 displays that the difference in support from pre-September 11 and post-September 11 by party were higher in Democrats than in Republicans: Democrats increased their support by 14.1%, whereas the Republicans only increased their support by 2.9%.
Figure 2 shows that there is a large difference in support for President Bush based on the partisanship of House members, indicating that they were affected differently by the rally effect. A t-test was employed in order to examine the statistical significance of these results. In this analysis, the predictor is the party affiliation of the House members and the response is the difference in voting before and after September 11. The results of the t-test can be seen below in Table 3.
Table 3. T-test: President Bush's Support Pre 9/11 and Post 9/11 by Party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>difference of before and after Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>5.921</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results show a strong statistical significance from the bar graph in Figure 2 that supports H2. With a significance level of p<.001, there is a strong level of correlation between party affiliation and the amount of change of presidential support in the House of Representatives after September 11.

Analyzing the difference in support for the president between Republicans and Democrats, Figure 2 shows that Democrats were more than five times more likely than Republicans were to rally post-September 11. A possible explanation for these results is that Democrats had the ability to increase their support level by 74.7%, whereas the Republicans only had the ability to increase their support level by 15.8%. Democrats clearly had a greater opportunity to increase their support. Overall, the results from Figure 2 and Table 3 show that Democrats rallied more than Republicans did, which offers a strong support for H2.

4 The test was performed on a confidence interval of 95%; meaning that to indicate significance, the p-value should be below .05.
Support by Seniority

As party lines dominate congressional voting choices, Edwards (1976) suggests that seniority also affects voting behavior. Edwards finds that freshmen members tend to be more inclined to respond to presidential prestige than non-freshmen members, which may affect their voting choices. If true, freshmen may be more inclined to increase their support of a president after a rally. This study applies Edwards’s findings to test this hypothesis:

H3: Freshmen House members’ level of support increases more than non-freshmen House members’ levels of support following a crisis event.

Using the data on seniority, the results show that President Bush received a support rate of 69.4% from freshmen members and a support rate of 54.8% from non-freshmen members before September 11. After September 11, President Bush received a support rate of 73.9% from freshmen members and a support rate of 62.5% from non-freshmen members. Figure 3 displays the difference in support from pre and post September 11 by seniority. Freshmen members increased their support by 4.2% and non-freshmen members increased their support by 7.6%.
Figure 3 supports the idea that non-freshmen members rallied more than freshmen members. However, to prove the significance of these results, a t-test was performed on the data set. In this analysis, the predictor is the seniority of the House members and the response is the difference in voting before and after September 11. The results of the t-test can be seen below in Table 4.
The t-test in Table 4 shows the results shown in Figure 3 are not statistically significant. Similarly to party, seniority was tested at a 95% confidence interval. The significance level of $p < .736$ is radically higher than the maximum value $p < .05$. The p-value shows that the error in the analysis is too high to make the results conclusive; there is no conclusive correlation between seniority and the amount of change of presidential support in the House after September 11. Unlike Edwards (1976) findings, these results suggest that seniority may not play an important role in determining levels of presidential support in Congress.

**Support by Seat Marginality**

---

5 In an independent t-test on freshmen members, with support as the dependent variable and party as the independent variable, Republican-freshmen members rallied more than Democratic-freshmen members. Republican-freshmen members had an average difference in support levels of 11 points from before and after September 11; Democratic-freshmen members had an average difference in support levels of 4 points from before and after September 11. These results show that freshmen members, accounting for party, diverge from the trends of this study on particular subgroups more likely to rally.
This study suggests that seniority may not be a key determinant in rallying behavior, despite Edwards' (1976) suggestion that seniority does affect voting behavior. However, Edwards (1976) also suggests that seat marginality can influence congressional voting choices. Edwards finds that marginal seat members tend to be more inclined to respond to presidential prestige than non-marginal seat members. Thus, marginal seat members may tend to increase their support of a president following a crisis more than non-marginal seat members. This study applies Edwards's findings to test this hypothesis:

H4: Marginal seat members' level of support increases more than non-marginal seat members' levels of support following a crisis event.

Using the data on seat marginality, the results show that President Bush received a support rate of 63.3% from marginal seat members and a support rate of 53.9% from non-marginal seat members before September 11. After September 11, President Bush received a support rate of 70.5% from marginal seat members and a support rate of 61.4% from non-marginal seat members. Figure 4 displays the difference in support from pre and post September 11 by seat marginality in the House of Representatives. Marginal seat members increased their support by 7.2% and non-marginal seat members increased their support by 7.5%.

---

6 Gross and Garand's (1984) measurement of marginality employed in this study is consistent with Edwards (1976) measurement on marginality.
Figure 4 shows that members from marginal seats and non-marginal seats had similar increases in support; non-marginal seat members only increased their support level by .3% more than marginal seat members. This small difference between marginal and non-marginal members does not strongly support the hypothesis that seat marginality is a strong predictor of the strength of a congressional rally. A t-test was performed to further examine these results. In this analysis, the predictor is the seat marginality of the House members and the response is the difference in voting before and after September 11. The results of the t-test can be seen below in Table 5.
Table 5. T-test: President Bush’s Support Pre 9/11 and Post 9/11 by Seat Marginality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>difference of Equal before and variances after assumed</td>
<td>.907</td>
<td>.341</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The t-test shown in Table 5 yields no significance between the two variables. The lack of a strong correlation between seat marginality and presidential support levels suggests that the increase in support that occurred after September 11 may have been random. The t-test has both a high level of error and a significance level of $p < .666$, showing that there is no statistical correlation between marginality and presidential support. The results suggest that seat marginality may not be a determinant of elite opinion presidential support levels after a crisis event, unlike Edwards’ (1976) findings.

Support by Ideology

Although partisanship and ideology are correlated, the two are not synonymous. Two members may identify with the same party, but may have different ideologies. Bond and Fleisher (1980) suggest that ideology may act as a determinant of presidential support of congressional roll call votes. If true, whether a member identifies as liberal, moderate, or conservative, may affect their rally (Poole and Rosenthal 2007). Fleisher and Bond (1988)
and Baum (2003) suggest that Republican presidents experience larger rallies from liberal Democrats. Drawing from the scholarly literature, this study suggests that a Republican president may receive increased support levels from liberal members after a crisis event. The hypothesis on support by ideology is the following:

$$H5: \text{Liberal House members' levels of support for Republican president increases more than moderate and conservative House members' levels of support following a crisis event.}$$

Using the data on ideology, the results show that President Bush received a support rate of 36.7% from liberal members, a support rate of 27.1% from moderate members, and a support rate of 87.5% from conservative members before September 11. After September 11, President Bush received a support rate of 51.7% from liberal members, a support rate of 39.7% from moderate members, and a support rate of 87.8% from conservative members. Figure 5 displays the difference in support from pre- and post- September 11 by ideology. Liberal members increased their support by 14.9%, moderates by 12.5%, and conservatives by 0.3%.
Figure 5 shows that members with liberal to moderate ideologies increased their support of President Bush significantly more than members with conservative ideologies after September 11. A t-test was used in order to further examine the statistical significance of these results. In this analysis, the predictor is ideology of the House members and the response is the difference in voting before and after September 11. The results of the t-test can be seen below in Table 6.
Table 6. T-test: President Bush’s Support Pre 9/11 and Post 9/11 by Ideology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>difference of Equal</td>
<td>2.682</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>8.259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before and variances</td>
<td>after assumed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results show a strong statistical significance from the bar graph in Figure 6 that supports H5. The t-test was performed on a confidence interval of 95%. The significance level of p < .001 shows a strong level of correlation between ideology and the amount of change of presidential support in the House of Representatives after September 11.

Regarding the difference in support for the president among liberals, moderates, and conservatives, Figure 5 shows that liberal members were more than 49 times more likely than conservative members to rally post-September 11. Figure 5 also shows that moderate members were more than 41 times more likely than conservative members were to rally post-September 11. A possible explanation for these results is that liberal members had the ability to increase their support level by 63.3% and moderate members had the ability to increase their support level by 72.9%; conservative members only could increase their support level by 12.2%. Liberal and moderate members had a greater opportunity to increase their support levels than conservative members. The results show that liberal members and moderate members rallied more than conservative members did, which offers strong support for H5.
Multivariate Analysis

The results from the t-tests show that ideology and party are strongly correlated with changes in presidential support levels, whereas the results for seniority and seat marginality were inconclusive. The t-tests analyze each of the four predictors individually and show the significance of their effect on the response. However, in order to show the correlations between the predictors and their response, a multivariate regression is needed; the multivariate regression allows for the simultaneous testing of each variable controlling for the effects of the other variables. This regression is a statistical test that analyzes each of the four predictors together with the same response. It measures each variables outcome on the response in relation to the others, thus showing which predictors had the strongest effect on the congressional support following the crisis event. The multivariate regression also shows the statistical significance of each of the predictors when analyzed with all the variables to ensure that the results are conclusive. Table 7 shows the R Square value, which represents the proportion of variance in support, which can be explained by the four independent variables. The R square of .215 shows that 21.5% of the data points of support can be predicted accurately from the independent variables: party affiliation, seniority, seat marginality, and ideology. Table 8 shows the multivariate regression of the four subgroups: seniority, seat marginality, ideology, and party.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.464&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.215</td>
<td>.208</td>
<td>12.61284</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors: (Constant), party code 100=dem, 200=rep, 328=ind, marginal, seniority, ideology
The variables, or the predictors, tested in the multi-variable regression are seniority, seat marginality, ideology, and party. The regression uses each of the four predictors to form an equation known as a regression model. The regression model is an equation that relates the response, the difference between presidential support levels from before and after September 11, to the four predictors in the regression.

The value labeled “constant” depicts the error induced in the regression model. Due to this error, the individual unstandardized coefficients do not show conclusive results. Additional errors are those of the four individual predictors shown in the column titled “std error.” These errors must be accounted for in order to examine the coefficients; the standardized coefficient column accounts for these errors.

The standardized coefficients show the predictors that have the strongest correlation to the response, or the difference of support from before and after September 11. Party is the strongest predictor of the four with a standardized coefficient of -.302. The next strongest predictor is ideology with -.187, then seniority with -.088, and lastly marginality with -.018. These results show that party lines affect the response the most. It also shows that the effect
of seniority and marginality on the strength of the congressional response to a crisis event is almost negligible. To check the significance of these results, the regression shows the p-values for each of the coefficients. These values represent the data analyzed using the traditional 95% confidence interval. The variables must have a p-value less than or equal to .05 to be statistically significant in relation to the response.

The p-values of both party code and ideology easily fall in this acceptable range. Seniority has a significance level of exactly p< .05, showing that the results are not conclusive. However, these results are generally accepted to be significant. These results from the multivariate regression are different from the t-test results, which show that there is no conclusive correlation between seniority and the amount of change of presidential support in the House after September 11. The multivariate regression shows that seniority is significant because it takes into account the correlations between all of the variables; the t-test only takes into account the one variable of seniority. Marginality has a significance level of p<.690, showing that it is not a conclusive or significant predictor on the response.

The regression model in Table 8 corroborates the results found from the t-tests on each variable. The values labeled “standardized coefficients” are used in order to examine each variable individually: the error inherent to each one must be minimized. These values would be obtained if all of the variables in the regression were standardized before actually running the regression. By standardizing the variables before running the regression, all of the variables that were on different scales are put on the same scale, where it becomes possible to compare the magnitude of the coefficients to see which ones have more of an effect.
By examining these coefficients, the model shows that party and ideology are the two major predictors on the strength of the rally effect in Congress. Additionally, the model shows that seniority has a slight effect on the strength of the rally in Congress. Lastly, the model shows that marginality does not strongly affect the difference in support levels from before and after September 11 in the House.
Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that party and ideology are key determinants in the difference of presidential support following a crisis event. In the case of September 11, Democratic members, liberal members, and moderate members of the House of Representatives rallied behind President Bush the most, exhibited by their significantly increased support levels. These findings are consistent with Fleisher and Bond’s (1988) and Baum’s (2003) studies on rallies, which suggest liberal Democratic members of Congress are more likely to increase their support levels for a Republican president. The findings are also consistent with Edwards’s (1976) suggestion that party is positively correlated with presidential prestige.

The study also suggests that seniority is a determinant in the difference of presidential support following a crisis event, but only when accounting for party and ideology. However, the findings from the study do not support Edwards’s (1976) findings that members from non-marginal seats respond positively to presidential prestige. To an extent, this study provides some support to the scholarly literature concerning the correlation in Congress and presidential support during normal times.

On the other hand, this study is not congruent with Edwards and Swenson’s (1997) suggestion on who rallies at the mass opinion level. This study suggests that the subgroups at the elite opinion level that are most likely to rally are the ones with the highest thresholds to overcome in approval, meaning that liberal and Democratic members are more likely to rally in a case with a Republican president. Moreover, a possible explanation for the varying results between Edwards and Swenson’s findings and this study’s findings are the varying scopes of the rallies measured. The rally following September 11 was much more extensive
than the rally that Edwards and Swenson observed. Although this study only examines a case with a Republican president, the results may suggest that conservative and Republican members are more likely to rally in a case with a Democratic president; only additional studies will be able to conclusively demonstrate this pattern.

Although the study is inconsistent with the literature on who rallies, it implies that the rally effect that Mueller (1970) identifies to occur in the masses also occurs in the elite. More specifically, the study suggests that rallies are more likely to occur in particular congressional subgroups. These findings are important in understanding the nature of the executive-legislative branch interaction, particularly following a crisis. Support levels for President Bush did increase after September 11, suggesting that the president does have an increased likelihood to achieve policy success in the House following a crisis. The study finds that rallies do occur at the elite opinion level, especially within particular subgroups; the findings suggest that the president has a temporary allotment of time where his policies have a higher probability of approval.

Despite the study's findings and predictions on rallies in the House, the results may be atypical due to the study's examination of only one rally effect. However, the results suggest a potentially useful avenue for future research into the executive-legislative relationship. Further studies on rallies at the elite level may produce more conclusive results concerning the tendencies of support levels in Congress following large-scale crises.
Bibliography


