

Does Where You Stand Depend on Where You Sit? Careerists' Attitudes toward Political Appointees under Reagan

Karen M. Hult and Robert Maranto

With the noted exception of George H.W. Bush, Republican presidents since Dwight Eisenhower have pursued “administrative presidency” strategies, which include political appointments to subcabinet positions. Less clear is whether and how appointments strategies affect the reactions of careerists to political appointees. Here, we turn for insight to data collected from senior careerists during the administration of Ronald Reagan, which emphasized such strategies. The findings indicate that careerists’ ideology influenced their views of the political appointees for whom they worked, particularly in regulatory agencies. Agency affiliation also was important, though not always as anticipated.

Beginning with the presidency of Dwight Eisenhower, Republican presidents have sought to achieve their policy goals through administrative as well as legislative means. The tools of these “administrative presidencies” (Nathan 1983; Maranto 1993a; Lewis 2008) include both “contextual” and “directive” strategies (Durant 1998; Durant and Warber 2001). The former encompass presidential use of their budgetary, reorganization, and personnel powers in efforts to create bureaucratic decision contexts that appear likely to “favor [presidential] aims” (Durant, 1998, 1). Meanwhile, the latter involve more unilateral actions by presidents (through, for example, executive orders, national security directives) to secure their objectives. Democratic President Bill Clinton also pursued administrative presidency strategies (Aberbach 2000; Durant and Warber 2001; Zaneski 2001).

In what follows, we focus on Republican presidents because, with the notable exception of George H.W. Bush, Republicans initiated and have pursued such strategies more systematically than their Democratic counterparts, particularly regarding personnel policies. Further, while Democratic presidents have often simply bypassed agencies they did not trust, Republican presidents have instead used personnel and budgetary strategies and tactics to dominate those organizations. The most coherent and explicitly ideological use of administrative presidency personnel approaches occurred in the Reagan years, when the White House Personnel Office carefully vetted appointees for their fidelity to administration ideology and placed them where they could have the most impact on public policy (Nathan 1983;

KAREN M. HULT is a professor of political science at Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University. ROBERT MARANTO is the 21st Century Chair in Leadership at the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas.

Maranto 1993a, 2005). This emphasis combined with the administration's continued symbolic importance among the public, political elites, and analysts of the presidency and public administration makes the Reagan administrative presidency an important topic for study.¹

Scholars recently have paid increasing attention to examining unilateral strategies (e.g., Howell 2003; Mayer 2001). Yet, contextual tools remain critical in designing, promoting the use of, and implementing directional strategies. One of the significant contextual tools employed by contemporary chief executives is the appointment of executive branch officials who share presidential values and policy objectives. Presidents seeking "responsive competence" may find such a strategy "particularly attractive because it is anchored in a formal presidential power that, in its implications for political and bureaucratic control, is perhaps more important than any other" presidents possess (Moe 1985, 245; cf. Parsneau 2004; Lewis 2008).

The opportunities for such "politicization" increased with the thickening of the U.S. national executive branch, especially the growth of political deputy assistant secretaries under Presidents Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter, and George H.W. Bush (Light 1995, 93; Lewis 2008). Moreover, growing federal government reliance on contracting and the complex networks that result likely amplify the need for "facilitators with abilities that are normally associated with political campaign skills" (Durant and Warber 2001, 235); Durant and Warber go on to observe that pursuing presidential goals in policy networks seems apt "to require *more* political appointees [placed] *deeper* into the bureaucracy than ever before" (2001, 236, their emphasis). Although scholars differ over the efficacy and the desirability of appointment strategies, every Republican president since the late 1960s—including George W. Bush—has pursued them.²

Somewhat less clear is how use of such a tool affects the dynamics within government agencies, including the reactions of civil servants. To explore this, we return here for insight to data collected from senior careerists in 1987 during the Reagan presidency, whose administration paid careful, systematic attention to the appointment of subcabinet officials, in part since administration officials had learned from the perceived failures of the Nixon years (Nathan 1983; Maranto 1993a).³ Even if the risks and opportunities of an appointments strategy are changing, as some (e.g., Durant and Warber 2001; Lewis 2008) suggest, examination of the Reagan years provides a baseline with which more recent relations can be compared. Moreover, the incentives for presidents to pursue an appointments strategy persist, perhaps especially as the governing environment in Washington grows more polarized.

The next section introduces several hypotheses about careerist-appointee relations. Then, after briefly describing the data, we report the findings.

In general, careerists' partisan and conservative-liberal leanings as well as the type of agency in which they worked shaped their views of Reagan appointees. Finally, we examine the strategic implications for presidents.

Hypotheses

In many Republican administrations, there have been relatively poor relations between careerists and political appointees in social welfare and regulatory agencies; Democratic administrations fare better in such agencies but do worse in others, notably defense (e.g., Aberbach and Rockman 1976, 2000; Maranto 1993a). Less clear is whether the variation in careerists' perceptions of appointees across types of agencies is better explained by *organization-level variables* such as the quality of political leadership and changes in agency budgets or by *individual-level variables* like careerist ideology and voting behavior. An important divide in organization theory "distinguishes between those theories that treat the organization as an undifferentiated collectivity and those that deal with smaller social units within organizations, such as individuals, coalitions, and subunits" (Pfeffer 1985, 382; cf. Brehm and Gates 1997). Many empirical studies, particularly those of for-profit organizations, suggest that researchers must acknowledge the behavioral regularities imposed by organizational structures. At the same time, most rational choice models focus on individual-level dynamics.

All organizations seek to shape individual behavior, but for government agencies staffed by civil servants such attempts can be problematic. Romzek (1992), for instance, writes that employee ties to a government organization can reflect the material *investment* of an exchange relationship or feelings of *commitment*, particularly commitment to shared values.⁴ Commitment reflects an employee's dedication to the organization's mission. Unlike invested employees, committed ones may be less likely to leave their organizations for more lucrative work; that is, to use exit rather than exercise voice (e.g., Golden 2000).

Organizational ideologies help foster commitment. Ideologies defining an organization's purpose attract recruits who support its mission. Few pacifists work at the Pentagon. Within the U.S. federal civil service, some agencies find it easier to elicit ideological commitment than others do. The U.S. Civil Rights Commission, for example, has a mission, which includes advancing racial and gender equality, that appeals to members of significant social movements (Romzek 1992, 150). Less clear are the purposive appeals of most of the subunits in the Departments of Commerce, Transportation, or the Treasury. Moreover, the normative appeal of an organization may vary over time. The military, for instance, found it easier to maintain commitment during the Cold War than afterward, when missions were less clear (Maranto

1994). After the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, commitment evidently is on the rebound.

The missions of government organizations often are related to political party philosophies. Thus, which party holds the White House influences whether political appointees in an agency support the agency's mission. Since the early 1970s, Democrats generally have supported, and Republicans opposed, the missions of regulatory and social welfare agencies. Not surprisingly, career officials in these agencies have tended to be liberal. This has been especially true of officials who chose their party affiliations since the 1960s (Aberbach et al. 1990; Aberbach and Rockman 2000; Maranto 1993a).

Although the higher civil service as a whole probably reflects the distribution of values in the mass public (e.g., Meier 1975; Meier and Nigro 1976; Maranto 1993a), most careerists within an agency have ideals that support their agency's missions. This may be quite important both to career-noncareer relations in the agency and to presidents trying to reorient agency policies. In the Nixon and Reagan administrations, for example, political appointees had some difficulties working with careerists in the social welfare and regulatory bureaucracies.

Even so, there often is diversity *within* agencies. Career officials vary in their willingness to support the initiatives of political appointees (e.g., Hecló 1977, ch. 6). Most careerists at least claim support, provided that appointees do not violate the law (Maranto 1993a, ch. 7). Further, careerists are influenced by contemporary debates, even when new ideas suggest changes in their own agencies (Aberbach et al. 1990, 191; Mayhew 1991). Individual-level views of public policy may affect careerists' assessments of political appointees independent of organization-level influences (Brehm and Gates 1997). In short, there are good reasons to expect that the ideals of careerists will influence their views of political appointees. Career officials serving in George W. Bush's EPA who call themselves "conservative," for example, might well support the President's appointees. We hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1: Individual-level ideology influences careerists' attitudes toward political appointees, with officials who are more conservative and more Republican holding more positive views of the Reagan administration's appointees.

Along with direct measures of individual ideology, for whom careerists voted for president might be associated with their views of agency appointees. Career officials who report voting for a winning presidential candidate might be more motivated to serve the administration's political appointees and more likely to trust those appointees. How well an agency's political

appointees perform in office also might influence whether civil servants support a president's second term (e.g., Reagan in 1984, George H.W. Bush in 1992, Clinton in 1996, and George W. Bush in 2004); the causal direction of any relationship between vote and attitude, then, is not obvious.⁵

Hypothesis 2: *Reported presidential vote in 1980 and in 1984 will be associated with careerists' attitudes toward political appointees, with careerists who report voting for Reagan having more positive views of his political appointees.*

Although individual-level ideology and voting behavior may affect careerists' attitudes toward political appointees, organization-level variables such as the rates of growth (or decline) also may be influential. As Romzek (1992) notes, the civil service pension system's "golden handcuffs"⁶ and the long-term development of skills useful to an agency reflect investments in the organization, investments lost if an employee prematurely leaves federal service. In effect, these material incentives tie an employee to the fate of the organization. Growing agencies have greater security and more opportunities for advancement than declining ones (Downs 1967; Niskanen 1971; Rubin 1985). Indeed, material incentives and the attendant social pressures are the main dynamics behind the venerable "Miles Law": "where you stand depends on where you sit."⁷

In addition, a shorter-term organization-level variable influencing careerists might be the political appointees who lead their agencies. Appointees typically serve in agencies for only a few years and are supposed to show greater loyalty to the White House and to party ideals than to the agency. Such appointees perform an important role in assuring that government organizations are accountable to elected officials (Hecl 1977; Pfiffner 1996). Meanwhile, the skill of agency political leaders likely also affects career-noncareer relations. Indeed, many public administration analysts believe that the inexperience of political appointees may be a key factor complicating career-noncareer relations (Ban and Ingraham 1990; National Commission on the Public Service 1989; Pfiffner 1996; Lewis 2008; Maranto 2005).

Together, these organization-level factors lead us to predict:

Hypothesis 3: *Agency affiliation will influence careerists' attitudes toward political appointees.*

At the same time, ideals and voting behavior might have more impact on career-noncareer relations in some agencies than in others because federal agencies vary in the degree to which their goals are contested (Parsneau

2004; Lewis 2008). Federal organizations with more controversial goals often have larger proportions of political appointees to facilitate presidential control by overcoming existing ideological and personal relationships between interest groups, congressional staffs, and career bureaucrats (Brown 1982; Light 1995; Lewis 2008). Case studies indicate that the goals of regulatory and social welfare agencies are particularly controversial (cf. Parsneau 2004). In recent Republican administrations, such organizations have featured significant conflict between political appointees and careerists, often based on ideological differences mirroring those in society at large (Ban and Ingraham 1990; Eisner, 1993; Golden 2000; Harris and Milkis 1996; Wellfeld 1992). In part these political battles represent fundamental disagreements about the proper role of government (Higgs 1987). Many conservative politicians and intellectuals question whether certain social welfare and regulatory agencies should even exist. Indeed, conservative political scientist and onetime Reagan political appointee Michael Sanera (1984, 1987) urged political appointees in domestic agencies (but not those in the Pentagon) to actively oppose the goals of their organizations. In contrast, military norms of compliance to bureaucratic rules and norms, combined with a somewhat greater political consensus on defense missions, may make the Pentagon relatively less ideological (Maranto 2005).

***Hypothesis 4:** Careerists' reported ideology and voting behavior will have a stronger impact on their views of political appointees in regulatory and social welfare agencies than in defense or other agencies.*

Data and Methods

To test these hypotheses, we returned to data collected in the late 1980s, when the Reagan administration successfully pursued many of the strategies associated with the administrative presidency. In September 1987, letters requesting lists of high-level (Senior Executive Service and GM-15) career officials serving in Washington, DC, were sent to 50 organizations in the federal executive branch. The agencies were chosen to represent a wide variety of policy concerns, and to assure that the many organizations whose personnel requests had been drastically cut and the relatively few that had experienced increases in the early Reagan years were included (Maranto 1989). Fourteen organizations responded, representing defense, regulatory, social welfare, and "other" types of policy.⁸ In November and December 1987, 1,045 high-level careerists serving in the Washington offices of these agencies were sent anonymous surveys with stamped return envelopes attached. A 49 percent response rate was achieved⁹ (Table 1). Fourteen

Table 1. Responses by Agency and Agency Type

| Agency Type / Agency | Surveys Sent | Received | Percent Returned |
|--|--------------|-----------|------------------|
| <i>Defense</i> | | | |
| Office of the Secretary (OSD) | 137 | 71 | 52 |
| Army | 140 | 67 | 48 |
| Navy | <u>50</u> | <u>34</u> | 68 |
| Subtotal | 327 | 172 | 53 |
| <i>Social Welfare</i> | | | |
| HUD | 130 | 28 | 22 |
| HRSA (Health Resources & Services) | <u>52</u> | <u>30</u> | 58 |
| Subtotal | 182 | 58 | 32 |
| <i>Regulatory</i> | | | |
| EPA | 98 | 42 | 43 |
| CPSC (Consumer Product Safety Commission) | 4 | 27 | 50 |
| OSHA | 46 | 19 | 41 |
| NHTSA (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration) | 102 | 57 | 56 |
| OSMRE (Surface Mining Reclamation & Enforcement) | <u>19</u> | <u>16</u> | 84 |
| Subtotal | 310 | 161 | 52 |
| <i>Other</i> | | | |
| FAAS (Foreign Agriculture Assistance Service) | 28 | 11 | 39 |
| National Park Service | 50 | 17 | 34 |
| Office of Personnel Mgt | 118 | 73 | 62 |
| FEMA | <u>30</u> | <u>21</u> | 70 |
| Subtotal | 226 | 122 | 54 |
| Total | 1,045 | 513 | 49 |

surveys delivered to retired, separated, or otherwise ineligible officials were returned, and are not included in the total. Since many of the never returned questionnaires probably were sent to such officials, actual return rates undoubtedly were higher than 49 percent. Still, as in any study of this kind, selection bias is a concern.

It should be underscored that these data over-represent political conflict by focusing on *high-level career executives in Washington*. In general, lower level officials and field offices are less involved in policymaking and less likely to interact with political appointees.

Respondents reported their party affiliations and conservative-liberal leanings using separate seven-point scales, with higher numbers indicating more Republican and more conservative responses.¹⁰ These two measures ($r = .721$) were added to create an index of “careerist ideology.” For the sample as a whole, the index had a mean of 6.67 (out of 14) and a standard deviation of 2.54, suggesting that the respondents were basically centrists.¹¹ Still, more liberal officials (index < 6) outnumbered more conservative ones (index > 10) by 21 percent to 13 percent. Meanwhile, the recalled 1980 presidential vote was 49 percent Reagan, 33 percent Carter, and 8 percent Anderson; in 1984, respondents reported supporting Reagan over Mondale by a margin of 46 percent to 43 percent.

The dependent variable, perceived career-noncareer relations, was measured using an index composed of three 1-5 point items that tapped careerists’ levels of trust of Reagan appointees, approval of Reagan-era changes in the agency, and judgments of appointees’ “knowledge and management skill.”¹² Cronbach’s alpha for the index was .8631, demonstrating generally high inter-item agreement. The 15-point perceived relations index had a mean of 8.48, a median of 9, and a standard deviation of 3.03, with higher numbers indicating greater regard for Reagan appointees.

Findings

The first hypothesis predicted that careerist ideology would influence attitudes toward political appointees. The ideology index is weakly related to perceived career-noncareer relations (Somers’s $d = .231$, $r = .303$, $b = .366$),¹³ with more conservative and more Republican careerists reporting more positive views of political appointees.¹⁴ Similarly, the second hypothesis on the relationship between perceived relations and presidential vote is supported: careerists who reported voting for Ronald Reagan in both 1980 and 1984 assessed his appointees more positively. (The relationship between voting for Reagan in 1980 and perceived career-appointee relations yielded a tau-c of .312 and a Somers’s d of .324, with relations dependent; analogous results for the 1984 vote were .437 and .437, respectively.)

The third hypothesis leads one to expect that the agency in which a careerist works will be related to their views of relations with political appointees. The results in Table 2 lend rather clear support, with the mean ratings of career-noncareer relations ranging from lows of 5.69 and 5.96 (out of 15 possible points) among careerists in the National Park Service and the Consumer Product Safety Commission to highs of 10.63 and 11.27 for those in the Navy and the Foreign Agriculture Assistance Service. A one-way analysis of variance indicated that agency affiliation accounted for almost 25 percent of the variation in perceived relations.¹⁵

**Table 2. Agency Affiliation
and Perceived Careerist-Appointee Relations**

| Agency | Perceived Relations | | | N |
|--------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------|----|
| | Mean | Standard Deviation | Median | |
| OSD | 9.76 | 2.38 | 10 | 68 |
| Army | 9.84 | 2.57 | 10 | 62 |
| Navy | 10.63 | 2.54 | 11 | 32 |
| HUD | 6.29 | 2.68 | 6.5 | 28 |
| HRSA | 9.11 | 2.44 | 10 | 28 |
| EPA | 8.95 | 3.02 | 10 | 40 |
| CPSC | 5.96 | 3.02 | 6 | 27 |
| NHTSA | 7.76 | 2.87 | 8 | 55 |
| OSRME | 8.87 | 3.29 | 10 | 15 |
| OSHA | 7.05 | 2.66 | 7 | 19 |
| OPM | 7.18 | 2.81 | 7 | 71 |
| FEMA | 9.47 | 2.14 | 10 | 19 |
| NPS | 5.69 | 2.39 | 5 | 16 |
| FAAS | 11.27 | 1.85 | 11 | 11 |

Moreover, the fourth hypothesis suggested that careerist ideology and reported voting behavior would have particularly strong impacts on the evaluations of career-noncareer relations in the relatively more controversial regulatory and social welfare organizations. Yet, as Table 3 shows, there are no statistically significant relationships between ideology and views of Reagan appointees in either of the social welfare agencies included in the sample. In the Health Resources and Services Administration, HRSA-supporting Surgeon General C. Everett Koop (whom Reagan named) and his appointees (whom careerists compared favorably to their predecessors under Carter) may have prevented ideology from predicting career-noncareer relations (Maranto 1989). More surprising, however, is the absence of any statistically significant relationship at HUD, especially given the relatively low evaluations of relations reported in Table 2 (mean 6.29, median 6.5) and the Democratic-liberal bent of agency careerists (cf. Stehr 1997, 79).¹⁶ Possibly, this could be explained by HUD's focus on distributive client politics, funding major construction projects, rather than redistributive policies assisting low income citizens (Welfeld 1992). Nor are there statistically significant relationships in three of the five "other" agencies, with OPM and the National Park Service (NPS) as the exceptions. The NPS, of course, experienced considerable controversy during the Reagan years, and in OPM there was a backlash against unpopular Director Donald Devine (Maranto 1993a).

Table 3. Careerist Reported Ideology and Perceived Appointee-Careerist Relations, by Agency

| Agency Type | Agency | Relationship between Ideology and Perceived Relations | | N |
|----------------|--------|--|-------------|----|
| | | Tau-c | Pearson's r | |
| Defense | OSD | .235** | .289** | 65 |
| | Army | .155** | .176 | 60 |
| | Navy | -.042 | -.074 | 31 |
| Social Welfare | HUD | -.076 | -.092 | 28 |
| | HRSA | .184 | .283 | 28 |
| Regulatory | EPA | .166 | .257 | 39 |
| | CPSC | .19 | .5** | 26 |
| | NHTSA | .208** | .29** | 53 |
| | OSRME | .31 | .551** | 14 |
| | OSHA | .43** | .602** | 18 |
| Other | OPM | .166** | .231* | 67 |
| | FEMA | .049 | .003 | 18 |
| | NPS | .21 | .484* | 16 |
| | FAAS | -.02 | -.029 | 11 |

*p < .1; **p < .05

Yet, more consistent with the fourth hypothesis, relatively strong and statistically significant relationships appeared in four of the five regulatory agencies sampled,¹⁷ suggesting that career-noncareer relations took a relatively strong ideological tone. The EPA also probably had such relationships earlier in the Reagan administration, when it had a highly controversial administrator, Anne Gorsuch Burford (Golden 2000, ch. 6; Kirschten 1983). Meanwhile, although some statistically significant relationships appear in the responses of defense careerists, their interpretations are somewhat less clear. One careerist wrote, for example, that “[i]n all [the liberal-conservative] categories, people here are pro-defense.”

Examination of the relationships between the two-party presidential vote (1 = Republican; 0 = Democrat) and perceived career-noncareer relations tells a similar story (Table 4). Despite the small number of cases, relationships in four agencies reached statistical significance for both the 1980 and the 1984 votes (OSD, NHTSA, OSHA, OPM). In several instances, the relationships are moderately strong (for example, explaining at least 25 percent of the shared variance in three instances). In general, perceived relations were more likely to correlate with the 1984 vote, perhaps in part because voting behavior was influenced by views of Reagan political appointees. This may well have occurred in OPM, for instance, leading

Table 4. Presidential Vote-Perceived Career-Appointee Relations, by Agency

| Agency Type | Agency | Reported Vote, 1980 (number of cases) | Reported Vote, 1984 (number of cases) |
|----------------|--------|--|--|
| Defense | OSD | .225* (54) | .273** (58) |
| | Army | .143 (54) | .155 (59) |
| | Navy | -.184 (23) | .181 (28) |
| Social Welfare | HUD | -.017 (23) | -.092 (26) |
| | HRSA | .478** (24) | .109 (27) |
| Regulatory | EPA | .097 (32) | .362** (32) |
| | CPSC | .225 (22) | .506** (22) |
| | NHTSA | .271* (49) | .392** (53) |
| | OSRME | .319 (12) | .647** (12) |
| | OSHA | .56** (16) | .479* (17) |
| Other | OPM | .291** (53) | .331** (62) |
| | FEMA | -.114 (18) | .047 (18) |
| | NPS | .327 (13) | .406 (15) |
| | FAAS | -.02 (9) | .386 (10) |

Cell entries are Pearson's correlations.
*p < .1; **p < .05

careerists unhappy with Director Devine to choose Mondale over Reagan in 1984 (Maranto 1989). And, consistent with the fourth hypothesis, statistically significant relationships between perceived relations and reported 1984 vote appeared in all of the regulatory agencies, although not as predicted in the two social welfare agencies. Also not fully supporting the hypothesis, statistically significant (albeit weaker) relationships appeared for the Office of the Secretary of Defense and OPM for both the 1980 and the 1984 presidential votes. Additionally, no significant relationships between perceived relations and the 1980 vote emerged in one of the two social welfare agencies and three of the five regulatory agencies in the sample.

In sum, the evidence from the surveys is consistent with many but not all of the bivariate relationships that the hypotheses predicted. To further explore the joint impacts of agency membership and ideology on careerist relations with appointees, several multiple regressions can be examined with the ideology index and type of agency as independent variables¹⁸ (Table 5).

In the first regression (A), both reported ideology and whether a careerist worked in a defense agency reached statistical significance. Compared with their colleagues in “other” agencies and controlling for ideology, careerists in defense units rated relations with appointees over two points more favorably on the 15-point perceived relations index; after controlling

Table 5. Impact of Ideology and Type of Agency on Perceived Relations

| | B | Std. error | Beta | t | Significance |
|--|--------|------------|-------|--------|--------------|
| <i>Defense, Social Welfare, and Regulatory Agencies</i> | | | | | |
| Constant | 5.485 | .439 | | 12.501 | .000 |
| Ideology | .310 | .051 | .260 | 6.083 | .000 |
| Defense | 2.263 | .342 | .350 | 6.623 | .000 |
| Social Welfare | .464 | .455 | .049 | 1.018 | .309 |
| Regulatory | .415 | .346 | .063 | 1.198 | .231 |
| R = .435 R ² = .189 | | | | | |
| <i>Defense Agencies</i> | | | | | |
| Constant | 5.823 | .355 | | 16.387 | .000 |
| Ideology | .300 | .050 | .252 | 5.966 | .000 |
| Defense | 1.995 | .273 | .308 | 7.294 | .000 |
| R = .432 R ² = .186 | | | | | |
| <i>Other Agencies</i> | | | | | |
| Constant | 6.258 | .371 | | 16.856 | .000 |
| Ideology | .377 | .051 | .317 | 7.336 | .000 |
| Other | -1.241 | .309 | -.173 | -4.013 | .000 |
| R = .353 R ² = .124 | | | | | |
| <i>Regulatory Agencies</i> | | | | | |
| Constant | 6.3585 | .395 | | 16.162 | .000 |
| Ideology | .349 | .052 | .293 | 6.669 | .000 |
| Regulatory | -.728 | .287 | -.111 | -2.533 | .012 |
| R = .326 R ² = .107 | | | | | |
| <i>Social Welfare Agencies</i> | | | | | |
| Constant | 6.157 | .387 | | 15.924 | .000 |
| Ideology | .357 | .053 | .300 | 6.767 | .000 |
| Social Welfare | -.474 | .417 | -.050 | -1.136 | .256 |
| R = .311 R ² = .097 | | | | | |

for agency affiliation, more conservative and Republican careerists were less than half a point more favorable than their more liberal and Democratic peers.¹⁹ When defense careerists are compared with all other respondents (B), working in a defense organization produced a view of relations with appointees that was almost two points higher after controlling for careerist ideology. Comparing careerists' responses in each of the remaining broad types of agencies with all other agencies produced generally weaker, and in

the case of social welfare and regulatory agencies statistically insignificant, results.

When one looks at the individual units with sufficient responses to produce meaningful results ($n > 26$), a somewhat different picture emerges. Controlling for ideology, for example, working in OPM, CPSC, or HUD was associated with close to a two-point decrease in assessment of relations compared to other agencies.²⁰ Again holding ideology constant, HRSA and EPA careerists were more positive, with reported relations in each almost one-point higher when compared to all other units.²¹ Although none of the regressions accounted for more than 20 percent of the variation in perceived relations, they do offer continuing support for the first and third hypotheses.

Adding reported voting behavior into the mix has varying effects. The 1980 vote reaches statistical significance in a regression that includes only it and the ideology index as the independent variables. Reported 1980 vote retains significance at $p < .05$ when a control for working in a specific agency is introduced in the cases of OPM ($b = .808, p = .035$) and EPA ($b = .842, p = .031$). Yet, when respondents in the defense agencies are compared to all others, the 1980 vote loses significance.²²

In contrast, the 1984 vote has a statistically significant influence on perceived careerist- appointee relations with either or both controls (Table 6). Although careerist ideology is no longer statistically significant with the vote variable added, this in part reflects the high correlation between the two variables ($r = .728, p < .000$); ideology nears the .1 significance threshold

Table 6. Impact of Ideology and 1984 Presidential Vote on Perceived Relations

| | B | Std. error | Beta | t | Significance |
|---|-------|------------|------|--------|--------------|
| <i>Defense, Social Welfare, and Regulatory Agencies</i> | | | | | |
| Constant | 5.485 | .439 | | 12.501 | .000 |
| Ideology | .310 | .051 | .260 | 6.083 | .000 |
| Defense | 2.263 | .342 | .350 | 6.623 | .000 |
| Social Welfare | .464 | .455 | .049 | 1.018 | .309 |
| Regulatory | .415 | .346 | .063 | 1.198 | .231 |
| R = .435 R ² = .189 | | | | | |
| <i>Defense Agencies</i> | | | | | |
| Constant | 5.823 | .355 | | 16.387 | .000 |
| Ideology | .300 | .050 | .252 | 5.966 | .000 |
| Defense | 1.995 | .273 | .308 | 7.294 | .000 |
| R = .432 R ² = .186 | | | | | |

once defense affiliation is added. Again, however, the three variables together explain only about one-fifth of the variation in perceived relations.²³ Once more, too, the findings do not fully support the fourth hypothesis.

Discussion

Agency affiliation, individual ideology, and reported voting behavior all had some effect on careerists' views of Reagan political appointees. Ideology might well have had an even larger influence had there been greater variation in careerists' liberal-conservative and partisan leanings; most careerists in the sample were self-proclaimed centrists. More generally, the values of the dependent variable, perceived relations between noncareer and career officials, may have been more positive than they would have been earlier in the administration due to the timing of the survey.²⁴ By the second term of the Reagan administration, many of the agencies had changed political leadership, and the greatest threats to mission and career personnel had mostly subsided, likely lessening the impact of a key organizational level variable, agency leadership.²⁵ One probably should not overstate the likely effects, however. In a study of presidential nominations of subcabinet officials between 1965 and 2000, Parsneau found that presidents who "faced greater ideological divisions between themselves and opposition senators nominated candidates who [were] significantly *more* partisan loyal" (2004, 21, emphasis added). The Republican loss of control of the U.S. Senate in 1986, then, might have meant that new subcabinet officials would have been more comparable to those named earlier in the administration. Further, there is evidence that second term Reagan appointees were no more moderate than first term appointees (Maranto 1993a).

Ideology had an especially strong impact on careerists' perceptions of noncareerists in regulatory agencies like the CPSC, likely reflecting the ideological conflicts in these agencies, divisions in which at least a few relatively conservative careerists seemingly sided with Reagan political appointees against a majority of more liberal careerists. In such environments, even the most skilled of appointees might not have been able to manage good career-noncareer relations, since basic goal conflicts about agency roles were involved (Durant 1990).²⁶ For example, economist James Miller led the Reagan Federal Trade Commission with considerable knowledge, skill, and even good humor, but most FTC careerists never accepted him because of his relatively radical agenda (Harris and Milkis 1996).²⁷ Notably, one agency in sample which in theory should have been non-ideological, OPM, also had a high correlation between ideology and careerists' perceptions. This may well reflect the polarizing tenure of first term Reagan OPM Director Donald J. Devine, suggesting that even in less ideological agencies par-

ticular leadership styles can ignite conflict (Maranto 1993a). In short, it is not accurate to say that either agency leadership or ideological disagreement play the key role in explaining career-noncareer relations; rather each have contingent impacts in part depending on the agency mission. Further, career perceptions may not always be based on reality. Outside of the defense agencies, pluralities of the careerists surveyed for this study *perceived* that Reagan appointees had used selective pay and promotion strategies. In fact, prior analyses of this same data set have for the most part not found statistically significant relationships between ideology and frequency of promotion (Maranto 1989).²⁸

Considerable research has found that organizational membership and agency task have more impact on attitudes and behavior than do the individual characteristics of employees (e.g., Gruber 1987; Parsneau 2004; Pfeffer 1985; Wilson 1989). Similarly, here, as the OPM, CPSC, and defense units illustrated, agency membership had relatively strong independent effects. Yet the results spotlight as well the influence of an individual attribute of careerists, ideology (which tapped both party affiliation and liberal-conservative leaning).²⁹ This finding in turn suggests that conflicts between civil servants and appointees, particularly in regulatory agencies, at times may be an almost inevitable result of ideological differences.

Especially at the executive levels in Washington, DC, headquarters, much of what careerists and their politically appointed bosses do has ideological implications (cf. Aberbach and Rockman 2000; Durant 1990; Eisner 1993; Golden 2000; Harris and Milkis 1996). Clearly, this is a key motivator for presidents who select appointments from among the tools of the administrative presidency. The findings here underscore the need for sensitivity to agency differences when employing an appointments strategy. A strong case can be made that presidents should concentrate in programs and units that are both central to their policy goals and in need of significant change (as, for example, Presidents Reagan, Clinton, and W. Bush considered environmental programs to be). It is in these areas that individual appointees who share presidential values and who have appropriate substantive, political, and managerial skills will be especially valuable.³⁰

The results also point to the need for more careful empirical analysis of the interplay between program and agency missions, on the one hand, and the values and goals of senior officials, on the other. Deserving more attention as well, of course, is the actual *behavior* of career officials and appointees in varying contexts. It may be, for instance, that the typical centrism of civil servants, combined with norms of bureaucratic accommodation to their appointed superiors and the influence of material incentives, generally produce cooperative behavior even under conditions of policy conflict. Alternatively, disagreement over policy goals and the means of attaining them may

encourage appointees to ignore the input of career officials or to close them out of decision-making altogether.

Faced with the specter of ideological opposition in an agency, strategic presidents are likely to find unilateral administrative tools especially appealing. Yet, it probably is a mistake to consider contextual and unilateral strategies as being mutually exclusive. The more indirect appointments route, for instance, may help pave the way for and enhance the implementation of directive initiatives, while at the same time amplifying presidential values and objectives throughout government units and the networks in which they are embedded. To be sure, appointments also can obstruct the execution of presidential directives and trigger a backlash to presidential objectives and initiatives, as James Watt, Donald Devine, and Ann Gorsuch Burford remind one. Meanwhile, appointments strategies often have other costs. Not only can they enmesh presidential nominees and appointees in pitched battles with congressional committees, but they also may “bring expanded opportunities for the prerogatives of subordinates to trump those of political appointees as moral hazard and adverse selection problems mount” (Durant and Warber 2001, 226). Even so, presidents who believe—as Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush all have—that key parts of the federal executive need to be reoriented appear likely to continue to find such risks to be worth taking.

NOTES

¹Interestingly, as Lewis (2008) points out, President Carter actually increased the numbers of political appointees more rapidly than Reagan. Yet the Reagan administrative presidency received far more attention from both scholars and journalists, perhaps since Reagan era appointments were crafted more to change policy than to provide patronage for supporters.

²For instance, Wood and Waterman (1994) provide evidence of the effectiveness of an appointments strategy in furthering presidential policy goals; Durant (1992) notes some of the limitations, and Durant and Warber (2001) are skeptical of its substantive (as opposed to symbolic) promise in what they call the current “neo-administrative state.” On desirability, compare, for example, Nathan (1983) and Maranto (2005) who on somewhat different bases argue in favor of the administrative presidency to Aberbach and Rockman (2000) who express several reservations. On George W. Bush’s use of administrative strategies, see, for example, Aberbach (2004), Friedman (2001), Hult (2003), and Simendinger (2004).

³These data are drawn from a larger project, which also included responses from 118 political appointees (out of 242 surveyed), and that was extended to the Bush I and first-term Clinton administrations. For other analyses of these more extensive data, see (Maranto 1989, 1993a).

⁴Ouchi (1980) made the same points in his comparisons of markets (organized by exchange relationships) and clans (organized by tradition). And, more than three decades

ago, Clark and Wilson (1961) suggested that organizations could be held together through purposive, material, or solidary incentives; cf. Brehm and Gates (1997).

⁵Prospective evaluations of this sort also can have an impact. For example, in the 1980 election one moderate OSD careerist "actually evaluated the probable [OSD] team that would compose the Administration, and Carter/Mondale lost."

⁶Until the 1990s, federal employees did not receive substantial pensions until 20 years of service. Federal pensions and sick leave tie employees to the federal service, but not to a particular agency since benefits are transferable across agencies.

⁷Miles originally formulated his "law" in the late 1940s to explain why former Bureau of the Budget examiners lost their frugality upon joining the agencies whose budgets they had previously examined: "In order to be effective in his new organization, he had to be its strong advocate in its external relationships" (1978, 399). Graham Allison (1971, 176), among others, inaccurately attributed Miles Law to Don K. Price.

⁸These included both independent agencies and those under the jurisdiction of a department. The Consumer Product Safety Commission also was included since the Chair's position was open in 1981, and the Chair controls most noncareer staff.

⁹Particular care was taken to assure that only *civil servants* were included in the data set constructed from the surveys. The 506 careerists in the sample who reported their rank were evenly divided between SES and GM-15 officials. The two kinds of officials are not analyzed separately here, since within organizational policy types no statistically significant differences in partisan affiliation, conservative-liberal leanings, or perceptions of career-noncareer relations were found (Maranto 1993a.)

¹⁰Respondents were asked to indicate their partisan affiliation on a scale ranging from 1 "strong Democrat" to 7 "strong Republican"; "independent" was a 4. They also were asked to place themselves on a "scale of political ideology", which ranged from 1 = very liberal to 7 = very conservative. For comparative purposes, the *political appointees* who responded to these questions reported being conservative (mean = 5.42) and Republican (53 of the 118 called themselves "strong Republicans" and 31 classified themselves as a "6" on the party affiliation scale); only one claimed to be a Democrat, while 18 others reported being "Independents." Cf. Maranto 1989. (The original surveys employed scales with lower numbers indicating a respondent was more conservative and more Republican. We reverse them here for easier interpretation.)

¹¹The mode and median were 7.

¹²The survey items were: "I generally trust the noncareer executives in my agency" (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree); "I generally approve of the changes non-career executives have made in my agency" (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree); "On average, how would you characterize the knowledge and management skill of Reagan appointees in your agency?" (1 = not competent to 5 = very competent).

¹³Unless otherwise indicated, measures of association and correlations reported in the text are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

¹⁴Of course, whether a career official reported to a political appointee or to another civil servant also may have helped shape their perceptions of career-appointee relations. Unfortunately, the data from the survey do not permit a direct test of such an expectation. The questionnaire did ask, however, about the extent of interaction career officials had with political appointees: "I interact a great deal with political appointees in my job" (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Responses on this item were positively associated with assessments of career-appointee relations, although the relationship was relatively weak ($\tau\text{-}c = .144$, Somers's $d = .164$, $p < .01$). At the same time, the relationship between extent of reported interaction with political appointees and careerist ideology is

not statistically significant ($p > .345$). Nor did interaction vary much across either individual agencies or agency types. In general, civil servants reported that they had considerable interaction with appointees; the modal response to the question was “strongly agree” (5), with a median of 4 and a mean of 3.94 (standard deviation = 1.19).

¹⁵Only in OPM and HRSA was the length of careerists’ service in an agency associated with their perceptions of political appointees at or above the 90% confidence level. In OPM, the association was weakly negative: Somers’s d (with perceived relations dependent) = $-.204$, $\tau\text{-}c = -.212$, and $r = -.254$; for all three, $p < .05$. In contrast, in HRSA the relationship was positive though still relatively weak: Somers’s $d = .281$ ($p = .065$), $\tau\text{-}c = .295$ ($p = .065$), and $r = .44$ ($p = .044$).

¹⁶On the 14-point ideology index, HUD careerists had a mean of 5.46 (with a standard deviation of 2.2), a median of 6, and a mode of 4.

¹⁷That in some cases the relationship yields a statistically significant Pearson’s r but not a significant $\tau\text{-}c$ likely reflects the small number of cases. Moreover, in smaller agencies like OSMRE and the CPSC, political appointees typically get less scrutiny from the press, Congress, and the White House; thus, their qualifications may appear to careerists to be less certain. These appointees also may have more autonomy, since small agencies generally have fewer constituents; such a situation further feeds careerist insecurity. As a careerist informant in one such agency suggested, during presidential transitions: “Basically all the small agencies try to do something in transitions to protect their budgets. In places like PBGC or RTC, a single one or a little set of political leaders can really change policy.”

¹⁸None of the equations that included interaction terms for type of agency and ideology or type of agency and reported vote yielded either statistically significant regression coefficients (at $p < .1$) for the new variable or notable changes in the other coefficients. The results are not reported here but are available from the authors.

¹⁹When years of respondents’ service in their current agencies was added as a variable, it was negatively related to perceived relations but was not statistically significant (at $p < .1$), and it had virtually no effect on the remaining coefficients.

²⁰Unstandardized regression coefficients were -1.68 for OPM, -1.89 for HUD, and -2.184 for the CPSC. All were statistically significant at $p < .01$.

²¹The unstandardized regression coefficients were 1.002 ($p = .077$) for HRSA and $.974$ ($p = .046$) in EPA.

²²A regression with ideology and 1980 vote as independent variables yielded unstandardized coefficients of $.287$ ($p < .000$) and $.725$ ($p < .000$), respectively. When a dummy variable for working in a defense-related unit was added, the coefficients changed to $.264$ for ideology ($p < .000$) and $.397$ for vote ($p = .283$); the coefficient for defense was 1.957 ($p < .000$). The first regression explained 11.6% of the variation in perceived relations and the second 20.3%.

²³Even after controlling for 1984 vote, working in OPM, HUD, or CPSC (each compared to working in all other units) had a statistically significant, negative effect on perceived relations of more than one point; being a careerist at HRSA, EPA, or the Navy was associated with more than a one-point increase in perceived careerist-appointee relations relative to all other agencies.

²⁴For instance, Parsneau reports: “early [first] term presidents tend to make more controversial nominations with less experience and more partisan loyalty” (2004, 23).

²⁵Another possible explanation for the findings is that the Reagan administration succeeded in promoting careerists based on their more conservative and more Republican leanings. Such selective promotion practices might have encouraged some, less conserva-

tive careerists to leave government service while reducing the willingness of others to fully report their assessments of political appointees. Yet, the single empirical test of this proposition finds relatively little support (Maranto 1993a). See Note 28 below.

²⁶Of course, careerists rarely view *all* appointees as being skilled or as having appropriate qualifications for their jobs (e.g., Cohen 1998; Ingraham 1987; Pfiffner 1996; National Commission on the Public Service 1989; Stehr 1997).

²⁷For example, Miller once addressed FTC careerists wearing a devil costume. As he described his agenda, arguing that he was not Satan. No one laughed.

²⁸Among the respondents considered here, civil servants who reported both being Republican and voting for Reagan “were slightly more likely to have ‘received bonuses’ or ‘particularly recent promotions,’” but the relationships were not statistically significant. At the same time, self-reported “conservative” civil servants were somewhat less likely than their more liberal colleagues to have suffered RIFs, but the relationship was statistically significant only for those working in regulatory units (Maranto 1993a). On a similar theme see Kirschstein (1983). Cole and Caputo (1979) found somewhat more evidence of selective personnel practices in the latter part of the Nixon and the Ford administrations; in 1976, career officials occupying important positions in selected social welfare and regulatory agencies tended to be more conservative and more Republican than other senior civil servants in the same agency.

²⁹This is consistent with Brehm’s and Gates’s view of the significance of the “policy predispositions” of individual bureaucrats (1997, 73).

³⁰The pressures surrounding presidential selection of cabinet and subcabinet officials—especially early in an administration and for positions in relatively visible agencies—complicate pursuing such counsel. See, for example, the essays in Mackenzie (2001). For advice to newly elected presidents about making initial nominations to executive branch positions, see, e.g., Patterson and Pfiffner (2003).

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