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THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF TARGET GROUPS DURING THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION DEBATES

AND WHAT IT TAKES TO WIN

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SUMMARY

This master thesis empirically tests Schneider and Ingram's theory on the social construction of target groups in the context of the televised presidential election debates in the United States. The theory proposes that the power and the social construction of target groups leads to patterns in the allocation of benefits and burdens for the four types of target groups. Schneider and Ingram mention various factors which may influence this process, but they do not go into detail into how and what influence politicians have. Political parties are imperative to politics in the United States; the expectation is that party affiliation is a variable in how politicians partake in the process of social construction.

The underlying question is how and in what manner are target group populations socially constructed and presented by Democratic and Republican candidates running for presidency during the televised presidential debates in the United States. The televised presidential election debates convey direct dialogue between politicians of the two major political parties. The debate setting is likely to showcase the difference between the candidates and their parties, making it very suitable to this research. The assumptions derived from the theory on target group populations and party politics in the United States are examined by taking the spoken word of presidential candidates during the televised presidential election debates in the United States. This was done by making use of a qualitative analysis, coding and subsequently analyzing the transcripts of selected debates making use of the computer assisted data analysis software Atlas.ti.

The conclusion of this study is that the social construction of target group populations by politicians during the presidential election debates is influenced by the context within which it occurs. Candidates strive to be elected, and this drive is the center of what they say and propose regarding target groups. The vantage point is how this will be perceived by the public and what is likely to appease most voters and offend the least voters. The two parties each have distinct patterns in who and how they construct target groups in line with their core beliefs and assumptions.

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On October 3, 2012, an estimated 67.2 million people watched the televised debate between President Barack Obama and his opponent at that time, the Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney. That same year the Idols season finale drew an estimated 21.5 million viewers. Whilst the presidential debate may have won from Idols, the cake goes to another televised event entirely; the 2012 Super Bowl. The Super Bowl drew a staggering 129 million viewers over a population of 314.1 million, almost doubling the number of viewers drawn in by the presidential debate. These ratings put into perspective the role that the presidential debates occupy within American society. The American society is a democratic one, one which holds its democratic values high at that. Yet nonetheless a tool which is essential in maintaining a democratic system – the elections and all that is connected to them – may be more important than a televised singing competition, yet it loses to the biggest sporting event of the year. Elections are crucial in the maintaining of a democratic political system. Within the elections, debates are key events and they have come to play a prominent role in the political process.

In the United States, it has become part of the election procedure for a series of debates to take place and be broadcasted on the radio and televised before the elections are held. These debates, though not mandated by law or by the constitution, were introduced in 1960 and have been held regularly since 1976. US politics is dominated by two parties, the Republican Party and the Democratic Party, and thus, while this is not set out by the United States Constitution, the functioning of the party system most resembles a two-party system. As such, the run up to the elections can be divided in two parts. First the general elections are held. During this stage candidates are either nominated by others or seek office independently. In the end one candidate is elected per party to move forward to the second stage of the elections, the general elections, where candidates run for office. The debates take place during both the primaries, where candidates from one party or the other debate amongst themselves, as well as the proceeding part of the elections.

When the candidates for both parties have been decided upon, the debates shift their focus to the general election, in which the final president will be elected. These debates, of which between two to four are presidential debates and one vice presidential debates, are again not mandated by the constitution. The debates start well over a year before the actual

election takes place. The candidates meet in a large hall, often at a university, before an audience of citizens. The formats of the debates have varied over the years, with questions sometimes being posed by one or more journalist moderators and in other cases by members of the audience. The debates are targeted mainly at undecided voters who are not partial to any political ideology or party. As such the questions include topics that are critical at that point in time and are situated rather than general. The debates play an important role in informing American citizens and in easing their decision over how to cast their vote. This is exemplified by a number of studies that have shown that over two-thirds of voters of past elections have found the televised and radio broadcasted to be either 'somewhat' or even 'very' important as a tool in helping them decide which way to cast their vote. As such, the broadcasted presidential debates can indeed be viewed as a crucial part of the election process.

On November 8th, 2016 the new president of the United States will be elected. The group of candidates has thinned and only a few candidates remain on each side. Whilst the primaries are well on their way, the general elections will leave us waiting a little longer. While America decides upon its new chief executive for the coming four years the world watches. Who will become the 45th president of the United States of America and in which direction will he or she take the nation? Once more the debates will be held and these debates will show how each candidate views the issues America is currently facing. The time of elections is definitely a time of heightened political attention. With a new presidential vacancy, the stakes are high. One of the results hereof is an extensive use of rhetoric as candidates try to simultaneously sway the public their way and away from their opponents. This use of extensive rhetoric in a debate which includes those issues society is dealing with, gives room for a debate in which not only the latest news is discussed, but a setting in which larger societal views are up for debate and in a continuous process of be defined and redefined. As the debate is between a democrat and a republican candidate, it is likely that while their views may align on some aspects, residing on different ends of the American political spectrum, they are likely to vary on others. Thus, competing officials can have different constructions of the same groups. These different constructions become more evident during political debates as discussion leads candidates to make finer and finer distinctions, clearly demarcating the target groups. This

demarcation involves not only indicating who belongs to which group, but also what the position of that group is within society and whether they are viewed as deserving or perhaps undeserving.

Thus, a lot is said during debates. More than smash talking and bad mouthing one another, politicians direct themselves towards their electorate and discuss the issues they plan on tackling and how they plan on dealing with those groups who have contributed to societal problems or solutions. This raises a number of questions. For instance, what is the actual influence of this debate talk? The politicians at hand have not yet been elected or they are up for reelection, what is the real political power they wield? Whilst they may not be in office yet and may never make it to that position, from a constructivist perspective what the candidates say matters nonetheless. The theory on the social construction of target group populations by Schneider and Ingram states that society can be viewed as being made up of different target groups that are socially constructed by a number of influences amongst which politicians and media. They continue that the manner in which these groups are constructed has influence on the policies and their design that are relevant and available to those groups.

RESEARCH AIM

This research would like to put this theory to the test. The focus will lie not on the outcome, so the actual policies made, but will focus on the construction of target groups during the presidential debates and how we can better understand how target groups are given what place within our society. This theory is then important in explaining why some groups are more advantaged than others and how this is influenced by more factors than only the traditional notion of political power. These social constructions are then at the heart of a cycle in which social construction and policy design shape and reinforce one another.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question will be what guides this thesis, every decision made is based on the extent to which it helps answering this question. The research question is as follows:

How and in what manner are target group populations socially constructed and presented by Democratic and Republican candidates running for presidency during the televised presidential debates in the United States?

ACADEMIC AND SOCIETAL RELEVANCE

The academic relevance lies in empirically testing different theories concerning policy making within the specific context of the presidential election debates. While important criticisms of the theory have emerged, such as the lack of inclusion of institutions (Lieberman, 1995), or a clear causal driver guiding the construction of target populations (deLeon, 2005), Schneider and Ingram have personally responded to these criticisms (Ingram & Schneider, 1995; Schneider & Ingram, 2005a, 2005b). They have done so in a manner that persuades scholars to continue this research agenda. Whilst a number of expectations can be drawn from the theory Schneider and Ingram have put forward, the theory has also received its share of criticism. It has been criticized for not acknowledging the influence of institutions and not providing causal drivers guiding the social construction of target populations. Schneider and Ingram have replied to this by encouraging other researchers to fill in the gaps. In 2014 Pierce et al. conducted a review of past applications of the theory (XX pierce). Of the publications the majority (90.2%) were applications of the theory, with many focusing on a specific policy domain such as social welfare, health or criminal justice. Another 9.8% of publications were categorized as theory building (xx, pierce). This research proposes to do both, by applying the theory to a specific context rather than a policy domain the outcome will both speak to a certain application (social construction in the context of the presidential debates) as well as building upon the theory by including the role of institutions (the debates as part of mass media and party affiliation as part of the political system).

Applying this theory and testing it within a certain context can give us an idea of how this theory can not only be used to explain past and current phenomena on the social construction of target groups and relating them to policy design, but also how this theory could possibly be applied to predict how politicians are likely to speak of target groups in the future within the context of the debates as well as perhaps other election related media content. An understanding of social constructions of target populations augments conventional expectations about the dynamics of policy change, the determination of beneficiaries and losers, the reasons for differing levels and types of participation among target groups, and the role of policy in democracy. As such this research aims to contribute to and expand upon a body

of knowledge. Societally insight can be provided in how groups are constructed socially and what the influence there of is. Whilst this construction may be social, the consequences are not only social but also practical and very real.

STRUCTURE

The structure of this thesis will be as followed. Following this introductory chapter, the second chapter will continue by situating the research question within a theoretical framework as set out by Schneider and Ingram. This will include a more extensive review of their theory on the social construction of target group populations and the identification of variables from this theory and the expectations to be tested. The third chapter will focus on the methodology applied for this research. In this chapter 3 the research design will be presented, explained and justified and will furthermore include the operationalization of the variables involved through linking these variables to the theory. Chapter four will allow for the fleshing out of the context within which this research takes place, expanding on amongst others on the political system and parties of American politics and the history and set up of the debates. The following chapters will continue with the actual findings and the analysis thereof and the implications this brings along. Chapter five will be devoted to empirics where chapter six will use the empirics and link this to previously done research and the theoretical framework to provide an analysis of the finding. The final chapter, chapter seven, will be the concluding chapter with a conclusion as well as a highlight of the strengths and weaknesses of this research and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2 THEORY

In this chapter the two theories relevant to this research will be outlined. Starting with Schneider and Ingram's theory on the social construction of target populations, followed by the theoretical aspects of party politics in the United States.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF TARGET POPULATIONS AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR POLITICS AND POLICY

The starting point of this thesis will be the theory on target group populations by Schneider and Ingram. This theory was first set out in the article Social construction of target

populations: Implications for Politics and Policy published in the American Political Science Review in 1993 and later built upon in their seminal book Policy Design for Democracy published in 1997. In this text, which is then further explored in their book, the two academics set out that politicians, along with other societal factors such as culture, history and media, all partake in the construction of target groups. This social construction of target groups is then important for policy and policy design, shaping what policies will be made and how they apply to the different groups. As Schneider and Ingram state: 'The dynamic interaction of power and social constructions leads to a distinctive pattern in the allocation of benefits and burdens to the different types of target groups' (A. Schneider & Ingram, 1993, p. 337). Policy design therefore does not only reflect power relations. Rather, the social construction of knowledge, target groups and the institutions and context in which they find their beginnings are all embedded in policy design. The experiences that citizens have with public policy, including the messages they receive and how they interpret them all convey this embedded meaning (A. L. Schneider & Ingram, 1997, p. 5)

Certain groups will be more likely to be made eligible for beneficial policies whereas others are more likely to qualify for burdensome policies depending on the social construction of said group. Moreover, the messages and experiences citizens are exposed to influence how they view themselves in relation to politics. Certain groups will be empowered and enabled to pursue their interests within the political realm, others will believe they have no place to want and wish within the political system. The social construction of target groups is closely linked to democracy. Understanding the complex relationship between the social construction of target groups and policy gives insight the workings of a democratic system of governance.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Before moving on to the assertions made by Schneider and Ingram, it is important to first get some key definitions straight. Social construction plays a central role in Schneider and Ingram's theory. Target populations are constructed through a social process, the types of

target group constructions are assumed to have boundaries that are empirically verifiable, which are in part created by policies. According to Schneider and Ingram target populations exist within objective conditions even though those conditions are subject to multiple evaluations (A. Schneider & Ingram, 1993, p. 335). From this postpositivist perspective facts and phenomena which exist independently from subjective perception require the use of a framework of meaning, values and theory in order to interpret them (Neuman, 2014). As such, terms and definitions are open to interpretation. However, to have a solid theory to work with and test it is necessary to define some terms as possible.

Firstly, there is the matter of the social construction of target populations. This refers to a social recognition of shared characteristics that differentiate a target population as socially meaningful. This is done through a process where specific emotive oriented values, symbols and images are attributed to these defining characteristics (Schneider & Ingram, 1993, p. 335). In other words, social construction is a social process of the creation of stereotypes of a group that have been established through social processes of socialization with the help of politics, culture, history, literature, religion, the media and so on.

On the basis of this social construction, Schneider and Ingram identify four categories in to which target populations can be sorted. These groups are qualified on the basis of two axis, on the one hand there is the valent constructions allocated to them and one the other their perceived power. On the basis of these two axis groups can either be constructed positively or negatively and they can enjoy a position of strong or weak power. The four groups are as followed; there are the advantaged, who hold a strong power position and are constructed positively; the contenders, who hold a strong power position but are constructed negatively; there are the dependents, who have a weak power position but are constructed positively and finally there are the deviants who have both a weak power position and are constructed negatively (Schneider & Ingram, 1993, p. 335-36). This is also displayed in the table below taken

FIGURE 1
Social Constructions and Political Power: Types of Target Populations

		Constructions	
		Positive	Negative
Power	Strong	Advantaged The elderly Business Veterans Scientists	Contenders The rich Big unions Minorities Cultural elites Moral majority
	Weak	Dependents Children Mothers Disabled	Deviants Criminals Drug addicts Communists Flag burners Gangs

from Schneider and Ingram, which further clarifies the four target groups and also provides examples of each of these groups.

The authors continue by explaining how politicians are likely to speak of these groups and what assumptions they have for the groups that are targeted in different manners. This includes how each group is perceived with regards to power and valence, but also how benefits and burdens are subscribed to each group and whether these are likely to be over- or undersubscribed. The matter of each groups

control and access to the legislative agenda is also addressed, including the measure of influence target groups have over influencing their own social construction within society. The type of policy tools and the design applied to realize the benefits and burdens is covered along with the types of rationale likely to be used to justify policy choices and design (Schneider & Ingram, 1993, p. 335).

ADVANTAGED

First of there is the advantaged group, this is the group that is best off in society; as it perceived as both powerful as well as attributed a positive image. Examples of this group included by Schneider and Ingram are the elderly, veterans, scientists, and businesses. When it comes to benefits and burdens, it is likely that benefits will be oversubscribed whereas burdens will be undersubscribed. The benefits received by this group will not coincide with what would be required in terms of policy effectiveness or representativeness, and the same goes for burdens (Schneider & Ingram, 1993).

The advantaged enjoy a powerful position in society. This is in part due to the control and access that they have pertaining to the legislative agenda, enabled by their resources and the capacity they have in shaping their own social construction and in combating possible attempts at negative construction. This means that for politicians it is the easiest when

resolving public problems to do this in the form of giving benefits to the advantaged, even when this is not effective and when benefits giving to another group would be more effective or more warranted. For example, if the government is dealing with an unemployment problem, it could want to create jobs to solve this problem. It could do this in a matter of way, money could be invested in large businesses, so that they can expand their services and goods and, in that way, create new jobs. Another option would be to allocate funds to community projects that could invest the money in infrastructure, creating jobs and improving local infrastructure along the way. Either solution would contribute to solving issues of unemployment, however the manner in which they do so differs significantly. The businesses, acting as the advantaged target group in this situation, would benefit from this first policy option. Whilst this may contribute to solving the issue of unemployment, spending this money on local community projects may be more effective as its results would be more widespread to a larger section of the population rather than within the business itself. Moreover, this policy design will guarantee that the money is directed towards the group that is most likely to be hurt hardest when society is dealing with unemployment issues, such as groups that belong to the dependent or deviant social construction. And lastly, the side effects will be that for the first option businesses will benefit, whilst the public at large will benefit from improved infrastructure. This is imperative of the link between the influence of the social construction of target group populations and the working of a democracy. Whilst one policy design might be better suited to a certain problem, depending on the groups involved and their perception and image, another policy design might be chosen. Burdens on the other hand, are likely to be undersubscribed for the advantaged. Especially sanctions and force will most likely not be used in connection with powerful and positively viewed groups. If, in exceptional cases, burdens are subscribed to advantaged, these burdens will be packaged as benefits. The advantaged group will then be told that everybody will be burdened, however they are supposedly not being made worse of in comparison to other groups.

Likewise, policy tools to subscribe benefits will focus on capacity building inducement and techniques that enable the target population to learn to anticipate the results of its own behavior and take appropriate action on a voluntary basis. Furthermore, benefits are likely to

be rationalized as being linked to the achievement of important public purposes and goods rather than being applicable to any specific target group.

On the basis of this theory, the following expectation has been devised:

Advantaged target groups will be mentioned less frequently than the contenders, dependents and deviants with many benefits packaged as beneficial to the general public and few burdens packaged as benefits.

CONTENDERS

The second group identified by Schneider and Ingram is the group of contenders. These enjoy a high perceived position of power, but they are constructed negatively and are often associated with an image of the underserving. Examples of contenders are moral majorities or cultural elites or other minorities but also groups such as the rich and big unions. In other words, these groups can be perceived as being a threat in one way or another to the advantaged (Schneider & Ingram, 1993).

Though this group will receive both benefits and burdens, the way these will be subscribed differs greatly from how this is done for the advantaged group. Whilst they too will be subject to beneficial policy, these benefits will be subscribed sub rosa; in other words, confidentially and secretly. Politicians will prefer for benefits subscribed to contenders to be noticed only by members of the target group in question and to remain largely hidden from the general public. On the other hand, burdens will be made symbolic and overt. Thus, it is likely that policy directed towards this group will be especially vague and complex, making it difficult to discern who is benefiting and who is being burdened by the policy. To this end, context is of particular importance.

Furthermore, the policy characteristics for contending groups is much more dependent on other factors such as the extent to which the group is brought to the attention of the media and public attention, the variation in cohesiveness of the group and how active the target group is. These factors make clear how much of a threat any contending group forms towards advanced goals. The more cohesive a contending group is and the more active they are, the more likely a shift will be towards more burdensome policies. During times of low public

attention, policy will tend to be beneficial, although relatively low in visibility and still undersubscribed. When public attention increases, which will likely occur when an unpopular group is cohesive and active, the policy will shift towards burdensome. In short more cohesiveness and activity will mean a bigger threat to the advantaged and thus more burdensome policies whereas less cohesion and activity will mean a lesser threat posed towards the advantaged and thus more beneficial policy, although still relatively low in visibility and undersubscribed in terms of what might be necessary. Thus, contenders have sufficient control to blunt the imposition of burdens, but they do not have sufficient control to continue on to attracting benefits.

Furthermore, the design and execution of policy aimed at contenders has its own characteristics. In design, as mentioned earlier, it is likely that these policies will be quite vague. When it comes to execution, the discretion and responsibility will often be passed on to lower level politics, handed over to lower-level agencies and governments. The messages with which this is done are also telling. Often burdens will be more symbolic rather than actually burdening contenders, when burdens are real, the message will be that they did not have enough power to impose the policy or that errors were made in their strategies. They will often be told that a policy was inevitable once the public became aware of their privileged and powerful position.

When it is benefits the contending groups are receiving, the rationales will understate the magnitude of gains. This is not difficult for politicians to achieve, as gains are often cloaked as procedures that enable the group to have privileged access to lower-level agencies or governments where the elected officials themselves will not be held accountable for the groups' gains.

On the basis of this theory, the following expectation has been devised:

Presidential candidates will prefer to avoid discussing contending target groups, but when they do speak of them it will be in a vague and ambiguous manner.

DEPENDENTS

The third group identified by Schneider and Ingram can be qualified as the dependents. This is a group which is positively construction but does not enjoy a position of power. Examples of social groups which can be classified as dependents are children, single mothers or

the elderly. This is the second of the two social construction groups in which this inconsistency between social construction and position of power occurs. This leads to an altogether different positioning within society and a different set of policy implications and consequences.

When it comes to the division of beneficial and burdensome policies, it is likely that benefits will not be done upon dependents sufficiently, whereas burdens will be oversubscribed. As this group is positively constructed, officials will want to appear as if their interests are aligned with their interests, however the group's lack of power will make it difficult for officials to direct resources towards them. Therefore it is more likely that beneficial policies will be symbolic in nature rather than being heavily funded, this allows for politicians to show great concern without having to – so to speak – put their money where their mouth is. When beneficial policies are designed for dependents, it is likely that these policies will be shifted to lower levels of government or the private sector. Similar to contenders, this shift to lower levels of government is not without consequence; pertaining mostly to the level of transparency and to the message sent to this socially constructed group. The move from high level politics to low level politics means that procedures are likely to be less familiar to citizens, and for procedures to be lengthy and involve many different agencies and actors. Therefore, the level of transparency will decrease. The result is that dependents have little control over the design of policies applicable to them.

This is further reinforced through the messages the policy designs send dependents. The message is that dependents are powerless, helpless and needy. The problems they face are their own, but they are not capable of tackling and solving them on their own. Thus, whilst their problems are not of public concern, they are dependent on the general public to resolve them only receiving attention through the generosity of others. As Schneider and Ingram state 'to be forced to depend upon a safety net means one is not much of a player' they continue that the tools and rationales applied by policy imply that 'government is responsive to them only when they subject themselves to government and relinquish power over their own choices. Even when beneficial policy is provided, it is accompanied by labeling and stigma' (Schneider and Ingram, 1997). For example, where beneficial policies direct towards the advantaged will seek out those that are eligible whereas beneficial policy directed towards dependents will not seek

out its subjects but have them seek out it. They will need to provide information on their income, proving that they are needy enough to receive benefits.

The message that dependents do not contribute is clear, as such this leads them to view themselves as not legitimate or effective in the public arena, this in part explains their passive style of participation. Dependents often do not mobilize in the political arena or object to the distribution of benefits and burdens as set out by the status quo as they themselves have been stigmatized and labeled by the policy process itself. In sum, dependents have little control over the design of their policies and messages to this group through these policies reinforce their difficult predicament.

On the basis of this theory, the following expectation has been devised:

When presidential candidates speak of dependents, policy proposals put forward will be symbolic rather than concrete.

DEVIANTS

The final group identified by Schneider and Ingram are the deviants. This group draws the short straw on both ends, as they are both constructed negatively and weak in terms of the power they are perceived of holding. Examples of this group are criminals, drug addicts, communists, flag burners and gangs. In the distribution of benefits and burdens the deviants can be placed polar opposite to the advantaged. The deviants are most likely to receive too little beneficial policy, and burdens will be very oversubscribed. The difference here being that benefits and burdens will be over and undersubscribed to an extreme extent, more so than for any of the other groups (Schneider & Ingram, 1993). Where it is easiest for public officials to write beneficial policies on behalf of the advantaged, it is easiest for public officials to inflict punishment on deviants. This is in part due to the lack of power this group has, but also because the general public is likely to approve of punishment for a group that is constructed negatively and has no power. It is therefore likely for these policies to be high on the legislative agenda, especially in times of elections, as they are likely to rally support from many possible voters.

Moreover, the methods and tools for burdensome, and in rare cases benefits, take a very different form in comparison to the policy designed for the other target groups. It is therefore likely that burdensome policies will not only be numerous, but that the extent to which they will be burdensome will not be in line with what is necessary to have the desired effect. They will be excessively burdensome. In essence, these policies will therefore be ineffective. Faced with issues of political relevance, politicians can choose to tackle these issues either through use of sticks or carrots. To tackle an issue, sometimes the stick method will be more effective in solving the issue, whereas in other cases carrots will be a more effective tool. For the deviants, it is likely that the sticks method will be the only method applied. Even when carrots would be more effective and less costly, punitive policies are likely to be the policy design chosen.

Deviants are not considered to be a part of the functioning of the system and therefore they have very little to no control over the policy agenda or design. As such, the type of policy tool applied to deviants also differs from those used on behalf of the advantaged, contenders and dependents. Most policies will be burdensome and the tools, the sticks, are likely to be more coercive in nature and often involve sanctions. As Schneider and Ingram put it: "At worst they will be incarcerated or executed, at best they will be left free but denied information, discouraged from organizing and subjected to the authority of others – including experts – rather than helped to form their own self-regulatory organizations." (Ingram & Schneider, 2016. p.339). In the rare case that the carrot is chosen over the stick, the form of beneficial policy is likely to be more paternalistic in nature. As the message to dependents is that they do not count, and that their problems are their own responsibility and their own to deal with, it is very unlikely that deviants will become involved in politics, therefore maintaining their position in society.

On the basis of this theory, the following expectation has been devised:

Deviants will be mentioned frequently, but only in the context of burdens.

The theorizing done by Schneider and Ingram focusses on target groups; how they are constructed and how the construction of these groups influences the lives of individuals belonging to this group in and outside of the political realm. Schneider and Ingram mention various factors which can influence whether a group is thought to be positive or negative and whether this group is thought to be powerful or not ranging from media to politicians and from culture to history. They theorize what the implications of the social construction of target group populations are on the workings of a democracy. The workings of a democracy are very much dependent on the institutions in place. In many democracies, political parties form the link between citizens and government and as such are vital to the functioning of democracy (A. L. Schneider & Ingram, 1997). While Schneider and Ingram mention politicians as one of the influences on social construction, they do not go into the way in which politicians, or any of the other factors, influence this process and what trends can be observed. When discussing politics and politicians within the context of a democracy, it is almost always necessary to discuss the role of political parties. How parties function, which parties there are and what ideas they stand for differs from country to country and from political system to political system.

The system of the United States can most easily be classified as two-party system, although this is not dictated by its constitution. While there have been others, the two parties that have stood the test of time are the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. When discussing the role of party politics on the workings of a democracy the following questions are raised; how does party affiliation influence politicians in their construction and representation of target groups? Or in the case of the United States; how do the democrats and republicans differ in how they speak of and approach different target groups? To broaden our understanding of Schneider and Ingram's theory and to extend its application, I will attempt to bring into picture the trends that can be observed for each of these two parties with regards to the social construction of target groups.

To this end, it is necessary to take a closer look at party politics in the United States. There is much to be said on the American political system and the role of parties in American politics. They offer different issue positions, on economic policy, on foreign policy, on social policy. They represent different interests, classes, regions and different ethnic and racial groups. This section

will focus on the role of political parties, but also what the parties stand for and which general ideas and which groups of people the parties are associated with. I will start by shortly describing the importance and role of political parties, continue by distinguishing the democratic views from those of the republicans and what (general) positions they are likely to take in specific policy realms. These general characteristics will provide the basis of another set of expectations, which will offer an expected pattern for democratic and republican presidential candidates for each of the target group constructions. More information on the American political party will be discussed in chapter four.

THE ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN AMERICAN POLITICS

A political party is an organized group which aims to nominate candidates to gain political power through elections whilst promoting ideas about public policy (Hershey, 2015). Parties form the link between society and its voter to government, forming the corner stone of democracy. Political parties are goal oriented and the goal of gaining political power lies in the hands of the voters. As Hershey states: "Political parties are at the core of American democracy and make it what it is today" (Hershey, 2015 p.XVI). However, most people are not very interested in politics (Hershey, 2015). This is something many democracies, including the United States, experience. It is for this reason that parties are vital to the proper functioning of a democracy.

Hershey states clearly: "Parties help people make sense of the complexities of politics. Parties simplify issues and elections for us; thus, people can make sensible choices in politics even when they don't have a lot of political information, by using their party attachment as a guide for evaluating candidates and issues" (Hershey, 2015, p. 10). Parties do this by enduring and serving as political symbols. The major American parties have histories spanning over more than 150 years. This longevity adds to their value for voters, providing continuity and a reference point from election to election and regardless of candidate. Furthermore, political parties operate as symbols, or emotion-laden objects of loyalty. The party label is a social identity, like that of an ethnic or religious group. And as such parties form the starting point for formulating or expressing decisions about candidates or issues. It follows that strong party organizations bring voters to the polls.

CANDIDATES AND APPEALING TO THE ELECTORATE AND THE INDEPENDENT VOTER

The choice of the candidate that will represent the party is crucial, he or she is the one who has the immense task of speaking to the masses and mobilizing the people. A candidate has the task of appealing to the electorate, but also to individuals who identify as independent. The electorate is made up of citizens who see themselves as Democrats or Republicans and feel some degree of loyalty to the party, also known as party identifiers. They are likely to support candidates brought forward by their party and the stands taken on issues. Party identifiers are vitally important as they form the base of support for the party they identify with. Without this reliable base, the party would have to work much harder to win and keep power. It is important to recognize that the electorate is more than a collection of individuals. Rather it is a coalition of social groups. Our image of a party includes not only the ideas but also the social groups a party is associated with. The relationship between social groups and parties is not fixed, but rather it is susceptible to change over time. It is likely that once a group is linked to a party, the stands of this group are likely to be reflected by the party (Hershey, 2015).

WHAT DO THE PARTIES STAND FOR?

To win the elections and gain political power, a party must not only appeal to its electorate. It must extend its popularity beyond this group and mobilize the masses. As such it is important for a party to represent a wide range of issues pertaining to various groups. It is therefore likely that parties will focus on issues that bind various groups and will downplay those issues that are contingent. At the same time, American politics has become more and more polarized over the previous decades (Bennett, 2012; Hershey, 2015; Lineberry & Edwards, G. C. Wattenberg, 1986). This has resulted in more agreement within the party and starker differences between the parties (Hershey, 2015). Although the parties both value typical American values such as freedom and recognize the importance of national security, how to achieve this is something the parties do not agree on.

American parties have tended to be pragmatic, focusing on concrete problems and their solutions rather than being ideological. For example, Democrats are likely to tackle issues through

government funded programs, whereas republicans are likely to give tax cuts to the wealthy with the idea of providing money to those who in turn can provide the population with more jobs. The parties also each have different social groups that they are often linked with. Republicans are usually linked with business and conservatives, and Democrats are often seen as the party of labor and the disadvantaged. The Democratic Party and the Republican party both have long history (Hershey, 2015). They each have their own distinct traditions, values, and following. In order to map what the parties stand for I will discuss each of these aspects.

THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

The Democratic Party traces its roots back to 1832. It was the first party that appealed to a broad base. It found its following in the less-privileged voters, fighting for the wants and woes of the worker and opposing those policies benefiting businesses such as high tariffs and other banking policies. It was a party of small farmers, workers, and less-privileged citizens and southern planters; a party that sought to include new immigrants but also opposed those who held anti-immigrant sentiment. The party, its constituency and the ideals it stands for have developed over the years, however its history is reflected even today.

Today the core of party is made up of liberals, minorities and labor unions and individuals from the lower- and middle-income group. Topographically, the support for the Democratic Party is stronger in the Northeast and along the West Coast. With regards to age, the parties following can be found in every age group. It has an advantage with the younger generation between the ages of 18 to 24 but loses those over the age of 50 to the Republicans. Oddly enough democratic support is strongest both amongst the least educated and simultaneously amongst those who hold a post graduate degree, the most highly educated group. Highly educated individuals also typically earn more. This too shows that the electorate of a party is not fixed but fluid, for historically speaking, upper-income individuals were generally supporter of the Republican Party rather than the Democratic Party. The higher educated and thus higher earning individuals are no longer as distinctively republican as they once were. A reason for this could be that the makeup of this group has evolved over the years.

This group, for example, now contains more people working in the education or health sector, who are invested in the environment and value women's rights.

Nonetheless despite a changing electorate, the Democrat Party is still generally perceived as the party of labor and the disadvantaged. As discussed earlier, the electorate is often reflected in the values the party upholds. Inequality is therefore one of the issues highest on the democratic agenda. From this party's perspective, much inequality stems from a lack of regulation in the marketplace. Government is viewed as a means of addressing societal inequalities. Therefore, democrats place an emphasize on government as an actor in tackling political issues over privatization. Social services and government programs are a means of reducing this inequality. As such, tax cuts limit the government in its means of providing such programs. Tax cuts should therefore only be aimed at helping those in need of help, versus providing benefits to those who are already well off. In short, democrats view the role of government as providing a safety net for those who need it. This strive for equality is mirrored in many different realms of policy, for example health care or education, where the party stresses the need to invest in public schools, with the goal of creating equal opportunities for children regardless of the family they grew up in. Democrats often times draw their candidates from these realms, such as teachers and trial lawyers. The party not only emphasizes education and health care, but also focuses on the environment and abortion and other topics which have over time become topics of interest to the party and it constituency (Hershey, 2015).

THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

The Republicans party as we have come to know it today came to be during the Civil War in 1854. The party was formed to oppose slavery whilst also adopting ideals of its forerunner, the Whigs. The Whigs were strongly involved with protecting American business and the industrial expansion of the time. Where liberals are mostly Democratic, conservatives and conservative Christians are by and large Republican. Many republican supporters live in the South and Mid-West of the United States, living in rural and suburban areas. Small business owners and wealthy individuals are also likely to lean towards the Republican Party.

The importance of protecting American businesses is an ideal which holds strong for the Republican Party to this day; business is the road individuals should take towards the American dream of freedom and economic independence. This is no wonder with many of its followers finding their occupation in business. From a Republican perspective, government is perceived as the opposition, as its regulations are viewed as interfering with the workings of a free market and its programs limit the freedom of the people by taking away from their rights and taking away their property. Washington and the governing elite as such overstep the boundaries of what it is that government should concern itself and prevent individuals from building up their own wealth.

Republicans therefore plead for lower taxes. Lowering taxes depletes government funds, restricting its ability to fund its programs. These tax cuts should be directed so as to benefit those who are well-off; as cutting their taxes helps well-off individuals to expand their business. Expanding the businesses creates more jobs and more wealth in the process thereby leaving government programs obsolete. Thus, where democrats favor governmental over private solutions, republicans favor private solutions over governmental solutions. Leaving labor regulations to businesses, rather than to the labor unions. But also giving autonomy to state and local governance over nationally and internationally imposed policies. With a clear religious following, Christian values and principles are reflected in the party's stands on issues. Furthermore, Republicans have traditionally focused on a strong national defense attained by a powerful military. In short, for republicans, the purpose of government is to promote economic achievement on an individual level, even at the cost of economic inequality (Hershey, 2015).

EXPECTATIONS

Based on Schneider and Ingram's theory on the social construction of target group populations, a set of expectations have been formulated stating how frequently each of the groups will be mentioned but also what type of policy is likely to be directed towards the group in question. I have done the same thing for each of the groups, contrasting how democrats and republicans are likely to discuss advantaged, contenders, dependents and deviants but also the form their policy is likely to take on. The theory above does not explicitly discuss how Democrats

and Republicans discuss the types of social construction groups, rather the expectations are based on the manner in which Democrats and Republicans deal with political issues.

Advantaged:

Democrats make use of tax-funded programs in order to reduce inequality. In order to fund these programs, the higher income segments of society (these can be both advantaged and contenders) will be taxed. These taxes are perceived as a burdensome policy. Republicans will reduce taxes to allow for growth in business and limits the government's interference. These tax cuts are perceived as beneficial policy.

On the basis of this theory, the following expectation has been devised:

Democrats will propagate burdensome policies for advantaged to advance dependents, whereas Republicans will propagate beneficial policies for advantaged for the benefit of both advantaged and others.

Contenders:

Democrats focus on inequality, which stems from a lack of marketplace regulation. Those who benefit from this lack of regulation partake in reinforcing and increasing this inequality within society, and as such are likely to be considered a contender by democrat. Republicans focus on building wealth by promoting a free market and diminishing government regulations. Republicans are therefore likely to view government as a contender and view those that Democrats view as contenders as advantaged.

On the basis of this theory, the following expectation has been devised:

Democrats are likely to view a larger group as contenders, as its focus lies on the dependents, whereas republicans will view less groups as contenders.

Dependents:

Democrats focus on inequality and then especially on the less-privileged. It is therefore likely that democrats are likely to emphasize dependents and propagate beneficial policies for this target group. Republicans have a different approach, with a focus on the advantaged. They are therefore likely to discuss dependents according to the expectations of Schneider and Ingram.

On the basis of this theory, the following expectation has been devised:

Democrats are likely to emphasize dependents and propagate beneficial policies for these groups, whereas republicans will speak of dependents in the more expected manner including symbolic beneficial policies.

Deviants:

On the basis of the information provided above, defining expectations for deviants is not clear. The expectation below focusses on the method in which the party's candidates will deal with deviants. This is based on a larger trend as to how the party in general deals with issues or groups as opposed to their core beliefs. Democrats are known for focusing on negotiations and conversations, this is exemplified by their focus on diminishing inequality by building the strengths of the less well-off. Republicans are known for propagating hard burdens and sanctions, this is exemplified by their stance on national defense.

On the basis of this theory, the following expectation has been devised:

When democrats propagate burdens for deviants, the burdens will take the form of negotiations and conversation whereas republicans will propagate hard burdens in the form of sanctions and force.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I will explain and justify the method chosen to answer the research question driving this research. The aim here is to connect the theory to the data; building a bridge connecting the theoretical discussion and the questions it poses to the data at hand and what it says about these theoretical and social phenomena. The starting point for choosing a method and constructing a research design lies in the methodological outlook, both the methodological perspective of the theorists, Schneider and Ingram, and that of the researcher at hand, myself. The methodological approach forms the starting point from which each decision in the process of designing the research setup. A qualitative method of analysis was chosen, as this is in line with the methodological approach that has been taken. A qualitative method requires a clear and structured research design. In this chapter I will go through this process step by step. I will describe the method used and the process that led me to this decision and the design of this study. This will be followed by a description of the data set and

the data selection process that was used. I will proceed by identifying the theoretical concepts from the theory and simplifying this by translating them to a set of clearly demarcated variables. This will allow me to operationalize the theory and allow me to measure and observe how the theory applies and translates to practice. I will put forward what is meaningful in the process of answering the research question and how this was identified in the data to empirically approach the research question.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology refers to the paradigm or philosophy underlying research. It connects our ideas of the fundamental nature of reality – our ontology – to our ideas of how we know what is around us; what is true or false and how we can come about these truths – our epistemology. As Neuman puts it: “How we can learn about or know the world is rooted in our ontological assumptions. Epistemology includes what we need to do to produce knowledge and what scientific knowledge looks like once we have produced it.” (Neuman, 2014. p.95) There are three main approaches to methodology. These approaches provide answers to questions such as what is the fundamental nature of social reality? What is the basic nature of human beings? But also, what constitutes an explanation or theory of social reality and how we can determine whether an explanation is true or false? These three approaches can thus help guiding us in how we see knowledge, what there is to know and how we can come to know it, something essential to any research. Often the methodological approach is not made explicit in research, however these three approaches also each have their own view on the role of the researcher within his or her research and the role sociopolitical values play in scientific matters. Therefore, I find it important to make the implicit explicit, more so due to the subjective nature of the topic at hand.

The three approaches are the positivist, interpretative and critical or postpositive approach. The *positivist approach* aims to mirror scientific method. It views the purpose of social science to discover laws, which explain causal relations between phenomena. Scientific knowledge is seen as superior to other forms of knowledge and as such knowledge should be objective and free of value. Truth is found in that which provides clear evidence and that which

cannot be falsified by logical contradictions. *Interpretative* social science has a very different underlying philosophy, it follows a constructivist view that reality is socially created. Reality is created through the interactions of people, who create and reinforce shared meaning. It sees different kinds of knowledges but does not add value to one form of knowledge over another. The evidence brought to light by this approach is contingent and context specific. The final approach is the *critical approach*, also called the post positivist approach. It shares many assumptions of positivism but finds a different purpose for social science and adopts a more nuanced approach. In this approach, there is an objective reality, but this reality is not fixed but evolving and shaped by cultural, political and social forces. People are constrained by, but not locked in, their social reality. The purpose of social science to empower people by revealing societal reality and liberating them from its confines. When it comes to evidence, the critical approach resides somewhere between the other two approaches. Whilst facts concerning the state of things exist independently from subjective perception, these facts are not free of theory. To interpret these facts, individuals make use of a framework of meaning, values and theory, in which they make sense of them (Neuman, 2014).

Each of these approaches to social science finds its foundations in a set of philosophical assumptions, and as such each has a stance on what constitutes the best research, both in terms of which methods can be used to discuss social reality and what evidence is meaningful in this quest. Each of these approaches is general, and not everyone adheres to them exactly as they are set out by Neuman. When discussing target populations Schneider and Ingram say that target group exist within objective conditions, they have boundaries which can be verified empirically. However, those conditions are open to multiple interpretations and evaluations. This perception of the social world is in line with the critical approach. As the social construction of target groups is something which is quite contextual, I find it best to study this phenomena from a lens which is attuned to the contextual nature of reality. Qualitative research focusses not only on the what, when and where of an issue, but the how and the why. "One of the important issues for analysis is to understand how social constructions emerge from objective conditions and how each changes." Schneider and Ingram state (1993, p. 335). I believe a qualitative method will allow me to do just this.

DATA SELECTION

The election period in the United States is a period which is always thoroughly covered by the media. There are plenty of articles and books, headlines and interviews which could serve as data to investigate how target group populations are represented by democratic and republican presidential candidates. Similarly, campaign materials, protests and rallies, even songs and television shows could be utilized to this end. However, this thesis has a clearly demarcated data set; the televised presidential debates. These debates have been organized by the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD) since 1987, but were first introduced to the public in 1960 and have been a reoccurring aspect of the elections since 1976. Ever since this time, each election year has seen the hosting of two to four debates which were broadcasted on television. The debates were selected as data for a multitude of reasons. Firstly, the debate conveys direct dialogue between the republican and democratic candidates. It is not a speech which has been written and rehearsed with the help of a team nor is it news which has been relayed and framed by others. Instead the dialogue is straight from the source. Furthermore, the debate setting and questions posed are likely to create a situation in which the candidates will find themselves disagreeing on a thing or two about society, politics and policy. This disagreement will give the candidates reason to take a clear stance on issues and voice a more outspoken opinion and making it very suitable to this research. Also, the viewership of the presidential debates is significantly greater than any other political programming (Benoit, Hansen, & Verser, 2003; Geer, 1988), giving weight to the importance thereof. Between 1988 and 2012 the debates drew audiences of anywhere from 30 to 70 million viewers. Research indicates that the debates are consistently perceived to be either somewhat or very helpful by some 70 percent of the public. Lastly, exit poll data reveals voters citing the debate as more influential than any other single factor in considering how to cast their vote (Benoit et al., 2003; Geer, 1988)

In total, there are 12 election years in which these debates have taken place, with a total of 33 presidential debates that have been publicly televised. For this research and the time constraints under which it functions, a selection was made in the data. One debate for

every presidential campaign was randomly selected. The method for this selection was a simple rolling of the dice. Depending on the number of debates held in that specific election cycle, each number on the dice was assigned to one of the debates. The debates that have been selected for the analysis can be found in the table below.

Year	Number	Broadcasted from	Transcription source
1960	Third	New York and Los Angeles	(Peters & Woolley, 1960)
1976	Final	Williamsburg, Virginia	(Peters & Woolley, 1976)
1980	First	Baltimore (Reagan-Anderson)	(Peters & Woolley, 1980)
1984	First	Louisville, Kentucky	(Peters & Woolley, 1984)
1988	Final	Los Angeles, California	(Peters & Woolley, 1988)
1992	Second	Richmond, Virginia	(Peters & Woolley, 1992)
1996	Final	San Diego, California	(Peters & Woolley, 1996)
2000	Final	St. Louis, Missouri	(Peters & Woolley, 2000)
2004	Final	Coral Gables, Florida	(Peters & Woolley, 2004)
2008	Final	Hempstead, New York	(Peters & Woolley, 2008)
2012	First	Denver, Colorado	(Peters & Woolley, 2012)
2016	Final	Las Vegas, Nevada	(Peters & Woolley, 2016)

*Only those debates in which both a republican and democratic candidate partook were taken into account

** When a third-party candidate partook in the debate, the debate was taken into account, but the other candidate's spoken word was not coded.

RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

The selection of the research method and design for this research was parallel to the selection of the data, in this case the data are the televised presidential election debates. The method of analysis for this research is two-fold, a process of coding followed by a process of analysis. Firstly, the data is analyzed through the process of coding. A code is a word or phrase used to capture and encompass the essence of a segment of text (Saldana, 2013). Coding is a process through which data is divided, regrouped and organized as to make its meaning salient.

The use of codes therefore allows the researcher to more easily observe patterns and trends in the data and to thereby link them to the theory (Grbich, 2012). Once the process of coding has been completed the data will have been divided, regrouped and reorganized. The next step is to analyze the results of the process of coding. At this point I will consider the trends and patterns, which will be laid out in the chapter on empirics. This will then allow me to delve into the analysis, linking the pattern and trends to the theory.

THE PROCESS OF CODING

The process of coding starts with the data in mind and how the data can be used to answer the research question. For that purpose, it is necessary to look at research question and to clarify the variables involved. The research question is as follows: *How and in what manner are target group populations socially constructed and presented by Democratic and Republican candidates running for presidency during the televised presidential debates in the United States?*

In order to answer this all-encompassing question, the different elements of the question were identified. There is the element of the target group populations, how they are constructed and represented and what type of policy has been proposed in relation to what group. An overarching aspect is the aspect of political affiliation. To answer this question, I would ask myself a set of question while coding:

1. Who is talking?
2. Who is the target group?
3. How is the target group constructed and represented?
4. What policy realm does the discussion pertain to?
5. What is the nature of the proposed policy in relation to the target group?

These questions in turn provide answers for the variables used to deconstruct the construction and representation of target groups by members of the two political parties.

When coding, it is important to start by distinguishing what has been coded and at what level. The level of coding is the unit of analysis; the smallest unit or segment of text from the data which is analyzed. A case is a unit of analysis that meets the set of coding prerequisites set

by the researcher and is coded. When a Politician from the republican or democratic party discusses a target group in relation to a policy proposal or a target group alone, this is considered a case. A unit of analysis is a segment of speech in which either of these conditions were met. Units of analysis therefore vary in length, in most cases a case would consist of one to multiple sentences. When the speaker moves from one policy proposal to the next while the target group population remains the same, the following proposal is considered part of the next case.

The coding of the texts was all done by one person. No specific training was done prior to coding. I have made use of many academic sources as well as academic guidance to guide me through this process (Weiss, 1995). I have made use of a combination of existing codes books and designing my own codebook to cater to the specific needs of this research. There are various tools and methods that a researcher can use to aid him or her in the process of coding. Coding can be done manually, through printing the date and assigning corresponding codes in the margins. Others may choose to code digitally, making use of Computer Assisted Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). I choose the latter and made use of Atlas.ti, a program designed specifically for qualitative research. Atlas.ti is a workbench that offers tools to systematically analyze large bodies of textual, graphical, audio and video data. It is not a program that does the analytical work for you, rather it is a program which aims to allow you to analyze the data optimally. The various functions that were used will be mentioned as they become relevant.

OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE VARIABLES

The variables have been identified from the theory explained in the previous section, this section explains how these variables have been identified in the data, or how the variables have been operationalized. The process of operationalization entails explaining what is considered evidence and why. The way in which this was done varied from variable to variable. Qualitative research does not make use of a strict notion of operationalization as is common with quantitative research, nonetheless it remains important to explain each aspect of the research design in such a way that the research remains replicable to other researchers.

In the process of coding, both a code and a coding category are assigned to a case. A code signifies the essence of a segment of a text, it can be used to see what the case concerns. A category indicates the value present in the case. Coding categories should follow directly from the research goals, the five questions described before are the tools which will allow me to answer the research question at hand. They form the building blocks for this research. As such, each of these five questions is linked to one of five variables. I will provide a definition of each variable, explaining the origins of the variable and what the meaning is within the context of this research. I will provide values for the variable or in other words the available categories in which the variable can be divided. Finally, I will provide indicators that will enable me to identify which value is present in the data. An overview of this information can be seen in the table below. A list of the codes with corresponding categories can be found in the appendix (XX)

Variable	Definition	Values	Indicators
Political color	The political party a candidate is affiliated with and running for	Democrat Republican	Who is speaking and what party do they identify with
Social construction of Target group population	shared characteristics distinguishing a group as socially meaningful	Advantaged Contenders Dependents Deviants	Which group is being spoken about and within that context are they portrayed as positive or negative and powerful or weak
Target population (verbatim)	Those groups which are being discussed as named by politicians	Mothers, taxpayers, criminals, young people etc.	As indicated by speaker
Nature of policy proposed	Whether policy proposed is beneficial or burdensome to target group	Beneficial Burdensome No policy proposed	Whether policy proposed is beneficial or burdensome to target group
Policy realm	To which realm of policy does it belong	Migration Education Healthcare Foreign policy Etc.	What policy area is discussed.

POLITICAL COLOR

Political color refers to the political party the speak is associated with and running for. The political color of the candidate is expected to be reflected in the way in which the politician addresses target groups, the policy realms they focus on and the policies they propose and for

who. The values for this variable are straight forward as there are only two major parties in the United States and only the spoken word of candidates of these two parties was coded. The values therefore are democratic, coinciding with the Democrat Party or republican for the Republican Party. The political color of the speaker is easily identified as the speaker is associated with and running for either of these two political parties. They are also introduced at the start of each debate as the candidate of a political party.

TARGET GROUP

A target group is a group of people that a policy or campaign hopes to influence through political channels. It is thus a group which is the target of something, in this case of a policy. What constitutes a group is and who belongs to that group is up to the speaker. Generally, a group is a set of people who have the same interests or aim and are organized to work together towards their goals. Alternatively, a group is a collection of people who are together in the same place at the time. A group is thus always a collection of individuals that share one or more things, be it the interests they have or the time and place in which they reside. In this case these shared characteristics distinguishing a group as socially meaningful.

It may seem that identifying a group from the text is straightforward matter. Nonetheless, I did encounter an issue concerning groups and what to include in this code. Single mothers or retirees, for example, are groups of individuals which clearly qualify to be classified as a group. It becomes more difficult when the discussion includes institutions, companies or even countries. China, the government and insurances companies, for example have all been recognized as groups and coded accordingly. Furthermore, the term group has been included in the largest sense, from a single person to a generation. In the end a person or group of persons in any form were included when they functioned as target group for policy or if the speaker engaged in actively socially constructing this group.

The focus of this research is the social construction of target group populations, nevertheless it is interesting to see who belongs to which of the four social constructions according to politicians of various political affiliation. Thus, whilst the other variables were all coded from the theory to text, this variable was coded from the text to be applied to the

theory. As such it was coded In Vivo, or verbatim. The code assigned consists of a word or short phrase taken directly from the language of the data source. Because the code come from the data as opposed to coming from the theory, the exact meaning of the speaker cannot be lost in translation, so to speak. What was included in the code dependent on the text. If a single word was used to describe or name a group, this single word functioned as the code. If the speaker was more descriptive, by use of adjectives or by adding conditions under which individuals belong to a certain group, this text was included in the code.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE TARGET GROUP POPULATION

If a target group is a group which shares a set of characteristics which distinguish a group as socially meaningful, the social construction of this group refers to the social values this group holds in the view of others. Social construction is a process through which symbols, images and emotions are connected to the characteristics a group is defined by. This is a social process; politics, culture, history, literature, religion, the media are all carriers that play part in how a group is perceived from group to group and through time and space. As Schneider and Ingram state: 'target populations are assumed to have boundaries that are empirically verifiable ... and to exist within objective conditions even though those conditions are subject to multiple evaluations' thus it is important to understand how a group is socially constructed on the basis of these objective conditions.

Schneider and Ingram simplify this through their use of four categories of social construction that target group populations can be placed in. These four categories follow from how target groups are constructed in relation to two factors; the valiance and the power that the speaker allocates the group in question. On the basis of these two axis groups can either be constructed positively or negatively and they can enjoy a position of strong or weak power. The first group is the advantaged group; the population belonging to this target group is perceived as powerful and positive. The second group are the contenders, who hold a strong power position but are constructed negatively. The third group are the dependents, who have a weak power position but are constructed positively. The final group are the deviants who have both a weak power position and are constructed negatively (Schneider & Ingram, 1993, p. 335-36).

These groups function as the values or categories by which target groups are coded in terms of social construction.

The difficulty with coding this variable is that the indicators are quite subjective. Whether a group is powerful or positive is not measured in numbers, but rather these labels are assigned in accordance with how the individual mentioning the group views the group. To simplify this the social construction was first split in valiance and power, the combination of what value was assigned for these two factors individually led to the final assigning of a social construction. Through the process of coding, I discovered that this was not only subjective, but also highly contextual. A particular group can be mentioned multiple times throughout a debate by the same speaker but in a different light depending on the other actors mentioned and the policy realm concerned. Advantaged, contending, dependent and deviant are all terms which are applied in relation to the context in which they are spoken about.

However, there are also tools which can be used to aid in the process of coding this variable. Schneider and Ingram do not only discuss the policy trends that are likely to be observed in relation to a particular target group, but also the messages and orientations that will most likely be brought forward. From this, some words can be seen as clearly pointing towards a type of social construction. A positive valent construction can be indicated with words such as deserving, intelligent, honest, public spirited, good or average. A negative valent construction includes the use of descriptive words such as undeserving, stupid, dishonest and selfish. A powerful group may be noted as such, powerful. A weak group could be described as poor, downtrodden or needy. When used, these words aided in the process of assigning a code describing the social construction as portrayed by the speaker. If these types of words were not used to describe the social construction of a target group, the construction was assumed from how group was positioned in the context. When a case was unclear I would write it down and come back to it at a later point in time. I would occasionally ask someone from the thesis circle, my supervisor or I would try to simplify the matter.

POLICY REALM

Policy realm refers to the area of policy that the proposed policy belongs to. There are many ways of categorizing this. Policy is often thought to be clearly demarcated in groups that make sense to us on the basis of our own interpretation and understanding of the world. However, while these categories, such as healthcare issues or national defense, make sense to us personally, they cannot be translated exactly to the understanding of another individual (Baumgartner, Green-Pedersen, & Jones, 2006). To this end Baumgartner and Jones of the Policy Agendas Project developed a codebook to provide a comprehensive method of coding policy content. The goal was to create a method to study policy content and public agendas in consistent fashion across the nation. This has developed into the Comparative Agendas Project, which expanded the application of the method to be applicable across time and between nations. It allows for the classifying of policy related activities through a single, universal and consistent coding scheme (Baumgartner et al., 2006).

The codebook consists of major topic codes can be assigned for general categories of public policy and sub-topics within each of these categories allowing the researcher to identify the specific focus of the policy (Baumgartner et al., 2006). For this research, the classification of policy into major topic codes was sufficient, using sub-topics as a tool for identifying the major topic. The list of major topics as classified by Baumgartner and Jones can be seen below.

Baumgartner and Jones			
1	Macroeconomics	11	Law, Crime, and Family Issues
2	Civil Rights, Minority Issues, and Civil Liberties	12	Social Welfare
3	Health	13	Community Development and Housing Issues
4	Agriculture	14	Banking, Finance, and Domestic Commerce
5	Labor, Employment, and Immigration	15	Defense
6	Education	16	Space, Science, Technology, and Communications
7	Environment	17	Foreign Trade
8	Energy	18	International Affairs and Foreign Aid
9	Immigration	19	Government Operations
10	Transportation	20	Public Lands and Water Management

The Comparative Agendas Project also includes guidelines for coding and examples of major topics and for all sub-topics. These examples and the sub-topics were the main tool for assigning the various values to the variable policy realm. The Policy Agenda Project intends for a

single code to be assigned as the overarching theme of the coded segment. However, in the process of coding for this research the size of a segment not demarcated per policy area, but rather per proposed line of policy action. The result is that, more often than not, more than one code signifying policy realm was assigned to a single segment. The coding system as set out by the project is hierarchal in nature, with all topic and subtopics numbered and consecutive. For this research, the numbers were replaced with alphabetical letters, which allowed me to maintain this hierarchal system within the coding program used. The indicators for this were taken from the list of topics and subtopics and the examples provided for each.

NATURE OF THE PROPOSED POLICY

The nature of the proposed policy refers to the intended effect the proposed policy will have on the target group in question. This effect can either be beneficial, in which case the policy will benefit the target group or burdensome, in which case the policy forms a burden to the target group. Beneficial or burdensome policies come in different forms and make use of different tools; this can be the allocation of money, access to information which is taken for granted, protecting or attacking a group but also granting autonomy or imposing more controls. Through the granting of benefits and burdens, policy design reflects power relations. The granting of benefits and burdens to one group over another does not only reflect power relations, policy design plays a part in socially constructing the groups targeted by the policy. The experiences that citizens have with public policy, including the messages they receive and how they interpret them all convey this embedded meaning and reinforce it. The extent to which positive or negative policies are oversubscribed and undersubscribed to one group over another is a part of these experiences. Thus, policy design does not only reflect but also shape the social construction of target groups.

Schneider and Ingram discuss how benefits and burdens can be presented differently depending on the social construction of the target group population. When a policy will benefit contenders, the benefits will be downplayed or vague, or benefits will be packaged as burdens. Similarly, when a policy burdens an advantaged target group the burdens will be downplayed or packaged as benefits. This type of framing of policy and the effects it will have make it difficult

to assess the nature of a policy when it is proposed in the course of the debates. More so because this study does not consider policy as it was designed, only how it was presented. When coding the nature of the proposed policy, the aim was to code it according to the actual effect the policy would have opposed to the perceived effect or the manner in which it was framed. A clear example of this is the idea of carrying the burden of others. Quite often in discussions pertaining to international affairs politicians comment that the role of America as a super power and a keeper of a peaceful and democratic world. This role includes the burden of carrying the weight of others on one's shoulders. While this is framed as part of the deal of being a super power, this was nonetheless coded as a burden versus a benefit.

While coding a researcher strives for codes to be clean and clearly demarcated. In most cases more than one group is mentioned within a segment of text and thus the policy can be perceived as beneficial or burdensome depending on the perspective which is taken. However, the aim is to code a case as either beneficial or burdensome. Whilst different groups are mentioned by politicians, one group is often the main focus where other groups are discussed to contextualize one another. It follows that the group which is central to the discussion is taken as the perspective from proposed policy is coded as beneficial or burdensome. It also frequently occurred that a policy proposal indicated a clear shift of power or goods from one group to another, in these situations the policy proposal was coded as both beneficial and burdensome.

The main indicators for coding this variable were derived from the writings of Schneider and Ingram, these were supplemented with indicators of my own. Indicators for beneficial policies were policies that would strive to extend knowledge, capacity, autonomy, funding or protection to a group etcetera. Indicators for burdensome policies included sanctions, cuts in budget or funding, controls, force and incarceration. I started coding this by also coding what type of policy tool was used, this made the process of coding more complicated but helped in uncovering whether the policy was beneficial or burdensome at its core.

ANALYZING PATTERNS AND TRENDS

At this point I will consider the trends and patterns which have become visible through the process of coding, the results of which will be laid out in the chapter on empirics. This will then allow me to delve into the analysis, linking the pattern and trends to the theory. The empirics consists mainly of facts and figures. How often was a group mentioned, which percentage of groups mentioned by Republicans are deviants and other such questions relating to the research question will be answered. There are several methods for analyzing the results of the coding. One tool is the codes-primary documents tool, this allows you to view how often a code was assigned from primary document to primary document. In this case, as the documents also represent a timeline of sorts, this function allows for the observation of trends over time. Another tool is the co-occurrence tool, which has a explorer and table function, this function shows how often codes co-occurred or how often two codes were applied to the same case or when cases have overlap. It not only shows when two codes share a segment of text, but also allows you to view these instances. This tool was used for various purposes, firstly for the grouping of the verbatim codes of target group populations and secondly to provide a more precise measure for the relationships between codes. For example, the co-occurrence tool allows me to see not only how often beneficial or burdensome policies were proposed, but also how this differentiated between republicans and democrats and how this related to advantaged, contenders, dependents and deviants all in one table.

Once the empirical picture is complete, the next step is to use that information and other aspects of the coding process and to link the patterns and trend that have been observed and link them to the theory. This section is also vital to fleshing out the results, providing not only the numbers but also delving into the how and why of what the numbers show. A key tool for this is the memos function. Memos are notes that the researcher makes whilst coding and which are linked to that bit of text which caused the researcher to make an observation. In the memos I have recorded all instances which caught my attention either as fitting with the theory or contrasting with this. I also made note of instances which embodied the trends I was perceiving.

In this chapter the context in which the research is situated will be fleshed out. This will cover a range of topics including the political system in the United States and the parties involved in American politics, but also the history and the setup of the debates. The context is crucial in giving the empirical evidence, which will follow in the consequent chapter, meaning.

POLITICAL SYSTEM OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The political system in the United States of America is the underlying institution forming the context of the presidential election debates. Understanding this system is thus crucial in understanding how it shapes the social construction of target group populations by the presidential candidates. In chapter 2 the role of political parties in American politics has been discussed. This can be summarized as follows; parties form the link between society and its voter to government, forming the corner stone of democracy. Parties are political symbols which help citizens make sense of the complexities of politics. The two parties are each associated with their own set of ideas, their approach to reaching their goals and the electorate to which they appeal. In this segment other aspects of the American political system will be discussed. I will discuss the three main elements of what parties do, and how parties help bridge the separation of powers enabling change. I will also discuss the role of party politics and the influence of the two-party structure and the American political system on the workings of politics in the United States.

THREE ASPECTS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

The definition of a political party, as presented in chapter 2, is an organized group which aims to nominate candidates to gain political power through elections whilst promoting ideas about public policy (Hershey, 2015). American political parties are therefore goal-oriented and achieving these goals depends on winning elections. Major parties are comprised of three aspects which all interact. These are the party organization, including the party leaders and activists who work for candidates or party causes, parties in government, which is all those who run for or hold a public office in name of the party, and the party in the electorate, citizens who identify as belonging to the party (Hershey, 2015). A successful candidate must appeal to the individuals in each of these aspects, and furthermore appease to those who identify as independent voters.

The second goal, educating citizens, occurs both during and after elections. Parties will aim to focus the voters' attention on issues that bind the party together and downplay those which might cause friction or divide. This will make re-election easier, as well as increase the power parties have in governing according to their principles and ideas. With everything that parties and its candidates or elected officials do they keep in mind these three aspects of party politics, as they each influence one another. A successful election means greater opportunities in educating and governing, a successful term in government while elected results in a greater chance at being successful during the elections and so on.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE TWO-PARTY STRUCTURE AND THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

The United States is not a two-party system, constitutionally it is a Federal presidential constitutional republic. Specifically it is a representative democracy, "in which majority rule is tempered by minority rights protected by law" (Scheb, John M.; Scheb, John M. II (2002). *An Introduction to the American Legal System*. Florence, KY: Delmar, p. 6. [ISBN 0-7668-2759-3](#).) The government of the United States was designed in such a manner as to fragment political power. The goal being that no single group could become powerful enough to rule alone. This division of power is accomplished mainly by the division between national and state-level government. This is further strengthened by the separation of powers which occurs at both levels. The separation of powers discourages the coming to power of a tyrant, but it also makes for a challenging system in which political parties must make these fragmented unites work together to solve problems and achieve political change. As Hershey states 'The two major national parties can provide a bridge over the separation of powers, a basis for cooperation within a government marked by decentralization and division'.

It is important to note that this form of representative democracy relies on the minority to restrain the rule of the majority. It is the other political party which fulfils this role, serving as a watchdog on the government and providing an organized opposition (Hershey, 2015). Therefore, the political system in the United States places the parties opposite one another. It is no surprise that this dichotomous relationship resonates and is reflected by the attitudes held by partisans. Many studies find that partisanship in America is bipolar in nature; for most

individuals a clear preference and identification with one party is accompanied by a negative attitude towards the party in opposition (Greene, 2016).

Everything candidates do or say is goal orientated and while their views may not align with those of every individual belonging to or identifying with the party which they represent, they all share in the goal to elect, educate and govern in name of their party. The American political system is an institution which play its own role in shaping the social construction of target group populations.

HISTORY OF THE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

The first televised debate in the history of the United States took place on the 26th of September in 1960. In this one-hour debate John F. Kennedy and Nixon went head to head. The debate drew over 66 million viewers out of a population of 179 million, making it one of the most-watched broadcasts in the history of American television. The impact of the debate was paramount; John F. Kennedy entered the debate as relatively unknown senator from Massachusetts and emerged from elections as the next president of the United States. There were of course many other factors that played into this victory, however it is generally agreed upon that the first televised debate was crucial, something acknowledged even by Kennedy himself (Benoit et al., 2003; Geer, 1988). Where the television had been a platform for entertainment, it now revealed itself to also be a space for the discussion of more serious issues. The next debate would only take place sixteen years later in 1976, when incumbent president Ford agreed to take on his challenger Jimmy Carter. The years between these elections no candidates dared to take on the televised debate, weary of its influence (Schroeder, 2008).

The first debates following the televised debates of 1960 were those of the 1976, 1980 and 1984 elections, sponsored by the League of Women Voters (LWV). In 1980 the League of Women Voters angered the Democratic party by including John Anderson, an Independent who was polling 15 percent, in the first debate. Carter refused to participate, and, without his main opponent present, Reagan won the election. Following the 1984 election cycle, the Democratic and Republican parties came together in a decision to move sponsorship of the debates under

the purview of the parties to gain more control (“The League of Women Voters and Candidate Debates: A Changing Relationship | League of Women Voters,” n.d.). The campaign leaders of the Bush and Dukakis campaigns drafted a memorandum of understanding. This document included agreements on various aspects such as who would be allowed to sit in the audience, who would fill the role of panelists, as well as making drastic changes by abolishing follow-up questions. The League of Women Voters was not included in this process and would merely function as a host. The LWV challenged this move, arguing that this change in sponsorship would give the two dominant parties control over the format of the debates and depriving voters of this rare chance to see the candidates outside of their controlled campaign environment. On October 3rd, 1988 the League of Women Voters announced the end of their sponsorship of the presidential elections (Peters & Woolley, 2004; “The League of Women Voters and Candidate Debates: A Changing Relationship | League of Women Voters,” n.d.).

Since its formation in 1987, the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD) has overseen the presidential debates. The CPD is a private, nonpartisan corporation whose primary undertaking is to “organize, manage, produce, publicize and support debates for the candidates for President of the United States.” (“CPD: The Commission on Presidential Debates: An Overview,” n.d.). In its own words the CPD is an independent organization that is not controlled by any political party, nor does it endorse, support or oppose any political party or its candidates (“CPD: The Commission on Presidential Debates: An Overview,” n.d.).

Nonetheless from this history of the formation of the CPD it follows that the debates as organized by the CPD are not without criticism. The CPD does not receive government funding or accept funding from political parties, committees or candidates. Funding is obtained mainly from the communities hosting the debates and secondly from corporations, foundations and private donors. However, the CPD states explicitly that providing funding does not provide influence (“CPD: The Commission on Presidential Debates: An Overview,” n.d.) This has been a controversial topic as companies such as Anheuser-Busch and Philip Morris have provided large donations, and in return were featured prominently at the CPD debates (Perloff, 1997).

Another aspect of the debates under the CPD which has been criticized are the criteria used in selecting which candidates will feature in the debate. According to the CPD, candidates

are invited to the debates when they not only have a theoretical but also a realistic chance of winning. This is established by making use of a pre-established, published, objective and transparent criteria and inviting them to debate current affairs. These criteria focus on evidence of national organization, signs of national newsworthiness and competitiveness, and indicators of national public enthusiasm or concern. Participation is open to any candidate, regardless of party affiliation or lack thereof, according to the CPD (“CPD: The Commission on Presidential Debates: An Overview,” n.d.). However, these criteria, including a 15% support across five national polls criterium, have been controversial as in practice they have excluded parties other than the two major parties from partaking in the debate (Eisner, 2018; Magarian, 2018).

These are just a few of the criticism on the CPD over the years. This research includes both debates sponsored by the League of Women Voters and those organized by the Commission on Presidential Debates. The history of the debates shapes the debates today as well as their role in society. This should be kept in mind throughout the rest of this investigation into the social construction of target group populations during the presidential election debates.

STRUCTURE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

The debates are structured in such a way as to provide voters a better understanding of the candidates. Over the years, the format has been tweaked to aim its focus on maximizing time and attention on the candidates and their views. The structure of the debates has differed from election to election. In general, the debates have involved a moderator who poses questions and keeps a check on the time restrictions. The questions have been obtained through various sources; they have been posed by a panel of journalists, topics have been provided by the moderator or selected from questions submitted by members of the audience. Since 1992, the format of the debate has been one alike a town meeting, in which 100 undecided votes from the area of the debate site are present and given opportunity to pose their questions. The moderator, who has remained the same since 1992, was selected on familiarity with the candidates and the major issues of the presidential campaign, his experience in live television and the ability to keep the debate focused and restrain speakers to

their time limits. The site for the debate is selected from those who have shown interest. Many debates are held at college and university campuses, prompting students to participate in the production process and become involved in election-related projects.

ELECTIONS IN TIME

To understand how each debate unravels differently to those before, it is important to get a general understanding of the time in which the debate took place. As discussed in a previous chapter, American parties and politics have tended to be pragmatic, focusing on concrete problems and their solutions rather than being ideological. Their ideology is reflected in how candidates propose dealing with these practical issues. The issues of the day are a combination of current events and those issues who find their origins in the past.

The scope of this research does not provide the space necessary to outline American history. Instead, in the appendix, a table has been inserted which I have made use of to help me make sense of history when coding the debates.

Year	Prior	Candidates	Issues of the day	Winner
1960	Eisenhower (R)	Nixon (R) vs. Kennedy (D)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cold War • Civil rights • Quemoy and Matsu • Chinese Civil War 	Nixon (R)
1976	Ford (R) – incumbent Nixon (R) – resigned	Carter (D) vs. Ford (R)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watergate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Nixon resigns • 1973 oil crisis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ economy is down • Cold War 	Carter (D)
1980	Carter (D)	Carter (D) vs. Reagan (R)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iranian Revolution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hostage crisis ○ Energy crisis • Economic downtime <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Unemployment ○ Inflation • Cold War 	Reagan (R)
1984	Reagan (R)	Reagan (R) vs. Mondale (D)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Recovery 	Reagan (R)

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increased spending on defense ○ Large government ● Heightened national pride ● Deficit 	
1988	Reagan (R)	Bush Sr. (R) vs. Dukakis (D)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Iran <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Contra ● Reagan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recovering economy ● Moral panic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aids, gangs, drugs ● Nearing end of Cold War 	Bush Sr. (R)
1992	Bush Sr. (R)	Clinton (D) vs. Bush Sr. (R) vs. Perot (I)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New democrat → Clinton ● Devolution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Power to the states ● Economic recession <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No new taxes ● End of the Cold War <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Less foreign policy ● Realigning election 	Clinton (D)
1996	Clinton (D)	Clinton (D) vs. Dole (R)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1994: republican state & congress majority ● 1995: government shut down ● Economic recovery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Low unemployment ○ Low deficit 	Clinton (D)
2000	Clinton (D)	Bush Jr. (R) vs. Gore (d)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Government surplus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Public policy ● Backlash Clinton sex scandal 	Bush Jr. (R)
2004	Bush Jr. (R)	Bush Jr. (R) vs. Kerry (D)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Post 9/11 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ War on terror ● War on Iraq 	Bush Jr. (R)
2008	Bush Jr. (R)	Obama (D) vs. McCain (R)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● War on Iraq ● Housing bubble and crash <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Economic recession 	Obama (D)
2012	Obama (D)	Obama (D) vs. Romney (R)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Economic recession <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Taxes ○ Deficit 	Obama (D)

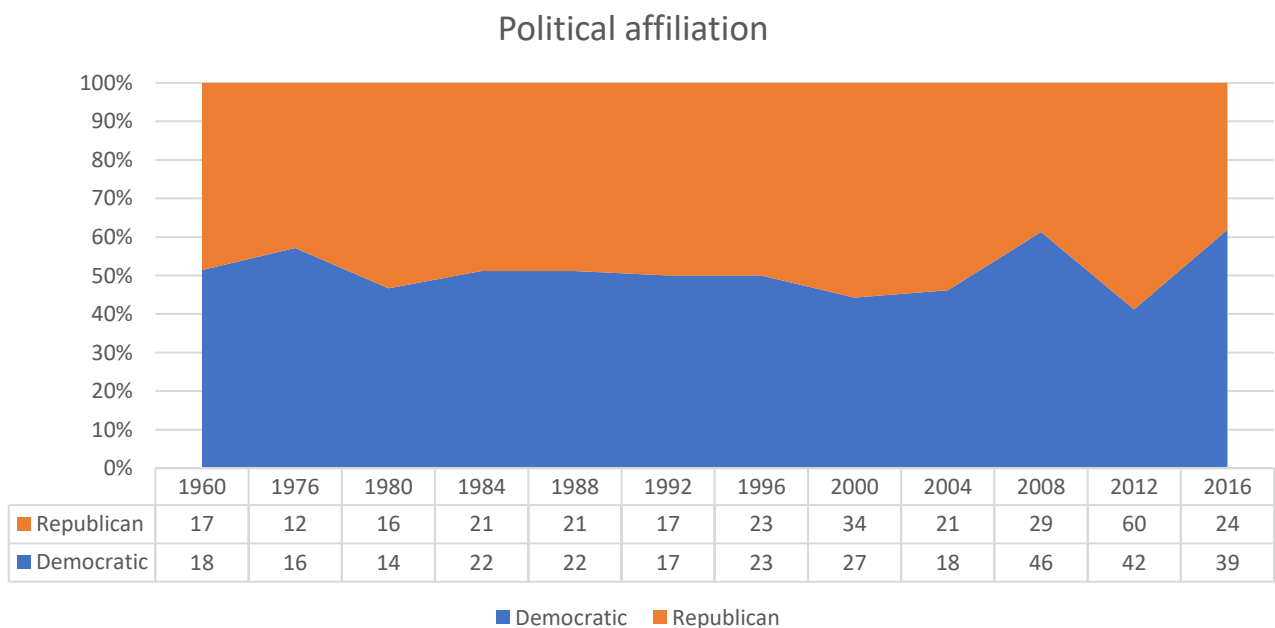
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laws on advertising and voting changed 	
2016	Obama (D)	Trump (R) vs. Clinton (D)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rebounding economy • ISIS • Institutional racism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Black lives matter 	Trump (R)

CHAPTER 5 EMPIRICS

In this chapter I will discuss the empirical results of the analysis. I will provide a numerical overview of the findings. This chapter will focus on the facts and figures, whereas the next chapter will involve the analysis of what the numbers say in relation to the theory and what else can be observed in the data. For this section, I will exam the data in terms of the five questions which acted as the guide to answering the overarching research question.

1. WHO IS TALKING?

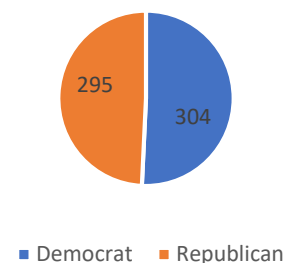
The first question that would present itself during the coding of a case was the question of political affiliation, or ‘who is talking?’. The graph and included table below shows the cases in which democrats or republicans spoken word fulfilled the coding requirements as set out in the chapter on methodology. Each case is either coded as democratic or republican and thus



the sum of the number of cases that can be seen in this table is equal to the total of amount of cases which have been coded for the purpose of this research.

In general, democrats and republicans played an equal role in the debates, as can be seen clearly in the pie chart on political affiliation below. The exceptions are the debate between Obama and McCain in 2008, Obama and Romney in 2012 and between Clinton and Trump in 2016. An explanation for this could be the style of debating. In the case of Obama and

Political Affiliation



McCain for example, Obama describes clearly the changes he would like to accomplish and the various policy changes which would aid in realizing this. This clear indication allows for a clear coding with each point made coded as an independent case. Furthermore, we see an increase in cases coded as the years progress. This is most likely caused by the learning curve experienced when coding. The texts were coded in

chronological order as to contextualize each subsequent election. A better understanding of coding in the later stages of the process coincides with a higher number of coded cases. However, as coding is generally not skewed between the politicians of either of the parties this does not negatively impact the analysis and its results.

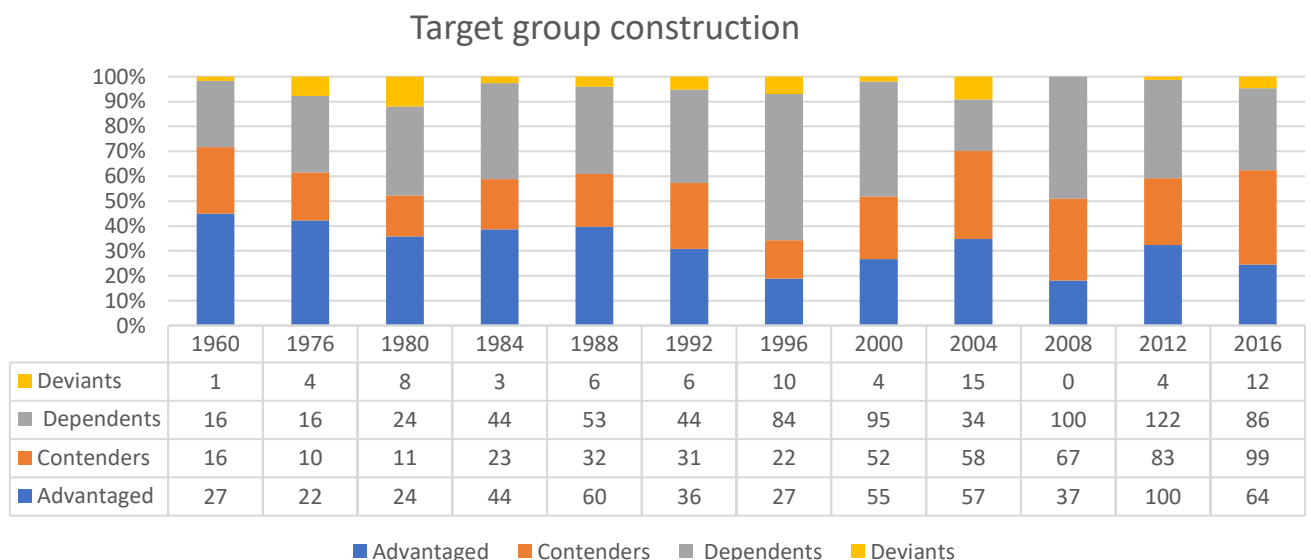
2. WHO IS THE TARGET GROUP?

After having noted the political affiliation of the speaker, the second question answered is the question: 'who is the target group?'. A target group is a group of people that a policy or campaign hopes to influence through political channels. The term group has been included in the largest sense, from a single person to a generation to a country. In the end, a person or group of persons in any form were included when they functioned as target group for policy or if the speaker engaged in actively socially constructing this group. The focus of this research is the social construction of target group populations, nevertheless it is interesting to see who belongs to which of the four social constructions according to politicians of various political affiliation.

Thus, whilst the other variables were all coded from the theory to text, this variable was coded from the text to be applied to the theory. As such it was coded In Vivo, or verbatim. The code assigned consists of a word or short phrase taken directly from the language of the data source. Because the code comes from the data as opposed to coming from the theory, the exact meaning of the speaker cannot be lost in translation, so to speak. It follows that this is the code with the largest number of separate variables. For example; one topic which has been discussed in various debates and by various candidates is the topic of education. When discussing education in America it follows that educators will be mentioned. The manner in which politicians do so differs; '2 million teachers', 'all teachers', 'good teachers', 'great teachers' and 'bad teachers' all refer to educators, yet through verbatim coding these instances are all coded separately opposed to being viewed as a single group. In total 1176 codes were assigned. These codes can be viewed in the appendix.

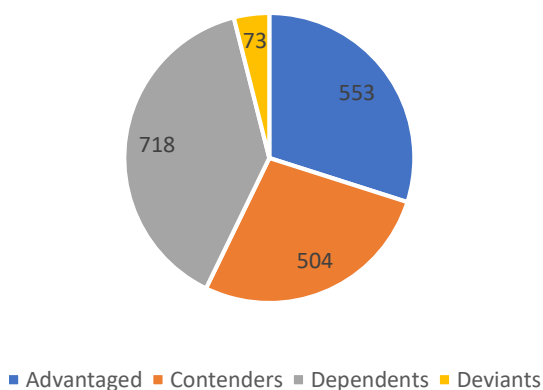
3. HOW IS THE TARGET GROUP CONSTRUCTED AND REPRESENTED

The third question posed during the process of coding is the question 'how is the target group constructed and represented?' by the speaker at hand. Each case includes at least one target group and thus one target group construction and representation. However, one case can also include multiple target groups and thus multiple constructions. Nonetheless, whilst a target group can be constructed in various ways by one speaker throughout the course of the



debate, each target group within a certain case will receive one single label in accordance to the method described in the section on operationalization. The four categories into which target groups are placed are the four categories – advantaged, contender, dependent and deviant – as set out by Schneider and Ingram. The graph and included table below show the number of cases in which each target group was coded and the percentage this makes up of that debate.

Target group construction

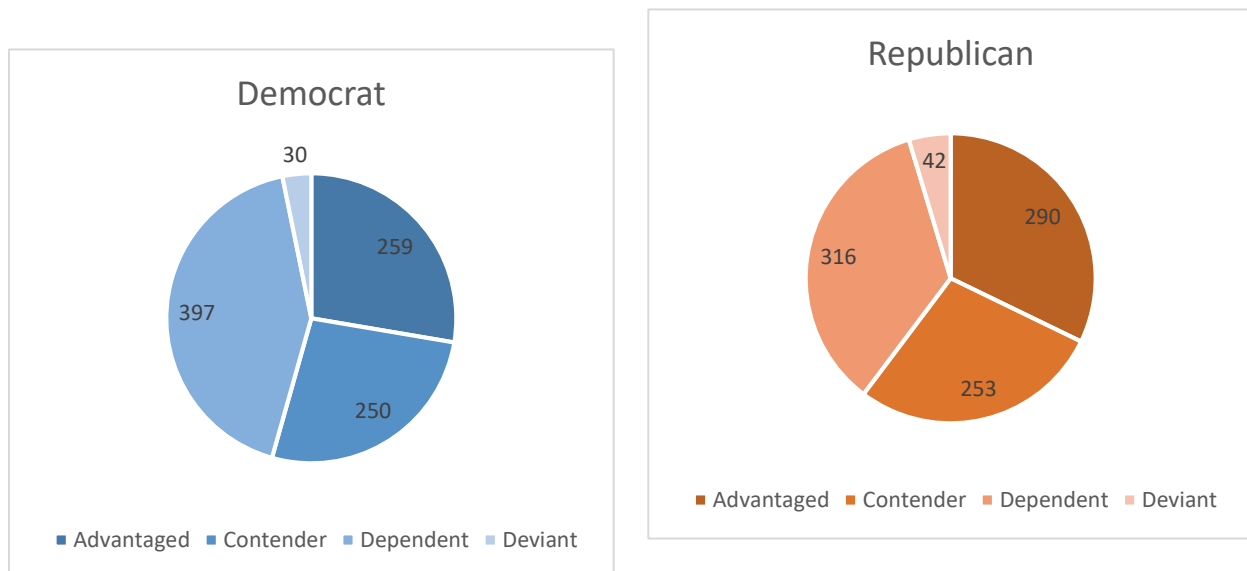


The outcome of this table is a little less straight forward than was the case with the previous inquiries. In total we see that contenders are mentioned most frequently, making up 38.85% (or a corrected percentage of 37.63 %) of all coded cases. This is followed by advantaged making up 29.92 % (or a corrected 32.3 %). In third place are dependents with 27.27% (or a corrected 25.31 %). In last place are deviants with 3.95% (or a corrected 4.75%). The

corrected percentages were calculated by taking the average of the percentages rather than a percentage based on the number of cases divided by the total amount of cases.

However, we also see a number of trends occurring over the years. For example, while dependents are mentioned most frequently overall this is not the case in all years. From 1960 through 1988 advantaged are mentioned most frequently. It is in the years following 1988 that dependents are mentioned most frequently, and we also generally see an increase in the amount of times contenders are mentioned. How these percentages compare to the expectations based on Schneider and Ingram's theory will be discussed in the following chapter.

Following the expectations, it is necessary to not only look at the absolute numbers and percentages overall differentiated over time, but also to include the speakers' political affiliation to see how this differs for democrats and republicans. The graphs below show how

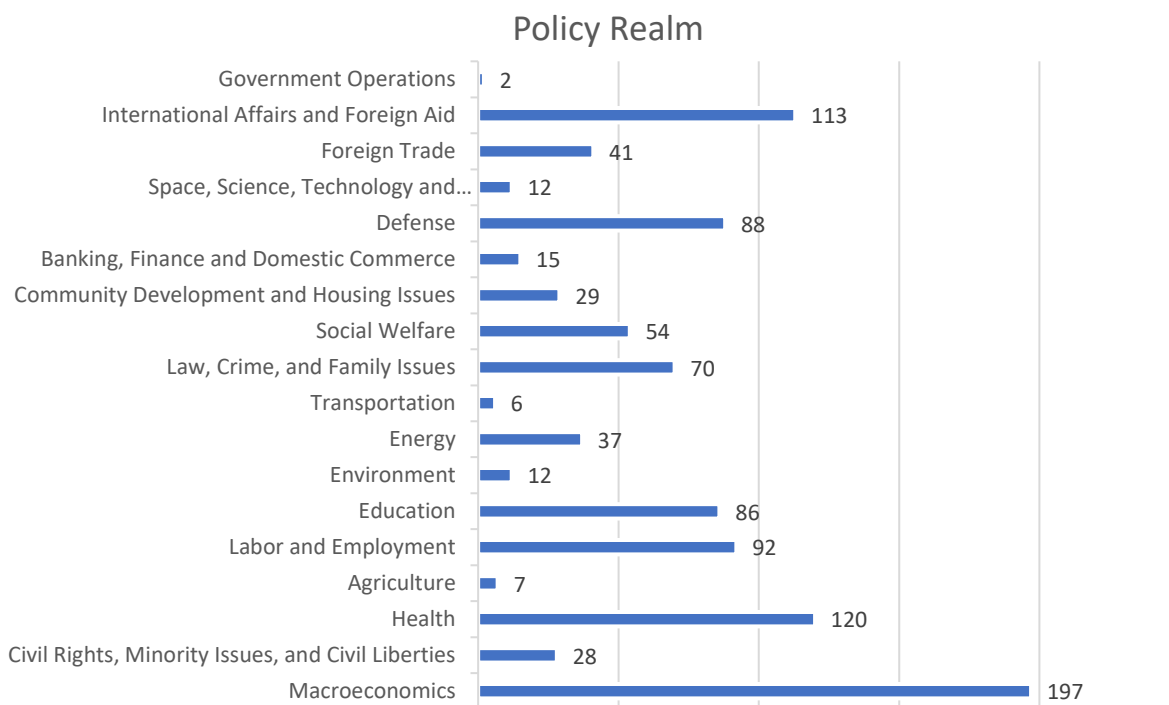


often democrats and republican used a certain category.

What we see in these pie charts is that while the percentages differ, democrats and republican alike discuss dependents most frequently, with a percentage of 42.4 and 35.1 respectively, and deviants the least, with a percentage of 3.2 and 4.7 respectively, in line with the previously discussed table. However, the percentage of target groups constructed as dependent does differ a bit with 42.4 percent cases constructed and represented as dependent by democrats versus 35.1 percent done so by republicans. Similarly, while both democrats and republicans mention advantaged most frequently following dependents, followed by contenders, the amount of times each of these groups is mentioned and how this compares to the other groups differ. Democrats construct and represent 42.4 percent of target group populations as dependent and 27.7 percent of target groups as advantaged, the gap between these two variables (138 cases or 14.7 percent) is much larger than is the case for republicans (26 cases or 2.9 percent). However, the difference between the second and third most frequently constructed group is larger for republicans (37 cases or 4.1 percent) than is the case for democrats (9 cases or 1 percent).

4. WHAT POLICY REALM DOES THE DISCUSSION PERTAIN TO?

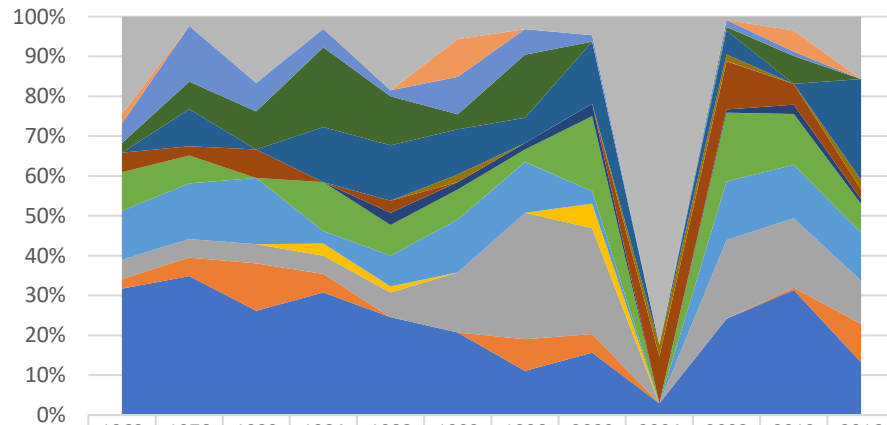
The subsequent question posed is the question ‘what policy realm does the discussion pertain to?’. Policy realm refers to the area of policy that the proposed policy belongs to. The possible variables are based on the codebook from Baumgartner and Jones’ Policy Agenda Project and have been laid out and described in the corresponding section in the chapter on methodology. The graph and included table below show the number of cases in which a certain policy was coded.



In this graph we see that certain policy realms are frequent topics of conversation whereas others are not or rarely discussed in the context of the American presidential debates. The three most touched upon policy realms are macroeconomics – which includes all general domestic macroeconomic issues including recessions, demographic changes but also the level of (un)employment – and health, followed by international affairs and foreign aid – including U.S. foreign policy and national defense issues and treaties. In the graph and included table below we see that most topics are not discussed equally throughout the years. Often, when a topic is broached, it sparks a conversation or discussion leading to the topic being built upon throughout a section of the debate. An example of this can be seen when looking at social

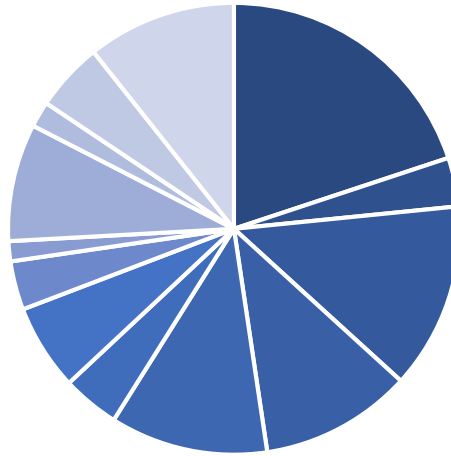
welfare, which is discussed frequently in 1984 (13) and 2012 (12), but not at all in the years 2000, 2004 and 2016. There are exceptions of course, but this seems to be the general trend. Which topics are frequented in which years is first and foremost down to what the topics of the day were at that point in time. An election year such as 2004, during which the war on terrorism was at its all-time high, shows a clear spike in talk of defense compared to other years in which the focus was directed towards other issues. For a more extensive explanation on which topics were highlighted in which debates, please refer to chapter 4 in which this contextual information is given.

Policy realm



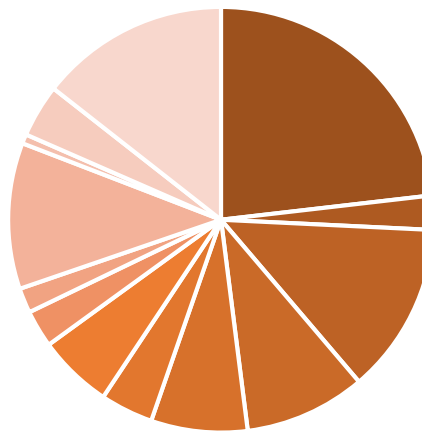
	1960	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016
■ Defense	10	1	7	2	12	3	2	3	28	1	6	13
■ Finance and Domestic Commerce	1	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	9	0
■ Community Development and Housing Issues	2	6	3	3	1	5	4	1	0	2	2	0
■ Social Welfare	1	3	4	13	8	2	10	0	0	1	12	0
■ Law, Crime, and Family Issues	0	4	0	9	9	6	4	10	0	7	0	21
■ Transportation	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	2
■ Immigration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
■ Energy	2	1	3	0	2	0	0	0	4	14	9	2
■ Environment	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	2	0	1	4	1
■ Education	4	3	0	8	5	4	2	12	0	20	22	6
■ Labor and Employment	5	6	7	2	5	7	8	2	0	17	23	10
■ Agriculture	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	0
■ Health	2	2	2	3	4	8	20	17	0	23	30	9
■ Civil Rights, Minority Issues, and Civil Liberties	1	2	5	3	0	0	5	3	0	0	1	8
■ Macroeconomics	13	15	11	20	16	11	7	10	1	28	54	11

Democrat



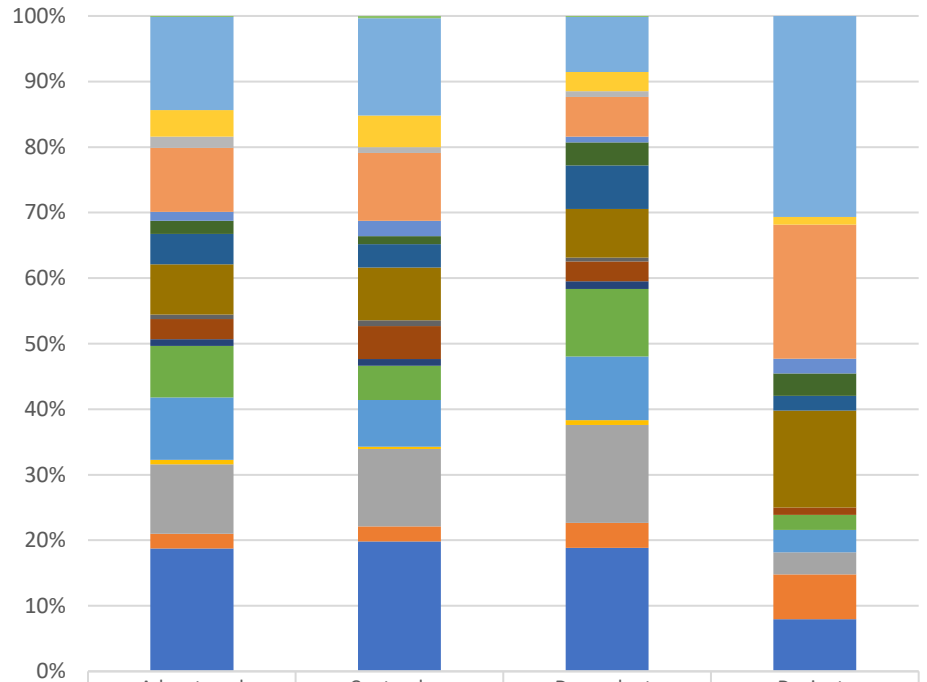
- Macroeconomics
- Health
- Education
- Social Welfare
- Banking, Finance and Domestic Commerce
- Space, Science, Technology and Communications
- International Affairs and Foreign Aid
- Civil Rights, Minority Issues, and Civil Liberties
- Labor and Employment
- Energy
- Community Development and Housing Issues
- Defense
- Foreign Trade

Republican



- Macroeconomics
- Health
- Education
- Social Welfare
- Banking, Finance and Domestic Commerce
- Space, Science, Technology and Communications
- International Affairs and Foreign Aid
- Civil Rights, Minority Issues, and Civil Liberties
- Labor and Employment
- Energy
- Community Development and Housing Issues
- Defense
- Foreign Trade

Policy realm in relation to target group construction



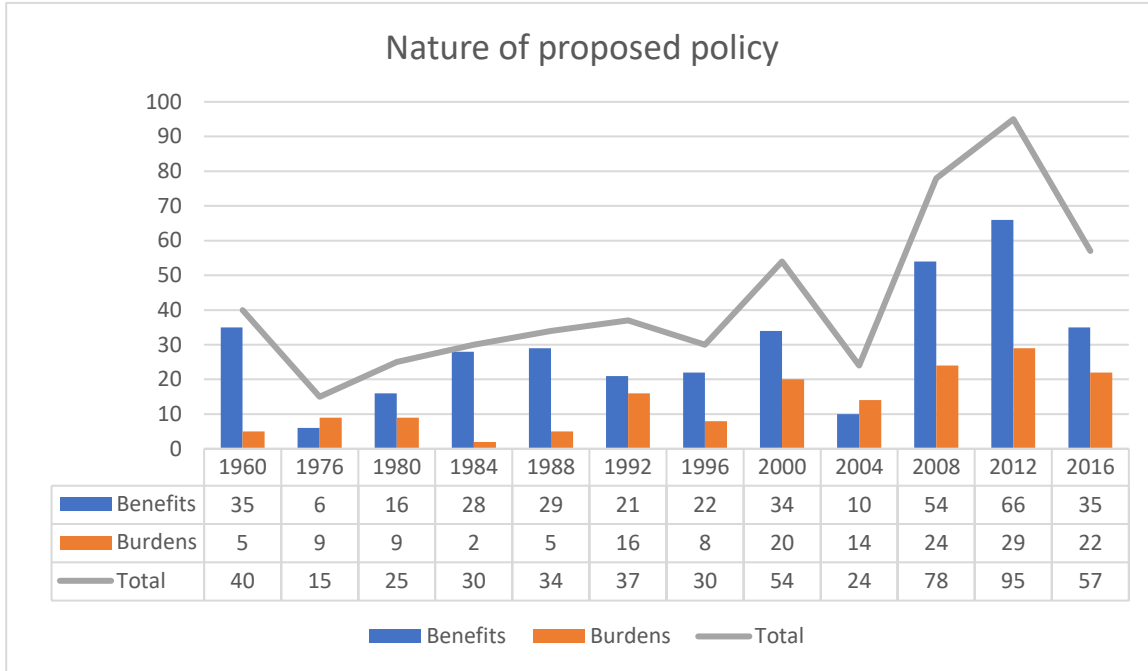
	Advantaged	Contenders	Dependents	Deviants
Government Operations	1	2	1	0
International Affairs and Foreign Aid	83	83	58	27
Foreign Trade	24	27	20	1
Space, Science, Technology and Communications	10	5	6	0
Defense	57	58	42	18
Banking, Finance and Domestic Commerce	8	13	6	2
Community Development and Housing Issues	12	7	24	3
Social Welfare	27	20	46	2
Law, Crime, and Family Issues	45	45	51	13
Transportation	4	5	4	0
Energy	18	28	21	1
Environment	6	6	8	0
Education	46	29	71	2
Labor and Employment	56	40	67	3
Agriculture	4	2	5	0
Health	62	66	103	3
Civil Rights, Minority Issues, and Civil Liberties	13	13	26	6
Macroeconomics	110	111	130	7

The table above shows how the policy realm co-occur with each target group. This table shows that there is variance in how often each target group co-occurs with a policy realm in which the patterns viewed and discussed earlier in chapter 5.3 are not necessarily translatable. Whilst in general contenders were mentioned most frequently, followed by advantaged, dependents and lastly deviants, this order is not reflected in each independent policy realm. For the policy realms foreign trade, banking and energy this general trend is replicated. However, in social welfare, labor and employment and health it is the dependent target group which is mentioned most frequently.

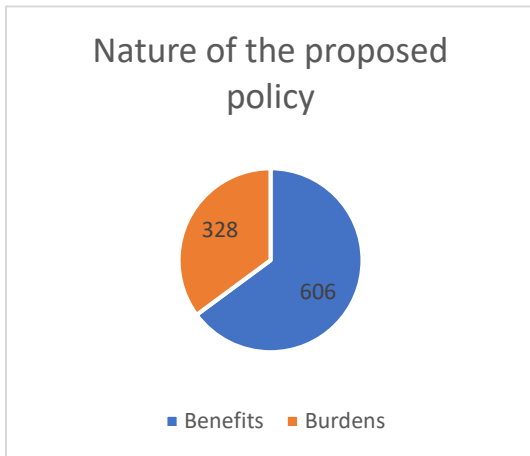
5. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE PROPOSED POLICY IN RELATION TO THE TARGET GROUP?

The fifth and final question posed during the process of coding is the question 'what is the nature of the proposed policy in relation to the target group?'. The nature of the proposed policy refers to the intended effect the proposed policy will have on the target group in question. This effect can either be beneficial, in which case the policy will benefit the target group or burdensome, in which case the policy forms a burden to the target group. This code was assigned from the perspective of the target group central to the discussion. When a policy proposal indicated a clear shift of power or goods from one group to another the policy proposal was coded as both beneficial and burdensome.

The graph and included table below show the cases in which a policy proposal was coded across the debates and whether it was coded as being beneficial or burdensome.

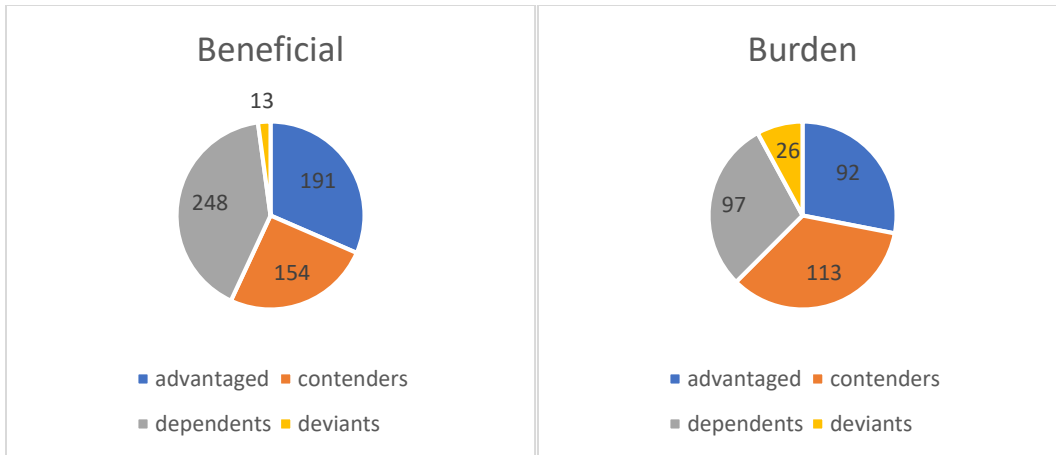


This table shows that in general over time more concrete policy proposals were put



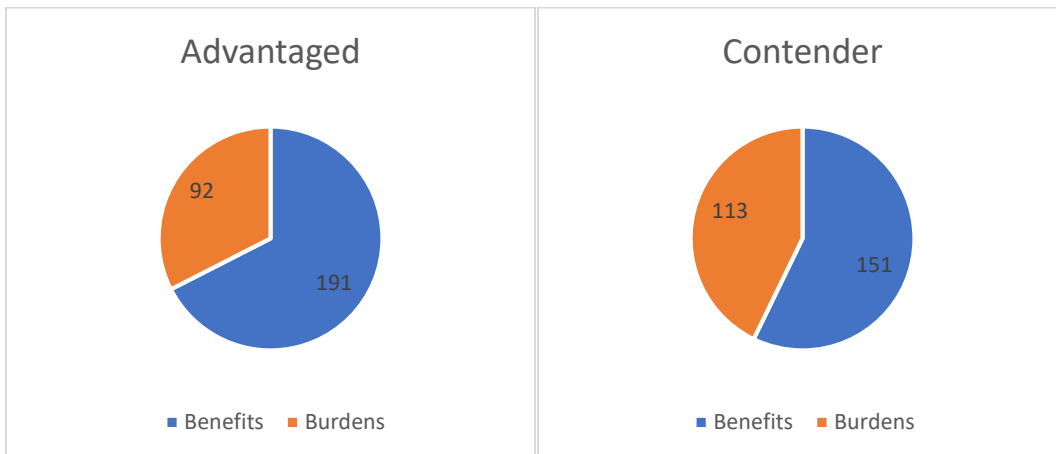
forward by presidential candidates. Moreover where the division between benefits and burdens is concerned, policy proposals in all but one case are more likely to be beneficial in nature rather than being burdensome. In total of all 934 instances of policy proposals benefits make up 65 percent with 605 coded cases leaving 35 percent of cases burdensome with a total of 328 coded cases.

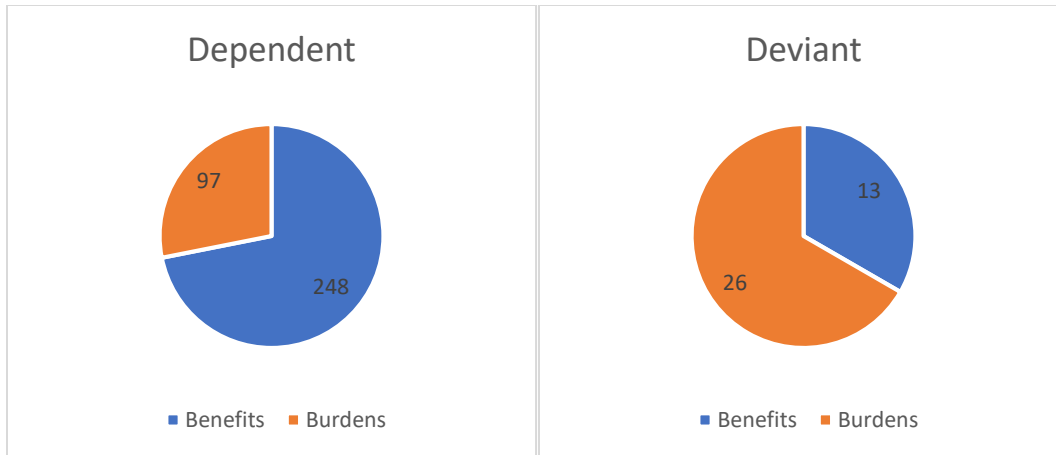
The graph and included table below show the number of cases in which each target group was coded and the percentage this makes up of that debate.



When it comes to benefits, most are directed at dependents (41 percent), followed by advantaged (32 percent), contenders (25 percent) and deviants (2 percent). This picture is quite different from the picture of the division of burdens. When it comes to burdens, most are directed towards contenders (34 percent), followed by dependents (30 percent), advantaged (28 percent) and lastly deviants (8 percent). However, this division does not necessarily paint a clear picture, as the percentage of the benefits or burdens a target group construction receives is related to the numbers of times that target group construction is mentioned overall.

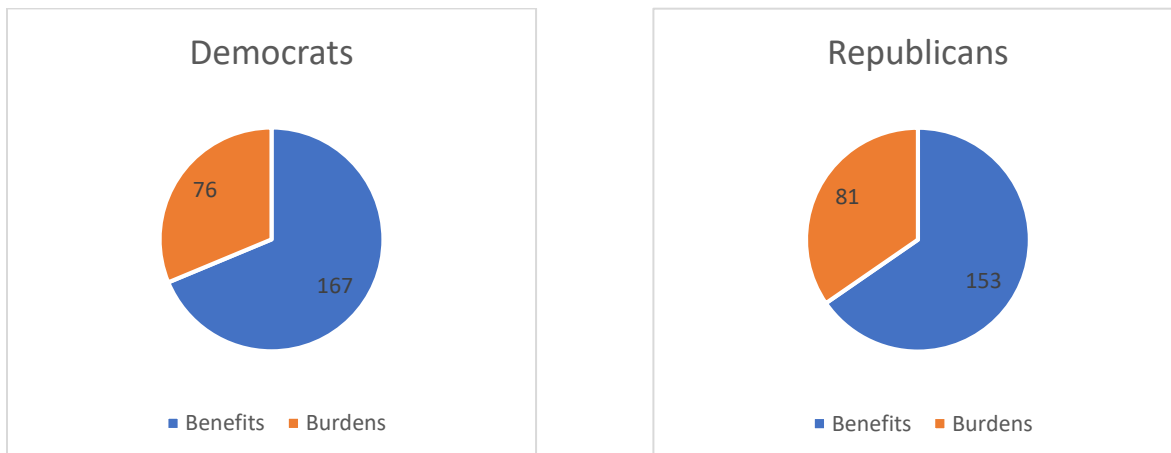
The tables below will give a clearer insight. There are four tables, one for each of the social constructions with which target groups can be labeled. The tables show the ratio between beneficial and burdensome policies for the policies directed at that specific group.





These four tables show that benefits and burdens are not divided equally for any of the four groups. Moreover, the extent to which the division of benefits and burdens is skewed and in which direction also differs significantly for each of the groups.

The contending target group is the group where the division of benefits and burdens is closest to being equal. They receive slightly more beneficial policy than burdensome policy (57 vs. 43 percent). Advantaged and deviant target groups are equal in the degree to which the division of benefits and burdens they receive is skewed. However, while for the advantaged the prescribed beneficial policy outweighs the burdensome policies (67 vs. 33 percent) the exact opposite can be said for the deviants for which burdensome policies outweigh beneficial policies (also 67 percent vs. 33 percent). The division of benefits and burdens is most skewed for the dependent target group construction, with beneficial policies most strongly outweighing burdensome policies (72 vs. 28 percent).



These two final graphs show how Democrats and Republicans differ in the amounts in which they subscribe benefits and burdens. We see that both political parties prescribe more beneficial policies than they do burdensome policies, with Democrats having a slightly more skewed division (69 vs. 31 percent) than Republicans (65 vs. 35 percent). So though there is a slight difference. This difference is not very significant.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS

The aim of the following chapter is to discuss what has been brought to light in the process of analyzing the data and connecting this to the theory. The statistics and figures of the previous chapter will be fleshed out and brought to life by connecting the numbers to the theory and giving examples along with an analysis of what these numbers signify. Several observations going beyond the assumptions from the theory will be presented, accompanied by illustrative examples from the data. This with the intent to provide an answer to the research question:

How and in what manner are target group populations socially constructed and presented by Democratic and Republican candidates running for presidency during the televised presidential debates in the United States?

The theory relevant to this research can be divided into two parts, the theory on the social construction of target group populations based on Schneider and Ingram's *Social construction of target populations: Implications for politics and policy* and the theory on party politics in America based on a variety of sources. In chapter 2 two expectations based on the two theoretical approaches were devised for each target group in order to empirically test these theories. Applying this theory and testing it within a certain context will provide an insight into how much explanatory power the social construction has on politics and policy and the role of political affiliation within the presidential election debates in the United States. An understanding of social constructions of target populations shifts conventional assumptions about the dynamics of policy change, the determination of beneficiaries and losers, the reasons for differing levels and types of participation among target groups, and the role of policy in democracy.

This chapter is divided by the two theoretical approaches. In the following sections each of these expectations will be reiterated, a short summary of the relevant statistics will be given, followed by the possible explanations, finally either confirming or debunking the expectations.

Throughout the process of coding a trend was perceived in which the social construction of target groups in relation to the policy realms defense and international affairs and foreign aid, in other words international relations, differed distinctively from the social construction of target group population in relation to the other realms of policy. For this reason, the social construction of target groups in relation to international affairs will be discussed separately under the heading 'Analysis on the social construction of target group populations in relation to international relations'.

ANALYSIS ON THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF TARGET POPULATIONS AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR POLITICS AND POLICY

The core argument of Schneider and Ingram in *Social construction of target populations: Implications for politics and policy* (1993) is that the social construction of target populations is an important political phenomenon that should take its place in the study of public policy by political scientist. The number as presented in the chapter on empirics show this to be true. Not each target group is featured equally, and benefits and burdens are not subscribed equally to all. However, the assumptions made by Schneider and Ingram as to how each group will be presented and how politicians will discuss the attribution of benefits and burdens to each of these groups is not in line with the findings of this research.

In my findings the vantage point for everything is the advantaged target group. To be constructed as a contender or dependent or deviant is to be constructed as such in comparison to the advantaged. Each policy proposal aims to reaffirm or cause a change in a groups position on the roster. The advantaged hold a hegemonic normative position in society. To be, or to want to be, positive and powerful is the norm, and there for each group will move in its position accordingly. This move can occur on either of the two axis, however valence is valued above power. Each policy proposal aims to reaffirm or cause a change in a groups position on the roster, the directions in which this can occur differ per target group. These findings, and how

they differ from the expectations on the basis of Schneider and Ingram, will be outlined throughout this chapter and per target group.

ADVANTAGED

The advantaged group is the group which holds the best position in society. A target group is constructed as advantaged when it is perceived as powerful and positive. Examples of this group provided by Schneider and Ingram are the elderly, veterans, scientists, and businesses. When it comes to benefits and burdens, it is likely that benefits will be oversubscribed whereas burdens will be undersubscribed. The benefits and burdens received by this group will not coincide with what would be required in terms of policy effectiveness or representativeness.

On the basis of this theory, the following expectation has been formulated:

Advantaged target groups will be mentioned less frequently than the contenders, dependents and deviants with many benefits packaged as beneficial to the general public and few burdens packaged as benefits.

This expectation consists of three parts; the number of times advantaged are mentioned in comparison to the other target group constructions, the number of benefits and burdens directed at advantaged and the way in which these are packaged.

Firstly, there is the frequency with which advantaged target groups are mentioned in comparison to the amount of times which the other target group constructions are mentioned. The theory by Schneider and Ingram gives ground to assume that advantaged groups will be mentioned less than contenders, dependents and deviants. In chapter 5 we saw that dependents are mentioned most frequently (37.63 %), followed by advantaged (32.3%). This expectation is not reflected in the findings.

The advantaged group is the group which holds the best position in society. This means that the advantaged hold the hegemonic position. Those who belong to the hegemonic group are the ruling or dominant group in a political or social context. As such the advantaged are the point of departure for all social construction. Each other social construction is done in comparison to the advantaged. Within the debates, each question posed, and each answer given has a

purpose. The presidential candidates' angle is to be elected president of the United States. A group which is constructed as advantaged by one politician could just as easily be viewed as a contender or dependent by another politician, simply by a shift of perception of the target group's power or valence. Moreover, to construct a target group as contender, dependent or deviant the speaker needs to refer to the advantaged to which the other target group is contrasted. Thus, whether a target group is constructed as contender or dependent or advantaged is a matter of what the politician speaking wants to bring across and how he wants to be perceived. Thus, advantaged are not mentioned less than the other social constructions, rather advantaged are mentioned in relation to the social construction of the other relevant target groups.

Moreover, between 1960 and 1988 advantaged are the most mentioned group. A possible explanation hereof is that these years coincide with the cold war, and thus many topics discussed are categorized as international affairs and foreign aid. In general, advantaged are mentioned relatively frequently in the policy realm of international affairs and foreign aid. This will be discussed more in depth in a following section

With regards to benefits it is theorized that target groups which are constructed positively will receive many benefits. The benefits will be presented in such a manner that they are not beneficial specifically for the advantaged target group, but for the United States and its people. With regards to burdens it is theorized that target groups which are constructed positively will receive few burdens. Furthermore, the burdens suggested will be presented as though they are not directed at the advantaged group but at the population at large. The advantaged will not be burdened more than others.

From the tables in chapter 5 we see that of all benefits subscribed advantaged receive 31.5%, coming in second after dependents (40.9%). Of all burdens subscribed advantaged receive 28%, coming in third after contenders (34.4%) and dependents (29.6%). Benefits make up 67.5% of policy directed towards advantaged target group populations and burdens make up 32.5%. Thus, most of the policy directed towards advantaged is beneficial, however advantaged do not receive significantly more beneficial policies than the other constructions.

A possible explanation of these numbers is that beneficial policy is allocated to those who are deserving. A target group that is constructed as advantaged is constructed as positive and powerful. However, as the advantaged target group is already powerful and accordingly can influence their own political position. The advantaged are deserving, but not necessarily needy. When compared to contenders, there is no problem subscribing beneficial policies to advantaged. However, when comparing advantaged to dependents or comparing how advantaged relate to contenders versus how dependents compare to contenders, the dependent will be more deserving than the advantaged. Thus, while it is possible to bestow beneficial policies on advantaged target groups, this depends on the standing of other possible target groups.

There are two consequential observations related to this. Firstly, in many cases it may be easier to construct a group that has a relatively large amount of power as being less powerful, and thus leaning towards dependents, to appease the general public. And secondly, another trend that can be observed is that the advantaged are also called upon to bear the burden to help others. If a group is constructed as advantaged prescribing benefits can be difficult. In the perception of the viewers, the voters, why would a group who is painted as positive and powerful need benefits? Especially when there are also groups in society who are positive but not powerful who could benefit much more from beneficial policy. An example of this can be seen in the debate of 2012 between Obama (D) and Romney (R). The economic crisis occurred just four years prior, and the consequent unemployment is the first topic to be discussed during the debate. Romney is criticized by Obama for propagating policies and tax cuts beneficial to the high-income segment of society. In response to this Romney says:

'My view is that we ought to provide tax relief to people in the middle class. But I'm not going to reduce the share of taxes paid by high-income people. High-income people are doing just fine in this economy. They'll do fine whether you're President or I am. The people who are having a hard time right now are middle-income Americans... But I do want to reduce the burden paid ... by middle-income Americans. And to do that, that also means I cannot reduce the burden paid by high-income Americans.'

In this segment the actors are socially constructed as follows, high-income people are advantaged, the politicians are advantaged, and the middle-income Americans are dependent. Romney makes clear how it is difficult to subscribe beneficial policy to those who are advantaged.

The public will question what makes individuals who have a high-income deserving of this policy, especially when most of the public will view themselves as belonging to the dependent group and not to the advantaged group. By speaking of the target groups involved in terms of these constructions Romney enlarges the electorate to which he can appeal. While the taxes on high-income individuals will remain in place these are not framed as a burden but rather as not receiving beneficial policy. This is an example of a burdensome policy which is both downplayed and framed as being beneficial to society at large.

To conclude, the expectations as based on Schneider and Ingram are not reflected in its entirety. Firstly, advantaged target groups are not mentioned less frequently than the other target groups. Secondly, while advantaged groups receive more beneficial policies than burdensome policies, and the beneficial policies are framed as benefitting the general public, advantaged do not necessarily receive many beneficial policies in comparison to the other social constructions. While burdens are subscribed more than would be expected, the way these are framed is in line with what has been set out by the theory. Furthermore, the segment described above also serves as an example why it can be appealing to construct a target group as dependent rather than advantaged. Considering this example, it is clear why dependents, and not advantaged, are allocated most beneficial policies.

CONTENDERS

The second group identified by Schneider and Ingram is the group of contenders. These enjoy a high perceived position of power but, contrary to the advantaged, are constructed negatively and are often associated with an image of the underserving. Examples of contenders provided by Schneider and Ingram are moral majorities or cultural elites or other minorities but also groups such as the rich and big unions. In other words, these groups can be perceived as being a threat in one way or another to the advantaged. This group will receive both benefits and burdens. Beneficial policy will be vague and understated. On the other hand, burdens will be made symbolic and overt. Thus, it is likely that policy directed towards this group will be

especially vague and complex, making it difficult to discern who is benefiting and who is being burdened by the policy.

On the basis of this theory, the following expectation has been formulated:

Presidential candidates will prefer to avoid discussing contending target groups, but when they do speak of them it will be in a vague and ambiguous manner.

The following expectation is two-fold. The first segment refers to the frequency with which politicians will refer to contenders, the assumption here is that presidential candidates will prefer to avoid discussing contenders. The second segment refers to frequency and form in which policy is prescribed.

From the empirical analysis we know target groups are constructed as contenders in 25.31% of the cases, in third place following dependents (37.63%) and advantaged (32.3%). We also generally see an increase in the frequency with which contenders are mentioned.

A contender is not by nature a contender. Power and image are not fixed concepts but concepts which are relative. A contender contends the power of the advantaged or suppresses the power of the dependent and has an image which deviates from that of the advantaged and the dependent. In the following segment, from the debate between Obama (D) and Romney (R) in 2012, this is exemplified. The topic is healthcare and the costs and benefits of Obamacare, which is funded by the government, in comparison to a voucher system which makes use of private businesses to provide care.

'... Every study has shown that Medicare has lower administrative costs than private insurance does, which is why seniors are generally pretty happy with it. And private insurers have to make a profit. Nothing wrong with that, that's what they do. And so you've got higher administrative costs, plus profit on top of that, and if you are going to save any money through what Governor Romney is proposing, what has to happen is, is that the money has to come from somewhere... When you move to a voucher system, you are putting seniors at the mercy of those insurance companies. And over time, if traditional Medicare has decayed or fallen apart, then they're stuck.' Obama, 2012.

What this segment demonstrates is that a target group is constructed in relation to other target groups or political actors. Seniors are made advantaged through their relationship with Medicare but become dependent once more when they are left 'at the mercy' of insurance companies. Insurance companies are advantaged when seniors do not have to rely on them for

their care, despite being profit based institutions. However, insurance companies become contenders when the opposition's policies – the opposition is also a contender –take away means, which are one of the many aspects of power, from the senior citizens. It follows that none of the actors involved are positive or negative, powerful or powerless by definition. Each of these attributes is measured through comparison.

The second aspect of the expectation states that policy directed towards contenders will be vague and ambiguous. Contenders will receive both benefits and burdens, the ratio in which this occurs depends on the formation of the contending target group. However, the manner in which these policies will be subscribed differs from benefits and burdens subscribed for other target group constructions. Beneficial policy will be vague and understated. On the other hand, burdens will be made symbolic and overt. Thus, it is likely that policy directed towards this group will be especially vague and complex, making it difficult to discern who is benefiting and who is being burdened by the policy.

From the tables in chapter 5 we see that of all benefits subscribed contenders receive 25.4%, placing third after dependents (40.9%) and advantaged (31.5%). Of all burdens subscribed contenders receive 34.4% receiving more than the other three social constructions. Benefits make up 57% of policy directed towards contenders and burdens make up 43%. The relative number of benefits directed towards contenders is 25% and thus equal to what each group would get if all benefits were to be divided equally amongst the four social constructions. However, burdens are oversubscribed, and contenders are on the receiving end of more burdensome policies than any of the other target group populations. Nonetheless most policies directed at contenders are beneficial, not burdensome.

The aim of policy is to either reaffirm or cause a shift in the position a target group has on the roster of power and valance. For contenders the aim of policy can either be to make the group advantaged by causing a change in the perception or a change in power, thereby making them deviants.

In 1992 the Cold War had come to an end. However, in its wake it left the United States in an economic recession. This was once of the major topics discussed during these election debates. The presidential candidates were addressed by a member of the audience. She

experienced seeing people she cared for who were no longer able to pay their mortgages. She questioned how the candidates had personally been affected by the recession and how the politicians could be able to help the public if they did not know of the problems of the public and had never experienced them themselves. Clinton (D) replies as follows:

'I'll tell you how it's affected me. Every year, Congress and the President sign laws that make us do more things; it gives us less money to do it with. I see people in my State, middle class people, their taxes have gone up from Washington and their services have gone down, while the wealthy have gotten tax cuts... In my State, when people lose their jobs there's a good chance I'll know them by their names. When a factory closes, I know the people who ran it. When the businesses go bankrupt, I know them.'

The distribution of benefits and burdens often implies the allocation or relocation of funds. Money can only be spent once and thus money that is allocated to a certain group cannot also be given to another group. Similarly, in the case of a tax cut a certain amount still needs to come in and thus if one group is given a tax cut this most likely eliminates this option for another group. The verb to compete is synonym of to contend, when a target group population competes with another group for funds or a cut in costs this means the dichotomy of contender – dependent will once more be prevalent. This is exhibited in the segment above, the rich in this case are not contenders on the basis that they are rich, but rather because their wealth contends the wealth of others. If the rich, who are positive and powerful and thus not needing, receive a tax cut, this tax cut cannot be given to the ordinary people, the middle-class people. Another aspect to mention is that a policy or condition has not been coded as an actor during this research. However, this example makes clear that target groups who are socially constructed as dependent cannot only be juxtaposed with other target group, but also be juxtaposed with a policy or a situation – anything or anybody by which their position of strength and power can be ascertained. Examples are policies, natural phenomenon, wars and so on.

In conclusion, the expectation that candidates will prefer to avoid discussing contending target groups is not reflected by the data. Instead contenders are mentioned often, as politicians make use of contending target groups to juxtapose and define the position of other target groups, mainly the advantaged or dependents.

DEPENDENTS

The third group identified by Schneider and Ingram are the dependents. This is a group, which while positively constructed, does not enjoy a position of power. Examples of social groups which can be classified as dependents provided by Schneider and Ingram are children, single mothers or the elderly. When it comes to the division of beneficial and burdensome policies, it is likely that benefits will not be prescribed sufficiently for dependents, whereas burdens will be oversubscribed. Beneficial policies will be symbolic in nature rather than being heavily funded. When beneficial policies are designed for dependents, it is likely that these policies will be shifted to lower levels of government or the private sector. Dependents often do not mobilize in the political arena or object to the distribution of benefits and burdens as set out by the status quo as they themselves have been stigmatized and labeled by the policy process itself. In sum, dependents have little control over the design of their policies and messages to this group through these policies reinforce their difficult predicament.

On the basis of this theory, the following expectation has been formulated:

When presidential candidates speak of dependents, policy proposals put forward will be symbolic rather than concrete.

Unlike the expectations of the other social construction groups, the expectation for dependents does not describe how often dependents will be mentioned in relation to the other groups. Nor does this expectation say much on the ratio between beneficial and burdensome policies as assigned to dependents. The focal point is the way policy directed at dependent target groups is formulated. Nonetheless it is valuable to address these two aspects. Dependents are the most mentioned social construction group, making up 37.6 percent of the cases. When it comes to benefits and burdens, dependents receive 41 percent of all beneficial policies – which is more than any other target group – and 30 percent of all burdensome policies, coming in third after contenders and advantaged. Of the policies directed at dependent 72 percent is beneficial and 28 percent is burdensome.

From the empirics we see that not only do dependents receive more beneficial policies than burdensome policies, they have the most skewed division of benefits and burdens and receive the most beneficial policies of any group. However, the main question here is what form these beneficial policies take on. Schneider and Ingram theorize that policy proposals aimed at

dependents are likely to be symbolic rather than concrete. As dependents are positively constructed, presidential candidates will want to appear as though their interests are aligned with their interests. While being positive, the lack of power makes it difficult for presidential candidates to direct actual resources towards this group. When beneficial policies are designed for dependents, it is likely that these policies will be shifted to lower levels of government or the private sector. If each policy proposal aims to reaffirm or cause a change in a group's position, policies aimed at dependents aim to move dependents on the roster towards advantaged, thus aiming to empower them.

It is important to remember that not every advantaged, contender, dependent or deviant is the same. Each of these labels are given based on the perceived power and valence of the target group population in question, however there are no clearly demarcated lines as to where the line is between powerful and weak or positive and negative. Nor are there any strict rules or guidelines as to what make a target group powerful or weak, or positive or negative. A target group which is constructed as dependent is dependent on something. However, this dependency can have varying causes and the level to which a dependent is dependent is variable. However, for a target group to be constructed as dependent the group's overall valence must be equal to that of the advantaged and the issue of dependency can be solved by leaning on the advantaged groups of society.

Each policy proposed aims to bring about a shift or reaffirm a target group's position within society. Advantaged are not only the point of departure for the social construction of all target groups, but the advantaged is also the point of departure for all policy or what policy aims to achieve. The advantaged must always be enabled and bolstered and what happens to other target groups is dependent on how it affects the advantaged. For target groups which are constructed as dependents the aim of policy is to empower them, thus moving these groups towards an advantaged construction. Schneider and Ingram discuss how the homogeneity or diversity within a group of contenders is the crux of how policy is formulated for the group. This same principle can be applied to dependents. Dependents are positive but weak, to move towards advantaged a change needs to occur in this level of perceived power. One main way of bringing about this change is by uniting individual or smaller groups of dependents target group

populations. An example of this is given in the debate between Clinton (D) vs. Bush Sr. (R) vs. Perot (I) in 1992. The topic is health care reform and how the candidates view the relationship between the rising costs of health care to the medical profession and what alternative causes there could be for this influx and their proposed solutions. Bush Sr. states:

'So you can't blame the practitioners or the health -- and my program is this: Keep the Government as far out of it as possible, make insurance available to the poorest of the poor through vouchers, next range in the income bracket through tax credits, and get on about the business of pooling insurance. A great, big company can buy -- Ross has got a good size company, been very successful. He can buy insurance cheaper than mom-and-pop stores on the corner. But if those mom-and-pop stores all get together and pool, they, too, can bring the cost of insurance down.'

In this quote the mentioned groups are coded as followed; the practitioners are dependent, as are the poorest of the poor and the next range, Ross and his company are advantaged and most significantly, the single mom-and-pop store on the corner is dependent while the mom-and-pop stores all together are advantaged as they together have the power to influence their own predicament – in this case by bringing down the cost of insurance. This segment includes various methods of policy through which health care can be tackled for different target groups. A beneficial policy is proposed for the poorest of the poor, who are considered dependent, in the form of providing means by providing voucher. Another beneficial policy is proposed for those with the next range in the income bracket, also providing means but this time doing so through tax credits. The final policy proposed is to enable and build the capacity of business by uniting them. Policy aimed at dependents aims to move the dependent target group towards the dependent. This also shows how when it comes to valance and power, the two variables on which social construction is dependent, valance is valued above power. Policies targeted at dependents will never aim to move dependents in the direction of deviants, because this does not impact the advantaged positively. Although dependents have no power, their positive position reinforces the hegemonic and normative position of the advantaged.

The expectation was that when dependents are concerned, presidential candidates put forward policy proposals which are symbolic rather than concrete. This expectation has not been met. While there are instances in which this is the case, in general this is not so. The

reason for this is that when aiming to be elected by the public, focusing on constructing target groups that would not traditionally be constructed as dependents and proposing beneficial policy is a tactic that can help the speaker appeal to a larger group while not deterring their appeal to other groups.

DEVIANTS

The final group identified by Schneider and Ingram are the deviants. This group is both constructed negatively and weak in terms of the power they are perceived of holding. Examples of this group provided by Schneider and Ingram are criminals, drug addicts, communists, flag burners and gangs. Deviants are most likely to receive too little beneficial policy, and burdens will be very oversubscribed. It is easiest for public officials to inflict punishment on deviants as the public is likely to approve of punishment for a group that is constructed negatively and has no power. These policies are often high on the legislative agenda, especially in times of elections, as they are likely to rally support from many possible voters. It is therefore likely that burdensome policies will not only be numerous, but excessively burdensome in form. The tools are likely to be more coercive in nature and often involve sanctions. In the rare case that beneficial policies are directed at deviants, the form of beneficial policy is likely to be more paternalistic in nature.

On the basis of this theory, the following expectation has been formulated:

Deviants will be mentioned frequently, but only in the context of burdens.

Like dependents, the expectation for deviants does not describe how often deviants will be mentioned in relation to others. The main focal point of this expectation is the division of benefits and burdens, or rather the lack of benefits. However, Schneider and Ingram do state that deviants are likely to be high on the agenda in times of election. This is because they can be used by candidates to form a rally point for various groups of the electorate. Within the confines of this research the deviant target groups are the least mentioned target group. Deviants make up 4.8 percent of target groups mentioned, with Republicans mentioning deviants more often (58.9 percent) than democrats (41.1 percent). Deviants make up 5 percent of target groups mentioned by Republicans and 3 percent of target groups mentioned by

Democrats. While this research design does not allow for a comparison of how often certain constructions are targeted in different settings, this finding does not seem in line with Schneider and Ingram's expectations. Moreover, while deviants are indeed mentioned mostly within the context of burdens, this is not exclusively the case. Of the policies targeted at deviants, burdens make up 66.5 percent and benefits make up only 33.3 percent. Just like dependents, the ratio between benefits and burdens is extremely skewed for deviants.

The deviant group is the group which is undoubtedly worst off within society. They are the counter part of the advantaged, weak as well as negative in comparison. The deviant is a deviant because they deviate from the advantaged. Not just in power but, more importantly, in valence. A deviant target group population either holds beliefs or acts according to principles which contradict those held by the advantaged. As valence is valued above power, if you do not belong to the advantaged, there is an order of social constructions who have it better or worse. If you are not an advantaged, it is best to be a dependent, followed by contender and worst to be a deviant. This is dependent on power and valence and is reflected by what it means to belong to this group within the realm of politics and policy. It is worse to be a contender than a dependent, but even worse to be deviant. This is exemplified by both the division of benefits as well as burdens.

The question is why are deviants not mentioned? It seems deviants are not mentioned because burdens are not mentioned. While who receives the most and the least benefits and burdens of each of the target group has been discussed, it might be more notable to discuss the how the division is between each individual target group. On the assumptions of a functioning democracy each target group should get an equal division of benefits and burdens. However, if the policy propositions done throughout the election campaign reflect the division of benefits and burdens, we see this is not the case. For both advantaged and dependents, dependents even more so, far more beneficial policy is prescribed over burdensome policies. For deviants the division is most skewed, and the amount of burdens heavily outweighs the benefits. Only for the contenders does the division of benefits and burdens come close to being equal. Moreover, there seems to be a relation between the division of benefits and burdens and how often a target group is mentioned. The dependent target group has the most positively skewed division of benefits

and burdens and is mentioned most frequently, followed by the advantaged who are mentioned most often after dependents and so on. So, the group which is likely to be mentioned in relation to beneficial policy is mentioned most and the group which is likely to be mentioned in relation to burdensome policy is mentioned least. Thus, it follows that candidates prefer to discuss the allocation and division of benefits rather than the division of burdens.

The reason for this could be what has been mentioned before, people care about what they receive just as deeply as they care about what others receive. In the section on contenders we discussed how a beneficial policy not only means the allocation but also the division of benefits. A tax cut that is given to one group cannot be given to another. This is where benefits and burdens differ. While a beneficial policy has both of these aspects to it, a burdensome policy only involves the allocation of burdens but not the division of them. If one group is penalized, another group can still be penalized as well. As such, the penalization of one group does not infringe on another groups' possibility of being penalized. This also means that while various target groups can all agree on another group receiving burdensome policies, they will often not care as deeply as they will care about the allocation and division of beneficial policies because the allocation of burdens will not have an impact on them or on other target groups.

The exception to this can be found in the realm of international relations. This is the policy realm in which deviants are most frequently discussed. The reason that deviants are discussed frequently within the context of international relations it that burdens are often discussed here and there is a fine line between the other as a contender or a deviant. In this case contenders and deviants alike, regardless of power, form a threat to the self, the United States and its citizens. When the United States is discussed at the level of international relations, the differences between advantaged, contenders, dependents and deviants at a domestic level largely falls away. The large corporation, the small business, the elderly and the hard working, they are all American citizens. The allocation of burdens matters because if they would not be allocated this could have repercussions for all of America.

If each policy proposal aims to bring about a shift or reaffirm a target group's position within society, the goal of policy aimed at deviants can have one of two outlooks. The position of the deviant can either be reaffirmed, this is done through burdensome policies which limit

the target group in its potential to gain power. The other option is that policy aims to bring about a shift in the position of a deviant target group. This shift will occur in one direction, moving the deviant target group towards a dependent social construction by changing the way in which the group is perceived. This is especially the case in the realm of international relations but can also be seen in other areas of policy.

An example of this can be seen in the debate in 2016 between Clinton (D) and Trump (R). The topic discussed is the topic of immigration, on which the two candidates have two very different opinions. The question posed is clear, one has one approach, the other the other, why are you right and is the opposition in the wrong. Clinton says the following:

'I was thinking about a young girl I met here in Las Vegas, Carla, who is very worried that her parents might be deported, because she was born in this country but they were not. They work hard, they do everything they can to give her a good life.... And you're right. I don't want to rip families apart. I don't want to be sending parents away from children. I don't want to see the deportation force that Donald has talked about in action in our country... I think it's an idea that would rip our country apart... my comprehensive immigration reform plan of course includes border security. But I want to put our resources where I think they're most needed: Getting rid of any violent person. Anybody who should be deported, we should deport them... So I think we are both a nation of immigrants and we are a nation of laws and that we can act accordingly. And that's why I'm introducing comprehensive immigration reform within the first 100 days with the path to citizenship.'

In this segment the included target group populations are constructed as follows; Carla, as an American citizen, is advantaged, her parents are dependents, the opposition is the contender and any violent person is the deviant. While there are some groups in society for which the construction as deviant is not very contended, for example criminals or communists, there are other groups where framing is especially important. Immigrants fall into the latter category. In this segment a person who is an immigrant is constructed in two ways, once as a dependent and once as a deviant. An immigrant can be dependent when he or she is hardworking or deviant when he or she is considered violent. It follows that the policy proposed has a different approach and goal to tackle each of these aspects of the immigrant population. Burdens in the form of border security and deportation for those immigrants which are considered deviant and benefits in the form of comprehensive immigration reform and a

pathway to citizenship for those immigrants who are considered dependent. in order to direct beneficial policies towards this target population group whose social construction is contended the candidate first has to make a distinction within this group and construct the group as powerless but positive.

Another example of this can be seen in the health care policy realm. Medicare and Medicaid are both government-funded healthcare programs which aim to help those who qualify pay for their healthcare and medical expenses. While these two policies have similar names, the difference between the names is significant. Medicare is designed to help with long-term care for the elderly, while Medicaid covers healthcare costs for the poor. The difference between caring and aiding also signifies which group is more likely to be viewed as dependent and which as deviant. Medicare is for the elderly; the assumption is that the elderly have worked hard all their life. They belonged to the advantaged and now that they are older they remain positive but are no longer in the position to fully support themselves, but they are deserving none the less. The elderly are a group for which the construction is never contended. This is different for Medicaid. An example of this can be seen in the debate of 1996 between Clinton (D) and Dole (R). On the topic of Medicaid Dole says:

'Obviously some people are going to need help. This is the United States of America. You're not going to go without food, and you're not going to go without medical care. This is America. But at the same time, if you want to get off Medicaid, get back in the mainstream, we're going to provide jobs. We're going to say you have a 5-year limit that you can be on welfare. You've got 2 years to look for a job. We provided more money for day care in the bill that passed the Senate and was vetoed. Then it came back, and the President signed pretty much the same bill.'

As with immigrants, a distinction is made between Medicaid recipients who are and those who are not deserving. Those who need help are going to receive it, but we also see here an example of the form of benefits as described by Schneider and Ingram. They discuss how the beneficial policies directed at dependents will often reinforce the message that dependents are powerless, helpless and needy. The problems they have are their own, but they are dependent on the public to resolve them. In the words of Schneider and Ingram: 'government is responsive to them only when they subject themselves to government and relinquish power over their own choices. Even when beneficial policy is provided, it is accompanied by labeling and stigma'.

This reflected in the segment above. If it is absolutely necessary one can receive Medicaid, with the goal of coming of this as soon as possible. The tone used here also adds to this message, being more paternalistic in nature. The nature of the message is the following, we – the government with the use of the taxpayers’ dollars- will provide you with help, if you – the recipient – agree to the following set of terms and conditions. This message is not part of the rhetoric used towards the elderly.

To conclude, deviants are mentioned but not frequently. When a target group can be constructed as either deviant or dependent, the candidate will frame the target group population as dependent so as to be able to direct positive policy towards them.

ANALYSIS ON PARTY POLITICS IN AMERICA

When discussing the role of party politics on the workings of a democracy the following questions are raised; how does party affiliation influence politicians in their construction and representation of target groups? Or in the case of the United States; how do the democrats and republicans differ in how they speak of and approach different target groups? To broaden our understanding of Schneider and Ingram’s theory and to extend its application, I have tried to bring into picture the trends that can be observed for each of these two parties with regards to the social construction of target groups. I have done so by formulating expectations as to how the two main parties will discuss each of the target group constructions.

Throughout the process of this research I have made use of Atlas.ti as a tool helping me analyze the data. This program has also been used to provide numerical insights. However, while the program was very useful, it was nonetheless limited in some respects. Mainly that while it can give insight into how two variables or codes relate, it cannot combine three to provide more insight. Therefore there are several aspects of the expectations which cannot be answered numerically. Instead I will give these answers where possible, followed by observations and analysis on the influence of political affiliation on the process of the social construction of target group populations.

ADVANTAGED

Democrats make use of tax-funded programs in order to reduce inequality. In order to fund these programs, the higher income segments of society, including the advantaged, will be taxed. These taxes are perceived as a burdensome policy. Republicans will reduce taxes to allow for growth in business and limits the governments interference. These tax cuts are perceived as beneficial policy.

On the basis of this theory, the following expectation has been formulated:

Democrats will propagate burdensome policies for advantaged to advance dependents, whereas Republicans will propagate beneficial policies for advantaged for the benefit of both advantaged and others.

The empirics showed that advantaged target groups receive more beneficial policies (67%) than burdensome policies (33%) and that Democrats propose slightly more beneficial policies (69%) than Republicans (65%). However how these three components interact is not something that can be displayed numerically within the confines of this research.

However, there are still trends that can be observed from the data. When setting out these expectations it was mentioned that the expectation was that Republicans and Democrats would see other groups as being contenders, with Republicans viewing government as contenders. The following quote, which has been previously discussed in the section on dependents, shows how this is reflected in the debates. On the topic of healthcare reform Bush Sr. states:

'So you can't blame the practitioners or the health -- and my program is this: Keep the Government as far out of it as possible, make insurance available to the poorest of the poor through vouchers, next range in the income bracket through tax credits, and get on about the business of pooling insurance. A great, big company can buy -- Ross has got a good size company, been very successful. He can buy insurance cheaper than mom-and-pop stores on the corner. But if those mom-and-pop stores all get together and pool, they, too, can bring the cost of insurance down.'

This segment shows a politician who want to steer away from government in tackling health care costs for dependents. This coincides with what could be expected according to Schneider and Ingram's theory in which a shift to lower level government is predicted for dependents to decrease the actual involvement and funds required from government. Yet this is not always the case, the political affiliation of the speaker in this case should also be taken

into account. Bush Sr. is the presidential candidate representing the Republican Party. The relationship between business and government is central to the Republican Party's ideas on politics. Business is the path individuals should follow towards the American dream of freedom and economic independence or, in other words, the path towards belonging to the advantaged. Government is perceived as the opposition, as its regulations are viewed as interfering with the workings of a free market and its programs limit the freedom of the people by taking away from their rights and taking away their property, as such government prevents individuals from building their own wealth. As a result, Republicans will often propose a policy in which taxes are lowered, simultaneously restricting government and allowing individuals to expand their business, creating jobs and wealth. This theorized working of the Republican Party fits completely with the speech given above. From this we cannot only infer what policies Republican candidates will propose, but we can also make general assumptions as to how they will socially construct the target group populations and other actors and institutions referenced throughout the debate.

In conclusion, the expectation that when it comes to advantaged Democrats will propagate burdensome policies to advance dependents, where Republicans will propagate beneficial policies in order to advance both advantaged and dependents is met.

CONTENDER

Democrats focus on inequality, which stems from a lack of marketplace regulation. Those who benefit from this lack of regulation partake in reinforcing and increasing this inequality within society, and as such are likely to be considered a contender by democrat. Republicans focus on building wealth by promoting a free market and diminishing government regulations. Republicans are therefore likely to view government as a contender and view those that Democrats view as contenders as advantaged.

On the basis of this theory, the following expectation has been formulated:

Democrats are likely to view a larger group as contenders, as its focus lies on the dependents, whereas Republicans will view less groups as contenders.

From the empirical evidence we know that contenders are mentioned less than advantaged and dependents and more than deviants. This is the case for both Democrats and Republicans, with contenders making up 27% of target groups mentioned by Democrats and 28% percent by Republicans. Democrats do not mention contenders more often. However, it is difficult to ascertain from the data which groups are included as contenders and whether this is broader for Democrats than it is for Republicans.

The theory states that Republicans view government as the opposition, as interfering and preventing. The use of these words indicate that Republicans will construct federal government as the contender. Local level government, the public and businesses will all be constructed as dependents or advantaged. When power moves from federal government to local government and businesses the result is that each of the target groups, both levels of government, businesses and the public, will be constructed as advantaged. The following example from the debate of 1984 between Mondale (D) and Reagan (R) demonstrates this phenomenon. The topic starts with a question on leadership in personal terms, followed by an inquiry after Reagan's reaction on Democrats claim that Reagan's campaign is based on imagery rather than policy. This second question is the result of Reagan attending the opening ceremony of an old-age housing project when his policy at the time was to cut Federal housing subsidies for the elderly to allegedly get his picture taken. Reagan says the following:

'Now, leadership... I think you must have some principles you believe in. In mine, I happen to believe in the people and believe that the people are supposed to be dominant in our society--that they, not government, are to have control of their own affairs to the greatest extent possible, with an orderly society.' He continues on the topic of cutting federal housing subsidies: *'Our policy was not to cut subsidies. We have believed in partnership, and that was an example of a partnership between, not only local government and the Federal Government but also between the private sector that built that particular structure. And this is what we've been trying to do, is involve the Federal Government in such partnerships.'*

This segment of speech once again clearly juxtaposes the people to government and what role and which accompanying social construction they should both adhere to. If this relationship is maintained, both parties are advantaged. The same holds true for the second part in which the relationship between Federal Government on one side and local government

and the private sector on the other side is characterized as a partnership. This partnership involves a relinquishment of power on the side of federal government and an increase in power for all other parties involved, including the real target group population of this program, the elderly. Through these policies Federal Government is no longer a contender, but simply left obsolete.

Another trend which may be related to the increase in groups constructed as contenders is a change in the style of debating. From 1988 on we see the rise of negative campaigning; a shift of focus from ideas and plans to the character of the presidential candidates. This allows for plenty of instances in which politicians slander one another and are even questioned on the nature of their character by the moderator. In this case a politician will always see himself as the advantaged and his opposition as the contender. The contender has a prospective position of power and as his or her views and plans do not align with those of the candidate, he or she will be viewed negatively. An example of this is visible in the debate of 1992, the only debate included in which three political candidates go head to head. A member of the audience says the following:

'Yes, I'd like to address all the candidates with this question. The amount of time the candidates have spent in this campaign trashing their opponents' character and their programs is depressingly large. Why can't your discussions and proposals reflect the genuine complexity and the difficulty of the issues to try to build a consensus around the best aspects of all proposals?'

In response to this the candidates in turn each say that they would like to move the focus back to their ideas on policy. At the same time, they each state that their own character should and cannot be questioned and that the others are the ones who are resorting to slander and 'mud wrestling'. In this case it is made explicit that the candidates' character, and not their policy, is central to the question, however these discussions or this structure of the self as advantaged and the other as the contender is prevalent in every debate. Thus, when the character of either candidate is discussed, both advantaged and contenders will be mentioned more frequently. These cases can co-occur with instances in which a policy is discussed or be discussed without relating to any further policy realms or target groups. This shows that while including party affiliation as a variable in explaining patterns in social construction is useful,

party politics itself is also a changing thing. It is an institution with changing rules and guidelines and assumptions.

To conclude, the expectation that Democrats are likely to view a larger group as contenders whereas Republicans will view less groups as contenders cannot be answered. However the underlying assumption that they view different actors (mainly government versus business) as contenders is reflected within the context of the debates.

DEPENDENT

Democrats focus on inequality and then especially on the less-privileged. It is therefore likely that democrats are likely to emphasize dependents and propagate beneficial policies for this target group. Republicans have a different approach, with a focus on the advantaged. They are therefore likely to discuss dependents according to the expectations of Schneider and Ingram.

On the basis of the theory, the following expectation has been formulated:

Democrats are likely to emphasize dependents and propagate beneficial policies for these groups, whereas republicans will speak of dependents in the more expected manner including symbolic beneficial policies.

Dependents are the group that is mentioned most throughout the course of the debates. While this holds true for both political parties, this is the target group in which the difference is largest between the parties. Dependents comprise in 42% percent target groups coded for Democrats and 35 % percent for Republicans. Thus, while they both focus on dependents above each other group, it is true that democrats emphasize dependents more than Republicans.

The Democratic Party and its views on how to tackle societal issues differs distinctly from the Republican approach. The party is generally perceived as the party of labor and the disadvantaged, and as such inequality or rather the goal towards equality is high on the democratic agenda. From this party's perspective much inequality stems from a lack of regulation in the marketplace. Government is viewed as a means of addressing societal inequalities. Social services and government programs are a means of reducing this inequality. While tax cuts are viewed as enabling from a Republican perspective, tax cuts limit the government in its means of providing the programs Democrats propose. Tax cuts should

therefore only be aimed at helping those in need of help, versus providing benefits to those who are already well off. In short, democrats view the role of government as providing a safety net for those who need it. The difference between the two political parties and their perspective on policy is not slightly different but a stark contrast. An example of this and the relevance of the contrast between parties can be seen in the following segment of text from the debate of 1988 between Dukakis (D) and Bush sr. (R). The discussion began with the topic of social security but evolved to include the topic of a balanced budget and where to cut and where to spend tax dollars. Dukakis says:

'I'm interested in 240 million points of light. I'm interested in 240 million citizens in this country who share in the American dream, all of them in every part of this country. But as we look at the decisions that the next president of the United States is going to have to make, I just don't believe the place you go first is those programs, those so-called entitlements, which provide a basic floor of income and a modest amount of medical care for the elderly, the disabled, for people who can't make their way on their own, and in many cases, have given a great deal to this country. Vice President Bush did call Social Security ... a welfare program. It isn't. It's a contract between generations. It's something that we pay into now so that we will have a secure retirement, and our parents and grandparents will have a secure retirement. It's a very sacred contract... There are plenty of places to cut. There's lots we can do in the Pentagon where dishonest contractors have been lining their pockets at the expense of the American taxpayer'

In this segment the following groups are coded as follows; the American citizens (the 240 million points of light) are coded as advantaged, the disabled and the elderly are coded as dependents, our parents and grandparents are dependents and the dishonest contractors are contenders. How the next president of the United States is constructed depends on the path this person takes. The elderly and the disabled are constructed as deserving dependents through the accompanying description which is given. Dukakis states how these groups have often given a great deal to the United States, constructing them as positive. The fact that they cannot make their way on their own shows that these groups are not deviant, for they are positive, and not contenders because it is to no fault of their own that they are dependent on the help of others. Social security is portrayed as a contract, thus through taxing the advantaged a safety net is created for the dependent. This generation's advantaged, the American taxpayers, will become the dependents of the next generation.

To conclude, the expectation that democrats are more likely to emphasize dependents and propagate beneficial policies for these groups. This stems from a focus on inequality which is central to the Democratic party but not to the Republican party.

DEVIANT

Democrats are known for focusing on negotiations and conversations, this is exemplified by their focus on diminishing inequality by building the strengths of the less well-off. Republicans are known for propagating hard burdens and sanctions, this is exemplified by their stance on national defense.

On the basis of this theory, the following expectation has been formulated:

When democrats propagate burdens for deviants, the burdens will take the form of negotiations and conversation whereas republicans will propagate hard burdens in the form of sanctions and force.

The empirical evidence shows that deviants are the target group for which the division of benefits and burdens is skewed negatively and more so than any other social construction type. However the form of the burdens proposed has not been examined as such due to the scope of the research. Throughout the research it became clear that deviants were mentioned most frequently within the realm of international relations. The trends observed will be discussed in the following section, this also includes findings related to the differences between the two political parties. I will link back to the expectation set out above in the section below.

Thus, both democratic and republican principles on policy are reflected in the way they construct target group populations. This shows that the theory on the social construction of target group populations could be expanded to include other aspects relevant to the speaker in order to create a more inclusive theory on how target groups will be constructed. Not only is the political affiliation of the speaker a variable in how the speaker will construct target groups, the political system in which these parties operate is of just as much relevance. The United States functions as a two-party system. This means that there can always only be one winner and one loser. As such each politician will always present his or her own party as the advantaged and the

opposition as the contender. To be able to talk an issue and to agree upon something, the issue must become bipartisan and thereby taken out of the political discussion. If we were to compare how politicians running for office socially construct target group populations in different political systems, the influence of these institutions would become clearer. Think for example about the political system in the Netherlands, which makes use of a system of proportional representation. In this case there is not just one winner and parties have to form coalitions. This dichotomy between one's own party and the other party, the self and the other, as the advantaged and the contender does not apply to this situation. Instead the construction will depend on the relation between parties or how they relate on certain issues. To conclude, political affiliation is a variable which should be accounted for when considering how certain target groups will be constructed by politicians.

ANALYSIS ON THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF TARGET GROUP POPULATIONS IN RELATION TO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Throughout the process of coding a trend was perceived in which the social construction of target groups in relation to the policy realms defense and international affairs and foreign aid, in other words international relations, differed distinctively from the social construction of target group population in relation to other realms of policy. The major reason why social construction differs in the context of international relations in comparison to social construction in other policy realms is due to the different type of actors present in this realm. The actors involved are often not actors such as businesses and teachers or old folks and criminals, but rather countries and their political leaders, terrorists and communists. Thus, just as a trend of polarization and dichotomy is visible in the social construction of target group populations in other realms of policy, this is even more so in the realm of international relations. Relationships are discussed in terms of enemies and allies, allowing little room for shades of grey between this black and white type of relationship.

The advantaged in this case is clear. The United States is always powerful and positive, the advantaged. She holds a hegemonic position and is a world super power responsible for upholding the principles of freedom and democracy the world over. As such America and its

people are also burdened with helping of other countries to achieve this goal. Thus, with regards to advantaged in context of international relations this aspect of the expectation holds up, when a target group is constructed as advantaged burdens are packaged as benefits. In the debate of 1988 between Dukakis (D) and Bush Sr. (R), in which upon answering the question whether a president has to be a likeable or an effective leader, Bush Sr. answers that

'it's a question of values, not likability or loveability, it's a question in foreign affairs in experience ... You've got to understand that it is only the United States that can stand for freedom and democracy around the world and we can't turn it over to the United Nations or other multilateral organizations.'

While this is a theoretical example in which a president discusses how each party involved, from the citizens to allies and the U.S. should be viewed. A similar response is given in 1976 by Ford (R) in response to a real-life situation. The question posed here is what price the American citizens should be willing to pay; what sacrifices they will need to make to realize the objectives of the presidential candidates. This is set to a time in which the Cold War is still very much a relevant topic, there are problems with the Middle East and problems on the horizon in the Pacific. Incumbent president Ford says: 'I think the American people will be called upon to be in the forefront in giving leadership to the solution of those problems that must be solved in the Middle East, in southern Africa, and any problems that might arise in the Pacific.' In other words; in light of issues of the world the advantaged is called upon to carry the burden of helping others to the pursuit of freedom and peace.

A prerequisite to be considered an ally of the United States is a shared view of the world and a shared set of ideals. An ally can be either advantaged or dependent. An ally is constructed as advantaged when they are in the position in which they can help or work together on equal footing with the United States towards a common goal. An ally is constructed as dependent when their ideals or position on an issue align with those of the United States but when they are the ones in need of assistance.

Democrat focuses on coalition building and cooperation. An example of this can be seen of the debate of 1960, Kennedy (D) vs. Nixon (R) on the topic of nuclear disarmament during the Cold War. Kennedy says:

'I must say that I feel that another effort should be made ... to renew negotiations with the Soviet Union and see whether it's possible to come to some conclusion which will lessen the chances of contamination of the atmosphere, and also lessen the chances that other powers will begin to possess a nuclear capacity. There are indications, because of new inventions, that ten, fifteen, or twenty nations will have a nuclear capacity - including Red China - by the end of the presidential office in 1964. This is extremely serious. There have been many wars in the history of mankind. And to take a chance uh - now be - and not make every effort that we could make to provide for some control over these weapons, I think would be a great mistake'.

In this quote the United States are coded as advantaged, the Soviet Union as contender and other powers and Red China as dependent. The Soviet Union is a contender because they have the power to threaten the power position of United States but also because they have the power and the image that could mean that groups which are currently seen as dependent could become contenders if they align themselves with the contenders. Thus, negotiations are not only the first step in controlling contenders but also an important step in controlling the power and thus the position of those currently constructed as dependents. Negotiations are the first step and only when this does not work will the democrat resort to arms. The contrast between the democratic and republican perspective on negotiations versus arms as an approach to the other is reiterated by Nixon's response to Kennedy: 'And I just want to make one thing very clear. Yes, we should make a great effort. But under no circumstances must the United States ever make an agreement based on trust. There must be an absolute guarantee.' While Kennedy does not necessarily disagree with a negotiations approach, the downsides of this approach from his perspective are made clear.

Another illustration can be found in the 1980 debate between Carter (D) versus Reagan (R). The formulation of panelist Stone's question on the difference of opinion the two candidates have on the use of American military power alone poises the two candidates opposite each other. The democrat Carter has been criticized for late response to certain aggressive situations and for insufficient buildup of the Armed Forces, where republican Reagan has been criticized for being quick to use muscle and military action to deal with foreign crisis. Carter responds:

'what we've done is to use that enormous power and prestige and military strength of the United States to preserve the peace. We've not only kept peace for our own country, but we've been able to extend the benefits of peace to others. In the Middle East, we've worked for a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, successfully, and have tied ourselves together with Israel and Egypt in a common defense capability. This is a very good step forward for our Nation's security, and we'll continue to do as we've done in the past... In doing this, we have made sure that we address this question peacefully, not injecting American military forces into combat, but letting the strength of our Nation be felt in a beneficial way. This, I believe, has assured that our interests will be protected in the Persian Gulf region, as we've done in the Middle East and throughout the world.'

In this quote the United States is constructed as the advantage, Israel and Egypt as dependent and the Middle East and the rest of the world as dependent as well. By putting in the work to realize a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt they have moved from dependent towards advantaged, from other to ally. As allies the now more positive and powerful construction bolsters the position of the United States. It is thus not only a situation of helping others but helping oneself through helping others. The benefits of this type of policy will not only be reflected in the position of other countries but also in turn in the United States.

What is interesting is that regardless of the use of military forces or negotiations, both parties share typical American values. This is in line with what has been theorized about party politics. In theory both parties' value typical American values such as freedom and recognize the importance of national security, they differ in their approach to achieving and protecting these values. From this research we can conclude that while there is a discrepancy in how other parties are constructed, the role and position of the United States is normatively advantaged. By extension the American Armed Forces are always positive. They can be constructed as dependent or advantaged, depending on the situation, but never as contender or deviant. If the use of the Armed Forces is not in line with what a politician requires necessary to deal with a certain situation, the opposition will be constructed as contender and the Armed Forces as dependent. Each candidate will always view himself as positive and powerful, the opposition is considered a contender because his views are not in line with those of the politician but as he or she is running for office he or she has a certain amount of potential power. In this case the Armed Forces will be constructed as dependent because while they are

positive in the sense that they share the same American core values, they are powerless in relation to the contender, who has the power to control the Armed Forces for better or for worse. Consequently, while the social construction of target groups in the context of international relations has been discussed separately, the core findings on social construction are in line with the rest of the findings. Social construction is not just whether a group is powerful or positive, but if a group is powerful or positive in relation to another group.

Coming back to the expectation discussed for the difference between Democrats and Republicans when discussing deviant target groups, the expectation is that democrats will propagate burdens for deviants, with burdens taking the form of negotiations and conversation whereas republicans will propagate hard burdens in the form of sanctions and force. Within the realm of international relations this expectation holds true.

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

This research set out to explore how the theory on the social construction of target group populations and the implications for policy by Schneider and Ingram are reflected within the confines of a real-life situation. The setting of this empirical research was the presidential election debates between 1960 up to the most recent debate in 2016. This theory aims to explain why some groups are better off than others and how this is not only due to political power, but that process of social construction informs and is informed by political power and valance and these two factors and policy design shape and influence each other in a reinforcing cycle. An extra lens was added by looking into the influence of party politics and political affiliation on this process.

The method used to uncover how this theory and this lens applied within the given context was largely based on the data selection. The data for this research were the televised presidential election debates, using mainly the transcripts and sometimes watching or listening to the recordings of the debates. The method chosen was a process of coding and analyzing, making a codebook especially for this research and adapted to this case and making use of

computer assisted data analysis software in the form of Atlas.ti. The central research question of this study is:

How and in what manner are target group populations socially constructed and presented by Democratic and Republican candidates running for presidency during the televised presidential debates in the United States?

By applying these theories and testing them within a certain context, an insight is provided into how much explanatory power the social construction has on politics and policy and the role of political affiliation within the presidential election debates in the United States. An understanding of social constructions of target populations could mean a shift in the conventional assumptions about the dynamics of policy change, the determination of beneficiaries and losers, the reasons for differing levels and types of participation among target groups, and the role of policy in democracy.

In this final chapter I will present an overview of the findings and the following conclusions of the analysis. I will also discuss the shortcomings of this research and present my recommendations for future research.

DISCUSSION

The core argument of Schneider and Ingram in *Social construction of target populations: Implications for politics and policy* (1993) is that the social construction of target populations is an important, albeit overlooked, political phenomenon that should take its place in the study of public policy by political scientist. Without much further analysis the number as presented in the chapter on empirics show this to be true. Not each target group is featured equally, and benefits and burdens are not subscribed equally to all. However, the assumptions made by Schneider and Ingram as to how each group will be presented and how politicians will discuss the attribution of benefits and burdens to each of these groups is not in line with the findings of this research.

In the table below you will find an overview of the expectations for each of the theories and each of the social construction types.

Social construction of target populations

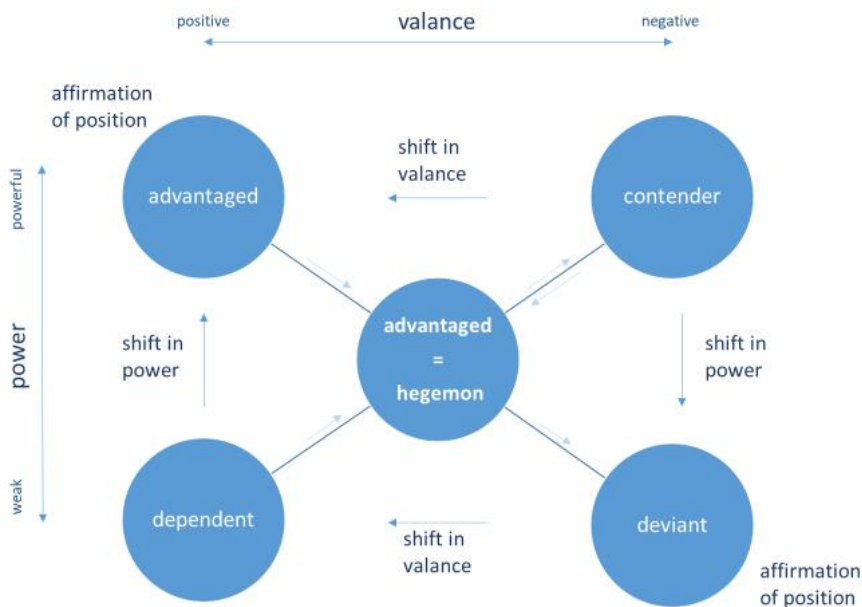
Advantaged	
Advantaged target groups will be mentioned less frequently than the contenders, dependents and deviants with many benefits packaged as beneficial to the general public and few burdens packaged as benefits.	The expectation was not met. Advantaged target groups are not mentioned less frequently than the other target groups and do not necessarily receive many beneficial policies in comparison to the other social constructions. Findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The advantaged is the starting point for all social construction. - It can be appealing to construct a target group as dependent rather than advantaged.
Contenders	
Presidential candidates will prefer to avoid discussing contending target groups, but when they do speak of them it will be in a vague and ambiguous manner.	The expectation was not met. Contenders are mentioned often. Findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contenders are mentioned frequently. Politicians make use of contending target groups to juxtapose and define the position of other target groups.
Dependents	
When presidential candidates speak of dependents, policy proposals put forward will be symbolic rather than concrete.	The expectation was not met. Findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Candidates construct target groups that are traditionally not seen as dependents as such to be able to propose beneficial policies. - This helps the speaker appeal to a larger group while not deterring their appeal to other groups.
Deviants	
Deviants will be mentioned frequently, but only in the context of burdens.	The expectation was not met. Findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Candidates prefer to discuss beneficial policy more than burdensome policies. Therefore deviants are not mentioned frequently.
Party politics	
Advantaged	
Democrats will propagate burdensome policies for advantaged to advance dependents, whereas Republicans will propagate beneficial policies for advantaged for the benefit of both advantaged and others.	The expectation was met.
Contenders	
Democrats are likely to view a larger group as contenders, as its focus lies on the	The expectation was partially met and remains partially unanswered.

dependents, whereas Republicans will view less groups as contenders.	Findings: - Republicans and Democrats view other actors as contenders. These are, respectively, government and business.
Dependents	
Democrats are likely to emphasize dependents and propagate beneficial policies for these groups, whereas republicans will speak of dependents in the more expected manner including symbolic beneficial policies.	The expectation was met.
Deviants	
When democrats propagate burdens for deviants, the burdens will take the form of negotiations and conversation whereas republicans will propagate hard burdens in the form of sanctions and force.	Within the realm of international relations the expectation was met.

In my findings the vantage point for everything is the advantaged target group. To be constructed as a contender or dependent or deviant is to be constructed as such in comparison to the advantaged. Taking a closer look at the semantics of the social constructions make this clear; to be dependent is on to depend on – , to be deviant is to deviate from – , to be a contender is to contend or compete with or for – . Each policy proposal aims to reaffirm or cause a change in a groups position on the roster. The advantaged hold a hegemonic normative position in society. To be, or to want to be, positive and powerful is the norm, and there for each group will move in its position accordingly. This move can occur on either of the two axis, however valence is valued above power. When comparing advantaged and dependent this is clear, they each have one variable in common with advantaged and one in which they differ. A dependent group is viewed as dependent on advantaged; as their ideology, their norms and values, are in line with the norm yet they do not have political power. Contenders do have this power, however as their ideology differs from the norm, they form a threat to the advantaged and are therefore contenders. They contend the advantaged in two ways. Firstly, the contender forms a threat to the position of power the advantaged hold, as they have a certain level of power themselves and thus the power to affect the position of power of the advantaged. And secondly, the contender threatens the hegemonic position of the advantaged,

as the power they hold also has the potential to affect the ideals of other and to make the ideals they hold the norm rather than those held by the advantaged.

So, each policy proposal aims to reaffirm or cause a change in a groups position on the



roster, the directions in which this can occur differ per target group. Advantaged will remain in the same position. Contenders can be moved in one of two ways, they can be moved in the direction of advantaged by a change in ideology or towards deviants in by change in power. Dependents will move in the direction of the advantaged through a shift in power. Deviants

will either have policy aimed at reaffirming their position as deviant, or they will receive policy that aims to move them in the direction of dependents through a change in ideology.

The context here is of extreme importance. The election debates are crucial to the presidential candidates as they seek office. Whether the public watches the debates, hears them on the radio or reads about them in the papers or talks about them with friends and family, what politicians say will either resonate or rub the wrong way with the public, potentially winning or losing the elections for them. Therefore political leaders will actively search for issues that have been constructed in such a way that they present an opportunity to gain power, claim credit for popular policy, or increase their legitimacy (1997. P104). This is the starting point where the findings in this research differ from the expectations based on the Schneider and Ingram's theory. Schneider and Ingram state that due to the political control advantaged enjoy – the control and access they have to the legislative agenda and the resources and capacity they have in shaping their own social construction – it is easiest for politicians to tackle public problems by giving benefits to the advantaged, even when this is not effective and when benefits giving to another group would be more effective or more

warranted. However, Schneider and Ingram also state: 'Social constructions become central to the strategies of public officials, especially those who are in elected or highly visible positions where they are expected to pay attention to public preferences, because people care intensely not only about what they receive from government, but what others are receiving as well, and why' (1997, P. 107). The importance of this quote does not lie in people caring about what they receive from government, but more so in that they also care deeply about what other receive and why. From the perspective of Schneider and Ingram benefits are more easily allocated to the deserving. However, in the eyes of the public the deserving are likely to be the dependent and not the advantaged. The advantaged are of course positive, but they are also powerful. They do not *need* beneficial policies. While the dependent are positive but are dependent on the advantaged and do need beneficial policy to better their position in society. It follows that, keeping in mind that presidential candidates speak with the election outcome in mind, it is often more beneficial for candidates to either direct policy at target groups which are constructed as dependent or at advantaged but present them as dependent in order to not only appease the target population related to the policy, but also to appease the general public.

The contribution of this study to the literature on the social construction of target group populations and the implications thereof on policy is that while the social construction of target group populations is relevant to which policy is directed at a group and how, the manner in which target group populations are constructed is highly dependent on context. While many expectations based on Schneider and Ingram's theory were not met in the reality of the presidential election debates, this does not necessarily go to say that these expectations would not be met under different circumstances. This does show that the theory can still be extended and built upon by looking how and why the act of socially constructing target groups differs for different political actors and per different political settings.

How and in what manner are target group populations socially constructed and presented by Democratic and Republican candidates running for presidency during the televised presidential debates in the United States?

To conclude the research question can be answered as follows; the social construction of target group populations by politicians during the presidential election debates is influenced

by the context within which it occurs. The answer to the question is two-fold. First, the process of construction is dependent on the context and institutional rules at work within that context. This research can as such be viewed as building upon the theory by Schneider and Ingram. Secondly, the candidate's primary goal is to be (re)elected and this drive is reflected in all that is said throughout the debates. This leads to a pattern in which certain target groups are mentioned through certain social constructions, with some being mentioned more and others being mentioned less. This process of social construction is important because the social construction of a group is reflected by the pattern with which benefits and burdens are subscribed to that group, as such target group populations will experience politics and policy differently according to the manner in which they are constructed.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

As any research, this research is bound by its limitations. There are a set of limitations which are not specific to this research but are due to the nature of the research and the methods that have been selected. Due to the qualitative nature of this research results from this study cannot be generalized or transferred to other settings. The findings are confined to the specific setting within which the subject was analyzed. While this research has provided some numbers to strengthen the validity of the findings, the general lack of numbers means that there are no thresholds which have been set to test the validity of findings. The expectations based on the theory have been formulated as such as opposed to being translated into expectations which can be accepted or discarded.

The analysis is largely based on observations made throughout the process of coding, which are later strengthened and further examined by accompanying these with numbers. The numbers aspect of this research also forms a limitation. As a researcher grows throughout the process of coding, coding is not done consistently and consequently from start to finish but evolves as the researcher does. This means that the numbers are not always reliable and mean different things at different stages of the research. I also found that the computer assisted data

analysis software used formed a limitation. While being incredibly helpful in the process of coding and analyzing, the program was not always suited to the needs of this research. For example, in many cases I would have found it very interesting and invaluable to examine how three variables or codes co-occurred as opposed to just two. I would have also liked to be able to use the program to see how variables co-occurred across primary documents or, in this case, over time.

Another difficulty I experienced was the coding of the social construction of the target group, a variable which is very subjective. The values linked to this variable, the four social construction groups, do not have distinct boundaries. They each form one quarter of a roster with power and valance on the axis. Sometimes it is near impossible to decide which quadrant a target group falls into. This is both a difficulty and a finding and as such has been addressed in the analysis.

However, the qualitative nature of this research also has its strengths. Whilst there are no thresholds, or other concrete measurement methods used, this method of analysis is well suited to a topic which may not be clear cut enough to be analyzed via those methods. This method of analysis provides in depth and detailed information on complex issues. These are all accompanied by vivid and telling examples taken directly from the data. Where possible, expectations and other influencing factors have been identified. (A. Schneider & Ingram, 1993)

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several recommendations for future research that could help enlighten the areas where this research is limited in its ability to provide answers or the questions which have been raised throughout this study. In the analysis and the conclusion, I have discussed the influences of the political system as a contextual variable in how politicians will socially construct target groups. I expect that a different political system will mean different patterns, with the example of the United States as a two-party system vs. the Netherlands and its system of proportional representation. It would be interesting to conduct further research comparing the influence of different political systems on the social construction of target groups beyond what has been discussed in this research. A study on the semantics of social construction would

be beneficial for future researchers in enabling them in the various qualitative studies they might want to conduct on the matter. Although this will remain subjective such a study could provide a set of guidelines in distinguishing between constructions. Lastly, this research focuses on the process of construction and how this is one aspect of the messages target groups receive in relation to their role in society and politics. The policy proposals which have been put forward within the context of the debates are informative, but do not provide insight in to the actual policy that is put into place after candidates come into office. It would be insightful to further study policy that is in place, not only because this is more concrete than a policy proposal, but also because policies and their form are another factor that Schneider and Ingram discuss in how target groups are socially constructed and how the implications of these constructions are rectified through the messages various policy forms send.

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