

Author(s): Kinder, Donald R., Steven J. Rosenstone, and John Mark Hansen
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Abstract

Kinder, Rosenstone, and Hansen discuss the relationship between group identification and assessments of government performance, in the context of candidate evaluations. The authors find that citizens who believe that the economic position of groups to which they feel economically connected has declined in the recent past evaluate Reagan less favorably and are less inclined to support him in trial heat matchups. This result confirms the authors' initial thesis that a performance-based political calculus depends more heavily on group frames of reference than family or national frames. The authors also find that assessments of the economic performance of "marginal groups" has a large effect on evaluations of Reagan. Furthermore, Kinder, Rosenstone, and Hansen find that assessments of the economic ups and downs of particular social groups are substantially colored by respondents' ideology, but are unaffected by party and social location factors. This result, however, does not indicate that economic evaluations of groups are simply indirect expressions of personal ideology; while judgments of political groups may be ideologically-laden, the political impact of such judgments are maintained when ideology is controlled in analysis. Finally, the authors find that the political effects of assessments of changes in group economic positions are greater when respondents are asked to evaluate change over a one-year time frame, as compared to the six-month frame.