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ABSTRACT

This study asks: Can the Cobb and Elder model (1972) of agenda setting be applied to policy making in the United States: If so, does the Reagan presidency provide a case study sufficient for studying this theory: This study takes an empirical look at Reagan’s tax policy and drug policy and draws conclusions based on Reagan’s attempts to shape the agenda for these two policies. The Cobb and Elder model focuses on the ability of a political actor to set the agenda. This study draws on their theory by focusing on two of Reagan’s policies, tax policy and drug policy. The study finds that Reagan uses six themes to address both taxes and drugs but finds it difficult to reinforce the dominant narrative. The study also finds that complexity and concreteness are large factors in the policy discussion.
DEDICATION

To my best friend, the mother of my children, and my wife, Michelle who has given up so much for the completion of this project and has always given her support, understanding, and unending love.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

I. Introduction and Importance of Study

A key to presidential success is having the ability to understanding the narratives surrounding an issue that come together to tell a story. No one politician in the United States has the ability alone to set the agenda and create a narrative for others to follow. Instead, presidents utilize the narrative process of telling stories, in order to attempt to change the meaning of a policy in order to control the solution. Public policy, and agenda setting specifically, are the result of a mosaic of competing narratives. Some narratives will move forward because the story that is being told resonates with larger audiences, while narratives that do not resonate with larger audiences are left out of the policymaking process. There are many competing narratives for any issue, which together form a dominant narrative and define an issue. Policy is broadly shaped around the narratives. Presidents oftentimes respond to the dominant narrative surrounding an issue, they use rhetoric, which is the beginning point, in order to capture the informal agenda.

There are triggering events that can begin to tell a story about a policy. Presidents must respond to these events and establish a narrative of their own and attempt to take control with an alternate narrative that changes the meaning to fit their policy needs. Cobb and Elder (1972) note that there are issues that require action and many institutions that attempt to shape the dominant narrative and solve the policy with their solution. The president is one of those institutions that is embroiled in constant policy battles and attempts
to shape their message in such a way as to lead to the solution. The primary focus is on the 
ability to direct the attention patterns of others. Specifically, this project will demonstrate 
how a president can utilize the Cobb and Elder model for agenda setting, specifically issue 
expansion, in order to achieve a public policy goal. In short, this study asks: how can the 
president utilize a narrative in order to create a narrative that others accept:

Before a discussion on agenda setting, it is important to understand the nature of 
political conflict as Cobb and Elder (1972) understand political conflict. The title of Cobb 
and Elder’s (1972) book is, “Participation in American Politics” and it describes several issues in 
shaping the agenda. There are several basic premises of agenda setting theory to Cobb and 
Elder’s model. First, issues are generated out of conflicts between expected behavior and 
perceived behavior. An issue is a conflict between two or more identifiable groups over 
procedural or substantive matters relating to the distribution of positions or resources (Cobb 
and Elder, 1972: 82). When a stakeholder or constituent expects the organization or 
government to perform a particular function, and the organization or government fails to do 
so, a conflict may arise.

II. Importance

Public policy is not created in a vacuum; rather, there are great subtleties to the 
process. Agenda setting, as well, occurs with much thought and deliberation; much conflict 
and strife. The goal of this study is to demonstrate how President Reagan attempted to set 
the agenda for the drug policy and tax policy by attempting to set the agenda with the 
general public and with Congress. The definitions that are used, the words that are chosen, 
and the symbols that are evoked, all matter when a president attempts to set the agenda. 
Central to the Cobb and Elder model, and agenda setting models in general, is the idea the 
language is used to communicate an answer to a problem.
The focus here is to explain how President Reagan approached public policy and apply Cobb and Elder’s model, specifically issue expansion. History reveals a narrative around both drug policy and tax policy, during Reagan’s years in office, as not always as the president had intended. In fact, with both policies, Reagan has to capitulate to other narratives; he was not always successful at expanding the issues according to his own narrative.

III. Framework

The Cobb and Elder (1972) theory suggests that there are many participants in the political process. Many of these participants are looking to shape the informal agenda by pushing a narrative that belies their policy beliefs. The model leads to the topic that is being examined will utilize an historical approach identifying the narratives that Reagan employed in his attempt to gain some measure of control over the policy solutions in the areas of drug and tax policy. These two policies have been chosen because they represent different types of policies, distributive and regulatory (Ripley and Franklin, 1990); as well as two conceptually different types of policy in that drug policy is a social policy, whereas tax policy is an economic policy.

While there is a great deal of research about agenda setting, there is little empirical research relating agenda setting with actual policy issues. Nor for that matter is there research applying Cobb and Elder’s model of agenda setting for two different policies within the same presidential administration. For this reason, this study examines the drug policy and tax policy in the United States from 1981 through 1989 applying the principles of the Cobb and Elder model. It is important to note that drug and tax issues did not emerge during the Reagan administration out of whole cloth. Nixon first uses the narrative of a war, and with tax policy, Reagan conjures up some ideas from the past. The dominant narratives
of the past helped define and shaped the policy solutions of the past. The narratives of the Reagan administration necessarily begin from those narratives. To the extent that the policies of the Reagan administration diverged from the policy directions of the past were a function of the changes in the narratives and supporting stories during that administration. As will emerge during this study, the narratives and ultimately the policy solutions implemented are equally a product of prior narratives as well as the changed narratives. All presidents face this same circumstance. To the extent that the existing policy narratives support the policy (and policy changes) of a president then those narratives can be used. To the extent that the narratives suggest other story lines and, therefore, other policy solutions than those desired by a president then the narrative must be changed. In order to understand how a narrative plays a major role with drug policy, it is important to establish a second policy, and analyze the narrative used with that policy.

IV. What Is Known

Presidents have to package their policy ideas in a clear and concise manner according to Bond and Fleisher’s (1990, 230) work, which relates to Cobb and Elder as they also note that the president’s greatest influence over policy comes from the agenda he pursues and the way it is packaged. Building on the theory advanced by Cobb and Elder, it is reasonable to conclude that a president has a strategy for agenda setting.

The purpose of this dissertation is: the president must attempt to set the agenda by using stories that capture a narrative that is understood and supported by others. In order to create a story, participants in the political system use an ideograph, which establishes a narrative surrounding a specific public policy, pushing the narrative through with repetition, and attempt to create a narrative that guides the action. Most importantly, the ideograph justifies action. The two ideographs examined follow the two public policies examined, drug
policy (war on drugs) and tax policy (comprehensive tax reform). Reagan used both phrases in speeches and writings over 6,500 times, thus justify an ideograph creation. History reveals that President Reagan signed many tax bills and drug bills into law, however, was he always able to have an effect on the dominant narrative in order to set the agenda according to his policy wants:

In order to establish a dominant narrative the president begins sending signals, and is a major aspect of a president’s strategy to shape a public policy. There are several ways that a president can, in the short term, attempt to influence public policy, mainly position taking, speeches, letters, and, news releases (Miller, 2012). These are seen as signals as to what the president deems as important, and his opportunity to set the agenda through establishing a narrative. In other words, presidents want to obtain space on the legislative agenda for their policy priorities. The purpose of this strategy is to build on the larger, and longer strategy, the ideograph, which is more effective in the long term at agenda setting and eventually achieving policy victories. The ideograph is more involved, and is typified by the signals sent by the president to Congress and the media. These signals include the major speeches given by Reagan in a public setting, and can be analyzed. This research study does not examine how public policies were passed into law, rather, the goal here is to understand how Reagan advocated his policy solutions and whether or not his attempts were successful at changing the narrative around a policy.

Presidents must operate within the structure of the Constitution and an atmosphere that is inherited and cannot be easily changed; the Constitution and the atmosphere are often times confining. However, this does not mean that presidents are completely constrained; presidents find strategic opportunities to exert their leadership ability and achieve legislative success. Presidents can employ an impressive array of strategic forces that aid them in their
attempts to influence Congress and the public. There are many policy issues that make fodder for examination, however, presidential agenda setting studies have largely examined most policies, but rarely has there been an examination of specific policies.

Upon examining how modern chief executives attempt to achieve policy victories two separate theories emerge from the literature, presidential leadership and presidential agenda setting. Presidential agenda setting theory (Light, 1998) posits that modern day presidents have to utilize the institution around them in order to set the agenda in order to influence the early part of the legislative process to achieve policy victories. By giving a State of the Union Address, major speeches, and other aspects of the institution of the presidency, a president can secure a place on the legislative agenda for their policy preferences. Edwards and Barrett (2001) revealed that over 97% of presidential legislative proposals will be considered by Congress and placed on the legislative agenda. Agenda setting can place a president’s policy priority on the congressional agenda, whereby Congress will consider the policy.

Leadership theory (Neustadt, 1990) suggests that the institution has real constraints to it, that in order to secure a policy victory a modern day president must find strategic opportunities and understand the timing involved on an issue. Neustadt (1990) notes that the president must marshal resources to persuade others to do as he wishes and cannot only rely on expanding the institution's legal authority or adjusting its support mechanisms.

The contention here is that presidents, in order to set the agenda, have to employ an ideograph in order to shape the narrative. Presidents have to employ a narrative of their own and attempt to expand that narrative to a larger audience in order to have a chance at setting the agenda. To achieve legislative success, a modern day president has to engage a narrative that invokes emotions, thoughts, and encourages a certain action. This allows a
president to hopefully establish what Cobb and Elder (1972, 123) refer to as issue expansion. Without a narrative, it can be hypothesized, modern day presidents, in fact no political participant, would not succeed in setting the agenda. Oftentimes, even with a strategy, there is no guarantee that a president will find success in setting the agenda. Thus, it is imperative that presidents lobby with a specific set of terms used in order to create symbols that invoke emotions, as the narrative becomes the storyline.

V. What Is Not Known

This study examines how narratives affect public policy, specifically how modern day presidents have attempted to utilize symbolic communication in order to set the agenda and affect drug policy and tax policy. Why do some presidents find success while others fail on both drug policy and tax policy: In order to answer this question the issue expansion aspect of Cobb and Elder’s model has to be examined. There is no one clear answer as to how a president establishes the dominant narrative, rather there are a series of explanations and events that allow a political actor to expand their ideas to a larger audience. This study explores the ability of President Reagan and his use of an ideograph to effect change on drug policy and tax policy.

Reagan was not the first president who attempted to change both policies, in fact with drug policy, Nixon felt that drug addiction was a national emergency and asked Congress to fund his program to fight the war on drugs (Sharp, 1994). Drug policy has had an ebb and flow to it, sometimes being put on a back burner, while other times drug policy became vitally important to the administration.

This dissertation will demonstrate that the language used by Reagan was an attempt to change the view of the policy and lead to the agenda setting for each policy. Obviously, there are other voices in the policy making process, who have their own opinions about drug
policy, and also attempt to develop a narrative to set the agenda. These other voices are in a constant competition to set the agenda. These other voices need the narrative in their voice in order to have the policy issue decided in their favor.

VI. The Research Issue

Reagan’s use of specific language during the policy debates over drug policy and tax policy will serve as the case study for this project. The goal of this dissertation is to understand how the president, as a leader, can build an ideograph in order to set the agenda; or is there other factors and institutions that establish the narrative surrounding a policy issue: In which case, the president follows the narrative, rather than establishing the narrative. In order to determine how the agenda is set, this study will test the agenda-setting theory of Roger Cobb and Charles Elder in terms of applicability. The purpose of combining these theories is to understand how the president, as a leader with goals, values, and motives, becomes a successful leader.

An ideograph methodology guides the dissertation as this method involves a content analysis and the coding of media articles, an analysis of presidential communiqué, and a review of scholarly literature on topics related to the policy-making in general, and Reagan’s tax and drug policy development, in particular.

In 1969 President Richard Nixon began the national war on drugs with a message to Congress which included policy proposals for the nation, for states, and for international partners. Nixon’s legislative proposal was set to be a rational and necessary approach to the drug problem (Sharp, 1994). The goal was to tighten the regulatory controls and protect the public against illicit diversion of drugs. Nixon also wanted to insure greater accountability and better record-keeping and to give law enforcement stronger and better tools. Nixon’s proposal attempted to stem the tide of dangerous drugs; resulting in fewer drug addictions.
Nixon was starting the war on drugs because he saw the epidemic future of illegal drugs in the United States (Sharp, 1994). During the 1980’s, drug use increased, there were a few high profile drug related deaths, and the Reagan Administration started efforts to tackle the drug problem in the United States. With his wife’s help, and her “Just Say No” campaign, Reagan attempts to lead Congress on the issue and create the ONDCP. In 1988, President Reagan signed the Anti-Drug Abuse Act which created the Office of National Drug Control Policy, a seminal event in drug policy history (Wisotsky, 1990).

The drug issue was selected as the case for examining leadership theory because it represents a domestic policy issue that is complex and provides an example of the constitutional system leadership theory. Also, the drug abuse/illegal drugs legislation had the potential to make an enormous impact on the lives of many citizens.

As Miller (2012) notes, attaining agenda status for a presidential policy preference is a major victory, it needs to be noted that agenda setting is the first step in an overall winning strategy which leads to an actual policy success; meaning, getting a bill through the committee system in Congress, then winning roll call votes in Congress, and having the ability to sign a bill into law. There are great complexities built into the policymaking process, the goal here is to look at the first step in policymaking, agenda setting. As such, this study explores presidential agenda setting, drug policy, and tax policy,

Agenda setting is the ability to influence authoritative decision-makers into considering an item, or a list of items, for a serious policy debate (Cobb and Elder, 1972). This idea is a complex process with many variables affecting the undertaking. A prominent variable that affects the process of agenda setting is the President of the United States, who has a prominent role, as well as an increasing role, in setting the formal agenda of the United States government (Anderson, 1990). Presidents must decide which policies they will
attempt to affect by recognizing a problem and establishing a goal; Shull (1989) describes this as the president’s agenda. The president attempts to score legislative victories in order to be a successful leader and must decide which issues they will address. Presidents attempt to influence both Congress and the media in order to obtain legislative success through the passage of new laws (LeLoup and Shull, 2002). Presidents would like support from the public for their policies, but they must also communicate their agenda to government agencies and to Congress. Scholars note that the office of the president is constitutionally weak; therefore presidents need to persuade others in order to overcome the purposefully weak office (Lowi, 1985; Skrownek, 1997; Neustadt, 1960). Cobb and Elder refer to this as issue expansion, whereby a participant in the political system has the opportunity to define the issue according to the narrative that they have established.

VII. Theoretical Framework

Cobb and Elder provide the theoretical framework for this project. Agenda setting research about the president examines the president, as a leader, in one of three ways, as an individual, as an institution, or as a constitutional system. Individual level analysis looks at the president as an individual, with certain strengths and weaknesses; with personal abilities and limitations. Presidents have certain political and personal goals and they act rationally to achieve those goals. The second style of leadership studies is the institutional analysis, which views the president as a complex office, inherited from the previous president, and left for the next president (LeLoup and Shull, 2002). The third type of leadership studies is the constitutional system level analysis, which understands that a president needs to have personal individualistic political skills, must utilize the office around him, but also suggests that presidents are part of a much larger system and policy choices reflect that larger system. Policies are a result of a president bargaining and compromising with other institutions such
as Congress, the bureaucracy, elections, political parties, and other domestic, as well as international, institutions. Presidents must understand and utilize this large system in order to shape their agenda.

Leadership studies typically find it useful to examine the presidency through more than a single lens, typically studying the presidency through more than one level of analysis. This study is conceptualizing the president, not as just an individual, not just an institutional officer, but as part of a much larger constitutional system. As Cobb and Elder suggest (1972), the president is a participant on the political system and struggles to expand his narrative to a larger public as are a number of other participants. In order to do so, the president has to work with Congress, the people, interest groups, and the media in order to build a narrative, and to lead and define the agenda.

Two major factors that determine success or failure to define the agenda on an issue, as well as how a policy is shaped, are the salience and complexity dimensions of public policy. There are many incentives for political actors to participate in the policymaking process. Cobb and Elder (1972) note that because different policies comport differently with these dimensions, different policies will present a distinct set of opportunities for involvement in agenda setting, influencing who will play a prominent role in the process.

Research notes (Wilson, 1989) that the type of policy and the policy area matter with regards to participation by members of Congress. Eshbaugh-Soha (2007) adds that levels of institutional activity vary across this range of public policies. He also expands on his idea by differentiating the distinct impacts that policy type has on the policy activities of Congress and the presidency, and proposes that institutional activity differs according to the dynamics of a policy’s salience. Salience encourages activity on the part of elected officials; complexity often requires policymaking outside of the public sphere. Previous research on agenda
setting using a systems level analysis has focused on foreign policy, a high salience issue, (LeLoup and Shull, 2002) while agenda setting studies using an individual level analysis and an institutional analysis tend to lack a substantive understanding regarding presidential leadership on domestic policy issues, most notably low salience issues (Bond and Fleischer, 1990). This study is innovative because it develops an understanding of agenda setting and domestic policy on a low salience issue. Gormley uses the term “hearing room” politics to describe drug use. Hearing room public policy issues are high in salience, and low in technical complexity. The public is likely to be concerned about these issues but also be able to understand it. Accordingly, the public has strong incentives to participate in these policies (Gormley, 1986, p. 608). Because of this, politicians who desire reelection are drawn to these types of policies and should devote countless resources to their adoption. Bureaucrats and interest groups, on the other hand, play a lesser role in these policies.

VIII: What Can Be Learned

According to Cobb and Elder (1972), if the general public is made aware of the issue, automatic agenda placement is likely to occur. General public awareness is most desirable for the original interest group of stakeholders because it means automatic agenda placement and possibly drastic action. As more of the public gets involved or becomes aware of an issue, the greater the number of stakeholders involved.

Presidential agenda setting involves more than personal charisma and intelligence; there are institutional factors, as noted by Cohen (1995) that allow a president to lead and to form the agenda. Presidents have a number of institutional resources at their disposal. The Cabinet is the informal designation for the heads of the federal government departments. Individuals that comprise the White House staff or "Kitchen Cabinet" are generally the closest advisers to the president. The Executive Office of the President is composed of
technical advisers including the Office of Management and Budget, which is responsible for coordinating the president's budget proposal. The vice president exists to succeed the president and to preside over the Senate, breaking tie votes if necessary, but is essentially a political resource for the president. The first lady has evolved from being largely ceremonial to being a more involved and active participant in the formation of public policy. The president has the power to propose legislation pursuant to his power to issue a State of the Union message, and to use legislative initiative and executive orders to recommend such measures as he shall judge to be necessary and expedient. Presidents typically attempt to shape the agenda through the SOTU speech (Cohen, 1995). One of the formal powers that all presidents have in their arsenal is the constitutional requirement to give this yearly speech to Congress.

While the president has a great many institutional resources in his leadership arsenal, these resources cannot alone guide the agenda. As Cobb and Elder (1972) note, setting the agenda takes far more than political skill and the ability to give a great speech. An active participant on the American political system has to build on a narrative, which espouses a solution, and expand that narrative to a larger audience.

Baumgartner and Jones (1993) make note that no single actor in the political system of the United States has the ability to focus attention as clearly as the president. Edwards (1989, 146) argues that the president may be successful given a strategically packaged agenda and a favorable contextual environment, while the president's greatest influence over policy comes from the agenda he pursues and the way it is packaged (Bond and Fleisher 1990: 230).

There are a number of theories regarding presidential leadership that attempt to explain how a president leads. Taking a departure from Neustadt, Burns, and other works on leadership, the goal here is to understand that while a president’s personal characteristics are
influential, a president has institutional mechanisms that can aide him in building a narrative for a policy issue. There are also constitutional mechanisms that the president has to consider as he attempts to become a successful leader such as political party affiliation, year of term in office, public opinion, elections, the bureaucracy, and control of Congress.

Paul Light (1980) asserts that the American presidency is a No Win Presidency; presidents must measure their effectiveness according to the time in office, when they can be most effective, when they have their greatest influence, when they have enough political capital, and which issues they can affect change. In order to better understand the limits on the presidency each of the constitutional variables need to be further explored and explained.

Strategy is an important aspect of setting the legislative agenda, according to Mahon’s (1989) work, there can be conflicts between the stakeholders aware of the conflict and the strategy taken by proponents as to how to handle the conflict. As an issue forms, the initial stakeholder identification group uses symbols to expand the issue to the attention of a greater number of people (ultimately, the general public).

Paul Light (1990) notes that presidents are faced with a conundrum when it comes to leading. Oftentimes, presidents have a difficult time determining whether to act quickly when they have the influence early in their term, or wait a bit until they have the effectiveness, after they have made friends inside the Beltway, while throughout casting a wary eye toward reelection. The result is what Light refers to as the No Win Presidency, or a no win on both counts, further circumscribing both presidential power and effectiveness. There are five reasons for the lose/lose situation: more competition from Congress; increased complexity of policy-making at the federal level; the declining influence of the office itself; the increased scrutiny and surveillance of executive activities by the Congress; and most importantly, the changed nature of the issues the institution must deal with, which
are now essentially without constituents. In short, Light's case is that the price for effective policy-making by presidents has risen in recent decades, while the resource base the chief executive needs to draw on for payment has actually shrunk.

Burns’ (1978) work on leadership is related to agenda setting because of the influence that is needed from the president. Transformational leadership occurs when a leader engages with others, not solely out of power, but in order raise motivation and morality (1978). A leader brings others into the debate and brings together mutual support for a common goal. The title of this dissertation project, Competing in a Confined Arena, is a line from Leadership (Burns, 1978, 45) and illustrates this conundrum that modern presidents face.

How can a president utilize leadership in order to shape the agenda: Is leadership necessary: Is there a competition of which the president is not a part: Does a president have to reinforce a dominant narrative in order to be a successful president: The obvious comparison is with sports, where the athletes have to compete in a confined space, a playing field, an arena, etc. Politics is similar in that there is a limited amount of resources, time, energy, room on the agenda, for all of the participants.

The policy process is complex and in the United States policymaking is a multifaceted and time-consuming process. At any given time there are numerous issues and actors attempting to get their ideas on to the formal agenda, also called the institutional agenda, and the policy agenda. This being the case, there is a great deal of competition for a place on the formal agenda. Factors that affect the formal agenda mainly include: the president, and the presidential administration, Congress, the media, a myriad of interest groups, the bureaucracy, focusing events, policy images, and public opinion. This research study focuses on the president and his ability, or inability, to focus the attention patterns of others. The president is in constant competition with other actors in the political system.
An ideograph is a research tool used largely while examining political symbolism. Cobb and Elder (1972, 93) noted that there was a very precise role for specific words in shaping the agenda. They posit that symbols have really taken political strategies to a new level; whereby symbolic imagery manipulates a policy discussion towards avenues never before thought of. An example would be the death tax; the name alone evokes images that frame the debate and shape the agenda for the public and for lawmakers. The public urged on lawmakers to repeal the death tax since taxpayers felt that they should not be taxed beyond the grave. The imagery of being taxed beyond the grave was clever and justifiable to the supporters; this ideograph worked because of the attitudes and symbols created by the language that was used. The “Three strikes and you’re out” policy is another example of an ideograph used in order to pass legislation that placed three time felons in prison for life. Once again, the imagery created by the simple phrase, related to baseball, changed the shape of the debate and shape the agenda for legislation (Miller, 2012, 20).

Weick (1979) notes that the narrative regarding an issue has to change before the policy ever changes. Story lines bring additional power of persuasion to ideographic images and create a new understanding of how to address a policy (Miller, 2012, 25). The type of policy is also important to Miller (2012, 78) as he notes that the most complex policies can still be manipulated by imagery and emotion.

An ideograph can be used as a presidential strategy that is built through the utilization of the various members of the president’s staff, through signals that include: major speeches (State of the Union, prime-time addresses to the nation, Inaugural Address), prime-time press conferences, and legislative proposals. The president, and his staff, builds coalitions with various actors and institutions including the First Lady, key members of Congress, public opinion, the cabinet, and interest groups by using key phrases and specific
language. These coalitions are aimed at gaining media interest, public interest, and framing the policy debate.

The agenda setting process does not look at the eventuality of a bill making it through the committee system and enacted into law, is discussed by both chambers and eventually passed by both the House of Representatives and the Senate, and sent to the president in order to sign the bill into law. Rather, success is dependent on the creative aspect of using language with the purpose of motivating action and justifying a policy position (Canes, 2006).

IX. Why These Issues:

Why choose the issues of drug use and tax reform: These are domestic policy issues that presidents have clearly added to their presidential agenda, most notably Nixon, Reagan, and Bush I. President Reagan was selected for the case study because of his communication skills. Reagan attempted to lead Congress on these two issues between 1981 and 1989. His attempts at shaping the agenda are important because it demonstrates that there are participants in the political system that constantly attempting to shape the agenda in their favor.

In order to mobilize a narrative, and gain support for one’s narrative, certain language is employed oftentimes highlighting specific facts and factors within the policy in order to shape the narrative. The narrative approach to policymaking uses terms and ideas that policymakers do not typically utilize in a policy debate. Stone (1997, 22) notes that words are rarely precise and can conjure up a myriad of emotions and feelings in one context versus another context. Understanding facts is a difficult prospect; rather, symbolic expressions replace facts and common terms in order to arouse attention. Miller (2012, 19) notes that language can disrupt commonly held beliefs, disrupt the sense, and/or create new
feelings about a policy. “Signs may link with other signs, images, forming ideographs, which are a constellation of signs, images, meanings, and emotions,” Miller notes. Creating a new belief or understanding about a policy is paramount to shaping the agenda, especially with drug policy and tax policy.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

I. Introduction

The key topic that is to be explored with this project is to apply Cobb and Elder’s theory to President Reagan and his narratives regarding drug policy and tax policy. Within the public policy mosaic there are many narratives that exist and a president is but one of the actor’s attempting to reinforce a narrative that is to be expanded to a larger audience. If a president is to be effective, he needs to understand that he cannot shape the agenda through the force of his personality. Rather, there is a storyline that needs to be developed that reinforce the narrative and drown out other narratives. Article II of the Constitution provides for a small number of express powers for the office of president and is often called the most loosely drawn chapter of the Constitution. Article II represents a compromise between the conflicting views of the framers over the nature of the office of the president. It appears that the framers intended the office to be one of delegated powers, since all of the powers of the national government are found in Article I, Section 8. However, inherent powers can be inferred from the vague and ambiguous powers granted to the president.

Modern presidents enjoy a plethora of communication resources that enable him to advance his legislative agenda (Barrett, 2004, 344). Presidents can utilize national prime time addresses to the nation, the State of the Union Address, the White House Communications Office, press conferences, and other avenues in order to focus attention on priority issues.
Richard Neustadt (1990) argues that governments are not unitary rational actors in the policy cycle. Decisions are political and are the result of bargaining and compromise. While the president does have a great deal of authority and power, are presidential powers enough to be the sole influence over the agenda setting? Shaping the agenda is more than a logical analysis between the president and his subordinates; there are a number of individuals and institutions that are a part of the process (Nuestadt, 1990).

It needs to be noted that the formal agenda differs from the public agenda in that the formal agenda is the domain of policy makers, such as Congress. The term congressional agenda follows the formal agenda in that it is specific to just Congress. The congressional agenda is defined as the list of items that Congress, the United States House of Representative and the United States Senate, are considering and discussing with committee hearings. The public agenda, described by many studies, following in the tradition of McCombs and Shaw (1972, 177), follows the public’s preferences. In other words, the issues that the public deem to be important become the public agenda.

At the center of policymaking is how the terms are defined. Cobb and Elder (1972, 110) argue that the narrative that surrounds the issue will largely dictate how a policy is formed. While there are many actors in the political system that would like to control the narrative, the reality is somewhat different. Policymakers follow the dominant narrative rather than create and control the narrative. Following the dominant narrative for the president is a choice at either being on the winning side of the policy battle once the issue is sent to the formal agenda, or losing his policy fight.

According to Paul C. Light’s (1999) work regarding the president’s agenda, there is a glut of new ideas as well as an ever-shrinking agenda to go along with shrinking presidential power. Previous research on the leadership capability of the president of the United States
has largely focused on either foreign policy or high-salience issues of domestic policy (Light, 1999). However, this study compares an area largely left unattended by scholarship - drug abuse policy and tax cut policy.

Under the stimulus of the New Deal, World War II, and the entrepreneurial leadership of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, there was a vast expansion of the scope and influence of the federal government and the president. Meanwhile, the United States became a world and then a nuclear power, and the presidency underwent fundamental changes that increase the likelihood that the personal attributes distinguishing one White House incumbent from another will shape political outcomes (Cohen, 1982, 515).

The chief executive became the principal source of policy initiative, proposing much of the legislation considered by Congress. Presidents began to make an increasing amount of policy independent of the legislature, drawing on their sweeping administrative powers in an era of activist government and global leadership (Cohen, 1982, 515). The president became the most visible landmark in the political landscape, virtually standing for the federal government in the minds of many Americans. The Executive Office of the President was created, providing the president with the organizational support needed to carry out his obligations (Cohen, 1982, 515).

Localizing agenda setting within the literature and in the scheme of policymaking processes sets the stage for defining agenda-setting and emphasizing its significance. Agenda setting is the study of issue salience, that is, the relative importance of an issue on the agenda of policymakers Gerston (1997) defines agenda setting as a process by which the most sensitive problems that have reached the attention of policymakers for management and disposition (p. 30). It is important to understand that agenda setting influences policymaking and policy outcomes (Rochefort & Cobb, 1994). Schattschneider (1960) also argues that
understanding the process of agenda setting is crucial to grasp the political concept and influence of power. Agenda setting is important because the definition of alternatives is the supreme instrument of power in Neustadt's theory (1990), bargaining is enabled by a framework in which the president makes the right strategic choices and proposes measures that he thinks he can persuade political decision makers to support because they are in their interest, given their responsibilities. They lend each other their status and authority, bolstering their mutual power and influence, finding common ground and facilitating the making of any bargains and policy modifications needed to secure final adoption of the measure. Their cooperation is made possible because they and the president make the right choices that guide the process of resolution; their cooperation is made necessary because of the constitutional system of “separated institutions, sharing powers” forces the president and Congress to work together to achieve mutual goals if important legislation is to be enacted (Cohen, 2010).

Agenda setting is an integral part of policy formation and the comprehensive decision-making model and incrementalism are some of the major approaches to explain policy formation (Quade, 1977; Simon, 1997; Lindblom, 1959; Wildavsky, 1979; Davis, Dempster & Wildavsky, 1966). The practical implication of Neustadt’s theory (1990, 72) is that the president cannot simply use his rhetoric, his charm, or his formal powers to achieve his objectives. Rather, he must persuade other institutions with whom he shares power that his proposals are in their interest to support, given their views and responsibilities. Neustadt’s fundamental insight (1990, 72) is that the president cannot force those with whom he must share power to act contrary to the public interest as they see it or to their own interests and responsibilities as they define them. He must make strategic choices regarding timing and presentation, the parties with whom he will engage and how he will
engage them, and how to ensure the long-term viability of his initiative. He must also assess his priorities and the impact of success or failure on his future power prospects. And he should not count upon trying to rescue a failed strategy by last-minute narratives or clever bargains.

Neustadt (1990, 47) argues that presidents cannot lead directly, instead, presidential power is a function of his or her ability to persuade relevant Washington actors that it is in their interest to cooperate. This theory assumes that there is a small Washington DC community with identifiable leaders, who the president can negotiate with directly. These leaders, whether legislative, bureaucratic, or from an interest group, can then marshal their followers in support of the president.

There is a divide in the literature between public administration scholars and political scientists. This divide centers on how much control a president has over the agenda as well as the locus of control. Political science literature, Burns (1978) for example, intimate that presidential agenda setting is the result of a president with great oratory power, a great deal of charisma, he gives a speech and the agenda becomes set. Over the past half-century, scholars have attempted to explain how presidential leadership works in practice. Much of the literature examines the give and take between the president and the legislature, looking at wins and losses and drawing conclusions from that data (Canes, 2006).. Public administrators feel that the ability to set the agenda is far more nuanced than that as evidenced by Cobb and Elder (1972, 107). There are subtleties to the narratives that surround an issue and the president is but one actor, in a system of many actors, who have the opportunity to help shape the agenda. Presidents have to work in the constitutional system, they all have access to the institutionalized presidency, they all have a certain charm or charisma about them - why then are some successful and others not:
The study of differing public policies demonstrates the fundamental need for communicating and persuading. Rochefort and Cobb (1993, 56) note that the use of language, in a persuasive manner, can not only attract attention to the issue by the public and policymakers alike, persuasive communication can also which aspect of the problem will be examined, and how to solve that problem. Miller (2012, 17) comments that the language used in policymaking is crucial because, “Policy communication is seen as a political contest among competing ideographic narratives on a symbolic playing field.” A particular narrative may rise to prominence because it is seen as a legitimate answer in the policy process. Once that narrative gains prominence, as well as dominance, the public and the policymakers can move towards action because they see the answer as legitimate. Miller concludes (2012, 17) that the policymaking process plays out through various phases of symbolic meaning making.

The effort here is demonstrate how a president, in order to become a successful leader, must use a rhetorical strategy, an ideograph, within the constitutional system, to shape the agenda for his policy initiatives. In other words, how can a president, with all of the encumbrances of the office, take a domestic policy issue, like illegal drug use or tax reform, shape the formal agenda for that issue, gain media attention for the issue, put pressure on Congress to consider the issue with great depth:

Previous research, notably political science research, relies on the assertion that agenda shaping is important to presidential relations with Congress (Bond and Fleisher 1990; Edwards 1989), but the holes develop in the research with a lack of empirical support for the ‘if’ and ‘how’ presidents strategically package their policy agendas. Agenda setting studies have largely looked at the president as an agenda shaping force with great political skills to shape the agenda through their office. Agenda setting research tends to focus on the public
agenda rather than the formal agenda rather than looking at the link between the two. Cobb and Elder’s model stipulates that the issue expansion aspect of agenda setting, the expansion of the issue to a larger audience is a crucial aspect of the president’s, or anyone else participating in the political system, ability to shape public policy. While this study cannot be considered a blueprint for presidential agenda shaping, it can explain how presidents have shape the legislative agenda and strategically packaged their policy proposals. The goal here is to understand the applicability of Cobb and Elder’s model, especially moving a narrative to a larger audience – issue expansion.

Terry Moe (1993) notes that presidents are motivated by a quest for control over the agenda and over public policy. In order to find success, presidents need some autonomy. Modern presidents gain personal and institutional autonomy in very few ways; most notably, presidents can attempt to control the agenda through the use of rhetoric. One of the few areas where presidents have control over policy can be found in the word choices that are made. Modern presidents, Moe says, respond to these unreasonable expectations placed on them by their political party, by their constituents, by the media, in order to find success by trying to shape their ideas into policy victories. Presidents have to aggressively build policy proposal that are more tractable, pose challenges, and act unilaterally whenever possible. According to Moe, by centralizing the policymaking process with the president and politicizing the institutional system, presidents gain more personal autonomy and institutional authority.

II. What Is Understood

Setting the informal and the formal agenda’s are a major aspect of Cobb and Elder’s theory (1972, 87). A conflict needs to become salient to decision makers and the public in order to expand and ultimately hope to be placed on the formal agenda for consideration.
(Cobb and Elder, 1972, 87). Awareness is naturally a necessary prerequisite for salience. As more people rally behind an issue conflict, public awareness rises and organizational or managerial awareness rises as well, as will become evident (Cobb and Elder, 1972, 151).

Cobb and Elder (1972) describe the means by which “an issue or a demand becomes or fails to become the focus of concern and interest within a polity (pp. 903-904). They propose a conflict model of agenda-setting which lays out many of the concepts and mechanisms central to agenda-setting in the context of policymaking processes (Cobb and Elder, 1983).

Cobb and Elder (1972) look at shaping the agenda as a series of steps whereby the issue is mobilized to larger and larger, or in some cases, more important, groups. In order to establish an issue there are three major steps in the agenda-setting process: issue creation, issue expansion, and agenda entrance.

In the first step, an issue is created through a series of triggering events, which must exist to help define and create an issue. An initiator, a group or person who converts a problem or grievance into an issue for a public or private reason is also necessary for issue creation. Together the initiator and the triggering device combine to form an issue (Cobb and Elder, 1972, 96)

Birkland (1997) calls these trigger events, focusing events. Focusing events are sudden, unpredictable events. Events however, do not have to be sudden to cause a discrepancy. The point is that a change in behavior causes the perceived incongruity (Cobb and Elder, 1972, 85).

The second step of agenda setting is issue expansion. For a created issue to ultimately make the formal agenda, proponents of the issue must mobilize support for their position on the issue (Mitnick, 1980: 169). When support is gained by large numbers of the
public, access to decision makers who control the formal agenda is more likely to occur. With more public awareness and support, the likelihood that access onto the formal agenda will be gained increases. Issue expansion involves two main factors, issue characteristics and symbol utilization. In short, issue expansion is the combination of narratives.

The third step, agenda entrance, is the final step at which an issue becomes part of the formal agenda and is under consideration by lawmakers. The formal agenda is very restrictive, usually to issues that have depth and durability. An issue is highly unlikely to make the agenda entrance step without legitimacy to the issue. In other words, the issue has to be perceived by the public and the policy makers as an issue worthy of action (Cobb and Elder, 1972, 97)

According to Cobb and Elder (1972, 76), agenda setting depends greatly on the dimensions of the actual issue, and they contend that a policy issue will have five main dimensions. The first dimension, degree of specificity, refers to how abstractly or concretely an issue will be defined (Cobb and Elder, 1972: 97). Is the issue one that is concrete to the general public: If so, the more concrete and well defined an issue is, the greater its chances of being placed on an agenda because it will be easier for people to comprehend (Suchman, 1995).

The second dimension is social significance, which refers to the extent to which the issue is important to the general public or peculiar to the immediate disputants (Cobb and Elder, 1972: 97). This dimension typically is looked at as the number of people who could be impacted by the issue. The greater the potential impact, the more socially significant the issue is, and the more likely that the public will be engaged(Cobb and Elder, 1972, 96).

The third issue dimension is temporal relevance. Cobb and Elder (1972, 117) refer to the time frame in which the issue exists. With the drug war it is important to understand
if the ramifications of the issue are in the short-term or long-term, because the ramifications will distinctly shape the character of the issue. Short-term issues may be urgently important or easily ignored. By the same token, long-run issues may take much time to develop and therefore could be put off by an organization for consideration, or they may have continual relevance and significance (1972, 117).

The fourth dimension, complexity, is best thought of existing on a continuum from highly complex to simple and easily understood. By controlling the complexity of the issue, presidents have a greater ability to expand the issue. Complexity can be a matter of perception, once again, the institution that defines the problem also has a greater hand in determining the agenda setting ability of the issue. Depending on how complex or technical the issue, will determine what skills are necessary to handle the issue. Highly complex issues may require a team of scientists to resolve, thereby changing the character of the issue; the public more easily understands issues with low complexity (Cobb and Elder, 1972, 120).

The last issue dimension in Cobb and Elder’s (1972, 122) list, is categorical precedence. This refers to the extent to which the issue is unique and without historical precedent, or the extent to which the issue is routine and commonplace. Managers have standardized procedures for some issues, but may have difficulty in cognitively processing extraordinary conflicts. The public is also more likely to be familiar with an issue with categorical precedence (1972, 123).

III. Presidential Leadership

Presidential leadership matters, their individual skill matters, however, so too do the resources and opportunities that occur. The presidency-centered approach to executive leadership posits that presidential legislative success is more of a result of institutional forces, opportunities, and resources, than personal charisma or individual skill. Understanding how
to utilize the presidential resources is key to understanding presidential leadership and how a president goes about building short term and long-term legislative strategies (Bond 1990).

Research on presidential leadership has largely looked at case studies and has noted that success is determined by personal characteristics such as charm and charisma. Rockman (2007) notes that the study of presidential leadership is complex because presidents vary in temperaments, but all are confronted with similar pressures while in office; presidents can control very little, except the institution that surrounds them. This study posits that there is another variable, often times overlooked by both the agenda setting and leadership literature, that affect a president’s ability to be an effective leader - a constitutional system that includes a great deal of institutions around the president (Rockman, 2007, 32-34).

Without the institutional mechanisms that modern presidents have at their disposal, leadership could be extremely difficult, or according to Light (1999) would be next to impossible considering the weakened institution of the presidency. Presidents must utilize the institutional mechanisms at their disposal, they are a necessity in the modern presidency. This is not to suggest that presidents with great charisma only lead through their charm, rather, this study suggests that all modern presidents have similar opportunities to lead, to set the congressional agenda because all presidents have the institution of the presidency around them (Light, 1999).

Presidential leadership requires a specific set of skills; it calls for presidents with the analytical insight necessary to evaluate their strategic positions correctly and the ability to take advantage of the possibilities in their environments. Presidential leadership studies categorize leadership styles in different ways. For example, Lewin (1939) classifies leadership styles in three categories: Autocratic Leadership, Democratic Leadership and Delegative (Laissez-Faire) Leadership. Weber classifies leaders as Bureaucratic Leader, Traditional
Leaders and Charismatic Leaders. Another seminal work on leadership from Hugh Heclo (1977), posits a theory regarding administrative leadership and the building of issue networks. The issue network are usually built around a specific policy issue and are formed around a specific piece of legislation. The building of an issue network is a long term lobbying strategy, usually employed, or at least started by the president with key members of the administration.

IV. Presidential Agenda Setting

For years, scholars have studied methods of managing and resolving conflict in societies. One of these methods, agenda setting, is “the list of subjects or problems to which government officials, and people outside the government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention at any given time” (Kingdon, 1984: 3). Bachrach’s Theory of Democratic Elitism (1967) provides the underlying logic for developing a theory of the sorting of stakeholder claims, or setting agendas. He tried to resurrect “the norm of participation and to reassert the social and individual value of active involvement of individuals in the processes that affect their lives” (Cobb and Elder, 1972: 9). Problems should be addressed as systematically as possible, given the existing norms and the constitutional system in which actors have to work. Dahl contends that “some issues are organized into politics while others are organized out” (Dahl, 1957: 71-72). This research document looks at agenda setting through the lens provided by Cobb and Elder (1972, p.87), who define the agenda as that set of items explicitly up for the active and serious consideration of authoritative decision makers.

V. Key Topic

The key topic that is to be explored with this project is to apply Cobb and Elder’s (1972) theory to President Reagan and his narratives regarding drug policy and tax policy.
There are many narratives that exist and a president is but one of the actor’s attempting to have his narrative expanded to a larger audience. At the core of every president’s leadership strategy is obtaining space on the legislative agenda for his most important proposals. Obtaining space on the legislative agenda is vital for the success of a president’s policy package. Previous works on agenda setting, such as Cobb and Elder (1972), Light (1982), and Downs (1967), note that a great source of presidential power comes from the ability to influence the congressional agenda.

Agenda setting is the process by which issues are brought to a formal institutional agenda and transformed into policy intentions (Mitnick, 1980: 168). This does not necessarily mean that the issue will be resolved however. In politics, an item may reach a public policy agenda for discussion or consideration, but may not reach legislation. Agenda setting in politics is concerned with why a government body decides to attend to certain subjects, but not to others. These subjects can be considered stakeholders of the system or government. Agenda-setting theory and regulatory entry is most widely credited to the work of Cobb and Elder (1972).

There are several basic premises of agenda setting theory to Cobb and Elder’s model. First, issues are generated out of conflicts between expected behavior and perceived behavior. An issue is a conflict between two or more identifiable groups over procedural or substantive matters relating to the distribution of positions or resources (Cobb and Elder, 1972: 82). When a stakeholder or constituent expects the organization or government to perform a particular function, and the organization or government fails to do so, a conflict may arise.

Problems are characterized in terms of seriousness by measuring the intensity of demands of the conflict. Easton (1953: 48) considered demands to be one of the two major
inputs of a political system. Demands are derived from wants that gain attention through an authoritative decision. Only when a demand is converted into an issue does that demand gain the power to enter a political or organizational agenda. An issue constitutes a major problem. Demands become issues when decision-makers recognize the demand as serious enough to command attention. William Mitchell (1962) considers the crystallization of demands into relevant issues is one of the most important processes in the political system (Cobb and Elder, 1972: 20).

VI. Competing Policymakers

One of the factors that needs to be explored when examining agenda setting is the idea that the president can be left out of the policymaking process. The notion of an iron triangle in a policy examines policies that are dominated by three institutions interest groups, a congressional committee or subcommittee, and a bureaucratic agency. These three institutions can coordinate a policy, a narrative, and a solution; and indeed oftentimes do; leaving others out of the narrative. The iron triangle institutions are usually like-minded and can agree to not only a narrative about a policy, but also a policy. It is rare for a president to win a majority of the battles over the narrative, so oftentimes what presidents will do is attempt to win a small part of the policy battle in order to define a part of the solution and accept part of the loaf instead of nothing.

The presidential agenda involves the list of policy proposals or ideas that the president recognizes as a priority, few items qualify (Light, 1999). These are the items that constitute a great deal of the president’s time and energy, they are refined by the president and his closest advisers, and publicized in major addresses (Light, 1999). The policy proposals that are defined as being part of the presidential agenda are the ones that receive maximum presidential attention and support.
Edwards (1989, 221) commented that the foremost skill that any president should possess in order to effectively lead, is the ability to recognize and exploit conditions for change, not creating them. There is a significant during the Reagan presidency and the beginnings of the Bush presidency on the issue of illegal drugs. In 1988 President Reagan used the State of The Union Address to address illegal drugs, whereby there were seven direct statements about illegal drugs and 10 more mentions of related crime. Following this speech, Congress initiated 52 hearings dedicated to illegal drugs. In 1989, President Bush mentions illegal drug use 31 times during the State of the Union Address; following this speech Congress held 59 hearings regarding illegal drugs in 1989.

Taking in to account the Cobb and Elder (1972, 141) agenda setting theory, presidents attempt to present an issue in a particular light in such a way that the issue takes on the importance of formal agenda status. A president has a great deal of resources at his disposal that can be used in order to get his policies implemented. A challenge to a president becomes: how does he bring other policy makers to the table and implement his policy priorities: Was President Truman correct when he asserted that the president’s job was to convince others what they should already be doing?

VII. Ideograph

The intellectual origins of the agenda-setting research in public policy relate to the pluralistic/elitism debate of the 1950s and 1960s. The crucial aspect of this debate concerns the notion of power, especially its use and distribution in society. Traditional elitists like Hunter (1953) argue that a disproportionate elite is able to establish a controlling system over a community. From this perspective, the interests and actions of a select few individuals control the formulation of policy. However, pluralists disagree. Polsby (1960) and Dahl (1956, 1961) stress the role of shifting coalitions within a system of dispersed authority.
Despite the immense research efforts by traditional elitists and pluralists, Bachrach and Baratz (1962) maintain that the notions of power remain elusive. “[P]ower may be, and often is, exercised by confining the scope of decision-making to relatively ‘safe’ issues” (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962, p. 948). From this neo-elitist perspective, the exercise of power excludes items from the agenda (Wolfinger, 1971). Elitist, pluralist and neo-elitist approaches are useful theoretical lenses to observe policymaking. They explain who influences policy formulation and how and they relate to the emerging agenda-setting tradition in the 1970s.

VIII. Presidential Narratives

Another one of the key topics that needs exploring are presidential narratives. Miller (2012) notes that proposals are often complicated and difficult to effectively communicate to a largely uninformed public or a Congress that is embroiled in an iron triangle and has ideas of their own. Thus, instead of proposing clear and precise policies, politicians often focus on presenting an image to the public. These narratives that presidents attempt to push to a larger public oftentimes meet with failure. There are many factors that preclude a successful narrative.

This study explores what presidents are doing in relation to the public by looking exclusively at what they say and, in particular, how they say it – without regard to any direct observations on public opinion. The method here codes fairly abstract types of narratives that would indicate when presidents are attempting to lead public opinion. The major assumption of this approach is that attempting to create a narrative that helps set the agenda, against anticipated resistance, will induce presidents to use certain persuasive methods that would be less useful or even counterproductive when the president anticipates immediate support.
The other factor of agenda building (Cobb and Elder, 1972, 133) symbol utilization and images utilized. “Groups can use a number of symbolic strategies to try to expand the conflict and obtain more supporters” (Mitnick, 1980: 171). Manipulation of these symbols can generate a greater public awareness and ultimately, a greater organizational awareness for the goal of agenda placement. Together, issue dimensions and symbol utilization can determine whether the issue will expand to a larger public (Cobb and Elder, 1972, 141). Again, the authors list five symbols that can be utilized for conflict expansion. It is important to remember that none of the characteristics of symbols in Cobb and Elder’s list is enough by itself to expand an issue.

Historical precedence can be manipulated to expand the issue to a greater number of people. A conflict that can be linked historically to a greater concern may be easier to expand to the greater public. When a symbol is used efficiently, and when the symbol has credibility to the general public, there is a greater chance the issue will be expanded. If a symbol is used incorrectly, its credibility with the public and with decision-makers will decline. When a symbol is overused, it tends to lose its significance and worth for the interest group. The more a symbol is used to rally different groups behind a cause, the greater the symbol saturation. A saturation point can be reached and eventually render the symbol useless to the interested party. On the other hand, while saturation is not desirable, reinforcement is desirable. Effective symbols must be reinforced in order to reach the public’s awareness and ultimately, the management’s awareness. With added reinforcement, greater awareness results. The last symbol characteristic is the urgency portent. “Symbols that have action content are more likely to be effective than symbols that have no behavioral portent” (Cobb and Elder, 1972: 139). Urgent action symbols are more likely to be expanded than conflicts that do not utilize symbols stressing urgent action.
Once an issue has been expanded, meaning that a greater awareness has been generated among the public, the agenda entrance stage has been reached. Cobb and Elder (1972, 106) list four levels of public awareness that factor into agenda placement. The lowest level, identification groups, can be thought of as the group that originally created the issue. This is the group most affected by an event or conflict. It is the goal of this interest group to generate the greater public awareness using symbols to expand the issue. The next level of public awareness is the attention group. The attention group is a small coalition of interest groups rallying behind a cause. Above this group is the attentive public, which can be viewed as the informed public on policy issues. When the conflict reaches the interests of the general public however, it has gone beyond just the informed few to become a highly salient issue.

With each higher level of public awareness, different strategies are employed to gain admission on an institutional agenda. Once a conflict reaches the mass public’s attention, and is viewed as legitimate by the public, the issue gets placed on an organization’s agenda automatically. The other lower levels require strategies. Cobb and Elder’s strategies for agenda placement on these three levels are beyond the scope of this research project. The focus here is on the three stages: issue creation, issue expansion, and agenda entrance and the five dimensions that an issue takes. Which leads to the salience of the issues relating to the likelihood that the issue will be placed on to the formal agenda.

Once a bill is under consideration by Congress, presidents must act if they want to achieve success on their policy proposal. Cobb and Elder (1972) note that the president attempts to act on a policy when the main narrative favors him. Administrations typically devise a lobbying strategy while a bill is being examined during the committee phase of policy making. In order to sway members of Congress and the media, framing the language
of the bill is essential to its success. Mayhew (2005) notes that the ability of the president, and his administration, to get Congress to address some status quo during the committee phase, gives a president tremendous influence on lawmaking. This is even true during times of divided government as Neustadt (1990) believes, presidents can have a greater effect when they persuade rather than command.

IX. Drug Abuse Literature

In a series of speeches between June and September, 1986, President Ronald Reagan called for a "nationwide crusade against drugs, a sustained, relentless effort to rid America of this scourge." His proposed legislation included $2 billion in federal monies to fight the problem, including $56 million for drug testing for federal employees. In many ways, Reagan's speeches were not only a measure of concern over drugs, they also played on and exacerbated that concern. In September 1986, the House of Representatives approved, by the overwhelming vote of 393 to 16, a package of drug enforcement, stiffer federal sentences, increased spending for education, treatment programs, and penalties against drug-producing countries which do not cooperate in US-sponsored drug eradication programs. Approved by the Senate in October, the drug bill, ultimately costing $1.7 billion, was signed into law by President Reagan. In it, a death penalty provision (unlikely ever to be carried out) was included for drug kingpins. Although legislation that had been enacted in 1984 included some anti-drug provisions, the 1986 legislation represented the first effort by Congress in 15 years to enact a major anti-drug law (Stolz, 1990, p. 8). In short, in 1986, the drug question preoccupied numerous politicians and lawmakers at the municipal, state, and federal levels, all "scrambling to put their imprint on the issue." For all, "politics have become as important as the [objective harm of the] substance" (Fuerbringer, 1986).
By the early 1990s, the issue had cooled down among politicians. Reports emanating from Washington indicated that by 1993, the administration of Bill Clinton had downscaled the war on drugs from "one of three top national priorities to Number 29 on a list of 29" priorities (Schneider, 1993, p. 1). One indicator of this scaling down of priorities: in 1993, Clinton's director of national drug control policy Lee Brown, headed a staff of 24 aides, compared with 146 who worked in George Bush's drug office. In short, from the late 1980s to the early 1990s, fear of drug abuse ceased to be a moral panic: As a social problem, drug abuse lost its celebrity status ((Schneider, 1993, p. 1).

Other indicators, measures, or manifestations of the intense concern felt in the United States about the drug issue on a wide range of fronts include the following:

During the 1970s 11 states decriminalized small-quantity marijuana possession. During the 1980s, the marijuana decriminalization initiative ground to a complete standstill; not one state decriminalized marijuana possession, and in the late 1980s and early 1990, as a result of popular referenda, two states—Oregon and Alaska—recriminalized the possession of small quantities of marijuana (Schneider, 1993, p. 1).

Celebrities such as the First Lady Nancy Reagan, comedian Bob Hope, and politician Jesse Jackson, acted as moral entrepreneurs, joining forces in speaking out against drugs. Nancy Reagan claimed that every casual recreational drug user was an "accomplice to murder," that "Drug use is a repudiation of everything America is." Anti-drug propaganda proliferated. The slogan for the 1980s (issuing from the First Lady's office) became "Just say no," that is, say "no" to drug use. "Don't even try it". "If you're going to die for something," a spokesperson for an anti-drug campaign said, "this [meaning drugs] sure ain't it." One ad suggested that taking drugs has the same effect on one's brain as frying does on an egg.
Another claimed that snorting cocaine is equivalent to putting a revolver up one's nose and pulling the trigger.

Organizations designed to deal with drug abuse sprang up in great profusion as well, with names such as College Challenge, World Youth Against Drug Abuse, the Just Say No Club, PRIDE, STOPP, Responsible Adolescents Can Help, Youth to Youth, and partnership for a Drug-Free America. Pamphlets, books, newsletters, and videotapes were offered for sale to concerned parents, teachers, and youth organizers who wanted to put a stop to drug use and abuse in their schools and communities (Reinarman, 1989).

Prior to taking office, Reagan stressed the importance of cleaning up the drug problem in America; soon after Ronald Reagan took office in 1981, his wife, Nancy Reagan, began making speeches stressing the anti-drug theme (Reinarman, 1989). It was from her office as First Lady that the "Just say no" slogan emerged. Some observers (Beck, 1981) have suggested that Mrs. Reagan chose the issue in part out of public relations considerations. Her choice of the drug issue could very well have been made to boost her public image, to suggest that she was a compassionate and concerned human being. Regardless of her initial motivation, her campaign, while, again, little more than words, bore fruit some five years after it was launched. The drug crisis of the late 1980s has to be set in the context of Mrs. Reagan's immensely publicized campaign. It was she who took the first steps toward galvanizing public concern and media attention. While other spokespersons, before and since, have "spoken out against drugs," she, possibly more than any single individual, is responsible for the success of the drug crisis. (Reinarman, 1989).

Findings such as these were picked up by the mass media extremely quickly and just as quickly were transmitted to the general public. Soon after a critical mass of articles on the crack-baby syndrome was published, it became an established fact that crack babies make up
a major contemporary medical and social problem. William Bennett, then federal drug czar, claimed that 375,000 crack babies were being born in the United States in the late 1980s—one out of 10 of all births!—a figure that was echoed by Washington Post columnist Jack Anderson and New York Times editor A. M. Rosenthal (Gieringer, 1990, p. 4). The medical care of crack babies, stated one of the most widely quoted articles to appear in a mass magazine on the subject, is 13 times as expensive as that of normal newborns (Toufexis, 1991). In New York City, the annual number of children placed in foster care in the early 1990s, compared with the number before the crack epidemic, was said to have increased five times. The New York State comptroller’s office estimated that New York City alone will spend three-quarters of a billion dollars over the next decade on special education for crack children. There is fear that these youngsters will become "an unmanageable multitude of disturbed and disruptive youth, fear that they will be a lost generation" (Toufexis, 1991, p. 56).

Over the twentieth century, drug use has gone through cycles of intense public awareness and concern and relative indifference. For some of these decades, reformers, the public, the media, or legislators focus on a specific drug which stands in for or represents the drug problem generally. The late 1980s witnessed a drug "panic," "crisis," or "scare" (Levine and Reinarman, 1988, 1987; Reinarman and Levine, 1989; Goode, 1990). Public concern about drug use, although it had been building throughout the 1980s, fairly exploded late in 1985 and early in 1986. The drug that was the special target of public concern was cocaine, more specifically, crack, a cocaine derivative. Drug use generally came to be seen as a—some say the—social problem of the decade (Reinarman, 1989). Drug use, abuse, and misuse emerged into the limelight as perhaps never before. It is possible that in no other decade has the issue of drugs occupied such a huge and troubling space in the public consciousness.
And it is possible that no specific drug has dominated center stage in this concern as crack cocaine did between 1986 and, roughly, late 1989 to early 1990 (Richardson, 1991, 455-460).

In many ways, the drug panic of the late 1980s is interesting because it was so unexpected. The 1970s represented something of a high water mark in both the use and the public acceptance and tolerance of illegal drugs. Consider these statistics provided by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA, 1989):

- During the decade of the 1970s, eleven states, encompassing one-third of the population of the United States, decriminalized small-quantity marijuana possession.
- In 1978, only a third (35 percent) of American high school seniors believed that people who smoked marijuana regularly risked harming themselves.
- Only a quarter (25 percent) of high school seniors said that private use of marijuana should be against the law (p. 141).
- In 1979, six out of ten American high school seniors (60 percent) had used marijuana at least once during their lifetimes (p. 48).
- Half (51 percent) had used it during the previous month (p. 49).
- Over a third (37 percent) had used it during the previous month (p. 50).
- One out of ten used marijuana every day (p. 51).
- In 1979, one quarter of Americans aged 12 to 17 (24 percent), nearly half of 18 to 25 year olds (47 percent), and nearly one in ten of those age 26 and older (9 percent), had used marijuana at least once during the previous year.
- Tolerance and use of a number of the other illegal drugs, while not nearly so widespread as with marijuana, were at unprecedented levels.
Something began happening in 1980 or thereabouts—for some indicators, give or take a year or so—that reversed this trend. Beginning roughly in the first year of the decade of the 1980s, public tolerance of the use of illegal drug use declined, belief that the use of illegal drugs is harmful increased, belief that use, possession, and sale of the currently illegal drugs should be decriminalized or legalized declined, and the use of these illegal drugs declined (NIDA, 1989).

At the beginning of 1985, crack, a potent crystalline form of cocaine, was practically an unknown—and unused—drug in the United States. By late 1985, the drug was beginning to be used extensively in urban areas, and the press accorded prominent coverage to it. Its previous obscurity, the seeming suddenness of its widespread use—although it had been used on a smaller scale since the early 1980s—and the degree to which it caught on in some neighborhoods made the crack story newsworthy and gave the public the impression that a major drug crisis had erupted practically overnight. Actually, the drug was and is used in large numbers only in some urban areas and, in those, only in certain neighborhoods (NIDA, 1989). The 1986 national high school senior study asked a question about crack cocaine for the first time; about 4 percent in the study said that they had used the drug at least once (Johnston, O'Malley, and Bachman, 1987, pp. 16-17, 45). Thus, it was not simply the greater danger than new patterns of crack used posed but the drama of a new, previously almost unknown, and potentially destructive, drug type on the drug abuse stage that helped generate the panic.

In June 1986, barely a week apart, two popular young athletes died of a cocaine overdose—on June 19, University of Maryland basketball forward Len Bias, and on June 27, Cleveland Browns' defensive back Don Rogers (Kerr, 1986, p. B6). Bias's death was felt to be especially devastating, to some degree, because of the proximity of Maryland's campus to
the nation's capital (Kerr, 1986, p. B6). Said one member of the House of Representatives, "Congress is predominantly male and very sports-minded." With Bias's death, he said, "you were hit with a devastating blow" (Kerr, 1986, p. B6). More generally, a nation, such as the United States, that glorifies sports figures is one which will tend to treat the death of a famous athlete as not only a catastrophe, but will see the source of that athlete's death as more common and representative than it actually is (Kerr, 1986, p. B6).

The drug-related events or developments mentioned above, which would have received a great deal of media attention in any case, were even more nationally prominent because they occurred in close proximity to major media centers—Bias's death in the Washington area, and the emergence of crack cocaine use specifically in neighborhoods in New York City and Los Angeles, "only blocks from the offices of major national news organizations" (Kerr, 1986, p. B6).

In short, the 1980s witnessed an enormous increase in public concern about drug use and abuse; all the actors in Stanley Cohen's drama of the moral panic (Kerr, 1986, p. B6) — the public, the media, politicians and lawmakers, action groups, and law enforcement—expressed strikingly and measurably greater concern about the issue between 1981 and 1989 than they had previously and than they did afterward. By nearly every conceivable subjective criterion, drug use and abuse emerged as a major social problem—perhaps the major social problem—during the late 1980s. So intense and widespread was this concern, it would seem safe to say, the United States was experiencing something of a drug "panic" at that time.

What generated such intense public concern about drug abuse between 1981 and 1989: Was Reagan behind the push to put drugs on the forefront (NIDA, 1989): Did this issue emerge as a consequence of objective factors—that is, did changes take place late in 1985 or early in 1986 to make drug use even more threatening, dangerous, or damaging than
it had been prior to that period: Had even more dangerous drugs emerged and come to be used more frequently in the mid to late 1980s than was true in the late 1970s and early 1980s: Were they used via more damaging and dangerous methods or routes of administration: Were more people dying during the "panic" period than before and after (NIDA, 1989): 

Or, on the other hand, was this concern solely a consequence of subjective factors—an illusory issue, perhaps, generated by politicians to get elected in the 1986 campaigns: If so, why in 1986, but not in 1984 or 1982: Did the panic erupt as a result of a few moral entrepreneurs who wished to condemn and eliminate an activity they deemed immoral and damaging: Was it the president leading through the use of the constitutional system: Who, exactly, was involved in the "claims-making activities" that held drug use and abuse to be a major social problem: What was it, exactly, that generated the extremely widespread and intense public concern over drug use that emerged in the mid 1980s (Levine and Reinarman, 1988):

Levine and Reinarman (1987, 1988; Reinarman and Levine, 1989) take the argument a step further and claim that in the late 1980s, America was "in the throes of a drug scare... [that] takes a kernel of truth and distorts and exaggerates the facts for political, bureaucratic, or financial purposes. During a drug scare all kinds of social problems are blamed on the use of one chemical substance or another—problems which have little to do with the drug" (1987, p. 1). Citing the surveys conducted by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), which show tens of millions of Americans to have used illegal drugs once or more, they argue that the "vast majority" of individuals who try drugs "do not become addicts—they do not end up in emergency rooms, or on the streets selling their mother's TV for a fix" (p. 10). They conclude that there are many problems that are objectively far more important than the illegal use of drugs. The "just say no" administration, Levine and Reinarman argue, "has just
said no to virtually every social program aimed at creating alternatives for inner city youth."
The drug scares of the twentieth century, they conclude, "do not aid public health; they may actually hurt it, and they give a very distorted sense of priorities and problems. This drug scare, like the others before it, is drug-abuse abuse" (Levine and Reinarman, 1987, p. 10).

Although not specific only to the 1986-9 period, one factor that helped to highlight the drug issue as a major social problem was the generally conservative political climate of the 1980s. Whether a cause or a consequence of this climate, the election of Ronald Reagan as President of the United States in 1980 set the tone for much of what was to follow throughout the decade, especially in the areas of sex, family, abortion, pornography, homosexuality, civil rights and civil liberties, and, of course, drugs (Jensen, Gerber, and Babcock, 1991, p. 657).

The 1986 elections must be counted as a source of heightened concern about the drug issue (Kerr, 1986; Jensen, Gerber, and Babcock, 1991), and the 1988 election, too, must be mentioned as a factor stirring up end-of-the-decade concerns as well (Jensen, Gerber, and Babcock, 1991, p. 657). There is something of a dialectic or give-and-take relationship between public concern and attention by politicians to a given issue. On the one hand, there is a bandwagon effect here: politicians sense that public concern about and interest in a given topic are growing and they work on the issue. Kerr (1986, p. B6) notes that Congress smells an issue and concentrates on the issue. On the other hand, while politicians took advantage of an issue that was in the incipient problem stage, once they got on the bandwagon; public concern escalated even further (Jensen, Babcock, and Gerber, 1991, p. 660). Politicians argue that it is their job to address the needs and concerns of their constituencies; dealing with the drug issue is one way of doing just that. In order to set the agenda, the drug crisis was not fabricated by politicians who stirred up an issue in the face of public indifference. The public
was not that gullible, and politicians cannot usually create feverish concern where none previously existed simply by making speeches. The drug issue tapped genuine widespread concerns on the part of the American public and on part of the political elite.

The appearance of the crack-babies story in the media was not lost on law enforcement or public attitudes toward law enforcement. In a 15-state survey sponsored by *The Atlanta Constitution*, over 70 percent of the respondents polled favored criminal penalties for pregnant women whose drug use harmed their babies (Jensen, Gerber, and Babcock, 1991, p. 657). Mothers in some 20 states have been arrested for the crime of "transferring" illicit drugs to a minor; that is, because of their own drug use, they caused the passage of said controlled substance through the placenta to the fetus they were carrying (Hoffman, 1990).

No question about it: the illicit drug use and more specifically, the crack cocaine use—of pregnant mothers emerged as an important social issue and problem sometime in the late 1980s, and it continued to haunt us into the early 1990s.

What is surprising about the issue of drug abuse is that some experts challenged the validity of the crack-baby syndrome. It was not until the early 1990s that enough medical evidence was assembled to indicate that the syndrome is, in all likelihood, mythical in nature (Neuspiel et al., 1991; Richardson and Day, 1991; Coles, 1991; Coles, 1992; Richardson, 1992; Day, Richardson, and McGauhey, 1992). The problem with most of the early research of the babies of mothers who used powdered and crack cocaine was that there were no controls (Jensen, Gerber, and Babcock, 1991, p. 661). Many of these women also drank alcohol, some heavily- and medical science knows that alcohol abuse is causally linked with at least one in utero medical problem: the fetal alcohol syndrome. In addition, no controls were applied for cigarette smoking (associated with low infant birth weight), nutritional condition, medical condition of the mother, the presence of absence of sexually transmitted
disease, medical attention (getting checkups, following the advice of one's physician—or even going to a physician during pregnancy), and so on. In other words, factors that vary with cocaine use are known to determine poorer infant outcomes; mothers who smoke crack and use powdered cocaine are more likely to engage in other behaviors that correlate with poor infant health. Mothers who smoke crack are also more likely to drink; is the condition of their children due to the alcohol or the cocaine: Mothers who smoke crack are also more likely to suffer from sexually transmitted diseases; such mothers are also less likely to eat a nutritious, balanced diet, get regular checkups, and so on (Jensen, Gerber, and Babcock, 1991, p. 659).

When the influence of these other factors is held constant, "it becomes clear that cocaine use per se does not affect infant outcomes. Rather, the lifestyle and covariates of cocaine use combine to affect the infant's status" (Richardson, 1992, pp. 11-12). While much more study is needed before a definitive conclusion can be reached, current medical opinion is leaning toward the view that "the effects of prenatal cocaine exposure that have been reported to date reflect the impact of polydrug use and a disadvantaged lifestyle, rather than the effects of cocaine" (pp. 11-12). In short, it is entirely possible that the crack-babies issue will turn out to be a "hysteria-driven" rather than a "fact-driven" syndrome. While, in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the public, the media, and even the medical profession, were sensitized to the possible harmful effects of cocaine abuse in babies, the more conventional factors were normalized, that is, their possible influence was ignored.

The media were quick to pick up on and publicize the early research that seemed to show that powdered and crack cocaine caused medical harm in newborns, infants, and even school-age children, very little media attention has been devoted to correcting this—in all likelihood—mistaken view. One rare exception is Boston Globe columnist Ellen Goodman.
Says Goodman, "It turns out that 'crack babies' may be a creature of the imagination as much as medicine, a syndrome seen in the media more often than in medicine" (1992). Dr. Ira Chasnoff, whose work originally pointed in the direction of indicating medical problems for these kids, was quoted by Goodman as saying: "Their average developmental functioning is normal. They are no different from other children growing up." Says Dr. Claire Coles, another researcher cited by Goodman, the myth of the crack baby became a "media hit," in part, because crack is not used by "people like us." "If a child comes to kindergarten with that label [crack baby] they're dead. They are very likely to fulfill the worst prophecy" (Goodman, 1992). It is likely that, because of this sensitization process and because the media rarely correct distorted, sensational stories, much of the public will continue to believe in the "crack-baby" myth for some time to come.

Periodically, the Gallup poll asks a sample of Americans the question, "What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today:" Drug abuse declined among the most important problems named by the public in Gallup polls between the early 1970s (February 1973, 20 percent) and the late 1970s (February, May, and October 1979, no mention at all), a period, ironically, as we saw, when drug use among the American public was at an all-time high. Between 1979 and 1984, drug use and abuse did not appear at all in the Gallup polls among the most often mentioned problems facing the country, indicating a relatively and consistently low level of concern about the issue.

In January, May, and October of 1985, the proportion of those polled mentioning drug abuse as the nation's number one problem fluctuated from 2 to 6 to 3 percent. In July 1986, this figure increased to 8 percent, which placed it fourth among major American social problems. In a set of parallel polls, conducted by the New York Times and CBS News in April 1986, only 2 percent named drug abuse as the nation's number one problem; by
August, the figure had increased to 13 percent (Clymer, 1986; Jensen, Gerber, and Babcock, 1991). The figure continued to grow through nearly the remainder of the 1980s until, in September 1989, a whopping 64 percent of the respondents in the New York Times/CBS News poll said that drug abuse represented the most important problem facing the country; this response is one of the most intense preoccupations by the American public on any issue in polling history. The concern at that time had been fueled by a barrage of network news programs on drug abuse and a major speech by President George Bush declaring a "war on drugs" (Kagay, 1990; Oreskes, 1990). In short, by the late 1980s, drug abuse had attained what Hilgartner and Bosk refer to as a "celebrity" status (1988, p. 57).

Notably, the 64 percent figure for September 1989 proved to be the apex of public concern about drugs; it is unlikely that a figure of such magnitude will be achieved for drug abuse again (Oreskes, 1990). By November 1989, according to a New York Times/CBS News poll, the figure had slipped to 38 percent; in April 1990, it was 30 percent; in July 1990, 18 percent; and in August 1990, only 10 percent (Kagay, 1990; Oreskes, 1990; Shenon, 1990). After that, according to the Gallup polls that continued into the 1990s, the figure remained in the 8 to 12 percent range. Why: Is Paul Light correct when he states that policy-making is becoming more complex, is Congress becoming more dominant in policy-making, does the president still have the power to lead on an issue like drug abuse, or is the issue no longer one on which presidents wish to use their political capital (Hilgartner and Bosk, 1988; Best, 1990, pp. 15-16): Late in 1989 and into the early 1990s, two additional problems overshadowed the drug issue in the public consciousness—the economic recession and the crisis and war in the Persian Gulf. The media stopped covering the drug story and the public stopped thinking about it as much (Oreskes, 1990).
Another concrete measure of how certain conditions or phenomena are perceived as burning issues at a particular time is the focus of the media on them, one specific and concrete indicator of which is the number of articles published on those subjects in magazines and newspapers. The *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* indexes all the articles that appear each year in the United States and Canada. In 1979 to 1980 (March to February), only 15 articles were published nationally on the subjects of "Drug Abuse," "Drugs and Youth," "Drugs and Sports," "Drugs and Employment," "Drugs and Celebrities," "Drugs and Musicians," and "Drug Education." In 1980-1, the tally was 37; in 19812, 29; in 1982-3, 38; in 1983-4, 48; and in 1984-5, 76. In 1985, the Reader's Guide changed the time period include in the count to coincide with the calendar year; in that full year, there were 103 articles devoted to the above-mentioned drug-related topics. In 1986, the number of articles published on these subjects totaled 280—between a two- and a threefold increase in only a year, and a six-fold increase in less than three years. But in 1987, drug use received strikingly less attention in national magazines: Only 116 articles were listed in the Reader's Guide on these drug-related topics. In 1988, 133 articles appeared; and in 1989, there was something of a rebound of interest in the subject: 222 articles on these drug subjects were listed in the Reader's Guide. But in 1990, only 128 articles on these topics appeared. It seems that the early 1990s (as with the public opinion polls) witnessed a waning amount of interest in the drug problem.

As Best (1990) says, the media and movement representatives tend to use big numbers when estimating the scope of a social problem—after all, they reason, "big numbers are better than little numbers" (1990, p. 147, 1989b, pp. 21, 32). The same applies, with even greater force, to moral panics. Orcutt and Turner (1993) demonstrate how, through "shocking numbers" and "graphic accounts," newspaper and magazine articles
distorted the extent of drug abuse in the United States in the 1980s by making it appear to be considerably more extensive than it actually was. By truncating the bottom of his graph and squeezing the Y-axis into a tighter, narrower space, the graphic artist who designed the layout of a major Newsweek article "transformed statistically nonsignificant [year-by-year] fluctuations" in a high school survey "into striking peaks and valleys" (p. 194). In this way, seeming increases in the yearly use figures were transfigured "into a tangible and threatening social fact" (p. 195). Other articles presented estimates of lifetime prevalence—or use by age 27—implying that they covered the period of use during high school (p. 198). These graphic and statistical techniques contributed to the media feeding frenzy that characterized the drug panic of the mid to late 1980s.

Another indication or measure of the degree of felt concern about an issue is the legislation proposed to deal with a given condition, phenomenon, or problem—both seriously and rhetorically—by politicians and lawmakers. In June 1986, Ed Koch, then mayor of New York City, urged the death penalty for any drug dealer convicted of possessing at least a kilogram (2.2 pounds) of either cocaine or heroin. Two months later, Mario Cuomo, governor of New York State, regarded as a more temperate politician than Koch, called for a life sentence for anyone convicted of selling three vials of crack—at that time, a quantity of the drug which sold on the street for $50. In September, one of the vocal opponents to drugs and drug dealers, during the debates over a new federal drug bill, Claude Pepper, a Florida representative said cynically, "Right now, you could put an amendment through to hang, draw, and quarter" drug dealers. "That's what happens when you get an emotional issue like this," he added (Kerr, 1986). 1986 was a turning point in drug policy as many events converged.
X. Tax Policy Literature

In order to understand how a narrative plays a major role with drug policy, it is important to establish a second policy, and analyze the narrative used with that policy. The Tax Reform Act of 1986 represents one of the most comprehensive revisions of the federal income taxes since its inception. The president was concerned that many taxpayers found the prior law unfair and overly complex. Further conquer the president believe that a number of features of the prior law text system resulted in excessive interference in labor, investment, and consumption decisions of taxpayers.

After an extensive review of virtually the entire prior text statute, the president and Congress concluded at only a thorough reform could assure a fair, more efficient, and simpler tax system. The president believed that the tax reform act establishing the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, would restore the trust of the American people in the income tax system and lead the nation's economy into greater productivity (Reagan Speech, May 14, 1986).

Reagan proposed that the tax act would make sweeping changes with three critical areas. First, The president wanted a fairer tax system, ending some of the loopholes that provided tax shelters to the rich, as well as moving 6 million low income individuals from their income tax burden. Second, the president desired a much more efficient text system that made sharp reductions in both individual and corporate taxes. The efficiency also eliminated many of the tax preferences that directly removed or less and tax considerations in labor, investment, and consumption decisions. The tax act enabled businesses to compete on a more equal basis. Third, The president and Congress desired a simpler tax system for individuals with income tax rates at 15% and 28% which replaced more than a dozen tax rates.
A primary objective of the president was to provide a tax system that would ensure that individuals with similar incomes would pay a similar amount of taxes. Reagan would attempt to establish a narrative that made the case that the ability of some individuals to reduce their tax liability excessively under the prior law eroded the tax base and required tax rates to be higher than otherwise would have been necessary.

The Act retained the most widely utilized itemized deductions, including deductions for home mortgage interest, state and local income taxes, real state and personal property taxes, charitable contributions, casualty and theft losses, and medical expenses. The president also felt that other deductions that had benefited a limited number of taxpayers were subject to restrictions under the Act.

Reagan noted that the Tax Reform Act of 1986 (P.L. 99-514, 100 Stat. 2085) implemented a tax code that at once swept away and reenacted its predecessor, the Internal Revenue Code of 1954. Although the 1986 act reenacted the great bulk of the 1954 code, the fact that Congress renamed the Internal Revenue Code indicates the importance of the changes put in place by the 1986 act.

The new law did not affect the bedrock concepts of federal taxation. Before and after the Tax Reform Act of 1986, the income tax law relied on the concept of taxing only the income taxpayers realized during the taxable year (usually in the form of cash). The new law did not initiate radical variations of taxation, such as a sales or value-added tax base. Nor did the 1986 act have any meaningful impact on other components of the existing Internal Revenue Code, including: Excise taxes, such as taxes on gasoline, cigarettes, and alcohol, estate taxes, meaning taxes imposed on the taxable value of the estate of a dead person, and Social Security taxes.
The narrative surrounding the tax policy that Reagan had proposed included the following six features: The act equalized the rate of taxation on long-term capital gains paid by individual taxpayers with the top rate of federal income taxation imposed on individuals. This was a dramatic change, because up to that point, capital gains enjoyed lower rates of taxation than did ordinary income from labor and investments, such as wages and dividends. Prior to 1986, these lower rates of taxation on capital gains led wealthy taxpayers to spend time and energy structuring their finances to maximize the portion of their incomes earned in the form of long-term capital gains. Consequently, the 1986 tax reform seemed to close a tax loophole.

The act was designed to decreased the use of tax shelters, devices taxpayers used to generate deductions and tax credits Congress accomplished this goal by enacting Section 469 of the Internal Revenue Code, known to tax experts as the "passive loss rules." The heart of the passive loss rules is that losses from passive tax shelters and losses from operating rental real estate can only be used as a deduction, or credit, against profits from other passive tax shelters and real estate. For example, a doctor could not deduct losses from real estate holdings against the income she earned in a medical practice. This largely put an end to taxpayers' use of tax shelters, which had, up until 1986, dramatically reduced federal revenues. Section 469 has a number of exceptions and limits, the most important of which are the following: (a) the rules do not apply to widely held corporations; and (b) passive losses are available in full only when a taxpayer disposes of the entire investment in a taxable sale or exchange. The new rules reportedly resulted in significant declines in the values of real estate.

The act dropped the top rate of federal income taxation of individuals from 50 percent to 28 percent. After Congress reduced the tax rate to 28 percent, however, it
increased the rate to almost 40 percent, but is on its way to reducing it again. The 28 percent rate applied equally to capital gains, discussed above, and all forms of other income. In addition, Congress reduced the top rate of taxation on corporations from 46 percent to 34 percent.

The Act eliminated deductions for interest expenses associated with buying personal consumption goods. The prior law allowing interest expense deductions for borrowing money to buy consumer goods has always been questionable because it encouraged personal consumption. This part of the 1986 act has withstood the test of time and remains an important feature of American tax law.

The Act repealed the universal individual retirement account (IRA) deduction in favor of restricting the deduction to people who did not have pension coverage through other avenues, such as their employer. Before repeal, everyone, no matter how wealthy or how much they benefited from other pension arrangements, could take a deduction for contributions made to an IRA. Now, only certain taxpayers are permitted to do so. The universal IRA deduction was appropriately considered an unjustifiable source of revenue losses. The 1986 act is applauded for this change.

The act eliminated federal income tax liability for those below the poverty line. This restored the laws as they existed in the late 1970s, when poor people were excluded from the obligation to pay taxes. This particular reform was made necessary by the effects of inflation: inflation increases people's nominal income and therefore their income taxes, even though in real economic terms they live in poverty.

Taking this into account, Reagan had an uphill battle in order to take a policy, so rich with numbers and confusing statistics, and boil it down to a few key phrases. The ideograph
(comprehensive tax reform) would become concrete, relevant to the average citizen, and easy to follow.

The first inkling of the 1986 act appeared in 1984 in President Ronald Reagan's State of the Union address. Reagan announced that he was asking the secretary of the treasury to develop and present a comprehensive plan to simplify the tax code by the year 1984. Reagan was reacting to Republican concerns that Senator Walter Mondale, Democrat of Minnesota, might propose radical simplifications of the Internal Revenue Code and thus gain political popularity of Reagan and his Republican Party hoped to enjoy. Reagan proposed that the new law be simple, fair, and broad-based. Specifically, it had to contain these features:

It had to be revenue-neutral, that is, neither adding to nor subtracting from federal revenues. Instead, the focus was on broadening the tax base and reducing rates. It had to be distributionally neutral, that is, not favor one economic group over another. It had to close major tax loopholes, such as the tax shelters described above. Reagan hoped that by closing loopholes, more taxes would be paid into the government, which would, in turn, allow an overall reduction in the tax rates (like the reduction in tax rates from 50 percent to 28 percent described above).

These proposals sat well with the powerful head of the House Ways and Means Committee, Representative Dan Rostenkowski of Illinois. Rostenkowski wanted to reduce the burden of taxation on working people and was capable of imposing his will on his committee. Without his cooperation, the proposals would have been doomed. On the opposite side of the aisle, Senator Robert Packwood, Republican of Oregon, played a less significant but nevertheless important role in working for passage of the act. The idea of an iron triangle comes into play with the House Ways and Means Committee. Reagan feared this his voice, and most importantly his own narrative, would be left out of the process.
Reagan framed the tax cuts as capable of passage only because it had features that were attractive to both conservative and liberal politicians. To fiscal conservatives, dropping tax rates represented an opportunity to impose supply-side economics - a theory of economics that assumes lower taxes will generate more government revenue in the long run. Liberal tax theorists were attracted to broadening the tax base by closing loopholes, arguably taken advantage of by wealthy taxpayers and paid for by the poor through higher tax rates. Both conservatives and liberals believed the act promised higher levels of compliance by the taxpaying public.

Since passage of the Tax Reform Act of 1986, Congress has tinkered with the tax code almost every year, generally adding to the code's complexity and length. Jeffrey Birnbaum, who wrote the book on the 1986 tax reform, said this: “The tax code is like shrubbery—the more severely it is pruned, the bigger and stronger it will grow back.”

In 1986, Congress pruned the tax code pretty severely, but it has grown back bigger and stronger and, once again, it needs to be pruned. The tax code is now about 70,000 pages long. A recent article in The Economist reported that Americans collectively spend more than 7 billion hours filing returns. That is the equivalent of nearly 4 million workers toiling full-time, year-round, just to handle the paperwork.

The Tax Reform Act of 1986 was a landmark law, made easy to digest by Reagan's simple to understand rhetoric. Reagan frames the Act as affecting every American family, every American business. It significantly reduced taxes for individuals. It eliminated many tax benefits for special interests. The 1986 tax reform leveled the playing field. No longer could a wealthy individual escape taxes by buying into a shelter. No longer could a clever investment strategy get investors out of paying their fair share. No longer could businesses participate in notorious tax shelters. Similar taxpayers paid similar taxes.
During his effort to reform the tax code in 1985, President Reagan said this: “The American people are always willing, even eager, to do their duty, but you quite naturally resent it when you see others shirking theirs. It rankles to know that your taxes are so high because others who can afford high-priced lawyers and tax consultants are able to manipulate the system to avoid paying their fair share.”

Reagan framed the tax cuts in the following fashion: “Millions of Americans dutifully and honestly file their tax returns. They just want a fair shake. They expect to pay the same tax as their neighbor who earns the same money. They expect not to feel like a sucker if they do the right thing, and that is not too much to ask. Some may wonder why we are holding this hearing. They may assume that Congress, especially in these times, cannot tackle tax reform. They may think times have changed, Congress will not compromise or work together, and special interests are too strong. That attitude is harmful to our country; it is harmful to the American people, and to our democracy. Tax reform is not just about the tax code. It is about one of the most direct relationships that citizens have with their government. It is important that Congress try to make that relationship as fair as possible.”

Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981:

- phased-in 23% cut in individual tax rates; top rate dropped from 70% to 50%
- accelerated depreciation deductions; replaced depreciation system with ACRS
- indexed individual income tax parameters (beginning in 1985)
- created 10% exclusion on income for two-earner married couples ($3,000 cap)
- phased-in increase in estate tax exemption from $175,625 to $600,000 in 1987 C
- reduced Windfall Profit taxes
- allowed all working taxpayers to establish IRAs
- expanded provisions for employee stock ownership plans (ESOPs)
• replaced $200 interest exclusion with 15% net interest exclusion ($900 cap) (begin in 1985)

Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 1982:
• repealed scheduled increases in accelerated depreciation deductions
• tightened safe harbor leasing rules
• required taxpayers to reduce basis by 50% of investment tax credit
• instituted 10% withholding on dividends and interest paid to individuals
• tightened completed contract accounting rules
• increased FUTA wage base and tax rate

Deficit Reduction Act of 1984:
• repealed scheduled 15% net interest exclusion ($900 cap)
• reduced benefits from income averaging
• reduced tax benefits for property leased by tax-exempt entities
• temporarily extended telephone excise tax (thru 1987)
• increased depreciation lives for real property from 15 years to 18 years

Tax Reform Act of 1986:
• reduced individual income tax rates (top rate 28%) and repealed capital gains exclusion
• repealed investment tax credit
• lowered corporation income tax rates; top rate lowered to 34 percent
• increased personal exemption amount from $1,080 to $2,000
• set uniform capitalization rules for manufacturing or construction
• increased standard deduction from $3,670 to $5,000 (joints)
• limited deduction for nonbusiness interest
• repealed second earner deduction
• limited passive losses
• established income limits on use of IRAs for taxpayers covered by pensions
• revised corporate minimum tax C repealed sales tax deduction for individuals
• set 2-percent floor on miscellaneous itemized deductions

XI. Public Policy Literature

Lowi (1972) first argued that the type of policy affects the politics associated with the issue: for political scientists to truly explain variation in political processes, they had to consider the policy itself and its impact on the decisions of political actors. In order to explain this Lowi (1972) created a typology of public policy, namely: distributive, redistributive, regulatory, and constituent policies, a cross section of coercion. With it, he demonstrated that the dominance of different policy types explains institutional preeminence of the presidency or Congress.

According to Lowi (1972) around the time period when regulatory and distributive policies gained in prominence, the president’s role in policymaking also increased. This relationship could attribute significance to the theory here. Shull (1983) concludes that presidents are most influential over distributive policies, and Spitzer (1983) notes that presidents propose more redistributive policies, and are least successful with regulatory policies.

The type of policy matters a great deal when looking at presidential success (Gormley, 1986). Presidents have the greatest influence when a policy is distributive rather than regulatory (Shull, 1983) (Jones, 1994). The highly complex nature of regulatory policy making often times is regarded as a challenge and less likely to receive much support from
Congress (Bond and Fleischer, 1990). Taking this into account, the following research plan is generated based on the Cobb and Elder Model of issue expansion as well as the type of public policy.

XII. Questions and Rationale

The research protocol follows a case study approach as evidenced by the above literature. The literature demonstrates a need for a case study approach.

Research Question 1: What were the dominant narratives surrounding drug policy and tax policy during the Reagan Presidency:

Research Question 2: How did Reagan respond to the dominant narratives surrounding tax policy and drug policy:

Research Question 3: What words or phrases surround the ideographs for drug policy (war on drugs) and tax policy (comprehensive tax reform):

Research Question 4: Can a president attempt to set the agenda by using similar narratives for different policy types:
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

I. Approach

How does a president shape the agenda: In order to measure the ability of a president to shape the agenda, Cobb and Elder (1972: 110) note that a president must be able to capture some aspect of the narrative that shapes the problem definition; mobilizing symbols relates to the ripeness of the issue and allows the president to shape the terms for issue expansion and ultimately to shape the formal agenda. It is important to establish what is the agenda as well as to establish the parameters of shaping the agenda. Both policies that are examined in this dissertation, drug policy and tax policy, were looked at by Reagan as needing change. As such, the goal here is to uncover how Reagan changed the images surrounding both policies in order to effectuate change as well as to compare both policies to determine similarities between the narratives that shape the limits of policy solutions.

The purpose here is to determine how Reagan went about shaping the agenda for these policy victories. With distinct types of policies the goal is to compare the narratives around both policies and what, if anything, Reagan was able to do with his own words.

The ability to shape the agenda, the ability to reinforce a narrative, is as much an art form as it is a science. An example of Reagan’s attempt at shaping the agenda and establishing a narrative comes from a campaign speech from September 1980, “Government regulation, like fire, makes a good servant but a bad master. We must keep the rate of growth of government spending at reasonable and prudent levels. We must reduce personal income
tax rates and accelerate and simplify depreciation schedules in an orderly, systematic way to remove disincentives to work, savings, investment and productivity. We must move boldly, decisively and quickly to control the runaway growth of Federal spending, to remove the tax disincentives that are throttling the economy, and to reform the regulatory web that is smothering it.

Cobb and Elder’s agenda shaping model (1972, 85) posits the idea that there is narrative surrounding an issue. The narrative surrounding the issue is not controlled by a single group or person, rather, people and institutions attempt to shape the agenda by controlling the narrative but find the relationship is oftentimes beyond their control. Presidents, Congress, the media, and interest groups are typically responding to the dominant narrative of an issue and have to proceed accordingly. While the president is the center of the political system in the United States, he cannot control the narrative, it is beyond him to do so. Presidents find that the narrative controls them, not the other way around. History reveals with both tax policy and drug policy, during the Reagan years, that Reagan attempted to control the narrative but instead was a respondent to the narrative that surrounded the issues.

Was Reagan able to shape the agenda or reinforce a narrative: Many policymakers can reinforce the mosaic that is a narrative; the president is one of those political actors. The following approach looks at Reagan’s words in order to test the research questions.

II. Qualitative Research Approach

The type of research that follows an observation made of human behavior is qualitative, specifically, a case study design. The method used for selecting Reagan’s speeches, the words Reagan used, is one whereby Reagan is looked at over the years. In order to determine if Reagan’s own narrative changes it is useful to look at the word choices
preceding major policy initiatives. Qualitative research designs are used as an avenue to test naturalistic research or inquiry (Taylor, 1977) of typical actions. The main idea behind utilizing a qualitative approach is that a researcher can make direct observations of human behavior in everyday life, for example, collecting data from presidential speeches. The study of complex ideas and complex interactions of institutions like the presidency, qualitative methodology may be the most appropriate research strategy (Reid, 1987). There are benefits to this type of research, notably; there is an understanding of the dynamic processes, meanings, communication patterns, and experiences that construct reality (Daly, 1992). Babbie (1986) notes that qualitative approaches also have the advantages of flexibility, in-depth analysis, and the potential to observe a variety of aspects of a social situation. A qualitative researcher can make observational notes while studying the thoughts and words of a subject over time. For this research, Reagan’s words are subject to observation in order to assess how he shape the agenda for drug policy and tax policy.

Qualitative research is concerned with non-statistical methods of inquiry and analysis of social phenomena. Unlike the deductive approach of quantitative research, qualitative research draws on an inductive process. The main difference is that there are themes and categories that emerge through analysis of data collected by such techniques as interviews, observations, and case studies. Much like this research project, samples are usually small and are often purposively selected.

A major justification for using a qualitative approach is that with presidential speeches, qualitative research uses detailed descriptions from the perspective of the research participants themselves as a means of examining specific issues and problems under study. The hypothesis, or hypotheses that are utilized come from an inductive process and are a result of the research questions. As such, the hypotheses that are generated are done so with
the data collected and analyzed in order to show patterns. Unlike quantitative methodology, the hypotheses are not formed and tested. Rather, the research data is used as a source of knowledge; the hypotheses are generated/developed from the answers.

There are several types of qualitative research, which is referred to by a variety of terms, reflecting several research approaches, notably grounded theory. The term, grounded theory, comes from the notion that the hypotheses that are generated come from the ground, or rooted in observation. Qualitative research is described as a way to describe systematic observations of social behavior with no preconceived hypotheses to be tested (Babbie, 1986). Hypotheses emerge from the observation and interpretation of human behavior, leading to further observations and the generation of new hypotheses for exploration. Qualitative research attempts to capture the big picture and see how a multitude of variables work together in the real world. Another characteristic of qualitative research is that it is generally heuristic or hypothesis generating. Unlike deductive research, it does not start with preconceived notions or hypotheses, attempting to discover, understand, and interpret what is happening in the research context (Babbie, 1986).

With presidential rhetoric, qualitative research is common, with some of the most notable studies examining naturally occurring behavior. Obviously, with a study such as this, the researcher’s effect on the subjects and the data is minimal. The level of explicitness in data collection procedures is also low. Most often, the data are more impressionistic and interpretive than numerical.

III. The Qualitative Paradigm

Qualitative research provides a rich understanding and provides an insight into the nature of a research problem. The nature of presidential relationships can be understood through observations and providing details that quantitative research could miss because of a
lack of understanding the subtleties of human interaction. Since this research project is utilizing a qualitative approach, certain measures have to be considered. An examination of presidential rhetoric is considered an interpretivist approach to research and as such is founded on the theoretical belief that reality is socially constructed and fluid. The data that is examined, presidential speeches, is always looked at as being negotiated within cultures, social settings, and relationship with other people. As a result, validity or truth cannot be grounded in an objective reality. The data presented here is taken to be valid or true is negotiated and there can be multiple, valid claims to knowledge. This dissertation follows Angen (2000), who suggests a research protocol for evaluating research from an interpretivist perspective. Ontologically, the nature of reality is subjective; in order to avoid bias, multiple coders were used in order to assure inter-coder reliability. The epistemological assumption is that the researcher interacts with the data and the purpose of the research is to understand and interpret. Careful consideration and articulation of the research goals are carried out in a respectful manner. In order to avoid research bias, established protocols are followed, in this case, this research follows Cunion’s (2006, 12) protocol for analyzing rhetorical literature.

Following the established protocol set by others for a qualitative research project, major speeches were examined for content based on specific criteria. Cohen’s (1995) research about presidential rhetoric, established a pattern whereby researchers studying the phenomenon, examine major speeches. Major speeches and major newspaper stories become the unit of analysis because they have the greatest impact on society. Cohen (1995) notes that major speeches are used by the president because they understand that there is a greater chance to move public opinion, sway policy makers, and allow the president to shape the agenda. In order to test whether or not the president is actually swaying the public, the
major newspapers are searched for the dominant narrative surrounding the tax issue and the drug issue during the time frame of 1981-1989.

The major speeches made by Reagan were accessed through the Public Papers of the Presidents – www.presidency.ucsb.edu. The speeches included for this analysis include all of Reagan’s State of the Union addresses, major speeches to the nation, as marked by the Public Papers, and other major addresses, such as convention speeches and Inaugural Addresses. The New York Times archival index serves as the newspaper search tool for this project. The speeches were selected because they fit in with the protocol established by Cunion, in order to identify presidential rhetoric in speeches, and followed here. Speeches were considered on the basis of fitting aspects of the six criteria established by Cunion (2006); 1) a speech that invokes fear; 2) speeches that address costs to the public; 3) mentions of objections to his policy; 4) citing of support by experts; 5) providing extensive arguments for his policy; and 6) appeals to the public’s sense of duty. Two separate individuals, with the same list of aforementioned criteria, completed the coding of the speeches.

Burke (1962, 70) argues that the ability to lead and utilize political power rests with the ability to effectively use language to label people or situations. The key idea is to use rhetoric in order to close off debate by invoking a meaning or a symbol. Reagan is attempting to close off debate by invoking an affective term or label that conjures up specific images and a preferred meaning. Humans use symbols, and oftentimes misuse symbols, through the use of rhetoric to define actions, people, institutions, policies, problems, and/or solutions. The terms for the ideograph, “war on drugs” and “comprehensive tax reform”, were meant to capture an image and shape the policy.
McGee (1980) defines the ideograph as an ordinary language term found in political discourse. It is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal. It warrants the use of power, excuses behavior and belief that might otherwise be perceived as eccentric or antisocial, and guides behavior and belief into channels easily recognized by a community as acceptable or laudable. Ideographs such as ‘slavery’ and ‘tyranny,’ however, may guide behavior and belief negatively by branding unacceptable behavior. McGee notes that ideographs are culture-bound, though some terms are used in different signification across cultures (McGee, p. 15).

The methodological treatment used here utilizes a synchronic approach to research when considering the historical implications of a term or an ideograph. Synchronic analysis illustrates how the ideograph functions with other ideographs, how specific use of language is used in order to shape an image (McGee, 1980, p. 11). Synchronic analysis’ primary goal is to examine the interactive functions of the ideograph with other terms that surround the main functions of the ideograph. Synchronic analysis is the foundational work that supports fragments that a researcher pieces together to form a complete text for analysis. The concept of ideographic is built upon an understanding of text as it relates to context (McGee, 1980, p. 11).

McGee (1980) analyzes the ideograph in politics and links politicos with narratives, establishing a purpose with their words. He noted that there are interpenetrating systems, or structures, belying a true reality. Rather, politicians who have the power to shape beliefs socially construct the political reality. Humans do not directly react or respond to a belief or an ideology. McGee notes that the use of rhetoric is far more complex than a Pavlovian response to an ideological statement. The socially created narrative is essentially a control over consciousness. Humans are indirectly conditioned to react to stimuli and are
conditioned to directly respond to a vocabulary of concepts that function as a guide for behavior. This is the essence of the ideograph:

The words only, and not the claims behind them, they are more pregnant than propositions ever could be. The words alone are the basic structure for reality; they are the building blocks upon which ideologies are ultimately built. When I say simply "the rule of law," however, my utterance cannot qualify logically as a claim. Yet I am conditioned to believe that liberty and property have an obvious meaning, a behaviorally directive self-evidence. Because I am taught to test such terms apart from my usual vocabulary, words used as agencies of social control may have an intrinsic force—and, if so, I may very well distort the key terms of social conflict, commitment, and control if I think of them as parts of a proposition rather than a basic unit of analysis (1980, pp.6-7).

There is no one complete text, but several fragments that are compiled together to provide a complete picture of Reagan’s agenda shaping ability. This thesis builds upon McGee’s (1980) argument that a narrative can be traced throughout a policy debate to construct a clear understanding of a specific text in order to create a specific image. This project will build upon different snapshots of media analysis such as speeches, newspaper articles, personal interviews, and historical research to piece together the fragments that comprise the ideographs of <the war on drugs> and <comprehensive tax reform>.

This project looks to be able to understand whether Reagan is attempting to shape the agenda through the utilization of his choice of words, or is he following the dominant narrative. The following list, adopted from Cunion (2006), of methods should be most prominent when the president is trying to shape the agenda through the use of a narrative:

First, mentioning actual opposition to or fears of his policies among ordinary citizens. This dilutes the president’s message and will probably be done only when public opposition is sufficiently strong or widely recognized that to ignore it would make him appear unresponsive or out of touch.

This element would presumably be followed by an effort to assuage the fears or concerns behind the opposition. Second, mentioning that the policies will actually have
some costs to the public. This, too, dilutes the message, and will be done only when there
are such obvious costs that to ignore them would cause the president to appear unconcerned
or overlooking reality. Third, mentioning objections to his policies. Again, including such
points has rhetorical costs, and is likely to occur only when an obvious objection needs to be
answered. Fourth, citing support for a policy, or for some claims on its behalf, by experts.
Typically, presidents would rather have the audience agreeing with him on the basis of their
own beliefs or experience. When the president’s major claims do not seem self-evident, an
appeal to experts plays a larger role. Fifth, providing extensive arguments, examples, or
evidence to support the main causal claims for the president’s policies – that is, to show that
it will actually yield the promised benefits. To spell out such arguments at length is not useful
if the public habitually takes the causal claim for granted, so it will occur primarily where
they need to be convinced. Sixth, appealing to the public’s sense of obligation or duty to
support a policy. The public is more likely to appeal to obligation when appeals to interest or
inclination are unlikely to work. The president may say that the people have “no choice” but
to support his policy given the common values – as if to recognize that if the people did
have a choice, they might not want to do what he asks. In order to shape the agenda,
Reagan utilizes many of these methods in his speeches in order to sell the policy to the
public and to policymakers.

Key words are used to search for relevant activities (drug control policy, drug war,
illegal drugs, war on drugs, illegal drug use, tax reform, comprehensive tax reform). The
reasoning behind choosing the method is more likely the data choosing the method. In
order to test the research questions, Reagan’s words have to be looked at, his speeches have
to be covered. The narratives that existed need to be looked at in order to establish whether
or not Reagan was able to identify the narrative and reinforce the narrative. To understand
the research questions, the data has to demonstrate that Reagan reinforced the dominant narrative in order to help shape the agenda. In order to illustrate how the narratives played a role in Reagan’s words there needs to be an examination of the drug policy narrative and the tax policy narrative.

IV. Available Data

The data that is available can be analyzed through qualitative methods because of the nature of the issue. Previous presidential agenda setting studies have followed a methodology of examining outcomes, such as the number of speeches a president makes regarding a specific topic. This project examines the words chosen by the president as the method of analysis.
I. Analysis

The narrative approach relies on understanding the symbolic communication associated with specific policies. Cobb and Elder note that the narrative approach aid in successful agenda shaping. In order to establish a narrative and attempt to set the agenda, policy makers attempt to create images in order to create the definition of a problem in order to also create the solution for that problem. The informal process of policymaking, the narrative that surrounds the issue, is typically the difference between a successful public policy and one that does not make it out of a committee hearing.

It is important to understand that the use of language is critical in order to understand the nature of the problem, which aspect of the problem needs to be examined, and to espouse a solution to a problem (Rochefort and Cobb, 1993, 56). Miller (2012) refers to the use of language as a competition between competing ideographic narratives. Words are chosen in a very precise manner because politicians want their ideas and solutions to prevail. They want their ideas to morph into the dominant narrative in order to sell their solution to other decision makers.

Miller (2012) notes that the signs and symbols used by policymakers in their language are attempts at stringing together a storyline that lead to a narrative. The purpose here is to understand how Reagan went about stringing together a storyline in order to support a narrative. In order to examine how the president attempts to develop a strategy of words
and ideas that used to create a solution, this chapter examines how Reagan attempted it by looking at empirical data, words and phrases that Reagan used. These words and phrases add up to building an ideograph, which suggest how the president is associated with the dominant narrative. Sometimes the president will accept the dominant narrative, other times he will not accept the narrative and attempt to modify the narrative through the use of stories. Presidents want their narrative to become the dominant narrative. Reagan wants his narrative to be prevalent in the solution. This chapter will examine what the dominant narratives were for both drug policy and tax policy during Reagan’s years in office. By doing this, there can be an examination of Reagan’s narrative and the dominant narrative. It is oftentimes difficult for any one individual, even the president, to dictate the narrative; it is far more commonplace to create a discourse that attempts to become the narrative through the use of language.

The nature of public policy discourse is ripe with examples, including the war on poverty, socialized medicine, and the death tax. The concept ideograph has been used to explain how politicos attempt to frame a debate, set an agenda, and/or score policy victories. An ideograph (McGee, 1980, 15) is found in a political discourse that utilizes ordinary language to evoke images and emotions in order to guide a policy narrative and define an issue.

The unit of analysis for this project, speeches made by President Reagan from 1981 through the end of his presidency as chronicled by the Public Papers of the Presidents (accessed through the American Presidency Project at the University of California at Santa Barbara). The State of the Union Address is a speech that particularly aids the chief legislator in the promotion of his goals. He uses the policymaking narratives of the State of the Union Address to build a case for his policy recommendations. This narrative conveys
policy substance and uses symbolism as the president attempts to lead Congress and the public to accept the solutions he proposes to policy dilemmas. In his symbolic narrative, the president utilizes images, examples, and draws upon the shared history of Americans to inspire his audiences, appealing to their shared values, experiences, and identities. The substantive narrative of the State of the Union Address is found in the reporting and recommending aspects of the speech.

In reporting, the president details the current situation as he sees it. He will also take credit for what has already been accomplished in a particular area. In recommending measures to Congress, the president proposes his solution to a policy dilemma; he takes positions as he requests the action of Congress. As is examined below, with both the symbolic and substantive narrative of the State of the Union Address, he seeks to persuade his audiences that his policy recommendations are good ones that should be supported and these activities, comes from his 1983 State of the Union Address where he uses references to war in order to relate symbols regarding taxes and drugs. (Reagan 1983). He calls upon Americans’ shared identity and immediately, Reagan utilizes religious symbolism, historical symbolism, and patriotic symbolism. We are not just any country, but a “blessed” country with a calling.

One way presidents seek to further their goals in speeches is by using symbolic rhetoric (Eshbaugh-Soha, 2005, 35). This type of narrative consists of presidents incorporating images, examples, and language which are symbolically important to Americans. Symbolism abounds in most major presidential addresses. The speech, setting, and deliverer all hold great symbolic importance. Moreover, presidents incorporate symbolic language and invoke images to remind Americans of their commonalities and then portray their policy recommendations as being consistent with these things Americans share.
(Hoffman and Howard 2006, 72-74). By using a narrative form in this fashion, presidents hope to make their narrative meaningful and tangible for their audiences.

II. The Mobilization of Stories

Public policy communication has long been the province of persuasive strategies and purposive language. The use of language is critical in determining which aspect of a problem will be examined (Rochefort and Cobb, 1993, 56). Public policy can become a competition between narratives on a symbolic playing field, leaving one dominant narrative that reflects key elements of prior narratives as a lens to view a policy. Central to the mobilization of stories, they explain narratives or new ways to understand a dominant narrative, and sometimes there are subtle changes to it.

The five aspects of Cobb and Elder’s model, specificity, social significance, temporal relevance, complexity, and categorical precedence, is applied to both drug policy and tax policy. The objective is to determine what were the dominant narratives surrounding each issue as well as how Reagan attempted to use his words in order to define the issues; and if the rhetoric was policy specific.

While attempting to set the agenda for both policies, 1986 marks a turning point in both policies. As previously mentioned, the elections of 1986 were a bit of a rebuttal of the Reagan policies. There is a noticeable shift in the actual policies that result. However, below are examples of Reagan’s speeches along with the prevailing narrative surrounding the issues. Unlike his first six years in office, where policies matched the words chosen by Reagan, there is a lack of continuity. Drug policy moves from treating the causes to an all out war with extremely stiff sentences for crack cocaine. Tax policy moves from one of lowering taxes to benefit everyone, to a tax bill that Reagan nearly vetoes. For each of the examples below
there are words and phrases that Reagan used prior to 1986 and then from 1986 through 1989.

Race becomes a factor in the mid 1980’s as well, and this is noticeable in the shift in narratives and in the shift in policy. Crack, a potent form of cocaine that can be smoked is developed in the early 1980s, begins to flourish in the New York region. A November 1985 New York Times cover story brings the drug to national attention (Kerr, 1986, p. B6). Crack is cheap and powerfully addictive and it devastates inner city neighborhoods. The 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse bill that Reagan signs is an enormous omnibus drug bill, which appropriated $1.7 billion to fight the drug crisis. $97 million is allocated to build new prisons, $200 million for drug education and $241 million for treatment (Kerr, 1986, p. B6). The bill’s most consequential action is the creation of mandatory minimum penalties for drug offenses. Possession of at least one kilogram of heroin or five kilograms of cocaine is punishable by at least ten years in prison. In response to the crack epidemic, the sale of five grams of the drug leads to a mandatory five-year sentence. Mandatory minimums become increasingly criticized over the years for promoting significant racial disparities in the prison population, because of the differences in sentencing for crack vs. powder cocaine.

The following speech excerpts were collected using The American Presidency Project website located at the University of California at Santa Barbara (accessed in June and July, 2013).

Most noticeable is the precise wording that Reagan uses in his speeches. During the first term, into the second, and up to the 1986 mid-term elections, the public rhetoric-and Reagan’s rhetoric are very similar. As crack moves through the country and as the economy hits a rough patch, as well as facing the 1986 mid-term elections, the public narrative changes. Post 1986, as documented below, the narrative surrounding drug policy becomes
one of war while the drug policy moves toward a narrative where the top earners seem to be avoiding taxes and looking for tax shelters.

III. Reagan’s Words

Below are the words that Reagan uses to create a storyline whereby he attempts to work with the dominant narrative or change it slightly. Using the categories supplied by Cobb and Elder (1972) Reagan’s words are separated according to the appropriate category. The two ideographs examined (war on drugs) and (comprehensive tax reform) were designed to create images, attach emotions, and certainly, to justify action. Reagan used both phrases in speeches and writings over 6,500 times, thus justify an ideograph creation.

Specificity

Drugs - Then there was a speech in Dallas where I mentioned the effect of narcotics on the crime rate and the appalling estimates that drug addicts were responsible for the economic increase of certain crimes. I don't mention these speeches now because they show any gift of insight on my part; the truth is, what I said then was well known at the time, certainly by you. The speech in Dallas was delivered in 1974; the speech in Las Vegas in 1967. The frightening reality—for all of the speeches by those of us in government, for all of the surveys, studies, and blue ribbon panels, for all of the 14-point programs and the declarations of war on crime, crime has advanced and advanced steadily in its upward climb, and our citizens have grown more and more frustrated, frightened, and angry. You're familiar enough with the statistics. The cases that make them up cross your desk every day. In the past decade violent crime reported to police has increased by fifty-nine percent. Fifty-three percent of our citizens say they're afraid to walk the streets alone at night. Eighty-five percent say they're more concerned today than they were 5 years ago about crime. Crime is an American epidemic. It takes the lives of 25,000 Americans, it touches nearly one-third of American households, and it results in at least some 6 billion—I think I said that figure wrong right there—it results in at least $8.8 billion per year in financial losses.

Taxes - “Make no mistake about it: what Mr. Carter has done to the American economy is not merely a matter of lines and graphs on a chart. Individuals and
families are being hurt and hurt badly. Factories are empty; unemployment lines are full.”

Social Significance

Drugs - Drugs already reach deeply into our social structure, so we must mobilize all our forces to stop the flow of drugs into this country, to let kids know the truth, to erase the false glamour that surrounds drugs, and to brand drugs such as marijuana exactly for what they are—dangerous, and particularly to school-age youth. We're here to thank the—to mark the progress, I should say, of the fight against drug abuse and to commit ourselves to an even greater national effort in the months ahead. Within the last several years, I think America has come to its senses about drug abuse. We raised a battle flag and declared war on one of the gravest problems that I think is facing our nation. Action replaced debate. We knew the fight wouldn't be easy, but we also knew we couldn't afford to lose. We're fighting for the health of our children and the future of America.

The Federal Government will redouble its efforts to stop drug trafficking, punishing drug traffickers, and increase international cooperation to control narcotics. But ultimately, victory can only come from the dedication and commitment of private industry, public organizations, local government, and citizen volunteers. We need to get more people involved, particularly in prevention programs. And we'll be calling on the American people to help us. To win this fight, we're going to need the kind of help that those of you here have given to your communities and to all of us. And I know that for each of you here today there are thousands of other caring Americans who are also giving of themselves. None of you ever expected any reward for what you did. That's the way it's always been in America. But believe me, I'm delighted that we have the opportunity to recognize you today.

Taxes - Every American family has felt what the Carter inflation means to hopes for a better life. Every visit to the supermarket reminds us of what Mr. Carter's policies have done. We pay the price of Carter's inflation every time we buy food or clothing or other essentials. Our plan treats Americans at all income levels evenly and fairly. Three-fourths of the tax cuts will go to middle-income taxpayers. Under present law, these middle income citizens—who make between $10,000 and $60,000—pay 72 percent of all income taxes and will receive 73 percent of the benefits of our proposal.

The choice before us is clear. I strongly feel that the great majority of Americans believe that nothing would better encourage economic growth than leaving more money in the hands of the people who earn it. It's time to stop stripping bare the productive citizens of America and funneling their hard-earned income into the Federal bureaucracy.
Temporal Relevance

Drugs - We're rejecting the helpless attitude that drug use is so rampant that we're defenseless to do anything about it. We're taking down the surrender flag that has flown over so many drug efforts; we're running up a battle flag. We can fight the drug problem, and we can win. And that is exactly what we intend to do. Study after study has shown that a small number of criminals are responsible for an enormous amount of the crime in American society. One study of 250 criminals indicated that over an 11-year period, they were responsible for nearly half a million crimes. Another study showed that 49 criminals claimed credit for a total of 10,500 crimes. Take one very limited part of the crime picture, subway crime in New York City: The transit police estimate that 500 habitual offenders are actually responsible for 40 percent of those offenses.

No longer do we think of drugs as a harmless phase of adolescence. No longer do we think of so-called hard drugs as bad and so-called soft drugs as being acceptable. Research tells us there are no such categories, that the phrase "responsible use" does not apply to drug experimentation by America's youth. And as far as the recreational use of drugs is concerned, I've never in my life heard a more self-serving euphemism by those who support drug use. There is nothing recreational about those children whose lives have been lost, whose minds have been ruined. If that's somebody's idea of recreation, it's pretty sick. Too often we've fallen into the trap of using nice, easy, pleasant, liberal language about drugs. Well, language will not sugar-coat overdoses, suicides, and ruined lives.

Taxes – We must review regulations that affect the economy and change them to encourage economic growth. We must establish a stable, sound and predictable monetary policy. And we must restore confidence by following a consistent national economic policy that does not change from month to month. I am asked: 'Can we do it all at once.' My answer is: 'We must.' I am asked: 'Can we do it immediately.' Well, my answer is: 'No, it took Mr. Carter three and one-half years of hard work to get us into this economic mess. It will take time to get us out.' I am asked: 'Is it easy.' Again, my answer is: 'No. It is going to require the most dedicated and concerted peacetime action ever taken by the American people for their country.' But we can do it, we must do it, and I intend that we will do it.

Complexity

Drugs - All of us here know the situation is not hopeless. I was not present at the Battle of Verdun in World War I, but from that battle I learned of that horrendous time of an old French soldier who said something we could all heed. He said, "There are no impossible situations. There are only people who think they're impossible." Each year, government bureaucracies spend bills [billions] for problems related to drugs and alcoholism and disease. Has anyone stopped to consider that we might come closer to balancing the budget if all of us simply tried to live up to the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule: Progress is
being made, but it takes time to erase 20 years of lax attitudes. I'm confident we're on the right track and that education, not scare tactics, will be effective.

Taxes - We must have and I am proposing a new strategy for the 1980's. Only a series of well-planned economic actions, taken so that they complement and reinforce one another, can move our economy forward again. The second major element of my economic program is a tax rate reduction plan. This plan calls for an across-the-board, three-year reduction in personal income tax rates - 10 percent in 1981, 10 percent in 1982 and 10 percent in 1983. My goal is to implement three reductions in a systematic and planned manner. More than any single thing, high rates of taxation destroy incentive to earn, to save, to invest. And they cripple productivity, lead to deficit financing and inflation, and create unemployment. We can go a long way toward restoring the economic health of this country by establishing reasonable, fair levels of taxation. But even the extended tax rate cuts, which I am recommending, still leave too high a tax burden on the American people. In the second half of the decade ahead we are going to need, and we must have, additional tax rate reductions. Jimmy Carter says it can't be done. In fact, he says it shouldn't be done. He favors the current crushing tax burden because it fits into his philosophy of government as the dominating force in American economic life.

Taxes are much too high to deal in half measures. In 1965 less than 6 percent of all taxpayers faced marginal rates of 25 percent or more. Today, more than one of every three taxpayers is in at least the 25-percent bracket. In addition, since 1965 the marginal tax rate for a median-income family of four has jumped from 17 percent to 24 percent in 1980. And under current law it would grow to a crushing 32 percent in 1984. We simply can't allow our already overburdened and demoralized taxpayers to suffer this unacceptable increase.

Categorical Precedence

Drugs - So, I asked all these people to get together here today—as they probably haven't gathered in a group before—to deal with the drug problem facing this nation. As in other areas of this administration, I want to seek new approaches. I want to get away from the fatalistic attitude of the late seventies and assert a positive approach that involves as many elements of this society as possible—State and local officials, volunteer groups, parents, teachers, students, independent agencies, and law enforcement officials.

Taxes – Official projections of the Congressional Budget Office show that by fiscal year 1985, if the current rates of taxation are still in effect, Federal tax revenues will rise to over $1 trillion a year. Surely Jimmy Carter isn't telling us that the American people can't find better things to do with all that money than see it spent by the Federal Government. Assuming a continuation of current policies in government, Congressional projections show a huge and growing potential surplus by 1985. These surpluses can be used in two basic ways: one, to fund additional government programs, or, two, to reduce tax rates.
That choice should be up to the American people. The most insidious tax increase is the one we must pay when inflation pushes us into higher tax brackets. As long as inflation is with us, taxes should be based on real income. Federal personal income taxes should be based on real income. Federal personal income taxes should be indexed to compensate for inflation, once tax rates have been reduced.

The two ideographs examined (war on drugs) and (comprehensive tax reform) were designed to create images, attach emotions, and certainly, to justify action. Reagan used both phrases in speeches and writings over 6,500 times, thus justify an ideograph creation. There are various terms that Reagan utilizes time and again for both tax policy and drug policy prior to 1986. He uses very similar terms in order to establish a narrative and shape both policies. There were many uses of terms that Reagan used to change the narrative for his policies include patriotic appeals, calls for common sense, and religious parallels. The noticeable areas of rhetoric that Reagan uses revolve around six major themes. The themes are war, education, religion, history/patriotism, the status quo, and big government.

Terms that are identified with war in Reagan’s major speeches:

- Waging a battle
- Losing a war is unacceptable
- No giving up
- No surrender
- Defeat is not an option
- Establish a foothold
- We will not reverse our progress
- We will not back down from this quarrel
- We face grave threats
• We could be destroyed

• Constant struggle

• An assault on waste and inefficiency

The second theme prevalent in Reagan’s speeches is education, which he uses, especially early in his presidency, and more notably with tax reform.

• We must understand our challenges

• Move towards a vigorous rate for a growth cycle

• Our system is broken, we must fix it

• As long as inflation is with us, taxes should be based on real income

• Investment is necessary to create new jobs

The third theme revolves around religion and Reagan’s use of religious figures, references to God, the Almighty.

• God bless America

• May the almighty bless this great country

The fourth theme Reagan uses quite frequently are his historical references and calls to patriotism, very often used together.

• Thomas Jefferson

• Mark Twain

• George Washington

• The Founding Fathers

• The shining city on a hill

• Unprecedented crisis

• Historical failure
Another theme is Reagan’s attacks on the status quo, especially early in his presidency, Reagan makes use of the status quo and how it has to be changed.

- It took Mr. Carter three and a half years of hard work to get us in this mess, it will take us some time to get out of it
- The American people know how to better spend their own money more so than Mr. Carter
- We must renew our dedication to this great country
- We cannot sit back and idly watch history pass us by

The final theme is Reagan’s attack on big government. The big government attacks are especially apparent with tax policy.

- An assault on waste and inefficiency
- The system is broken, we must fix it
- Government is not the solution, it is the problem
- Government regulation, like fire, makes a good servant but a bad master

The themes, and the words used, change a bit around 1986 for both policies. There were several events going on in including the mid-term elections and the impending Iran Contra scandal that had an effect on Reagan, but also the explosion of crack cocaine and the Democratic takeover of the Senate. Both of these events spurred on a change in the way Americans viewed both policies and Reagan reacted to the changes. Most notably, Reagan reacts with his choice of words around 1986 in order to reflect the national mood.

With tax policy, Reagan changes his tone after the Democrat takeover of the Senate, including:
• Only through new taxes, and not through spending restraint, can Congress come up with a plan.

• That is why I said we are at a breakpoint.

• The American people don't want more spending; they want better results. And anyone who tells you we can't cut the deficit without raising taxes or attacking defense is just not telling you the truth.

• This budget battle is all about making the next 4 and 8 and 20 years as good as the last 4.

• Continued opportunity and growth for a generation—that's what is at stake

• The budget Congress is about to adopt raises taxes $21 billion next year and $73 billion over the next 3 years.

• On the spending side, there is an additional $43 billion for domestic spending and no new funding for defense.

• If Congress has its way, national security will decline in real terms for the third year in a row.

• Their price for meeting our national security needs is this: For every $1 of defense, it will cost $10 in new taxes; that's an offer I can refuse

• It is clear that there are differences in our priorities. These differences will be resolved once we have a credible, reliable, and enforceable budget process.

• For these past 7 years, the administration has limited government and cut taxes. The result: the longest peacetime expansion in American history, unemployment at the lowest level in almost 14 years, the creation of 16 million new jobs. And I might add, in the last 3 years, four times as many businesses have opened as have closed. We
could go back to big government, and indeed many of those in favor of these plant-closing provisions argue that they're already in effect in many European countries.

- Well, to tell you the truth, I'm sort of proud of being an American, proud that since 1983 the United States has created six times as many jobs as has Western Europe.

With drug policy, there was a shift from the “Just Say No” campaign to an all-out war on drugs. Some of the obvious word choice Reagan made include:

- America has accomplished so much in these last few years, whether it's been rebuilding our economy or serving the cause of freedom in the world. What we've been able to achieve has been done with your help—with us working together as a nation united. Now, we need your support again. Drugs are menacing our society. They're threatening our values and undercutting our institutions. They're killing our children.

- From the beginning of our administration, we've taken strong steps to do something about this horror. Tonight I can report to you that we've made much progress. Thirty-seven Federal agencies are working together in a vigorous national effort, and by next year our spending for drug law enforcement will have more than tripled from its 1981 levels.

- We have increased seizures of illegal drugs. Shortages of marijuana are now being reported. Last year alone over 10,000 drug criminals were convicted and nearly $250 million of their assets were seized by the DEA, the Drug Enforcement Administration.

- And in the most important area, individual use, we see progress. In 4 years the number of high school seniors using marijuana on a daily basis has dropped from 1 in 14 to 1 in 20. The U.S. military has cut the use of illegal drugs among its personnel
by 67 percent since 1980. These are a measure of our commitment and emerging
signs that we can defeat this enemy. But we still have much to do.

• Despite our best efforts, illegal cocaine is coming into our country at alarming levels,
and 4 to 5 million people regularly use it. Five hundred thousand Americans are
hooked on heroin. One in twelve persons smokes marijuana regularly.

• Regular drug use is even higher among the age group 18 to 25—most likely just
entering the workforce.

• Today there's a new epidemic: smokeable cocaine, otherwise known as crack. It is an
explosively destructive and often lethal substance which is crushing its users.

• It is an uncontrolled fire!

• Drug abuse is not a so-called victimless crime. Everyone's safety is at stake when
drugs and excessive alcohol are used by people on the highways or by those
transporting our citizens or operating industrial equipment.

• Drug abuse costs you and your fellow Americans at least $60 billion a year.

• Now you can see why drug abuse concerns every one of us—all the American
family. Drugs steal away so much. They take and take, until finally every time a drug
goes into a child, something else is forced out—like love and hope and trust and
confidence. Drugs take away the dream from every child's heart and replace it with a
nightmare, and it's time we in America stand up and replace those dreams. Each of
us has to put our principles and consciences on the line, whether in social settings or
in the workplace, to set forth solid standards and stick to them. There's no moral
middle ground. Indifference is not an option. We want you to help us create an
outspoken intolerance for drug use. For the sake of our children, I implore each of
you to be unyielding and inflexible in your opposition to drugs.
These various terms contribute to the five aspects of Cobb and Elder’s Model. The first aspect, specificity, explains how concretely the issue is defined (Cobb and Elder, 1972, 110). What is noticeable about Reagan with both tax policy and drug policy is that Reagan uses similar terminology to concretely define the terms for debate. Reagan uses patriotism and attacks on big government to define the concrete nature of the problem. He attempts to define both problems as being real and applicable to everyday Americans. Not only with tax policy, which is looked as putting more money in the pockets of everyday people in order to create more spending and more jobs, but Reagan also collectively calls on the nation to come together to control the drug problem. In an address early in his administration, he notes that drugs have impacted all levels of society, and no one is immune to the harsh realities of drugs.

Reagan outlines drug policy by calling it a war and eventually, through the passage of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, creates the drug czar. These terms are concrete and intuitive; they conjure up images of actual war. He repeatedly uses terms that justify major action for drug policy. In a speech given on October 8, 1988, Reagan uses the war reference for his war on drugs:

“Now, I'd like to turn to another subject: the war on drugs. I want all Americans to take heart. This war is not yet won, not by a long shot. But we're doing better, and our nation is united against this scourge as never before. Right now there's a drug bill on Capitol Hill. It has passed the House but hasn't even come up for consideration in the Senate, and time is fast running out. The House bill has many good and tough provisions that express our national commitment to five simple but powerful words. Those words are "zero tolerance" and "just say no." When we say zero tolerance, we mean, simply, that we've had it. We will no longer tolerate those who sell drugs and those who buy drugs. All Americans of good will are determined to stamp out those parasites who survive and even prosper by feeding off the energy and vitality and humanity of others. They must pay. We believe that when those who sell drugs are caught they must make redress for the damage they cause.”
The same is true with the concrete nature of tax policy. Reagan narrates tax policy, and comprehensive tax reform, as a policy that will affect everyone. Change is needed, and that change needs to be bold and drastic or the reality will be catastrophic. The tax code is not easily understandable and a fairly esoteric concept; Reagan makes it concrete. He repeatedly asserts that lower taxes means more money, which means more jobs and less inflation.

Social significance is very clearly an aspect of Reagan’s choice of words. While he does mention that drugs are a problem in the inner cities especially, he also repeatedly states that drugs are the problem for the entire nation. No one is free from the confines of drug abuse. Similarly, tax reform was aimed largely at the middle class. However, Reagan points out that taxes, and his trickle down approach, affects the entire society; tax cuts will benefit everyone.

Both policies have a similar narrative with regards to temporal relevance. The narrative for both policies was aimed at long-term prospects. Reagan used repeated terms to express the dismay regarding the tax system in place when he became president, and how long it was going to take to get out of the whole America was in. He also looked at his tax policy as being a long-term solution to the status quo; decades of prosperity would follow. Drug policy was no different; Reagan looked at the long-term implications for cleaning up American streets. Once again, he used a similar refrain regarding drug policy; it would take a long time and a great deal of education to fix the problem.

Reagan’s rhetoric made both policies fairly easy to follow, taking the complexity out of the tax system and boiling it down to a simple adage that lower taxes means more spending money. He repeated the narrative that the people could do more with their own money than the government. Drug policy was also kept extremely simple, Just Say No! He
asked Nancy Reagan to spearhead the campaign, but his narrative changed from a campaign speech in 1979, through most of his administration, up to the supposed explosion of crack cocaine around 1986. Reagan kept it extremely easy for individuals to comprehend; drug abuse affects everyone, so everyone needs to play a role in saying no to drugs; he then moves towards a policy on an all out war on drug dealers and crack users.

The narrative around both policies made the solution look extraordinary. As mentioned, one of the major goals of the ideograph is to not only define the problem, but to justify the action, to justify the policy solution. A war on drugs had never been successful; Reagan addressed the problem in terms that belied an extraordinary solution, which is the theory behind the ideograph. Tax cuts are also a fairly routine policy, however, Reagan’s rhetoric justified the policy that he was proposing early on in his first four years in office. He utilized dire tactics to describe the problems facing the country if changes were not made, significantly after 1986. He noted that the problem that was created to a great deal of time, the solution would also take a great deal of time.

With both policies Reagan used his choice of words to justify his policy proposals. Drugs have images readily apparent, while taxes conjure up images of tax forms. Reagan established a narrative that framed taxes as a social problem. He increased the rhetoric regarding tax policy, as noted in Appendix 1. The number of mentions of tax policy, and the amount of verbiage used, was significantly higher with tax policy. The narrative the he picked for both policies would lead to his solution to both policies, but as pointed out above, the narrative was not always his narrative. He nearly vetoed tax legislation proposed by the Senate Democrats; he publicly decried the legislation, but ultimately signed it.
IV. Changing Narratives

There is a change of focus in the Reagan narratives over the years, as a result of the emergence of crack cocaine, with drug policy; and a change in narrative because of unsuccessful policies with tax policy. During his first year in office Reagan gave 44 speeches where taxes were the major priority. The major focus of these speeches was economic recovery, and he uses several key phrases during 1981: inflation, unemployment, spending crisis, raising the standard of living, rewarding hard work, waste, fraud, and government abuse. After the passage of The Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981, the economy plunges and Reagan has to capitulate on the Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 1982; whereby he raises taxes and closes tax loopholes. Reagan speaks 49 times in 1982, with a major focus being tax policy, with the major focus being bipartisanship. Reagan’s speeches in 1982 centered around terms like: cut federal deficits, get the economy moving, bring down interest rates, increase revenues, and create jobs. As the recession continued into 1982 Reagan worked with Democrats in Congress to create this bill; his language reflects this change.

As the economy started to rebound, Reagan gives 33 speeches in 1983 and 24 speeches in 1984 centered on tax policy. The focus shifts to expansion and Reagan uses terms like: reduced inflation, grown the economy, increased employment opportunities, increased production, Americans are working together, growing confidence, and increasing opportunities. The Deficit Reduction Act is passed in July 1984 with Reagan’s support. By 1986 there was a bit of a repudiation of Reagan’s policies and with bad mid-term elections, Reagan is faced with a policy choice in 1986 with the Tax Reform Act of 1986. Largely a bill shaped by Democrats Bill Bradley and Dick Gephardt, Reagan begrudgingly signs the bill, but not before he attempts to frame the narrative with 47 speeches in 1985 and 33 speeches.
in 1986 with terms like: everyone will pay their fair share, household incomes will increase, simplify the tax system, and fairness for all. Reagan's rhetoric changes based on the realities of the day, but Reagan was unsuccessful at changing the narrative.

Table 4.1 Yearly Look At Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>TAX POLICY FOCUS</th>
<th>KEY WORDS</th>
<th>NUMBER SPEECHES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Economic Recovery</td>
<td>Inflation, Unemployment, Spending Crisis, Raise the standard of living, reward hard work, waste, fraud, government abuse</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Bipartisanship</td>
<td>Cut federal deficits, get the economy moving, bring down interest rates, increasing revenues</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Expansion</td>
<td>Reduced inflation, grown the economy, increased employment opportunities</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Increased employment opportunities, increased production, Americans are working together, growing confidence, and increasing opportunities</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>Everyone will pay their fair share, household incomes will increase, simplify the tax system</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Simplicity</td>
<td>Simplify the tax system, fairness for all</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Deficit Reduction</td>
<td>Americans are saddled with debt, federal spending juggernaut, cut spending, halt inflation</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Spending</td>
<td>Bring down spending, incentives, opportunity, growth</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>The Growing Economy</td>
<td>No new taxes, the economic pie is expanding, increased benefits for all, balance the budget</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With drug policy, Reagan’s rhetoric changes as well as his policies. His early focus was on rehabilitation, his later focus changes to one of incarceration (Elsner, 2004, 20). While drugs were largely a policy left to the states, the federal government does play a role, and a much more involved role through the Reagan presidency. It is also worth pointing out that race plays a factor as the following narratives note. The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 created sentencing disparities between the races, with crack users receiving a 100 to 1 sentencing disparity (Elsner, 2004, 20). Crack was seen as largely a problem with inner city minorities and as such crime statistics reveal a gap in sentencing disparities between white and minorities (Elsner, 2004, 20).

The drug policy narrative tended to revolve around several main themes during Reagan’s first few years in office. The idea of providing hope to drug addicts was a constant theme. While Reagan initiated 8 speeches in 1981, where the main focus was on drugs, mainly his themes centered on providing hope, drugs and alcohol are everywhere, parents need to watch their children, there is a culture of denial, and parents need to be parents. In 1982, Reagan delivers 18 speeches focusing on drugs, he uses terms like: you can run but you cannot hide, we have taken down the surrender flag and raised the battle flag, international cooperation, education, treatment, research, and the mood towards drugs is changing. In 1982 Reagan delivers several speeches where he also mentions the problem in South Florida, and how this once paradise has turned into a battlefield for drug dealers, pushers, and addicts. Reagan also plants the seed for a larger role for the federal government in drug policy as he reveals the cooperation between the different agencies and how this cooperation has helped ease the drug flow (Elsner, 2004, 20).

In his 1983 State of the Union address, Reagan uses language that appears for the first time: we need major reform of our criminal justice system to battle the scourge of
drugs, drug dealers are poisoning our children, and we need to make our cities safe again (Elsner, 2004, 35). He gives 33 speeches is 1983 with the similar theme throughout the year. By 1984 Reagan delivers 24 more speeches mainly concerning drug policy and drug use with major themes like: tougher penalties for drug pushers, we should not be afraid to walk down our own streets, we must protect victims, parents need to know that their children will not become victims, people are waking up to the fact that drugs are everywhere, there is reason for hope, and we have much greater parental involvement than just a few short years ago. In his 1985 State of the Union address, Reagan changes the focus of his narrative, towards incarceration and away from parents understanding their children. In fact, he states, “We do not seek to violate the rights of defendants. But shouldn't we feel more compassion for the victims of crime than for those who commit crime: For the first time in 20 years, the crime index has fallen 2 years in a row. We've convicted over 7,400 drug offenders and put them, as well as leaders of organized crime, behind bars in record numbers. These proposals would also reform the habeas corpus laws and allow, in keeping with the will of the overwhelming majority of Americans, the use of the death penalty where necessary. There can be no economic revival in ghettos when the most violent among us are allowed to roam free. It's time we restored domestic tranquility. And we mean to do just that.” The narrative has changed for Reagan, the story has also changed, his focus is now towards inner cities and drug policy is directly linked with crime, the nationalization of crime.

By 1986 Reagan delivers another 30 speeches concerning drugs, notably in the State of the Union address he remarks, “And tonight I want to speak directly to America's younger generation, because you hold the destiny of our nation in your hands. With all the temptations young people face, it sometimes seems the allure of the permissive society requires superhuman feats of self-control. But the call of the future is too strong, the
challenge too great to get lost in the blind alleyways of dissolution, drugs, and despair. Never has there been a more exciting time to be alive, a time of rousing wonder and heroic achievement. As they said in the film "Back to the Future," "Where we're going, we don't need roads." He also delivers several prime time addresses to the nation in 1986 concerning drugs. The themes of these messages to the nation include:

“The first thing we did was take down the surrender flag and raise the battle flag, together we beefed up our enforcement arm, today more arrests are being made and more narcotics are being seized than ever before, there is more communication and effective coordination between the levels of government and departments and agencies than many believed was possible, and we are, indeed, trying to do everything government can do to combat drug traffickers.”

This was much stronger language from Reagan, thus changing his narrative towards drug policy, and continued a more aggressive attack on drugs, dealers, and users. He follows in 1986 with even stronger rhetoric, with phrases like: we must create an atmosphere of intolerance for drug use in this country, the time has come to give notice that individual drug use is threatening the health and safety of all our citizens, and we must make it clear that we are no longer willing to tolerate illegal drugs or the sellers or the users.

In an address to the nation in late 1986 Reagan uses the narrative that would surround crack cocaine:

“Today there's a new epidemic: smokable cocaine, otherwise known as crack. It is an explosively destructive and often lethal substance which is crushing its users. It is an uncontrolled fire. And drug abuse is not a so-called victimless crime. Everyone's safety is at stake when drugs and excessive alcohol are used by people on the highways or by those transporting our citizens or operating industrial equipment. Drug abuse costs you and your fellow Americans at least $60 billion a year.”

Reagan continued on in similar speeches, “Our job is never easy because drug criminals are ingenious. They work every day to plot a new and better way to steal our children's lives, just as they've done by developing this new drug, crack.” Reagan continued to hit hard in 1987 and 1988, “For every door that we close, they open a new door to death.
They prosper on our unwillingness to act. So, we must be smarter and stronger and tougher than they are. It's up to us to change attitudes and just simply dry up their markets.” Shortly thereafter, the federal government allocated $3 billion to help stem the tide of drugs, largely going to law enforcement agencies (Levine and Reinarman 1987, 1-5). Reagan sums up the new approach to drugs in a 1987 speech, “Drugs will not be tolerated any longer!” (Levine and Reinarman 1987, 1-5)

By 1987 the dominant theme in Reagan’s speeches concerning drugs, including 33 speeches regarding illegal drugs, revolved around the crime of drug use. In one such speech Reagan uses very direct language, telling his audience that the epidemic can be cured through tougher laws (Jensen, Gerber, and Babcock, 1991, p. 659). The nation needs to be intolerant of drugs, while he still talked about getting help for drug users; his own narrative uses terms like subduing and conquering drugs. One very telling speech Reagan gave in 1987 utilized many of the same messages that he was becoming more and more familiar with, “Nevertheless, today marks a major victory in our crusade against drugs—a victory for safer neighborhoods, a victory for the protection of the American family. The American people want their government to get tough and to go on the offensive. And that's exactly what we intend, with more ferocity than ever before.” Clearly, by 1987 Reagan’s own words had become much more tough and exacting towards tougher penalties and tougher drug laws.

By the 1988 State of the Union address, Reagan talks about the individual battles that face drug users and a crusade with many heroes in the war on drugs. His narrative moves increasingly towards the war analogy, giving 40 speeches in 1988 alone, a new high for Reagan. One of his final speeches given in 1988 centered on drugs and is very telling of the shift from the early Reagan years, “Federal drug arrests have increased 66 percent. Arrests of
major traffickers have tripled. And in the past 8 years, prison sentences for those convicted of drug law violations have increased by 44 percent, to an average of more than 6 years per sentence. “And that’s how we’re fighting on what you might call the supply side of the crusade against drugs.” (Hoffman, 1990) Rarely did Reagan address arrests and sentences in drug policy speeches, by the end of his presidency he trumpets the incarceration numbers. He also used the personal stories to make his point on his 1987 and 1988 speeches, oftentimes invoking a horrible act committed by casual drug users. He called for his fellow Americans to be unyielding and inflexible in their opposition to drugs (Hoffman, 1990).

With tax policy, Reagan differs with the actual policy that is signed largely in 1982 and again in 1986. With drug policy, Reagan shifts his focus from one of treatment to one of incarceration.

Table 4.2 Yearly Breakdown of Drug Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>DRUG POLICY FOCUS</th>
<th>KEY WORDS</th>
<th>SPEECHES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Cultural Problem</td>
<td>Providing hope, drugs and alcohol are everywhere, parents need to watch their children, there is a culture of denial, and parents need to be parents</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Education/Treatment</td>
<td>You can run but you cannot hide, we have taken down the surrender flag and raised the battle flag, international cooperation, education, treatment, research, and the mood towards drugs is changing</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
<td>Drug dealers are poisoning our children, and we need to make our cities safe again</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Tougher Penalties</td>
<td>Tougher penalties for drug pushers, we should not be afraid to walk down our own streets, we must protect victims, do not become victims, drugs are everywhere, there is reason for hope</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Incarceration</td>
<td>War on drugs and drug dealers, his focus is now towards inner cities and drug policy is directly linked with crime</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Crack/Crime War On Drugs</td>
<td>The first thing we did was take down the surrender flag and raise the battle flag, together we beefed up our enforcement arm, today more arrests are being made and more narcotics are being seized than ever before, we are trying to do everything government can do to combat drug traffickers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Epidemic War On Drugs</td>
<td>Nevertheless, today marks a victory for safer neighborhoods, a victory for the protection of the American family, the American people want their government to get tough and to go on the offensive, with more ferocity than ever before.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Arrests/Convictions War On Drugs</td>
<td>Federal drug arrests have increased 66 percent. Arrests of major traffickers have tripled. And in the past 8 years, prison sentences for those convicted of drug law And that's how we're fighting on what you might call the supply side of the crusade against drugs violations have increased by 44 percent, to an average of more than 6 years per sentence.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
V. Conclusions

Research Question 1: What were the dominant narratives surrounding drug policy and tax policy during the Reagan Presidency: As noted above, the dominant narrative changes over time. Reagan changes his own view on drugs based on external events and notes that the dominant narrative on taxes changes without him. With drugs, the infusions of crack cocaine and drug lords, changes the Reagan narrative from one of helping drug addicts to a narrative of a war. With taxes, Reagan finds that the iron triangle, specifically Congress, has shaped the narrative because of spending and funding issues. Reagan’s rhetoric does not change drastically, but the narrative that is created certainly changes and he is forced to work with the narrative that is produced.

Research Question 2: How did Reagan respond to the dominant narratives surrounding tax policy and drug policy: Reagan loses control of the tax policy narrative and as such has very little maneuverability on the issue. The policy mosaic that is created reflects his own narrative only slightly. Clearly with tax policy, Reagan does not shape the policy because his narrative is not one that can be transferred to a larger audience. Outside of the Kemp/Roth tax bill, Reagan is trying to catch up to the dominant narrative. With regards to drug policy, Reagan’s narrative shifts with the times and has slightly more success with his war on drugs narrative. Reagan is successful at creating a drug czar position and treats drug policy as if it were a war, his own narrative is accepted in part because it is a narrative that others can understand and reconcile.

Research Question 3: What words or phrases surround the ideographs for drug policy <war on drugs> and tax policy <comprehensive tax reform>: As noted above, Reagan uses various terms and themes in order to shape his narrative on both policies. The
data reveal that there is not a high degree of success on Reagan’s behalf to establish his narrative and to weave it into the dominant narrative.

Research Question 4: Can a president attempt to set the agenda by using similar narratives for different policy types: Reagan attempts to use similar language, but the narratives for both policies are vastly different. Specifically with regards to drug policy, race becomes an issue and the narrative surrounds the target of an enemy. While with tax policy, Reagan uses narratives from economic recovery to growing the economy.

Table 4.3 Agenda Through 1986

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Through 1986</th>
<th>FORMAL AGENDA (COBB AND ELDER)</th>
<th>DOMINANT NARRATIVE/INFORMAL AGENDA DRUGS</th>
<th>DOMINANT NARRATIVE/INFORMAL AGENDA TAXES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specificity</td>
<td><em>How abstractly or concretely an issue will be defined.</em></td>
<td>“JUST SAY NO” to drugs – softer gentler message aimed at children</td>
<td>“REFORM” the tax code – increasing the amount of money Americans will be able to save and spend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Significance</td>
<td><em>Is the issue peculiar to a specific subset of the population or is it broader in its significance:</em></td>
<td>Policy was aimed at powder cocaine and marijuana users</td>
<td>Tax reform was aimed at middle America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporal Relevance</td>
<td><em>The extent to which an issue has short range, circumstantial relevance, or longer, more enduring relevance.</em></td>
<td>Focused on cleaning up the streets and providing long term treatment</td>
<td>Aimed at long-term financial strain most Americans were facing. Taxes need to be cut in order to rein in future government growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity</td>
<td><em>Is the issue highly complex and technical, or is it easy to understand:</em></td>
<td>“Just say no!” Focus is on rehabilitation</td>
<td>More money in your pocket means Americans will have more money to spend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Categorical Precedence | The extent to which an issue is routine or extraordinary. | A war on drugs had never been successful. Losing this war is unacceptable! | If taxes are not cut, future generations will be saddled with crippling debt

Table 4.4 Agenda Post 1986

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1986 – and beyond</th>
<th>FORMAL AGENDA (COBB AND ELDER)</th>
<th>DOMINANT NARRATIVE/INFORMAL AGENDA DRUGS</th>
<th>DOMINANT NARRATIVE/INFORMAL AGENDA TAXES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specificity</td>
<td>How abstractly or concretely an issue will be defined.</td>
<td>Shifts from cocaine and marijuana users to crack users</td>
<td>Tax rates are lowered but loopholes are closed – increases revenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Significance</td>
<td>Is the issue peculiar to a specific subset of the population or is it broader in its significance.</td>
<td>Focus becomes inner city minorities – Race is an issue</td>
<td>Focus on the highest earners paying their fair share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporal Relevance</td>
<td>The extent to which an issue has short range, circumstantial relevance, or longer, more enduring relevance.</td>
<td>Shifts from “Just Say No” to a “War on drugs”</td>
<td>Looked at as a long-term fix for deficit problems and one of fairness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity</td>
<td>Is the issue highly complex and technical, or is it easy to understand:</td>
<td>Mandatory drug sentences</td>
<td>Tax code is fairly complex – moving money from a tax shelter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categorical Precedence</td>
<td>The extent to which an issue is routine or extraordinary</td>
<td>Extraordinary – made drug dealers subject to the death penalty</td>
<td>Reform the tax system and create an easier system</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

I. Central Themes

The modern presidency is driven by words, public images, and associations made by the president. Since the president is at the center of the political system (Gardner, 1989, 45) the president can utilize his resources and attempt to shape the agenda and shape public policy. The research above lends to the conclusion that the president can attempt to shape the agenda, but the narrative that dominates the policy process is a mosaic of many narratives, one of which may be the presidents. The president does have an ability to shape policy by using specific word choices, linking them to larger concepts, and helping to set the narrative. Reagan utilizes specific language, very specific words that, alone, would not be moving, placed in their context, they become the ‘truth’ as McGee (1980, 57) refers to it. Reagan signed legislation that had a narrative that was not his, he attempted to shape the agenda in his favor, but was not able to identify the dominant narrative nor attach himself to the narrative.

Linking the major themes together, Cobb and Elder’s model, with its five component parts, helps explain how Reagan attempted to set the agenda for these two policies.

If Paul Light (1999) is correct that the president has an ever-shrinking amount of authority, Reagan displays how a president can attempt to shape the agenda by means other than institutional. By using specific words, and making specific choices linking words to
ideas and emotions, Reagan attempts to get around the shrinking role of the president. The influence is a result of how the president packages his ideas; in other words, the choices the president makes can result in success.

A central theme for this study is the strategy taken by a president attempting to shape the agenda. Strategy is an important aspect of setting the informal agenda, according to Cobb and Elder as well as Mahon’s (1989) work; Reagan displays his strategy through the use of his choice of words and the stories that he relates. Reagan uses words relating to war, education, religion, history/patriotism, the status quo, and big government repeatedly in order to shape the agenda. Following McGee’s (1980, 38) theory, Reagan ties tax cuts and drug policy to these images, in an attempt to define the problem and the solution, however was not able to do so.

II. Importance of Study

The concept behind creating an image, or mobilizing images, occurs regularly in public policy discourse. An ideograph, which directs attention to the meaning behind words, creates associations, generates emotional affects, and creates or assigns values to words, phrases, and thoughts (Miller, 2012, 91). Terms used frequently in the policy discourse, flood of immigrants and no child left behind, as clearly used to create an emotional attachment. Miller (2012, 92) notes that policy discourse is not the same as scholarly argumentation. An ideograph works in public policy discourse because there is blame to be assessed, a problem to be solved, and most importantly, the ideograph justifies action. The narratives that existed regarding drug policy and tax policy were shaped before they reached the formal agenda.
III. How We Got Here

With both tax policy and drug policy there were noticeable shifts in the actual legislation from the 1981 tax cuts to the 1986 tax bill that increased taxes; there were clear shifts in the dominant narrative as well. With drug policy and the introduction of crack cocaine, the focus of the narrative shifts dramatically. Reagan uses his rhetoric as a way of becoming part of the narrative. Major funding for drug abuse was targeted at rehabilitation, after the crack explosion funds were geared towards incarceration largely because the narrative changed and Reagan adopted new language to fit the narrative.

During his campaign for office, Reagan campaigned largely on the poor economy and how to fix it (Jensen, 1991, 1022). His solutions was to cut taxes, soon after taking office in 1981, Reagan signed into law one of the largest tax cuts in the postwar period (Jensen, 1991, 1025).

That legislation, which was phased in over three years, pushed through a 23% across-the-board cut of individual income tax rates. It also called for tax brackets, the standard deduction and personal exemptions to be adjusted for inflation starting in 1984 (Jensen, 1991, 1022). The 1981 bill also made certain business deductions more generous (Jensen, 1991, 1024). By 1986, Reagan lowered individual income tax rates again, this time in landmark tax reform legislation (Jensen, 1991, 1022). As a result, and despite the aggressive tax cutting, Reagan could not ignore the budget deficit, which was burgeoning (Jensen, 1991, 1022). After Reagan's first year in office, the annual deficit was 2.6% of gross domestic product. But it hit a high of 6% in 1983, stayed in the 5% range for the next three years, and fell to 3.1% by 1988 (Jensen, 1991, 1022). So, despite his public opposition to higher taxes and the constant choice of words decrying tax hikes, Reagan ended up signing off on several measures intended to raise more revenue. The bills did not raise more revenue by hiking
individual income tax rates though. Instead they did it largely through making it tougher to evade taxes, and through closing tax loopholes.

The words chosen by Reagan typically stayed the same, while the overall narrative surrounding the issue certainly had changed. In fact, the reality of tax reform meant that Reagan would sign off on tax increases (Hoffman, 1990, 44). There were other notable tax increases under Reagan. In 1983, for example, he signed off on Social Security reform legislation that, among other things, accelerated an increase in the payroll tax rate, required that higher-income beneficiaries pay income tax on part of their benefits, and required the self-employed to pay the full payroll tax rate, rather than just the portion normally paid by employees (Hoffman, 1990, 44). The tax reform of 1986, meanwhile, was not designed to increase federal tax revenue. Because the reform bill eliminated or reduced many tax breaks and shelters, high-income tax filers who previously paid little ended up with bigger tax bills (Hoffman, 1990, 46).

IV. What Is Now Known

Narratives surrounding a policy help direct thinking toward certain policy solutions, which is why presidents would like have a hand in shaping the narrative. Reagan attempts to gain traction for both drug policy and tax policy through his use of his own narrative. With tax policy Reagan is forced to confront a narrative regarding taxes that is not his own, and does not comport with his idea. The Tax Reform Act of 1986 is the most apparent example of Reagan losing the narrative struggle. He was not able to control the narrative as the economic indicators were not in his favor, and he signed a tax bill that he did not highly regard. Reagan agreed to sign the bi-partisan bill only after top tax rates could be reduced, therefore allowing the president to claim he was lowering taxes. The reality comported with
the new law in that tax loopholes were being closed and the new law would actually increase the amounts paid by top earners.

The struggle to shape a narrative on tax policy demonstrates that while presidents attempt to ‘control’ the narrative, this is not possible. A narrative is something that is followed rather than created; it is largely uncontrollable. Politicians, nevertheless, attempt to control a narrative through their words, they use rhetoric to move the narrative to find a majority for action. Astute politicians understand that they have to change the meaning of a policy by shaping and crafting a solution. An ideograph is utilized in order to connote an emotional attachment to an idea, or a public policy, and these attachments are an attempt to gain support for a policy solution.

The data also reveal that Reagan changes his rhetoric, especially on drug policy, over the course of his presidency. Early in his presidency, Reagan taps into the dominant narrative with the addition of self-reliance that surrounds fixing the problem; later in his presidency that rhetoric is lost and replace by one of conviction rates and problems with crime. He addresses problems in the inner city to a large degree, while at the same time pushing for much stiffer sentences for crack dealers and users over cocaine users and dealers.

The race factor plays a role when the data is examined; the push for much stiffer sentences, the changing rhetoric, and the change in tone is obviously shifted from a problem of marijuana and cocaine, to one of crack in the cities.

Clearly, this study is not meant to be a forecast of presidential agenda setting and how future presidents can go about setting the agenda. Reagan was a master communicator but not necessarily a master narrative changer or adjustor. Most presidents do not find a high degree of success in their ability to establish a narrative that expands to a larger
This study is meant to examine how Reagan went about trying to shape the agenda for comprehensive tax reform and drug control policy. Reagan goes about trying shape the agenda for tax and drug policy in a similar fashion, relating both policies to images and emotions.

The three observations below come as a result of the analysis of the data. These three hypotheses/observations emerge from the collected data and confirm the judgments made from the research questions.

Observation 1: President Reagan utilized rhetoric in his speeches in order to change, or at least, modify the narrative. It needs to be noted that Reagan had the nickname of the great communicator, but was unable to understand and affect what the narrative was on both of these issues.

Observation 2: President Reagan utilized stories and speeches in order to become one of the many sources that contribute to a narrative, which is the center of the problem definition for drug policy and tax policy with varying degrees of success. As previously mentioned, it is known that most presidents find it difficult to understand the narrative approach to policymaking. There are few people and/or institutions that have the capability to work with others on a narrative that also defines the problem and the solution in such a way that reaches a larger audience.

Observation 3: President Reagan had very little control over the course of his presidency about the direction of the formal agenda because he had little involvement in changing the dominant narrative. The narrative is set when Congress adds the issue to the formal agenda. While the informal agenda allows for movement and understanding of alternative ideas, Reagan exhibited little control over the agenda.
V. Limitations

The data demonstrates that Reagan uses the ideograph technique as a way to communicate his ideas and shape the agenda. The data also reveals the limitations of this research. The scope of the study is limited to words and phrases used by Reagan. There is no personal interview where Reagan reveals the truth behind his choice of words.

It is also difficult to fully understand how policy is undertaken and completed. There are many factors that contribute to the success or failure of a public policy. As previously mentioned, there are agenda setting theorists who suggest that there is an event that occurs which causes policy to be undertaken. Yet other policy experts would argue that there is disagreement over policy between the many policymakers. There is no complete understanding to the many complexities of policymaking.

Another limitation to policy aspect of this research, Miller (2012, 145) notes that proposals are often complicated and difficult to effectively communicate to a largely uninformed public. Thus, instead of proposing clear and precise policies, politicians often focus on presenting an image to the public. The average voter often makes electoral judgments based on his or her shortcut perceptions of what candidates meant rather than an evaluation of the actual policy that a politicians is actually proposing. Presidents who want to avoid complicated policy discussions may instead focus on presenting themselves in terms of their values and suggesting that those values are important characteristics of a president. This is done through statements about a president’s life experiences, beliefs and emotions.

McGee (1980, 13) sets the stage for the ideograph with politics and politicians in 1980, since then few scholars have applied the ideograph to policy research. It is understood that the concept ideograph has been used to explain how politicians can attempt to frame a debate, set an agenda, and/or score policy victories. An ideograph (McGee, 1980, 15) is
found in a political discourse, studied here as (war on drugs) and (comprehensive tax reform) that utilized ordinary language to evoke images and emotions in order to guide policy narratives and defined two issues.

VI. Future Research

Future research should be more expansive, possibly comparing different presidents to Reagan. Future questions may want to address the questions addressed here, but in a broader scope. Research should include an understanding of the abilities of the president; are the president’s powers increasing or decreasing: Does a president increase the power of the presidency by using specific rhetoric, phrases, or thoughts: Do future presidents have to understand how to identify the dominant narrative in order to find success with public policy: The key difference between future presidents may just be in their ability to understand the dominant narrative, perhaps alter it slightly if possible, in order to find success with policymaking.

Another area of future study is with the idea of the ideograph. There is substantial evidence above to demonstrate the importance of using words with other words specifically to evoke emotion.

This study set out to understand how Reagan used his skills in order to try and shape the agenda for both drug policy and tax policy; and if in so doing, he followed Cobb and Elder’s model of agenda setting, primarily, issue expansion. The data shows that he uses many of the same images and emotion moving thoughts for both policies. The five aspects of Cobb and Elder’s model, specificity, social significance, temporal relevance, complexity, and categorical precedence, were applied to both drug policy and tax policy and measured in a qualitative manner, paying close attention to the ideas he used time and again. The determination was made, and the evidence displayed, that Reagan attempted to use rhetoric
in order to define the issues; and the rhetoric was not policy specific. Will image making help presidents in the future:

While this study examined Reagan’s major speeches, primarily because these speeches have an impact on the public, the research questions can be answered by the three observations. The depth of field for this study is vast, while there are a number of major speeches made by Reagan between 1980-1989, there is a wealth of information regarding both tax policy and drug policy. The three hypotheses accept the three research questions posed in chapter 1. What role does rhetoric play in setting the agenda: Can a president attempt to set the agenda by using similar rhetoric for different policy types: What words or phrases surrounded the ideographs for drug policy <war on drugs> and tax policy <Comprehensive tax reform>: In the future, presidents, along with other policymakers, will have to be able to focus the attention patterns of others in order to find narrative success and policy success.

VII. Concluding Remarks

Finally, why an ideograph: The American president has to compete in a confined arena, there are many forces attempting to pass public policy. How does the president gain an advantage in this situation: More than simple rhetoric, the ideograph is embedded in a history; McGee (1980, 12) argues that the word “equality” conjures up a certain collective image and emotion in the United States, and is a much different image and emotion in another country. The terms that were chosen by Reagan were terms that are embedded in American history, terms that are culture specific, words and phrases that have a relatively precise meaning as well as having a very clear message. The history of war in the United States is well understood; therefore using the term “war” in a situation that is not an actual war evokes emotions related to the United States and the wars that she has fought. So,
when a president is engaging language, he is doing more than trying to persuade an audience. Simply, the president is attempting to set the agenda, score a policy victory, guide actions, and justify his policy proposals.
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### APPENDIX

#### CODING OF MAJOR SPEECHES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Type of Speech</th>
<th>Rhetoric Used in Tax Speeches</th>
<th>Rhetoric Used in War on Drug Speeches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02.05.81</td>
<td>Major to the Nation</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07.27.81</td>
<td>Major to the Nation</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.24.81</td>
<td>Major to the Nation</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 5, 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.23.81</td>
<td>Major to the nation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04.29.82</td>
<td>Major to the Nation</td>
<td>1, 3, 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.26.82</td>
<td>State of the Union</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 5, 6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08.16.82</td>
<td>Major to the Nation</td>
<td>1, 3, 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.14.82</td>
<td>Remarks on Initiative</td>
<td></td>
<td>1, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.02.82</td>
<td>Radio Address to the Nation</td>
<td>1, 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.13.82</td>
<td>Major to the Nation</td>
<td>1, 3, 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.25.83</td>
<td>State of the Union</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 5, 6</td>
<td>1, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.01.83</td>
<td>Remarks on Signing</td>
<td></td>
<td>1, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Pages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.13.83</td>
<td>Proclamation</td>
<td>1, 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.25.84</td>
<td>State of the Union</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 5, 6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.29.84</td>
<td>Major to the Nation</td>
<td>2, 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.05.84</td>
<td>Major to the Nation</td>
<td>2, 6</td>
<td>1, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05.28.84</td>
<td>Major to the Nation</td>
<td>1, 3, 4, 5, 6</td>
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<td>05.09.84</td>
<td>Major to the Nation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>02.06.85</td>
<td>State of the Union</td>
<td>3, 4, 6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04.24.85</td>
<td>Major to the Nation</td>
<td>1, 3, 5, 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02.04.86</td>
<td>State of the Union</td>
<td>1, 3, 6</td>
<td>1, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03.16.86</td>
<td>Major to the Nation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05.20.86</td>
<td>Remarks on Signing Proclamation</td>
<td>1, 4, 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.14.86</td>
<td>Major to the Nation</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 5, 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.27.87</td>
<td>State of the Union</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.14.87</td>
<td>Major to the Nation</td>
<td>1, 6</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>01.25.88</td>
<td>State of the Union</td>
<td>3, 4, 6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
1- opposition to or fears of his policies among ordinary citizens
2- policies will actually have some costs to the public
3- objections to his policies
4- cites support for a policy, or for some claims on its behalf, by experts
5- providing extensive arguments, examples, or evidence to support the main causal claims for the president’s policies

6- appealing to the public’s sense of obligation or duty to support a policy