The Influence of Politics on Federal Disaster Declaration Decision Delays

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Abstract

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KEYWORDS: disaster relief, public choice, decision theory, political decision making

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Introduction
        In the U.S., natural disasters are considered largely "local", and typically do not involve state or federal resources until they are either determined to be a necessity or they are requested from local authorities (Col, 2007). The amended Stafford Act provides a national response framework with procedural details for local and state governments to request assistance (including financial, personnel, medicine, and defense) for major disasters that would otherwise overwhelm their response capacity (Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA], 2007). The procedure requires a request from the local authorities to the state's emergency management office, which then submits to the Governor for review and consideration. If approved, the Governor submits to the state FEMA regional office which then reviews the request before submitting to the FEMA headquarters, which then makes a final recommendation before submitting to the President for final approval.
        While this multi-stage decision process helps ensure significant oversight and review before federal assistance is released, it also is fraught with potential for bureaucratic and administrative delays.   During disasters, delays are particularly problematic since the speed and agility of response determines the eventual outcomes in terms of loss of lives and overall damage. Most of the principles of emergency management emphasize coordination, efficient mobilization of resources, flexibility, and timeliness (Haddow, Bullock, & Coppola, 2008). The National Response Plan (U.S. Department of Homeland Security [DHS], 2004) describes several situations where speed or timeliness play a pivotal role, stating for example that "federal support must be provided in a *timely* manner to save lives, prevent human suffering, and mitigate severe damage" (DHS, 2004). Similarly, Congress has described the lack of speed and efficiency during a recent major disaster (Hurricane Katrina) response citing that "…supplies and equipment were so slow in arriving" and administrative failures "were able to delay, disrupt and diminish the response" (U.S Select Bipartisan Committee, 2006).
        Public choice theory has suggested that decision outcomes can be influenced by the bureaucratic posturing of administrators, which is partially dictated by their own concerns, vote motivations, and other special interests (Buchanan & Tullock, 1962). The work of social and political science researchers have documented a wide range of contrasting results, some arguing that political affiliations influence results and others finding no evidence of this. We will discuss some of these studies in the next section. In the field of decision theory,

political views of decision-making suggest that the decision outcomes are a result of a search for power, influence, and manipulation of information (Dean & Sharfman, 1993). Since administrative bureaucracy and poor coordination are common to large-scale disasters, we use decision theory to study the interaction effect of the political party affiliation between the governor and the president to explore decision delays in disasters.

In this area, recent research has shown mixed results about the impact that politics plays in the approval or turndown process (Garrett & Sobel, 2003; Larcinese, Rizzo & Testa, 2006). Most studies conclude that decision outcomes are not influenced by politics, yet the outcome was limited to the bifurcated "yes-no" decision. We contend that the decision to delay or hold up decisions is equally an important outcome of the decision process, since it is possible that the federal assistance or relief comes too slow and actually is not beneficial at all. Delays are often used to stall decisions under uncertainty, or to postpone decisions where administrators cannot determine the best course of action. Offers of assistance for response when the disaster has ended often times does not help the community respond or recover as quickly and resiliently as ideally it could have. This research differs from previous research by exploring if political party affiliations between the dyad impact the delays or speed at which approvals are granted. Our working proposition is that same party affiliations between the governor and the president would result in lower overall approval times, while opposite political party affiliations would result in longer overall approval times. We suggest this based on partisan politics and public choice theory that suggests that politicians are more likely to favor same party politicians (Niskanen, 1998).

Even though many have called for reducing decision delays, and improving speed and agility in emergencies (c.f. Harrald, 2006), there have not been any studies undertaken to assess decision delays for presidential disaster declarations. That is the primary motivation for our research, to better understand the impact of electoral politics on disaster declaration decision delays. By decision delay, we are specifically focused on the time between the start of the disaster and the time which a Presidential disaster is declared. For background purposes, the steps of the decision cycle are shown in Figure 1.

<Insert Figure 1 Here: Disaster Total Decision Delay Time>

Public Choice and Decision Theory

Many theories have evolved over time to explain the behavior and actions of politicians and administrators in political economy (Wise, 2004). Public choice theory builds on the individual as the unit of analysis and the concept of a rational actor which makes decisions due to self-interest, value maximization, rationality, and risk perceptions (Ostrom & Ostrom, 1971). Public choice theory has been used to examine the decisions taken by key politicians and

administrators, exploring how the decisions they have taken are based on these assumptions of maximizing what is in one's own best interest. Many have used public choice theory to examine the decision content and quality of president's, governors, congressman and other political figures. This is based on the assumptions that political decision-makers will take actions that protect their own interests and "maximize the payoff they receive from public actions" (Wise, 2004, p. 674).

The interaction between a state's governor and the President represents a political dyad. The working relationship between these individuals is at least partially influenced by electoral consequences (Stein, 1990), but also by political similarities, voting considerations, and many other complex behavioral and political factors (March & Olsen, 1989). The public choice view is rooted in rational decision theory, which suggests that political actors will make decisions based on maximizing their own self-interest (Niskanen, 1998). Similarly, rational public choice theory suggests that competitive political behavior of bureaucrats drive their choices in decision processes (Strom, 1990).

Vote-maximizing or vote-seeking behavior is one of the key aspects of public choice theory. Downs (1957) asserted that decisions are driven largely by the voting impact, and therefore politicians use estimates of probabilities to evaluate choices. According to public choice theory, self-interest actions typically focus on either expanding budgets or bureauraccy, but also encourage bureaucrats to make choices which "maximize the payoff they receive from public actions" (Wise, 2004, p. 674).

However, there are several key criticisms of public choice theory. For example, some researchers feel that it is fairly simplistic, and does not adequately describe the complexities of political behavior in the U.S. (Miller, 1992). Yet, most researchers feel the emphases on power and influence, votes, and self-interest are characteristic of politics, and many key theoretical frameworks have placed the individual politician's motivations at the center (c.f. Frisch & Kelly, 2006).

Decision theory offers useful insight into political processes. For these purposes, a decision is defined as "a commitment to an action that is intended to yield satisfying states of affairs for particular parties" (Yates, 2003, p. 24). Bozeman and Pandey (2004) looked at specific public management decision scenarios, and raised interesting questions about the impact of decision content on decision processes, specifically average time to make decisions. Pandey and Bretschneider (1997) found that administrative delays were greater in public organizations than private ones, and specifically explored strategies for reducing administrative delays and "burdensome", avoidable "red tape".

This concept of speed or delays in the decision process has been studied widely from the industrial-organizational management perspective, but not as

much from the political or public context. Most political decisions have been empirically studied through the context of a discrete choice—that is, a "yes-no" or "approve-reject" scenario. The timing, or speed, at which the decision was made has not been widely studied in public administration, despite the importance that delays can have on the actual decision outcomes. The construct known as "total decision delay time" represents the time elapsed between the need and the action (Greenleaf & Lehmann, 1995).

Delays are useful to study, because reasons for delays offer insight into the intended actions and beneficiaries of the decision process. Decision delays could be based on cognitive processes, uncertainties, perceived risk, or many other factors. However, delays could also be politically motivated and have political consequences. Some have suggested that delays in decisions could be political maneuvers or tactics to avoid selecting politically risky choices (Sattler, Freeman, & Brandt, 2008). Others have found that decision delays postpone action and are largely due to doubts in the decision makers mind about the right course of action, or other uncertainty (Lipshitz & Strauss, 1997). Alternatively, delays could be a form of "defensive avoidance" where psychological stress or threats causes fear and procrastination (Janis & Mann, 1977; Ashforth & Lee, 1990). In political negotiations, the "delay-default syndrome" suggests that when presented with choices, individuals often choose to do nothing because they are unsure of the right path and choose to avoid politically risky decisions, basically choosing the default "business as usual" (Burgess, 1994). Studying delays in key political decisions are important, since the concept of timing or speed in high-stakes decisions is considered a component of "new public management" programs and a "paradigm of speed" (Ramo & Skalen, 2006). Others have considered time in decision models to be the new competitive advantage for organizations (Stalk & Hout, 1990; Bluedorn & Denhardt, 1988).

Electoral Politics and Disaster Relief

Several empirical studies have relied on the public choice theoretical lens for exploring relations between the actions of political leaders. Nearly a dozen studies have investigated the political influence on the presidential disaster declaration process. Previous studies have examined electoral votes (Downton & Pielke 2001; Garrett & Sobel, 2003; Reeves 2007; Sylves & Buzas 2007); the impact of reelection years (Garrett & Sobel, 2003; Sylves & Buzas, 2007); the gubernatorial and presidential party similarity (Garrett & Sobel, 2003; Salkowe & Chakraborty, 2009); and the impact of congressional and presidential party similarity (Garrett & Sobel, 2003; Sylves & Buzas, 2007; Salkowe & Chakraborty, 2009). Most studies have found conflicting results: some argue that politics have influenced decisions, while others contend that disaster scale and state economic need are more influential.

For example, Garrett and Sobel (2003) found evidence that congressional and presidential factors influence the amount of funds that were distributed to states and local economies. More specifically, they found that half of all disaster relief is motivated politically rather than by need (Garrett & Sobel, 2003). Similarly, Reeves (2007) found that the president may look more favorably upon requests made by governors of his same political party. The rationale is that when president and governor are of the same party, they have stronger political congruence than with those of the opposite party. For example, governors often promote or travel with the president during campaigns and other official visits, as well as provide endorsement and support for presidential candidates of their own party during election years (Garrett & Sobel, 2003**).**

Looking at the pattern of allocating federal funds to states, Larcinese et al. (2006) found that states with governors of the same party as the president tend to receive more federal funds than states with governors of the opposite party. However, investigating presidential disaster declarations, Garrett and Sobel (2003), Sylves and Buzas (2007), Reeves and Gasper (2010) and Salkowe and Chakraborty (2009) all found no relationship between gubernatorial and presidential party similarity and the decision on whether to approve or turndown presidential disaster declaration requests.

During the year of a presidential reelection, studies have also explored the propensity to approve disaster declarations, and found that reelection years did have a higher success rate than non-reelection years (Salkowe & Chakraborty, 2009; Downton & Pielke 2001; Garrett & Sobel 2003; Sylves & Buzas 2007; Daniels, 2010). In a targeted study examining the decisions of individual presidents, May (1985) found that President Nixon had higher approval ratings in the reelection year than in nonelection years, whereas President Carter had a slightly lower approval rating in the reelection year than in nonelection years. Daniels (2010) however found that governors are more likely to request major disaster declarations during reelection years. This suggests that the dyad relationship between governors and presidents is at least partially influenced by political concerns.

Disaster declarations provide an ideal opportunity for the president to gain electoral votes. Many researchers have pointed out the failures and flaws of disaster management approaches from government, especially during major natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina (Eikenberry, Arroyave, & Cooper, 2007). Garrett and Sobel (2003) and Reeves (2007) concluded that disaster declarations have been used by the president more favorably with states of electoral importance. Garrett and Sobel (2003) find that states with higher electoral importance have a higher rate of presidential disaster declaration. This is because the president may court voters in these battle ground states by distributing the federal relief dollars to individuals and small businesses (Reeves,

2007). In addition, governors of these electorally important states are less likely to request disaster declarations if they are of the opposite party of the president, since such declarations might help the president to gain electoral support in their states (Reeves & Gasper, 2010).

Hypotheses

Public choice theory suggests that politicians and bureaucrats are rational decision makers, but motivated by their own self-interest. We propose that it is in the self-interest of politicians to reward or assist those in their same political party because they are most likely to derive political support and cooperation from these individuals. Rewarding the political party would likely result in approving disasters quicker, or having the shortest overall decision delays. This study examines the role that political affiliation of the President and Governor plays in the delays or speed of approving federal disaster declarations in the U.S. Therefore, using both public choice and decision theory, we propose the following hypothesis:

> *H1: The political parties of the governor-president dyad will have a significant interaction effect on the total decision delays in federal disaster declarations.*

And more specifically, that:

> *H2: Response time delays to federal disaster declaration approvals will be the shortest when the President and Governor are of the same political party.*

Data and Methods

The purpose of this research is to assess the delays, or timing, of the Presidential disaster declaration approval process and to explore if political influences interact with declaration timing. More specifically, we are exploring the interaction effects between the political dyad (the governor and the President at the time of the disaster). We explore these interaction effects using data from 1993 to 2010 using approved disaster declarations. Figure 2 shows the research model for this study.

<Insert Figure 2 Here: Research Model>

Primary Variables

We chose to focus on the subset of disaster declarations that were approved, and we operationalized our dependent variable to represent the total delays or time in days for the approval. Although the approval process is quite

lengthy and has multiple steps, as shown earlier in Figure 1, we measure this as the number of days between the day the event occurred or started and the day which the President declared the disaster. These data were available through the FEMA annual major disaster declarations online database (FEMA, 2010). We explored 917 major disaster declarations during the 1993 to 2010 timeframe. Emergency declarations and fire management declarations were not included in the analysis.

To measure political influence on timing, we captured the political party of the governor and the President at the time of each disaster declaration. Presidential parties were coded as either Republican (1) or Democrat (0). Gubernatorial parties were coded as Republican (1) and Democrat (0). Because of the small number of independent or other parties, they were not factored into the regression, although they were assessed using the analysis of variance with a coding of 3 (other). Data for state governors were obtained from the National Governors Association (NGA) online database (NGA, 2010).   Data for the political party of the President were obtained from the White House database (White House, 2010).

Interaction Dyadic Variable

Previous studies have focused primarily on the role of one party on the decision process (namely the president), and not the interaction effects between the two parties. Consequently, to capture the dyadic relationship between the governor and the President, we explored the interaction effects between the two parties. We coded five interaction variables for the dyadic relationship (i.e., Republican President and Republican Governor=1, Republican President and Democratic Governor=2, Democrat President and Republic Governor=3, Democrat President and Democrat Governor=4, and all other combinations were coded as 5). This final category was primarily due to a small number of independent governors or disasters occurring in Washington DC which has no state chief executive. For all analyses, we concern ourselves primarily with only the first four dyads.

Control Variables

State Economic Need. Several previous studies have suggested that the state's economic need or resources impact decision outcomes during presidential disaster declarations. Garrett and Sobel (2003) looked at the state per capita income, and found that states with higher per capita income have a lower approval rate of disaster declaration than lower income states. Salkowe and Chakraborty (2009) arrived at a similar conclusion and found that states with lower total taxable resources had much higher rate of success in acquiring a disaster declaration than states with lower total taxable resources. Others however, such

as Downton and Pielke (2001), analyzed flood-related declarations and found that the state's ability to pay did not have an impact on the likelihood of acquiring disaster declarations. Reeves (2007) also did not find relationship between presidential disaster declarations and personal per capita income. Due to this contradiction in findings, we chose to include a measure of state's economic condition as a control variable. We used real gross domestic product by state for the year of the disaster, and adjusted all dollars to 1997 as our index year. The data source for this was the Bureau of Economic Analysis Regional Economic Accounts database.

Disaster Scale/Magnitude. Two previous studies (Downton & Pielke, 2001; Gasper & Reeves, 2010) found a positive relationship between the scale of damage caused by the disaster and the likelihood of obtaining a disaster declaration for that disaster. For that reason, we included the total duration of the event to control for scale or magnitude of the disaster. Data for this variable were obtained from the Public Entity Risk Institute database, available from the University of Delaware for this information, available at www.peripresdecusa.org. We also used the FEMA database to obtain these total durations as well. We attempted to incorporate a secondary measure of scale—total dollar damages available from the Spatial Hazard Events and Losses Database for the United States at the Hazards & Vulnerability Research Institute—but only about one-third of all the disasters had values, and this limited the degrees of freedom in the regression model so it was ultimately omitted.

Incident Type. The type of incident could be important, so we included a dummy variable ranging from 1 to 15 to control for disaster type (e.g., coastal flood=1, flood=6, severe storm=12). These data were obtained from the FEMA database.

Concurrent disasters. Finally, we controlled for the number of simultaneous major declared disasters underway in the year of the event, using the same FEMA database.

Data Analysis Method

Regression analysis was used to test the extent to which the political dyad interacts with the total delays. Moderated hierarchical regression specifically was the primary procedure, which allowed us to look at the primary control and independent variables in one model and the interaction effects of these variables together on delays in the second model. The independent variables were standardized, using the procedures developed by Aiken and West (1991). We also explored differences in delays between the political dyads through analysis of variance (ANOVA) techniques. We analyzed the standard errors for the individual variables and the models overall, and all were sufficiently low. We present these results in Table 2 with the models.

Results

There were 917 major disasters which occurred between 1993 and 2010, with a mean total decision delay of 29.6 days, and a median delay of 22. Table 1 presents the summary statistics and coding description for each of the variables in the research model. Table 2 presents the regression results with the two models.

<Insert Table 1 Here: Descriptive Statistics and Coding for Variables Analyzed>

Our primary hypothesis (H1) posits that there will be a significant interaction effect of the political party dyad (between governor and president) on the total delay time in declaring disaster declarations. We further hypothesize (H2) that these delays will be the shortest when the dyad is of the same political party. As can be seen in the regression model 1, neither the political party of the governor or the president had a significant effect on overall timing or total delays ($\beta=-2.26$ and $\beta=-1.01$, $p>.05$ respectively). Three of the control variables however (the economic conditions of the state, total disaster duration, and the type of incident) all had significant association with total delays however. The richer the state in terms of gross domestic product, the lower the overall decision delay time ($\beta=-4.02$, $p>.01$). Alternatively, the longer the disaster lingers (measured by total duration of the disaster), the longer the decision delay ($\beta=.27$, $p>.01$). In addition, the type of incident had an impact on the overall delay as well ($\beta=.71$, $p>.05$)

<Insert Table 2 Here: Regression Model Results>

When we introduce the interaction variable between the two main effects (political party of the president and governor), we see that it has a significant relationship with timing in regression model 2 ($\beta=8.92$, $p<.01$). More importantly, the R^2 of the second model increases from $R^2=.13$ to $R^2=.14$, and the F-statistic also increases from F=19.26 to F=21.33, confirming that the second model with interaction effects is slightly more explanatory. Therefore our findings provide support for Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2 posits that the interaction effect will be the most significant when the parties of the two political parties are the same (that is, when the dyad is either republican president-republican governor, or democratic president-democratic governor). To explore this more fully, we performed an analysis of variance to examine differences in the means and medians of the delays by political dyads. The results of this can be seen in Table 3.

<Insert Table 3 Here: ANOVA of Delays by Political Dyad>

As can be seen in this table, there is a significant difference in both the means and the median delay times based on the interaction effect between the governor and president political dyads. Analysis of variance of the means confirmed that the differences in means were significant (F=4.26, p<.001) as were the medians (Moods=10.13, p<.05).

We then isolated specific types of incidents within the total sample using subset analysis to further control for incident magnitude or severity and found identical patterns of decision delays by dyad. For instance, using the disaster "severe storms" incident type, we found an identical pattern for the means and medians, all with significant differences between the means and medians. Table 4 presents one of the subset analyses using the "severe storm" incident.

<Insert Table 4 Here: ANOVA of Delays by Political Dyad>

Specifically, the interaction effect of the dyad consisting of a Democratic president and a Republican governor resulted in the lowest overall delays or timing in the disaster declaration process, around 24.7 days relative to the sample mean of 29.6 (approximately 17% below the sample mean). Ignoring the dyad of "other" (which represents a small minority of combinations of independent governor with either a republican or democratic president), we find that the highest overall delays were observed when both the president and governors were from the same party—either both Republican ($\bar{x}$ of 29.7), or both Democrat ($\bar{x}$=30.9). Clearly, the interaction between the parties in the political dyad has a significant effect on the total disaster decision delay, providing support for Hypothesis 2.

Conclusions

Public choice theory suggests that politicians and political bureaucrats make decisions that maximize their self-interests. Decision theory suggests that delays are often used when decision-makers wish to avoid risky outcomes or stall progress for political gains. Using these theoretical lenses, we examine the effect of the interaction between the political parties in the governor-president dyad to explore the impact on total decision delays in the federal disaster declaration process. This strategic decision often precedes significant financial resource infusion to recover and rebuild post-disaster. Decision theory suggests that delaying tactics are common in organizations and politics for a variety of reasons, such as coping with risk or uncertainty, and that decision speed is equally as important as the actual content or outcome of a decision (such as approval or rejection). Previous studies have largely found mixed results about the decision outcomes in disaster relief, some contending that electoral politics does not influence the decision outcome while others find contrary evidence.

In this study, we contribute to the literature by focusing not on decision outcome, but on the decision speed. We isolated only the approvals (i.e., disaster declarations) and instead explore the interaction effects of the political dyad on the length of delays in this process. No previous studies have explored the decision delays in such major political decisions. This focus on decision delays represents a unique contribution to the literature on public decision making, public choice theory, and even the emergency management functions of public administration.

Based on an analysis of all major disasters occurring between 1993 and 2010, we find sufficient evidence that there is a significant effect of the political interaction in the decision dyad. Specifically, controlling for incident type, the lowest overall delays were observed when the dyad consisted of a Democratic president and a Republican governor. Alternatively, the highest delays came when both parties came from the same political party.

This is contrary to most political frameworks, especially public choice theory, which suggests that political parties will reward those of the same party since this is often the basis for future political support. The specific notion that major decisions are politically motivated would at least partially indicate that same-party dyads would have the quickest decision process and shortest declaration delays. Our findings contradict that position.

Our findings also departed from previous decision outcome research in disaster relief in terms of economic need. Prior research suggests that richer states are less likely to have positive outcomes (approvals), but we find that at least when isolating the approvals, richer states will likely face shorter decision delays. This is an interesting result, which seems consistent however with public choice theory, where economic motivations could contribute to decision processes. Further, we also found that the larger, more sustained disasters in terms of overall magnitude required longer decision delays. Decision theory and behavioral motivations could partially explain be useful in interpreting this, since larger disasters could create greater overall risk and uncertainty, which could bias politicians and create further complexity and doubt.

We are able to conclude from this that politics does matter in high-stakes political decisions, such as that of disaster relief. Our interaction variable for the political party affiliations of the president-governor dyad did produce a significant influence on decision delays. We subsequently posited that public choice theory leads us to expect that same-party affiliations would result in a preferred path for maximizing one's own self-interest, however we found no evidence of this. We instead find that politicians may find it more advantageous to make more rapid decisions when the requestor is from the opposing political party. Here too decision theory may offer a plausible alternative explanation of our findings. Since previous research in decision making has found that decision delays can be

due to doubts uncertainty in the decision-makers mind (Lipshitz & Strauss, 1997), or "defensive avoidance" causing fear and procrastination (Janis & Mann, 1977; Ashforth & Lee, 1990), politicians of opposite parties may make quick decisions because they do not want to appear hesitant, afraid, uncertain, or weak to the opposing party. Negativity bias in decision theory suggests that individuals (voters) put more emphasis on negative experiences than positive ones. Therefore politicians could be avoiding subsequent "blame avoidance" and negative perceptions that could be easily displaced from one party to the other if decisions were postponed excessively (Weaver, 1986).

The implications and future opportunities for research examining decision delays on disaster relief are immense. While this research does not attempt to explore other primary factors outside of political party affiliations, future research could more closely determine what drives the strategies and delays in these important political processes. Could it be that each state varies in terms of their comfort levels or thresholds where they would rather not seek federal assistance, or is there general apprehension in approaching the president? Could the "strings" that are attached to presidential disaster declarations outweigh the benefits, so that states have to carefully consider the tradeoffs and timing? Future research studies could qualitatively and quantitatively model the decision process and more comprehensively explore other factors in the decision process. Further research could also add additional constructs to explore if this were to improve public perceptions of their ability to work with others.

From a practical perspective, this research also has an impact on the field of emergency management, where speed and responsiveness are essential to preserving and protecting public health and safety. More comprehensive understanding of the timing could help to improve emergency management decision making, especially that which occurs at the onset of the disaster cycle.

As with all studies, this one is not without its limitations. First, data were analyzed using secondary databases, albeit from federal sources, and therefore the richness of the data that is captured is lacking. More detailed data available from disaster after-action reports and other briefs should be coded and incorporated in the future to explore what other factors contribute to decision-making delays.

In conclusion, this study will hopefully encourage other researchers to continue to focus on new aspects of decision-making in public administration and political contexts. While self-interest and personal motivations have long been known to influence decision-making, very little empirical evidence has been collected to explore the relationship between temporal aspects of the decision process, especially in high-stakes political arenas. Our research suggests that the interaction effect of the political dyad with the decision process and has a significant impact on the timing or delays involved in key decisions, such as

federal disaster relief. Incorporating further more detailed aspects of the decision cycle could help to better understand political impacts on decision processes.

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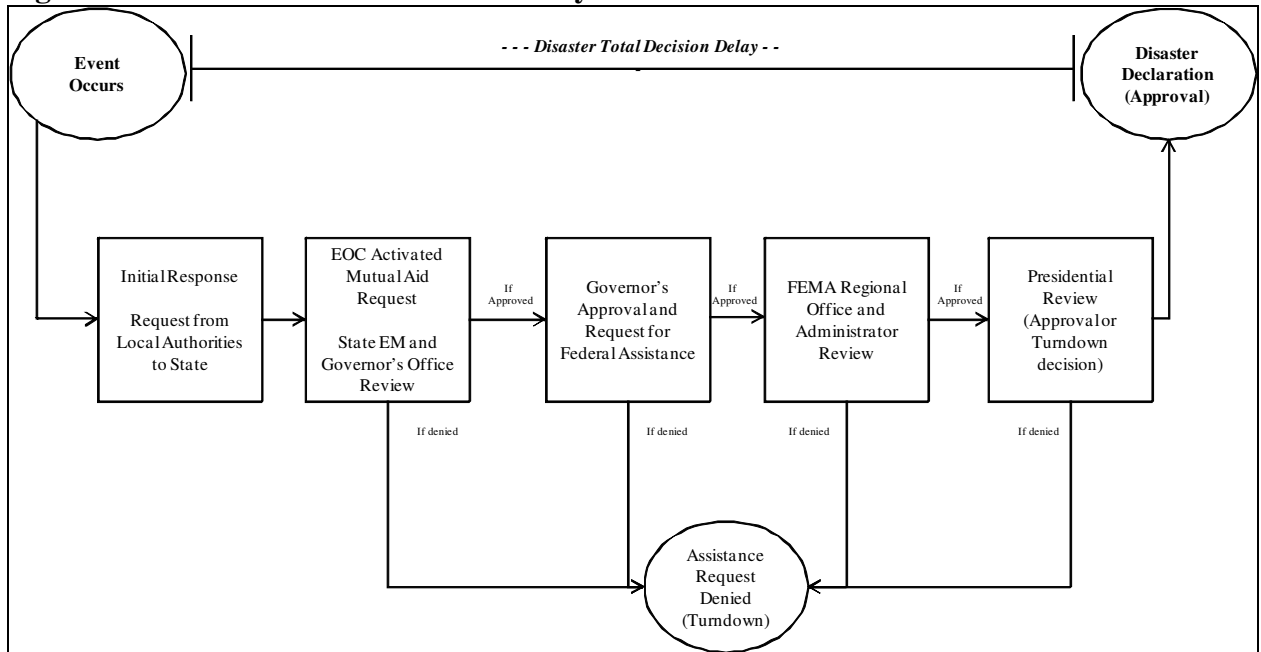**Figure 1: Disaster Declaration Decision Cycle Time**
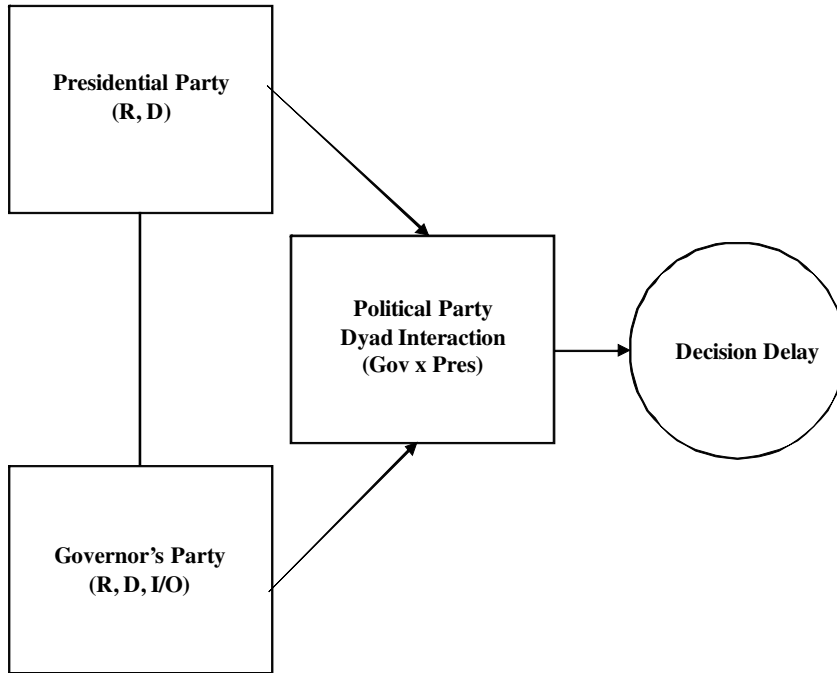
Figure 2: Research Model

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Coding for Variables Analyzed

Variable	Coding	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Main Variables					
Governor party	1=Repub, 2=Dem, 3=Other/Indep.	1.00	3.00	1.50	0.55
President party	1=Repub, 2=Dem	1.00	2.00	1.53	0.50
Interaction Variable					
Political dyad effect	Pres x Gov.	1.00	6.00	2.29	1.19
Control Variables					
State gross domestic product	Real GDP by state, chained to 1997	13987.00	1778720	254621	289145.00
Total duration (days)	Disaster end date - Incident start	0.00	365.00	21.98	35.02
# of concurrent disasters	Sum of all disasters during same time period	30.00	77.00	55.01	14.07
Incident type	1-15 (categorical)	1.00	15.00		
Dependent Variable					
Total decision delay time	Declaration date - Incident start	0.00	224.00	29.61	27.90
N=917 Major disaster declarations					

Table 2: Regression Model Results

Variable	Model 1	Model 2
Control Variables		
State gross domestic product	-4.02 **	-4.19 **
Total duration (days)	0.27 **	0.28 **
Concurrent disasters	-0.01	-0.01
Incident type	0.71 *	0.78 *
Main Effects		
Governor party	-2.27	-6.66 **
President party	-1.01	-5.17 *
Two way interaction		
Presidential x Governor dyad		8.92 **
F	19.26 **	21.33 **
R^2	0.13	0.14
Adjusted R^2	0.13	0.14

Standardized coefficients, n=844

* $p<.05$

** $p<.01$

Table 3: ANOVA Results of Delays by Political Dyad

Dyad/Interaction	*N*	Mean	Median
Gov=R, Pres=R	230	29.7	25.5
Gov=D, Pres=R	253	30.5	21.0
Gov=R, Pres=D	197	24.7	18.0
Gov=D, Pres=D	214	30.9	21.5
Other	23	48.1	36.0
Total	*917*	*29.6*	*22.0*

F=4.26, p<.001
Moods Median Test=10.13, p<.05

Table 4: Subset Analysis - "Severe Storms" Incident

Dyad/Interaction	*N*	Mean	Median
Gov=R, Pres=R	147	33.2	29
Gov=D, Pres=R	145	31.1	23
Gov=R, Pres=D	160	25.8	19.5
Gov=D, Pres=D	126	32.1	24.1
Other	17	42.6	34
Total	*595*	30.7	

F=2.90, p<.05
Moods Median Test=9.71, p<.05