

What Prompts the Pollsters? News Agendas, Survey Agendas, and the Uncertain Validity of Policy Responsiveness Research

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ABSTRACT

An extensive literature assesses the quality of political representation in democratic societies by examining the congruence between governmental policy and the public's surveyed preferences. Yet the validity of this congruence research has been questioned because surveys ask about only a fraction of policy issues, and are presumed to emphasize those issues receiving prominent attention in news coverage. This paper analyzes how *CBS Evening News* coverage influences the questions asked in *CBS/New York Times* polls. The policy agenda of CBS/NYT surveys was found to be more diffuse than that of CBS news coverage, and short-term trends in CBS's news coverage tended to have a limited influence on the policy agenda of its opinion surveys. These findings suggest that the survey agenda is less influenced by the news agenda than is commonly thought, and that the validity of policy congruence research may be on firmer ground than previous scholarship has suggested.

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Political scientists have long been concerned about the nature of political representation in democratic societies. Representation is a foundational concept in political theory (e.g., Pitkin 1967; Mansbridge 2003, 1992; Birch 1971; Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin 1999; Brennan and Hamlin 1999; Bartels 2003; Althaus 2003), and a large empirical literature examines the responsiveness of political institutions to the policy preferences of the mass public revealed in opinion surveys (e.g., Converse and Pierce 1986; Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson 1995; Jacobs and Shapiro 2005; Hansen 1998; Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002; Miller and Stokes 1963; Weissberg 1976; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Bartels In preparation; Soroka and Wlezien forthcoming; APSA Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy 2004; Erikson, Wright, and McIver 1993; Soroka and Wlezien 2005; for recent reviews, see Manza and Cook 2002; Burstein 2003). In this literature, an important indicator of representational quality is the congruence between governmental policy and the public's preferences revealed in opinion surveys (e.g., Page and Shapiro 1983; Page and Shapiro 1992; Brooks and Manza 2006; Wlezien 2004, 1995; Bartels 2006, In preparation; Gilens 2004, 2005; Monroe 1979, 1998; Page 1994; Jacobs and Shapiro 1994). Yet by testing democratic responsiveness using available measures of surveyed preferences, this important research area could be drawing incorrect conclusions about the quality of political representation.

The problem is that survey questions are asked on only a fraction of policy issues, but almost nothing is known about the policy agenda of the survey research industry (Barabas 2007). As emphasized by Paul Burstein (2003: 37) in a recent review of this literature:

Almost never considered is how the choice of issues affects our ability to generalize about the impact of opinion on policy. Even important issues are neglected; perhaps even more critically, issues that don't make the headlines are virtually ignored (except in the studies that address hundreds of issues) even though, in the aggregate, the relevant policies affect the public tremendously. The sample of issues studied is very much biased toward those

of relatively high salience; if salience influences responsiveness, current estimates of the strength of the relationship between opinion and policy may be too high.

Burstein adds that “serious work on this problem has barely begun” (38). The tendency for the polling agenda to be biased toward salient issues in the news seems high, since the available record of surveyed policy preferences is largely produced by news media polls. An analysis of the iPoll database maintained by the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research shows that at least half of all archived survey questions asked between 1980 and 2007 came from news polls.¹ To the extent that media polls focus narrowly on newsworthy events and concerns of the moment, the available record of surveyed policy preferences could have little bearing on the public’s broader concerns, especially issues that are the focus of ongoing legislative debate but are rarely featured in the news. But if news organizations go beyond the issues that populate the headlines to underwrite a broader range of social analysis, then the polling agenda of news outlets could provide a suitable foundation for evaluating the policy responsiveness of governing institutions.

This paper examines the causal relationships between the news agenda and the polling agenda to shed light on this potential threat to the validity of opinion-policy congruence research.

¹ There are a total of 406,791 survey questions in the Roper Center’s iPoll database for the years 1980 through mid-2007. These surveys are provided to Roper by 66 organizations, of which 15 are news organizations. These 15 organizations are associated with 272,974 questions in the database. If these questions are counted as independent of one another, then 67.1% of the total number of these survey questions would come from news organizations. However, several of these 15 organizations at least occasionally sponsor joint surveys. Taking the lower number of questions from each pair of co-sponsoring organizations and adding the difference between that value and the total number of questions from the other organization produces a minimum estimate of the unique number of media-produced survey questions. This method attributes at least 183,191 questions to news organizations, or 45.0% of the total. The true number probably lies somewhere between 45% and 67%, but because iPoll does not allow searching for questions from more than one organization at a time, the true number is difficult to assess more closely.

These relationships are examined with a case study that tracks the population of news stories broadcast on CBS *Evening News* from 1980 to 1990 and the population of survey questions posed in CBS News polls, including unpublished questions that appeared during this period.

This is the first study to analyze the impact of the news agenda on the polling agenda across the full set of policy issues covered by major news organizations. Spanning a decade, this data set of nearly 63,000 news stories and 6,500 survey questions allows researchers for the first time not only to identify the polling agenda for an important media outlet, but also to determine how that polling agenda was influenced by the outlet's own news agenda. Since political representation is affected not only by the topical agenda of survey questions but also by public pressure brought against governing institutions by the news media (Cook 1998), this paper also examines how a news organization's internal polling influences the amount of coverage that different policy domains receive in its news broadcasts. Even if direct opinion-policy responsiveness is declining (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Monroe 1998; Barabas 2007; although see Burstein 2003), a news outlet's polling agenda could affect news coverage given to different policy issues, creating indirect responsiveness: government policy could respond to the agenda of surveyed concerns conveyed through the news agenda even if the public's own preferences are increasingly ignored.

News Coverage and the Polling Agenda

Research on the nature of mass opinion has focused on assessing the results of survey questions without investigating the more fundamental issue of why some questions rather than others come to be posed to citizens in the first place. Yet the survey agenda itself is an important venue for political representation (Althaus 2003, 2006; Lipari 2001; Weissberg 2002). Although the output of most government policies is usually visible to researchers, the input of citizen preferences is usually invisible to scholars unless revealed through opinion surveys. As Bachrach and Baratz (1962) pointed out, political power rests both in formal decision-making authority and in the choice of issues taken up by political institutions. The results of opinion surveys are routinely used not only to

pressure elected officials but also to direct their attention to particular problems (e.g., Geer 1996; Ginsberg 1986; Herbst 1993). Control over the policy agenda of opinion surveys therefore represents an important type of political power. Despite this, little is known about how news discourse and other factors influence the selection of topics appearing in opinion polls, or how the results of opinion polls conducted by news organizations influence subsequent reporting about the surveyed topics.

Although the survey agenda is occasionally the subject of scholarly research (Barabas 2007; Lipari 2001; Lewis 2001; Weissberg 2002), only three studies have directly studied the agenda of poll questions to try to untangle the causal ordering of news agendas and survey agendas: one studied attention given to the AIDS issue in the 1980s (Dearing 1989), the second examined how changes in presidential approval ratings drove presidential network news coverage in the early 1990s (Groeling and Kernell 1998), and the third looked at the relationship between polling and news coverage on foreign policy in the year following the 9/11 attacks (Sparrow and Stroud 2007). All found evidence of reciprocal impact, with the news agenda shaping subsequent polling and surveys influencing both the subsequent news agenda and the tone of news coverage. But no previous research has studied the reciprocal impact of news coverage on survey results across a broad range of policy issues.

Likewise, little is known about the impact of the polling agenda on news coverage. Previous research on this topic has been limited to coverage of AIDs (Dearing 1989), presidential approval (Groeling and Kernell 1998), the impact of horserace polls on election coverage (Craig 2000; Patterson 1993; Rhee 1996), and foreign policy (Sparrow and Stroud 2007). A few other studies have presented descriptive analysis of the use of polling data in news coverage (Bennett and Klockner 1996; Paletz et al. 1980; Fitzgerald, Rule, and Bryant 1998; Ladd and Benson 1992; Lewis 1991; Frankovic 2005), but these studies included no measure of the underlying survey agenda that news organizations might use to develop stories.

Without a clearer understanding of what sets the polling agenda and how the polling agenda affects the news agenda, the literature on opinion-policy responsiveness rests on uncertain ground. It

is unclear whether the polling record covers a broad or narrow range of policy concerns, or even how one might judge the breadth of that issue agenda. Entire issue domains could be under-represented in the available pool of poll questions. Although surely limited as a measure of the range of important issues worthy of attention, this study uses the population of news stories on *The CBS Evening News* from 1980-89 as a benchmark for comparing the breadth of the polling agenda in CBS/NYT surveys.

Untangling the reciprocal impact of news agendas and polling agendas can clarify whether news coverage on some issue domains is more influential than for others. Salient news coverage is one of many factors likely to affect which questions get asked in opinion surveys, but the extent to which news coverage determines the survey agenda is unknown. Polling organizations conduct surveys on events of the day, but they also conduct surveys to update opinion trends on important issues that only occasionally receive news attention. Many observers suggest that news organizations invest in polling primarily to make news and to burnish their reputations (e.g., Crespi 1980; Kovach 1980; Mann and Orren 1992; Rosenstiel 2005; Patterson 2005). News organizations may also use in-house polling to better understand the public's views on a wide range of issues. Knowing audience preferences is a prerequisite for attracting readers and viewers, and the declining audience shares of traditional news outlets (Prior 2007; Project for Excellence in Journalism 2006) underscore the need for journalists to understand audiences' orientation to the political world covered by the news. To the extent that media polls are used for basic social research rather than to generate news content, the polling agenda could be less influenced by the latest headlines than many observers suspect.

Aside from shedding light on key assumptions underlying the opinion-policy responsiveness literature, clarifying the relation of topics in polls and news stories can extend our understanding of responsiveness. Several studies document a recent decline in the level of policy responsiveness to the mass public's collective preferences (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Monroe 1998; Barabas 2007; though see Burstein 2003). These studies define responsiveness as congruence between government policy and the mass public's surveyed preferences within a given issue domain. However, many democratic

theorists identify the agenda of policy-making institutions as a key site for political representation (Bryce 1891; Christiano 1996; Dahl 1989; Habermas 1996). Empirical studies of the policy agenda as a site for political representation are still relatively uncommon (e.g., Sulkin 2005), but this research establishes agenda congruence as a unique dimension of opinion-policy responsiveness.

News organizations began establishing regular in-house polling operations in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Lavrakas and Traugott 2000; Miller 1995; Cantril 1991; Lewis 1991; Frankovic 1992), and the rapid growth of media polling corresponds with the onset of declines in democratic responsiveness (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Monroe 1998; Barabas 2007).² Barabas (2007) found that from 1937 through the mid-1970s, the available polling record contained fewer than 2,500 questions per year. But between 1979 and 1989, that average grew to between 8,000 and 15,000 questions per year, before rising again to between 15,000 and 22,000 questions per year from 1990 through 2005. Since at least half of questions in the survey record for the last few decades come from media polls (see note 1), this rapid rise in the number of questions in the polling agenda could have important implications for the policy agenda. If polling on a topic leads news outlets to subsequently increase coverage on that topic, then by steering news attention toward some topics rather than others, the policy agenda of media polls could increase the amount of public pressure on political institutions to address particular issues (e.g., Edwards and Wood 1999; Protess et al. 1991; Linsky 1986; Dearing and Rogers 1996). Even if the proliferation of media polls hasn't produced an overall increase in policy-related survey questions (as suggested by Barabas 2007), the topical distribution of policy questions in media polls could affect which issues are more likely to see policy responsiveness. Clarifying the strength of the relationship between the polling agenda and subsequent news coverage

² The possible connection between the proliferation of polls and an apparent decline in policy responsiveness points to the need to analyze data on this question from the time the process seems to begin, the 1980s, rather than a more contemporary time period. Thus, we focus on the 1980s and suggest questions for future research on other eras.

will help assess the ability of the polling agenda to constrain policy institutions. It is possible that agenda responsiveness has increased even as preference responsiveness has declined.

Understanding the causal connections between the news agenda and the polling agenda can also provide critical insights into a key methodological concern in public opinion research. Gaps in the survey record and the limited number of questions asked in identical form over time complicate our understanding of dynamics in public preferences over long periods of time. An ingenious solution proposed by Stimson (1999) is to aggregate the results of available poll questions that tap related policy preferences. Measures of “policy mood” aggregate the results of all available survey questions from a given time period into a single measure of policy liberalism. This aggregated measure is thought to represent the underlying ideological dimensions of the mass public’s policy preferences and can be estimated for any period in the post-World War II era. It also has desirable properties that compensate for the limitations of individual survey trends so that opinion researchers can model dynamic changes in policy preferences over long periods of time. As a consequence of these several advantages, policy mood has become a widely-used indicator of public opinion that has supported a broad range of path-breaking research on policy responsiveness and opinion dynamics (e.g., Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002; Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson 1995; Kellstedt 2003; Stevenson 2001; Chanley, Rudolph, and Rahn 2000; Durr 1993; Flemming and Wood 1997).

Because this method of estimating policy mood weighs topics that have been extensively surveyed more heavily than issues that have been infrequently surveyed, this approach must assume (though it does not establish) that the mix of survey questions asked at any given time accurately reflects the salience of issues currently on the policy agenda. If the polling agenda does not track all issues in the news agenda, then measures of policy mood derived from available polling data might be unable to reflect mass opinion accurately in all areas. Correcting these imbalances would require weighting available survey data according to the actual political salience of issues represented in the survey record, a reconstruction effort that would be difficult to carry out. The use of policy mood

measures has been challenged on precisely these grounds (Best 1999), and salience-weighted policy mood measures could yield different estimates of the mass public's latent preferences. Assessing the validity of policy mood requires a clearer understanding of how well the polling agenda mirrors the news agenda, and also why some questions rather than others end up on the poll agenda.

This paper seeks to address these gaps in the literature by examining every issue in the news and polling agendas across an entire decade to identify the policy dimensions of the polling agenda as well as to clarify the causal relationships between the topics aired in news coverage and those represented in the polling agenda. The data-collection effort required to make these assessments limits this paper's analysis to a detailed case study of a single influential news organization, widely considered a leader in the news polling industry and one of the three most important sources of news for the American public during the period considered (Althaus 2007; Prior 2007). Yet because these relationships have never been studied across a wide range of issues over long periods of time, such a case study can yield important insights about the broader patterns of concern to opinion researchers.

A simple model of agenda setting (Figure 1) can be used to identify potential causal connections between the news agenda and the polling agenda. Pre-poll values of the news agenda should predict both the polling agenda and the future news agenda, while the polling agenda should predict future values of the news agenda. Measures of lagged news content should predict the polling agenda because the content of media polls should reflect current topics of interest in the news. The strength of this causal relationship will be affected by the extent to which the short-term influence of the lagged news agenda predominates over longer-term influences (Crespi 1980; Atkin and Gaudino 1984; Kovach 1980). The relationship between the news agenda and the polling agenda will determine, at least in part, the extent to which the polling agenda provides a good estimate of the public agenda, thus providing data to illuminate the accuracy of assumptions made about the polling agenda in the policy responsiveness literature.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

We also hypothesize that the lagged news agenda will significantly determine the future news agenda. News coverage tends to move in “issue-attention cycles” (Downs 1972) that sustain interest in “big” stories over longer periods of time. But little is known about which of two mechanisms might produce this tendency. *Higher levels* of news attention to a topic should generate more poll questions on the topic than lower levels, since news attention is in part a function of audience interest and news organizations partly conduct polls to satisfy that interest. But *rising or falling levels* of news attention to a topic should also influence the future news agenda, since changes in news attention signal whether audience interest in a topic is growing or fading: stories with rising levels of attention are more likely to continue, while stories that have reached saturation levels are likely to be attenuated. Finally, poll questions are hypothesized to have an independent influence on future values of the news agenda, apart from any spurious covariance that comes from both being influenced by the pre-poll news agenda. To justify the cost of affiliated polling organizations, media outlets should give substantial attention to stories for which they have proprietary polls (Crespi 1980; Atkin and Gaudino 1984; Kovach 1980; Mann and Orren 1992). Thus, high levels of attention to a topic in the media organization’s polling agenda could raise the level of attention given to that topic in its news coverage. However, if in-house polling merely displaces poll results that would have been reported from other organizations, then the news outlet’s own polling agenda might have little bearing on the agenda of its subsequent news coverage.

The polling agenda can have both direct and indirect effects on the news agenda. The polling agenda could directly influence the number of post-poll stories containing poll results. But direct effects are only part of the story, for most of the survey data collected by news organizations is never published. Unpublished survey results are instead analyzed internally and distributed in newsrooms to inform the work of journalists and editors (Kovach 1980; Crespi 1980; Kagay 1991; Kagay 2000). This study therefore tests for indirect effects of the polling agenda on the post-poll news agenda. To the extent that polls shape the news agenda, the survey agenda could have an indirect influence on

the agenda of government institutions, quite apart from any direct effect on the number of news stories mentioning survey results.

Data and Methods

Capturing the full range of survey data produced by and available to news organizations is essential for estimating the relationships between news discourse and survey questions. The entire population of survey questions administered by the CBS/NYT polling organization between 1980 and 1989 (N=6,479 questions) was collected for this project. These poll agenda data come from survey codebooks, archived at the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, for all CBS/NYT polls conducted during the 1980s. These codebooks were converted into a question database that includes every substantive survey question administered to national samples of United States residents from the start of 1980 through the end of 1989.³

News agenda data come from the exhaustive record of CBS *Evening News* broadcasts maintained by the Vanderbilt Television News Archive. The Vanderbilt Archive creates abstracts of the stories in every news broadcast, and these abstracts have been shown to accurately represent the agenda of news broadcasts (Edy, Althaus, and Phalen 2005). The entire population of abstract entries for the CBS *Evening News* during the period from January 1, 1980, through December 31, 1989 was coded (N=62,696 stories).⁴

³ Variables created for survey administration purposes and demographic information questions were omitted from the database. All other questions, whether on political or nonpolitical topics, were included.

⁴ Although the Vanderbilt Abstracts provide the most comprehensive and systematic record of broadcast news content available in the United States, program preemptions cause the abstracts to miss a fraction of aired broadcasts. With roughly 10% of days missing abstracts, our level of missing data is similar to the roughly 7% missing abstracts reported by Althaus et al (Althaus, Edy, and Phalen 2002: footnote 5) in their analysis of the Vanderbilt abstracts. Most missing cases arise on weekends, when sporting events preempt national news broadcasts

Both sets of agenda data were analyzed by trained coders using an exhaustive typology of 52 issue categories adapted from McCombs and Zhu's (1995) system for coding the issue agenda of news broadcasts. Each abstract and poll question was assigned a single issue code. Tests of intercoder reliability were conducted on a stratified random sample of 130 CBS *Evening News* broadcasts containing a total of 2,241 stories.⁵ Raw agreement scores were very high (88.2% agreement on issue codes for individual abstracts, 99.5% agreement on the presence of poll results in individual abstracts), and chance-corrected measures of intercoder reliability confirmed that the content analysis was extremely reliable (Cohen's kappa = .88 and .83, respectively; Brennan and Prediger's kappa = .88 and .99, respectively). For most analyses reported below, we aggregated the 52 issue codes into seven umbrella categories representing economics, elections, government, domestic policy, civil rights and moral issues, foreign policy, and all other (i.e., non-political) topics.

Several types of analytical models could be used to estimate the relationships in Figure 1, and time-series models appropriate to count data (such as negative binomial regression) might seem well suited to the task. However, because most of these models are designed for continuous time series with cases representing discrete periods, they are less suitable for the poll question data. CBS/NYT polls were conducted on an average of 39 days apart, but this average masks substantial variation in the lag period between surveys (s.d. = 30.3 days; min = 1, max = 111). Thus most days and weeks contain no poll questions, and data overdispersion caused by this tendency, where standard

(Althaus, Edy, and Phalen 2002). Of the 3,653 days in the period from January 1, 1980 to December 31, 1989, abstract data exist for all but 364 of those days. Since our analysis considers news content over 14 consecutive days, we address the problem of missing abstracts by setting all story values to zero for days lacking abstracts.

⁵ Coding rules, unitizing rules, and a detailed codebook are available upon request. The tests of intercoder reliability were conducted on news agenda data because the topical agenda of news abstracts is more complicated and difficult to code than that of the survey questions, a conclusion replicated in coding by Sparrow and Stroud (2007).

deviations become larger than means, would tend to bias results from standard time-series models (Gujarati 1995). The solution adopted here is to move away from time series approaches altogether and instead to use each occurrence of a poll as an observation of the hypothesized relationships in Figure 1. While this solution does not allow for modeling the dynamics that influence the timing of news surveys (see Groeling and Kernell 1998), it greatly simplifies the interpretation of findings.

The data set for the regression analysis thus consists of 122 cases, one for each time a survey went into the field during the 1980s. Previous studies have used 10-day (Groeling and Kernell 1998) and monthly (Dearing 1989) lag periods to assess the impact of news agendas on poll agendas, but there is no clear evidence on the optimal lag length for such an analysis. Testing a variety of lag lengths (7-day, 14-day, and 30-day lags) revealed that 14-day lag periods provided the best fit to the data (in terms of adjusted R-square values). Therefore, the basic model used below consists of the poll agenda on the day a survey first went into the field, the post-poll news agenda during a two-week period beginning three days after the poll went into the field,⁶ and the pre-poll news agenda from the two-week period immediately preceding the day that the poll went into the field.

The Breadth of the Polling Agenda

Before analyzing agenda-setting effects, it is important to first examine the distinctive topical agendas revealed in the news and polling data. The first column in Table 1 shows that nearly half of all CBS *Evening News* stories during the 1980s dealt with foreign policy issues. After foreign policy stories, the next largest categories contained stories about domestic policy, the economy, and “other” topics that were non-political in nature (mainly human interest stories and disaster news).

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

⁶ The extra three days between the start of a poll and the start of the impact period in the news agenda is to account for the delay before the poll comes out of the field and is ready to report in the news. In our data, the median gap between the starting and ending day of a poll was three days (mean = 3.3 days, s.d. = 2.2 days; min = 0, max = 14).

In keeping with the findings of other studies (Bennett and Klockner 1996; Fitzgerald, Rule, and Bryant 1998), the second column shows that the agenda of stories reporting poll results was quite different from the overall news agenda. Unlike the overall news agenda, in which nearly half the stories dealt with foreign policy, more than half of stories reporting poll data were about elections. Trailing far behind in the agenda of stories using poll results, the next largest categories dealt with government, domestic policy, foreign policy issues, with the remaining categories containing fewer than 10% of poll stories each. However, comparing the topical distribution of stories that report polling data exaggerates the amount of polling data that actually appeared in CBS newscasts. A clearer picture emerges by looking at poll stories as the percentage of total stories in each topical category. Dividing the number of poll stories in the second column by the total number of stories in the first column reveals that only 12% of election stories reported poll results, as did around 2% of stories on government and civil rights/moral issues. Less than 1% of stories in each of the remaining categories reported polling data.

Although the use of survey data in news reports was a relatively rare occurrence, CBS news sponsored or co-sponsored 122 national surveys with policy-related questions between 1980 and 1989. The third column in Table 1 reports the topical agenda of the nearly 6,500 questions included in those polls. The pattern in this column is nearly identical to that in the second column: election topics dominated the agenda of poll questions (41%), followed distantly by foreign policy, government, and the economy. As 49% of poll questions in the data set were asked during the presidential election years of 1980, 1984, and 1988, this finding is perhaps unsurprising: Election polling allows news organizations to make news rather than merely report it, which gives them an important competitive advantage over their rivals. It underscores how the CBS news organization devoted a substantial portion of its polling resources to enhance election coverage. Still, only 3% of

survey questions were about non-political topics. The largest group—fully 51%—were about policy issues.⁷

A detailed look at the issues covered in the polling agenda for CBS/NYT surveys reveals a fairly wide range of policy concerns. Figure 2 shows the number of poll questions falling into each of 52 issue categories in our coding scheme. These results are organized by the seven broad categories from Table 1, with issues ordered from most- to least-pollled topic within each category. Outside of the elections category, a diverse policy agenda is represented in poll questions. Even with our broad and exhaustive agenda coding scheme all categories have at least a few survey questions, and most more than a dozen. Apart from elections, the most commonly polled topics were approval ratings of government officials (305 questions), U.S. military affairs and foreign policy (290 questions), and questions on the Soviet Union (249 questions). Beyond that, the polling agenda widens out into a broad mix of policy topics, but just how broad is difficult to determine when the polling agenda is examined in isolation. Some topics received more polling attention than others, and these topical disparities could have important consequences for drawing conclusions about opinion-policy responsiveness.⁸

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

Shedding light on the breadth of the polling agenda requires a basis for comparing the topical distribution of poll questions, and we do so using the topical distribution of all CBS news stories

⁷ Categories apart from elections and “other” form 56% of poll questions, but nearly 5% are presidential approval or evaluating government officials questions. Thus, 51% of survey questions are devoted to policy issues.

⁸ Within the economic category, for example, labor issues were addressed by less than a fifth the number of questions devoted to trade relations with other countries. Within domestic policy, nearly five times as many questions were asked about law and order as education. And while abortion and women’s rights received significant poll coverage in the civil rights and moral issues category, gay rights were hardly addressed.

broadcast in the 1980s. This might not be a good choice if both the news agenda and the polling agenda were driven by journalistic tastes, as both might be similarly skewed by those news judgments. However, we find that the CBS polling agenda is only modestly related to the CBS news agenda. The Spearman rank-order correlation among the 52 issue categories is a modest $+0.31$ ($p = .03$), while the Pearson correlation among the two agendas is a nonsignificant $+0.06$ ($p = .65$). To clarify the lack of consistency between the polling agenda and the news agenda for CBS during this period, Table 2 shows the percentage of news stories and the percentage of poll questions falling into each of the 52 categories.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

One obvious reason for the discrepancy is the relative prominence of the elections category in the polling agenda. Yet even within the elections category, there is little relationship between the types of news stories covered and the types of survey questions asked. While the news focused on political strategy, ballot tests, and policy stances of presidential campaigns, the polls emphasized ballot tests, presidential candidates' character, and citizen engagement with the election. Outside of the election category, a similar discontinuity appears in each topical domain: The issues highlighted in the news are usually not the issues receiving prominent attention in the polls. While news coverage within each topical category tended to focus on one or two issue domains, the policy agenda of survey questions tended to spread broadly across domains within each topical category. In short, the topical agenda of CBS surveys was more diffuse than that of its news coverage, suggesting that the polling agenda may be much less sensitive to the news agenda than is commonly thought.

One aspect of the news cycle nonetheless bears further attention: The large proportion of survey questions devoted to election topics during presidential election years may skew the policy issues covered in the polling agenda. The degree of impact depends in part on whether the polling organization devotes more resources to surveys during election years or merely displaces policy-related questions to make room for the election-related questions. CBS/NYT polls included an

average of 67.4 questions during presidential election years but only 44.0 during other years ($t = -3.89, p < .001$), suggesting that additional resources were devoted to the polling operation in election years. Yet although the average presidential-year survey contained a third more questions than the average survey in other years, the agenda of non-election topics varied significantly between years. Figure 3 compares the average number of survey questions by topic in CBS/NYT polls during the presidential election years of 1980, 1984, and 1988 and the average number in other years. T-tests show that all of the observed differences are statistically significant at conventional levels except for those within the economic, civil rights/moral issues, and “other” categories. As shown in Figure 3, surveys from presidential election years contained significantly fewer questions on government, domestic policy, and foreign policy than surveys from other years. Thus the priority given to election topics in CBS/NYT surveys has a systematic influence on which issues get represented in the polls.

INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

The Reciprocal Impact of the News and Polling Agendas

The diverging agendas for news coverage and poll questions in Table 1 show that there is no simple correspondence between the topics receiving news attention and the topics represented in the news organization’s surveys. Untangling those relationships requires a regression framework that takes simultaneous account of multiple factors shaping these agendas, including both the direct and indirect effects of the polling agenda on the news agenda. Table 3 presents regression results for using the news agenda in the two weeks preceding the starting date of each survey to predict the topical agenda of CBS/NYT polls. Table 4 addresses the direct impact of the polling agenda on news coverage by focusing on the number of CBS news stories that reported survey results in the two weeks after each poll came out of the field. Table 5 details the indirect impact of the polling agenda on the CBS news agenda in the two weeks after each poll came out of the field.

INSERT TABLES 3, 4, AND 5 ABOUT HERE

Each of these tables controls for both the amount of news attention given to each topic in the two weeks before each survey went into the field and whether that level of attention was higher or lower than that of the preceding two-week period. Thus the level of attention to different topics in the news is modeled separately from the effects of trends in the news agenda. To clarify the impact of these different factors, we first present findings about the shorter-term effects of the polling and news agendas before turning to the impact of longer-term news trends on that set of relationships.

INSERT FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE

Figure 4 summarizes in graphical form the significant agenda-setting effects found in Tables 3, 4, and 5. The black bars show the impact of one additional news story in the two-week period prior to each survey on the number of additional questions appearing in that survey. The grey bars show the impact of one additional survey question on the number of news stories reporting poll results in the two weeks after the completion of each survey. The white bars show the impact of one additional survey question on the total number of news stories about a topic in the two weeks following each survey. The first relationship of interest in Figure 4 is the impact of the pre-poll news agenda on the polling agenda (the black bars). We expected that topics with more stories in the immediate pre-poll period will be more likely to transfer into the survey agenda than topics having fewer stories, because interest in these topics is already high. Figure 4 shows that the polling agenda is susceptible to such short-term influences in some topical areas more than others.

The number of news stories about a topic that appeared in the 14 days immediately before the start of the poll had significant and positive effects in four of the seven topic areas: economy, foreign policy, elections, and government. In the topic of elections, the news agenda coefficient takes a value of .89 (see the second column of Table 3), which means that each election story in the two-week period before a poll goes to the field adds nearly one survey question on the topic of elections. This finding fits with the large amount of election polling by the CBS/NYT organization. The news agenda coefficient for economic issues is .36, meaning that it took roughly three additional stories

about the economy to produce a single poll question on an economic topic. In contrast, the two other significant effects of the news agenda on the polling agenda were much smaller. It took nearly eight foreign policy stories to produce one foreign policy question and 10 news stories on the government to generate one survey question on this topic. It is mainly for the topics of elections, economics, government, and foreign policy that we see polls used to gauge the public's reaction to high-profile scandals, crises, and prominent events in the news.

No significant news agenda effects were found for poll questions on domestic policy, civil rights/moral issues, and "other" nonpolitical topics.⁹ This pattern of news agenda effects is puzzling given prior research suggesting news editors use a "what's personal" heuristic to determine when polls are relevant to news coverage (Bennett and Klockner 1996). This view could explain why the poll agenda was so responsive to election and economic stories, since citizens are expected to vote and are personally affected by inflation and unemployment. But use of a "what's personal" norm makes little sense for explaining why foreign policy coverage should have a significant effect on the polling agenda when coverage of domestic policy and civil rights/moral issues has no effect at all. Clearer agenda-setting relationships might exist among subtopics in the domestic policy and civil rights/moral issues categories, but we also think that this lack of influence may stem from the tendency for CBS/NYT to repeat the same questions to establish baseline trends. Relatively few questions on these topics were asked in the average poll (see Table 1) and the absence of an agenda-setting relationship suggests those few may have been used to track longer-term developments in public opinion.¹⁰ The routine practice of adding new data points to existing survey trends should be

⁹ The lack of news impact on poll questions dealing with "other" topics is likely reflecting the network's use of its surveys for conducting market research activities or to generate information for programs other than the evening news. Many of these "other" questions concern celebrities, sports, and parent/child relationships.

¹⁰ Trend analysis is emphasized in the *New York Times* standards for its joint polling operation with CBS. In this

insensitive to the short-term news agenda. This could explain not only the small news agenda effect in the domestic policy and civil rights/moral issues categories, but also in the government category, since its most common type of question was the presidential approval rating.

In addition to reflecting news coverage, the polling agenda can also influence subsequent news coverage. One way that the polling agenda could influence the news agenda is by increasing the number of news stories about a topic that report findings from polls. We call this the direct effect of the polling agenda on the news agenda. The grey bars in Figure 4 show the direct effects of the polling agenda on the number of news stories mentioning poll results that aired during the two-week period after each survey came out of the field (see the coefficients in Table 4). If news organizations invest in poll data to generate interesting news stories, then the poll agenda should have a short-term influence on the number of news stories reporting poll results. The grey bars in Figure 4 reveal consistent support for this hypothesis.

Every category save “other” shows significant effects of the number of poll questions on the number of subsequent news stories that report poll results from any source. But in every case the size of these effects is small. For example, in the equation predicting the number of news stories about governmental topics that contained survey results (see the third column of Table 4), the poll agenda coefficient of .05 indicates that it would take 20 poll questions on governmental issues to yield one additional governmental story that mentions survey results. This was the largest effect that the

document, the editorial board states that “our aim in any poll story is to give readers a sense of where the general public stands on the issues of the day and to make note of any shifts in opinion.” The standards also describe the manner in which polls should be developed in response to events, but also state that opinion shifts on ongoing issues be tracked over time. For the complete text, see www.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/politics/pollingstandards.pdf.

polling agenda had on the appearance of survey data in news reports.¹¹ Adding just one story mentioning poll results to the news agenda would require a poll with 33 questions on elections¹² or domestic policy. The same impact on the news agenda would take 50 questions on the economy, foreign policy, or civil rights/moral issues. As these examples show, although the poll agenda directly influences how many news stories will include poll results, on average these agenda-setting effects were quite small.

If the main effect of the poll agenda on news content is to increase the number of stories reporting poll data, then the grey bars in Figure 4 suggest that the news organization's own internal polling data had little impact on the news agenda. With nearly half of poll stories focused on election issues and the remaining poll stories comprising a tiny proportion of news coverage given to other categories, the direct impact of a news network's survey operation appears small indeed. Yet the indirect impact of the poll agenda could still be fairly large if a network's internal polling shaped subsequent news coverage by influencing editorial decisions about which topics to cover. We find evidence for this indirect effect in five of the seven categories.

The CBS poll agenda had more influence on the topical distribution of post-poll news coverage than on the number of stories reporting poll results. In Table 5, the coefficients for the

¹¹ The size of the poll effect for the government category is larger than the typical effect in Table 3, but this may be due merely to the high news value placed on presidential approval ratings and survey questions about political scandals, which together comprise approximately 44% of questions in the poll agenda in this category.

¹² It is interesting that the poll effect on election stories should be relatively small, since that topic area is the most common of all the topics found in both the poll questions and the stories that report polling data. We suspect this indicates that election-related poll results have high news value whether they originate from the networks polls or from other sources. Internally-generated election polls do have a small positive effect on the number of election stories reporting poll results, but probably by displacing rather than supplementing survey data from other sources.

number of poll questions are all positive predictors of the post-poll news agenda, and five of seven are statistically significant. The white bars in Figure 4 display the significant indirect effects of the poll agenda on the news agenda. Fewer than two poll questions on foreign policy or government were needed to generate an additional news story on these topics. Three questions on the economy or domestic policy produced an additional news story on either of these topics. Given the large number of election-related questions asked in presidential election years (see Figure 3), the limited size of the available news hole makes it unsurprising that nearly eight election-related poll questions were needed to yield an additional election story. No significant indirect effects of the polling agenda were found for the civil rights/moral issues category.

The effects of the poll agenda on the news agenda appear to be smaller than the effects of the news agenda on the poll agenda, but the comparison in Figure 4 obscures just how much smaller, for poll questions and news stories rarely appear in equal numbers. The clearest estimate of the news agenda's effect on the poll agenda is given in the r-squared values from Table 3, which suggest that the pre-poll news agenda accounts for as many as half the election-related poll questions, and about one in ten of the foreign policy, government, and economic questions appearing in CBS/NYT polls. In contrast, the size of direct effects of the polling agenda can be seen by re-estimating the equations in Table 4 to isolate the unique variance explained by the poll agenda beyond that explained by the two news agenda variables. This comparison reveals that the direct effects of the CBS/NYT poll agenda account for 19% of post-poll news stories that report poll results about government; 16% of stories mentioning survey results about the economy; slightly less than 10% of news stories reporting poll results about the domestic policy, foreign policy, and civil rights/moral issues; and one percent or less of polling stories about elections or other topics. The size of indirect effects from the polling agenda can likewise be seen by re-estimating the equations in Table 5 to identify the unique variance explained by the polling agenda after controlling for prior values of the news agenda. The results show that the indirect effects of the polling agenda on the news agenda can account for 5% of post-

poll stories about the economy and domestic policy, 4% of stories about government, and 2% or less of stories about elections, foreign policy, other topics, and civil rights/moral issues. On average this translates to about two foreign policy and two domestic policy stories in the two weeks after a poll was completed, one and a half economic stories, nearly one story on government, and almost no change in the number of stories on elections, civil rights/moral issues, and non-political subjects.

CBS's news agenda had larger effects on its poll agenda than its poll agenda had on the issues covered in subsequent newscasts. Yet aside from the elections category, where the unique effects of the two agendas are hardest to untangle, these reciprocal effects are also rather small.¹³ The poll agenda is influenced but not determined by the news agenda. Most of the policy agenda for CBS/NYT polls during the 1980s had little to do with the distribution of news topics in the weeks before each poll went into the field.

Impact of Longer-Term Trends in the News Agenda

So far we have considered only short-term factors that affect the agendas of news broadcasts and news polls. If longer-term trends in the news agenda also help set the poll agenda, then rising levels of coverage about a topic might have an additional impact on the poll agenda beyond whether the current level of coverage is high or low, as a rising trend indicates a growing level of interest in the topic. Likewise, topics that are receding from the news agenda may be less likely to transfer to the polling agenda, regardless of the current level of coverage. To address these possibilities, Tables 3, 4, and 5 include an additional variable that captures the relative change in the number of pre-poll stories about a given topic compared to the previous 14-day period.

The third row of Table 5 shows the impact of longer-term trends in the news agenda on the

¹³ Although stronger or different agenda setting relationships may exist at lower levels of issue aggregation, this same conclusion is reinforced with a parallel analysis of the three most common non-election subtopics in the CBS polling agenda (detailed analysis available upon request).

topics covered in the post-poll news period. All these coefficients are negative and five attain at least marginal levels of significance. This pattern underscores the cyclical nature of the news agenda: this week's hot topic quickly becomes last week's old news. However, the third row of Table 4 reveals that longer-term trends in the news agenda have no significant or consistent effects on the likelihood that the post-poll news agenda will report the results of surveys. Likewise, the second row of Table 3 shows the same pattern: longer term trends in the news agenda have no consistent impact on the poll agenda. The lone exception is in the case of foreign policy questions, which significantly decrease in number when the longer-term trend in foreign policy coverage is rising. Not only is this effect in the opposite direction of that expected, it is also rather small—the average impact of a one-story decline in the lagged foreign policy news agenda is just one-fifth of a survey question. In short, longer-term trends in the news agenda tended to have little effect on the CBS/NYT poll agenda. If other polling organizations are similarly insulated from the latest trends in news coverage, the survey industry as a whole may be polling on a broader range of issues than many observers would have guessed.

Conclusion

Important questions have been raised about the validity of major strands of representation research that rely on available polls as indicators of the mass public's preferences. Our dataset covering all questions asked by the CBS/NYT polling organization and all stories aired by the *CBS Evening News* in the 1980s allows for a thorough case study of the relationship between the news agenda and the poll agenda. This study lays the groundwork for understanding the role that polls play as indicators of political concerns and a communication channel for the mass public to make its preferences known.

Contrary to expectations, this study found that the CBS/NYT poll agenda often bore little semblance to the CBS news agenda. Outside of elections-related questions, the poll agenda was more evenly distributed across topics than was news coverage. The poll agenda was shaped by the news agenda at the margins for non-election questions, but the topics on the poll agenda were mostly

unrelated to patterns of recent news coverage or longer-term trends of issue attention. These results suggest that, at least in the case of CBS news during the 1980s, the relationship between the poll agenda and the news agenda was far weaker than has been hypothesized by previous research.

These findings are puzzling given the considerable resources devoted by CBS and other media outlets to their internal survey operations. The scholarly literature has generally assumed that the polling agenda was strongly influenced by the news agenda because so much polling seems oriented to issues of the moment. Moreover, observers of American journalism have long been concerned that the tight relationship between a network's news and polling operations might create pressures to report on proprietary survey results to a greater extent than might be warranted. Yet outside of election coverage, we found that only one or two CBS news stories out of a hundred mentioned poll results, and that the direct effects of the polling agenda on the number of stories mentioning poll results was almost negligible. If polling data rarely appear in its newscasts, why would a news organization like CBS devote so many resources to its polling operation?

Our findings suggest that the CBS news operation was not primarily seeking to make news with its proprietary surveys. Instead, CBS appeared to be using its polls for broad social analysis to inform its reporters rather than to pad its reporting. This conclusion speaks to important concerns about the validity of the policy congruence literature (Burstein 2003; Barabas 2007) and about the use of aggregated "public mood" measures of surveyed preferences (Best 1999). In both cases, political scientists using available polls for these purposes may be on firmer ground than previously supposed. While this may come as a relief to scholars engaged in these important research endeavors, systematic differences between the news agenda and the survey agenda suggest that more work is needed to determine which source might better reflect the public salience of a given policy issue.

Definitive answers to questions about the validity of congruence research and aggregated measures of public mood will require a broader understanding of what determines the overall polling agenda, as well as the relationships among the news agenda, the poll agenda, and the public's own

agenda of concerns. Future research could usefully address three limitations in this study. First, this analysis examined only a single news organization over a limited period of time. A more definitive conclusion would require more research on the agendas of a broad array of news outlets and survey organizations (e.g., Sparrow and Stroud 2007). Second, the magnitude of data collection required for this project limited this study to an analysis of one of two partners in the CBS/NYT survey operation. If the news agenda of the *New York Times* was substantially different than that of CBS, then this disparity could explain the diverging agendas noted here. This possibility seems remote, since the topical agendas of national news outlets tend to be strikingly similar to one another (Sparrow 1999; Danielian and Reese 1989; Golan 2006; Reese and Danielian 1989; Entman 2003). But lacking direct evidence on the *Times* news agenda for the 1980s, we are unable to rule it out. Third, the focus of this paper was narrowly on comparing policy agendas, which ignores the potential that the process of gathering and reporting survey results may have more subtle effects on the framing of news stories or on the terms of political discourse.

Despite these limitations, the findings reported here have implications for long-standing debates about the democratic potential of polls and the quality of representation afforded by political institutions. Polls are an important way to get the public's voice into policy debates. But our findings show that polling also affects what gets debated. The very practice of asking questions on some topics rather than others stimulates news coverage about subjects on which survey questions were asked, and political institutions have strong incentives to respond to the agenda of public concerns conveyed through media coverage. Even though preference congruence may be declining over time, agenda congruence could be going up as a consequence of the way news coverage directs the attention of elected officials to some problems rather than others.

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Figure 1: Hypothesized Relationships between News Agenda and Poll Agenda

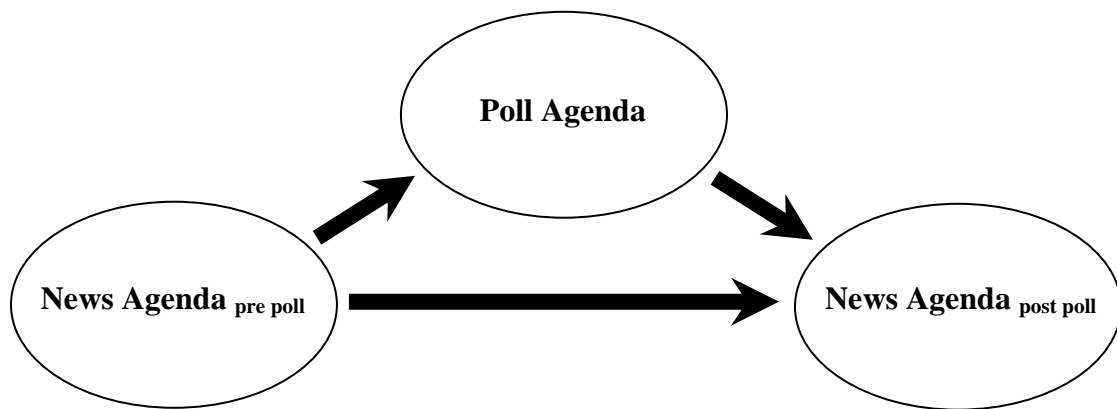


Table 1: Topical Agenda of CBS Evening News, Stories Reporting Results from Any Opinion Poll, and CBS/NYT Polls

	CBS Evening News Stories		CBS Evening News Stories Reporting Results from Any Poll		CBS/NYT Poll Questions	
Economy	11.7	(7,316)	4.6	(36)	9.5	(614)
Elections	5.6	(3,534)	53.7	(418)	41.0	(2,659)
Government	9.3	(5,826)	12.1	(94)	15.7	(1,018)
Domestic Policy	15.4	(9,639)	11.3	(88)	8.1	(522)
Civil Rights/Moral Issues	2.6	(1,625)	4.9	(38)	6.3	(410)
Foreign Policy	43.1	(27,035)	11.6	(90)	16.1	(1,040)
Other Topics	12.3	(7,721)	1.8	(14)	3.3	(216)
Total	100.0	(62,696)	100.0	(778)	100.0	(6,479)

Note: cells contain column percentages with number of stories/questions in parentheses.

Figure 2: The CBS News Polling Agenda, 1980-1989

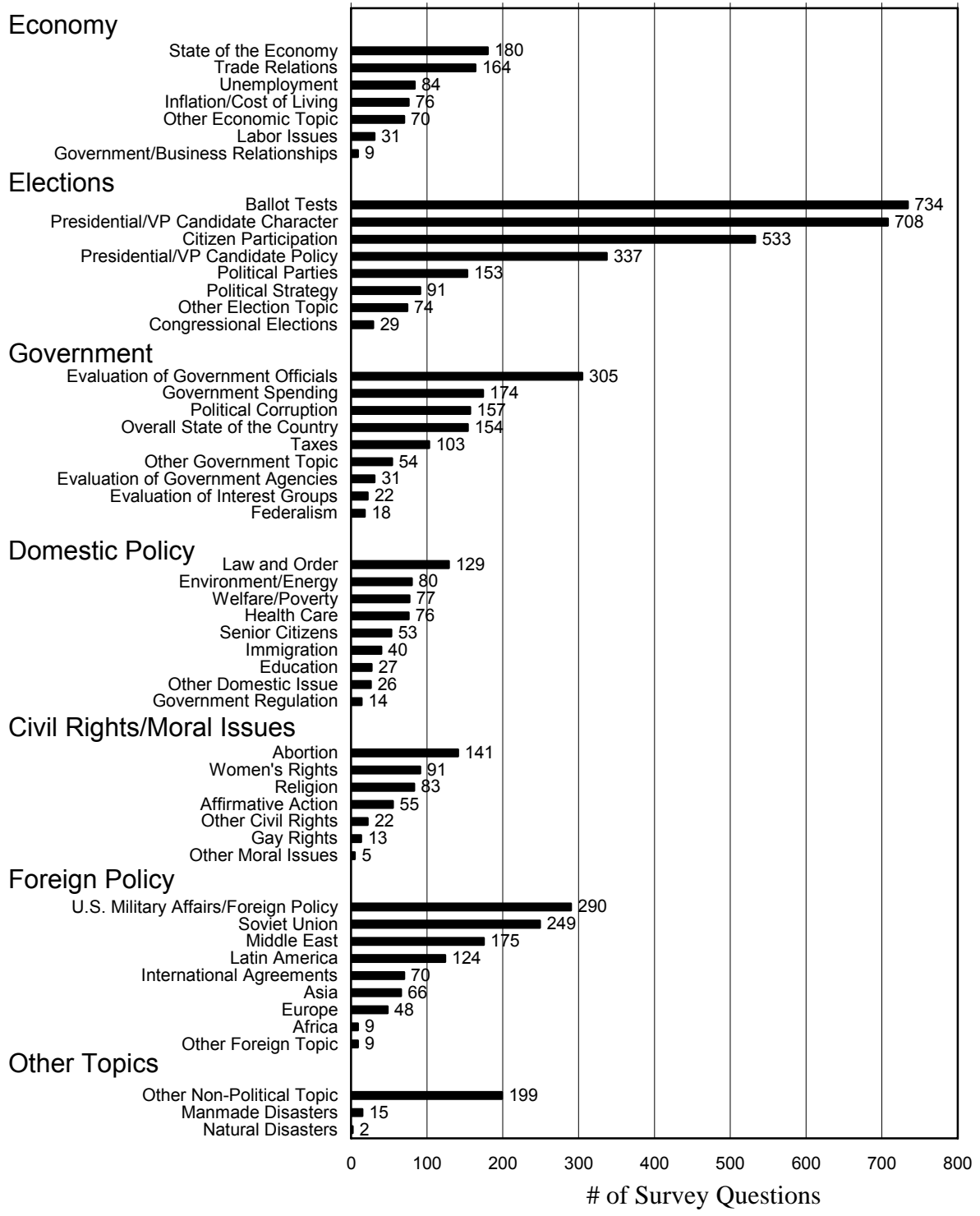


Table 2: Differences in the Topical Agenda of News Coverage and Poll Questions

Issue Domain	News Agenda %	Poll Agenda %	Difference
Economy			
State of the Economy	6.2	2.8	-3.4
Labor Issues	1.9	.5	-1.5
Inflation/Cost of Living	1.2	1.2	+0
Trade Relations	1.2	2.5	+1.3
Unemployment	1.0	1.3	+0.3
Gov't/Business Relationships	.4	.1	-.2
Other Economic Topic	.3	1.1	+0.8
Elections			
Political Strategy	2.3	1.4	-.9
Other Election Topic	.8	1.1	+.4
Pres/VP Candidate Policy	.6	5.2	+4.6
Ballot Tests	.6	11.3	+10.7
Political Parties	.5	2.4	+1.9
Pres/VP Candidate Character	.4	10.9	+10.5
Congressional Elections	.3	.4	+.2
Citizen Participation	.3	8.2	+7.9
Government			
Political Corruption	2.6	2.4	-.2
Evaluations of Gov't Officials	1.8	4.7	+2.9
Government Spending	1.1	2.7	+1.6
Other Gov't Topic	1.1	.8	-.2
Evaluations of Gov't Agencies	.9	.5	-.4
Taxes	.8	1.6	+.8
Federalism	.1	.3	+.2
Overall State of the Country	.1	2.4	+2.3
Evaluations of Interest Groups	.1	.3	+.2

(Table 2 Continued)

Issue Domain	News Agenda %	Poll Agenda %	Difference
Domestic Policy			
Law and Order	7.3	2.0	-5.3
Environment/Energy	3.1	1.2	-1.8
Health Care	1.8	1.2	-.6
Government Regulation	1.3	.2	-1.1
Immigration	.8	.6	-.2
Welfare/Poverty	.6	1.2	+.6
Education	.6	.4	-.2
Senior Citizens	.4	.8	.4
Other Domestic Issue	.2	.4	+.2
Civil Rights/Moral Issues			
Affirmative Action	.9	.8	-.1
Other Civil Rights	.5	.3	-.2
Abortion	.4	2.2	+1.8
Women's Rights	.4	1.4	+1.0
Religion	.3	1.3	+1.0
Gay Rights	.1	.2	+.1
Other Moral Issues	.1	.1	.0
Foreign Policy			
Middle East	11.1	2.7	-8.4
Europe	7.1	.7	-6.4
Latin America	6.2	1.9	-4.3
Soviet Union	6.1	3.8	-2.2
U.S. Military Affairs/Foreign Policy	3.8	4.5	+.7
Asia	3.4	1.0	-2.4
Africa	3.0	.1	-2.8
International Agreements	.7	1.1	+.4
Other Foreign Topic	.3	.1	-.2
Other Topics			
Other Non-Political Topic	8.3	3.1	-5.2
Natural Disasters	2.8	.0	-2.8
Manmade Disasters	1.8	.2	-1.6

Figure 3: Differences in the Polling Agenda between Presidential Election Years and Other Years

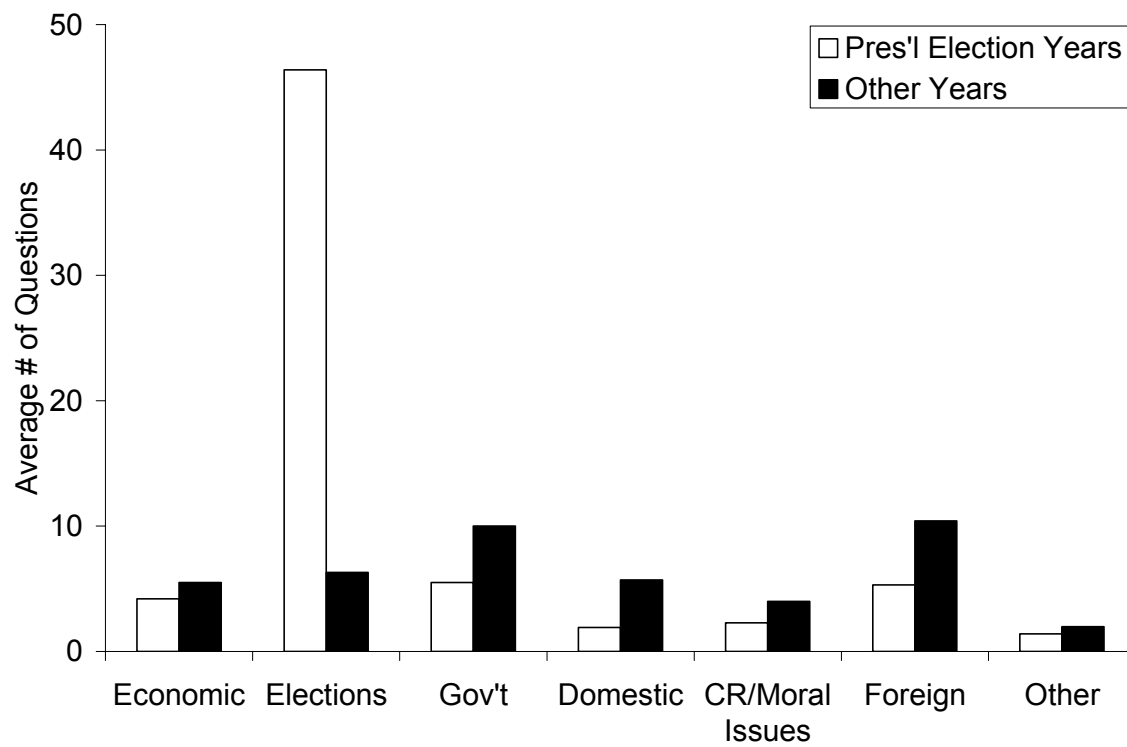


Table 3: Predicting the Number of Poll Questions

	Number of Poll Questions on						
	Economy	Elections	Gov't	Domestic Policy	Civil Rights and Moral Issues	Foreign Policy	Other
# of Pre-Poll News Stories on Topic	.36**	.89**	.10*	.11	-.22	.13**	-.03
Δ in # of Pre-Poll News Stories on Topic	-.12	-.20	.01	-.06	.06	-.09**	.05
Constant	-4.60	4.79*	5.62**	.14	4.81**	-4.72	2.67*
Adj. R-squared	.08	.49	.11	.00	.00	.12	.00
N=	122	122	122	122	122	122	122

Note: Cells contain unstandardized OLS regression coefficients. All models use 14-day lag/lead periods.

† two-tailed $p < .10$ * two-tailed $p < .05$ ** two-tailed $p < .01$

Table 4: Predicting the Number of Post-Poll News Stories that Report Results from Any Poll

	Number of News Stories that Report Poll Data on						
	Economy	Elections	Gov't	Domestic Policy	Civil Rights and Moral Issues	Foreign Policy	Other
# of Poll Questions on Topic	.02**	.03*	.05**	.03**	.02**	.02**	.00
# of Pre-Poll News Stories on Topic	.02**	.12**	.01*	.01	.01	.00	.00
Δ in # of Pre-Poll News Stories on Topic	-.01	.00	-.01	-.00	.00	-.00	-.00
Constant	-.56**	.42	-.13	-.03	.03	.00	-.04
Adj. R-squared	.37	.55	.33	.10	.08	.10	.00
N=	122	122	122	122	122	122	122

Note: Cells contain unstandardized OLS regression coefficients. All models use 14-day lag/lead periods.

† two-tailed $p < .10$ * two-tailed $p < .05$ ** two-tailed $p < .01$

Table 5: Predicting the Number of Post-Poll News Stories

	Number of News Stories on						
	Economy	Elections	Gov't	Domestic Policy	Civil Rights and Moral Issues	Foreign Policy	Other
# of Poll Questions on Topic	.30**	.13*	.58**	.33**	.08	.52*	.26
# of Pre-Poll News Stories on Topic	.49**	.73**	.55**	.45**	.37**	.57**	.49**
Δ in # of Pre-Poll News Stories on Topic	-.23*	-.23*	-.02	-.14†	-.12	-.15†	-.18*
Constant	12.68**	2.80†	4.69†	19.00**	3.71**	39.55**	15.54**
Adj. R-squared	.24	.66	.50	.26	.05	.40	.15
N=	122	122	122	122	122	122	122

Note: Cells contain unstandardized OLS regression coefficients. All models use 14-day lag/lead periods.

† two-tailed $p < .10$ * two-tailed $p < .05$ ** two-tailed $p < .01$

Figure 4: The Unit Impact of Significant Agenda-Setting Effects within the Seven Topical Domains

