Credibility Crux
How Public Opinion Polls are Affected by News Organization Branding

Thesis

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Abstract

Research has suggested that, at times, the voting public bases not only their political opinions but also their vote on public opinion poll results. However, the present study seeks to understand, not only such power of public opinion polls, but the extent that the news organization reporting the poll’s findings influences this relationship. Particularly, the present study examines the extent to which a news organization’s branding changes the way the public perceives a reputable, third party public opinion poll. While the study found no evidence that news organization branding influences the public’s perception of the polls or their results, there is evidence that the polls influence people’s perceptions of the brand itself, but in inconsistent ways.
Vita

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Fields of Study

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Introduction

With the continued growth of cable television and Internet sources, the news media has become a highly competitive market. The number of news outlets readily accessible to the public is seemingly endless even cutting across the ideological sphere from the left (e.g. Huffington Post, Daily Kos, MSNBC) to the moderate (Politico, C-SPAN, CNN) to the right (Drudge Report, FOX News, NewsMax, Christian Science Monitor). Even major daily newspapers, although increasingly battered by economic storms, play a key role in the competitive media market, including The New York Times, The Chicago Tribune, and The Washington Post (along with their on-line versions). With such an endless supply of news outlets from which to choose, the media are increasingly in competition for market share which has led to the need to differentiate themselves from the competition with the help of greater marketing strategies.

The goal of such strategies is creating consumer loyalty because creating such faithfulness generates numerous benefits for the news organization including greater revenue, consumers’ lower sensitivity to marketing efforts of competitors, and substantial entry barriers to future competitors (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman, 1999). Because of the chief benefits of successful consumer loyalty, much has been written on the topic in the management literature relative to consumer products, such as laundry
detergent and automobiles, yet minimal research exists on the topic regarding the news media.

Understanding the media’s marketing techniques has far reaching implications beyond merely consumers’ media consumption, however. According the Pew Research Center’s 2008 Biennial News Consumption survey, only 14% of the American public are uninterested in the news and choose not to consume it (Pew, 2008). Certainly, not all Americans consume high amounts of news, but, as this survey indicates, most Americans do consume some news on a relatively regular basis either through the Internet, television, or newspaper (Pew, 2008). These news outlets often conduct their own public opinion polls or disseminate the work of other pollsters as a way to reach out to and understand the public. Such polls not only inform the public of the opinions of others but also affect political debate, the state of the U.S. economy, and even social trends. Understanding the power of public opinion polls and the public’s reliance on the news media, it is important to understand the possible relationship between marketing, the news media, and the public’s relationship with opinion polls. That is, the focus of this research is to understand the extent to which a news outlet’s marketing affects consumers’ perceptions of the credibility of that source’s public opinion polls and the affect this may have on political attitude formation and perceptions of bias and accuracy of the poll’s findings. To be clear, credibility, in the present study, is not referring to methodology of the poll (e.g. internal validity, sample size, etc.), but rather the extent to which respondents believe that the public opinion poll institution and findings are, themselves credible, accurate and unbiased.
Literature Review

Understanding Brand and Branding across disciplines

For the context of the present research, what is meant by marketing is a media organization’s attempt to brand itself as somehow different from the competition. While the term brand has attracted much attention in marketing practice, defining the term has proven difficult. Therefore, much of the literature seems to simply assume a shared understanding of the term, which complicates the creation of a nexus between marketing and political communication. In response to the growing importance and ambiguity of branding, the American Marketing Association (AMA) defined brand as: “a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the good or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors.” For the purpose of this research, the news organizations themselves are the brands (e.g. CNN, FOX News, MSNBC) that are attempting to differentiate themselves from other media outlets. However, using the AMA’s definition to discuss any brand, media organization or otherwise, is problematic because this definition is extremely similar to that of a trademark. Gabbott et al. (2009) argue that problems defining brand arise because the term has not one but several key interpretations: populist, technical, and conceptual. No matter the interpretation, in each case researchers and practitioners are dealing with the same phenomenon simply from a different perspective. The authors
argue that differing perspectives are inevitable because brand is an extremely dynamic phenomenon. Therefore, it is suggested that there never will be, nor should there be, a unifying definition of brand, but instead there will be a constantly evolving series of contexts through which the concept is viewed (Gabbott et al, 2009). Although this argument is understandable, it simply further complicates the creation of a bridge between the business and communication literatures because it is difficult to empirically study such a nebulous concept. In an attempt to lessen the ambiguity of what is brand, de Chernatony (2009) offers a five-stage, multi-level definition of what is branding leading to the following succinct definition of brand: “a cluster of values that enables a promise to be made about a unique and welcomed experience.” While the term cluster may still seem vague, understanding these clusters as differentiation, positioning, personality, vision, and added value, as illustrated in Figure 1, offers a concise yet inclusive definition of brand.

Here, it is important to note that the focus of this paper is not to painstakingly delineate how de Chernatony’s model describes media organizations as brands, but it is important to offer a brief explanation as to why this definition of brand is the most correct definition to use for the present study. Therefore, I will briefly apply three of de Chernatony’s concepts – differentiation, positioning, and personality – to media organizations.

The first stage of branding is differentiation, or the need to attract attention and stand out from competitors. Differentiate continues to be increasingly important in the news media sphere as more news sources fight for market share. While daily newspaper
readership remains steady in the low 40\textsuperscript{th} percentile and network and local TV news viewership have remained relatively stable since 2002, cable news programs have grown rapidly (\textit{Pew Research Center, 2004}). Between 1997 and 2005, for example, the average primetime audience of the three primary cable news networks – CNN, Fox, MSNBC – grew from 1.2 million to 2.8 million (\textit{Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2006}). Therefore, there is more market share at stake for which media organizations seek to compete. One way organizations seek to compete for market share is to position themselves as fulfilling a need. To do this organizations undertake a gap analysis, working to create and communicate a functional advantage (\textit{de Chernatony, 2009}). In this stage, organizations develop strategies to “fight through a sea of sameness to register the brand’s functional benefit in customers’ minds (\textit{Jones, 2000}). One method of fighting through this sea is for an organization to brand itself as fulfilling a need for more credibility. Nicholson (2008) argued that, especially in these difficult economic times, it is crucial for organizations to focus on the credibility of their brand. For example, FOX News began as a response to what its founders saw as a liberal U.S. media, becoming the place for conservative news which is more credible than the liberal biases espoused by their competitors.

The last of de Chernatony’s five aspects of brand that will be discussed here is the notion of added value. That is, to create and sustain loyalty to the brand, organizations must not only successfully meet the needs of their consumers, but also take this a step further. Relative to media organizations, the Pew Center (2004) survey found, that the public wants more in-depth news coverage. According to Kim and colleagues (2008), an
added value here could be credibility. That is, not only are consumers getting the information they want, but they can trust the brand is giving the most credible information possible. According to Erdem and Swait (1998), credibility is conceptualized as having two dimensions, trustworthiness and expertise. Specifically, trustworthiness means that it is believable that the brand will deliver what is has promised, and expertise implies that the brand is believed capable of delivering the promises. For instance, *The Washington Post* attempts to brand itself as internationally credible asserting that it is “the global platform for internationally respected…journalism” (*Washington Post Digital, 2009*). Also, *The New York Times* brands itself as not only trustworthy but also as expert journalists, writing that the company remains dedicated “to the highest standards of quality journalism” (*The New York Times, 2009*).

Understanding not only what is brand but also how the key aspects of this concept apply to media organizations’ focus on branding themselves as credible, it is also important to discuss to what extent an organization’s branding efforts affect the public’s perceptions of the reliability of the research they conduct and/or report regarding public opinion polls and the possible further ramifications of these perceptions.
Public Opinion Polls and the Media

Globally, public opinion polls have become integral to the media’s coverage of political issues and candidates (Frankovic, 1998). An answer as to why we have experienced such a growth in the popularity of public opinion polls in media coverage may lie in the fact that campaign coverage has become increasingly, if not predominately, horse-race journalism (Genz, Schonbach, and Semetko, 2001). Public opinion polls provide the data needed for the media to report on campaigns as sporting events, depicting a particular party, candidate or issue as winning or losing public support; in short, “polls are tailor-made tools for journalists… to cater to the audience’s desire for entertainment at least as much as to its need for information” (Iyengar, Norpoth, and Hahn, 2004). Therefore, there appears to be no end to the ubiquity of public opinion polls in the news media. With an understanding of the prevalence of public opinion polls in the
media’s coverage of electoral campaigns, the question remains to what extent do such polls influence voting intentions and ultimate vote choices?

There is no shortage of theoretical work in answer to this question. Numerous discussions of the mechanisms at play relative to polls’ power to change voters’ voting intentions and decisions exist throughout the literature (for overviews see Donsbach, 1984; Brettschneider, 2000; Irwin and van Holsteyn, 2000; and Schoen, 2002). Specifically, since Simon’s (1954) work with bandwagon and underdog effects, researchers have theorized that public opinion polls influence voting behavior as voters yearn to be on the side of the victor or champion the cause of the underdog (Schmitt-Beck, 2008a, 2008b). Particularly, Brettschneider (1992) found that nearly one quarter of German voters in the parliamentary elections of 1983 and 1987 took public opinion polls into account when casting their vote; furthermore, the polls exerted “some influence” on 14% of the sample. Faas and colleagues (2008) also found that public opinion polls influenced voting intentions and voting behaviors for some German political parties, including the Leftist and Social Democrats.

Clearly, there is some degree of both empirical and theoretical support in favor of the influence of public opinion polls. Because such polls can and do exert such power, it seems arguable that media organizations and pollsters would want to report on highly credible public opinion polls since the influence of inaccurate polling could have dire consequences for the fate of an electoral campaign. Yet, this does not seem to be the case.
Conducting sound public opinion research can be extremely difficult; and although no poll is perfect, many polls conducted and reported by media organizations adhere to many of the same principles set forth by the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR). However, this is not true across the board.

The explosion of media outlets and the 24-hours news cycle have created a greater reliance on secondhand, repackaged news (Rosenstiel, 2005). For instance, research by the Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ) found that the three major cable news outlets focus on an estimated four stories a day with their reporters, while the remaining stories are wire stories (PEJ, 2004). Also, it makes sense that as the public demands round-the-clock news coverage, the media often has more time to fill than news to fill it, causing the organization to be less discriminating in the information they choose to report. Rosenstiel (2005) argues that this growing reliance on repackaged, secondhand news makes news organizations more likely to use polling from sources they cannot vouch for. Even when a news organization attempts to evaluate secondhand material before reporting, there often are not staff members to do the work. That is, newsroom cutbacks, especially for newspapers and network news channels, often occur among more senior staffers who have the background to effectively discriminate information (Rosenstiel, 2005). Morin and Deane in the Washington Post argued that pollsters generally do not admit publicly: "Too many of the most widely reported pre-election polls cut corners, take big risks and use methods that are less than gold standard" (2004, p. Cl). And, seemingly reputable news organizations often report these “less than gold
standard” polls. For instance, during the 2004 presidential campaign MSNBC led each day with a tracking poll by Zogby. In response Morin and Deane (2004) wrote,

“Zogby International does all kinds of controversial things to produce its headline grabbing tracking polls, John Zogby calls only people with listed telephone numbers, missing those who are unlisted. About 30 percent of the people in his samples were called during the day—a good time to reach retirees and housewives but a bad time to reach most working people” (p. C1).

Chinni (2000) cites David W. Moore, author of the book The Super Pollsters, who argued that “one of the reasons media organizations started doing their own polling was to make sure they wouldn’t get biased data.” However, now the media are paying disreputable pollsters to do their polling: “The whole thing is really a backward step,” (Chinni, 2000).

Credibility, Attitudes & Accuracy

Again, to clarify, the present research in no way argues that all polling is disreputable; however, it would be remiss to argue the opposite that all polls are reputable. Instead, as has been discussed, both calibers of polls exist throughout today’s media. Understanding this is important because, as discussed, if an inaccurate poll is deemed credible, voters may, in fact, change their voting decision due to bandwagon or underdog effects when, in fact, the poll was never credible or vice versa. Theoretically, it seems plausible, that an inaccurate public opinion poll could decide an entire election, if a particular news organization is branded as credible and continues to report inaccurate, disreputable findings. Or, a credible public opinion poll could be dismissed by the public
or deemed not reliable due to the reporting organization’s branding. Currently, while there does, as discussed, exist research examining the influence of public opinion polls on voting decisions as well as research which examines the existence of journalistic coverage of both reputable and disreputable polls in the current media environment, there exists no research on the extent that (1) public opinion polling institutions are deemed credible by the public, (2) the extent to which there is public confidence in public opinion poll findings, (3) the extent to which the news organizations’ branding influences these perceptions, nor (3) the extent to which the relationship between source branding and public opinion polls influences political attitude formation. Therefore, this work seeks to fill a gap in the literature relative to the relationship that exists between news organizations, the public, public opinion polls and political attitudes.

As discussed, news organizations often attempt to include credibility as an aspect of their brand. That is, relative to news organizations, the multiple levels of successful branding often hinge on the organization portraying itself as credible. Intuitively, the presence or absence of such branding will affect how the organization’s products (i.e., news reports about public opinion) are perceived. Yet, news organizations also often include political ideology as an important aspect of their brand (e.g. FOX News). An important aspect of the present study is to further explore the relationship that exists between an organization’s position as credible and its position as catering more or less toward a particular political ideology.

Regarding U.S. politics, media bias relative to political ideology has been well documented throughout the literature. For instance, Goldberg (2002) and Coulter (2003)
document media bias on the left, while Alterman (2003) and Franken (2003) argue that the U.S. media is biased toward the right. Such biases, research suggests, affect how credible viewers deem the reporting news organization. For instance, according to a 2004 Pollingpoint survey of nearly 74,000 U.S. adults, nine in ten Republicans say FOX News is the most credible news source, while Democrats said CNN was the more credible choice. The present study hypothesizes that the public’s perception of the reporting news agency will influence the extent to which the public deems an independent polling institution that is being reported on by the news organization and that institution’s polls as credible. That is, perceptions of the source (the brand) will influence perceptions of the polling institution and polls being reported on by the news media. Here, it is also important to note that the brands chosen for the current study seek to represent these various political ideologies with FOX News the more conservative, CNN the more moderate and MSNBC more liberal. While certainly both CNN and MSNBC have made moves toward the right by offering conservative pundits airtime (e.g. MSNBC's "Scarborough Country" is hosted by Joe Scarborough, a former Republican congressman), a recent Pew Research Center (2009) poll found that perceptions of MSNBC, CNN, and FOX News continue to match these aforementioned ideology. Specifically, the poll found that FOX News continues to be viewed as predominately biased toward the right while MSNBC continues to be perceived as biased to the left and CNN is perceived as moderate and well balanced. Employing these brands and understanding the aforementioned perceptions of credibility, I hypothesize that:
H1: Democrats will deem the Quinnipiac University Polling Institute, the institution that conducted the public opinion polls reported by CNN and MSNBC, as more credible than when reported by FOX.

H2: Republicans will deem the Quinnipiac University Polling Institute, the institution that conducted the public opinion polls reported by FOX News as more credible than when reported by CNN and MSNBC.

However, there exists no research into how perceptions of credibility are influenced when branding is not a factor. That is, how perceptions of credibility are affected when a poll is conducted by a polling institute but reported on by a news organization that has no definitive brand, such as a news wire (e.g. the Associated Press wire)? Therefore, the present study offers only a research question into how the absence of a definitive news brand (i.e. a wire story) affects perceptions of credibility.

News organizations’ branding may influence not only perceptions of credibility relative to a polling institute but also overall confidence in the poll’s findings. Specifically, does branding affect the public’s belief that the poll’s findings are accurate and unbiased? The Pew Research Center’s (2007) survey about the public’s view of the media found that only 39 percent of the public is confident that the information reported by the media is accurate while only 31 percent of the public believe the media is “careful to avoid bias.” Here, it is important to reiterate the aforementioned argument that perceptions of the source may be reflected on the news reported on by that source. Therefore, if a news organization is perceived to be biased, then, intuitively, that
perception can be reflected on the public opinion poll being reported on, even when the poll is conducted by an independent, third party.

Research has shown that such negative views of the media somewhat fall down political party lines. The Pew Research Center (2007) found that Republicans (70%) are much more likely to identify the information covered by the media as biased than Democrats (39%). The only exception to this, according to the findings, is when Republicans consume news from FOX News. Only seven percent of Republicans who consumed news from FOX News identified the organization’s news reports as biased while Democrats’ view of the levels of bias and lack of accuracy were relatively unchanging across media. I expect the results of the present study to reflect similar partisanship and brand affects regarding perceptions of bias of the Quinnipiac University public opinion polls.

H3: Significantly more Republicans will believe the polls’ findings are biased than Democrats.

H4: Republicans randomly assigned to the FOX News condition, will have significantly lower rates of perceived poll bias than Republicans randomly assigned to either the CNN, MSNBC, or AP wire conditions.

H5: Democrats will not have significantly different rates of perceived bias about the polls’ findings across the four conditions, regardless of brand.
The Pew Center (2007) found a similar partisan divide regarding accuracy of the information presented by the media. The study found only 56 percent of Republicans believe the media report accurate information while Democrats remain overwhelmingly positive with 84 percent believing in the accuracy of the media’s information. Again, Republicans who consumed news from FOX News indicated that the brand was largely accurate in their news reports while 63 percent identified other media as largely inaccurate. Therefore, partisanship and branding will influence the levels of perceived media accuracy regarding public opinion polls.

H6: Significantly more Republicans will believe the polls’ findings are less accurate than Democrats.

H7: Republicans randomly assigned to the Fox News condition, will have significantly higher rates of perceived poll accuracy than Republicans randomly assigned to either the CNN, MSNBC, or AP wire conditions.

H8: Democrats will not have significantly different rates of perceived accuracy about the polls’ findings across all four conditions, regardless of brand.

The presence or absence of a definitive news organization brand may influence more than perceptions of credibility but also overall political attitude formation.
While not definitive, many studies investigating the link between attitude formation and public opinion polls have consistently demonstrated that political attitudes tend to move in the direction of the majority opinion (e.g., Ceci and Kain, 1982; Fleitas, 1971; Gaskill, 1974; LaPonce, 1966; Rothman, 1973). That is, research has found that people’s political attitudes will move to better mirror what is positioned by the public opinion polls as the majority opinion. However, what role, if any, does political partisanship play in such movement?

Lee and Capella (2001) found that people are “influenced disproportionately” by arguments that are consistent with their ideological and value predispositions. That is, arguments that are ideologically consistent with those of the consumer are more persuasive relative to attitude formation than those which do not align with the consumer’s ideology. While some use political partisanship and ideology interchangeably, they are different, albeit closely related, phenomena. Through his forty year analysis of U.S. political partisanship, Fiorinia (2002) found that ideology is directly linked to political partisanship. It is well documented that partisanship and political ideology are related to political attitudes, in general, and as Pollingpoint found, such phenomena also affect perceptions of a news organization’s credibility. For instance, if FOX News reports on a recent public opinion poll that found the majority of Americans support a particular issue, it would be expected that Republicans, who deem the news organization as highly credible, are more likely to align their political attitudes with the reported majority than if a Republican heard the same report on MSNBC, an organization which seemingly espouses a different political partisanship. But, in this example, for
instance, do the attitudes move toward the majority because FOX’s, the source, brand confirms the viewer’s partisanship and political attitudes or because the content does? The present study seeks to answer this question along with how political attitudes are affected by confirming and disconfirming information. For instance, what happens to political attitudes when a news outlet, branded as more conservative, reports the results of a public opinion poll in which the majority opinion supports a more seemingly liberal stance?

Since the nexus of news organization branding and political attitude formation has not yet been researched, I offer no hypothesis in answer to the aforementioned question. Instead, I leave the movement of attitude relative to source branding as a research question (e.g. Appendix B).
Measurement

Data were collected from 272 students in undergraduate communication courses at a large Midwestern university. Eight participants did not fully complete the questionnaire, therefore their answers were eliminated, which brings the total number of participants to 264 ($N = 87$ Democrats; $N = 80$ Republicans; $N = 53$ Independents; $N = 44$ who indicated “No Preference”). Participants were randomly assigned to one of three brand conditions (CNN, FOX News and MSNBC) or the control condition (Associated Press) which were identified for the participant using the brands’ names, logos, color schemes, and top navigations.

Participants were first asked their political partisanship along with identifying whether they thought each of the four aforementioned news organizations were very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable or very unfavorable. Aside from these preliminary questions, participants were asked knowledge questions regarding Quinnipiac Polling Institute, including questions asking their opinion of the accuracy and partisan bias of the Institute along with their overall trust in the Institute’s poll findings. Participants were given the opportunity to choose “Never heard of the Institute” or “Know very little”. Respondents were then asked to identity their views on abortion, Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, and the war in Afghanistan. Particularly, participants were asked about their opinion on the legalization of abortion; the extent to which they agree that the
US should be fighting the war in Afghanistan; and whether or not they agree that the policy of Don’t Ask, Don’t tell should be overturned.

After assessing respondents’ political attitudes, knowledge of the polling institute, perceptions of accuracy and trust in the polling institute, and favorability of the individual news brands, respondents read three news articles about three separate Quinnipiac University public opinion polls on abortion, Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, and the war in Afghanistan. While the content of the articles was identical across the conditions, each condition’s articles were attributed to their condition’s brand (e.g. for the CNN condition, these articles seemed to be created by CNN, using the brand’s logo, color scheme and top navigation). Once participants read these three articles, they were again asked about their attitudes toward the Quinnipiac Polling Institute, including their trust in the Institute and their belief that the Institute’s findings across the individual issues were accurate. Beyond their attitudes toward the Institute, participants were again asked their attitudes toward the aforementioned political issues and lastly were asked their favorability of the news organization brands alongside numerous distracter questions.
Results

Before diving into a deeper evaluation of branding’s role in influencing perceptions of public opinion polls’ findings, it is important to gauge respondents’ knowledge of the polling organization. While knowledge of the Quinnipiac University Polling Institute was extremely low ($M = 1.22$), participants’ pretest measures, regardless of political party identification, indicate that respondents largely believed the institute to be relatively unbiased ($M = 2.73$). That is, although participants knew little to nothing about the institute or its methodologies, rather than choose the options “I have never heard of the Institute” or “I’m unsure,” respondents indicated their confidence that the institute is unbiased. Participants also reported their confidence in the accuracy of and trust in the institute’s polls ($M = 1.45, M = 1.32$) with “accurate” or “can be trusted” being coded as 1 and “inaccurate” and “cannot be trusted” coded as 2, respectively.

Contrary to the proposed hypotheses, this inherent trust in accuracy of the public opinion polls was not influenced by political partisanship or branding. A 2 x 4 ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the effects of four brand conditions and political partisanship (Democrats and Republicans) on perceptions of accuracy and bias for public opinion polls across the aforementioned political issues. The means and standard deviations for perceptions of poll accuracy and bias across these issues as a function of the two factors are presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3. The ANOVA indicated no significant interaction between political partisanship and brand for perceptions of accuracy of the polls’ findings.
across the political issues \( (F(8, 256) = 1.716, p > .05 \) for Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell; \( F(8, 256) = .346, p > .05 \) for Abortion; \( F(8, 256) = .729, p > .05 \) for the War in Afghanistan) or significant main effects for political partisanship \( (F(8, 256) = .655, p > .05 \) for Don’t Ask Don’t Tell; \( F(8, 256) = .285, p > .05 \) for Abortion; \( F(8, 256) = .015, p > .05 \) for the War in Afghanistan) or brand \( (F(8, 256) = .451, p > .05 \) for Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell; \( F(8, 256) = .572, p > .05 \) for Abortion; \( F(8, 256) = .567, p > .05 \) for the War in Afghanistan). The ANOVA also indicated no significant interaction between political partisanship and brand for perceptions of poll bias across the political issues \( (F(8, 256) = .804, p > .05 \) for Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell; \( F(8, 256) = 1.272, p > .05 \) for Abortion; \( F(8, 256) = .636, p > .05 \) for the War in Afghanistan) or significant main effects for political partisanship \( (F(8, 256) = 1.001, p > .05 \) for Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell; \( F(8, 256) = .135 , p > .05 \) for Abortion; \( F(8, 256) = .149, p > .05 \) for the War in Afghanistan) or brand \( (F(8, 256) = 1.994 , p > .05 \) for Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell; \( F(8, 256) = .976 , p > .05 \) for Abortion; \( F(8, 256) = 2.704 , p > .05 \) for the War in Afghanistan). These findings suggest that perceptions in public opinion poll accuracy and levels of bias are not influenced by branding or political partisanship, as hypothesized.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political ID</th>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Poll's Accuracy</th>
<th>Poll's Bias</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
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<td>0.3015</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fox News</td>
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Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations for Perceptions of Poll Accuracy and Bias Regarding the Issue of Don't Ask, Don't Tell

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political ID</th>
<th>Brand</th>
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<th>Poll's Bias</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>1.0909</td>
<td>0.3015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>1.2667</td>
<td>0.4498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MSNBC</td>
<td>1.3214</td>
<td>0.4756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fox News</td>
<td>1.1667</td>
<td>0.3835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>1.2500</td>
<td>0.4629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>1.3214</td>
<td>0.4756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MSNBC</td>
<td>1.1515</td>
<td>0.3641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fox News</td>
<td>1.3000</td>
<td>0.4831</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations for Perceptions of Poll Accuracy and Bias Regarding the Issue of the War in Afghanistan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political ID</th>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Poll's Accuracy</th>
<th>Poll's Bias</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>1.3636</td>
<td>0.5045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>1.2333</td>
<td>0.4302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MSNBC</td>
<td>1.2143</td>
<td>0.4179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fox News</td>
<td>1.1667</td>
<td>0.3835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>1.3750</td>
<td>0.5176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>1.2759</td>
<td>0.4549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MSNBC</td>
<td>1.4242</td>
<td>0.4352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fox News</td>
<td>1.3000</td>
<td>0.4831</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations for Perceptions of Poll Accuracy and Bias Regarding the Issue of Abortion
A 2 x 4 ANOVA was also conducted to evaluate the effects of the four brand conditions and political partisanship (Democrats and Republicans) on attitude change across the polled political issues. The means and standard deviations for attitude change across the polled political issues as a function of the two factors are presented in Table 4. The ANOVA indicated no significant interaction between political partisanship and brand for attitude change across the political issues ($F(8, 256) = .887, p > .05$ for Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell; $F(8, 256) = 1.601, p > .05$ for Abortion; $F(8, 256) = .607, p > .05$ for the War in Afghanistan; $F(8, 256) = .594, p > .05$ for the US military’s primary goal in Afghanistan being to eliminate terrorism in Afghanistan) or significant main effects for political partisanship ($F(8, 256) = .138, p > .05$ for Don’t Ask Don’t Tell; $F(8, 256) = 2.418, p > .05$ for the War in Afghanistan; $F(8, 256) = 1.409, p > .05$ for the US military’s primary goal in Afghanistan being to eliminate terrorism in Afghanistan) or brand ($F(8, 256) = 1.039, p > .05$ for Don’t Ask Don’t Tell; $F(8, 256) = .861, p > .05$ for the War in Afghanistan; $F(8, 256) = .487, p > .05$ for the US military’s primary goal in Afghanistan being to eliminate terrorism in Afghanistan). However, while the analysis indicated no significant interaction between brand and political party identification, the analysis did indicate significant main effects for political partisanship ($F(8, 256) = 3.069, p < .05$) and brand ($F(8, 256) = 3.646, p < .05$) for attitude change concerning the issue of abortion. The follow up analyses to the main effect for brand and political partisanship consisted of all pairwise comparisons among the four news brand and two major political parties. The Tukey HSD procedure was used to control for Type I error across the pairwise comparisons. The results of these analyses indicate that respondents’ attitudes
toward the legalization of abortion changed significantly more for Republicans than Democrats and more for those in the CNN condition than for the other brands. There were no significant differences for the other brands.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political ID</th>
<th>Don't Ask, Don't Tell</th>
<th>Abortion</th>
<th>War in Afghanistan</th>
<th>Eliminating Terrorists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attitude Change</td>
<td>Attitude Change</td>
<td>Attitude Change</td>
<td>Attitude Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>-.2727</td>
<td>1.0091</td>
<td>-.0099</td>
<td>0.7007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>-.3000</td>
<td>0.9154</td>
<td>0.1000</td>
<td>0.4026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSNBC</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
<td>0.6086</td>
<td>-0.0714</td>
<td>0.3780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fox News</td>
<td>0.3333</td>
<td>1.3284</td>
<td>0.0556</td>
<td>0.2357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>-.3750</td>
<td>1.1877</td>
<td>-.7500</td>
<td>0.7007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>-0.2069</td>
<td>1.8396</td>
<td>0.1379</td>
<td>0.5809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSNBC</td>
<td>-0.0606</td>
<td>0.7882</td>
<td>-0.0303</td>
<td>0.3046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fox News</td>
<td>-0.1000</td>
<td>0.8766</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Means and Standard Deviations for Participants' Attitude Change

Lastly, a 2 x 4 ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the effects of the four brand conditions and political partisanship (Democrats and Republicans) on participant’s favorability of each of the individual brands. The means and standard deviations for favorability change across the brands as a function of the two factors are presented in Table 5.

The ANOVA indicated no significant interaction between political partisanship and brand conditions for favorability of the brands across the different conditions \(F(8, 256) = .549, p > .05\) for the Associated Press; \(F(8, 256) = 1.065, p > .05\) for CNN; \(F(8, 256) = .436, p > .05\) for FOX News; \(F(8, 256) = .420, p > .05\) for MSNBC) or significant main effects for political partisanship \(F(8, 256) = 1.955, p > .05\) for CNN; \(F(8, 256) =
.592, $p > .05$ for MSNBC) or brand ($F(8, 256) = 1.290, p > .05$ for the Associated Press; $F(8, 256) = .486, p > .05$ for CNN; $F(8, 256) = .572, p > .05$ for FOX News; $F(8, 256) = 1.448, p > .05$ for MSNBC). However, the analyses do suggest significant main effects for political partisanship for the change in favorability for the Associated Press ($F(8, 256) = .5.940, p < .05$) and for FOX News ($F(8, 256) = 4.574, p < .05$). The political partisanship main effect indicated that Republicans tended to change their favorability ratings more than Democrats.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political ID</th>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Favorability Change Mean</th>
<th>Favorability Change SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>0.8182</td>
<td>0.7508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>0.2000</td>
<td>1.1265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MSNBC</td>
<td>0.0714</td>
<td>1.2745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fox News</td>
<td>0.1110</td>
<td>1.1318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>1.5000</td>
<td>1.0690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>0.2759</td>
<td>1.2506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MSNBC</td>
<td>0.3030</td>
<td>1.3107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fox News</td>
<td>-0.8000</td>
<td>0.9189</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Mean Difference and Standard Deviations for Participants' Change in Favorability across Brands
Discussion

The findings suggest that brand does not influence people’s perceptions of public opinion polls. That is, even when an individual consumes news from a source that seems to more readily support a different political party than their own (e.g. a Republican watching MSNBC or Democrat watching FOX News), brand does not affect their perceptions of the validity of the reported public opinion poll. Instead, public opinion polls are endowed with high levels of public trust regarding the accuracy and credibility of their findings, even when those findings do not support an individual’s personal views on the polled issue.

The fact that knowledge of the Quinnipiac University Polling Institute was extremely low, yet respondents were confident that the institute is trustworthy and that their findings are accurate and unbiased, has great implications for the importance of conducting and disseminating sound public opinion research. That is, as this study suggests, the public has great trust in the accuracy and credibility of polling entities and their views are somewhat influenced by the results of public opinion research whether they possess knowledge of the polling entity or not. Therefore, not only must public opinion pollsters strive to produce accurate and reliable public opinion results, but the news media should be vigilant in deciding what public opinion polls to disseminate to the public because, as the present study suggests, the public will largely believe poll results and judge them as accurate whether they truly are or not. A possible critique of this argument is that the present study used a university polling entity, and because the
polling institute is tied to an institution of higher learning, the public may be more apt to believe it is trustworthy. However, the term university was removed from the entity’s name throughout the questionnaire to eliminate such biases, therefore more aptly allowing these results to be discussed in conjunction with numerous polling entities that also do not have university in their name.

Understanding that people inherently trust numbers – and thus trust polls – and that a news organization’s branding does not influence the publics’ perception of these polls, the present study also unexpectedly found that perceptions of the news brands themselves are influenced by the news they report. That is, as the results indicate, favorability of some of the news brands themselves changed dramatically throughout the course of the study. However, there is no identifiable pattern to these changes in favorability. That is, the public’s favorability of FOX News increased while the favorability of the other brands decreased. Yet, perceptions of the public opinion polls were very favorable throughout the study. Therefore, it is unclear why the favorability of the brands changed and in the directions they did. However, what is clear from these findings is that perceptions of reporting news brands and perceptions of the reported public opinion polls are separate in the minds of the consumer. It seems arguable that if the public perceives information in a news report (e.g. public opinion poll results) as credible, they would, at least to some degree, attribute this favorability to the reporting news organization, as well. Yet, the results of the present study do not support such thinking. Instead, there is clearly a separation in the mind of the consumer between the reporting news organization and the poll being reported. But, the question that remains is
why? And, beyond merely why are these perceptions separate, why the difference is how these perceptions are manifested? That is, why does the favorability of FOX News increase while the favorability of MSNBC, the Associated Press, and CNN decrease? Clearly, there seems to be another variable influencing favorability of the news brands; however, what exactly this variable is is not readily identifiable. Thus, further, multi-method research is needed to identify and measure this variable. Specifically, qualitative interviewing and focus groups are needed to understand the process by which people make their decision on the favorability of a media brand as well as the process at play as the public consumes information from this brand to help identify possible variables affecting favorability of news media brands outside of the content they report.

Beyond inherent trust in public opinion polls, the fact that the present study found no evidence that branding influences people’s perceptions of public opinion polls is in direct contrast to the proposed hypotheses, which were largely based on the marketing literature surrounding brandings influence on consumer choice. An interesting extension of the present study is to analyze news organization’s branding in conjunction with public opinion polls regarding consumer products. For instance, would news organization branding have an influence on perceptions of public opinion polls if the poll’s findings surrounded a consumer product, such as the public’s opinion of Toyota’s product safety given the recent, widespread recalls? While these recalls do have political ramifications, such a public opinion topic would, arguably, not be defined as a political issue to the extent that the present study’s polled issues are. Adding a more-consumer-focused public opinion topic to the present study would allow for a better understanding of the possible
role news organization branding plays in relation to the public’s perceptions of public opinion polls across different types of issues – both political and consumer focused.

Adding more consumer-focused public opinion polls to the present study might also offer a better understanding of polls’ influence on individual attitudes. While the study found some evidence of the power of public opinion poll’s to change individual’s political attitudes, these findings were not consistent across the political issues polled. The lack of consistent findings may be attributed to the fact that the political issues used in this study were ones that, arguably, are grounded in long term attitudes and beliefs – homosexuality, abortion, and war. Therefore, adding more consumer-focused public opinion polls, which would be less grounded in such long term beliefs, might yield more consistent results which would allow for a greater understanding of different types of public opinion polls’ influence on the public.

A further manipulation of the present study would be to include methodological information about the public opinion polls. For instance, would the public trust polls even more if information about the poll’s sound methodologies were included in the report of their polling results. For instance, if AAPOR implemented ratings of top polling entities, would including such ratings increase the public’s perceptions of credibility of these polls as compared to polls without such a rating? Or, would all polls, regardless of methodology be endowed with the same level of great public trust?

While the present study offers some interesting information about the possible relationship, or lack there of, between public opinion polls, news organization branding and the overarching influence on the public, further multi-method research is needed to
more fully understand what, if any relationship, exists between these as well as understanding the process at play as the public consumes public opinion poll results for the mass media.
Limitations

As mentioned, further research is needed to fully understand the process consumers go through when they consume media regarding public opinion polls, so an important limitation of this study is that it does not offer a more comprehensive, multi-method approach to understand the mechanisms affecting people’s perceptions of the news media in relation to their public opinion poll reports. Also, in retrospect, the time between measurement 1 and measurement 2 might benefit from being more spaced out from one another. While the study did find significant differences in the pretest and posttest in relation to brand favorability and personal issue opinions, offering more time between the measures may have provided different results.

While the study does have its limitations, its theoretical underpinnings will serve to bolster more than simply the Communication literature. There is much debate about the state of the Communication field, but seemingly the predominate view is that Communication needs to better integrate itself with other disciplines. That is, Putnam (2008) argues that Communication needs to make connections across the field as well as with other fields. Berger (2009), on the other hand, posits that Communication is already connected to other fields, but the field simply takes from these other fields but does not innovate. No matter the position, the common theme is that Communication is not innovating within itself or within other fields. The present study seeks to overcome this limitation. Specifically, this study seeks to not only create a nexus between public opinion polling, political knowledge and attitude, and marketing literatures but to also
offer each literature something in return. Specifically, the marketing or business literatures will have not only a discussion and definition of brand but also an understanding of how brand relates to media organizations and public opinion polling. The political communication and polling literatures along with the political attitude formation and knowledge literatures will benefit from an understanding of the effects of perceptions of source credibility and how these perceptions can possibly be changed through branding efforts. Put simply, the present study provides (1) growth for the field of Communication, (2) an analysis and definition of brand relative to the media, and (3) a possible springboard for further analysis and discussion of public opinion polls, political knowledge, and their relationship with the U.S. media.
Conclusion

People inherently trust public opinion polling entities and their poll results, yet this trust is not also attributed to the news organization reporting the poll. And, although there is no one way public opinion poll results affect people’s individual opinions on the issues, there is evidence that individuals’ issue stances can be influenced by the reported public opinion poll results. Thus, media organizations must be cautious of the public opinion poll results they report in an attempt to help protect the public’s opinion from eroding based on inaccurate and biased public opinion polls. Put simply, people inherently trust numbers and the source that aggregated those numbers, whether they have any knowledge of the source or not, thus erroneous public opinion data widely disseminated to the public could, not only, affect people’s personal opinions but the way in which they vote and, thus, the future of our country. However, further research is needed to more fully understand the mechanisms that influence the relationship between the mass media, the public and public opinion data.
Bibliography


Appendix A: News Articles
Quinnipiac poll: Evangelical Christians and Catholics Disagree on Future of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.

In a new poll, the Quinnipiac Polling Institute has found that 56 percent of Americans, including 50 percent of voters with family in the military, believe that “the ban on openly gay men and women in the military should be repealed.” Respondents to the poll also rejected the idea that allowing gay men and women to serve openly in the military would be “divisive.”

White Catholics say 64 – 29 percent that gays in the military should be allowed to come out, while white evangelical Christians support “don’t ask; don’t tell” 53 – 40 percent. Voters reject 58 – 35 percent, including 56 – 39 percent in military households, the argument that allowing openly gay men and women to serve would be divisive, the independent Quinnipiac University survey of 2,041 registered voters nationwide finds.

Quinnipiac poll: Americans Have Strong Opinions on the Goal of the War in Afghanistan

In a new poll, The Quinnipiac University Polling Institute has found that 65 percent of American voters are willing to have American soldiers “fight and possibly die” to eliminate the threat of terrorists operating from Afghanistan. But 49 percent of voters do not think the U.S. will be successful in eliminating this terrorist threat.
A 52 – 37 percent majority of Americans think the war in Afghanistan is the right thing for the U.S. to do, the independent Quinnipiac University survey of 2,630 American voters finds.

“Voters are willing to shed American blood to fight terror, but not for nation-building,” said Peter A. Brown, assistant director of the Quinnipiac University Polling Institute. “And almost 3 – 1 they expect nation-building to fail.”

In a direct matchup of the two choices, 65 percent of voters say eliminating terrorism should be the main U.S. goal, while 21 percent say building a stable democratic government should be the main goal.

Quinnipiac poll: U.S. Voters Divided on Abortion

A recent Quinnipiac University poll of 2,041 registered voters nationwide revealed that the issue of abortion continues to divide the country, and the division is almost equal on both sides of the issue.

The results show that Americans who think abortion should be legal in all or most cases hold a 52 percent-41 percent advantage in public opinion over those who think it should be always or usually illegal.

Specifically, the poll found that 15 percent of all voters say abortion should be legal in all cases while 37 percent of voters say abortion should be legal in most cases. On the other side of the issue, 27 percent of U.S. voters agree abortion should be illegal in most cases while 14 percent believe abortion should be illegal in all cases.
Appendix B: Condition Examples
Mar 3, 7:55 AM EDT

AP: Quinnipiac poll: Evangelical Christians and Catholics Disagree on Future of Don't Ask, Don't Tell

Associated Press Writer

In a new poll, the Quinnipiac Polling Institute has found that 56 percent of Americans, including 50 percent of voters with family in the military, believe that “the ban on openly gay men and women in the military should be repealed.” Respondents to the poll also rejected the idea that allowing gay men and women to serve openly in the military would be “divisive.”

White Catholics say 64 – 29 percent that gays in the military should be allowed to come out, while white evangelical Christians support “don’t ask, don’t tell” 53 – 40 percent. Voters reject 58 – 35 percent, including 56 – 39 percent in military households, the argument that allowing openly gay men and women to serve would be divisive, the independent Quinnipiac University survey of 2,041 registered voters nationwide finds.

Figure 2. AP Example Article
Quinnipiac poll: Evangelical Christians and Catholics Disagree on Future of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.

In a new poll, the Quinnipiac Polling Institute has found that 56 percent of Americans, including 50 percent of voters with family in the military, believe that “the ban on openly gay men and women in the military should be repealed.” Respondents to the poll also rejected the idea that allowing gay men and women to serve openly in the military would be “divisive.”

White Catholics say 64 – 29 percent that gays in the military should be allowed to come out, while white evangelical Christians support “don’t ask, don’t tell” 53 – 40 percent. Voters reject 58 – 35 percent, including 56 – 39 percent in military households, the argument that allowing openly gay men and women to serve would be divisive, the independent Quinnipiac University survey of 2,041 registered voters nationwide finds.
Quinnipiac poll: Evangelical Christians and Catholics Disagree on Future of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.

By the CNN Wire Staff

March 3, 2013 7:50 a.m. EDT

(CNN) -- In a new poll, the Quinnipiac Polling Institute has found that 56 percent of Americans, including 50 percent of voters with family in the military, believe that "the ban on openly gay men and women in the military should be repealed." Respondents to the poll also rejected the idea that allowing gay men and women to serve openly in the military would be "divisive."

White Catholics say 64%–29 percent that gays in the military should be allowed to come out, while white evangelical Christians support "don't ask, don't tell" 53%–40 percent. Voters reject 58%–35 percent, including 56%–39 percent in military households; the argument that allowing openly gay men and women to serve would be divisive, the independent Quinnipiac University survey of 2,041 registered voters nationwide finds.
Quinnipiac poll: Evangelical Christians and Catholics Disagree on Future of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.

msnbc.com
updated 7:35 a.m. ET, Sat., March 3, 2010

In a new poll, the Quinnipiac Polling Institute has found that 56 percent of Americans, including 30 percent of voters with family in the military, believe that “the ban on openly gay men and women in the military should be repealed.” Respondents to the poll also rejected the idea that allowing gay men and women to serve openly in the military would be “divisive.” White Catholics say 64 – 29 percent that gays in the military should be allowed to come out, while white evangelical Christians support “don’t ask, don’t tell” 53 – 40 percent. Voters reject 58 – 35 percent, including 56 – 39 percent in military households, the argument that allowing openly gay men and women to serve would be divisive, the independent Quinnipiac University survey of 2,041 registered voters nationwide finds.
Appendix C: Questionnaire
Pretest

1) In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Independent?
   _____ Democrat
   _____ Republican
   _____ Independent
   _____ Other
   _____ No preference

2) What is your overall opinion of CNN?
   _____ Very favorable
   _____ Mostly favorable
   _____ Mostly unfavorable
   _____ Very unfavorable

3) What is your overall opinion of MSNBC?
   _____ Very favorable
   _____ Mostly favorable
   _____ Mostly unfavorable
   _____ Very unfavorable

3) What is your overall opinion of FOX News?
   _____ Very favorable
   _____ Mostly favorable
   _____ Mostly unfavorable
   _____ Very unfavorable

4) What is your overall opinion of the AP wire?
   _____ Very favorable
   _____ Mostly favorable
   _____ Mostly unfavorable
   _____ Very unfavorable

5) In general, how satisfied are you with the way things are going in the nation today?
   _____ Very satisfied
   _____ Somewhat satisfied
   _____ Somewhat dissatisfied
   _____ Very dissatisfied
6) How much do you know about the Quinnipiac Polling Institute?
   _____ Nothing
   _____ Very Little
   _____ Some
   _____ Very Much

7) To your knowledge, the Quinnipiac Polling Institute is funded by
   _____ Democratic Party
   _____ Republican Party
   _____ A University
   _____ Polling Clients
   _____ Never heard of the Institute

8) The Quinnipiac Polling Institute is biased in favor of
   _____ Conservatives
   _____ Liberals
   _____ Is not biased
   _____ Never heard of the Institute

9) To your knowledge, the Quinnipiac Polling Institute employs
   _____ Well-trained pollsters
   _____ Untrained pollsters

10) In your opinion, the Quinnipiac Polling Institute is
    _____ Accurate
    _____ Inaccurate

11) To your knowledge, the Quinnipiac Polling Institute
   _____ Does not separate fact and opinion
   _____ Does separate fact and opinion

12) In your opinion, the Quinnipiac Polling Institute
    _____ Can be trusted
    _____ Cannot be trusted

13) I believe the number 1 goal for the U.S. in Afghanistan should be to eliminate terrorists
    Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree  Unsure

14) Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Democrats in Congress are handling their job?
    _____ Approve
    _____ Disapprove
15) I believe the policy of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell should be overturned.
   Strongly Agree     Agree     Neutral     Disagree     Strongly Disagree     Unsure

16) Did you vote in the 2008 U.S. Presidential election?
   _____ Yes
   _____ No

17) I believe the U.S. should be fighting the war in Afghanistan now.
   Strongly Agree     Agree     Neutral     Disagree     Strongly Disagree     Unsure

18) I believe the number 1 goal for the U.S. in Afghanistan should be to build a stable, democratic government.
   Strongly Agree     Agree     Neutral     Disagree     Strongly Disagree     Unsure

19) Do you agree or disagree that President Obama is doing a good job running the country.
   _____ Strongly Agree
   _____ Agree
   _____ Disagree
   _____ Strongly Disagree

20) Should abortion be legal in all cases, legal in most cases, illegal in most cases, or illegal in all cases?
   _____ Legal in all cases
   _____ Legal in most cases
   _____ Illegal in most cases
   _____ Illegal in all cases

21) On the issue of abortion, would you say you are more pro-life or more pro-choice
   _____ Pro-life
   _____ Pro-choice
   _____ A mixture of both
   _____ Unsure

22) Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Republicans in Congress are handling their job?
   _____ Approve
   _____ Disapprove
   _____ Unsure
Posttest

23) Is the Quinnipiac Polling Institute
   _____ Biased
   _____ Unbiased

24) The Quinnipiac Polling Institute
   _____ Can be trusted
   _____ Cannot be trusted

25) The Quinnipiac Polling Institute has
   _____ Poorly-trained pollsters
   _____ Well-trained pollsters

26) The Quinnipiac Polling Institute’s findings about public opinion on the Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell issue are
   _____ Accurate
   _____ Inaccurate

27) The Quinnipiac Polling Institute’s findings about public opinion on the U.S. involvement in the war in Afghanistan are
   _____ Accurate
   _____ Inaccurate

28) The Quinnipiac Polling Institute’s findings about public opinion on the abortion issue are
   _____ Accurate
   _____ Inaccurate

29) The Quinnipiac Polling Institute’s findings about public opinion on the U.S. involvement in the war in Afghanistan are
   _____ Biased in favor of Conservatives
   _____ Biased in favor of Liberals
   _____ Unbiased

30) I believe the U.S. should be fighting the war in Afghanistan now.
    Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
31) I believe the number 1 goal for the U.S. in Afghanistan should be to eliminate terrorists
   Strongly Agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

32) The Quinnipiac Polling Institute’s findings about public opinion on the abortion issue are
   ______ Biased in favor of Conservatives
   ______ Biased in favor of Liberals
   ______ Unbiased

33) The Quinnipiac Polling Institute’s findings about public opinion on the Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell issue are
   ______ Biased in favor of Conservatives
   ______ Biased in favor of Liberals
   ______ Unbiased

34) I believe sending more U.S. troops to Afghanistan is the right thing to do.
   Strongly Agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

35) I believe the number 1 goal for the U.S. in Afghanistan should be to build a stable, democratic government.
   Strongly Agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

36) I believe the policy of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell should be overturned.
   Strongly Agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

37) I believe abortion should be
   ______ Legal in all cases
   ______ Legal in most cases
   ______ Illegal in all cases
   ______ Illegal in most cases

38) I believe the majority of Americans do not support legalizing abortion
   Strongly Agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

39) What is your overall opinion of FOX News?
   ______ Very favorable
   ______ Mostly favorable
   ______ Mostly unfavorable
   ______ Very unfavorable

40) What is your overall opinion of the AP wire?
   ______ Very favorable
   ______ Mostly favorable

41) How do you get most of your news about national and international issues?
   ______ Television
   ______ Newspaper
   ______ Radio
   ______ Magazines
   ______ Internet
   ______ Other

42) How do you get most of your local news about issues and events in your area?
   ______ Television
   ______ Newspaper
   ______ Radio
   ______ Magazines
   ______ Internet
   ______ Other

43) What is your overall opinion of CNN?
   ______ Very favorable
   ______ Mostly favorable
   ______ Mostly unfavorable
   ______ Very unfavorable

44) What is your overall opinion of MSNBC?
   ______ Very favorable
   ______ Mostly favorable
   ______ Mostly unfavorable
   ______ Very unfavorable

45) I believe polls can accurately measure public opinion
   ______ Strongly Agree
   ______ Agree
   ______ Neutral
   ______ Disagree
   ______ Strongly Disagree

46) In general, do you think news organizations get the facts straight, or do you think their stories and reports are often inaccurate?
   ______ Get the facts straight
   ______ Stories are often inaccurate

47) In presenting the news dealing with political and social issues, do you think that news organizations deal fairly with all sides, or do they tend to favor one side?
   ______ Deal fairly with all sides
   ______ Tend to favor one side
Appendix D: Correlation Matrix
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>PartyID</th>
<th>Accuracy of Poll Findings on Don't Ask, Don't Tell</th>
<th>Accuracy of Poll Findings on War Support</th>
<th>Accuracy of Poll Findings on Abortion</th>
<th>Bias of Poll Findings on War</th>
<th>Bias of Poll Findings on Abortion</th>
<th>Bias of Poll Findings on Don't Ask, Don't Tell</th>
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<td>Condition</td>
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<td>.129*</td>
<td>-0.052</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>-0.075</td>
<td>0.112</td>
<td>0.063</td>
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<tr>
<td>PartyID</td>
<td>0.129</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>-0.039</td>
<td>-0.027</td>
<td>0.019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accuracy of Poll Findings on Don't Ask, Don't Tell</td>
<td>-0.052</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.486**</td>
<td>.450**</td>
<td>-.272**</td>
<td>-.230**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy of Poll Findings on War Support</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.032</td>
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<td>1.000</td>
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<td>-.170**</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-.282**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bias of Poll Findings on War</td>
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<td>-0.027</td>
<td>-.272**</td>
<td>-.227**</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.019</td>
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<td>-.170**</td>
<td>-.282**</td>
<td>.478**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.530**</td>
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</table>

*Note: *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Table 6. Correlations of Post-Test Poll Accuracy and Bias Across Issues