POLLING IN CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate

School of The Ohio State University

By

Joseph Quin Monson, M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
2004

Dissertation Committee:

Professor Paul Allen Beck, Adviser

Professor Herbert F. Weisberg

Professor Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier

Approved by

_____

Adviser
Department of Political Science

ABSTRACT

Political polling is now an integral part of congressional election campaigns. Polling is widely considered an accurate measure of public opinion and thus serves to reduce the uncertainty associated with running for Congress. It does so by supplying strategic information that enables campaigns to operate more efficiently and effectively, targeting campaign messages to voters who are most likely to be receptive.

Poll use by congressional campaigns varies considerably but is predicted by campaign characteristics such as the competitiveness of the race, the resources available to pay for the polling, and the amount the campaign is spending on advertising. More polling is also done by incumbents and open-seat candidates compared to challengers, by candidates with prior political experience in elected office, and by Democrats. Finally, mid-decade redistricting has a negative effect on polling while a close underlying partisan division is positively related to poll use.

Polling is used by campaigns to help the candidate more effectively communicate with voters on issue. Candidates rarely use polls to take issue positions, and pollsters rarely make these kinds of recommendations. However, polling is commonly used to help campaigns to choose which issues positions to address and how best to do so.

Candidate recruitment and emergence studies have given little attention to polling's impact on how candidates and parties assess the probability of victory in a given

district. Except for those who can afford to pay for it and existing office holders who are risk averse, most potential candidates do not routinely conduct exploratory polling. However, in the small number of very competitive U.S. House districts, the party campaign committees use polling extensively to help convince attractive candidates to enter open seat contests favorable to the party or especially to identify vulnerable incumbents of the opposite party and find out if a reasonable chance of victory exists.

To Kate, Anna, Alex, and Sadie

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many people to thank for their help with this project. My committee members Paul Beck, Herb Weisberg, and Jan Box-Steffensmeier provided sound advice, constructive feedback, patience, and encouragement throughout the process. I also received a tremendous amount of support from friends at Brigham Young University. While working on this project, I also worked with David Magleby and Kelly Patterson to study soft money and issue advocacy in congressional elections. The overlap between the two projects was very helpful, especially for learning the ropes of the Washington, D.C. consulting community and elite interviewing. David, Kelly, and Dan Nielson at BYU all provided feedback and encouragement at different stages of the project that proved to be very helpful. Finally, I spent several years as a graduate student working at the Center for Survey Research at Ohio State University. My work there with Paul Lavrakas is what sparked my interest in this topic.

Funding for this project was provided by a Graduate Student Alumni Research Award (GSARA) grant from the Ohio State University Graduate School. This funding was used to purchase the data reported in Chapter 3. Several others also deserve help for their assistance. Kevin Sweeney provided helpful advice on model selection and estimation. Scott Adler, Paul Herrnson, Dwight Morris, and Peter Roybal all supplied data. Bob Biersack and Paul Clark of the Federal Election Commission (FEC) provided

assistance with FEC political party data. Stephanie Curtis provided assistance with compiling and merging various data sources. Kris Nelson transcribed many of the interviews with pollsters. Thomas Donohoe and David Andelin read and coded all of the interviews.

Finally, my family was instrumental in helping me to finish this project. My parents and siblings lent encouragement at many points along the way. My wife Kate was very patient and encouraging throughout a project that went on longer than it should have and saw the addition of three children (Anna, Alex, and Sadie) to our family. At certain points during a project like this, you question your ability to see it through and you begin to doubt whether you are contributing something significant to others. One very significant contribution from Kate, Anna, Alex, and Sadie to me is their unconditional love and support. For that I am truly grateful.

VITA

August 15, 1969	Born, Walnut Creek, California
1996	B.A./M.A. (combined degree), Public Policy, Brigham Young University
1999	M.A., Political Science, The Ohio State University
1996 – 2001	Graduate Teaching and Research Associate, The Ohio State University
Summer 2000	Instructor, Department of Political Science, Brigham Young University
Summer 2001	Instructor and Faculty Advisor, Brigham Young University Washington Seminar internship program, Washington, D.C.
2001-2002	Presidential Fellow, The Ohio State University
2002 - present	Assistant Director, Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy, Brigham Young University
2003 - present	Instructor, Department of Political Science, Brigham Young University

PUBLICATIONS

Journal Articles

1. David E. Campbell and J. Quin Monson. 2003. "Following the Leader? Mormon Voting on Ballot Propositions." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42: 605-619.

2. Kenneth Mulligan, J. Tobin Grant, and Stephen T. Mockabee, and J. Quin Monson. 2003. "Response Latency Methodology for Survey Research: Measurement and Modeling Strategies." *Political Analysis* 11:289-301.

3. David B. Magleby and J. Quin Monson. 2003. "The Noncandidate Campaign: Soft Money and Issue Advocacy in the 2002 Congressional Elections." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 36: 401-409.

4. Dean Lacy and Quin Monson. 2002. "The Origins and Impact of Electoral Support for Third-Party Candidates: A Case Study of the 1998 Minnesota Gubernatorial Election." *Political Research Quarterly* 55:409-437.

5. Stephen T. Mockabee, Joseph Quin Monson, and J. Tobin Grant. 2001. "Measuring Religious Commitment Among Catholics and Protestants: A New Approach." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40:675-690.

Edited Book

1. David B. Magleby and J. Quin Monson, eds. 2004. *The Last Hurrah? Soft Money and Issue Advocacy in the 2002 Congressional Elections*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Book Chapters

1. J. Quin Monson. 2004. "Get On TeleVision vs. Get On The Van: GOTV and the Ground War in 2002." In *The Last Hurrah? Soft Money and Issue Advocacy in the 2002 Congressional Elections*, ed. David B. Magleby and J. Quin Monson. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 90-116.

2. David B. Magleby and J. Quin Monson. 2004. "The Consequences of Noncandidate Spending with a Look to the Future." In David B. Magleby and J. Quin Monson, eds., *The Last Hurrah? Soft Money and Issue Advocacy in the 2002 Congressional Elections*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 258-80.

3. J. Quin Monson and Stephanie P. Curtis. 2004. "Studying the Noncandidate Campaign: Case Study and Survey Methodology." In *The Last Hurrah? Soft Money and Issue Advocacy in the 2002 Congressional Elections*, ed. David B. Magleby and J. Quin Monson. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 281-298.

4. Samuel C. Patterson and Joseph Quin Monson. 1999. "Two More Years: Reelecting the Republican Congress" In *Reelection 1996: How Americans Voted*, ed. Herbert F. Weisberg and Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier. New York: Chatham House Publishers, 183-212.

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: American Politics

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Opinion research, including both traditional surveys and focus groups, is an integral part of congressional elections. Together with media and direct mail consultants, pollsters have become an indispensable part of competitive congressional campaigns. The growth in the political consulting industry, including the rise of political polling, over the past several decades can be regarded as the emergence of a new institution of American democracy. Understanding both the empirical and normative implications of this rise is an important objective for political analysis. However, the accounts of campaign polling and its practice and role in election campaigns to date are mostly anecdotal in nature and avoid drawing many systematic conclusions.

One of the most striking changes in modern American campaigns is the rise of the political consultant (Sabato 1981). Modern political consultants, in tandem with accompanying technological developments, have risen both in numbers and influence in recent years. Names like Pat Caddell, Richard Wirthlin, Robert Teeter, James Carville, Dick Morris, Mark Penn, Ed Rollins, and Frank Luntz, to name a few, have all received media attention for prominent roles in numerous presidential and congressional election campaigns. However, although consultants—particularly pollsters—have risen in prominence and importance in campaigns, political scientists have only just begun to pay

attention, with a few exceptions (Dulio 2001; Friedenberg 1997; Johnson 2001; Johnson-Cartee and Copeland 1997; Luntz 1988; Medvic 2001; Nimmo 1970; Rosenbloom 1973; Sabato 1981; Thurber and Nelson 2000) .

According to Petracca, this neglect is due to three factors: First, relative to other options, campaign consultants are difficult to study. Data sources to study consultant behavior are scarce while voter surveys and campaign finance data are readily available. Further difficulty in gathering data results from the fact that consultants can be proprietary and even secretive about their practices. Second, defining consulting, or the essence of what it means to consult a political campaign, is elusive and difficult. *Consulting* can refer to a host of different kinds of activities and levels of professionalism. Finally, political science as a discipline has moved away from analysis of electoral institutions and focuses on individual voter behavior (Petracca 1989). However, Medvic notes that the barriers identified by Petracca are no longer significant obstacles (Medvic 2001, 10-11). Recent work, including Medvic's, has begun systematically to define consulting. Furthermore, data availability has improved, and there is renewed interest among political scientists for institutional approaches to the study of politics. Finally, as Medvic points out, "The implicit assumption that campaigns and consultants can *best* be studied in institutional (or, for that matter, behavioral) terms is dubious" (Medvic 2001, 11, emphasis in original).

One result of the limited research on consultants by political scientists is a corresponding underdevelopment of explanatory theories for consultant behavior. Thurber (1998) sums up the state of political science research on campaign consultants by calling the current state of existing knowledge "atheoretical." Indeed, Thurber

chooses an apt title for his article, "The Study of Campaign Consultants: A Subfield in Search of Theory." Medvic's work, presenting a theory of "deliberate priming" is a notable exception to this current lack of theoretical focus (Medvic 2001). If the available literature on campaign consultants is sparse, very little existing literature examines political pollsters in the context of congressional campaigns.

Despite the relative inattention by political scientists, polling data and pollsters have come to play a central role in modern campaigns at all levels. This evolution came about after the advent of survey research techniques in the years during and especially after World War II (Converse 1987). Beginning with John F. Kennedy (Jacobs and Shapiro 1995; 1994) and continuing in more recent presidential campaigns (Moore 1992), modern survey research has become an important part of presidential campaign strategy (Eisinger 2003). Thus, scholars have paid some attention to the importance of polling at the presidential level; however, scant attention has been given to the role of polling data and pollsters in the context of congressional campaigns.

The existing accounts of polling in congressional campaigns come from both candidates and consultants. One of the earliest accounts comes from then-Representative Jacob Javits (D-NY) who recounts his use of polling to aid his 1946 campaign (Javits 1947). The description by Javits foreshadows some of the use of polling in campaigns today. Javits used the poll to identify issues that his potential constituents thought were most important so that he could focus on them in his campaign. For Javits, the polling data became a tool that he used to focus on issues and aid him in delivering a clear exposition of his positions. More recently, David Price (D-NC) in his book, *The Congressional Experience* (Price 1992, chapter 2), recounts the events of his first three

campaigns for Congress, beginning in 1986. He frequently mentions campaign polls, demonstrating that polling serves an important informational and strategic role in his campaigns. Polls help a candidate identify vulnerabilities, find a strong message and issues to focus on in each campaign, and track the campaign's progress from months before the election through Election Day.

Other detailed accounts of campaign polling come from pollsters themselves. For example, Hamilton (1995) describes modern campaign polling, including the general content and purpose of early benchmark polling, tracking polls, the use of polls with focus groups, and recent trends in campaign survey research. Stonecash provides a similar account, describing the role of polling while also providing some methodological nuts and bolts for would-be campaign pollsters (Stonecash 2003).

Research on polling in congressional elections is important to pursue. Despite the efforts of some to forecast elections months in advance of the outcome, much evidence exists to demonstrate that campaigns matter (Campbell 2000; Ezra and Nelson 1995; Gelman and King 1993; Holbrook 1996; Krasno 1994). Furthermore, consultants lead to more successful campaigns, and pollsters in particular are chiefly influential among consultants in congressional campaigns in terms of the eventual success of the candidate. This evidence will be reviewed below.

Bartels (1992) suggests that separating campaign effects from voters' long-term inclinations is a difficult task. Despite this difficulty, Holbrook (1996) asserts that campaigns matter even in the face of evidence that voting behavior can be accounted for with variables that are largely in place before the campaign begins, such as party identification (Campbell et al. 1960) or retrospective voting (Fiorina 1981). Campaigns

matter even though relatively accurate forecasts of aggregate voting behavior at the presidential level are made using just a few variables, such as economic growth and presidential approval (e.g. Campbell and Mann 1992; Lewis-Beck and Rice 1992). While not dismissing the effect of long term factors, Holbrook argues that events external and prior to the start of the campaign create a baseline from which campaigns then have their effect. Campaigns affect both the information most individual voters receive about candidates as well as external events and can even affect an election outcome, especially in a close race. For example, the well-regarded forecasting models were unable to accurately predict the outcome, let alone the extreme closeness, of the 2000 presidential election.[1] Models predicting midterm elections have run into similar difficulty in recent years. Models run before the 2002 election predicted that Democrats would gain between four and fourteen seats in the House and maintain control of the Senate.[2] Instead, Republicans gained seats in both the House and Senate, defying both the models and conventional wisdom just as the Democrats did in 1998.

Holbrook's "baseline" argument is reminiscent of the concept of a "normal vote" (Converse 1966), which consists of the partisan base in a district and reflects the force of long-term factors. Holbrook argues that deviations from the normal vote are attributable to campaigns; campaigns matter because many voters make up their minds late in the

[1] For a review of these models see the articles in the March 2001 issue of *PS: Political Science and Politics*.

[2] For a collection of the 2002 models, see the "Symposium on Mid-Term Elections" sponsored by the Elections, Public Opinion, and Voting Behavior Section of the American Political Science Association at http://www.apsanet.org/~elections/archives.html (accessed June 15, 2004).

campaign, party identification has become less important over time, levels of candidate support have been shown to fluctuate during a campaign, and finally, because campaign information makes a difference.

This last point, that campaign information matters, is key. Krasno (1994) uses Senate elections as a unique kind of natural experiment to examine the importance of campaign information. Only a third of senators are up for election every two years; this allows for comparison between those currently up for reelection and their counterparts who are up for reelection two and four years later. Using data from the Senate Election Study, Krasno, like Holbrook, also finds that campaigns matter. For example, comparing candidate ratings from 1988 to 1990 of incumbent senators who faced hard-fought campaigns in 1990, Krasno shows that respondent ratings of incumbent senators change over time. Respondents were much more likely recall the incumbent senators name in 1990, less likely to respond "don't know" in response to other questions about the candidates and more likely to move to the extremes on response options (Krasno 1994, 149). This evidence is convincing because he compares only a subset of senators for which he is able to hold the overall competitiveness of the race constant. In summary, campaigns are important providers of information in an environment in which all voters possess limited information and are uncertain about the election and subsequent consequences (Popkin 1991, 70).

More recent evidence also supports the notion that campaign information has important effects on voters. Campaign information can affect the campaign agenda, defined as what voters view as the most important issues of the campaign, and these effects impact the vote (Abbe et al. 2003; Herrnson and Patterson 2000). Alvarez (1997,

chapter 10) presents evidence that campaigns reduce the level of voter uncertainty about candidate issue positions. Sellers (1998) shows that candidates successfully emphasize issues on which they have built a good record. It is also important to remember that voters do not need to remember campaign information for it to have an impact. Instead, many voters continuously update their overall evaluations of candidates "on line" when they encounter new information, and these overall evaluations can be used in decision making even as the details are forgotten (Lodge, McGraw, and Stroh 1989; Lodge, Steenbergen, and Brau 1995).

Campbell provides a useful synthesis of much of the research on campaign effects (Campbell 2000). He asserts that presidential campaigns have large and significant effects on the final distribution of the vote but also argues that these effects are largely predictable, which explains why campaign effects are sometimes overlooked by political scientists. Campbell's "theory of the predictable campaign" consists of three components. First, the effects of campaigns are limited by certain contextual features that include stable partisan affiliations of voters and early decision making by voters. Second, two important factors in any campaign, incumbency and economic conditions, are known well in advance of the campaign and help to make things more predictable. Third, competitive campaigns lead to a narrowing of the race as Election Day nears. Thus, while election outcomes are often predictable, there is some room for campaign effects, especially when both sides run a strong campaign. In other words, because of the stability of the context and the predictable effects of important factors, campaigns can have an effect but this effect is limited.

Not only do campaigns matter to voter decision making, but consultants matter in terms of campaign strategy and election outcomes. Campaign information has important effects on voters, but it is the campaign consultants in concert with the candidates who are the architects of the information delivered by campaigns. Several existing studies show relationships between hiring consultants and the total amount of campaign fundraising or the final proportion of the vote. For example, Herrnson (1992) shows that the presence of professional fundraisers significantly increases candidate fundraising success. In short, more fundraising consultants equal more money; and ample evidence exists regarding the importance of money to congressional election campaigns, including the ability to deter strong challengers (Box-Steffensmeier 1996), purchase campaign services (Herrnson 2004; Jacobson 2004), and impact the eventual outcome, especially for challengers (Jacobson 1990b, 1985, 1980, 1978).

Evidence also exists that consultants increase the percent of the vote candidates receive (Medvic 2001, 2000a and 1998; Medvic and Lenart 1997; Herrnson 2000b). Medvic and Lenart (1997) conduct analysis on all non-incumbent races in 1992 and find that even while controlling for campaign spending and quality of candidate, the mere presence of professional campaign consultants increases the share of the vote by 5 percentage points. Furthermore, they find that for each additional consultant hired, the vote share increases by an additional 2.5 percentage points. Most important, however, they find that all types of consultants do not create equal advantages. For example, employing a professional pollster produces the entire vote gain for challengers. Pollsters, direct mail specialists, and media consultants all have significant impact in open seat contests. General campaign consultants and professional fundraisers, however, have no

impact on vote share. In addition to their demonstrable impact on vote share, pollsters have long believed that their work increases the vote share for their candidate and in a close race can alter the outcome of the election.[3]

In addition to increasing the overall percentage of the vote for their clients, another reason pollsters are the most important professional campaign staff to employ is that the work of pollsters largely defines the work of the rest of the campaign staff. As noted above, while it has been shown that campaigns matter in part because they change the information available to voters, pollsters are critical architects of the information environment. Salmore and Salmore (1989, 115) note that the relationships among different kinds of campaign consultants have evolved in recent years such that media and direct-mail consultants take direction from the pollster regarding the general content of their material and who will be targeted. Hamilton (1995) labels pollsters as the "central nervous system" of the campaign and attributes the rise of campaign pollsters to the campaign's strategic center to changes in technology, especially the drop in cost of telephone polls. Additionally, Hamilton (1995, 177) argues that "one of the key functions of the polling firm . . . is to define the persuadables in order to pinpoint final targets for the campaign. The other key function is to determine which way the persuadables are moving and why" (cf. Bradshaw 1995; 2004). In sum, pollsters are an important group to study because what they do makes the most tangible difference compared to other

[3] Pollster Louis Harris contends, "In all, we would estimate that polls cannot change an election more than 3 to 4 percentage points, but since most elections hover around the 50-50 mark, we would be less than frank not to admit that they can affect the outcome. More accurately stated, a candidate using polls effectively can alter the outcome" (Harris 1963, 6).

consultants in election outcomes. They work at the roots of the campaign strategy, often directing the work of other consultants, because they possess the information other consultants depend on to run the campaign.

Data

This project studies polling in congressional campaigns relying on three principal sources of data. The first is a set of in-depth interviews with campaign pollsters as well as several current and former congressional campaign committee staff members. I conducted a total of 42 interviews during 2001 and 2002. The interviewing followed a traditional elite interviewing methodology using a set of topics and broad questions and following a relatively open format. The interviews are the principal source of data and analysis Chapters 4 and 5 and are also used to supplement the other chapters. More information on the elite interviews can be found in the appendices. Appendix A includes a discussion of sampling procedures, interviewing methodology, the representativeness of the sample, and information regarding the analysis and coding of the interviews. A copy of the interview protocol is provided as Appendix B, a list of people interviewed as Appendix C, and the form used to code information from the interviews as Appendix D. All but four of the interviews were taped and transcribed. Most of the interview subjects agreed to the interview on the record, and the rest when contacted later agreed that selected portions of the interview could be attributed to them. Because the interview subjects are listed in Appendix C, individual citations to the interviews are not included in the list of references.

The other two principal data sources for this project are quantitative. The first was compiled on candidates and campaigns for the 1998 election from a variety of

sources including Federal Election Commission expenditure data cleaned and compiled by the Campaign Study Group (CSG).[4] CSG provided itemized expenditure data for each candidate in the 1998 election cycle which was the most recent year available.[5] The CSG data also include a number of other variables identifying districts, candidate status, 1998 vote percentages, and more. These data were then combined with several other data sources for other candidate and district characteristics.[6] The other quantitative data source is the 1978 Congressional Campaign Study conducted by Edie Goldenberg and Michael Traugott (Goldenberg and Traugott 1984). Their study includes a preelection and postelection survey of campaign managers in the 86 contested races comprising the 108 congressional districts serving as primary sampling units in the 1978 American National Election Study. The interview data are combined with campaign finance data from 1978 to make it comparable to the 1998 data. The 1978 data are available from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research. Both quantitative data sets are presented and discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

---

[4] Since providing the data, the Campaign Study Group has dissolved and reemerged as Dwight L. Morris and Associates. For more information, see http://www.campaignfinanceanalysisproject.com/cfap_index.htm (accessed June 16, 2004).

[5] U.S. House candidates are now required to file electronically with the FEC so analysis of expenditure data should be even more readily available in the future. However, the other major advantage to the CSG data is the extensive cleaning undertaken on data that are often not cleanly reported to the FEC. This is particularly true when it comes to categorizing each expenditure.

[6] Peter Roybal of Congressional Quarterly, Paul Herrnson of the University of Maryland, and Scott Adler of the University of Colorado provided these data.

A Brief Description of Campaign Polling Techniques and Practices

Campaign polling comes in a variety of forms. To ease explanations in later chapters, it is useful at this point to give a brief explanation of the different types of campaign polls. They can best be distinguished by their overall purpose together with information about their timing, length, and methodology. Other sources provide additional detailed information about different types of campaign polls and are drawn upon in this section along with my interviews with pollsters (Delli Carpini and Williams 1994; Hamilton 1995; Hamilton and Beattie 1999; Johnson 2001; Shea and Burton 2001; Stonecash 2003; Young 1992). Five different types of polling are routinely used in political campaigns. These include benchmark, brushfire, exploratory, tracking, and panel surveys. Although not a polling method, focus groups and other qualitative methods are a sixth way for assessing public opinion in a campaign.

The *Benchmark Poll*, also sometimes called a baseline poll, is widely considered the one essential piece of research that every campaign that utilizes polling should conduct (Mellman et al. 1991). It is generally the longest and most complete of all the different types of campaign polls and is done early in the campaign planning stage. For most U.S. House campaigns, this could range from early in the election year to late spring or early summer. The length and timing depends on whether or not a candidate faces a serious primary challenge as well as the competitiveness of the general election, the resources available to pay for it, and whether or not the campaign is planning to begin large-scale communications with voters. The benchmark poll is a large contributor to overall campaign planning and strategy and is particularly useful in helping campaigns select issues to discuss, focus a campaign theme or message, and identify likely targets

for that message. As its name indicates, it is the baseline against which all subsequent research is compared to look for opinion change.

Because of its general importance to overall campaign planning and strategy, the benchmark poll is an essential poll for campaigns that conduct any polling. Democratic Pollster David Petts likened the benchmark survey to a routine physical exam in which a doctor checks your blood pressure, administers routine blood tests, and screens for other problems. Petts indicated that he recommends that all incumbents do a benchmark survey and run some advertising even if the benchmark results come back indicating the incumbent is in very good shape, "because it's the one opportunity you have every two years to create or build upon an impression for the voters." He returned to the medical analogy saying, "Just because you get a good bill of health doesn't mean the doctor is going to tell you not to exercise."[7]

Benchmark surveys contain a set of typical questions designed to assess the current standing of the race, potential campaign issues or themes, candidate and opponent strengths and weaknesses, the political context, candidate traits, and voter demographics. The current standing of the candidate and his or her opponent is measured in terms of the vote, favorability and name identification, positive and negative attributes, and especially key campaign issues or themes. Important issues are identified through questions such as those that ask respondents to state the "most important problem" facing the country, state, or local community. In addition, pollsters often draw upon their experience to craft messages based on current events at the national or local level that may be important to

[7] David Petts (Bennett, Petts, and Blumenthal), telephone interview by J. Quin Monson, February 18, 2002.

voters. Assessing candidate strengths and weaknesses often means that campaigns conduct extensive research on both candidates prior to the benchmark poll to discover both major accomplishments and potential vulnerabilities. These could include recorded votes in Congress, public statements, tax records, divorce proceedings or other potentially damaging personal information.

The information that is gathered is then distilled into a set of positive and negative statements about each candidate that are presented to voters to gauge their impact on support for each candidate. The survey may also include questions on the overall political context such as a right track/wrong track question or questions about the state of the economy. For incumbents, questions about candidate image or traits are often asked. These can include questions about which candidate is "a strong leader" or "gets things done." Benchmark surveys for challengers are more apt to focus on theme and message possibilities because they are typically unknown. Finally a broad set of voter demographic questions enable the campaign to identify and "segment" strong supporters, likely supporters, and most importantly "persuadable" voters who might be convinced to support the candidate. Depending on the resources available to the campaign, this survey will generally take between 15 to 25 minutes for respondents to complete.

The *Brushfire* poll is similar in content to a benchmark poll except it is much shorter. The benchmark survey is basically pared down to a few items that the campaign is emphasizing, and the measurement in the brushfire survey can be compared with the previous benchmark results to assess the effectiveness of the campaign communications. The brushfire survey is used to test new themes and message possibilities that emerge as the campaign unfolds. Typically, a campaign conducts a lengthy benchmark survey as

the campaign is being organized and developed and then conducts a shorter brushfire survey just before producing advertising. However, campaigns on limited budgets may conduct a single hybrid survey to conserve resources and serve the purposes of both. It may be conducted later in the campaign than the typical benchmark poll and have a length longer that the typical brushfire poll. Both the benchmark and the much shorter brushfire poll are the essential tools for the focus on issue representation in congressional campaigns that is the focus of Chapter 4.

Exploratory polls occur prior to benchmark surveys and are conducted by potential candidates who are "testing the waters" as they consider whether or not to declare their candidacy and enter a race. They are also sometimes called feasibility studies. Pollster Fred Yang indicated that while an exploratory poll has some content similarities with a benchmark poll, it tends to not be nearly as comprehensive in part because it is usually done very quickly. According to Yang, the purpose of the exploratory poll is usually more along the lines of answering the question, "Can you win?" instead of, "How do you win?"[8] The latter is clearly the purpose of the benchmark survey. Exploratory surveys are focused more on assessing the standing of the race, the overall political context, and especially the strength of the incumbent. This last point is especially true in cases in which exploratory polling is used in U.S. House races because most of the exploratory polling for House races is done for potential challengers to incumbents. Sometimes this polling is conducted by the potential candidates, but more

[8] Fred Yang (Garin/Hart/Yang Research Group, interview with J. Quin Monson, February 7, 2002, Washington, D.C.

often than not it is the party campaign committees that do this work. The content and interpretation of exploratory polling is covered in detail in Chapter 5.

Tracking polls are conducted during the campaign while the campaign is communicating with voters. They are most common during the closing days or weeks of a campaign and are typically very short, only a few questions in length. They are usually used in close races to gauge the horse race and a few other leading indicators, such as candidate favorability and one or two campaign messages, as well as a small set of voter demographics. Nowadays, most tracking consists of a rolling cross section sample in which the interviewing from several nights is combined. If a three-night rolling sample is used, for example, then on the fourth night of interviewing, the interviews from the first night are dropped when the fourth night is added. Discerning true change from noise in such surveys can be difficult, but some new filtering tools have made the process easier (Green and Gerber 1998). The major purpose of tracking polls is to detect whether or not the campaign strategy is working. This means carefully assessing the dynamics of the ballot test between the two candidates. Blakeman (1995) suggests that a tracking poll is "most useful when measuring tactics against a win coalition model." This means that the campaign will use the benchmark survey and other planning information to set goals in order to reach a winning coalition of 50 percent plus 1 one vote. These goals consist of targets for specific demographic groups of voters needed to build the winning coalition. For example, a Republican candidate running in a Democratic-leaning district may need to win at least 25 percent of Democrats in order to achieve a victory. A tracking survey would allow the campaign to know how close they are to putting together the winning coalition and what groups need extra attention. Campaigns with plentiful resources that

are spending a lot of money to communicate with voters are most likely to use tracking polls. This is especially true if television adverting is a major component of the campaign. The conventional wisdom is that the effects of television advertising will show up rather quickly in a tracking poll while grass roots or direct-mail efforts will take longer to manifest, making tracking polls not worth the expense. For this reason, tracking polls are generally not a high priority in many House races, but are commonly used in competitive statewide elections.

Panel surveys are a common technique in academic work but are less common in campaign polling. When they are done, they are sometimes called "Panel Back" surveys because the respondents are interviewed at one point in time and then re-contacted and re-interviewed days or weeks later. Oftentimes respondents are asked many of the same questions so any change in response can be analyzed against campaign events. Panel surveys are a powerful tool: Instead of relying on the analysis of change at the aggregate level, change can be examined at the individual level because respondents are asked the same questions at two or more points in time. All other methods rely on analyzing change in two cross sections of respondents. Panel surveys are rarely used in House campaigns, in part because they are very expensive to conduct. Respondents drop out of the panel from one wave to the next, driving up the cost of maintaining a panel large enough to be representative. There are also concerns about "panel effects" that occur when survey respondents are sensitized to political events because of their participation in the survey, thus altering responses to questions in subsequent panel waves in ways that make the panel unrepresentative of voters.

Focus Groups are increasingly being used for all levels of campaigns. Focus groups consist of small groups of about a dozen people who are led in a discussion by a focus group moderator. They are usually recruited so that the group is quite homogeneous, sharing demographic or attitudinal characteristics or both (e.g. women age 35-44 who are undecided in their vote choice for Congress). The homogeneity typical in focus groups aids the group dynamic by helping participants feel more comfortable to share their views among strangers as well as providing interaction between group members. It also helps the pollster to focus on specific demographic groups that are thought to be important to the campaign's success. The strength of focus groups is that they allow participants to freely express themselves so that attitudes can be examined with more depth and context than a traditional sample survey allows. As a consequence, however, their weakness is that information obtained from focus groups cannot be generalized with confidence to any population. If sufficient resources are available, they can be conducted in the early stages of a campaign, before the benchmark poll, in order to aid the campaign in the construction of the benchmark survey questionnaire. Focus group respondents will often provide useful information about how an incumbent candidate is perceived in language that can be incorporated into a survey instrument and tested with a representative sample. The same can be done with potential campaign themes or issues (Mellman et al. 1991).

An even more common use is to convene focus groups after the benchmark in order to test advertising. Some high tech focus groups use Audience Response System technology that gives participants hand-held dials to record their response, positive or negative on the dial, to a campaign commercial as it plays, allowing the researcher to

know precisely what part of the ad produced the response (Maullin and Quirk 1995). More commonly in House races, participants are simply probed for their verbal reactions to advertising. Pollsters speak of the difficulty faced by media consultants of translating a poll-tested message into the language and visual imagery of a television advertisement. Using focus groups can help campaigns avoid colossal mistakes or identify unintended messages.

For example, much of my interviewing was conducted during the summer of 2001 just after a hotly contested special election took place in Virginia's Fourth Congressional District between Republican Randy Forbes and Democrat Louise Lucas. Several interview subjects related that one of the messages that Forbes supporters tested in their polling was the effect of some votes that Lucas had taken against requiring Virginia public school students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.[9] The issue tested very well in polling, but campaign advisers were worried about whether or not the issue would really be effective with voters. So they tested it in some focus groups with women voters, one of the main targets for the Forbes campaign. The focus group helped reaffirm that the pledge issue worked well. In addition, pollsters learned that it worked well in sequence with other issues. As Glen Bolger related, "When we went negative, the first message was taxes because everybody believes Democrats are bad on taxes. Then we went with crime and welfare. Then we took it up the next level which was the pledge and the

[9] Lucas voted against versions of the bill that would have allowed students to be suspended if they didn't participate and voted for a later version without that provision (Whitley 2001).

flag."[10] By delivering messages about Lucas's votes on taxes, welfare, and crime first, the advertising about the pledge of allegiance became even more believable. Focus groups are a powerful research tool when used in concert with polling and campaign advertising.

Chapter Overview

Central to my research is the question of how polling information has altered the nature of modern congressional campaigns. This includes the factors that predict poll use by candidates and campaigns, the role of polling data in the candidate emergence and recruitment process, and the consequences of opinion research on issue representation by candidates. What follows below is a chapter by chapter summary of this dissertation.

Chapter 2

This chapter provides theoretical unity to the empirical work that follows by presenting the idea that campaign polling serves to reduce the uncertainty of campaign decision making. The concept of uncertainty is explored with an eye toward describing the variation in uncertainty faced by congressional campaigns as well as the variety of methods campaigns can employ to reduce uncertainty. Polling is not the only way to reduce uncertainty, but it is broadly accepted as an accurate means for assessing voter attitudes and anticipating voter behavior. When done well, polling is the information source that best reduces the uncertainty associated with running a congressional campaign because it increases the strategic information available to campaign decision makers and enables them to more efficiently allocate limited campaign resources.

[10] Glen Bolger (Public Opinion Strategies), interview with J. Quin Monson, August 1, 2001, Alexandria, Virginia.

Chapter 3

In this chapter I draw on the research of Margaret Conway (1984) to explore the possible factors affecting polling use in congressional campaigns using campaign expenditure data from the 1998 election.[11] These possible influential factors can be grouped into three categories: characteristics of the campaign, characteristics of the candidate, and characteristics of the constituency. The characteristics of the campaign or the nature of the contest include the competitiveness of the race, the presence or absence of an incumbent, and the available campaign resources. These are all significant predictors of polling use. Characteristics of the candidate include the candidate's status as an incumbent, challenger, or seeking an open seat as well as prior political experience, age, education level, and partisanship. Incumbents and open seat candidates use significantly more polling than challengers. Political experience is positively related to polling use if the experience included prior elected office. The candidate's age and education are not related to polling use. However, Democratic candidates were significantly more likely to use polling in 1998, a departure from earlier years. Characteristics of the constituency include district geographical size, the diversity of the district voters (in terms of characteristics like partisanship, past voting patterns, race, and income, district mobility, and any mid-decade redistricting. Only the long-term partisanship of the district and redistricting had significant effects on polling use.

[11] Conway does a superb job of outlining the possible influences on the quantity of campaign polling used, but does not test her hypotheses with data.

Chapter 4

Press accounts and conventional wisdom suggest that politicians and other leaders pander to the public by "embracing the whims of public opinion rather than stand firmly for the public interest" (Simon 2003, 2). For congressional candidates the most extreme form of pandering comes when candidates change their issue positions to more closely approximate the views of voters. In this chapter I draw upon the work of Jacobs and Shapiro (2000) who argue that politicians do not "pander," or use polling data to adjust their issue positions toward the center of the public's opinion distribution. Instead, they argue that politicians use polling to create "crafted talk," figuring out how best to present and sell their own favored proposals to the public. While they suggest that approaching elections can alter behavior of elected officials on issues where their efforts toward opinion change have been unsuccessful, their focus is on the governing context, not the electoral context. Unlike day-to-day governing, campaigns run on a fixed schedule and gaining the timely attention of potential supporters is both difficult and essential. The electoral context is different because as Mayhew (1974) suggests, all other goals must necessarily be subordinated to winning the election.

Using the foundation laid by Jacobs and Shapiro for the governing context, I apply the theoretical approach of Kingdon (1989) on voting decisions in Congress to candidate position taking in congressional elections. The level of agreement between the candidate and the public as well as the intensity of each opinion is taken into account to model all of the possible actions that candidates can take in a campaign. In addition to changing their positions on issues, a second way in which candidates may pander to the electorate is in the selection of the issues to address in the campaign. In my interviews

with pollsters, using polling for issue selection was asserted to be far more common than using polling to determine issue positions. In other words, candidates rarely change their positions to match constituents. Instead, they pick and choose what to focus on—choosing to downplay or ignore policy items on which they do not agree with constituents.

Chapter 5

One abiding truth about congressional elections is the importance of candidate quality to the level of competitiveness and the eventual outcome. In this chapter I examine the decisions of potential candidates about whether or not to seek office as well as the recruiting efforts of each party's campaign committees and the role of polling in both processes to reduce the uncertainty of the decision-making process. A critical factor influencing the decision to run cited in all the current literature is the candidate's self-perceived chance of winning. Given the potential for polling information to provide information crucial to a potential candidate's decision-making process, one would expect that polling would figure prominently in the candidate emergence literature. However, a review of the candidate emergence literature reveals a lack of evidence for an influence of polling on a candidate's decision to enter a given race.

In Chapter 5, I use the interviews to discuss the frequency of "exploratory polling," or polling work done prior to a potential candidate's decision to seek office, and the role it plays in candidate emergence and recruitment. Contrary to much of the candidate emergence literature, the evidence from my interviews suggests that polling plays a significant part in a small subset of candidate emergence and recruitment efforts. These include House races targeted by the National Republican Congressional

Committee (NRCC) and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC). The NRCC and DCCC routinely target a small set of incumbent districts held by the other party for candidate recruitment efforts. They frequently conduct exploratory polling in these battleground House districts in order to make decisions about incumbent vulnerability and also to persuade reluctant potential candidates that they have a chance to win and later to persuade donors, especially Political Action Committees and other members of Congress, to contribute to the nominee. Potential candidates themselves are less likely to commission exploratory polling for a variety of reasons explored in the chapter, but those that do are often current office holders who have much to lose by declaring their candidacy for a different office.

Chapter 6

The purpose of this research is primarily empirical. However, there are also underlying normative aspects to the research. Chapter 6 concludes with a discussion of some of the normative implications and a discussion of the importance of political polling to democracy and especially elections. While there are numerous and significant reservations about political polling, some are unfounded, and others are mitigated by good methodological practice. In other words, if political polling is done *well* it enhances democratic elections because it reinforces the connection between voters and candidates. Candidates rarely pander by using polling to adopt issue positions, but they do use polling to choose what to emphasize as they communicate with voters. Polling allows increased information for candidates who wish to address issues of importance to voters.

In Chapter 6, I also address future research questions arising from this project. These include a brief discussion of polling in congressional versus presidential contexts as well as the likelihood of differences between polling for House versus Senate campaigns. Another topic of discussion in Chapter 6 is a review of the relationship between polling and competition in congressional campaigns and the possibility that polling is underutilized by a small group of congressional candidates that could utilize the information in order to make the election outcome closer and increase the overall competitiveness of congressional elections.

The growth in the political consulting industry, including the rise of political polling, over the past several decades can be regarded as the emergence of a new institution of American democracy. Understanding both the empirical and normative implications of this rise is an important objective for political analysis.

CHAPTER 2

UNCERTAINTY, INFORMATION, AND POLLING

The literature on public opinion and voting behavior has used productively the concept of uncertainty when discussing the decisions that everyday citizens make about politics. Some of this literature focuses on the uncertainty that voters feel about candidates and their issue positions and the effects of this uncertainty on candidate evaluations, vote choice, and issue voting (Alvarez 1997; Alvarez and Franklin 1994; Bartels 1986; Franklin 1991). Another conceptualization, from the political psychology literature, focuses on the concept of uncertainty in the context of how survey respondents treat conflicting information or "considerations" when formulating answers to survey questions (Tourangeau and Rasinski 1988; Zaller 1992; Zaller and Feldman 1992). One unifying conclusion that can be drawn from this body of work is that limited information and uncertainty do not keep voters or survey respondents from making choices.

Furthermore, these choices can be considered reasonable even with the lack of information or certainty (Popkin 1991). As Lupia and McCubbins indicate, "limited information need not prevent people from making reasoned choices" (1998, 4).[12] Other research addresses the concept of uncertainty in the context of elite decision making.

[12] It is important to note that uncertainty and limited information often go hand-in-hand, but not always. Uncertainty can also result from too much information.

Much of this literature focuses on presidential, legislative, or bureaucratic decision making but has more recently begun to focus on political candidates and campaign decisions (Burden 2003).

In congressional campaigns the best data to inform strategic decisions often come from polling. However, as will be demonstrated here and in subsequent chapters, there is considerable variation in the amount of polling commissioned as well as the quality of data and the uses to which they are put. Furthermore, polling is not the only source of strategic information available to campaigns. In fact, polling is not even the only possible source of information about public opinion. Campaigns also seek public opinion information from a range of sources including aggregate voting and demographic data, newspaper accounts, political elites, and informal contact with voters (Herrnson 2004, 195–98). While many of these non-polling methods provide less precise data on public opinion, the information obtained may be good enough for the purposes of many campaigns. In a congressional campaign, additional information may either be unneeded given the electoral context and the quality of alternative sources, or it may be so costly that the ability of a campaign to obtain it is out of reach (see Stonecash 2003).

However, many campaigns choose to conduct polling, for a variety of strategic purposes. Prior to campaigning, prospective candidates and political parties use polling to inform their pre-candidacy and recruitment decision making. Campaigns use polling to choose and shape campaign messages about issues and candidate image characteristics. Polling also helps campaigns target their messages to potential supporters and motivate them to turn out on Election Day. Finally, polling helps campaigns assess the effectiveness of these communications and fine tune their presentation.

Given the diversity of uses for polling in a congressional campaign, I present in this chapter a theory that underlies how polling is used in congressional campaigns. I also briefly present evidence drawn from my interviews with pollsters about their perceptions of the major uses of polling in a campaign. The theory underlying how polling is used is based on two features of congressional elections that drive how information is obtained and used. First, congressional campaigns are faced with varying degrees of uncertainty during the electoral cycle. Second, congressional campaigns have available a wide variety of information, including polling, to help allay this uncertainty. This chapter builds upon the literature about information and uncertainty to address the question of how candidates and their campaigns address the challenges posed by the uncertainty of electoral politics. These challenges include what decisions campaigns make, how the necessary information is obtained to make those decisions, and what role polling plays in the information-gathering process. When done well, polling is the information source that best reduces the uncertainty associated with running a congressional campaign because it increases the strategic information available to campaign decision makers.

Uncertainty and Information in Congressional Elections

Uncertainty pervades congressional elections. A great deal of uncertainty by incumbent congressional candidates is one of the first things that Fenno takes notice of in his landmark study of U.S. House members in their districts. Fenno's observation that a member of Congress's "perception of a reelection constituency is fraught with uncertainty" is equally true of non-incumbent candidates as well (Fenno 1978, 10). Fenno's list of sources of uncertainty about the composition of the reelection

constituency, or those that a candidate perceives will vote for him or her, includes the ever changing demographic composition of the district, redistricting, and the political experience and skill of the opponent (Fenno 1978, 8–18).

Burden (2003, 6) helps to clarify the concept of uncertainty by arguing that uncertainty should be thought of as an "amount or a degree rather than a quality that is merely present or absent." If uncertainty is "an amount or degree," then all candidates face different sorts of calculations. Maestas (2003) makes clear that a critical question candidates face is accurately estimating the outcome of the election. She assumes that all candidates are able to give a subjective estimate of the probability of being elected and that there is a random element to these estimates so that if asked the same question repeatedly, candidates would likely offer slightly different answers even though the circumstances of the race did not change. In this way Maestas distinguishes between the concepts of "risk" and "uncertainty." Risk is the probability that a candidate will win or lose. Uncertainty is the variance of the subjective estimate of risk. She then clarifies the importance of this distinction:

> Distinguishing risk from uncertainty can cause incumbents to act as if they face great risk. . . . . Uncertainty might cause risk averse decision makers to overweight lower end probabilities and make decisions based on the "worst case scenario." . . . This implies that incumbents who are uncertain would have lower "effective" estimates of their chances of reelection. This view is consistent with the anecdotal evidence that "safe" incumbents often still feel insecure (Maestas 2003, 191).

Jacobson (2004) extends this theme by showing that even incumbents in "safe" seats (defined as winning 60 percent or more in the previous election) have reason to feel insecure about their electoral prospects. He builds on the work of Thomas Mann to show that while the vote margins of incumbents have increased during the past several decades,

this increase in the vote margin was also accompanied by an increase in the heterogeneity of interelection vote swing, or the difference in the incumbent's winning percentage from one election to the next (Jacobson 2004, 28–31). While the vote margins of incumbents increased, so did the standard deviation of the average difference in the incumbent's winning percentage, and more so-called "safe" incumbents were defeated in their bids for reelection. In other words, while the risk (or probability of losing) decreased, the uncertainty (or variance of the risk) increased. It is the increasing uncertainty by congressional incumbents with previously large margins of victory that Mann labels "unsafe at any margin" (Mann 1978). The level of uncertainty felt by congressional candidates can vary dynamically over time. Speaking of trends that have developed in congressional elections over time, Jacobson notes, "Uncertainty also breeds caution, and the grounds for uncertainty have widened in recent years. Party loyalty has diminished, leaving electorates less predictable, more volatile; a good showing in one election has become a weaker guarantee of success in the next than it was in the past" (Jacobson 1993, 120; see also Jacobson 1990, 15–23).

Even for candidates who have experienced recent electoral success, uncertainty can result from past personal experience. Fenno suggests, "Once having gone through a testing election, early or late, a member will entertain the possibility of its recurrence forever. Even when he is being spared, it will be happening to someone he knows" (1978, 13). The bottom line is that whether an incumbent or not, all candidates face varying levels of uncertainty about their probability of victory as well as about the best strategy for increasing that probability in any given campaign.

Congressional candidates are faced with varying types of information to help reduce the uncertainty they sense about their electoral outcomes. The best information must be timely and accurate. However, campaigns must weigh the cost of gathering additional information against the expense and time required to gather it. Generally speaking, Lupia and McCubbins conclude, "Information is useful only if it helps avoid costly mistakes" (1998, 6). In other words, campaigns frequently make important decisions based on limited information and do not seek additional information because the information is costly to gather and the "costs of paying attention to it exceed the value of its use" (Lupia and McCubbins 1998, 6–7).

As indicated above, the concept of uncertainty has been used in the public opinion and voting literature to refer mostly to the ability of citizens to make rational decisions based on limited information or when they are uncertain. My purpose here is to turn this around to ask, "What information do campaigns need in order to make rational decisions?" In the campaign context, a rational decision is one that maximizes the probability of winning for the minimum cost. A rational decision effectively reduces that risk in the most efficient way possible.

Campaigns do not need perfect information. In a close contest they need just sufficient information to make better strategic decisions than those made by the opposition. A few additional points about the timing and quality of the information needs of congressional campaigns are worth making. First, campaigns need information quickly. Because Election Day occurs at a fixed point in time, the information must be timely in order to be useful at all. Second, campaigns do not need the same information about every potential voter. In other words, all voters are not of equal value to a

campaign. Campaigns realize that they cannot win every vote; instead they seek the swing or persuadable voters (Bradshaw 2004; Shea and Burton 2001). They need the most precise information about these voters and how to influence their behavior in order to make effective campaign decisions.

Polling Information and Increased Certainty

Survey research has taken hold as a strategic tool in election campaigns while at the same time becoming an important research tool for government agencies, various academic disciplines, and private industry (Converse 1987). Making the case that survey research has been a powerful tool of political science research, Henry Brady makes an analogy between survey research in political science and "telescopes in astronomy, microscopes in biology, and seismic, weather, and environmental sensors in the geo-sciences." He further makes the case for the utility of surveys in political science by observing that surveys "provide the gold standard for measuring citizen opinions that are at the heart of democratic deliberation" (Brady 2000, 47). For candidates and elected officials interested in gauging public opinion, what surveys provide over alternative methods is increased precision, quantitative estimates, and the ability to estimate the attitudes and behavior of specific subgroups in a structured way with the appearance of accuracy and legitimacy (Herbst 1993). In addition, technological advances in computers, the widespread use of the telephone, and the acceptance and implementation of Random Digit Dialing (RDD) sampling techniques have made the use of telephone polling both cost effective and accessible (Lavrakas 1993).

When done well, polling is the information source that best increases the strategic information available to campaign decision makers. Polling can identify potential

methods of reducing electoral risk and at the same time reduce the uncertainty associated with choosing between those methods. It can identify a strategy that is both effective and efficient. Public opinion polling is capable of providing very accurate information to the point of reducing uncertainty about the campaign to negligible levels. This point is most forcefully made by John Geer, who asserts,

> The advent of the public opinion poll represents a significant enough change in the kind of information available to politicians that it becomes reasonable now to distinguish (theoretically) between "complete" and "incomplete" information. (Geer 1996, 46)

Geer does not assume that polling actually provides complete information. However, he argues that it is a vast improvement and the advent of polling represents a significant advance over previous methods of estimating public opinion (Geer 1996, 50). Elsewhere, Geer and Goorha echo this assertion: "Have polls changed the level of uncertainty? Our answer is a resounding yes. Surveys, despite their flaws, represent a significant improvement in the quality of information available to politicians" (Geer and Goorha 2003, 143). The increasing presence and importance of polling at all levels of campaigns speaks volumes about the credibility that most candidates give to the idea that polling offers an accurate assessment of public opinion.

According to Geer, polling is a superior method for assessing public opinion and reducing the uncertainty in a campaign for three reasons. First, unlike the alternatives, polling provides direct measurement and unfiltered assessment of public opinion. Second, alternative estimates of public opinion are likely to be less accurate not only because the measurement is not direct but also because the methods lack precision. Polling allows researchers to be very specific when asking questions about particular

topics and to get answers directly from the people. Third, polling allows for a "less biased reading" of public opinion. In other words, there is less room to rationalize an interpretation of the data because of personal predispositions (Geer 1996, 51–54; cf. Geer and Goorha 2003).

Polling increases the information level of candidates and campaigns, and it reduces the uncertainty surrounding a number of important decisions. It is also the means for gaining the information to make strategically better decisions. Connecticut Senator Joseph Lieberman provides a good example of how personal experience led him to conclude that polling provides critical campaign information. Lieberman's political career included losing his first general election campaign for Congress in 1980. Lieberman hired Mark Penn and Doug Schoen, who later worked for President Clinton, to do polling for the campaign. The last campaign poll was taken three weeks before the election and showed Lieberman ahead by 19 points but with about one-third of the respondents still undecided. After the poll, the Republican opponent, Larry DeNardis, began an onslaught of television advertising. Lieberman's uncertainty about the race heightened. He writes that he "became anxious" but that he followed the advice of the media consultants and stayed the course with his chosen strategy, deciding against any additional polling to assess the changing campaign environment. After losing the election, he admitted that his "message of proven leadership and closeness to the Democratic establishment was jarringly out of sync with the public mood." One of the lessons learned from the loss was, "A candidate must keep polling right up until the end, and be prepared to conduct the campaign accordingly" (Lieberman 2000, 59–60).

The Purpose of Campaign Polls

Campaigns need good information to make the most effective and efficient decisions. Polling in a congressional election campaign can be used for a variety of purposes. The numerous possibilities include aiding the campaign in the issue focus of the campaign, determining where to focus campaign efforts geographically in the district, allocating resources (both time and money), evaluating campaign advertising, evaluating a candidate's or opponent's strengths and weaknesses, determining who will be targeted by campaign communications, deciding what type of communications will most effectively reach potential supporters, and finally assessing how the campaign is faring in terms of the "horse race" with the opposition. Most of these potential uses have in common that they are focused on campaign strategy. Hamilton (1995) discusses the move of political polling to the center of campaign strategizing over time, noting that it is in part because the pollster has access to the best information as well as the ability to interpret it correctly. Richard Wirthlin (n.d.) gives an additional reason for this rise in importance of political pollsters: "In no small part, this was due to the fact that the pollster was exposed intimately to thirty or more campaigns in every election cycle…[in contrast to the campaign manager who] might at best, be acquainted with three to five campaigns." Thus, "the pollster was put in a position to see the forest *and* the trees of a campaign more clearly, in some cases, than the campaign manager."

In his summary of political polling, Hamilton (1995, 168) identifies two "critical questions" that the political pollster helps to answer for a campaign. The first one is, "What is the most persuasive *message*(s) for this campaign?" These messages can emphasize issues or candidate qualities. Hamilton's second critical question is, "What is

the definition of our key *target* group of voters?" In my research, all my interview subjects addressed this subject as well. Republican pollster Bruce Blakeman summarized it well by saying, "The [campaign] strategy should all be driven from data provided from the poll."[13] His statement was representative of many of the pollsters in the interviews.

Table 2.1 includes a summary of responses coded from the interviews to a question about the most important function of a poll in a campaign. Multiple responses were tallied and the data represent the percentage of respondents that mentioned each possible function. Using polling to enable the campaign to better target voters was mentioned by 76 percent of the pollsters, followed closely by using the poll to select issues to focus on in the campaign (74 percent) and using the poll to help develop the campaign message (71 percent). Democratic pollster Dave Beattie summarized well: "The one thing polling should do is basically answer the question 'Who do we talk to about what?' and provide focus for the campaign." He continued by saying, "You [the candidate] believe in X. There are some voters that also believe in X, but there are also voters that believe in Y. We only have so much money to spend. Let's not talk about gun control to gun owners. Suburban women care about it, so let's make sure we're sending mail to suburban women."[14] Republican pollster Chris Wilson shared a similar view: "The poll should be the utility that shows you what issues are most important to

[13] Bruce Blakeman (formerly with Wirthlin Worldwide), interview by J. Quin Monson, February 7, 2002, Washington, D.C.

[14] Dave Beattie (Hamilton Beattie Research), telephone interview by J. Quin Monson, March 6, 2002.

voters and shows how to communicate those issues to the voters, and then shows you in what areas both demographically and geographically to communicate those issues."[15]

There is a clear break in the distribution of responses after the first three with relatively even proportions mentioning using polling to assess candidate strengths and weaknesses (58 percent) and opponent strengths and weaknesses (50 percent) followed by using the poll to assess the "horse race" (47 percent). Finally a number of different responses fell into the "other" category including general comments about candidate image, overall campaign strategy, and several mentions of fundraising.

Similar results are reflected when the data are coded by the single most important function of a poll as mentioned by the pollsters. Table 2.2 contains a summary of these responses. When asked to name the single most important function, 29 percent said selecting the issues to focus on in a campaign, 21 percent said campaign message development, and 18 percent said voter targeting. The other possibilities were far behind. A catch-all "other" category included several mentions about overall strategy while 11 percent did not name a single most important function.

In both Table 2.1 and Table 2.2 it is especially noteworthy that assessing the "horse race" was not among the top reasons for conducting a campaign poll. This is in direct contrast to most media-sponsored polls, where the horse race question often the receives the most attention (Asher 2004, 117-120; Asher 1992, 273-278; Broh 1980; Holley 1991) although this trend may have declined somewhat in recent years among news outlets practicing "public journalism" (Meyer and Potter 2000). Typical responses

[15] Chris Wilson (Wilson Research Strategies), telephone interview by J. Quin Monson, February 15, 2002.

included Republican pollster Kellyanne Conway who said, "The primary use of a poll should not be to tell you whether you're going to win or lose. The primary use of a poll should tell you how you can win and how you can lose."[16] Glen Bolger summarized it by saying that polling is used "primarily to help make smarter decisions about what to do in the campaign."[17] However, as Doug Usher noted, "Generally the candidate is most concerned about where he or she is in the race and we are most concerned about strategic guidance."[18] Thus, even in campaign polls, the horse race question has important secondary uses because the candidates are generally very interested and also because these numbers are useful when private campaign polls are released to drive media expectations and fundraising, as indicated in several of the interviews.

In order to effectively persuade potential supporters to back their candidate and then to motivate them to turn out, congressional campaigns need to have information about voter demographics. This includes where voters live, as well as their gender, age, income, education level, and especially their ideological and partisan affiliations. The demographic information, when paired with information about vote choice, enables a campaign to accurately characterize likely supporters, opponent's likely supporters, and the block of undecided voters (Bradshaw 2004; Shea and Burton 2001). All of this information serves to aid a campaign by reducing the uncertainty it has about the

---

[16] Kellyanne Conway (The Polling Company), interview by J. Quin Monson, August 15, 2001, Washington, D.C.

[17] Glen Bolger (Public Opinion Strategies), interview by J. Quin Monson, August 1, 2001, Alexandria, Virginia.

[18] Doug Usher (The Mellman Group), interview by J. Quin Monson, August 2, 2001, Washington, D.C.

distribution of voter preferences. In Hamilton's words, polling seeks to answer the following: "In order to win, what must be communicated directly to which group of voters (most of whom are not seeking the information) with a limited budget?" (Hamilton 1995, 169). Finally, as Senator Lieberman's anecdote illustrates, frequent campaign polling can assess the changes levels of support from subgroups of voters over time, enabling the campaign to make necessary adjustments.

Targeting also reduces uncertainty about the allocation of campaign resources. Dave Beattie said that polling is a way to "focus resources where the resources are going to be the most effective."[19] A similar view was articulated by Geoff Garin, who described the purpose of polling: "To help campaigns use their scarce resources as efficiently as possible . . . the two scarce resources being their money and the attention of voters. . . . Campaigns have myriads of choices and we try to help them make the most cost-effective and cost-efficient ones."[20] Because time, voters' attention spans, and campaign resources are limited, campaigns can use polling to reduce the uncertainty about the ways they should communicate with voters.

Polling reduces uncertainty and increases quality of information available to other campaign actors as well. For example, polling can provide information that may reduce the uncertainty of potential candidates in their decisions about whether or not to run for Congress. Similarly, polling can play a role in decisions about candidate recruitment at each party's congressional campaign committee. Likewise, polling information can help

---

[19] Dave Beattie interview.

[20] Geoff Garin (Garin-Hart-Yang Research Group), telephone interview by J. Quin Monson, March 1, 2002, Washington, D.C.

identify races in which to target party committee or interest group resources. Neither the parties or interest groups are interested in expending limited resources on a campaign that is likely to lose (Magleby and Monson 2004). These possibilities are discussed in detail in Chapter 5. The same polling information can be circulated among political elites and used to reduce the uncertainty associated with making campaign contributions. Pollsters often draw up brief "PAC Memos" for the party committees that are then circulated in the PAC community as a way to solicit campaign contributions.

Aside from the resources to pay for it, the amount of polling commissioned by a campaign strongly depends on the level of uncertainty that it can tolerate. The biggest factor in this tolerance for uncertainty is the level of competition faced by the campaign. Candidates in marginal districts who are facing an experienced and well-funded opponent are likely to be in the closest races in which decisions are more critical. The need for the best information available means that polling is a critical resource.

Limitations of time and money help determine the quality and volume of information that can be processed in a campaign with polling. It is helpful to compare academic survey research and the study of elections to campaign polling. When academics study elections and voting behavior, there is a high value placed on doing so with precision and accuracy. This translates into a survey process designed to measure scores of potentially influential variables and to do so by minimizing the "Total Survey Error" (Groves 1989; Lavrakas 1993). The Total Survey Error (TSE) paradigm that has been adopted by many academic survey researchers is explicitly a cost-benefit approach. Throughout his book, Groves (1989) repeatedly refers to the tradeoffs involved in reducing survey error (a benefit) in relation to the costs involved. Academic surveys and

election analysis also face relatively few time constraints. Thus, in comparison to a typical political poll, an academic survey features a long questionnaire, a field period of days or weeks, and analysis that can lag months or even years after the election is over.

Political polling, in contrast to academic survey research, takes a satisficing approach. While political pollsters are concerned with accuracy, a more important question is, "When is the information good enough?" Political pollsters need the information immediately, especially when a deadline looms, so pursuing more precise estimates takes a back seat to simply identifying and rank ordering the best strategic options. Chris Wilson, in describing a decision to use a measurement strategy that was not optimal but was less costly than alternatives, conceded that "the problem with having paying clients is they can't always afford to do it the best way."[21] The satisficing approach is necessary because political pollsters are faced with three major and interrelated constraints on their ability to collect and process information:

1. Complexity. There are an infinite number of combinations of characteristics among any set of voters. Only a finite number of these characteristics can be measured and analyzed. In addition, voting behavior can be quite complex. The academic study of voting behavior using sample surveys has moved forward for over five decades, but often what academics think they know can only be summarized by complex multivariate models that are formulated *after* each election. In contrast, campaigns must make strategic decisions *before* the election. The ability to gather, simplify, and analyze data accurately in a complex

[21] Chris Wilson interview.

campaign environment is extremely difficult. Furthermore, the analysis has to be simplified and presented to non-specialists. As Brian Tringali told me, "I just tell [the client] what time it is. They don't want to know how the watch is made up."[22]

2. Limited Time. Election Day occurs at a fixed point in time. Thus, political pollsters face a limited amount of time to figure our how to communicate the campaign message to voters. Furthermore, because campaigns are dynamic events, data quickly lose their value as new events occur.
3. Resources. Collecting complex data in a limited amount of time requires resources, especially money. Most campaigns have limited budgets with a fixed proportion allocated to research and polling. This is usually between 5 to 10 percent of the overall campaign budget (Mellman et al. 1991).

In some cases, campaigns and candidates can obtain information that is accurate enough with little or no polling and make adequate strategic campaign decisions. However, the use of polling increases when the election is competitive and the stakes are high. This point will be demonstrated in Chapter 3 by examining House campaign spending data which show that the more competitive a race is, the more the campaign is likely to use polling.

With a limited supply of resources available to attain information, an important question for many campaigns is when should resources be allocated to get information? There are various stages during a campaign when polling can provide important strategic

[22] Brian Tringali (The Tarrance Group), interview by J. Quin Monson, August 13, 2001, Alexandria, Virginia.

information. For example, as discussed in Chapter 5, polling information can provide information in pre-candidacy decisions about whether or not to run for office. Potential candidates rarely use polling in their decision-making process. Why? Because in most cases, the pollsters report that the potential candidates are able to garner adequate information from other sources to make the decision. The bottom line is that if a person is already determined to run for office, why does he or she need to spend money on polling? The exception is for potential candidates who already hold a public office. In their case, the cost of giving up their current office to pursue a higher one often pushes them to commission polling to help them more precisely estimate their chances.

Candidate recruitment polls commissioned by congressional campaign committees, on the other hand, are regularly used in the candidate recruitment process in certain targeted districts. The party campaign committees use other information sources to make an initial list of potential "target" races, but they turn to polling to test the strength of existing incumbents and the viability of potential challengers as they recruit candidates to run and make allocation decisions for their campaign activities. Once an incumbent is on the target list and polling confirms viability, it is in the party's best interest to spend resources to recruit aggressively the strongest possible challenger. The information from polling can be quite persuasive to a reluctant potential candidate. If the party can identify a candidate and strategy to win a race, the additional cost of polling is relatively cheap compared to the millions that might be wasted with an incorrect decision.[23]

[23] Even with a substantial amount of polling information, congressional campaign committees can still make allocation mistakes. For example, in 2002 the National

When enough resources exist in a campaign, polling data can be plentiful. However, as Lupia and McCubbins point out, "Information is useful only if it helps avoid costly mistakes" (1998, 6). In other words, more polling, to be useful, must provide some kind of instrumental benefit; otherwise, it should not be done. Generally pollsters do not recommend collecting data until it can be strategically useful. In other words, with the exception of early polls for candidate recruitment and initial planning, the pollsters themselves recommend that campaigns forego polling until just before they actively begin to communicate with voters.

More polling data will usually act to reduce uncertainty about strategic campaign decisions, but this is not always the case. Burden points out that "uncertainty and information are often but not always inversely related" (Burden 2003, 9) Even if the polling data is informative, because of the often diminishing returns of obtaining additional data "the marginal benefit of pursuing uncertainty-reducing information might not justify the effort" (Burden 2003, 10). Uncertainty can be heightened with polling data if the data are of poor quality or if the polling data contradict previously collected data. Burden suggests that this could be especially true with data that are more recent. He posits that the addition of a small amount of recently obtained polling will likely be

---

Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) overloaded resources in the incumbent versus incumbent race in Pennsylvania's Seventeenth Congressional District between George Gekas (R) and Tim Holden (D). The NRCC outspent the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee $6 million to $2 million in a race where the Republican incumbent had not campaigned seriously in 20 years and was badly outmatched (Medvic and Schousen 2004). Conversely, in the Utah Second Congressional District, the NRCC relied on flawed polling data and hesitated to help an under-financed challenger until the last two weeks before the election. As a result, when they realized the race would be closer that expected they were only able to spend about $200,000 in a race that was decided by less than 1 percent between incumbent Democrat Jim Matheson and Republican challenger John Swallow (Patterson 2004).

given more weight in campaign decision making when compared to older information. If the new information does not point unambiguously toward a solution then uncertainty has increased as a result (Burden 2003, 10). Thus, the amount of polling is not the only factor in reducing uncertainty. Rather, the quality of the data and analysis as well as the timing and the context of the new information must also be considered.

There are also some normative implications for the ways in which polling reduces uncertainty in the campaign environment. The increased level of information that pollsters provide to congressional campaigns may allow for candidates to be more responsive to public opinion. On its face, this sounds like a good outcome. However, it also has a dark side. Candidates are accused of "pandering" to voters by changing their issue positions to more closely match the findings in the polling data. Chapter 4 discusses this possibility in great detail. My findings generally indicate that candidates do not change their positions on issues in response to public opinion. This rarely occurs because the conditions under which they are most likely to occur are rare.

Overall, in a congressional campaign, risk is defined as the probability of winning the election while uncertainty is the variance of that risk assessment. More uncertainty about the risk assessment effectively lowers the risk assessment because it makes campaigns behave as if the worst case scenario will occur. Uncertainty is pervasive in all congressional campaigns, even for "safe" incumbents, though a more competitive campaign leads to more risk and uncertainty. The varying levels of risk and uncertainty in campaigns also lead to an uncertainty about the best strategy to increase the probability of victory. Generally, polling serves to reduce that uncertainty and improve the likelihood of good strategic decisions. It does so by providing the campaign with

accurate information on voter preferences and increasing the likelihood that a campaign will make rational decisions. In the campaign context, a rational decision is one that maximizes the probability of winning for the minimum cost. This means using polling to identify campaign effective messages and deliver them to the voters most likely to be receptive to each message. Campaign polls must balance the complexity with the demands of time and the limitations resources.

Function	Percent*
Voter targeting	76
Selection of issues to focus on in campaign	74
Campaign message or theme development (how to talk about issues)	71
Candidate's strengths and weaknesses	58
Opponent's strengths and weaknesses	50
"Horse race" (finding out who is ahead)	47
Other	76

Source: interviews with political pollsters, n=38
* Multiple responses allowed.

Table 2.1 Functions of Polling in an Election Campaign

Function	Percent*
Voter targeting	18
Selection of issues to focus on in campaign	29
Campaign message or theme development (how to talk about issues)	21
Candidate's strengths and weaknesses	3
Opponent's strengths and weaknesses	0
"Horse race" (finding out who is ahead)	3
Other	16
Did not identify most important function	11

Source: interviews with political pollsters, n=38
* may not total to 100 percent because of rounding

Table 2.2 The Most Important Function of Polling in an Election Campaign

CHAPTER 3

EXPLAINING CANDIDATE POLL USE

Campaign polling makes a tangible difference in election outcomes and is at the roots of campaign strategy. Polling effectively increases the information level of candidates and campaigns. Campaigns need accurate and timely information to make the most effective and efficient decisions in terms of campaign strategy. Polling provides campaigns with information about voter preferences in a variety of areas but at the most basic level it provides information about voting choice and the potential factors that influence the dynamics of vote choice in a campaign including the likelihood of voting, the influence of issues on vote choice, and the effectiveness of a variety of campaign messages.

While polling increases the level and quality of information available, campaigns also face several limitations in their ability to obtain and process the information. These factors include the complexity and volume of information, the short period of time in which that information must be understood and utilized, and the resources required to obtain it. In addition, the amount of polling consumed in a campaign depends on the level of information needed. In other words, given the constraints listed above, how much uncertainty can be tolerated? As Lupia and McCubbins argue, "Information is useful only if it helps avoid costly mistakes." More information, to be useful, must

provide some kind of instrumental benefit otherwise it should be not be used (Lupia and McCubbins 1998, 6).

Polling use by congressional candidates has steadily increased since the days of Jacob Javits' use of pollster Louis Harris in 1946 (Javits 1947). Harris himself estimated that in the 1962 campaign two-thirds of the candidates for U.S. Senate and about one in ten candidates for the U.S. House used the services of a professional pollster (Harris 1963, 3). Medvic (2001, 70) uses lists compiled by *Campaigns and Elections*, a campaign consultant trade journal, to calculate that in 1986 only 14.5 of House candidates employed a pollster. This rose to 26 percent in 1990 and to 46.3 percent in 1992 (Medvic 2001, 76-77). Herrnson (1998; 2000b, 69) reports that in 1992, 60 percent of House campaigns employed the services of a polling consultant while only 14 percent of campaigns did not make use of any polling. In the 1998 election he reports that 55 percent employed a polling consultant while the proportion not using any polling rose to 28 percent (Herrnson 2000a, 73). In 2002, only 49 percent of campaigns employed a consultant while 32 percent used no polling at all (Herrnson 2004, 72). The proportion of U.S. House campaigns employing a polling consultant has risen significantly since the 1980s and appears to have stabilized between 50 and 60 percent. In addition, the fact that anywhere from a sixth to a third of House candidates are not using polling data in any form comes as a surprise given the crucial strategic role that polling plays in developing campaign strategy and determining candidate success.

Among candidates who do conduct polls the level of use varies substantially. Using data from Federal Election Commission candidate expenditure reports (described in further detail below), Table 3.1 presents a frequency distribution of candidate

campaign expenditures on polling for the 1998 and 1978 election cycles. The distribution is limited to major party candidates and for ease of presentation the expenditures in the table have been grouped into categories. In 1998, about half of the campaigns spent something on polling with a polling firm. This is roughly the same as the figures reported by Herrnson (2000a) from his survey in 1998 for campaigns that hired a consultant (55 percent). Some of the campaigns that did not spend money on polling may have obtained polling information from other sources or simply relied on other means to gauge the opinions of potential voters. Of those that made polling expenditures, most were less than $20,000, with about 2 percent spending more than $70,000—the maximum was $256,107. In 1978, the proportion of campaigns spending money on polling is much lower with only a little more than one in four campaigns spending something on polling. The variation within each election cycle combined with the increase in use over time and the critical role that polling plays in an effective campaign means that understanding the factors that predict poll use is important to our understanding of congressional elections.

The data presented in Table 3.1 could lead some to conclude that even though the use of polling has grown over time, polling does not play a major role in congressional campaigns since even in 1998 half of U.S. House candidates spend nothing on polling. However, the figures in Table 3.1 do not take into account the important role of electoral competition and candidate status. Table 3.2 presents the 1998 data crosstabulated by competitiveness, where "competitive" is defined as those races in which the difference between the two major party candidates in 1998 was 10 percentage points or less, and candidate status.

Some stark differences emerge in this table. For example, 80.8 percent of challengers in non-competitive races do not pay for any polling, while just 18 percent of challengers in competitive races do no polling. Substantial proportions of incumbent and open-seat candidates in non-competitive races also do no polling at 56.9 percent and 47.6 percent respectively. It is also instructive to compare spending by candidate status for only the competitive races. For example, grouping the first three categories together shows that a large majority of challengers in competitive races spend less than $20,000 on polling (63 percent), while a small minority of percent of incumbents and open-seat candidates are in that range (37.6 percent and 28.9 percent respectively). The data in Table 3.2 suggest that the bulk of candidates doing no polling are in non-competitive races where more polling would be unlikely to affect the outcome. However, even in competitive races, challengers are spending much less on polling, suggesting that if some challengers invested more resources in polling they might narrow electoral margins and even defeat some incumbents.

While its use is widespread, polling is not the only method that can be used by candidates to gauge public opinion (Herrnson 2004, 195-98). Susan Herbst (1993, chapter 5), in a theoretical and historical review of polling in American politics, interviewed former members of Congress, some who served as far back as the 1930s and 40s. Her inquiry reveals that very few of these former members actually used scientific sample surveys, but the large majority of them thought that assessing public opinion in their district was "always important" or "almost always important" (Herbst 1993, 95). Even today, in addition to surveys, members of Congress (and by extension congressional candidates) develop other methods of assessing and even quantifying opinion. The

options listed by Herbst for quantifying constituent opinion include tabulations of constituent mail and telephone calls, counts of newspaper editorials, shows of hands in town meetings, colleagues in Congress, local party leaders, and other "official experts" (such as union leaders, academics, clergy, and lobbyists). In addition they can also use qualitative assessments such as newspapers and magazines articles, conversations with others (colleagues, journalists, and constituents), and their own personal instincts.

This chapter will explore the reasons for variation in campaign spending on polls. After a brief description of the data sources, I will describe the hypotheses and the operationalization of variables, followed by a presentation and discussion of the model and results. Finally, I will conclude with a discussion of the implications of the findings for the study of congressional elections.

Data

The data in this chapter were compiled and merged from a variety of sources for the 1998 US House election. The 1998 election is the most recent for which data are readily accessible. The dependent variable throughout is the amount of polling conducted by each congressional campaign, operationalized as the expenditures for polling that are reported by candidates to the Federal Election Commission (FEC). Expenditure data were purchased from the Campaign Study Group (CSG), a for-profit venture that provides FEC expenditure data in electronic form.[24] After converting the paper copies filed with the FEC to electronic format, CSG provides itemized expenditure

[24] Since providing the data, the Campaign Study Group has dissolved and reemerged under a new name. For more information, see http://www.campaignfinanceanalysisproject.com/cfap_index.htm.

data for each candidate in a single election cycle.[25] In addition to total expenditures, spending data across eight broad categories can be obtained. The categories include: polling and focus group research, campaign overhead, fundraising, advertising, and other campaign activity (consultants, web site, and direct mail), constituent gifts/entertainment, donations, and unitemized expenses. The CSG data also include a number of other variables identifying all of the candidates, and variables such as their status as incumbent, challenger, or open seat candidate, the 1998 vote totals and so forth. These data were then combined with candidate characteristic and district voting data obtained from Peter Roybal at Congressional Quarterly. Paul Herrnson also provided candidate level data, particularly the coding for political experience. Finally, congressional district level data from the US Census and other sources was merged from a data set compiled by Scott Adler (Adler n.d.).[26]

Additional data used in this chapter come from the 1978 Congressional Campaign Study conducted by Edie Goldenberg and Michael Traugott.[27] The study includes a preelection and postelection survey of campaign managers in the 86 contested races comprising the 108 congressional districts serving as primary sampling units in the 1978

[25] US House candidates are now required to file electronically with the Federal Election Commission. This will make expenditure data more readily available in the future. However, the other major advantage to the CSG data is the extensive cleaning undertaken on data that are often not cleanly reported to the FEC. This is particularly true when it comes to categorizing each expenditure into categories of spending.

[26] For more information on Scott Adler's data see http://sobek.colorado.edu/~esadler/districtdatawebsite/CongressionalDistrictDatasetwebpage.htm.

[27] The data are available from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR #8431). Neither the collector of the original data nor ICPSR bear any responsibility for the analyses or interpretations presented here.

American National Election Study. Of the 172 possible respondents, interviews were conducted with 167 (82 Republicans and 85 Democrats) for a response rate of 97 percent. The emphasis in the preelection interview was on campaign strategy and resource allocation and included the managers' assessments of their chances of winning the election. The postelection interview followed up on questions of campaign strategy and resource allocation. The available data also include campaign expenditure data that were merged with the campaign manager survey data. As reported in Goldenberg and Traugott (1984, 16) the sample of 86 contested districts is quite representative of all 435 districts except perhaps in the proportion of successful challengers. While 19 incumbents lost their bids for reelection in 1978, only one incumbent in the sample lost.

The 1978 data serve as a nice baseline for comparison with later years. My interviews with pollsters suggest that by 1978 polling had a firm foothold in congressional elections that was established during the 1970s. While a relatively small proportion of candidates were using polling in 1978, the party campaign committees began to push for more candidates to use polling. For example, the formation of the Democratic Study Group by Thomas Mann and Richard Conlon in 1974 was specifically geared toward helping Democratic challengers and marginal incumbents (Mann 1978, 5). Similar efforts to encourage candidates to use polling were undertaken by Republicans. In 1976 the National Republican Congressional Committee hired pollster Wilma Goldstein in an effort to bolter the polling use by Republican candidates.[28]

[28] Linda DiVall (American Viewpoint), telephone interview by J. Quin Monson, March 5, 2002.

Hypotheses and Variables

Conway (1984) lays out a theory of polling use in congressional campaigns and groups the possible factors affecting polling use into three categories: characteristics of the campaign, characteristics of the candidate, and characteristics of the constituency. I use Conway's categories to frame my hypotheses about polling use and build on her work to provide the first analysis of poll use under this framework.[29]

Campaign Characteristics

Perhaps the most compelling variable to predict polling use is the level of competition faced by candidates. A more competitive race could lead to more polling for several reasons. First, in a competitive race more resources pour in from donors, parties, and other groups who see the race as winnable. Polling is expensive and the increase in funds makes more polling possible. Second, as Price (1992) and Hershey (1974) suggest, a more competitive race leads candidates (whether incumbents or otherwise) to feel insecure about their prospects if they are ahead, or to maintain hope for a victory if they are behind. Either way, whether through insecurity or increased hopefulness, the uncertainty motivates candidates to seek more information about public opinion (Hershey 1974).

[29] Empirical analysis of polling use has previously been conducted by Declercq (1978) on the 1974 election and by Weaver-Lariscy, Tinkham, and Nordstrom (1987) on the 1982 election. In both cases the data were collected through a survey of campaigns. However, several factors inhibit comparisons of their findings to the Goldenberg/Traugott data examined here. They rely on the campaigns to indicate whether or not polling was used and then use measures such as the number of polls conducted or the importance of polling to the campaign in their analysis. Instead, to facilitate comparisons with 1998, I rely on polling expenditures. These prior studies also do not use multivariate techniques, further complicating comparisons. Finally, Declercq's study is limited entirely too election winners, making comparability even more problematic.

For example, Representative David Price (D-NC) articulates this hypothesis about his use of polling in his 1990 reelection campaign when he faced a formidable challenger who was willing to spend substantial amounts of his own money. He also notes that the national context was troublesome with "Congress bashing reaching a fever-pitch" and a visible and contentious budget battle that lasted well into October. All of this combined to convince Price of the need to invest "as much in polling [for the 1990 race] as we had in the previous two campaigns combined" (Price 1992, 23). Price faced stiffer competition in 1990 resulting in an increased uncertainty about the election outcome, which in turn led him to allocate more resources to polling in an effort to reduce that uncertainty. As discussed in detail in Chapter 2, it is not just uncertainty about the outcome that leads to more polling, but also uncertainty about strategy and efficient allocation of campaign resources.

The relationship between competitiveness, uncertainty, and polling use articulated by Price and Hershey is also supported by research measuring the importance of polling compared to other methods of assessing public sentiment (Goldenberg and Traugott 1984, 54-56; Herrnson 2004; Hershey 1974). For example, Herrnson's 1992 Congressional Campaign Study included a question that asked respondents in campaigns about the importance, on a five point scale, of a list of possible sources for learning about public opinion in their districts (Herrnson 2004, 197).[30] Two points are worth noting

[30] In King and Schnitzer's review of polling use in the 1966 campaign, they were so confident of the expected relationship between polling and competitiveness that they only sent their questionnaire to candidates in which both candidates received 40 percent of the vote or more, dismissing the remaining races because "truly effective competition did not exist …[so] there was no need to spend money on polling" (1968, 431).

about Herrnson's analysis. First, consistent with Herbst (1993), today's campaigns use a variety of methods for gauging public opinion. "Candidate Contact with Voters," with an average importance of 4.37, *not* "Public Opinion Surveys" (at 3.53), achieved the highest average among respondents.[31] In order of importance, the other categories are, "Newspaper, Radio, TV," "Local Party Activists," "Mail from Voters," "National Party Publications," and "National Party Leaders." Second, Herrnson's data support the notion of increased importance of polling in competitive elections. While polling is not the most important source among all candidates, its importance increases substantially among certain campaigns. Herrnson divides the campaigns according to their status as incumbents, challengers, and open seats. Among each of these groups he further divides the campaigns according to their level of competitiveness. The measure of competitiveness is based on the actual election results--any race within 20 percentage points is classified as competitive. Among incumbents "in jeopardy" the importance of "Public Opinion Surveys" equals "Candidate Contact with Voters." Among "hopeful" challengers and open-seat "prospects" the importance of "Public Opinion Surveys" lags somewhat behind "Candidate Contact with Voters" but the differences are much smaller than those for the entire sample.

Evidence presented by Goldenberg and Traugott (1984, 54-56) from the 1978 election is consistent with Herrnson's data. In their study, they ask campaign managers about sources used to gather information in the campaign. Like Herrnson's data, "Personal Contacts" trumps all other alternatives with "Polls" running a close second.

[31] Herrnson's respondents include candidates, campaign managers, press aides, and other senior campaign workers.

However, campaigns perceiving themselves as "vulnerable" consider "Polls" equally important with "Personal Contacts."

Campaign competitiveness is operationalized by taking the absolute value of the difference between the percent of the vote for the two major party candidates for the 1996 election. The resulting difference ranges between zero, for a small number of very close elections, and 100, for cases in which the incumbent was unopposed. An inverse relationship is expected—more polling is expected to occur during the current cycle the closer the contest was in the previous cycle.[32]

Another an obvious predictor of polling use is the resources available to campaigns to pay for the work. One fairly recent estimate places the costs of an average "benchmark" poll with 400 interviews in the range of $12,000 to $16,000 and the average tracking poll (20 days @ 200 interviews per day) at $60,000 to $80,000 (Faucheux 1995,

[32] Alternatively, the preelection prognostications of pundits such as Stuart Rothenberg, Charlie Cook, Ron Faucheux, and the staff of *Congressional Quarterly* could be used. The advantage would be that these measures would reflect contemporary judgment about the competitiveness of each race instead of using data that is older and may be out of sync with the current competitiveness of the seat. However, with the exception of Faucheaux, the pundit scales are estimated in just a few ordinal categories that would require a series of dummy variables to estimate. The Faucheaux measure provides a numerical estimate in terms of the odds of victory, but while interesting and quite accurate, it is quasi-interval data at best. Furthermore, the pundits use the previous election return data together with many of the variables in my model such as candidate quality, presidential vote performance, and candidate fundraising as they make their judgments so the impact other variables in my model could be affected adversely. Another alternative would be to use the 1998 election results in the model. This is problematic because polling use has been shown to affect vote percentages (Medvic 2001) creating an endogenous variable. For purposes of this work, the previous election's vote returns seems to be the best alternative, although using the 1998 results does not significantly alter the overall results.

23). Campaigns can commission a very short survey with a small sample much more cheaply than these estimates indicate.[33]

A related potential predictor of polling was suggested to me by several professional pollsters who stated that one of the main reasons that campaigns conduct polls is to test the effectiveness of their communications with voters. If the campaign is not communicating with voters, then there is little reason to be gauging public opinion. After an initial benchmark survey taken for planning purposes, most pollsters would not recommend that a candidate do any polling until the campaign actually begins communicating with voters in earnest, generally through some kind of advertising. Thus, the advertising expenditures of a campaign should be a positive predictor of polling expenditures. Advertising expenditures are by far the largest proportion of a campaign budget (Herrnson 2004, 83) so it should come as no surprise that total expenditures and advertising expenditures go hand in hand and are highly correlated (r=0.75). If the multicollinearity is severe enough, including both in the model poses the risk of adversely affecting the coefficient estimates of other independent variables. This does not appear to create a problem in the models I estimate below.

Candidate Characteristics

Pollster Louis Harris advocated that candidates should use polling frequently throughout a campaign, but admitted that it "This not only is expensive but is a difficult

[33] This is especially true if the survey interpretation and analysis is handled internally by the campaign. For example, RT Nielson Co., a Republican polling and telephone shop can provide data for a 6 minute questionnaire with a sample size as of 300 for as little as $2,995 or a 13 minute questionnaire with a sample size of 3000 for $4995. See: http://www.rtnielson.com/pages/political.shtml (accessed June 30, 2004).

proposition to sell all but those candidates who are well informed about polls, their uses, and their limitations" (Harris 1963, 4). This leads to the hypothesis that as politicians become more familiar with polling or social science methodology, they will be more open to its use in political campaigns. The familiarity effect posited here suggests that increased likelihood to use polling is driven by an increased comfort level or trust in the methodology. More exposure to polling data and methods could lead to increased trust and use of polling. While exposure to polling data and methodology is not possible to measure directly, a variety of candidate characteristics may serve as adequate surrogates including the candidate characteristics such as previous political experience, status (incumbent, open seat or challenger), age, and education.

For example, the status of the candidate might be positively related to polling use. An incumbent member of Congress could be more likely to think polling is important and find it useful because once he or she arrives in Congress an incumbent that initially views polling with suspicion learns to overcome these suspicions with increased exposure and experience with pollsters and polling data as well as with colleagues that use and trust polling.

Current office holders might also learn to model their campaigns after those of successful colleagues and may learn by their own experience and through interaction with professional political consultants to accept certain practices as necessary and even critical to their success (Hershey 1984). This suggests that political experience is an important factor in determining both whether or not and how much polling will be used. Using data provided by Paul Herrnson, political experience is coded into three dummy variables. The "amateur" category includes candidates with no previous political experience as an

officeholder or candidate. The "unelected" category includes candidates who have run for office before or those who have held jobs or appointed office that has given them significant political experience such as former congressional staff members who should be expected to have some level of political sophistication. Finally, previous elective political experience forms the third category. This includes candidates who were elected to office before running for Congress. The amateur category is excluded from the model as the baseline category and I expect to find a positive relationship for the unelected and elected variables.

Candidate age could be negatively related to polling use by congressional candidates because age serves as a surrogate measure of experience in use of new campaign technology. Candidates entering politics or even those who were educated before polling was widely used and accepted may differ from those who entered politics later on. The concept of polling was still quite new as a political tool in the 1950s and 60s, especially for members of Congress (Harris 1963). While it is difficult to fathom that in 1998 a congressional candidate could still remain largely unexposed to polling techniques, the oldest candidate in the data is 78 years old and the average is 51. In 1998 a candidate who was 51 or older was born in 1947 or before. This means that they were both educated and socialized into politics during and era in which polling was not nearly as common as it is today, especially in campaigns for Congress.

Another possible correlate of poll use that might capture the concept of familiarity with polling is level of education. More education could result in an increased exposure to social science methods or perhaps an increased interaction in an educational setting with others likely to accept polling methodology as a valid assessment of public opinion.

This variable may lack sufficient variation—about 90 percent of candidates for Congress have a college degree or higher. I include a dummy variable coded one if the candidate holds an advanced degree (such as a JD, PhD, MD etc.) which is true of about 40 percent of the candidates.

In some previous work that examines elections in the 1960s and 1970s, partisanship and ideology are related to poll use, with Republican and conservative members of Congress more likely to use polling (King and Schnitzer 1968; Wilcox 1976; Monson 2001). Conway (1984; 1983) suggests that during the 1980s Republicans may have used more polling because Republican Party campaign committees more aggressively trained managers, consultants, and candidates in modern campaign techniques and technology. Through the 1970s and 1980s the Republicans held a large advantage in party fundraising and used those funds to help congressional candidates with technical support, particularly polling work (Cotter and Bibby 1980; Hershey 1984, chapter 5). It is not clear that these differences will persist in 1998, but to control for the possibility I include a dummy variable for candidate partisanship in the model.

Constituent/District Characteristics

Conway (1984) discusses several testable propositions concerning district characteristics and poll use in congressional campaigns including geographical size of the district, diversity among constituents, and the strength of local party organizations. For example, geographical district size may be inversely related to poll use because districts of small geographical size are more likely to have complicated boundaries making

sampling more difficult and thus increasing the costs of polling.[34] I include the total square miles of the district in the model to test for this possibility. I also include variables for the percent of the total population located in an urban area and a dummy variable coded one if the district includes or is contained within one of the country's 50 largest cities. Increased diversity among constituents is likely to increase the need for polling and these variables help control for some of the variation in district diversity. A diverse constituency increases the difficulty for candidates of drawing accurate conclusions about district opinion and increases the difficulty of compiling a winning coalition among voters. Both of these factors could also serve to increase the campaign's uncertainty about the election and lead the candidate and campaign staff to invest more resources in polling research. District diversity is operationalized here as the percent of the total population that is African American.

Mid-decade redistricting might also affect the uncertainty around election time. If a district's existing boundaries are challenged in court and subsequently changed, more polling could be required to assess the opinions new constituents or to relieve uncertainty about changing district demographics. On the other hand, redistricting may create a district with boundaries that are more contiguous thus reducing the polling costs. This variable is entered in the model as a dummy that equals one if the district lines were

[34] If district boundaries make Random Digit Dialing (RDD) samples less reliable or prohibitively costly, the alternative is to sample from lists of registered voters. This can be more or less expensive depending on the quality of the list and the cost of matching telephone numbers to the voter registration file. Thus it is not clear that this variable will affect quantity of poll use as much as it might affect the choice of sampling methodology. For comparisons RDD versus Registration Based Sampling (RBB) see Gerber and Green (2003) and other papers posted by Voter Contact Services at: http://www.vcsnet.com/articles2.shtml.

redrawn *after* the regular round of redistricting in every state leading up to the 1992 election.

A final district/constituency level characteristic that could be important is the overall average level of partisanship among voters in each district. This is measured here as the mean of the absolute values of the Democratic presidential vote percent minus the Republican presidential vote percent for 1996 and 1992. This variable is akin to the concept of a "normal vote" (Converse 1966). It is correlated with the 1996 district election results ($r = 0.64$) but this correlation is not so high as to introduce problems with the model estimates. As a measure of the normal vote it may also provide an indicator for potential competitiveness at the district level in cases where the presidential contenders closely compete but the congressional incumbent cruises to victory with a safe margin.

Conway also suggests that the sophistication of state and local party organizations is positively related to polling use. The presumption is that strong state and local party organizations can provide financial and technical support for polling. While state parties can provide some financial support, when given to federal candidates this money is often transferred to state parties from the national party campaign committees. Furthermore, consultants, mostly at the national level, provide the technical expertise for polling work. I am not aware of existing data for 1998 that provides a summary measure of state and local party organizational strength.[35] A detailed listing of coding and data sources is included in Table 3.3.

[35] John Aldrich has compiled state level data on state party organization and electoral activity. One of the variables in the data is whether or not the state party conducts polling. However, there is not much variation on this variable—nearly all state parties

Choosing a Model

At first glance an OLS model appears appropriate—the dependent variable, measured as dollars spent on polling, is continuous and theoretically unbounded. However, many House candidates do no polling. As indicated in Table 3.1, during the 1998 election about half of the major party House campaigns spent nothing on polling. Using OLS with a dependent variable when many cases are censored[36] at zero produces biased or inconsistent estimates (see Achen 1986, chapters 4 and 5; Greene 2003, chapter 22; Long 1997, chapter 7). A widely accepted alternative to OLS when the dependent variable is censored at zero is the Tobit model. Beginning with the work of Tobin (1958), for whom the Tobit model is named, Tobit models are commonly estimated in work by economists on household expenditures. They have also been commonly used by political scientists in work on campaign expenditures (e.g. Damore and Hansford 1999; Deegan and White 1976; Herrnson 1989).

Sigelman and Zeng (1999) and Maddala (1992) suggest that Tobit models are only appropriate for estimating an underlying latent variable (y*) that in theory, at least, can be negative. The values cannot simply be clustered on zero because of a binary decision, in this case to conduct polls or not. Actual negative spending for polling does not occur in practice. However, Sigelman and Zeng (1999, 170) indicate that Tobit can

---

conduct polling. Constructing and defending a measure of state party professionalization is beyond the scope of this project.

[36] Censoring occurs when the dependent variable is observed for the entire sample but some observations contain only limited information.

still be used depending on the underlying decision process.[37] I am assuming that campaigns can, in theory, have negative spending because polling expenditures are relative to other campaign expenditures. By choosing to spend that money on something else instead of polling, the campaign is effectively engaging in negative spending on polling. In other words, perhaps there are candidates who have such distaste for polling that they spend negatively on it by spending relatively more on other campaign expenses. This negative utility for polling satisfies the requirement for a theoretical possibility of negative values on the dependent variable.

Campaigns may have some desire to do polling, but just not have enough money to pay for the kind of polling the campaign would like to have to make it worthwhile. While some limited polling information can be purchased quite cheaply, the type of polling information that fulfills the major purposes of polling outlined in Chapter 2 takes significant resources. So campaigns may wish to conduct polling but cannot afford to do so, or they might be able to afford plenty of polling but do not purchase any.

The alternative to estimating the Tobit model is a Heckman sample selection model, sometimes referred to as a "Heckit" model (Heckman 1976; 1979; Sigelman and Zeng 1999). Since both Tobit and Heckit models involve censored or truncated

[37] Using an example of PAC contributions to candidates they conclude, "Does a PAC decide on how much it *prefers* or wishes to contribute, or does it decide on whether or not to contribute and then, if the first decision is affirmative, decide on the exact amount of its contribution? If one is wiling to *assume* the former, then this data configuration can be modeled via Tobit, for a PAC might wish that it could make a 'negative contribution' to a disliked candidate by taking dollars away. In that case the underlying propensity to contribute to a particular candidate can be imagined to include negative as well as positive values, with $0 representing a censored negative value" (Sigelman and Zeng 1999, 170, emphasis in original).

observations, one might assume that they are interchangeable. In fact the Tobit model is a special case of the Heckit model in which the variables in the selection equation are identical to the outcome equation in which case the Heckit model is not needed (Sigelman and Zeng 1999, 177).

A Heckman two-stage model involves first estimating a selection equation using probit and then using the results from the selection equation to correct for the bias in a subsequent outcome equation estimated with OLS. Sigelman and Zeng (1999) argue that the decision to use Tobit versus Heckit depends on the assumptions made about the nature of the decision-making process. If using a Tobit model, it is assumed that a campaign simply decides how much to spend on polling. If using a Heckit model, it is assumed that a campaign first decides to use polling, and then decides how much to spend. I found no evidence in any of the literature or in my interviews with pollsters to of a two-step decision-making process.

While the selection and outcome equations can share variables, one of the theoretical justifications for the Heckit model is the idea that a different set of predictors are important for the selection equation versus the outcome equation. A stable estimation of the Heckit model requires that at least one variable in the outcome equation be different from the selection equation. If estimating a Heckit model, I would be assuming that at least one of the variables included in the selection equation is clearly a predictor of the selection process and not of the outcome process. This is a difficult assumption

because all of the independent variables I used could be thought of in terms of both selection or outcome equations.[38]

In sum, I do not have evidence to make strong assumptions about the structure of the underlying decision process. In addition, I cannot make a clear distinction between a the predictors for a selection equation and an outcome equation, and I am able to make a reasonable theoretical case for negative values on the dependent variable. For these reasons I decided to compute the estimates with a Tobit model.[39]

Results

Table 3.4 presents the Tobit model of polling expenditures for major party US House candidates in 1998. Interpreting Tobit coefficients is straightforward. The coefficients in Table 3.4 represent the linear effects of the independent variables on the expected value of the underlying latent variable y* and can be interpreted just like OLS coefficients. That is, for a unit increase in x_k there is an expected change of β_k units in y*, holding all other variables constant. In terms of campaign characteristics, all three variables are statistically significant and in the expected direction. In terms of the competitiveness of the race, for each point increase in the difference between the two

[38] Breen (1996, 43-44) cites some examples in which selection and outcome equations are identical and says that "in such cases, the parameters of the outcome equation are then identified only because of the non-linearity of the probit equation." However, he also makes cautions that "there can be little justification for introducing constraints purely for the purpose of identifying the model. In practice, reliance on the nonlinearity of the probit can result in barely identified, and thus unstable, parameter estimates."

[39] Even though the Tobit model is the best fit given the structure and decision process underlying the dependent variable, estimating the model using either OLS or Heckit would not significantly alter the results.

candidates in the 1996 election, expected polling expenditures in 1998 decrease by about 155 dollars.

Both advertising expenditures and total expenditures are strongly related to expected polling expenditures, although the coefficient for advertising expenditures is larger, confirming the suggestions from my interviews with pollsters about the likely relationship between polling and campaign advertising. For each dollar spent in advertising or overall, expected polling expenditures increase by a few pennies. The apparent small size of these two coefficients can be misleading. However, the largest portion of a typical congressional campaign budgets is spent on advertising and a much smaller portion is spent on polling. Herrnson (2004, 82-84) reports that an average House campaign spends 34 percent of its budget on advertising. If a campaign had total expenditures of $1 million, this would put the advertising budget at $340,000 and applying the coefficient from the model, the expected expenditure on polling would be $15,980 ($340,000 x .047). Using the coefficient from the total aggregate spending, the same million dollar campaign would be expected to spend $15,000 on polling ($1 million x .015). The estimates are roughly in line with each other and the example demonstrates how the apparently small coefficients have a relatively large substantive impact on expected polling expenditures.

Among candidate characteristics, several are statistically significant. The dummy variable for incumbent suggests that compared to the average challenger, an incumbent is expected to spend about $6,203 more dollars on polling. The expected polling expenditures for the typical open seat candidate are even higher at $7,631 compared to the challenger. Political experience was only statistically significant if the experience

was as a previously elected official of some kind. Having prior elected experience increased the expected polling expenditures by $5,448. Neither age nor education had a statistically significant impact on expected polling expenditures.

One of the most interesting and surprising results in the model is the large and statistically significant coefficient for party. Democratic candidates on average are expected to spend $7,162 more than Republicans on polling all else being equal. In a model estimated using data from the 1978 congressional election (results not shown) just the opposite was true—Republicans were more likely to conduct polling. In 1978 Republicans not only held a fundraising advantage but also offered technical assistance and campaign seminars, and even coordinated some research efforts (Goldenberg and Traugott 1984; Sabato 1981). This means that not only were Republican candidates likely to have more funds, but they were also likely to receive encouragement from party officials to conduct polls and even training in campaign seminars on the necessity of polling and how to use it effectively. In recent years, the Democrats have narrowed the gap in fundraising and both parties now provide some help with polling (Herrnson 2000b, 103).

This narrowing in the partisan fundraising gap does not adequately explain the relationship. One possible explanation for the significance of this variable is the coordinated expenditures that the political party campaign committees are allowed to make together with congressional candidates. The coordinated expenditure limits for each House district are determined by a formula that adjusts the limit upward each election using the Consumer Price Index. In 1998 coordinated expenditures from the NRCC and DCCC totaled roughly $8 million (Magleby 2000) with probably between 3

and 4 percent of this likely going toward polling (Kolodny and Dulio 2003). Since the expenditures are made in coordination with the campaign, it is not likely that the factors affecting polling consumption in the model, with the possible exception of party, are dramatically affected. In analyzing the coordinated expenditures for 1998, I was able to identify $380,593 in coordinated polling expenditures. However, all but $24,447 was spend by Democratic committees in coordination with Democratic candidates. Thus, including the coordinated expenditures would only serve to increase the size of the effect for party.

I also checked for the possibility that the result for party was being driven by outliers. The largest spender on polling was Democrat Phil Maloof, a losing challenger in New Mexico, who spend more than $250,000 on polling out of more than $6.6 million total. Eight of the top ten spenders on polling were Democrats. Dropping Maloof or the top ten spenders out of the data did not alter the statistical significance of the coefficient for party.

In short, the finding for party in 1998 seems quite robust. However, evidence from my interviews suggests that the disparity between Republicans and Democrats may be due to differences in how polling was handled by the party committees. The NRCC conducted a significant amount of polling in 1998 that was reported to the Federal Election Commission (FEC) as operating expenditures. The NRCC may have spent close to $800,000 on polling this way in 1998.[40] Polling data paid for with regular committee operating funds (a mixture of hard and soft money in 1998) were used by both parties to

[40] Ed Brookover (formerly with the NRCC), interview with J. Quin Monson, February 7, 2002, Washington, D.C.

support issue advocacy conducted in competitive races. Instead of using some coordinated expenditure for polling, the NRCC often shared the expense with the campaign but counted it as an in-kind contribution, taking advantage of FEC rules that allow the committee to discount the value of the contribution as time passes and the data are less valuable. Another option is for the party and the campaign to split the cost of the survey but because the committee is using the polling information to inform their issue advocacy campaign (which under FEC rules in 1998 was not officially direct involvement in the race), it does not count as an in-kind contribution to the candidate or as a coordinated expenditure. Thus, the fruit of the significant spending on polling by the NRCC legally found its way into individual Republican campaigns. However, there is not sufficient detail about the nature of NRCC polling expenditures to unpack this further and discover which candidates the spending benefited.

All of the district characteristics except two are statistically insignificant in the model. The mean difference between the 1992 and 1996 presidential candidates, intended as an indicator of the normal vote, or the baseline level of party competition within the district was statistically significant in the expected direction. Districts with long term partisan competition have candidates that are more likely to use polling. For each percentage point increase in the average presidential vote difference the expected polling expenditure decreased by $281, a relatively small impact.

Redistricting is the other district level variable in the model that achieved statistical significance. However, the direction of the coefficient was somewhat surprising. Recall that one expectation was that for the small number of districts that experience mid-decade redistricting, the process would introduce uncertainty for

candidates about the characteristics of the constituency and prompt more polling. This is not the case. Mid-decade redistricting actually leads to a decrease in expected polling expenditures of $6,966. This is probably due to the nature of the mid-decade redistricting that occurred in the 1990s. Most of this redistricting was in response to legal challenges and court orders over racial gerrymandering. Lublin (1997) summarizes the effect of the various court decisions on the composition of the districts in the states concerned. Many of the so-called "Majority minority" districts drawn before the 1992 election were very oddly shaped. One of the old redistricting plans was characterized as "a truly creative work of art" (Lublin 1997, 106). He concludes that in North Carolina, Georgia, Texas, Louisiana, and Florida where district boundaries were redrawn in the mid to late 1990s in response to or in anticipation of court orders, the new districts boundaries were more compact and contiguous (Lublin 1997, 129-132). From the perspective of a political pollster, sampling in the old districts sounds difficult to say the least. Perhaps the redrawn districts reduced those costs significantly because the newly re-drawn district boundaries reduced the costs of polling or made the districts more competitive as the district became less racially homogeneous.

A similar Tobit model was estimated on the 1978 Goldenberg/Traugott data (results not shown). Only two variables were statistically significant in the model, the campaign's aggregate spending (positively related to polling, as expected) and party (discussed above). The lack of other statistically significant predictors is probably partly due to the lack of variation on the dependent variable and party due to the small number of available cases (n=143).

Conclusions

The relationships presented above lead to some mixed conclusions about the role of polling in congressional campaigns. On the one hand the results can be interpreted with optimism. Candidates are attempting to be responsive to voters in their districts. The evidence presented here shows that competitive campaigns or candidates who run in districts where the underlying district partisanship is closely divided make increased efforts to gather information about the wishes of their constituents through polling. This may in turn lead to more attentiveness to the issues that voters consider most important. On the other hand, the increased uncertainty or vulnerability from a close election that leads to increased polling may result in efforts to narrowly target voters with messages that are constructed based on polling data and not on the candidate's own positions. The likelihood of this occurring is addressed in Chapter 4. While the existence of competition leads to more polling, more work is needed to understand just how this polling is used by candidates to formulate and present issue positions to voters.

The results also lend support to what is widely known about the difficulties of running for Congress as a challenger or an inexperienced candidate. We know that most of the time challengers are inexperienced and under-funded running against an entrenched incumbent with ample resources. The model presented here adds some nuance to that story by showing that the challenger status, lack of experience, and the lack of sufficient resources hamper the ability of campaigns to collect and use public opinion data. Part of the reason that many congressional candidates have difficulty achieving viability is that they are unable to gather adequate intelligence to guide an effective campaign. Campaign spending is not only important because of the increased

visibility and name recognition it provides, but it is also important because it can supply the polling and other tools necessary to make advertising and other traditional campaign efforts more effective. Since polling data are an essential tool to running an effective campaign, the lack of polling for these types of campaigns likely has an impact on the final result. The model presented here presents some evidence regarding the mechanism underlying the electoral disadvantage of inexperienced and under-funded candidates.

A final summary point to draw from the results is that campaign and candidate characteristics and not district/constituency characteristics play the most important in predicting the extent to which candidates will conduct polls. Not surprisingly, the total resources available to pay for polling is the dominant predictor of poll usage by candidates, but several other variables hypothesized to be important also play a role. These include the level of competition in the district and candidate characteristics including candidate status, party, and political experience.

Polling Expenditures	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1998			
Zero	386	49.9	49.9
$1 to 9999	84	10.9	60.8
$10K to 19999	115	14.9	75.7
$20K to 29999	77	9.9	85.6
$30K to 49999	70	9.4	95
$50K to 69999	25	3.2	98.2
$70K +	17	2.2	100.4*
Total	774	100.4*	
1978			
Zero	111	72.6	72.6
$1 to 999	17	11.1	83.7
$1000 to 1999	13	8.5	92.2
$2000 to 2999	8	5.2	97.4
$3000 +	4	2.6	100.0
Total	153	100.0	

* does not sum to 100 due to rounding

Table 3.1 Polling Expenditures for House Campaigns in 1998 and 1978

Candidate Status	Polling Expenditures	Non-Competitive		Competitive	
		Percent	N	Percent	N
Challenger	zero	80.8	177	18.0	16
	$1 to 9999	8.2	18	18.0	16
	$10K to 19999	6.4	14	27.0	24
	$20K to 29999	2.7	6	13.5	12
	$30K to 49999	1.4	3	16.9	15
	$50K to 69999	0.5	1	5.6	5
	$70K +	0	0	1.1	1
Incumbent	zero	56.9	170	9.9	10
	$1 to 9999	12.4	37	7.9	8
	$10K to 19999	16.4	49	19.8	20
	$20K to 29999	7.4	22	21.8	22
	$30K to 49999	4.7	14	22.8	23
	$50K to 69999	1.3	4	7.9	8
	$70K +	1.0	3	9.9	10
Open Seat	zero	47.6	10	6.7	3
	$1 to 9999	4.8	1	8.9	4
	$10K to 19999	9.5	2	13.3	6
	$20K to 29999	23.8	5	22.2	10
	$30K to 49999	4.8	1	31.1	14
	$50K to 69999	4.8	1	13.3	6
	$70K +	4.8	1	4.4	2

Note: “Competitive” is defined as a difference of 10 percentage points or less between the two major party candidates in 1998.

Table 3.2 1998 Polling Expenditures by Competitiveness and Candidate Status

Variable Name	Variable Coding/Description	Source
Polling (dependent var.)	Candidate expenditures on polling as disclosed to Federal Election Commission in 1998 dollars	Campaign Study Group (CSG)
Closeness of 96 election (diff96cd)	Absolute value of the 1996 Democratic congressional candidate percent of vote minus the Republican congressional candidate percent of vote	Congressional Quarterly (CQ)
Advertising expenditures (advert)	Candidate expenditures on advertising	CSG
Total expenditures (aggspend)	Aggregate total candidate expenditures	CSG
Incumbent (incumb)	1=incumbent candidate 0=open seat or challenger	CSG
Open Seat (opseat)	1=open seat 0=incumbent or challenger	CSG
Unelected political experience (unelect)	1=previous political experience in non-elective public office or prior candidacy (for challengers only) 0=otherwise	Paul Herrnson
Elected political experience (elected)	1=previous political experience in elective public office 0=otherwise	Herrnson
Age (age)	Candidate age in years	Herrnson
Advanced Degree (advdeg)	1= Candidate has an advanced degree such as PhD, JD, MD 0=otherwise	Herrnson
Party (demo)	1= Democratic candidate 0= Republican candidate	CQ
Redistricting (redist)	1= district that was reapportioned again after 1992 redistricting 0=otherwise	Scott Adler
Black percent (blackper)	Percentage of total population identifying their race as African-American	Adler
Square miles (landsqmi)	Size of district in square miles	Adler
Urban percent (urbanper)	Percentage of total population living in urban areas	Adler
Closeness of Presidential race (meandiff)	The average absolute value of the Democratic presidential vote percent minus the Republican presidential vote percent for 1996 and 1992.	CQ
50 largest cities (city)	1 = district contains or is contained in one of the fifty largest central cities 0=otherwise	Adler

Table 3.3 Variable Description and Coding

Variable	Coeff.	s.e.	
Campaign Characteristics			
Closeness of 96 election	-154.670	46.513	***
Advertising expenditures	.047	.004	***
Total expenditures	.015	.002	***
Candidate Characteristics			
Incumbent	6203.328	2076.313	**
Open Seat	7631.318	2845.034	**
Unelected political experience	221.269	2327.500	
Elected political experience	5448.155	2706.453	*
Age	-25.672	82.077	
Advanced Degree	638.548	1540.138	
Party (Democrat)	7162.167	1556.042	***
District Characteristics			
Redistricting	-6966.721	2987.529	*
Black percent	12331.250	7130.860	
Square miles	-.0004	.0004	
Urban percent	1944.444	2678.801	
Presidential race closeness	-281.403	84.5687	*
50 largest cities	1785.679	1841.975	
Constant	-11284.730	4647.575	*
Total N	729 (351 left censored, 378 uncensored)		
-2xLL	8808.12		
χ^2	648.98 ***		
Std. error	17495.53		

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 3.4 Tobit Model of Polling Expenditures by House Campaigns (1998)

CHAPTER 4

POLLING AND ISSUE REPRESENTATION

Representation has long held the attention of congressional scholars. Traditionally, the study of representation has been centered around issue agreement between legislators and their constituents on matters of public policy. For example, in one of the earliest empirical studies of congressional representation, Miller and Stokes (1963) found a correlation between constituency attitudes on public policy issues and subsequent roll-call behavior by members of Congress. Whether or not members of Congress should actually be bound by constituency wishes in their voting behavior is a question that has concerned political theorists for hundreds of years, perhaps most famously expressed by Edmund Burke in his "Speech to the Electors of Bristol" in which he asserted that his role as a legislator was to act as a "trustee," voting his conscience in the best interest of his constituents, rather than to act as a "delegate," voting the mandate of his constituents (see Weisberg, Herberlig, and Campoli 1999, Chapter 5).

The question of proper representation is still difficult to answer both theoretically and empirically. Candidates and office holders at all levels are accused sometimes of changing their issue positions to more closely approximate the views of voters. For example, former Senator Paul Simon laments an entire "culture of pandering" in which

not only political leaders, but also leaders in the media, education, and religion, fail in their duty to effectively lead in the public interest. Polling is named specifically as something that has "turned a temptation for candidates into a threat to our free system" (Simon 2003, 2).

In addition to the early work of Miller and Stokes, there is also a presumption in some of the academic literature that issue followership by elected officials is the norm.[41] For example, Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson (1995), in a notable piece of empirical work on representation, examine aggregate opinion and vote data over time and find a strong positive relationship. They allow for the possibility that some of the relationship between public opinion and policy may result from unresponsive politicians being defeated and the new personnel altering the aggregate preferences of the institution. However, they also speak of "rational anticipation" on the party of "savvy politicians . . . [which] produces dynamic representation without need for actual electoral defeat" (Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson 1995, 545). They conclude, "Politicians are keen to pick up the faintest signals in their political environment. Like antelope in an open field, they cock their ears and focus their full attention on the slightest sign of danger (ibid., 559).[42] Some scholars make accusations about candidates that also implicate consultants. Herbst, relying partly on Sabato (1981), states, "Candidates tend to tailor their policy

[41] For a review of this literature see Jacobs and Shapiro (2000, chapter 1).

[42] To be fair, these authors make clear elsewhere that they do not claim that politicians slavishly follow public opinion at the expense of their own ideology or issue position. They argue that public opinion and a politician's own beliefs can both have an influence suggesting, "Indeed, if politicians try to influence public opinion . . . the only plausible motivation is because public opinion matters at election time (Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002, 78).

statements *not* to cohere with their own ideologies, but to fit the most recent poll results. Indeed, consultants encourage this" (Herbst 1993, 121; emphasis in original).

In this chapter I draw from interviews with 42 professional campaign pollsters and party campaign committee staff to analyze how polling interacts with position taking on issues in congressional elections. The current literature on representation asserts a strong role for public opinion and elections, but it inadequately explains the mechanism underlying that relationship. How do politicians find out about public opinion? More importantly, under what conditions, if any, are they likely to pander? If politicians are following public opinion, then one possibility that seems to consistently appear in the media states that candidates simply use polling to inform themselves about public opinion on issues so that they can adopt the public's view and enhance their chances for election. After a brief review of the literature, I present a theory of how candidates use polling to represent themselves on issues and then discuss the findings from my interviews to address the expectations drawn from the literature. My research question is: What is the relationship between the voters' position on an issue (as measured by polling), candidate's position on an issue, the saliency of the issue to each, and the subsequent behavior of the candidate with regard to the issue? The dependent variable is the candidate's behavior with regard to campaign issues.

To address the research question I rely on Kingdon (1989) and Geer (1996) to hypothesize about the possible behavior of candidates and suggest conditions under which each possibility might occur. These possibilities include a sharpened definition of pandering by candidates. Pandering occurs when candidates change their behavior from what it would be otherwise in response to public opinion. I refine the definition of

pandering into two distinct categories: *issue position pandering* and *issue selection pandering*. Issue position pandering occurs when candidates alter or reverse their positions on issues that, they discover through polling, matter to voters. Issue selection pandering occurs when candidates use polling to narrow the range of issues that they focus on in their campaign. It means that candidates change focus but do not alter their issue positions. A critical element to predicating how candidates will behave is the saliency of the issue to both the public and the candidate. I find that polling is rarely used for issue position pandering but is routinely used for issue selection pandering. If pandering is defined as changing behavior from what it would be otherwise in response to public opinion, then most candidates clearly pander. However, I find little evidence of widespread issue position pandering in which candidates ignore their own ideology and policy positions and remake them to fit with public opinion.

Polling and Pandering: A Review of the Literature

Polling in a democracy has both advocates and detractors. Survey research pioneer George Gallup was an early advocate of the benefits of polling to issue representation. In *The Pulse of Democracy*, Gallup and Rae (1940) argue that polls are capable of providing an accurate and clear picture of public opinion because they allow for more precise measurement of public sentiment than any other method (cf. Geer 1996). They see the advent of polling as an advance in democracy because it gives the "common man" increased influence over elected officials, allowing voices beyond the political elite to be heard. It follows that this increasingly precise measurement would allow ordinary citizens to be better represented on issues by their elected officials.

Others regard the use of polls as needlessly hampering the ability of candidates and politicians to innovate. They regard this same precision as restrictive because the numbers produced in opinion polls represent an aura of legitimacy and the "rigid, structured nature of polling may narrow the range of public discourse by defining the boundaries for public debate" (Herbst 1993, 166). Ginsberg (1986) also represents this dissenting view. He argues that the rise of public opinion polls increases state power because the information that polling data contain allows political elites to manipulate public opinion to serve their interests. Weissberg offers a different critique, asserting that even if polling is done competently with no apparent bias, it is not suitable as a tool to inform public policy. He says, "The enterprise itself, no matter how proficiently executed, elicits public responses that are better characterized as lofty aspirations, not choices corresponding to realistic policy options" (Weissberg 2002, 15).

The long-standing debate over the influence of polling in democracy turns on a critical question of influence. George Gallup and other proponents of polling's positive influence on democracy assert that polling increases the power of the people to clearly communicate their opinions to candidates and elected officials. On the other hand, Ginsberg and other critics assert that polling gives too much power to political elites, either through their ability to influence the public or because they pander to majoritarian wishes.

More recent work presents a more mixed view, neither taking the rosy view of Gallup but also eschewing Ginsberg's pessimism. Jacobs (1992; 1993) discusses a "recoil effect" in which politicians conduct polls with the intent, along the lines suggested by Ginsberg, to shape and manipulate public preferences. However, eventually as

politicians become more aware of the public opinion, they "recoil" by becoming more responsive than they originally would have been.

Jacobs and Shapiro use President Clinton's failed attempt at health care reform and the parallel activities by congressional Republicans to argue a provocative thesis. They assert that politicians do not "pander," or use polling data to adjust their issue positions toward the center of the public's opinion distribution. Instead, they find that politicians use polling data to influence the public to follow their lead. In other words, politicians use polling to figure out how best to sell their favored proposals to the public. Jacobs and Shapiro coin the term "crafted talk"— which occurs when "politicians craft how they present their policy stances in order to attract favorable press coverage and 'win' public support for what they desire" (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000, 27). In other words, public officials use crafted talk to give the appearance of responsiveness. They are thus able to simultaneously serve their own interests, whether based on their own personal ideology or the interests of other actors, and at the same time appear to be responsive to popular wishes. However, Jacobs and Shapiro qualify the assertion that politicians don't pander by saying, "If public opinion does not change in the desired direction, politicians change their behavior with the imminent approach of presidential elections by temporarily increasing their responsiveness to centrist opinion even if it requires compromising their policy objectives"(Ibid.). In short, politicians don't pander—except when necessary around election time.

The work cited above primarily focuses on elected public officials and not candidates. Thus, the question remains as to whether or not issue representation in the campaign context is different. While Jacobs and Shapiro state that approaching elections

can alter behavior of incumbent office holders on issues where their efforts toward opinion change have been unsuccessful, they do not focus on the election context as it may differ from the governing context. This is an important distinction. In terms of responsiveness to public opinion, is the campaign context different from the governing context? Probably so. McGraw characterizes Jacobs and Shapiro's model as one in which "the causal arrow moves in both directions: public opinion provides the basis for elite strategies, which are then used to move public opinion to be congruent with public officials' own policy preferences" (McGraw 2002, 269). While some argue that reelection is the primary goal for members of Congress (Mayhew 1974), during an election campaign, winning the election must be the most important goal for any serious candidate. Perhaps more than in day to day governing, in a campaign candidates want attention for everything they orchestrate. Because time and public attention are limited and "earned media" is a valuable commodity, campaigns seek efficiency in the focus they give to particular issues. To maximize public attention, campaigns must limit their discussion of issues so that the media and the public can focus their limited attention effectively. This suggests that unlike the governing context, in an election, the causal arrow only moves in one direction. Candidates do not have time, resources, or clear incentive to change the direction of public opinion on an issue. Furthermore, campaigns consist of promises about future behavior, while much of the governing context consists of the actual behavior itself. Thus, during a campaign, candidates may pander a bit, knowing that they are not yet making policy but just talking about it.

In earlier work, Jacobs and Shapiro focus their attention on the electoral context. They present a theory of intentional or deliberate priming in which candidates use polling

data to overcome uncertainty caused by incomplete or imperfect information and then use it to "intentionally develop strategies to minimize risk and maximize benefits" (Jacobs and Shapiro 1994, 528). Medvic (2001, 51) also develops this theory of deliberate priming to meant that "campaigns emphasize certain topics with the intention of altering the criteria that voters use for candidate evaluation." In their study of President Kennedy's campaign, Jacobs and Shapiro present evidence that Kennedy's public statements were congruent with public opinion by coding and lagging the data containing Kennedy's campaign statements according to how long it took pollster Louis Harris to compile and present polling results (1 or 2 weeks). They conclude, "What is significant is not just that Kennedy cited issues identified by the public but that the frequency and strength of his stance was congruent or consistent with the public's preferred direction for policy" (Jacobs and Shapiro 1994, 532). However, they also present evidence that Kennedy took positions contrary to public opinion, and they stop short of suggesting that he ever explicitly changed his issue position to achieve congruence with the polling data.

As the example with President Kennedy demonstrates, issue positioning, is more complex than it initially appears. Candidates can select issue positions in two different ways during a campaign. First, candidates can pander in their selection of issues to address in the campaign but not alter their actual position on any one issue. There are already good reasons to expect that polls serve campaigns in this regard. As shown in Chapter 1, assisting campaigns with issue selection is one of the most important purposes of opinion research in a campaign (cf. Hamilton 1995).[43] Furthermore, in addition to the

[43] This view is not new, as exemplified in the following statement by pollster Louis Harris: "No poll I have ever been witness to has made the candidate a different man, has

work of Jacobs and Shapiro at the presidential level, research at the congressional level finds substantial congruence between issues discussed by congressional candidates and those named as important by voters (Abbe et al. 2003; Herrnson and Patterson 2000).

Another way to pander is for a candidate to actually alter his or her issue position. Previous work has demonstrated a link between the issue positions of constituents and those of candidates for Congress that persists despite the finding that the candidates have "imperfect" information about constituent opinion while the constituents are "almost totally uninformed" about issues (Miller and Stokes 1963). While there is congruence between voters and candidates on both issue positions and issue importance, the causality in both cases is still in question. In the case of issue importance congruence, it is possible that candidates use polling to find out what voters think is important and then name those same issues as important themselves. In the case of issue position congruence, the question is whether candidates change issue positions in response to polling or other information or whether voters change issue positions, either through persuasion efforts of campaigns or through projecting their positions onto favored candidates.

Kingdon's (1989) classic study on congressional voting speaks to the question of issue representation and will be applied here to move beyond members of Congress to include congressional candidates. Drawing upon extensive interviews, Kingdon finds that when issue positions are not congruent, the intensity of the attitude of both the

---

changed his position on an issue, has made him into what he is not. Especially with television, it is impossible to perform such transformations, even if it were proper. However, such polls can singularly alter the strategy of a candidate. They can tell him where to spend his time and money; which natural issues he has working for him, and which are boring the electorate to death; and how he can campaign most effectively" (Harris 1963, 6).

constituents and the member of Congress are critical in determining whose position holds sway. Kingdon's model is reproduced in Table 4.1 (Kingdon 1989, 39). The predicted outcomes from cases of mismatched intensities follow naturally: When the constituents' attitudes have high intensity but the attitude intensity of the member of Congress is low, the constituents are likely to get their way and vice versa. One would expect a similar result in a campaign; the more intense the attitude of the voters, the more likely it is that the candidate will pander, both in terms of issue selection and issue position. Another other interesting prediction occurs when both the constituents and the member of Congress have intense, but opposing, opinions. Kingdon finds that in these cases, members of Congress will seek to redefine the issue by explaining their behavior in terms more agreeable to their constituents, or they may turn to other sources of influence on their behavior such as interest groups or lobbyists. The election context makes things even more interesting on this question. Candidates may behave consistent with Kingdon's theory by trying to redefine the issue or redirect the conflict toward other issues.

In a similar vein to Kingdon, Geer argues that while increased precision and use of polls may encourage pandering (he uses the term "followership") on the part of politicians, improvement in polling methods and precision also offers the opportunity for what he terms "Wilsonian leadership." This occurs when leaders give voice to the latent concerns of the public (Geer 1996, 44). This is representation that goes beyond simple followership or delegate roles into the realm of issue entrepreneurship, in which politicians lead the public to think about new issues or existing issues in a new light in an

effort to make them salient and gain support for preferred policy positions. This is also very similar to how Jacobs and Shapiro (2000) describe "crafted talk."

While Geer focuses on elected officials, he also addresses the effect of the election context by suggesting that the probability that an elected official will be sensitive to public opinion is, in part, dependent upon the closeness of the previous election. This can predict a candidate's level of sensitivity in a current election as well. Geer also points out that Wilsonian leadership poses greater risks in terms of electoral consequences for politicians who make mistakes in estimating the salience of an issue to the public (Geer 1996, 100).

Drawing upon Jacobs and Shapiro (2000), Geer (1996), and Kingdon (1989), in Table 4.2 I present a summary of possible candidate behavior under a variety of issue position and saliency combinations. The top panel includes possibilities when the candidate and the majority of voters agree on the issue position and the bottom panel suggests the options for instances of issue position disagreement. Under issue position agreement, when the issue is salient to both the candidate and the voters, then the candidate is likely to focus on the issue throughout the campaign. This is intentional (Medvic 2001) or deliberate (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000) priming. To find substantial evidence for this would come as no surprise. When the issue is important to voters but not to the candidate, polling can be used for issue selection pandering.

I expect to find at least some evidence of this in the interview data since candidates do not need to change their position. When issues are important to the candidate but not to voters, an opportunity for "Wilsonian leadership" arises. I do not expect to find overwhelming evidence for this in the election context. This is due partly

to the observation by Geer, noted above, that attempting to increase the salience of an issue in a campaign is risky behavior for candidates in a close election. In fact, as Chapter 3 demonstrates, poll use by candidates is more likely when the previous election is close. It follows that when candidates face increased electoral competition they will avoid risky attempts to lead public opinion. Furthermore, as outlined in Chapter 2, even candidates who are not in a close election feel uncertainty about their probability of election (cf. Mann 1978), adding reason for them to avoid risky behavior in an election campaign. Finally, when both the candidate and voter agree on the issue but it is of little importance, there is no incentive to give the issue any attention. Given the incentives, I expect to find little, if any, evidence that candidates give attention to issues that no one thinks are salient.

The second panel of Table 4.2 lists possible behaviors when candidate and voter issue positions are not congruent. When this occurs issue position pandering is possible. The findings of Jacobs and Shapiro (2000) may carry over to the election context, and if so, I expect to find that issue position pandering is not a common practice. I also expect to find evidence of increased issue position pandering in hard-fought campaigns with expected close outcomes because in those situations issue position pandering has the largest expected benefit. When candidates and voters disagree on the issue and both find it important, then I expect that candidates will do what they can to avoid the issue. As Kingdon (1989) suggests, candidates may not avoid an issue but instead attempt to redefine the conflict. This could occur by changing the subject or by redefining the issue in terms more favorable to the candidate. Because an informed opponent is likely to

engage in some deliberate priming on these issues, I expect to find some evidence of candidates attempting to redefine the issue.

Data and Methods

The analysis in this chapter is based upon my interviews with 42 congressional campaign pollsters and party campaign committee staff. I chose to interview pollsters because they gather the opinion data and are therefore likely to be close observers of candidate behavior with regard to its use. In addition, the most experienced pollsters have worked with hundreds of candidates and party campaign committees over many years, and they can provide insight and generalizations that cover many situations. The interviewing followed a traditional elite interviewing methodology with a set of topics and questions but with a relatively open format. The Appendices contain more information about the interview questions and methodology.

One important question about the methodology that merits some attention here is whether or not the information given by pollsters about the role of issue representation is credible. Using the term "pandering" as I have done here, reflects the reality of a negative connotation that exists for pandering, especially issue position pandering, but also to some extent for issue selection pandering. Given the negative perception associated with pandering, why would a pollster admit that they are a party to something considered nefarious? However, interviews with pollsters should be considered credible. First, no one is better positioned to know about the influence of polling on candidate issue positioning. This is because pollsters know the public opinion data on each district and also have access to the development of the campaign. The pollsters I interviewed work on multiple campaigns each election cycle, and some have been doing so for many

election cycles. Thus, unlike the candidates or campaign managers, they have observed dozens, and in some cases, hundreds of candidates as they deal with polling data and present themselves to voters on the issues. Second, the views of pollsters on this issue are more trustworthy than the views of candidates could be. Because of the negative perception of pandering, it would be unlikely for a candidate to admit to changing an issue position in response to polling data. Third, while I conducted the interviews "on the record" I also allowed for the pollsters to go "off the record" or offer explanations or examples that were not for attribution during the course of the interview. This happened briefly during about one-third of the interviews. I also gave opportunities for pollsters to attribute behavior such as issue position pandering to other pollsters in an attempt to get them to talk openly. In most of the interviews, the pollsters appeared to share their perceptions openly and in all cases I found their answers to my questions to be sincere and credible.

Assessing the frequency of possible behaviors by congressional candidates and the role of pollsters and polling in that behavior will proceed along two parallel tracks. Interviews were taped, transcribed, and then coded for the relative frequency of certain behaviors. Though the information presented from the coding cannot be considered an estimate with generalizability, coding and tabulating the data does lend more precision to assertions about the frequency of certain behaviors. In addition to the tables, selected quotes and examples will be used from the interviews to illustrate important points.

Analysis

Table 4.3 contains a compilation of the pollster's reports of candidate behavior on the issues. One of the most striking conclusions in Table 4.3 is that issue selection

pandering was named by *all* of the pollsters as something they have seen candidates do; 32 pollsters or 94 percent of those addressing this question indicated it happened frequently with candidates they worked for, and the rest either indicated that it happened rarely, or in one case that it had not happened with a client but the behavior had been observed elsewhere. Mark Mellman expressed it well by saying, "The most important role [of polling] is to help the candidate figure out of all the things they could say about themselves, about the job, about what they want to do in the job, which are the one or two that if we repeat over and over again are most likely to get us the most votes."[44] Similarly, in language that was mirrored in several other interviews, Joe Goode said, "All these guys have 20 things they want to talk about and 50 ways they want to save the world for their district, and I think the primary function of a pollster is to refine that down to the two or three things that are really going to punch through, that people are going to listen to, that you can shape your overall strategy around."[45] This is an important way that the campaign context is different from the governing context. A member of Congress can certainly give attention to many issues in a two-year term, while a candidate for Congress has much less time to communicate with voters and risks not connecting with voters if attention is given to too many topics.

While Table 4.3 contains each pollster's observations about candidate behavior, Table 4.4 contains a summary of the pollster's own behavior. In the case of issue

---

[44] Mark Mellman (The Mellman Group), interview by J. Quin Monson, August 17, 2001, Washington, D.C.

[45] Joe Goode (Greenberg, Quinlan, Rosner Research), interview by J. Quin Monson, August 16, 2001, Washington, D.C.

selection pandering, 93 percent of the pollsters reported having advised a candidate to put increased emphasis on an issue. This shows that one reason that the polling information is so influential regarding issue selection by candidates is that the pollsters are clearly using the data to make recommendations to the campaigns.

Pollster Bill Dalbec gave an example of how a pollster might advise a candidate using a hypothetical Republican businessperson running in a district where education was a top issue in the minds of voters. According to Dalbec, the prototype Republican businessperson would "probably want to talk about taxes and the economy and the defense and things like that, [but] if you don't talk about education you risk being marginalized and ignored in the campaign. While [education] might not be your strength, you obviously have to have a strategy to deal with education. . . . If you ignore that issue, then you're going to be ignored by the media coverage and by the voters. You can't be out there with a major issue hanging over your head and not be talking about it"[46] Jim Lauer gave similar advice, suggesting that if the polling identified an issue of importance to voters, a candidate might "go out and do some homework on it" in order to be able to communicate effectively on the issue to voters. But he also cautioned, "If you try to be too cagey with voters they're going to figure it out immediately."[47] In other words, the homework by the candidate has to lead to increased sincerity on the issue, or efforts to connect with voters will not be effective.

---

[46] Bill Dalbec (The Wirthlin Group), interview by J. Quin Monson, August 7, 2001, McLean, Virginia.

[47] Jim Lauer (Lauer, Lalley, and Victoria), telephone interview by J. Quin Monson, August 24, 2001.

Reflecting the findings of Jacobs and Shapiro (1994) and Medvic (2001), the use of polling for purposes of intentional or deliberate priming is widespread in congressional elections. In Table 4.3, 73 percent of the pollsters reported that candidates had frequently used polling to adjust the presentation of a campaign issue. Likewise, in Table 4.4, 90 percent of the pollsters reported having advised a candidate to adjust the presentation of a campaign issue. Once the two or three most important campaign issues are identified, the polling is used to find the words and phrases that most effectively communicate the candidate's position. While Jacobs and Shapiro (2000) coin the term "crafted talk" to refer to the efforts of elected officials to fine tune their message in order to persuade the public by raising the saliency of an issue, in the campaign context, crafted talk is used in an effort to find the most effective way to talk about an issue that is already salient. As Joe Goode put it, "Generally . . . we're going to find something that this guy *wants* to do or talk about that's going to appeal to that constituency" (emphasis added).[48]

On occasion polling will assist the campaign in finding a "silver bullet," or an issue that both the candidate and public agree on and are passionate about. Of these situations Chris Wilson said, "When those two levels of passion or those two lines of passion intersect, that's when a campaign is magical, and you know you're in from day one."[49] More typical is the combination of issue selection pandering and deliberate priming described by Nathan Henry. "One of the more challenging things is to push a candidate off what they want to do in an ideal world to what they have to do if they want

[48] Joe Goode interview.

[49] Chris Wilson (Wilson Research Strategies), telephone interview by J. Quin Monson, February 15, 2002.

to be successful in a race. . . . You can't make them into somebody they're not, but what you can do is talk about one thing they believe in strongly versus another thing they believe in strongly."[50] Several pollsters shared an example that they commonly shared with clients that involved drawing two circles that intersected representing public opinion and the candidate's issue positions and explaining that the purpose of polling was to identify the area where those circles intersected. As Diane Feldman explained, "The poll takes who the candidate is and what they want to talk about and what they're passionate about and is the instrument that listens to the voters and what they want to hear about and are passionate about and finds the space where those two combine. And within that space you generally find the message in the winning strategy."[51] Similarly, Dee Allsop said, "It's critical to identify what the candidate cares about, in terms of a list of issues . . . then you find the same thing for the public . . . and then try to find ways that they overlap."[52]

Recall that in Table 4.2, I suggested that one possibility for congressional candidates is to undertake "Wilsonian leadership" or issue entrepreneurship in an effort to make an issue salient to voters (Geer 1996). When asked about this in interviews, pollsters largely rejected this, saying it was not appropriate for the campaign. One indicated, "This is an election campaign, not a public education effort. If you want to engage in a public education effort, there are a lot of ways to do that and running for

---

[50] Nathan Henry (The Mellman Group), interview by J. Quin Monson, August 2, 2001, Washington, D.C.

[51] Diane Feldman (The Feldman Group), telephone interview by J. Quin Monson, February 28, 2002.

[52] Dee Allsop (The Wirthlin Group), interview with J. Quin Monson, January 14, 2001, Alpine, Utah.

office is probably not the best way."[53] Several expressed the notion that the main objective of any campaign is to win and that any effort to lead public opinion should be attempted after gaining victory. As Geer (1996, 100) points out, attempts at issue entrepreneurship are risky affairs. Although polling data can help reduce the risk, a mistake can be costly, especially when easier routes to victory exist. Fred Yang gave an example from Senator Russ Feingold's first campaign for Senate. Against the advice of his campaign advisors, Feingold insisted upon focusing on the deficit and political reform during his 1992 campaign instead of using the condition of the economy to focus on jobs, something that was much more salient to Wisconsin voters. However, in this case, the strategy worked for Feingold because the issues solidified his attempt to be viewed as an outsider and a maverick, something that was appealing to voters. Jacobs and Shapiro (1994) make the point that issues and candidate image usually work hand in hand, and one can be used to reinforce the other.

One reason candidates avoid trying to lead public opinion relates to one of the cornerstones of campaign polling: using information from the poll to focus campaign resources as efficiently as possible. Along these lines, pollster Mark Mellman outlines five possible campaign activities, listed in order from least difficult to most difficult: (1) activating latent partisans, (2) reinforcing already held beliefs, (3) filling empty heads, (4) altering the saliency of an issue (or issues) for the voters, and (5) changing minds. As Mellman explained, leading public opinion by changing minds or attempting to bring latent issues to the surface are among the most difficult tasks and should be avoided when easier routes to victory are available (Medvic 2000b, 9).

[53] The pollster requested anonymity for this comment.

Finally, an important aspect to note in the case of issue position agreement is that issues considered important by less than a majority of voters may be extremely important to smaller subgroups of voters that make up a candidate's winning coalition. Thus, while candidates may not give much attention to the issue in their campaign either because it is not important to them or to most voters, they may find ways to target the message to specific groups. Dave Sackett gave the following hypothetical example, "[Suppose] we're weak amongst women over the age of 45 in these four counties in the district, and the other three counties are okay. . . . We'll go back and look at that group and say, 'What are the issues that they care about? What are the things they seem to be focused on?'"[54] This kind of targeting is especially done through direct mail, radio ads, and even cable television, all of which are capable of "narrowcasting" or narrowly focusing a campaign message to a carefully targeted subgroup of voters. As discussed in Chapter 1, identifying subgroups for issue targeting is also a major purpose of campaign polling identified by the pollsters.

Recall from Table 4.2 that when candidates and voters disagree on a topic and the topic is important to voters but not as important to the candidate, the opportunity arises for the candidate to change his or her position on the issue; that is, engage in issue position pandering. The pollsters soundly rejected this, asserting that it was not something that candidates did or that they encouraged candidates to do. In the interviews only 9 percent of the responses (3 pollsters) indicated that candidates frequently engaged in issue position pandering. However, another 42 percent indicated that they knew of

[54] Dave Sackett (The Tarrance Group) interview by J. Quin Monson, August 1, 2001, Alexandria, Virginia.

instances but that it only happened rarely and another 15 percent had not seen a candidate they worked for engaging in issue position pandering but knew of examples where it had occurred. This leaves 33 percent who claimed to have never seen issue position pandering at all. In sum, according to the pollsters, issue position pandering by congressional candidates does occur but is rare.

Not only do pollsters see issue position pandering as relatively uncommon, they discourage it. Table 4.4 shows that only 11 percent of the pollsters admitted to having ever advised a client to change their position on an issue. Several pollsters expressed visceral reactions to my questions about the topic. One called the idea "disgusting"[55] while others explained that helping candidates determine their issue positions with polling was clearly not how they saw their role.[56] For example, Diane Feldman said, "I got into this business because I believe in things and I wanted to work for people and help people who believe in things."[57] In some cases I did not even need to ask a question about issue position taking and polls—the pollsters preemptively offered their views on this point in response to a question about the general purpose of polling in a political campaign and quickly rejected the idea of issue position pandering on the part of candidates. Because of the normative issues involved, clearly this is a topic on which pollsters have well-defined views.

---

[55] Lisa Grove (LGD Insight), telephone interview by J. Quin Monson, February 20, 2002.

[56] Neil Newhouse (Public Opinion Strategies), interview by J. Quin Monson, August 1, 2001, Alexandria, Virginia. Fred Yang (Garin/Hart/Yang Research Group), interview with J. Quin Monson, February 7, 2002, Washington, D.C.

[57] Chris Wilson interview. Diane Feldman expressed similar sentiments.

When the topic of changing issue positions to reflect voters was discussed further in the interviews, several reasons were offered as to why issue position pandering is very rare on the part of congressional candidates. First, many pollsters suggested that the great majority of their clients come to a race with well-developed ideologies and therefore have thought out their positions on many issues before they collect polling data. As Kellyanne Conway put it, "Polling can fill . . . the void where one lacks a certain core or beliefs. Fortunately, my experience is that applies to very few people. Very few people."[58] Others expressed the same view in a different way suggesting that even if they tried to convince a candidate to change an issue position, they would be unlikely to succeed.[59] Not only do candidates have positions on core issues, but the campaigns themselves are waged around those core issues, so the issues most likely to be at the center of a campaign are those that the candidates are most likely to have well-formed views on.[60]

The process of questionnaire construction for a political poll, as described by the pollsters, also illustrates the point that candidates come to the campaign with well-formed

---

[58] Kellyanne Conway (The Polling Company), interview by J. Quin Monson, August 15, 2001, Washington, D.C. Similarly, Linda DiVall said, "I don't deal with too many candidates who come in not knowing what their opinions are on issues. They're running for Congress because they have some firmly held beliefs, because they come from ideological backgrounds that suggest to them why they're running in the first place, [and] because they want to change something fundamental about Washington or some significant problem." Linda DiVall (American Viewpoint), telephone interview by J. Quin Monson, March 5, 2002.

[59] For example: "The reality is that I have had very little luck in my career getting candidates to changes their opinions on things." Brad Bannon (Bannon Communications), telephone interview by J. Quin Monson, August 15, 2001.

[60] Karin Johanson, (formerly of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee), interview by J. Quin Monson, August 1, 2001, Washington, D.C.

issue positions and are thus unlikely to engage in issue position pandering. The pollsters will typically only test issue positions that the candidate has already taken or has expressed a willingness to take during the campaign. Preparation for the first benchmark poll usually includes an extensive compilation of the candidate's positions on the issues. This may mean research on both candidates that produces extensive information including an analysis of voting for incumbents or other candidates who have previously held office, newspaper clippings about the candidate, and background material produced by the campaign such as interviews with the candidate and his or her family and associates. Once the background information is assembled, the candidate can get involved in the process. As Mark Mellman indicated, "Sometimes candidates dictate the case they want to make whether or not it is a strong one for them or not. We then design a survey to test the relative efficacy of those directions."[61] While it is true that pollsters will include issue items in the survey based on their experience with other campaigns and their sense of national public opinion trends, several expressed the idea that testing positions that a candidate is unwilling to take is a waste of resources.[62] In sum, in seeking to determine the direction of the causal arrow between polling and issue positions, it is important to know what comes first. In the great majority of cases,

[61] Mark Mellman interview.

[62] David Beattie put it this way, "We don't want to test something for a candidate that they're not willing to say . . . [or] support." Dave Beattie (Hamilton Beattie Research), telephone interview by J. Quin Monson, March 6, 2002.

candidates begin with issue positions and then conduct polling about them and not the other way around.[63]

Even if candidates wanted to change positions, whether related to the polling data or not, doing so would leave them open to the charge of political opportunism and eventually hurt their campaign.[64] One pollster said that he had occasionally talked candidates out of changing their positions, even if their views had actually changed saying, "If they're already on record [with an issue position], I will show them what flip flopping can do to them. Talk about distrust, that's a distrust factor."[65]

While pollsters clearly stated that very little issue position pandering occurred, most of them were willing to admit that it did occur once in awhile, and a few candidly admitted to having advised a client to change a position. One indicated, "I always approach such situations very gingerly. Perhaps raising the issue, but also raising the caveat that you've got to live with yourself and you have to respect your philosophy. . . . You do it very, very gingerly. It's not very often that happens."[66] In the instances in which candidates changed issue positions in response to polling data, I found support for

---

[63] It is conceivable that a candidate could have relied on or been influenced by polling to take an issue position at some earlier point in time or that a candidate might rely on some other measure of public opinion that would influence his or her issue position. Uncovering evidence of that kind of behavior would be extremely difficult and is outside the scope of this project.

[64] Linda DiVall interview. Brad Bannon interview. Kellyanne Conway interview.

[65] Steve Kinney (Public Opinion Strategies), telephone interview by J. Quin Monson, May 16, 2002.

[66] David Petts (Bennett, Petts, and Blumenthal), telephone interview with J. Quin Monson, February 18, 2002.

the idea that issue importance plays a critical role. One pollster stated, "The only time that I can recall [a candidate changing issue positions in response to polling] is a situation where . . . the candidate says 'I don't know anything about this issue. I don't care anything about this issue and if you're telling me that to get elected I need to be on this side or that side, I'm willing to consider that. You make me a substantive case of why I should and you tell me politically. . . [and] I'm there because I don't know anything about it.'"[67] Another pollster gave the example of candidates who occasionally inquire with the pollster about public opinion because they just received a call from a reporter about an issue they had never really considered before.[68] Thus, in cases where candidates align themselves more closely with voters, an important prerequisite is that they have not already formed a position or at least they do not feel strongly about the issue. Again, however, according to the pollsters these conditions are unusual and as a consequence, so is issue position pandering.

Another opening for issue position pandering occurs if there is a change in salience of the issue to voters. This could take on two forms, a tangible change in the saliency or a change in the composition of the constituency, either through redistricting or because the candidate is running in a different constituency, moving from the state legislature to the U.S. House of Representatives or from the House to the Senate. Instances of the latter came up in several interviews, particularly when candidates go from running in a congressional district to running a statewide campaign for senate or

[67] The pollster requested anonymity for this comment.

[68] The pollster did not respond to a request for permission to attribute this comment.

governor. Chris Wilson suggested several examples surrounding abortion politics and the Supreme Court's Webster v. Reproductive Health Services decision in 1989 in which the Court upheld a Missouri law that restricted abortion rights.[69] In the wake of the Webster decision, Wilson pointed to several pro-life members of Congress who had changed their position. While there is not evidence that public opinion shifted direction on abortion, the Webster decision by the Court served to activate the issue in the minds of voters and led to a change in position when some candidates ran for a different office.[70]

A more common approach to issues by candidates could be more aptly labeled "issue position adjustment" rather than issue position change. One pollster noted that a more common occurrence is that candidates stay on the same side of an issue but adjust their position to more closely reflect voters. This was referred to by one pollster as "the interstices of the issue."[71] Margie Omero conceded that position change might occur "on a very subtle level. . . . Should we cut taxes by this amount or that amount?"[72]

---

[69] *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*, 492 U.S. 490 (1989).

[70] Chris Wilson interview. The three examples that Wilson pointed out were John Rowland, Peter Torkildsen, and Jim Courter. Rowland was elected to Congress in 1984 and was elected governor of Connecticut in 1994 after running unsuccessfully in 1990. He resigned in 2004 in the wake of an ethical scandal. Peter Torkildsen was elected to Congress from Massachusetts in 1992. In September 1990 Republican state Sen. Paul Cellucci, Weld's running mate, beat Rep. Torkildsen, 60 percent to 40 percent in the race for lieutenant governor. Oddly, Torkildsen was pro-life in his statewide run, then changed to pro-choice for his successful congressional run. He was defeated in 1998. Jim Courter, was elected to Congress from New Jersey in 1978 and served until 1991. He ran for governor against Jim Florio in 1989 and lost. He had a very strong pro-life record as member of Congress and changed to pro-choice for the governor's race.

[71] The pollster requested anonymity for this comment.

[72] Margie Omero (Momentum Analysis), interview by J. Quin Monson, January 15, 2001, Washington, D.C.

In such cases it can become difficult to distinguish between issue selection pandering and issue position pandering, but clearly some adjusting occurs at the margins of issues.

Another major theme drawn from the interviews is about behavior when the candidate and voters disagree on an issue of importance. When this happens, pollsters advise the candidate not to talk about the issue at all. They were emphatic about this in part because some of them noted that they had difficulty at times convincing candidates to follow their advice on this point. As Bill Lee put it, "He's got to shut the hell up, change the subject altogether, or develop an issue as strong [as] or much stronger than the one there's a problem with."[73]

They further noted that aside from a stubborn candidate, it is particularly difficult to keep the candidate off an issue when it is raised repeatedly by an opponent. This is especially true when the opponent has accurate polling data too and therefore has knowledge of what issues are likely to be problematic for the opposition. When an opposing candidate raises difficult issues, candidate behavior fits the observation of Kingdon (1989) nicely; candidates seek to redefine the conflict by changing the terms of the debate if not the topic altogether. Several Republicans noted examples with abortion politics. Ed Brookover noted that "when the opponent points out that you have a strongly held position that conflicts with the majority of voters, the candidate can shift the focus of the debate." As an example he suggested that instead of debating abortion a candidate in this situation could change the terms of the debate to partial-birth abortion in the third

[73] Bill Lee (TelOpinion Research), telephone interview by J. Quin Monson, March 6, 2002.

trimester.[74] Or, as Bill Dalbec explained, "In many cases while [the voters] might disagree with your position overall, they might agree with your philosophy that parents should be involved when a minor child is involved in an abortion, or that federal funding should not be used to pay for these, or other reasonable restrictions that are on the pro-life side."[75]

Conclusion

The results from the interviews presented here suggest that candidates make use of polling for a variety of reasons related to issues and that the use is situational and strongly related to the importance placed on the issue by both the candidates and the voters. Substantial evidence was found for the use of polling to deliberately prime voters when issue agreement and high saliency were present for the issue. Candidates engage in this kind of campaigning and pollsters encourage it. Issue selection pandering is also a common tactic employed by candidates and encouraged by pollsters.

In addition, this chapter adds further evidence to substantially discredit the notion of widespread issue position pandering by candidates. The pollsters admitted that it happened, but rarely, and named a number of reasons why it should occur rarely. Pollsters find it distasteful. Candidates come to races predisposed on issues and unlikely to change positions, especially because the high saliency issues for voters and candidates are often the same issues. Finally, the actual polling process including the collection of information about the candidates and questionnaire construction, make it very difficult to

---

[74] Ed Brookover (formerly of the National Republican Congressional Committee), interview by J. Quin Monson, February 7, 2002, Washington, D.C.

[75] Bill Dalbec interview.

make the case that polling precedes position taking very often. While pandering occurs rarely, it is most likely to occur at the margins of issues.

One implication is that political polling is not the nefarious bane of democracy that some critics make it out to be. At its worst, polling occasionally aids and abets issue position pandering. More likely, however, it is used to simply help candidates communicate effectively and efficiently with voters.

There are some important limitations to the conclusions presented here. The finding that politicians do not use polling to pander on their issue positions does not necessarily mean that politicians do not change their issue positions in response to other factors. My conclusions about issue position change are limited to the influence of polling. It could be that some candidates do not need any polling to conclude that they are not electable unless they adopt a particular issue position. However, these decisions could be made long before a pollster becomes involved in the process, and analysis of these decisions is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, based on the interviews conducted for this chapter, the notion that campaign polling drives issue position pandering by candidates can be rejected.

		Constituency Intensity: High	Constituency Intensity: Low
Own Intensity	High	Redefine conflict and/or consider other actors	Prefer own position
	Low	Prefer constituency position	Consider other actors

Source: (Kingdon 1989, 39)

Table 4.1 Kingdon's Weighting Intensities

Issue Position Agreement

Candidate Importance	Voter Importance: High	Voter Importance: Low
High	*Deliberate Priming* Focus on issue throughout the campaign	*Wilsonian Leadership* and/or *Crafted Talk* Talk about issue in attempt to make salient or target message to sub-groups
Low	*Issue selection pandering* Talk about issue	Ignore issue

Issue Position Disagreement

Candidate Importance	Voter Importance: High	Voter Importance: Low
High	Do not talk about issue If necessary, change the subject or redefine issue	Do not talk about issue
Low	*Issue position pandering* or *followership*	Ignore issue

Table 4.2 Possible Candidate Behavior by Issue Agreement and Importance

Question from Interview Coding Sheet	**Yes, Frequently**	**Yes, Rarely**	**No, but knew of examples**	**No, never**
Issue Position Pandering: "Did the pollster report that a candidate had changed a campaign issue position (e.g. pro-choice to pro-life) as a result of polling data?"	9 (3)	42 (14)	15 (5)	33 (11)
Issue Selection Pandering: "Did the pollster report that a candidate had put increased emphasis on a campaign issue position (e.g. discuss Medicare position instead of tax position) as a result of polling data?"	94 (32)	3 (1)	3 (1)	0 (0)
Deliberate Priming: Did the pollster report that a candidate had ever adjusted the presentation of a campaign issue position (e.g. emphasis on cutting car registration taxes instead of cutting income taxes) as a result of polling data?	73 (16)	23 (5)	5 (1)	0 (0)

Notes: Cells contain row percentages. N is in parentheses. Some questions were not addressed in all interviews.

Table 4.3 Pollster Reports of Candidate Behavior on Issue Representation

Question from Interview Coding Sheet	Yes	No
Issue Position Pandering: "Did the pollster report ever advising a candidate to change a campaign issue position (e.g. pro-choice to pro-life) as a result of polling data?"	11 (3)	89 (24)
Issue Selection Pandering: "Did the pollster report ever advising a candidate to put increased emphasis on a campaign issue position (e.g. discuss Medicare position instead of tax position) as a result of polling data?"	93 (28)	7 (2)
Deliberate Priming: Did the pollster report ever advising a candidate to adjust the presentation of a campaign issue position (e.g. emphasis on cutting car registration taxes instead of cutting income taxes) as a result of polling data?	90 (18)	10 (2)

Notes: Cells contain row percentages. N is in parentheses. Some questions were not addressed in all interviews.

Table 4.4 Pollster Reports of Their Own Behavior on Issue Representation

CHAPTER 5

EXPLORATORY POLLING AND CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT

The decision of a potential candidate for Congress to actually run is a topic of interest to both scholars and political practitioners. Of particular interest to scholars is the importance of candidate decision-making and quality to the level of competitiveness and the eventual outcome. Jacobson (1990a and 2004) and Herrnson (2004), for example, highlight the importance of candidate quality to congressional election outcomes. Jacobson (1990a, chapter 4) contends that "you can't beat somebody with nobody" and attributes the 40 year spell of Democratic control of Congress that lasted until 1994, in part, to the general weakness of Republican challengers and candidates for open seats during that period.

In their seminal study of potential candidate decision-making, Fowler and McClure (1989, 6) indicate that while election campaigns are consequential, "the electoral potential of most candidates and the competitiveness of most elections are usually set long before the media and the voters take notice of what is going on. . . It is the unrecognized, unexamined decisions not to run made by so many strong candidates in winter and spring that more firmly fix the voters' actual choices in November." Their point underscores how important understanding the decision-making process of potential candidates is to our understanding of congressional elections. Candidates who take

institutional, structural, personal, or other factors into account when considering a run for Congress are referred to in the literature as "strategic," "rational," or "ambitious," candidates (Maisel et al. 1994). While definitions of what constitutes a "strategic" candidate differ in their details, one thing all strategic candidates hold in common is that they choose a time to run that favors their chances of success.

Given the effect of candidate quality on election outcomes, it is important to understand the process by which candidates are recruited and decide to run for office. Strategic candidates use the information they can gather to make a calculation about their probability of success. In our candidate-centered system, decisions in most races to run for office depend upon actions of the potential candidates themselves. In a small subset of the most competitive races, congressional campaign committees have long played a role in candidate recruitment (Herrnson 1988, 48-56; 2004, 35-48). In seeking to maximize its likelihood of expanding its membership in Congress, each campaign committee needs to find and recruit the strongest possible candidates for the subset of races in which they have the best chance of success.

This chapter seeks to expand our understanding of the role that polling plays in the candidate recruitment efforts of parties as well as the decision-making process of potential candidates. Previous work on candidate recruitment and emergence suggests that polling is not an important factor in the decision-making process. The evidence presented in this chapter will show that a significant amount of exploratory polling, or polling work done prior to a potential candidate's decision to seek office, does occur. There are a limited number of exploratory polls done in each campaign cycle, but the races they are done in are the ones with the potential for the most competition. Thus, the

limited number does *not* mean limited importance. To the contrary, if the polling information is important to the decision to run in these races, the exploratory polling could impact the outcome of the very races that have the greatest possibility of switching from one party to the other and perhaps changing partisan control of Congress. In addition to demonstrating the limited use but high importance of exploratory polling, this chapter presents the most detailed description available of the content and interpretation of exploratory polls.

Polling in the Candidate Emergence Literature

The existing work regarding candidate emergence points to two important points. First, within most congressional districts, numerous *potential* "quality" candidates exist, and many of them have ambitions to run for Congress (Fowler and McClure 1989; Maisel and Stone 1997; Maisel, Stone, and Maestas 2001). Second, several factors can play a role in a potential candidate's decision about whether or not to seek office. Some of the more critical considerations include the partisan makeup of the district, whether or not the candidate must run against an incumbent, the likelihood of a contested primary, the strength of the local party organization, and the personal costs of running in terms of family and career consequences.[76] Another important consideration that has received some attention in the campaign finance literature is the fundraising prowess of the incumbent (e.g. Box-Steffensmeier 1996; Goodliffe 2001). Common to much of this literature is the idea that a critical factor influencing the decision to run is the candidate's

[76] See Fowler and McClure 1989 or Maisel et al. 1994 for a broader review of these considerations.

self-perceived chance of winning. Investigating how those chances are gauged is an important part of this chapter.

For instance, Fowler and McClure (1989) investigate the decisions to run for Congress of the potential candidates in New York's 30th congressional district leading up to the 1984 and 1986 elections. The 1984 election featured an open seat as a result of a retiring incumbent and had numerous potential candidates. With an incumbent in place for 1986, the potential field narrowed dramatically. One major conclusion of the authors is that the complexities of modern political campaigns require potential candidates to weigh the pros and cons of running for Congress months before Election Day. They conclude that a crucial consideration in the decision to seek office is whether or not the potential candidate perceives that they have a chance to actually win. Maisel, Stone, and Maestas (2001) find a similar role for the self-perceived odds of winning on the eventual decision. They report that potential candidates who see their chances of winning as better than 50/50 are much more likely to actually declare as candidates.

But just how do potential candidates gauge their chances of winning an election? Given the importance of the probability of winning to candidate emergence, the potential exists for polling information to play a role in the decision-making process. This is because polling could dramatically reduce the uncertainty associated with gauging the probability of victory. It seems possible that polling could provide a very clear picture, even months beforehand, of one's chances at election to Congress. Mann (1978, 76) shares this view indicating: "The potential vulnerability of an incumbent can often be assessed with an early reading of public opinion in his district; the telltale signs are

mediocre job-approval scores and absolute levels of voter preference of less than 50 percent."

Polling has the potential at least to play a prominent role in decisions to run, especially for strategic challengers. Early polling could enable a potential candidate to detect weaknesses in an incumbent member, evaluate the favorable and unfavorable characteristics of the electorate, and (especially in the absence of an incumbent) evaluate his or her own name recognition or favorability. All of this information would increase the accuracy and objectivity of strategic calculations about one's chances of winning election and thus aid a decision to run for office.

While it seems plausible that polling would play a role in candidate calculations, the existing literature on candidate emergence does not present much evidence to support the idea. For example, Fowler and McClure (1989, 68) find that candidates seek information to gauge their chances at winning election, but instead of polls, they rely on "their instincts, their personal advisers, and the flow of rumor and intelligence that circulated among local activists in both parties." They list some reasons that polls remain unused in decisions to seek office. First, the potential candidates themselves seem to place a higher priority on the personal aspects of the campaign, such as the financial resources available to them, family considerations, and whether or not they have the stomach for a hard-hitting campaign. Second, for most potential candidates, polling would only confirm what they already know about their own visibility and name recognition, namely that it is very low. Third, most undeclared candidates do not have the resources available to pay for polling in the early stages of a campaign. Fourth, most undeclared candidates are poorly equipped to properly interpret and use polling data in a

decision to run. Fowler and McClure (1989, 69) conclude that a poll done before a candidate announces "is more a statement of intent by a politician, a sign that he or she is already planning a campaign and raising the necessary money, than a tool to help the politician decide whether to run in the first place."

More recent case study work also asserts little role for polling in potential candidates' decisions to run (Kazee 1994). However, accepting that polling plays no part in candidate emergence and recruitment based on the case study research would be premature. While the contributions of Fowler and McClure (1989) and Kazee (1994) are critical to understanding candidate emergence, because they rely on case studies, the research covers only the decisions of relatively few candidates. In addition, the cases selected for study include very small number of potentially competitive races and thus virtually no strategic candidates that one might expect to incorporate polling data in their decision making process. For example, of the eight case studies in the Kazee volume, only one of the challengers put forth a serious campaign—spending just over $400,000 and receiving 43 percent of the vote. Of the other seven, none spent over $100,000 or received more than 40 percent of the vote (Kazee 1994, 182). In the Fowler and McClure case, two potential candidates actually *did* have access to early polling data. In one case, the American Medical Association Political Action Committee (AMPAC) paid for an exploratory poll that was turned over to Louise Slaughter. However, she decided not to run for the Democratic nomination in 1984 before receiving the results. But, she did reemerge in 1986 to capture the nomination and beat an incumbent in the general election. The other potential candidate who commissioned a poll eventually became a declared candidate.

In other sources anecdotal evidence exists that polling is used by potential candidates in their decision-making calculus. Crespi (1989) contends that early polling constricts the choices available to the public because potential candidates who do poorly in early polls take themselves out of the running. If the polls are publicly distributed, the information affects media attention given to potential candidates as well as early fundraising efforts. For example, Crespi cites media reports that indicated that Rudolph Guiliani decided against seeking the Republican nomination for the U.S. Senate seat in New York after seeing polling evidence regarding the strength of incumbent Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (Crespi 1989, 27).

The role of polling in candidate recruitment by party campaign committees is not yet well understood. Herrnson (1988 and 2004) makes only passing references to polling as a part of the candidate recruitment process. However, the potential utility of using polls as a tool of candidate recruitment has been noted in accounts by journalists. For example, in an article for *National Journal* on candidate recruiting techniques Louis Jacobson (2001, 2080) wrote, "Once someone is mentally prepared for the rigors of a campaign, the surest way to actually get the would-be candidate in to the race is to present seductive poll results." Gary Jacobson, however, is critical of the caution that polling and other sources of information breed in campaign committees and potential candidates. Jacobson writes:

> Belief that an incumbent is vulnerable leads to decisions that produce the kind of vigorous challenges that make for close contests which incumbents sometimes lose. The problem is that expectations are shaped by information that is far more unreliable than is commonly recognized. Indeed, the illusion of accurate information, based on polling and other research now carried out by potential candidates, party committees, and even some PACS, breeds overly cautious behavior and missed opportunities" (1993, 133).

If unexpected events occur after filing deadlines have passed, the parties face a shifting strategic environment and are unable to take advantage of it because the party failed to recruit a strong candidate thinking the seat would not likely be in play. The assertion that this problem is serious rests on the accuracy and interpretation of the information available to the potential candidates and parties.

Polling may be an important influence on potential candidate, but it also may lead party campaign committees to make allocation mistakes, perhaps by not recruiting strong candidates in places where, if the right candidate emerged, a competitive election would ensue. In sum, with the high potential for polling information to provide information crucial to the decision-making process of both the party and potential candidate, polling would be expected to figure prominently in the candidate emergence literature; however, this is not the case. The existing case studies of candidate emergence do not uncover a prominent role for polling (Fowler and McClure 1989; Kazee 1994) and the existing survey based study does not ask potential candidates about whether or not polling was used in their decision-making process (Maisel, Stone, and Maestas 2001).

Expectations

Given the potential for polling in the pre-candidacy stage and the lack of evidence that much is done in this regard, the first task is to roughly estimate the amount of exploratory polling that occurs. If there is a significant amount, then the next task is to more clearly characterize the kind of candidates and races in which exploratory polling plays a role and clearly identify who sponsors the polling. Based on existing anecdotal evidence one would expect to find that at least some exploratory polling occurs but that it

does not occur in every instance. Expectations regarding the type of potential candidates most likely to use exploratory polling are that they are "strategic" or "quality" candidates. In other words they have some combination of previous elective office experience and/or access to resources (personal or otherwise) to pay for the data collection and are especially attuned to what the exploratory polling can tell them about their chances of success. Examination of the evidence of potential candidates who seek polling advice in the pre-candidacy stage will be limited to challengers and candidates for open seats. Incumbents, while likely to commission polling as they decide whether or not to seek reelection, are assumed to be running for reelection until they announce otherwise, and it would be difficult to distinguish whether or not the polling is done before they declare their intentions for reelection.

Another expectation is that most of the exploratory polling is not commissioned directly by the potential candidates. Most potential candidates lack the financial resources for polling, and to further complicate matters, commissioning a poll may require a formal organization (and disclosure with the Federal Election Commission) through which to make payment. FEC regulations do not require formal organization for potential candidates who are merely "testing the waters" but even unannounced candidates must comply with contribution limits for funds raised prior to their decision (Federal Election Commission 1999, 3). Thus, two likely alternatives to candidate sponsored exploratory polling are those conducted by political parties or independent interest groups.

Data and Methods

The analysis in this chapter again draws from my interviews with 42 congressional campaign pollsters and party campaign committee staff. Interviewing this group will be informative on the questions raised above because both pollsters and party committee staff are close observers of exploratory polling and candidate recruitment efforts as well as candidate behavior with regards to its use. The pollsters and campaign committee staff have collectively worked with hundreds of candidates over many years and can thus provide insight and generalizations that cover many situations. The interviewing followed a traditional elite interviewing methodology with a set of topics and questions but following a relatively open format. Appendix A contains more information about the interview methodology, the representativeness of those interviewed, and coding procedures. Appendix B contains an interview protocol in which the questions are listed. Appendix C contains a list of those interviewed and Appendix D provides a copy of the coding sheet.

How Much Exploratory Polling is Done?

Exploratory Polling by Candidates

A summary of the reports by pollsters about the frequency of exploratory polling is presented in Table 5.1. All but one of the pollsters interviewed indicated that they had conducted some exploratory polling for a client. When the incidence of exploratory polling is broken down by the type of client, 76 percent had conducted exploratory polls for a House campaign committee and 74 percent for a prospective House candidate. The frequency of experience with exploratory polling in Senate races was lower, with 50 percent who reported exploratory work for a Senate campaign committee and 45 percent

who had done work at some point in time for a prospective Senate candidate. The conclusion to be drawn from Table 5.1 is that the pollsters interviewed have considerable experience conducting exploratory polls for a variety of clients and are qualified to make judgments about the quantity, content, and likely effects of exploratory polling based on that experience. However, it would be erroneous to conclude from this table that most prospective House candidates conduct exploratory polling or that more exploratory polling is done in House races compared to Senate races or by House campaign committees compared to Senate campaign committees.[77]

When discussing exploratory polling, the pollsters usually hastened to indicate that for the typical House race exploratory polling for undeclared candidates is not the norm in every race. Thus, most of the time, particularly in open seat races where the opportunity to run may be long-awaited, candidates make a decision to run without referring to polling. Why? The reasons given by Fowler and McClure (noted previously) for not conducting polling are still relevant. For example, before considering polling a potential candidate must clear other personal hurdles such as assessing personal resources and family considerations. Once these hurdles are cleared the decision may oftentimes already be made and any polling simply confirms that the decision-making is headed in the right direction. As Diane Feldman put it, "The reality is if they're raising money to do

[77] The higher percentage for pollsters doing exploratory polling in House races is likely simply an artifact that there are more potential opportunities for exploratory polling in House races. Similarly, the higher proportion of pollsters conducting polling for House campaign committees versus Senate campaign committees is likely a function of the Senate committees not dividing the work amongst as many pollsters. This has certainly been the case for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee in recent election cycles.

a poll, interviewing pollsters, hiring a pollster, going through the process of talking about how they would win, they've basically probably made the decision that they want to run."[78] However, sometimes at the stage when the other hurdles to running for Congress have been cleared, the exploratory poll is done because it helps to confirm the decision. Bruce Blakeman summarized it by saying, "What they're looking for is validation of what they already want to do . . . they're 90 percent there and just getting some numbers to show that this is really doable."[79]

As noted above, even with many reasons not to conduct exploratory polling, it is still done with some frequency among potential House candidates. In addition to the resources to pay for it, several themes emerged from the interviews that appear to make pre-decision exploratory polling more likely among candidates. Exploratory polling is more commonly done by prospective candidates who have the most to lose, in terms of prestige, by running and losing a campaign. Most commonly this is a currently office-holder trying to decide whether to give up the current job to seek higher office, but it could also be a very prominent business person who does not want to be embarrassed by a losing campaign. Linda DiVall shared an example of this kind of strategic thinking on the part of a potential candidate. Leading up to his first run for Congress in 1994, Current South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford commissioned an exploratory poll. DiVall indicated the polling was very influential on his eventual decision to enter the

---

[78] Diane Feldman (The Feldman Group), telephone interview by J. Quin Monson, February 28, 2002.

[79] Bruce Blakeman (formerly with Wirthlin Worldwide), interview by J. Quin Monson, February 7, 2002, Washington, D.C.

race. Upon announcing his candidacy he gave his campaign $100,000. As DiVall put it, he needed to know that he was a viable candidate and this was sound investment that he was making on his own behalf and "the data clearly demonstrated that."[80]

Another pollster indicated, "The people who tend to be the most poll oriented are people who have something to lose. Usually that's not money but position or prestige. . . I can't think of any current office holder in a relatively safe seat who doesn't look at polling data before deciding if they are going to make that jump or not."[81] Exploratory polling is quite commonly done by potential candidates for statewide races for U.S. Senate or Governor because they are quite often current or former office holders. It also occurs more often in statewide races because these candidates are likely to have ample resources for exploratory polling. Doug Usher indicated that exploratory polling was "pretty standard practice, particularly with the more sophisticated candidates. They don't want to hurt themselves."[82] All else being equal, an incumbent office holder who is trying to decide whether to challenge an incumbent member of Congress is much more likely to use polling in the decision-making process.

Exploratory Polls by Party Campaign Committees

While prospective House candidates are less likely to commission exploratory research as they consider a run for Congress, the same is not true for the party campaign

[80] Linda DiVall (American Viewpoint), telephone interview by J. Quin Monson, March 5, 2002.

[81] The pollster requested anonymity for this statement.

[82] Doug Usher (The Mellman Group), interview by J. Quin Monson, August 2, 2001, Washington, D.C.

committees, the National Republican Campaign Committee (NRCC) and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC). In their survey of potential candidates, Maisel, Stone, and Maestas (2001) find that party recruitment of candidates does occur and that being offered party support plays a significant role in potential candidate decision-making.[83] Herrnson (2004, 108) reports that some of the work done to identify potentially vulnerable seats is conducted by political parties who use "recruitment surveys" to inform potential candidates about the possibility of mounting a successful campaign.

In the most recent congressional election cycles, party campaign committees have played a substantial role in candidate recruitment efforts in districts deemed to be potentially competitive. Both the NRCC and DCCC both conducted exploratory polling for recruiting purposes in the 2000 election cycle. The process of choosing those districts is essentially the same for both parties. Each begins the process by doing aggregate data analysis to come up with a list of anywhere from 50 to 100 potentially competitive seats. There are a lot of indicators that the party committees use to gauge the potential competitiveness of a particular race that do not involve polling, especially when going up against an incumbent. Among these are the incumbent's previous vote totals, the district's presidential vote, party registration, whether the potential challenger has held elective office within the district (and to what extent the constituencies overlap), the fundraising activity by the incumbent, relevant demographic trends (such as changes in racial or ethnic composition or changes in the amount of turnover among voters in the

[83] This is in direct contrast to Fowler and McClure (1989) who found little role for political parties in candidate recruitment in New York's 30th district in 1984 and 1986.

district since the incumbent last faced a serious challenger), and finally any significant negative in the incumbent's behavior (such as questionable votes, ethical lapses, bad publicity, etc.).[84]

Once the list is compiled and rank-ordered, the committees begin to identify races where candidate recruitment efforts would be likely to pay the greatest dividends especially in terms of mounting a successful challenge to an incumbent of the other party. Often this means identifying and recruiting quality candidates for office. The extent of exploratory polling is much greater at the NRCC compared to the DCCC, but has been increasing in recent years for both committees. In 2000, the NRCC compiled a list of about 100 districts that were potential targets. Of the 40 open-seat races, they did exploratory polling in 30 to 35 of them. They also conducted exploratory surveys in 20 to 25 districts held by Democratic incumbents and exploratory surveys in 10 to 15 districts of potentially vulnerable Republican incumbents. This adds up to a exploratory surveys in 60 to 75 districts with 50 to 60 of those being open seat and challenger races. They did multiple surveys in about ten districts when the first choice could not be

[84] On the Democratic side an organization exists solely to provide this kind of analysis of states and congressional districts at the pre-polling stage. The National Committee for an Effective Congress (NCEC) provides low-cost campaign services to many Democratic congressional candidates. Among Democratic pollsters, the work of the NCEC's Mark Gersh in identifying and targeting districts was particularly noted for its usefulness in candidate recruitment and emergence. Gersh reportedly uses aggregate data analysis to rank order House districts using many of the variables indicated above and the results are used by many Democratic campaign consultants and party officials as the baseline for their own judgments about vulnerable incumbents and potential targets. Both political parties do this kind of analysis. Gersh's work is given a lot of credibility among Democratic pollsters. On the Republican side, this kind of analysis does not seem to be as heavily utilized, but the much of the work goes to political demographer John Morgan.

convinced to run and more data was needed for additional recruiting efforts.[85] The exploratory polling at the DCCC in 2000 was much less extensive. They identified about 50 districts as potentially competitive and the commissioned exploratory surveys in about 20 to 25 of them.[86] This is in contrast to the senate committees where pollsters report doing exploratory polling in nearly all of the 33 or 34 states with senate races.[87]

If possible, the party will attempt to recruit a candidate without commissioning an exploratory poll, thus saving the expense for later. For example, Karin Johanson, formerly with the DCCC in 2000, shared an example of Dianne Byrum's decision to run in the Michigan Eighteenth Congressional District. Johanson said, "[Byrum] was a state senator. When [Debbie] Stabenow decided she was going to run for the Senate, Dianne decided she was going to run for the House. We knew it was a marginal seat but that

---

[85] John Guzik (formerly with the National Republican Congressional Committee), interview by J. Quin Monson, August 31, 2001, Washington, D.C. I verified the 2000 figures with him by telephone on July 1, 2004. The amount of exploratory polling conducted in 2000 represents a significant increase over 1998. The 1998 expenditures were also an increase over what was done in 1996. Ed Brookover (formerly with the National Republican Congressional Committee, interview with J. Quin Monson, February 7, 2002, Washington, D.C.

[86] Karin Johanson (formerly with the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee), August 1, 2001, Washington, D.C. Fred Yang (Garin/Hart/Yang Research Group), interview with J. Quin Monson, February 7, 2002, Washington, D.C. The amount of exploratory polling is roughly double the exploratory polling done in 1998. Matt Angle (formerly with the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee), interview with J. Quin Monson, August 14, 2001, Washington, D.C.

[87] This is because polling in all of them is not as prohibitively expensive as polling in all 435 house districts would be and it is viewed as a chance to at least do a check up on the status of each race. The practice of checking up on all of the Senate races up for election in each cycle is also consistent with the evidence presented by Abramowitz and Segal (1992) that on average U.S. Senate races are more competitive than U.S. House races because the potential exists for a competitive race if the right candidate can be found.

Byrum was a strong candidate. We didn't need to do a poll at the beginning and neither did she. She didn't need to come to Washington with a poll. That had been a targeted seat for three cycles with Stabenow running in it. We didn't need anything there."[88] As John Guzik put it, one reason to try not to do an exploratory poll if a candidate has already expressed interest in running is "there's not much more you can do with that data. because you're so early in a campaign."[89] However, in some cases the most desirable candidates will actually request to see some polling data before making a decision and the party responds by commissioning an exploratory poll if they think the district is viable and the candidate is seriously considering a run.[90]

In a world where there are only 30 to 50 truly competitive races per cycle, the candidate recruitment efforts by the party committees are significant. The amount of exploratory polling used in candidate recruitment also appears to be a significant increase over previous years for several reasons. First, due to the increased use of soft money available to the party committees up through the 2002 election cycle, the committees had more money available than ever before and resource limitations were less of an impediment. The advantage in hard money fundraising enjoyed by the Republicans likely played a role in the amount of exploratory polling conducted. This is because exploratory polling is sometimes conducted jointly with the candidate or later shared with them for their use. Depending on the circumstances, the polling may need to be paid for

[88] Karin Johanson interview.

[89] John Guzik interview.

[90] John Guzik interview. Jim Lauer (Lauer, Lalley, Victoria), telephone interview with J. Quin Monson, August 24, 2001.

with hard money. With the enactment of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act and its ban on party soft money, it is not yet clear what the impact will be on party-sponsored recruitment polling. Second, in the past few congressional elections the House has been very closely divided so party committees seek more than ever before to maximize their effort in every potentially competitive race.

There are other financial reasons that the party committees conduct much of the exploratory polling. Herrnson (2004, 108) finds that because of the volume of polls they commission, parties can obtain discounted rates or use their connections with established candidates to place questions on surveys sponsored by a Senate incumbent or other statewide candidate, thus reducing the cost of the survey work substantially. In addition, the interview subjects indicated that prospective candidates will sometimes hesitate to conduct exploratory work because of the cost. When conducted by the party committees, however, they can discuss the findings with undeclared candidates without making a contribution to the candidate because there is not an actual announced candidate yet.[91]

---

[91] The rules change for declared candidates. When candidates have declared, then both the candidate and party can share the cost of a poll and both have immediate access to the data. If the candidate (or undeclared candidate) pays the entire cost of the poll, then he or she may share the results freely with others. If the party committee pays the entire cost of the poll, then they are not allowed to give the results to a declared candidate unless they do so as an in-kind contribution. If the information is turned over within 15 days, the campaign must pay 100 percent of the cost. For polling information turned over between 16 and 60 days, the campaign can discount the cost by 50 percent. For polls given between 61 and 180 days, the campaign pays only 5 percent of the cost. After 180 days polling information can be given for free. See General Services Administration, Title 11—Federal Elections, sec. 2, U.S.C. 106.4, 77-78 cited in Herrnson 2000a, 299). In the interviews, it was noted with some hesitation that the line between what constitutes data sharing is not absolutely clear. Some pollsters drew between the level of detail that could be shared and other drew distinctions between whether information was shared verbally or in writing.

One observation made repeatedly was that in open seat races the party committees do exploratory polling but not for recruitment purposes. In these races, the pool of willing quality candidates is usually plentiful enough that an exploratory poll is not needed to convince anyone to enter the race.[92] As Linda DiVall explained, "[The NRCC] will sometimes do a candidate recruitment survey . . . [in an open seat] and they're trying to make certain they're getting the right candidate into the race."[93] In an open-seat race with a large field, the party committees will generally try to remain officially on the sidelines during the primary, but exploratory polling is used for both recruiting and field clearing purposes. It is in the party's interest to avoid a divisive and expensive primary, thus sometimes exploratory polling that is unfavorable to a particular candidate will be shared in an attempt to convince the candidate to drop out of a race and wait for a better opportunity. Karin Johanson commented on polling that the DCCC sponsored in an Illinois congressional district that had three candidates running—two men and a woman. "We did a poll that basically showed that he was strong but that she was also strong. He just decided not to do it. There was a third candidate in the race that I think was convinced by the polling that he was nowhere and that it would have been a big sacrifice for him to run and that he probably wouldn't have won the primary. So it turned out that we cleared the field."[94] At least one pollster lamented the role that polling plays in the recruitment process. Steve Kinney said, "One of the sad parts about polling is that a lot

[92] The pollster who made this observation did not respond to requests to cite this for attribution.

[93] Linda DiVall interview.

[94] Karen Johanson interview

of times it can be used to dissuade a viable candidate from actually going forward." Kinney continued by saying that it wasn't that the data were necessarily inaccurate but were misinterpreted.[95]

About a third of the pollsters made a clear distinction between pre-announcement polling and pre-decision polling. The former is quite commonly used by "strategic" House candidates for fundraising purposes among the party campaign committees and the Washington Political Action Committee (PAC) community. For a candidate to receive money or help from the party committee or the PAC community they must provide credible polling evidence demonstrating they have a chance to win. At a minimum, they must show weakness on the part of an incumbent. "Credible" in this context usually means that the polling work is conducted by an experienced and well-known pollster. Polling that is used for fundraising purposes is usually done for challenger or open seat candidates and is virtually the same in content as pre-decision exploratory polling. In fact, once the exploratory poll has been examined and the decision made to enter the race, the same polling data is often used to help with fundraising. Often this takes the form of a "PAC memo" that the pollster writes summarizing the case for why this candidate is a viable contender. This memo is then circulated in the Washington, D.C. PAC community as donations are solicited. Sometimes these PAC memos are released by the candidate or the party committee to the press in order to generate interest and fundraising momentum in the district.

---

[95] Steve Kinney (Public Opinion Strategies), telephone interview with J. Quin Monson, May 16, 2002.

For example, Glen Bolger of Public Opinion Strategies produced a brief memo for the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) about the 2002 U.S. House open-seat race in the Nevada Third Congressional District between Jon Porter (R) and Dario Herrara (D). The poll had Porter leading Herrara 41 percent to 39 percent but Bolger indicated that the lead grew to 50 percent to 42 percent among those who expressed an opinion of both candidates. Bolger then says, "This is important because the voters who are paying the closest attention to politics are supporting Porter." [96] While exploratory polling can be used to fundraise, it can also be used to help dry up financial support. Linda DiVall explained, "In some cases campaigns might also use survey research to simply talk about the fact that they do have a large lead and try to dry up fundraising on the other side. Sometimes it can be a preemptive strategy to go in very early on to try to scare a good potential candidate away, or to dry up their fundraising and to make it much more difficult for them to be taken seriously either by the PAC community, or the media, or the political newsletters like Rothenburg and Cook."[97] Matt Angle suggested that sometimes the party committees aggressively discourage fundraising during intra-party battles. He said, "A lot of times you go to the people that they would look to for support and say, 'You need to know that we really think this is a good guy and we wish that the district were different . . . but it's not the type of district he could win." This was along the lines of a recruiting strategy that Angle pursued at the

[96] Glen Bolger, "Re: Key Findings—Nevada CD-3 Survey." Memorandum to NRCC Chairman Tom Davis and Nevada State Party Chairman Bob Searle, July 27, 2001.

[97] Linda DiVall interview. More about *The Rothenberg Political Report* can be found at: http://www.rothenbergpoliticalreport.com/ and more about *The Cook Political Report* can be found at: http://www.cookpolitical.com/.

DCCC under Martin Frost. The exploratory polls were used to "To find out if a Democrat can win, what type of Democrat, and then to recruit to fit that profile." Sometimes that meant recruiting a more conservative Democrat for a race in a southern state such as Jim Turner in the Texas Second District in 1996.[98]

In sum, the interviews made it especially clear that most of the exploratory polling going on is done by the party campaign committees, not the potential candidates. This can partly be explained by the differing goals attributed to candidates versus political parties. Candidates may be running because of strong feelings about a particular issue or ideological focus. The parties, on the other hand, have a singular focus, and that is to win more seats and capture or retain control of the chamber. As John Guzik summarized it, "For candidates, they can often decide without polling data because by the time they consider a poll they have already crossed the other hurdles. For the committees, sometimes the process works in reverse. The committee identifies their ideal candidate [whether by name or not] and then the courting process begins."[99] The party committee recruiting efforts are generally not ideological and the interviews with the current and former party campaign committee officials especially revealed this pragmatic focus. As a result, the exploratory polling for parties generally focuses on identifying vulnerable incumbents on other side because this is where the party can have the most impact.

[98] Matt Angle interview.

[99] John Guzik interview.

Exploratory Polling by Interest Groups/Political Action Committees (PACs)

In addition to political party work, interest groups also occasionally conduct exploratory polling on behalf of potential candidates. As noted above, Fowler and McClure (1989) discuss the polling conducted for Louise Slaughter by the American Medical Association Political Action Committee (AMPAC) as she considered declaring herself a candidate in an open seat race early in 1984. AMPAC conducted the poll as an in-kind contribution, and under Federal Election Commission rules, waited 15 days after the polling was done to give the information to Slaughter enabling them to discount the value of the contribution so that it was within the existing limits.[100]

The pollsters indicated that exploratory polling for interest groups was not a common occurrence. As indicated in Table 5.1, only 11 percent of the pollsters had done this kind of work. This may be due to the single issue focus that interest groups or PACs bring to electoral politics. In the case of party campaign committees, who have as their primary goal winning more seats regardless of ideology, interest groups would have a more difficult time identifying suitable potential candidates to do polling for. In addition, the bias of PAC giving toward incumbents is well-known, so it is not surprising that they would not generally become involved in exploratory polling on behalf of challengers.

The exceptions to this general rule include groups such as EMILY's List or the Club for Growth. Both of these groups have deep pockets and clearly identify and help candidates early in the process. In fact, while the pollsters made little mention of interest

[100] The same rules about discounting the value of polling work given as an in-kind contribution that apply to political parties also apply to interest groups and PACs. See note 16.

group and PAC exploratory polling, when it was mentioned, EMILY's List was mentioned by some pollsters as an interest group that had done exploratory polling in the past.

The Content of Exploratory Polls

Conway (1984) briefly discusses "feasibility" surveys conducted by the Republican House and Senate campaign committees in 1980 that identified weak Democratic incumbents. The survey questions included items about name identification and recall, vote intention, and then moved on to inquire about the incumbent's record and assess its impact on the election. In my interviews, the content as described by Conway has largely remained the same with some new twists added over time. What has changed some is the interpretation given to the results and the rules of thumb used to assess vulnerability.

The pollsters were asked to identify what kinds of questions they used to assess the competitiveness of a particular race, particularly when an exploratory poll involves challenging an incumbent. They were also asked what kinds of thresholds were commonly accepted for labeling an incumbent as vulnerable to challenge. Exploratory polls were commonly described to me as very brief "Can you win?" polls where the object is to model the race as closely as possible to how you think might occur. The pollster attempts to find out if circumstances exist for the prospective candidate to win. Much of what is done on an early exploratory poll is quite similar to what will be done in a later benchmark survey. The difference is that the exploratory poll is generally quite a bit shorter and less detailed than a benchmark poll because it is thought to be too early to try to formulate campaign strategy. Something may happen in the intervening months

that will change everything, so the pollsters usually advise to wait to do a benchmark survey until just before the campaign is ready to begin communicating with voters in earnest. Thus, in modeling the race, it is not the object of the pollster at this stage to imagine every possible twist and turn in the upcoming campaign, but to get a general picture of what is possible.

Table 5.2 contains a list of sample exploratory polling questions drawn from descriptions of them given to me in the interviews as well as a breakdown of some of the thresholds that are used in analyzing the data to determine if a race is winnable. Given the fact that most of the exploratory polling is done on behalf of the party campaign committees to identify vulnerable incumbents, I give particular attention to the thresholds used to identify an incumbent as vulnerable.

There are several questions that were listed by nearly every pollster as an essential element of an exploratory poll. Obviously, one element of any election poll is an assessment where the race actually stands using a ballot type question. There are two types used in exploratory polls. If the potential candidate names are known, then they can be included in the question. If there are numerous potential candidates, then several pairings will be explored for both the general election, particularly if the party is sponsoring the poll. Sometimes, however, a "generic ballot" question is asked with only party labels if a reading is desired on the potential partisan vote in a district without the incumbent's name attached.[101] This question is usually worded something like, "If the election for U.S. House of Representatives were held today, would you vote for the

[101] Although no one used this terminology, this is akin to the "normal vote" concept (Converse 1966).

Republican or the Democrat?" The conventional wisdom among pollsters was that an incumbent was considered weak if he or she did not received at least 50 percent on the ballot question with the names included. The assumption is that nearly all of the voters that do not choose the incumbent are easily within the reach of the challenger campaign. An incumbent who achieves between 50 and 60 percent on the ballot question can still be deemed relatively weak depending on the poll results. Sometimes a follow-up question is used to assist this assessment. For example, if a majority of respondents say they will "probably" vote for the incumbent versus "definitely" vote for the incumbent, then there is some potential vulnerability. If both the generic ballot question and the ballot question with names are used, a comparison between the two can be instructive. If the incumbent is leading with more than 50 percent but the challenger's party is leading on the generic question, then that suggests room for improvement.

In addition, the ballot question is often asked multiple times, once at the beginning to assess the current position of the race and then again after candidate profiles and other questions that are discussed below. One key to interpreting later questions is to assess whether or not there is any movement among voters in their vote choice after being presented with information about the potential candidates. If an incumbent drops below 50 percent on subsequent ballot questions, then he or she is potentially vulnerable to a challenger under the right circumstances. As Fred Yang put it, "[If] you don't move the needle, 9 times out of 10 that's a pretty good prediction that you just aren't going to make it."[102]

[102] Fred Yang interview.

Another question that was nearly always named as an important part of an exploratory poll is the "Reelect" question. There are two general types used, the "soft" reelect and the "hard" reelect—the difference being the question wording and the subsequent threshold used to determine vulnerability. In the soft reelect, the question is worded something like, "Has Congressman Smith performed his job well enough to deserve reelection or is it time to give a new person a chance?" Any incumbent who receives support from fewer than 40 percent of respondents is generally considered vulnerable.[103] A variation on the soft reelect question includes a follow up for whether the respondent thinks the incumbent "definitely" or "probably" deserves reelection. The percent who say "definitely reelect" is taken as an indication of the depth of support. If 45 percent favor reelection, but only 15 percent say definitely reelect, then that is an indication of shallow support.

The hard reelect question is another way to gauge depth of support and is often worded something like, "If the election was held today and you had to make a choice, would you vote to reelect Congressman Smith no matter who ran against him?" It presents a more stringent threshold. If less than 20 percent answer "yes," meaning they would not vote to reelect the member of Congress no matter who the opponent is, then the incumbent is considered vulnerable. Some of the pollsters indicated that depending on the client and the resources available they may add some open end follow-up questions after the reelect question to ask the respondent to provide reasons for their

[103] Several pollsters indicated that this threshold has changed over time. It used to be that if an incumbent was under 50 percent he or she was considered vulnerable and even recently a reelect in the 40s indicated vulnerability. Now, the threshold is to be in the low 40s or 30s to really indicate vulnerability.

answers. These are generally used more qualitatively to provide some idea of the potential strengths and vulnerabilities of the incumbent as perceived by the voters.

The name identification and favorability rating of the candidates was also nearly universally mentioned in the interviews as an essential element of an exploratory poll. Generally, a list of names is presented and respondents are asked to indicate if they have heard of the person and, if so, to indicate whether they have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of them. Depending on the media market in the district, the number of years in office, and the mobility of district residents, incumbents are generally expected to have a high level of name identification. What is often most interesting about this question is the level of name identification achieved by the challenger; obviously for a potential candidate the higher the better. This is especially true of potential candidates that currently hold another elective office as this means that they will already have a certain level of credibility with voters and will expect to have some level of name identification depending on how much the constituencies overlap. Most challengers do not have more than 50 percent name recognition, so when there is a challenger that does have more than 50 percent name recognition combined with favorable opinions then it is considered a sign that they can provide a strong challenge to the incumbent. One kind of analysis that is undertaken when the challenger has some level of name identification is to produce a ballot comparison of only those respondents that that are able to name and rate both people. If the challenger does significantly better among that subset of respondents, it is considered an indication of how the campaign might proceed with all voters.

However, the most important part of name identification/favorability question is the favorability rating of the incumbent. The generally accepted rule of thumb is to

compute a ratio of favorable to unfavorable responses, regardless of the levels (although some potential challengers are so unknown that a favorability ratio is not computed). For example, of the respondents who have heard of the incumbent, if the ratio of favorable to unfavorable stays above 2 to 1 then the incumbent is generally considered to be in good condition and not vulnerable to challenge. The closer the ratio is to 1 to 1 the more vulnerable the incumbent. In the unusual circumstance when the unfavorable exceeds the favorable, then the incumbent is considered to be very vulnerable.

Another common aspect of exploratory polling is to devise generic biographies of the candidates, sometimes taken directly from current or past campaign literature, that are read to respondents in order to get their reactions to a particular type of candidate. The threshold is simply whether or not the voters prefer your candidate to the opposition when both are presented in the most objective light possible. Thus, it is important that the information be written to reflect as accurately as possible the information that voters are likely to see about each candidate if the candidates both had sufficient resources to communicate with voters. "Push questions," or questions that give brief positive or negative statements about a candidate, are also sometimes used in exploratory polling. Again, the accuracy of the information being provided is critical. Pollsters stressed repeatedly that testing information that wasn't true, or that wasn't potentially going to be used was both dangerous to the credibility of the future campaign and an inefficient use of resources. If there are sufficient resources for the poll, then numerous positive and negative statements about all potential candidates can be explored. When resources are limited, the most likely scenario is to test the impact of positive statements about the challenger and negative statements about the incumbent. If some of them produce a large

proportion of respondents that say they would be more or less likely to support a particular candidate, then the interpretation at such an early stage in the election is simply that there exists information that could be used to persuade voters to support a challenger. The same is true for issue questions that could be used in exploratory polling. The pollster analyzes the data to find out if there are issues that strongly correlate or even predict vote choice. As Fred Yang put it, "[We] profile our candidate . . . [then] do the negatives on our candidate to give the person a fair read . . . [then] do the positives and negatives on the Republican and model the race. . . A lot of these challengers [are] . . . great on paper but no one knows them . . . Let's give people some information about you and see if you can move people." In a later reality check on the predictive value of the exploratory data he indicated that even if the profiles move voters, that is not guarantee. "If life were a poll you could win. Unfortunately, life is not a poll."[104]

The Influence of Polls on Decision-Making

Given the number of questions used to assess a race, exploratory polls rarely provide enough information for a clear picture to aid candidate decision-making. It has already been noted that many potential candidates are able and even encouraged to make decisions without referring to polling data. However, they are clearly an important tool at times, especially to party recruitment efforts and are at times an influential factor in decision-making. Table 5.3 contains a summary of the observations of the pollsters from the interviews about the impact of polling on the eventual decisions of potential candidates. Of those that commented on the question, about a third of the pollsters were

[104] Fred Yang interview.

willing to assert that polling has very little impact compared to other factors. Dee Allsop was typical of this viewpoint when he stated, "Most candidates at that stage already know they are going to run. It is rare where we've done a poll and then decided no, they are not going to make it."[105] About a quarter were coded as saying that polling had about equal impact with other factors. Another quarter thought that polling had a lot of impact while 13 percent, or three people, asserted that polling had a definitive impact on the decision-making process.

One reason polling can have an impact on the eventual decision is related to the point cited earlier from Bruce Blakeman about why candidates want exploratory polls: "they're 90 percent there and just getting some numbers to show that this is really doable."[106] In other words, the only aspect of the decision-making process left is to estimate whether or not the person can possibly win. As Lisa Grove put it, "If you have gotten to the point where you are commissioning a poll to see whether or not you're viable, you've thought about all of the other factors."[107] Perhaps many potential candidates go through a sequential decision-making process with polling data used at the end as a final step in the process. The weight given to the other "hurdles" and the secondary role given to polling in many decisions is evidence that personal ambitions for political office remain a critical factor in decision about whether to seek office at the

[105] Dee Allsop (The Wirthlin Group), interview with J. Quin Monson, January 14, 2001, Alpine, Utah.

[106] Bruce Blakeman interview.

[107] Lisa Grove (LGD Insight), telephone interview by J. Quin Monson, February 20, 2002.

House level. By the time a poll is commissioned, the potential candidate's uncertainty about viability is all that is left to the decision calculus.

Several pollsters indicated that the influence of exploratory polling data is rarely clear cut. They used a traffic light analogy—the exploratory poll signals red when there is clearly no chance of victory, yellow when the signals are mixed, and green when there is a clear path to victory.[108] Exploratory polling almost always signals a yellow light. This is especially due to the kind of potential candidate most likely to commission polling or have it commissioned for them. Oftentimes they have already examined the personal costs involved, have seen analysis of the aggregate data, and then after some careful thought they turn to polling information because they are still on the fence and the other factors have not yet pointed to a clear answer. In these situations, the exploratory polling data is not likely to provide clear signals either. Glen Bolger described an exploratory poll that he considered a yellow-light situation "where the incumbent is not in terrible shape, but not in super strong shape either. I told the candidate, 'It's really up to you. . .It comes down to do you want to take the time? Do you want to spend the money? Do you want to raise the money? Do you want to do all this campaigning? You have a shot at winning. You have a pretty good shot, against the incumbent, of losing."[109] Doug Usher made a point that in an open seat race, "there's really no way to tell someone that they're

[108] Fred Yang interview. Glen Bolger (Public Opinion Strategies), interview by J. Quin Monson, August 1, 2001, Alexandria, Virginia. David Petts (Bennett, Petts, and Blumenthal), telephone interview by J. Quin Monson, February 18, 2002. All three used this analogy in their interviews.

[109] Glen Bolger interview.

not viable. If they have [political] resources and money. . . it's an open seat so they've got a chance."[110]

Speaking of a situation in which the polling data clearly pointed against running, Bill Lee suggested that "First-time prospective candidates, in my experience, will not normally fight the data. I can think of one or two that have, but it's not that common."[111] Chris Wilson, made the point that a clear answer, in the form of a red light for running is rare, but can effectively dissuade someone from running. He summarized two recent cases for me by saying, "We found out they can't win, so they decided not to get in the race." He further characterized the effect of the polling data on the decision by saying, "[The polling was] more than influential. It made the decision for them." But then he clarified this by saying it was unusual for polling to have so much influence on the decision. He could only think of one other example in the previous eight years. The mixed influence of polling on decision making is, in part, because of the prevalence of "yellow lights." When inconclusive polling results are combined with indecisive potential candidates, the polling will not have a decisive impact on the final decision.

A "green light" in exploratory polling is also rare, but powerfully influential on decision making. Both Fred Yang and Karin Johanson shared the example of recruiting Representative Mike Honda to run for the open seat in California's Fifteenth Congressional District in 2000. The Republicans had recruited a strong candidate and the Democrats had settled on Honda as a likely prospect. When the polling came back, the

---

[110] Doug Usher interview.

[111] Bill Lee (TelOpinion Research), telephone interview by J. Quin Monson, March 6, 2002.

generic ballot question showed a 20 point lead for the Democrat. In a head-to-head ballot question using names, Honda was also ahead. The district's past voting history also favored Democrats. In sum, all of the signs pointed in the right direction. As Yang put it, Mike Honda was told, "If you get in, you win."[112] Honda was still somewhat reluctant but calls from President Clinton and Dick Gephardt pushed him over the top into running. The polling clearly had some influence on Honda's decision, but perhaps even more importantly, because the situation so clearly favored him, the party pulled out all of the stops in their efforts to convince him to run. So while the polling had a direct effect on Honda's decision, it also had an indirect effect on his decision through the impact it had on Democratic party leaders who took from the polling that they should do everything in their power, including the calls from Clinton and Gephardt, to convince Honda to make the race. Honda won in 2000 with 54 percent against a well-funded Jim Cunneen.

The other problem with assessing the impact of exploratory polling that emerged in the interviews is that even if the signals from the polling are clear, not all prospective candidates operate using the same probability calculations as they decide whether or not to tackle a race. As Mark Mellman put it, "Different people need different probabilities when they make a decision . . . For some people a 1 in 100 chance is enough. Others will need a 20 percent chance. Others need 50. Other times the pollster thinks the results are definitive but the person doesn't accept the recommendation."[113] But even so, many of the pollsters indicated that they have seen instances where polling data proved to be

---

[112] Fred Yang interview.

[113] Mark Mellman (The Mellman Group), interview by J. Quin Monson, August 17, 2001, Washington, D.C.

decisive to someone's decision. Exploratory polling has the most influence when the picture provided is relatively clear cut and is working in conjunction with other decision-making factors such as family consideration, personal financial costs, political party recruiting efforts and so forth.

Conclusions

The fact that the majority of exploratory polls in House races are conducted by the party committees has some implications for the competitiveness of House elections. Exploratory polling allows the party committees to more efficiently allocate their substantial resources behind their efforts to win or maintain majority status in the House. This occurs when they are able to identify and recruit strong challengers to run in competitive districts. Thus, instead of serving as mostly an incumbent protection committee (sometimes for incumbents who are barely in danger), the party committees make efforts in a few select districts to recruit strong challengers and assist them throughout the campaign. While it may indeed be a more efficient way to win seats, one implication of this is that it may deny valuable funding to challengers who really could win if they had ample resources. Exploratory polls are not flawless or clear-cut indicators of the probability of winning. As demonstrated in the inexact thresholds adhered to by many pollsters for interpreting exploratory polling, the interpretation of a race as winnable and an incumbent as vulnerable is not an exact science. In addition, the polls are conducted anywhere from eight months to a year in advance of the election, and many things can happen in that time period to change the dynamics of a race. Several of the party campaign officials shared their favorite examples of a race that was not on the list of targeted races until very late in the campaign cycle but after persistent prodding by

the challenger the party committee became involved in the race and succeeded in defeating an incumbent.

Thus, if the exploratory polls done by party committees are not accurate predictors of vulnerability, or if the rules of thumb used by pollsters and committee staff are not correct, then competition in House elections is being stifled. What I do not know is whether any attempt has been made by the party committees to assess their methodology for identifying target races to see if their efforts are relatively accurate or not. This would, in fact, be quite difficult as the early efforts to determine vulnerability and competitiveness become something of a self-fulfilling prophecy where the races and candidates that are deemed potentially competitive are fueled with party and interest group resources and the others mostly go without.

In sum, the contribution of this chapter to the study of candidate emergence and recruitment in House elections is increased recognition for the role of polling in candidate decision-making and party recruitment efforts. Exploratory polling, while not commonplace, is still a prominent feature in some prospective candidate decision-making. This is especially true for prospective statewide US Senate or gubernatorial candidates. For prospective House candidates, exploratory polling that is commissioned by the candidates is more unusual and is even discouraged by some pollsters. However, it is still done by candidates who perceive that they have something significant at risk by undertaking a campaign for Congress—typically a current office-holder who is not willing to give up a safe reelection campaign in order to challenge a House incumbent. The House campaign committees do a substantial amount of exploratory polling in conjunction with their efforts to recruit challengers. Districts are identified as potentially

winnable using aggregate data analysis and then exploratory polling is commissioned when potential candidates of the party committee's liking need further evidence to get them to run.

	% Yes	% No
Did the pollster report having ever done exploratory polling?	97 (37)	3 (1)
Has the pollster conducted exploratory polling for a(n) . . .		
Prospective Senate candidate?	45 (17)	55 (21)
Prospective House candidate?	74 (28)	26 (10)
Senate campaign committee?	50 (19)	50 (19)
House campaign committee?	76 (29)	24 (9)
Interest Group?	11 (4)	90 (34)

Note: Cell entries are percentages with n in parentheses.

Table 5.1 Frequency of Exploratory Polling

Survey Question Type and Sample Wording		Thresholds		
		Vulnerable	**Possibly Vulnerable**	**Not Vulnerable**
Ballot Question	Generic: If the election for U.S. House of Representatives were held today, would you vote for the Republican or the Democrat? With names: If the election for U.S. House were held today and the candidates were John Smith, the Republican, and Dave Jones, the Democrat, for whom would you vote? Follow up with: Is that definitely for Smith/Jones or probably for Smith/Jones?	Incumbent under 50%	Incumbent between 50 and 60%	Incumbent above 60%
"Soft" Reelect	Has Congressman Smith performed his job well enough to deserve reelection or is it time to give a new person a chance? Follow up with: And do you believe that definitely/probably he deserves reelection/it is time for a new person?	Less than 40%	Between 40 and 50%	50% or more
"Hard" Reelect	If the election was held today and you had to make a choice, would you vote to reelect Congressman Smith no matter who ran against him?	Less than 20%	Between 20 and 30 percent	30% or more
Open End follow up questions	Being as specific as you can, what are the one or two most important reasons why you would reelect/hesitate to reelect/not reelect John Smith as Congressman?	The open end responses are used to identify possible strengths and weaknesses of the candidates. Some pollsters found that getting these in the respondent's own words was particularly useful for developing campaign strategy.		
Favorability/ Name identification	I am going to read a list of names. For each one, please tell me whether you have heard of that person and if so, whether you have a favorable or an unfavorable impression of that person. Follow up with: Is that very favorable/unfavorable or somewhat favorable/unfavorable?	Positive to Negative ratio is 1:1 or Negative > Positive	Positive to Negative ratio is 2:1	Positive to Negative ratio is 3:1

Table 5.2 Exploratory Polling Questions and Vulnerability Thresholds

Continued on next page

Table 5.2 (continued)

Survey Question Type and Sample Wording		Thresholds
Candidate biographies or profiles	Now I am going to read you descriptions of some candidates for the House of Representatives. After I read them I want you to tell me, based on the descriptions, which candidate you would rather vote for. Candidate A is a small business owner and long-time resident of the community. He is a candidate who will work hard to lower your taxes, especially the federal income tax, and will work to protect your privacy from the intrusion of the federal government. Candidate B is an experienced legislator who has a proven track record of getting things done in Washington. As a former teacher, he has worked hard to improve education standards and increase funding for schools to reduce class sizes and rebuild deteriorating school buildings. Which candidate do you prefer, candidate A or candidate B?	If no names are attached to the question, then the purpose is simply to test the potential of the candidates if both are presented in the most favorable light possible.
Push Questions on both candidates	I'm going to read you a series of statements about John Smith. For each of the following, please tell me if it would make you more likely to vote for John Smith or less likely to vote for John Smith? Follow up with: Is that much more/less likely or somewhat more/less likely? Positive Example: John Smith is a veteran of the Air Force and served with distinction in Operation Desert Storm. Negative Example: John Smith voted six times during the last two years to increase your taxes, including tax increases for working families.	Do the push statements as a group have any effect on the overall vote? Are there particular statements that emerge as strong correlates or predictors of vote choice?
Issue questions	From the following list, which issue is personally most important to you in deciding your vote for U.S. House? READ LIST OF ISSUES Which party is better on _____? Specific issue questions identified as potentially important in the district.	Is there an issue that strongly correlates with movement in voter support? Are there issues that emerge as particularly strong correlates or predictors of vote choice?

Source: Interviews with pollsters

	Percent (N)
A Definitive Impact	13 (3)
A Lot of Impact compared to other factors	26 (6)
About equal impact compared to other factors	26 (6)
Very little impact compared to other factors	35 (8)

Table 5.3 Impact of Polling on Decision Making of Potential Candidates

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: POLLING AND DEMOCRACY

Pollster Bill Hamilton, in a brief review of the progression of campaign polling, wrote, "Clearly the art and science of modern political polling have become the major influence in strategic decisionmaking in modern U.S. political campaigns" (Hamilton 1995, 161). It is not just polling, but in some cases the interpretation of that polling offered by the pollsters themselves, that is a major influence on campaign strategy. In this chapter I review the major contributions of the preceding chapters as well as outline areas for future research. I also briefly examine the relationship between campaign polling and democracy. The influence of polling is broad enough to consider it a new institution of American democracy because it makes a major contribution to democratic deliberation and the interaction of the public with candidates and policy makers. Because of the potential influence of polling on campaigns, elections, and subsequent public policy, polling can have a positive influence on democracy but only when the polling is conducted and used well. The contributions of polling appear to have a mostly positive impact on such democratic ideals as increased competition in elections and increased issue representation by candidates.

Review of Findings

Although other scholars have investigated the influence of polling in the presidential context (Eisinger 2003; Jacobs and Shapiro 1994, 1995, 2000), this is the first in-depth examination of polling in the congressional election context. The preceding chapters add several contributions to our understanding of congressional elections.

In Chapter 2, I provided some theoretical unity to the empirical work that follows with a discussion of the idea that campaign polling serves to reduce the uncertainty of campaign decisionmaking. Polling is not the only way to reduce uncertainty, but it is broadly accepted as an accurate means for assessing voter attitudes and anticipating voter behavior. When done well, polling is the information source that best reduces the uncertainty associated with running a congressional campaign because it increases the strategic information available to campaign decision makers and enables them to more efficiently allocate limited campaign resources.

In Chapter 3, I tested several hypotheses about polling use in congressional election campaigns and found evidence of several trends. First, polling use has increased over time by all types of candidates. In 1978 nearly three out of four House candidates used no polling, whereas in 1998 the proportion using no polling fell to about half of House candidates. Those candidates using no polling are in races where there is not a serious contest. The campaign factors that lead to increased poll use include the competitiveness of the district, the funds available to pay for polling, and especially the candidate's advertising expenditures. The candidate characteristics related to more polling use include candidate status (incumbents and open seat candidate spend more), party (Democrats spend more), and previous political experience in elective office.

One of the main findings from the model of poll use in congressional campaigns is that the competitiveness of the election and candidate status lead to an increase in the use of polling. This means that candidates seek to be more attuned with public opinion as their prospects for a truly competitive election become more likely. This in turn suggests that for Congress to be more substantively representative of the American public, we need to create more competition in congressional elections. The round of redistricting completed leading up to the 2002 elections did much to damage the competitiveness of the average congressional district as most state legislatures engaged in incumbent protection strategies that served to enhance the electoral prospects of incumbents of both parties and left very few truly competitive districts. In an environment with few opportunities for truly competitive elections, polling may help to identify potentially competitive opportunities more effectively.

In Chapter 4, I found that pollsters and polling data are rarely used by candidates for *issue position pandering*, but are widely used as tools of *issue selection pandering*. Candidates pander, or change their behavior from what it would have been otherwise, in response to public opinion data, but they do not change their positions on the issues. In short, the voters are asked what issues are most important to them and then the candidates increase the attention given to those issues. The evidence also suggests that campaigns attempt to ignore issues of high importance to voters on which the candidate and the majority of voters disagree. This is a potential problem, but it is mitigated in competitive races when the opposition has that same information. Thus, in a competitive election, polling helps ensure that all issues of high importance to voters are likely to be addressed.

In Chapter 5, the role of polling was found to be especially important to the candidate recruitment efforts of the political party campaign committees in a small number of targeted districts in which other evidence of potential competitiveness can be found. Polling can play a role in increasing the level of competitiveness in congressional races by helping to convince reluctant potential candidates to enter a race. This is an especially important factor in recruiting strong challengers to run against incumbents. Strategic challengers would normally wait until circumstances favor their chances at winning, but recruitment polling can be used to convince them that the odds are good enough to enter a race against an incumbent instead of waiting for an open seat.

Questions for Further Study

Much remains to be learned about polling in congressional elections and its potential for aiding democracy. Throughout this research, I have examined polling in congressional elections only, focusing almost entirely on House elections. There are important distinctions between polling in U.S. House, U.S. Senate, and presidential campaigns that remain to be examined in detail in future research. Clearly pollsters have grown to play a central role as strategic advisors in both presidential elections and in executive branch policy making (Moore 1992). Presidential pollsters are a central part of campaign strategy and work for each campaign exclusively. This does not appear to be the case in most House campaigns. Pollsters at the congressional level usually work for multiple campaigns and most contact with the campaign takes place via telephone. It remains to be seen how much these differences between presidential and congressional campaigns impact campaign strategy. There are further differences to be examined by comparing the role of polling in House versus Senate or other statewide campaigns. My

sense from the pollsters is that Senate campaigns more closely resemble presidential campaigns in their use and integration of polling into campaign strategy, but this question needs further systematic examination.

An important question that deserves attention in future research is whether or not polling could be better utilized to move more House districts into the competitive column. In other words, in Chapter 3 there is clearly a positive relationship between polling use and competitive elections. It is clear in other research (Herrnson 2000b; Medvic and Lenart 1997; Medvic 2001) that polling use has a positive impact on the outcome of an election. What remains to be understood is whether or not there are candidates that could make elections more competitive if they were to use more polling than they currently do. Chapter 3 is suggestive on this question, with evidence that there is a small group of candidates running in races that end up being quite close who are underutilizing polling and could have narrowed the margin even more and perhaps won had they invested more resources in polling research that would have helped the campaign formulate better strategy. This appears to be particularly true for a small group of challengers who invest little or nothing in polling and yet manage to run a fairly competitive race against an incumbent (see Table 3.1).

Similarly, another question that remains for future research is whether or not exploratory polling is being misinterpreted by some candidates and keeping them from entering a race that they could make competitive with effort. The potentially positive role of polling is conditioned upon it being conducted and interpreted well. If the polling is poorly done and analyzed, the recommendation made using the exploratory poll may

be needlessly pessimistic, leading a strategic and high quality challenger to pass on a race that could have been competitive.

Other questions from this project that await future research include more detailed work about the use of polling by political parties that goes beyond their candidate recruitment efforts. This is important work, especially given the changes underway at the party campaign committees in how they fund their activities in response to the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) that prohibits the committees from raising and spending soft money, the unlimited donations that became a staple of congressional elections in the 1990s. One of the potential effects of BCRA is to drive the soft-money donors toward new avenues, particularly new interest groups set up as quasi-party organizations (Magleby and Monson 2004). If this indeed occurs, then it will also be important to examine further how interest groups utilize polling in their election related activities.

Another important item on the future research agenda is a thorough examination of campaign polling methodology and analysis techniques. In an early assessment of polling, George Gallup presented an idealistic view. "The public opinion polls provide a swift and efficient method by which legislators, educators, experts, and editors, as well as ordinary citizens throughout the length and breadth of the country, can have a more reliable measure of the pulse of democracy" (Gallup and Rae 1940, 14; cf. Cantril 1991, 10-11). Gallup's early view about the potentially positive relationship between polling and democracy overlooks the importance of sound methodology to that relationship. Only through polling that is done well does it become possible for all citizens to be considered equally. Many criticisms levied at polling can be sufficiently dealt with if pollsters approach their role with care, armed with sound methodological practice. A

significant literature in survey methodology has been devoted to the sources of error embodied by the concept of total survey error (e.g. Groves 1989). Whether they do so consciously or not, political pollsters make decisions based on the idea of total survey error to allocate limited resources to a polling operation in order to collect data that minimizes the potential error. Tradeoffs exist for different sources of error including such things as how extensively to pretest the questionnaire, how many callbacks to make to each telephone number, and the sample size needed to analyze data with precision and confidence.

There is a substantial literature on survey research sampling, questionnaire design, and other topics common to all surveys, but there is not much current analysis of the special needs of campaign polling that goes beyond a description of existing practices. One reason for this is that private pollsters consider many of their methods proprietary and are loath to share them for fear of losing advantage to competitors. One of the more experience pollsters asserted that there is considerable stagnation in election polling methodology.[114] Where campaign pollsters and media pollsters share similar challenges, the work in media election polling methodology has helped to further advances in our understanding of sampling likely voters as well as some question wording and question order effects. However, there is much about campaign polling methodology and analysis that is unique. There are some standard practices, but there is not a widespread agenda or mechanism to test and improve on these practices even though doing so would help

[114] Alex Gage (Market Strategies), interview by J. Quin Monson, August 9, 2001, Alexandria, Virginia. Chris Wilson (Wilson Research Strategies), telephone interview by J. Quin Monson, February 15, 2002.

improve the accuracy of campaign polling and increase the positive impact of polling on democracy.

A related area for future examination are the techniques used to analyze campaign polling data. One critique labeled media election polling as "data-rich but analysis poor," and it suggested that "it is somewhat of a wonder that they do so little in making use of the information they gather" (Lavrakas and Traugott 1995, 260). The same thing could be said of some campaign polling. Superficial analysis relying only on frequency distributions and crosstabulations obscures findings that would enable candidates to target their message more effectively to a desired group and truly represent a diversity of voters during the public deliberation of a political campaign. Poor analysis could mean that the campaign focuses on issues of less importance to voters, either because critical questions were not asked or were asked poorly or because the analysis failed to uncover the truths contained in the data. My interviews uncovered some evidence for wide variation in the use of analytic techniques that range from simple crosstabulations to sophisticated multivariate analysis. Much remains to be learned about how campaigns analyze survey data.

Polling and Democracy

Timothy Cook (1998) refers to the media as a new institution in American politics. In his work on the media, Cook defines an institution of government as an entity that assists in governing whether directly, as in the three branches of government outlined in the Constitution, or indirectly by mediating between the traditional branches of government. Cook defines the media as a new institution because of the central role it plays in mediating between various actors in political and social processes. "Making

news, in other words, is not merely a way to get elected or reelected, to boost one's own ego or to be a show horse instead of a work horse; instead *it is a way to govern*" (Cook 1998, 165 emphasis added). Part of Cook's theory of the media relies on the idea that public opinion is essential to the ability of the three branches of government to get anything done.

While Cook posits that the news media play an essential role to distributing information and mobilizing public opinion, there are alternative ways that this occurs. Jacobs and Shapiro (2000) point out that politicians have begun to use public opinion data in a recursive effort to shape public opinion itself (cf. McGraw 2002). Pollsters are at the center of this operation both during political campaigns and now increasingly during the governing process (Bowman 2000). The recent work by Jacobs and Shapiro (2000) and Eisinger (2003) shows that polling has become an integral part of presidential governing. However, according to Eisinger (2003, 188) the influence of polling has not yet penetrated Congress to the same extent. That is likely to change, however, as polling has become an integral part of any serious congressional election campaign and is conducted on a regular basis by congressional party organizations.

Another way to think about the evolution of polling and pollsters to a new institution of American politics is to think about their place in the political consulting industry, which has grown and professionalized tremendously in recent years (Dulio 2001; Johnson 2001; Medvic 2001; Ornstein and Mann 2000; Sabato 1981; Thurber 2000). Polling and pollsters are at the forefront of the consulting industry and provide strategic information essential to the work of the other consultants. Just as the news media mediates how elected officials communicate with the people (Cook 1998),

pollsters mediate between campaigns and voters. As Geer and Goorha conclude, "In fact, because politicians from both sides of the aisle view surveys as accurate gauges of public opinion, polls have become a quasi-institution in American politics" (Geer and Goorha 2003, 146).

If polling is now an integral part of our functioning democracy in the United States, it is important to examine its influence for good or bad on our democratic system. Cantril refers to the question of the legitimacy of polling in a democracy as the latest phase in the development of public opinion research (1991, 204). To be accepted as legitimate, polling must overcome the objections of many critics, including academics (Ginsberg 1989; Herbst 1993; Weissberg 2002), journalists (Witcover 1999), politicians (Simon 2003), and even pollsters themselves (Crespi 1989).

To examine the role of polling in a democracy it is instructive to compare some ideas in public policy analysis with the ideas of pollster Daniel Yankelovich (1991) and other advocates of better polling practice. In theories about public policy analysis, much has been made recently of the idea of "public deliberation" (Anderson 1990, chapter 12; Fischer 1995, chapter 10; Reich 1988). This is the notion that good public policy does not occur in an elitist vacuum where know-it-all public policy analysts impose their judgments of what is best on a passive public. Some have responded by calling for increased efforts by policy analysts, elected officials, journalists, and other political elites to take steps that increase the level of deliberation by the public on policy questions. These steps include attempts to arm the public with sound information about the policy alternatives (Fishkin 1995) and promote forums where the public and policy makers can

exchange their ideas about solutions and come to terms with each other about the best course of action (Reich 1988, chapter 6).

Does campaign polling advance or impede U.S. democracy? This question is best discussed in terms of public deliberation because elections are inherently a form of public deliberation. In other words, the question to be addressed is whether or not campaign polls improve the election process in terms of public deliberation. Overall, does polling help candidates focus on the issues of most concern to voters? Does the public make a more informed choice because of information provided to the campaigns through election polls? Does polling facilitate or inhibit increased participation in elections and governing by the mass public? The acid test of whether or not election polls aid democracy is whether or not they aid public deliberation, for that is the essence of democracy.

When done well, campaign polling advances democracy in American elections. I conclude this primarily because the majority of problems put forward by those who say polling impedes democracy can be solved by more rigorous and innovative polling methodology and data analysis. When political polling is done well, the good outweighs the bad. As long as pollsters follow good methodological and ethical practices election polling will continue to aid public deliberation, elections, and democracy.

Some charge that election polling impedes democracy because polling data are superficial because and measures public opinion outside the context of public debate (Cantril 1991, 208). This is similar to the concerns expressed by Yankelovich (1991) about public judgment. Public judgment "is the state of highly developed public opinion that exists once people have engaged an issue, considered it from all sides, understood the choices it leads to, and accepted the full consequences of the choices they make"

(Yankelovich 1991, 6). One solution is to simulate public debate on issues of great concern to the public by having respondents assess the strengths for and against an argument and then re-measuring opinions about the issue. This can be done when measuring opinion about a policy debate, issues in a campaign, and even with candidate choices themselves. It is important to devote enough resources to a poll so that enough questions are asked to ensure that you are adequately measuring all facets of an issue. While some campaign polling is too short to do this adequately, the best campaign polls do an outstanding job of enabling candidates and campaigns to see the level of public judgment on an important issue and address the issue in terms that the public would like to hear. Likewise, the polling enables candidates to focus on issues and candidate attributes that are most important to voters.

Another criticism of election polling is that pollsters have different frames of reference than the public and poll findings can be artifacts of the terms utilized by the pollster (Cantril 1991, 207; cf. Ginsberg 1986). One way to overcome this problem is through polling pluralism—many researchers investigating the same issues with different methods will tease out the best data and the most correct conclusions (Cantril 1991, 213). In this sense, it behooves private campaign pollsters to consume polls by a diverse set of public polling organizations that can provide clarity or cast doubt on the findings of the private campaign polling. Likewise, private pollsters would do well to seek input in both questionnaire design and data analysis from others including other consultants or even academics to ensure that their view is not myopic. One danger of political polling is that pollsters serve so many clients that they stretch themselves too thin and are unable to customize their work sufficiently to each congressional candidate. Instead they employ

canned questions again and again while questions of importance that are unique to specific campaigns are not asked. Careful consideration of the context of the political campaign during the questionnaire construction that utilizes research on the candidates and local issues is an essential component of avoiding a cookie cutter approach to political polling. Likewise, devoting sufficient time and attention to each client is also essential. Finally, divergent polls from public sources should be reported side by side with private polling results to communicate the difficulty in measuring opinion and the potential lack of public judgment on the matter.

One thing is clear, if election polling is to contribute positively to democracy then some of the burden lies with political pollsters to make it happen. Assuming a competent pollster has used acceptable methods in gathering data, how can campaigns and pollsters work together to promote more deliberative use of polling data? If polling is to make a positive contribution to democracy then the following will begin to occur:

1. Pollsters will employ more sophisticated analytic techniques and get beyond marginal frequencies and crosstabulations, allowing them to reach voters on issues of importance to them with greater precision.
2. With the campaign's help, polling data will be heavily integrated with substantive candidate issue positions. Polling will be used to adjust how existing issue positions are presented to voters so that voters are presented with compelling arguments to support each candidate.
3. Campaigns will consult other polling data to see when they coincide or diverge from their own findings to reduce the errors that can be made.

The contribution of campaign polling to public deliberation is far from perfect. Mistakes are made; data and analysis are sometimes both poor. Election polling still has hurdles to overcome but it has great potential to serve the best interests of democracy. Objections to the role of polling in a democracy can generally be overcome by two lines of argument. First, one set of problems is solved by increased attention to methods and analysis. Many of the potential problems polling creates for effective functioning of democracy can be solved if more attention is paid to getting it right and telling the right story. This underscores why more attention on methodology and analysis in future work is needed. Second, it is not clear on other potential problems whether or not they actually impede democracy. Judgments on this regard depend on one's definition of the ideals of democracy and the responsibilities of individual citizens and elites. Since election polling is here to stay, the best that can be done is to improve the way in which polling data is collected and reported

Because of their central role in campaigns and increasingly in governing, I conclude that the influence of polling is enough to consider it an important institution of American democracy. Because of the potential influence of polling on campaigns, elections, and subsequent public policy, polling can have a positive influence on democracy but only when it is done and used well. The problems with polling in a democracy outlined by critiques can be solved by more rigorous and innovative polling methodology and data analysis. As long as pollsters follow good practices, election polling will aid public deliberation, elections, and democracy.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW METHODOLGY

Many of the conclusions drawn in this dissertation, especially in chapters 1, 4, and 5 are drawn from 42 interviews with congressional campaign pollsters and party campaign committee staff. At first glance one might think that interviewing congressional candidates would be optimal. However, there are two potential problems with interviewing candidates. First, especially in the case of winners, access would be quite limited and difficult to obtain. This would also be true of campaign managers but for a different reason—they are often a mobile group and contact information is often difficult to find. This is not true of campaign pollsters, many of whom are headquartered in the Washington D.C. area. A second reason for not interviewing candidates is that candidates themselves may not provide an objective view of the situation and motivations behind their decision-making. It is not likely that a candidate would admit to allowing polling to drive their decision to run for office and even less likely that a candidate could provide an entirely objective account of how polling affects issue positions.

My interviews with pollsters should be considered credible for several reasons. No other type of consultant is as well positioned to know about the influence of polling on campaigns. The pollsters know the public opinion data on each district and also have access to the campaign's strategic development. The pollsters I interviewed have worked

on and observed multiple campaigns each election cycle. Together they average 16.5 years of experience with a mode of 20 years. Unlike the candidates or campaign managers, the pollsters have observed dozens, and in some cases, hundreds of candidates and campaigns. Some might question the ability of the pollsters to provide objective reports about a process they have a personal stake in. They are the most objective source available to me and I have no reason to believe there was any widespread attempt to mislead me on any of the questions I asked. To the contrary, they were sometimes self-critical and often critical of their profession on some points, particularly concerning methodology and data analysis. I conducted the interviews "on the record" but I also allowed for the pollsters to go "off the record," or offer explanations or examples that were not for attribution, at any time during the course of the interview. This happened briefly during about one-third of the interviews. In a couple of instances, they asked me to turn off the tape recorder. Going "off the record" if only briefly, signaled that they were willing to be frank and open with me about their role in congressional campaigns.

The interviewing followed a traditional elite interviewing methodology with a set of topics and questions but following a relatively open format. Appendix B contains an abbreviated interview protocol in which the possible questions are listed. Most of the interviews were conducted in the subjects' Washington D.C. area offices in person during August of 2001 or by telephone in January and February of 2002. All interviews were tape-recorded, most lasting about an hour. While the questions were devised in advance, the format of the interviews was conversational. Follow up questions were frequent, and if the subject answered a question intended for later or moved into a topic of interest, the interview moved along with them. Generally, however, the issues discussed in this paper

were raised at the point in the interview suggested in the protocol. These procedures follow along standard practices of in-depth interviewing (Hammer and Wildavsky 1989; Leech 2002).

At the beginning of each interview I asked for permission to cite or quote the interview for attribution. Of the 42 interviews I conducted 30 were conducted completely on the record for full attribution, although in four of these cases I was not able to tape the interview. Another 9 pollsters who initially expressed hesitation about being on the record gave me permission to attribute limited material from the interview to them by name. In each case I provided a list of quotes or facts in writing and received a written confirmation that I could use the material. The remaining three did not respond to my requests. To preserve the confidentiality of those who did not respond as well as for material that I was granted permission to use, but not for attribution, I will not reveal the attribution status any of the interviews. However, all of those interviewed gave permission to be included in a list that is included as Appendix C.

Drawing a sample of pollsters to interview was a multi-step process. No comprehensive list exists of pollsters, but there are several publications and organizations from which names and contact information can be obtained. For example, each year *Campaigns and Elections*, the trade journal for political consultants, publishes a directory of firms that offer campaign related services called the *Political Pages* (Campaigns and Elections 2000). The "Polling/Survey Research" section of the 2000-2001 edition

contains approximately 250 listings.[115] However, of those listed in the directory there are a smaller number of pollsters who are actively involved in congressional campaigns—particularly the most competitive races where pollsters are likely to play the most active role. Fortunately, *Campaigns and Elections* also publishes a list of "win/loss" records for various consulting firms shortly after each election (Campaigns and Elections 2001).[116] I selected subjects to interview who are employed at polling firms that have congressional races listed among their client list in the win/loss records. Once polling firms were identified that conducted work for congressional campaigns I identified potential interview subjects by reviewing the biographical information of each firm's principals on the world wide web or made telephone calls to the firm inquiring about the person or persons handling the congressional clients. In addition, as part of each interview I asked subjects to make recommendations of other pollsters to interview. This enabled me to get names of some prominent regional pollsters as well as some pollsters with substantial experience in congressional races who have since gone on to other pursuits. In a few

---

[115] There are other directories available that contain names and contact information for polling firms and individual pollsters including *Political Marketplace USA*, (Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 1999) and the membership directories of the American Association of Political Consultants and the American Association of Public Opinion Research, however the Win/Loss records published by *Campaigns and Elections* was the simplist method of identifying polling firms with congressional clients.

[116] Some of my interview subjects indicated that the Win/Loss records were incomplete and only included the races for which the pollster chose to disclose the information to *Campaigns and Elections*. For my purposes, this is not extremely troublesome. My use of the Win/Loss records is to identify the pollsters that have clients running in House races, not to identify the pollsters for each House race. I expect that the listing of pollsters in the Win/Loss records covers all of the pollsters with multiple congressional clients. If races are omitted it is likely that the pollster had other congressional races listed and thus falls into my listing of pollsters with congressional clients.

cases I was not able to obtain an interview for inclusion in this paper, but will be interviewing further at a later date.

I also interviewed current and former staff members from the House party campaign committees, the National Republican Campaign Committee (NRCC) and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), starting with the 2002 campaign cycle and going back through the 1998 campaign cycle. Several of the pollsters in both parties currently do a substantial amount of work for the party campaign committees or actually worked at the committee in the past before going into polling full time. Of the 42 interviews, 34 were with full-time pollsters and 8 were with current and former campaign committee staff members. Appendix C contains a list of those interviewed.

There are a few ways to consider the representativeness of the sample. Political consultants generally work for only one party's candidates and my list achieves partisan balance with 22 Republicans and 20 Democrats. In addition, the Win/Loss records in *Campaigns and Elections* include 44 polling firms with congressional clients in the 2000 election cycle. Of these firms, I have interviewed at least one person at 20 of them. In some cases I interviewed multiple people at a firm, especially at Washington, D.C. based firms that have many congressional clients, such as Public Opinion Strategies and the Tarrance Group on the Republican side or Garin/Hart/Yang Research Group and the Mellman Group on the Democratic side. As part of their listing of Win/Loss records, *Campaigns and Elections* also creates a shorter list of consulting firms with the "Best Client Lists." There are 32 polling firms included on this list and I have interviewed

someone at 16 of those firms. Another way to assess the range of firms where I conducted interviews is to examine the payments received from U.S. House campaigns. Table A.1 contains a listing of the top 41 firms in terms of their total receipts from U.S. House candidates in the 1998 election. I compiled this from the Campaign Study Group itemized polling expenditures for each campaign used in the analysis for Chapter 3. These 41 firms represent 90 percent of the total dollars spent on polling by House candidates in 1998. Of these 41 firms, I interviewed someone at 16 of them, represented by an asterisk in the table.

In sum, I have achieved a fairly good balance in interviews of Republicans and Democrats, have attempted to interview someone at nearly every firm that has congressional clients listed in *Campaigns and Elections* and have succeeded with many of them. My list of interview subjects includes many of those with the "best" clientle, as defined by the leading consultant trade magazine as well as many of the top firms in terms of total receipts from U.S. House candidates in 1998.

One point worth noting as well is that political pollsters are often trained by each other so that in many cases, polling experience and training can be traced back to a few major consultants for each party. Thus, even though I have not interviewed pollsters with certain firms, in many cases I have interviewed someone that was trained as a pollster with the same person.[117] In other cases, even though I have been unable to obtain an interview at a particular firm, I have interviewed someone that used to work there in the

[117] Many Republican pollsters have worked directly with Richard Wirthlin or Robert Teeter or have worked closely with someone who has worked directly with them. On the Democratic side the same is true of Pat Caddell and Peter Hart.

past. This gives me increased confidence that my interview subjects cover a large breadth of experience and methods. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I am confident in the representativeness of my interviews simply because of the high level of consistency in the answers to my questions over a variety of topics given by a large number of pollsters that I have interviewed.

The interview tapes were transcribed and then evaluated using a coding sheet developed to analyze questions specific to this project. A copy of the coding sheet is included as Appendix D. I employed two undergraduate students to do the coding.[118] Each interview was coded by both students. I entered the data from each coder for a single interview at the same time, question by question. The students were instructed to include page numbers in the transcript so when discrepancies were encountered, I could quickly locate the information the student used to code the question. In some cases the interview transcripts exceeded 20 single spaced pages and the interview questions were not always delivered in the same order. As a consequence most of the discrepancies in the coding were the result of one coder finding relevant information and the other not finding anything. On objective questions of fact or quasi-objective questions (i.e. the presence or absence of a particular behavior) where discrepancies existed, I checked the transcript pages listed and after verifying the information I accepted any reasonable evidence of the behavior. In only a small handful of cases did the coders completely misinterpret an answer, and usually this occurred because of their unfamiliarity with

[118] To preserve the confidentiality of the interviews, anyone that had access to the interview transcripts signed a statement pledging to preserve confidentiality by not discussing the contents of the interviews with anyone except me.

polling or election jargon. In cases where subjective evaluations were asked for and discrepancies existed (such as Q31), I averaged discrepant answers.

Company Name	Total Dollars	Average Payment	Rank
Cooper & Secrest Associates	695,470	4,863	1
Public Opinion Strategies*	612,255	6,312	2
Mellman Group*	524,812	6,997	3
Garin-Hart-Yang Strategic Research*	496,352	12,409	4
Moore Information	436,071	6,413	5
Tarrance Group*	412,088	5,887	6
Fabrizio, McLaughlin & Associates	371,730	7,744	7
Feldman Group*	361,543	7,378	8
Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research*	354,886	7,098	9
American Viewpoint*	347,081	9,641	10
Cole, Hargrave, Snodgrass & Associates	333,015	5,286	11
Bennett, Petts & Blumenthal*	318,714	9,374	12
Global Strategy Group Inc.	291,289	5,394	13
Decision Research	243,108	6,570	14
McLaughlin & Associates, John*	229,397	8,193	15
Talmey-Drake Research & Strategy	220,417	9,184	16
Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates	196,396	6,772	17
Evans/McDonough Co.	193,940	7,183	18
Anzalone & Associates	177,501	7,100	19
Lake, Sosin, Snell & Associates	176,805	5,052	20
Lauer Lalley, Victoria Inc.*	162,792	9,044	21
In-Kind	124,931	4,164	22
Kitchens Group	124,908	7,348	23
Lester & Associates, Ron	123,149	5,598	24
Wirthlin Group*	103,396	7,954	25
Finkelstein & Associates, Arthur J.	101,203	9,200	26
Voter/Consumer Research	97,300	8,108	27
LGD Insights*	95,877	4,566	28
Polling Company*	94,577	4,504	29
Lawrence Research	92,000	18,400	30
Market Strategies*	88,723	8,872	31
Ridder/Braden	88,071	4,194	32
Charlton Research Co.	82,171	10,271	33
Abacus Associates	80,141	6,678	34
Raritan Associates	79,189	3,046	35
Penn & Schoen Associates	68,708	7,634	36
Hickman-Brown Research	65,230	7,248	37
Hamilton & Staff*	62,979	15,745	38
McKeon & Associates	61,668	4,744	39
Greenberg Research*	56,699	3,544	40
Kiley & Company	55,400	11,080	41

Notes: Data compiled by Campaign Study Group from Federal Election Commission disclosures. The companies listed represent 90 percent of the total dollars spent on polling.
* Represented in interviews

Table A.1 Polling Firms by Total Dollars Paid by U.S. House Candidates in 1998

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

I. Introduction and Background

1. Introduce self and briefly describe the research and the academic purpose.

"I would like to tape record the interview and have your answers to my questions be on the record. If you would like to specify that any portion of the interview remain confidential, in referring to the interview I will remove any identifying information, including references to yourself or any clients. So, if at any time you would like to go off the record, just say so and any comments you make will remain confidential. Also, if you would like me to turn off the tape at any time I will be happy to do so."

2. Tell me a little about how you got started in political polling. (education and training, previous political experience, other polling or consulting firms)
3. Among candidates for US House, who were your primary clients in the 2000 election cycle? Did you do any political party work?
4. I want to discuss your work for congressional candidates, especially those running for the U.S. House and any political party work or other work you may have done that included questions about a U.S. House election. When I ask about your "clients," I'm mostly interested in candidates for US House.

II. Purpose of Polling

1. In your view, what is the most important function of poll in a campaign? Anything else?
2. What kinds of changes or adjustments do you suggest a candidate make in response to polling data?
3. Tell me about your interactions with the campaign? Do you spend time directly with the candidate or mostly the campaign manager?
4. Issues.
   a. Have you ever had a client that changed his or her position on an issue because of polling data? Please explain.
   b. Have you ever advised a client to change his or her position on an issue? Please explain.
   c. Have you ever used polling in the selection of issues to focus on in the campaign? Please explain.
   d. Have you ever had a client that took a position held by a minority of the public, perhaps in an effort to lead public opinion? Please explain.

5. Image.
    a. What kinds of things can polling or focus groups tell a candidate about his or her image?
    b. What kinds of adjustments are possible to make?
    c. Can you give me an example of a client that used polling data to successfully change his or her image in a campaign?

III. Who Uses Polling Data?

1. Have you noticed any differences between clients in their willingness to use polling or accept your recommendations that are based on polling? Please explain.
2. What kind of campaign characteristics lead to more/less polling? What helps predict whether they will spend more of their available resources on polling?
    a. Is the level of competition important?
    b. How about uncertainty about outcome?
    c. How about the level of resources available?
3. Characterize the kind of congressional candidate that is more likely to use a lot of polling data versus a congressional candidate that is less likely to use polling.
    a. How about incumbents vs. challengers vs. open seat candidates?
    b. How about their familiarity with polling? (educational background, age)
4. What about constituency characteristics? Are there districts that seem to require more polling than others? Please explain. (homogeneity/diversity, geographical size)

VI. Candidate Emergence

1. Have you ever done work poll for a prospective candidate--one who hadn't yet decided for sure to run?
    a. [if yes] Tell me about it? How influential was the polling data on the client's ultimate decision?
    b. What did the poll consist of?
    c. What are some typical thresholds for assessing a client's chances at winning a seat in Congress? What kinds of things to you look for in the data?

VII. Party Campaign Committees

1. Have you done work for any of the congressional campaign committees? (NRCC, NRSC, RNC, DCCC, DSCC, DNC) How about state parties?
2. How do the parties identify vulnerable incumbents? How much of the work for prospective candidates done by parties?
3. How is polling for political parties different from polling for candidates? Are the needs of the party different from the needs of the candidate?
4. How do the parties choose what races to commission polling in?
5. How do the committees choose the pollsters they employ? Is there small number of approved pollsters? Do the hill committees match pollsters up with

candidates or insist that a campaign use a specific pollster before they will pay for a survey?

VIII. Polling and Election Outcomes

1. How does polling affect the outcome of the election?
2. Can polling data alter the outcome? How?
3. How does the effect of polling compare to the effect of other types of consultants (media, full time manager, fundraising, direct mail)

IX. Polling Methodology

1. Likely voter screens/models.
2. Sampling—Registration-based sampling (RBS) vs. Random Digit Dialing (RDD)
3. How much to your questionnaires vary by client? Do you use many of the same questions or question types? Ask for a sample of their work
4. Methods of analysis. Frequencies and crosstabulation vs. multivariate analysis.
5. How much variation is there in quality among pollsters who work for congressional candidates? What kind of poor work is going on out there that you have seen? What was one of your worst failures as a pollster?
6. Do you make use of push questions, designed to test the effectiveness of candidate traits or issue positions of your client? How about for the opposing campaign?

APPENDIX C

PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Dee Allsop (The Wirthlin Group), January 14, 2001, Alpine, Utah
Matt Angle (formerly with the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, 1998 election cycle), August 14, 2001, Washington, D.C.
Dave Beattie (Hamilton Beattie Research) March 6, 2002, by telephone
Glen Bolger (Public Opinion Strategies), August 1, 2001, Alexandria, Virginia
Brad Bannon (Bannon Communications), August 15, 2001, by telephone
Bruce Blakeman (formerly with Wirthlin Worldwide), February 7, 2002, Washington, D.C.
Michael Bloomfield (The Mellman Group), August 3, 2001, Washington, D.C.
Ed Brookover (formerly with the National Republican Congressional Committee, 1998 election cycle), February 7, 2002, Washington, D.C.
Shane Clark (Public Opinion Strategies), July 23, 2001, Alexandria, Virginia
Kellyanne Conway (The Polling Company), August 15, 2001, Washington, D.C.
Bill Dalbec (The Wirthlin Group), August 7, 2001, McLean, Virginia
Linda DiVall (American Viewpoint), March 5, 2002, by telephone
Diane Feldman (The Feldman Group), February 28, 2002, by telephone
Alex Gage (Market Strategies) August 9, 2001, Alexandria, Virginia
Geoff Garin (Garin-Hart-Yang Research Group), March 1, 2002, by telephone
Joe Goode (Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research), August 16, 2001, Washington, D.C.
Lisa Grove (LGD Insight), February 20, 2002, by telephone
Andy Grossman (formerly with the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, 2002 election cycle), June 27, 2001, Washington, D.C.
John Guzik (formerly with the National Republican Congressional Committee, 2000 election cycle), August 31, 2001, Washington, D.C.
Nathan Henry (The Mellman Group), August 2, 2001, Washington, D.C.
Karin Johanson (formerly with the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, 2000 election cycle), August 1, 2001, Washington, D.C.
Jim Jordan (formerly with the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, 2000 and 2002 election cycles), June 27, 2001, Washington, D.C.
Steve Kinney (Public Opinion Strategies), May 16, 2002, by telephone
Chris LaCivita (formerly with the National Republican Senatorial Committee, 2002 election cycle), June 27, 2001, Washington, D.C.
Jim Lauer (Lauer, Lalley, Victoria), August 24, 2001, by telephone
Bill Lee (TelOpinion Research), March 6, 2002, by telephone

Corey Mangleson (RT Nielson), January 15, 2001, Salt Lake City, Utah
Michael Matthews (formerly with the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, 2002 election cycle), June 28, 2001, Washington, D.C.
Chris Marshall (The Mellman Group), August 2, 2001, Washington, D.C.
Mark Mellman (The Mellman Group), August 17, 2001, Washington, D.C.
Mike McElwain (National Republican Congressional Committee, 2002 and 2004 election cycles), August 9, 2001, Washington, D.C.
Neil Newhouse (Public Opinion Strategies, August 1, 2001, Alexandria, Virginia
Ron Nielson (RT Nielson), January 15, 2001, Salt Lake City, Utah
Margie Omero (Momentum Analysis), January 15, 2001, Washington, D.C.
David Petts (Bennett Petts, and Blumenthal) February 18, 2002, by telephone
Stu Polk (McLaughlin and Associates), August 14, 2001, Alexandria, Virginia
Adam Probolsky (Probolsky and Associates), March 12, 2001, by telephone
Dave Sackett (The Tarrance Group), August 1, 2001, Alexandria, Virginia
Brian Tringali (The Tarrance Group), August 13, 2001, Alexandria, Virginia
Doug Usher (The Mellman Group), August 2, 2001, Washington, D.C.
Chris Wilson (Wilson Research Strategies) February 15, 2002, by telephone
Fred Yang (Garin-Hart-Yang Research Group), February 7, 2002, Washington, D.C.

APPENDIX D

CODING SHEET FOR POLLSTER INTERVIEWS

Indicate the page number where you found the answer in the left-hand margin for each question.

Coder Name: _____

Interview ID: _____

1. Name of pollster: _____

2. Date of interview (mm/dd/yyyy): _____

3. Confidentiality: Did the pollster agree that he or she could be cited and/or quoted by name?
    1. Yes
    2. OK to name in list of people interviewed but do not quote without permission. Wants to be contacted for permission before being quoted by name
    3. Do not list name or quote at all
    4. Nothing in the transcript about this

3b. Is the information in the transcript incomplete or ambiguous about confidentiality?
    1. Yes
    2. No

<u>Personal characteristics of pollster</u>

4. Pollster's party affiliation:
    1. Democrat
    2. Republican
    3. both parties
    4. non-partisan
    5. Not listed in transcript

5. Approximate number of years experience with political polling (if no indication in transcript code with 99):

    _____

6. Position in company:
    1. President/Owner/CEO
    2. Partner
    3. Vice President
    4. Political Party Campaign Committee staff (DCCC, DSCC, DNC, NRCC, NRSC, RNC)
    5. Other (Specify) _____
    6. Not listed in transcript

7. Based on the information in the interview about years of experience, number of campaigns worked on, and other factors in the transcript, would you characterize this pollster as a:
    1. very experienced
    2. somewhat experienced
    3. not very experienced

    Note: To aid coding on this question, a "very experienced" pollster would have worked on dozens of congressional races over 10 or more years; a "somewhat experienced" pollster would have worked for between 5-10 years, perhaps some of it assisting more senior partners in a firm, working on perhaps 20-40 races; a "not very experienced" pollster would have 5 years or less experience and relatively few races, perhaps less than 30, and none where they were the principal person in charge of the polling for that race at the firm.

<u>Purpose of Polling/Issue Representation</u>

8. What did the pollster report as the function of a poll in an election campaign? (mark all that apply)
    1. gather information for voter targeting
    2. gather information for selection of issues to focus on in campaign
    3. gather information for campaign message or theme development (how to talk about issues)
    4. gather information about the candidate's strengths and weaknesses
    5. gather information about the opponent's strengths and weaknesses
    6. the "horse race" (finding out who is ahead)
    7. Other (Specify): _____

9. What did the pollster indicate was the <u>single most important function</u> of a poll in an election campaign? (mark one only)
    1. gather information for voter targeting
    2. gather information for selection of issues to focus on in campaign
    3. gather information for campaign message or theme development (how to talk about issues)
    4. gather information about the candidate's strengths and weaknesses
    5. gather information about the opponent's strengths and weaknesses
    6. the "horse race" (finding out who is ahead)
    7. Other (Specify): _____
    8. did not identify a most important function

10. If you find a good quotation answering question number 8, please mark in the transcript and paraphrase here with a page number reference.

11. Did the pollster report that a candidate had changed a campaign issue position (e.g. pro-choice to pro-life) as a result of polling data?
    1. Yes, happened frequently
    2. Yes, but only happened rarely
    3. No, but knows of examples where this happened.
    4. No, never happened.
    5. Nothing reported in transcript about this.

12. Did the pollster report ever advising a candidate to change a campaign issue position (e.g. pro-choice to pro-life) as a result of polling data?
    1. Yes
    2. No
    3. Nothing reported in transcript about this.

13. Did the pollster report that a candidate had put increased emphasis on a campaign issue position (e.g. discuss Medicare position instead of tax position) as a result of polling data?
    1. Yes, happened frequently
    2. Yes, but only happened rarely
    3. No, but knows of examples where this happened.
    4. No, never happened.
    5. Nothing reported in transcript about this.

14. Did the pollster report ever advising a candidate to put increased emphasis on a campaign issue position (e.g. discuss Medicare position instead of tax position) as a result of polling data?
    1. Yes
    2. No
    3. Nothing reported in transcript about this.

15. Did the pollster report that a candidate had ever adjusted the presentation of a campaign issue position (e.g. emphasis on cutting car registration taxes instead of cutting income taxes) as a result of polling data?
    1. Yes, happened frequently
    2. Yes, but only happened rarely
    3. No, but knows of examples where this happened.
    4. No, never happened.
    5. Nothing reported in transcript about this.

16. Did the pollster report ever advising a candidate to adjust the presentation of a campaign issue position (e.g. emphasis on cutting car registration taxes instead of cutting income taxes) as a result of polling data?
    1. Yes
    2. No
    3. Nothing reported in transcript about this.

17. If you find a good quotation addressing questions 11 through 16, please mark in the transcript and paraphrase here with a page number reference.

Use of Polling Data

18. Of the following campaign/candidate/district characteristics, does the pollster indicate that they lead to more or less use of polling by a congressional campaign?

	More Polling	Less Polling	Not addressed in Transcript
a. A competitive race	1	2	9
b. Money/Resources available to pay	1	2	9
c. Campaign communicating with voters	1	2	9
d. Candidate with previous political experience	1	2	9
e. Older candidate	1	2	9
f. More educated candidate	1	2	9
g. More diversity in congressional district (size, race/ethnicity, urban/rural)	1	2	9
h. Strong local party organization	1	2	9
i. Other: _____	1	2	9

Candidate Recruitment

19. Did the pollster report having ever done exploratory polling (polling for a prospective candidate or polling before a person has decided to run)?
    1. Yes
    2. No

19b. If none reported: What explanation, if any, did pollster give for not doing exploratory polling? Paraphrase the reason and include a page number reference.

20. Has the pollster conducted exploratory polling for a prospective Senate candidate, a prospective House candidate, a Senate campaign committee (NRSC, DSCC), or a House campaign committee (NRCC, DCCC), or an interest group? (mark all that apply)
    1. prospective Senate candidate
    2. prospective House candidate
    3. Senate campaign committee
    4. House campaign committee
    5. Interest group
    6. Did not do any exploratory polling.
    7. Nothing in the transcript about this

21. According to the pollster, who conducts <u>most</u> of the exploratory polling that is done? (mark only one answer)
    1. prospective Senate candidate
    2. prospective House candidate
    3. Senate campaign committee
    4. House campaign committee
    5. Interest group
    6. Did not do any exploratory polling.
    7. Nothing in the transcript about this

22. In how many races does the pollster (or his or her firm) do exploratory polling during a typical two year campaign cycle for each of the following clients:

					<u>Did not say</u>
a. Prospective House Candidates	0	1-2	3-5	6 or more	99
b. Prospective Senate Candidates	0	1-2	3-5	6 or more	99
c. House campaign committee (NRCC, DCCC)	0	1-2	3-5	6 or more	99
d. Senate campaign committee (NRSC, DSCC)	0	1-2	3-5	6 or more	99

23. According to the pollster, in a typical situation where exploratory polling is used, how much impact does the polling information have on the potential candidate's decision making compared to other potential factors? Does it have …
    1. <u>a definitive impact</u> on the decision
    2. <u>a lot</u> of impact compared to other factors
    3. <u>about equal</u> impact compared with other factors
    4. <u>very little</u> impact compared to other factors
    5. <u>no impact</u> at all
    6. Did not do any exploratory polling.
    7. Nothing in the transcript about this

24. In a typical situation where exploratory polling is used, which potential candidates are more likely to use it? (mark all that are mentioned)
    1. current office holders seeking higher office
    2. statewide candidates (senate and governor) more than US House candidates
    3. Other (Specify): _____
    4. Did not do any exploratory polling.
    5. Nothing in the transcript about this

25. If some or very little impact above: Why is the exploratory polling not influential on the candidate's decision making? (mark all that are mentioned)
    1. Candidate can gauge public opinion without polls. Polling will only tell candidate what he/she already knows.
    2. Candidate places higher priority on other factors (finances, family…)
    3. Candidate has already made up his/her mind
    4. Polling data do not usually give a clear answer
    5. No money for polling at this stage. Resources are better spent elsewhere.
    6. Other (specify):
    7. Did not do any exploratory polling.
    8. Nothing in the transcript about this

26. Did the pollster indicate that as a general practice he or she recommended that potential candidates should not conduct exploratory polling?
    1. Yes
    2. No
    3. Did not do any exploratory polling.
    4. Nothing in the transcript about this

27. Did the pollster make a distinction between pre-decision polling and pre-announcement polling?
    1. Yes
    2. No
    3. Did not do any exploratory polling.
    4. Nothing in the transcript about this

28. Please mark any particularly good quotes on candidate recruitment polling in the transcript and paraphrase here with a page number reference.

<u>Misc.</u>

29. Does the interviewee make reference to the quantity of polling done at a party campaign committee in a particular election cycle?
    1. Yes
    2. No

29b. If yes, indicate page number(s) of discussion):_____

30. Did the pollster discuss methodology in the transcript?
    1. Yes
    2. No

30b. If yes, indicate page number(s) of discussion):_____

31. Please rate the overall quality of the transcript?
    1. Very good (very few, if any, typos or errors)
    2. Fair (a few significant errors, but usable)
    3. Poor (many typos, significant omissions, difficult to follow)

LIST OF REFERENCES

Abbe, Owen G., Jay Goodliffe, Paul S. Herrnson, and Kelly D. Patterson. 2003. "Agenda Setting in Congressional Elections: The Impact of Issues and Campaigns on Voting Behavior." *Political Research Quarterly* 56:418-430.

Abramowitz, Alan I. and Jeffrey A. Segal. 1992. *Senate Elections*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Achen, Christopher H. 1986. *The Statistical Analysis of Quasi-Experiments*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Adler, E. Scott. n.d. "Congressional District Data File, 105th Congress" University of Colorado, Boulder, CO. Available at http://sobek.colorado.edu/~esadler/districtdatawebsite/CongressionalDistrictDatasetwebpage.htm.

Alvarez, R. Michael. 1997. *Information and Elections*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Alvarez, R. Michael and Charles Franklin. 1994. "Uncertainty and Political Perceptions." *Journal of Politics* 56:671-688.

Anderson, Charles W. 1990. *Pragmatic Liberalism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Asher, Herbert. 1992. *Presidential Elections and American Politics*. 5th ed. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Asher, Herbert. 2004. *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Ought to Know*. 6th ed. Washington D.C.: CQ Press.

Bartels, Larry M. 1986. "Issue Voting Under Uncertainty: An Empirical Test." *American Journal of Political Science* 30:709-28.

Bartels, Larry. 1992. "The Impact of Electioneering in the United States." In David Butler and Austin Ranney, eds., *Electioneering: A Comparative Study of Continuity and Change*. Oxford : Clarendon.

Blakeman, Bruce. 1995. "Tracking Polls: How to Do Them." *Campaigns and Elections* August, pp. 24-25.

Bowman, Karlyn. 2000. "Polling to Campaign and to Govern." In *The Permanent Campaign and Its Future*, Norman Ornstein and Thomas Mann, ed. Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute and the Brookings Institution.

Box-Steffensmeier, Janet M. 1996. "A Dynamic Analysis of the Role of War Chests in Campaign Strategy." *American Journal of Political Science* 40:352-71.

Bradshaw, Joel C. 1995. "Who Will Vote for You and Why: Designing Strategy and Theme." in James A. Thurber and Candice J. Nelson, eds. *Campaigns and Elections American Style*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Bradshaw, Joel C. 2004. "Who Will Vote for You and Why: Designing Campaign Strategy and Message." In James A. Thurber and Candice J. Nelson, eds. *Campaigns and Elections American Style*, 2nd ed. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Brady, Henry E. 2000. "Contributions of Survey Research to Political Science." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 23:47-57.

Breen, Richard. 1996. *Regression Models: Censored, Sample-Selected, or Truncated Data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Broh, C. Anthony. 1980. "Horse-Race Journalism: Reporting the Polls in the 1976 Election." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 44:514-529.

Burden, Barry C. 2003. "Everything but Death and Taxes: Uncertainty and American Politics" in Barry C. Burden, ed. *Uncertainty in American Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Campaigns and Elections Magazine. 2000. *The Political Pages 2000-2001: Annual Directory of Political Consultants Products & Services*. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc.

Campaigns and Elections Magazine. 2001. "Winners and Losers 2000; Political Consultant Win/Loss Records; Plus, Big Winners, Best Client Lists." *Campaigns and Elections Magazine*, Special Post-Election Issue, December-January 2001, pp. 28-66.

Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Campbell, James E. 2000. *The American Campaign: U.S. Presidential Campaigns and the National Vote*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press.

Campbell, James E. and Thomas E. Mann. 1992. "Forecasting the 1992 Election: A User's Guide to the Models." *Brookings Review* (Fall): 22-27.

Cantril, Albert H. 1991. *The Opinion Connection: Polling, Politics, and the Press*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Cook, Timothy E. 1998. *Governing With the News: The News Media as a Political Institution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Converse, Jean. 1987. *Survey Research in the United States: Roots and Emergence 1890-1960*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Converse, Philip E. 1966. "The Concept of a Normal Vote" in *Elections and the Political Order*, Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes, eds. New York: John Wiley and Sons, pp. 9-39.

Conway, M. Margaret. 1983. "Republican Party Nationalization, Campaign Activities, and Their Implications for the Party System." *Publius* 13:1-17.

Conway, M. Margaret. 1984. "The Use of Polls in Congressional, State, and Local Elections." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. 472: 97-105.

Cotter, Cornelius P. and John F. Bibby. 1980. "Institutional Development of Parties and the Thesis of Party Decline." *Political Science Quarterly* 95:1-27.

Crespi, Irving. 1989. *Public Opinion, Polls, and Democracy*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Damore, David F. and Thomas G. Hansford. 1999. "The Allocation of Party Controlled Campaign Resources in the House of Representatives, 1989-1996." *Political Research Quarterly* 52: 371-85.

Declercq, Eugene. 1978. "The Use of Polling in Congressional Campaigns." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 42:247-58.

Deegan, John Jr. and Kenneth White. 1976. "An Analysis of Nonpartisan Election Media Expenditure Decisions Using Limited Dependent Variable Methods." *Social Science Research* 5:127-35.

Delli Carpini, Michael X. and Bruce Williams. 1994. "The Method is the Message: Focus Groups as a Method of Social, Psychological, and Political Inquiry" *Research in Micropolitics* 4:57-85.

Dulio, David A. 2001. *For Better or Worse? How Political Consultants are Changing Elections in the United States*. Ph.D. dissertation, American University.

Eisinger, Robert M. 2003. *The Evolution of Presidential Polling*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ezra, Marni, and Candice J. Nelson. 1995. "Do Campaigns Matter?" in James A. Thurber and Candice J. Nelson, eds. *Campaigns and Elections American Style*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Erikson, Robert S., Michael B. MacKuen, and James A. Stimson. 2002. "Public Opinion and Policy: Causal Flow in a Macro System Model." In *Navigating Public Opinion: Polls, Policy, and the Future of American Democracy*, Jeff Manza, Fay Lomax Cook, and Benjamin I. Page, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Faucheux, Ron. 1995. "Pricing Polling: The Going Rate." *Campaigns & Elections*. August p. 23.

Federal Election Commission. 1999. *Campaign Guide for Congressional Candidates and Committees*. Washington, D.C.: Federal Election Commission.

Fenno, Richard F., Jr. 1978. *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. Boston: Little, Brown.

Fiorina, Morris. 1981. *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Fischer, Frank. 1995. *Evaluating Public Policy*. Chicago: Nelson/Hall Publishers.

Fishkin, James S. 1995. *The Voice of the People: Public Opinion and Democracy*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Fowler, Linda L. and Robert D. McClure. 1989. *Political Ambition: Who Decides to Run for Congress*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Franklin, Charles. 1991. "Eschewing Obfuscation? Campaigns and the Perception of U.S. Senate Incumbents." *American Political Science Review* 85:1193-1214.

Friedenberg, Robert V. 1997. *Communication Consultants in Political Campaigns*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Gallup, George and Saul Rae. 1940. *The Pulse of Democracy: The Public Opinion Poll and How it Works*. New York: Greenwood Press.

Geer, John G. 1996. *From Tea Leaves to Opinion Polls: A Theory of Democratic Leadership*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Geer, John G. and Prateek Goorha. 2003. "Declining Uncertainty: Presidents, Public Opinion, and Polls" in Barry Burden, ed. *Uncertainty in American Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gelman, Andrew, and Gary King. 1993. "Why are American Presidential Election Polls so Variable When Votes are so Predictable?" *British Journal of Political Science* 23:409-501.

Gerber, Alan and Donald P. Green. 2003. "Enough Already with Random Digit Dialing: Can Registration-Based Sampling Improve the Accuracy of Election Forecasts?" Unpublished paper at http://www.vcsnet.com/articles2.shtml (accessed June 30, 2004).

Ginsberg, Benjamin. 1986. *The Captive Public*. New York: Basic Books.

Goldenberg, Eddie N. and Michael W. Traugott. 1984. *Campaigning for Congress*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Goodliffe, Jay. 2001. "The Effect of War Chests on Challenger Entry in U.S. House Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 45:830-44.

Green, Donald P. and Alan Gerber. 1998. "How to Interpret Tracking Polls" *Campaigns and Elections* August, pp. 23-25, 60.

Greene, William H. 2003. *Econometric Analysis*, 5th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Groves, Robert. 1989. *Survey Errors and Survey Costs*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Hamilton, William R. 1995. "Political Polling: From the Beginning to the Center." In James A. Thurber and Candice J. Nelson, eds., *Campaigns and Elections American Style*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Hamilton, William R. and Dave Beattie. 1999. "Modern Campaign Polling" In *The Manship School Guide to Political Communication*, ed. David D. Perlmutter. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.

Hammer, Dean and Aaron Wildavsky. 1989. "The Open-Ended, Semistructured Interview: An (Almost) Operational Guide." In Aaron Wildavsky, ed., *Craftways on the Organization of Scholarly Work*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Harris, Louis. 1963. "Polls and Politics in the United States." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 27:3-8.

Heckman, James. 1976. "The Common Structure of Statistical Models of Truncation, Sample Selection, and Limited Dependent Variables and a Simple Estimator for Such Models." *Annals of Economic and Social Measurement* 5, 4:475-92.

Heckman, James. 1979. "Sample Selection Bias as a Specification Error." *Econometrica* 47:153-161.

Herbst, Susan. 1993. *Numbered Voices: How Opinion Polling Has Shaped American Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Herrnson, Paul S. 1988. *Party Campaigning in the 1980s*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Herrnson, Paul S. 1989. "National Party Decision Making, Strategies, and Resource Distribution in Congressional Elections." *Western Political Quarterly* 42:301-323.

Herrnson, Paul S. 1992. "Campaign Professionalism and Fund-Raising in Congressional Elections" *Journal of Politics* 54:859-70.

Herrnson, Paul S. 1998. *Congressional Elections: Campaigning at Home and in Washington*. 2nd ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Herrnson, Paul S. 2000a. *Congressional Elections: Campaigning at Home and in Washington*. 3rd ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Herrnson, Paul S. 2000b. "Hired Guns and House Races: Campaign Professionals in House Elections." In James A. Thurber and Candice J. Nelson, eds. *Campaign Warriors: Political Consultants in Elections*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Herrnson, Paul S. 2004. *Congressional Elections: Campaigning at Home and in Washington*. 4th ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Herrnson, Paul S. and Kelly D. Patterson. 2000. "Agenda Setting and Campaign Advertising in Congressional Elections." In *Crowded Airwaves: Campaign Advertising in Elections*, James A. Thurber, Candice J. Nelson, and David A. Dulio, eds. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Hershey, Marjorie R. 1974. *The Making of Campaign Strategy*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

Hershey, Marjorie R. 1984. *Running for Office: The Political Education of Campaigners*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers.

Holbrook, Thomas M. 1996. *Do Campaigns Matter?* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Holley, Jack K. 1991. "The Press and Political Polling" In *Polling and Presidential Election Coverage*, Paul J. Lavrakas and Jack K. Holley, eds. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Jacobs, Lawrence R. 1992. "The Recoil Effect: Public Opinion and Policymaking in the U.S. and Britain." *Comparative Politics* 24:199-217.

Jacobs, Lawrence R. 1993. *The Health of Nations*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Jacobs, Lawrence R. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1994. "Issues, Candidate Image, and Priming: The Use of Private Polls in Kennedy's 1960 Presidential Campaign," *American Political Science Review* 88:527-40.

Jacobs, Lawrence R. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1995. "The Rise of Presidential Polling: The Nixon White House in Historical Perspective." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 59:163-95.

Jacobs, Lawrence R. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 2000. *Politicians Don't Pander: Political Manipulation and the Loss of Democratic Responsiveness*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jacobson, Gary C. 1978. "The Effects of Campaign Spending in Congressional Elections," *American Political Science Review* 72:469-91.

Jacobson, Gary C. 1980. *Money in Congressional Elections*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Jacobson, Gary C. 1985. "Money and Votes Reconsidered: Congressional Elections, 1972-82," *Public Choice* 47:7-62.

Jacobson, Gary C. 1990a. *The Electoral Origins of Divided Government: Competition in U.S. House Elections, 1946-1988*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Jacobson, Gary C. 1990b. "The Effects of Campaign Spending in House Elections: New Evidence for Old Arguments," *American Journal of Political Science* 34:334-62.

Jacobson, Gary C. 1993. "The Misallocation of Resources in House Campaigns" In *Congress Reconsidered*, 5th ed. Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, eds. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Jacobson, Gary C. 2004. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, 6th ed. New York: Longman.

Jacobson, Louis. 2001. "The Secrets of Recruiting" *National Journal* June 6, pp. 2076-2081.

Javits, Jacob K. 1947. "How I Used a Poll in Campaigning for Congress." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 11:222-26.

Johnson, Dennis W. 2001. *No Place for Amateurs: How Political Consultants are Shaping American Democracy*. New York: Routledge.

Johnson-Cartee, Karen S. and Gary A. Copeland. 1997. *Inside Political Campaigns: Theory and Practice*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Kazee, Thomas A., ed. 1994. *Who Runs for Congress? Ambition, Context, and Candidate Emergence*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Kolodny, Robin and David A. Dulio. 2003. "Political Party Adaptations in US Congressional Campaigns." *Party Politics* 9:729-46.

King, Robert and Martin Schnitzer. 1968. "Contemporary Use of Private Political Polling." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 32:432-36.

Kingdon, John W. 1989. *Congressman's Voting Decisions*. 3rd ed. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Krasno, Jonathan S. 1994. *Challengers, Competition, and Reelection: Comparing Senate and House Elections*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Lavrakas, Paul J. 1993. *Telephone Survey Methods: Sampling, Selection, and Supervision* 2nd ed. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Lavrakas, Paul J. and Michael W. Traugott. 1995. "The Media's Use of Election Polls: A Synthesis and Recommendations for 1996 and Beyond" in Paul J. Lavrakas, Michael W. Traugott, and Peter V. Miller, eds. *Presidential Polls and the News Media*. Boulder, CO: Westview.

Leech, Beth L. 2002. "Asking Questions: Techniques for Semistructured Interviews" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35:665-68.

Lewis-Beck, Michael and Tom Rice. 1992. *Forecasting Elections*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Lieberman, Joseph I. 2000. *In Praise of Public Life: The Honor and Purpose of Political Service*. With Michael D'Orso. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Lodge, Milton, Kathleen McGraw, and Patrick Stroh. 1989. "An Impression-Driven Model of Candidate Evaluation." *American Political Science Review* 87:399-419.

Lodge, Milton, Marco R. Steenbergen, and Shawn Brau. 1995. "The Responsive Voter: Campaign Information and the Dynamics of Candidate Evaluation." *American Political Science Review* 8:309-26.

Long, J. Scott. 1997. *Regression Models for Categorical and Limited Dependent Variables*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lublin, David. 1997. *The Paradox of Representation: Racial Gerrymandering and Minority Interests in Congress*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Lupia, Arthur and Matthew D. McCubbins. 1998. *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Luntz, Frank I. 1988. *Candidates, Consultants, and Campaigns: The Style and Substance of American Electioneering*. New York: Basil Blackwell.

Maddala, G.S. 1992. *Introduction to Econometrics*, 2nd ed. New York: Macmillan

Maestas, Cherie D. 2003. "Risk and Uncertainty as Sources of Incumbent Security" in Barry Burden, ed. *Uncertainty in American Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Magleby, David B. ed. 2000. *Outside Money: Soft Money and Issue Advocacy in the 1998 Congressional Elections*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Magleby, David B. and J. Quin Monson, eds. 2004. *The Last Hurrah? Soft Money and Issue Advocacy in the 2002 Congressional Elections*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Maisel, L. Sandy and Walter J. Stone. 1997. "Determinants of Candidate Emergence in U.S. House Elections: An Exploratory Study" *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 22:79-96.

Maisel, L. Sandy, Linda L. Fowler, Ruth S. Jones and Walter J. Stone. 1994. "Nomination Politics: The Roles of Institutional, Contextual, and Personal Variables" in L. Sandy Maisel, ed. *The Parties Respond: Changes in American Parties and Campaigns*, 2nd ed. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Maisel, L. Sandy, Walter J. Stone and Cherie Maestas. 2001. "Quality Challengers to Congressional Incumbents: Can Better Candidates be Found?" in Paul S. Herrnson, ed. *Playing Hardball: Campaigning for U.S. Congress* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Mann, Thomas E. 1978. *Unsafe at Any Margin: Interpreting Congressional Elections*. Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute.

Maullin, Richard and Christine Quirk. 1995. "Audience Response Systems" *Campaigns and Elections* August, pp. 27, 56.

Mayhew, David R. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection* New Haven: Yale University Press.

McGraw, Kathleen M. 2002. "Manipulating Public Opinion." In *Understanding Public Opinion*, 2nd ed., Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox, ed. Washington D.C.: CQ Press.

Medvic, Stephen K. 1998. "The Effectiveness of the Political Consultant as a Campaign Resource." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 31:150-54.

Medvic, Stephen K. 2000a. "Professionalization in Congressional Campaigns." In *Campaign Warriors: Political Consultants in Elections*, James A. Thurber and Candice J. Nelson, eds. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Medvic, Stephen K. 2000b. "Campaign Consultants and Political Communication: Explaining What Consultants Do." Presented at the annual meeting of the Southern Political Science Association, Atlanta, GA.

Medvic, Stephen K. 2001. *Political Consultants in U.S. Congressional Elections*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

Medvic, Stephen K. and Silvo Lenart. 1997. "The Influence of Political Consultants in the 1992 Congressional Elections." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 22:61-77.

Medvic, Stephen K. and Matthew M. Schousen. 2004. "When Incumbents Clash: Fundamentals Matter" In *The Last Hurrah? Soft Money and Issue Advocacy in the 2002 Congressional Elections*, ed. David B. Magleby and J. Quin Monson. Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Mellman, Mark, Edward Lazarus, Allan Rivlin, and Lisa Grove. 1991. "Benchmark Basics & Beyond." *Campaigns and Elections* May, pp. 22-32.

Meyer, Philip and Deborah Potter. 2000. "Hidden Value: Polls and Public Journalism" In *Election Polls, the News Media, and Democracy*, ed. Paul J. Lavrakas and Michael W. Traugott. New York: Chatham House Publishers of Seven Bridges Press.

Miller, Warren E. and Donald E. Stokes. 1963. "Constituency Influence in Congress." *American Political Science Review* 57:45-57.

Monson, Joseph Quin. 2001. Explaining Poll Use in Congressional Election Campaigns. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL.

Moore, David W. 1992. *The Superpollsters: How They Measure and Manipulate Public Opinion in America*. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows.

Nimmo, Dan. 1970. *The Political Persuaders: The Techniques of Modern Political Campaigns*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Ornstein, Norman and Thomas Mann, eds. 2000. *The Permanent Campaign and its Future*. Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute and the Brookings Institution.

Patterson, Kelly D. 2004. "When Redistricting Means Never Having to Say You're Sorry" In *The Last Hurrah? Soft Money and Issue Advocacy in the 2002 Congressional Elections*, ed. David B. Magleby and J. Quin Monson. Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Petracca, Mark P. 1989. "Political Consultants and Democratic Governance." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 22:11-14.

Popkin, Samuel L. 1991. *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Price, David E. 1992. *The Congressional Experience: A View from the Hill*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Reich, Robert B., ed. 1988. *The Power of Public Ideas*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Rosenbloom, David L. 1973. *The Election Men: Professional Campaign Managers and American Democracy*. New York: Quadrangle Books.

Sabato, Larry J. 1981. *The Rise of Political Consultants: New Ways of Winning*. New York: Basic Books.

Salmore, Barbara G. and Stephen A. Salmore. 1989. *Candidates, Parties, and Campaigns: Electoral Politics in America*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Sellers, Patrick. 1998. "Strategy and Background in Congressional Campaigns." *American Political Science Review* 92:159-72.

Shea, Daniel M. and Michael John Burton. 2001. *Campaign Craft: The Strategies, Tactics, and Art of Political Campaign Management*, Revised and Expanded Edition. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Sigelman, Lee and Langche Zeng. 1999. "Analyzing Censored and Sample-Selected Data with Tobit and Heckit Models." *Political Analysis* 8:167-82.

Simon, Paul. 2003. *Our Culture of Pandering*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Stimson, James A., Michael B. Mackuen, and Robert S. Erikson. 1995. "Dynamic Representation." *American Political Science Review* 89:543-64.

Stonecash, Jeffrey M. 2003. *Political Polling: Strategic Information in Campaigns*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Thurber, James A. 1998. "The Study of Campaign Consultants: A Subfield in Search of Theory." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 31:145-49.

Thurber, James A. and Candice J. Nelson, eds. 2000. *Campaign Warriors: Political Consultants in Elections*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Tobin, James. 1958. "Estimation of Relationships for Limited Dependent Variables." *Econometrica* 26:24-36.

Tourangeau, Roger and Kenneth Rasinski. 1988. "Cognitive Processes Underlying Context Effects in Attitude Measurement." *Psychological Bulletin* 103:299-314.

Weaver-Lariscy, Ruth Ann, Spencer F. Tinkham and Kurt E. Nordstrom. 1987. "The Use and Impact of Polling as a Strategic Planning Tool in Congressional Campaigns." *Political Communication Review* 12:1-24.

Weisberg, Herbert F., Eric S. Heberlig, and Lisa M. Campoli, eds. 1999. *Classics in Congressional Politics*. New York: Longman.

Weissberg, Robert. 2002. *Polling, Policy, and Public Opinion: The Case Against Heeding the "Voice of the People"* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Whitley, Tyler. 2001. "Democrats Rap Forbes Mailing; They Say in Impugns Lucas' Patriotism" *Richmond Times Dispatch*, 10 June, p. C4.

Wilcox, Walter. 1976. "The Congressional Poll—and Non-Poll" in *Political Opinion and Behavior*, Edward C. Dreyer and Walter A. Rosenbaum, eds. North Scituate, MA: Duxbury Press, pp. 63-71.

Wirthlin, Richard B. n.d. "Political Polling in the United States of America 1970-2004" In Robert M. Worcester, ed. *Political Opinion Polling, An International Review*, 2nd ed. Forthcoming.

Witcover, Jules. 1999. *No Way to Pick a President*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.

Yankelovich, Daniel. 1991. *Coming to Public Judgment: Making Democracy Work in a Complex World*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Young, Michael L. 1992. *Dictionary of Polling: The Language of Contemporary Opinion Research*. New York: Greenwood Press.

Zaller, John R. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Zaller, John R. and Stanley Feldman. 1992. "A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences." *American Journal of Political Science* 36:579-616.