

**Question Wording and Issue Salience of
Public Opinion Polls:**
The Energy Crisis Prior to the 2008 Presidential Election

INTRODUCTION

During the months leading up presidential elections, the American public is bombarded with numbers. Public opinion polls are conducted almost daily, assessing how the candidates stack up against each other and how the public feels about issues relevant to the campaign. These polls are no doubt helpful to the candidates themselves in helping shape their own campaigns and decide on what to focus (Stonecash, 2008). The results of many polls also have the potential for farther-reaching influence over the public's views and policymaking. Polls are often reported by the media, drawn on during political speeches or debates, and used as support by policymakers to endorse their causes. Different polls are given varying amounts of attention, and they are often picked and chosen to benefit whoever is reporting them.

While it is nice to believe that polling results are unbiased, the data collected through polls are products of the survey instrument and method used to collect the information (Groves, 2004). The quality of these results depends on many different aspects of the survey, including sampling, survey mode, weighting/data adjustments, and questionnaire design, among others. Generally, the polls that are reported on in national newspapers and television stations are from sources that abide by industry-wide standards. However, nuances in question wording and question order within the survey instrument are rarely critiqued when the polls are released. These fine distinctions created during survey design have the potential for impacts on how survey respondents answer the questions (Tourangeau, 2000).

LITERATURE

Questionnaire Design

It is well established that question order can affect survey results (Abramson, 1987) and prior research has also shown that question wording can have dramatic effects on survey response in certain types of questions (Gendall, 1990). In 1984 Bradburn and Danis found differing results for two similar questions asking respondents if they supported the United States' involvement in the Korean War. They found that the inclusion of the phrase "to stop the Communist invasion" in the question asked by the National Opinion Research Center yielded higher support than the question asked by Gallup that simply asked respondents if they thought the United States had made a mistake by defending Korea.

Smith found similar results in 1987, when he analyzed results from many different surveys showing that Americans were more likely to say they supported spending for the "poor" than for "welfare." He found that the word "welfare" carries more negative connotations than "poor." Smith uses this work to illustrate how small differences in question wording can have a great impact on survey response.

This research coincides with the Rasinski's work in 1989 about the effects of question wording on public support for government spending. He uses data from the General Social Survey (GSS) from 1984, 1985, and 1986, which asked questions using split-ballot experiments to study these effects. Some specifics of the study show more support for "solving the problem of big cities" than "assistance to big cities" and "improving the conditions of blacks" than for "assistance to blacks." In 2000, Jacoby sought to replicate these results using real-world situations, by using data from the 1992 CPS National

Election Study to study the effects of issue framing – the ability to present one social issue in several different ways – on the public opinion support of government spending. He found that issue-framing effects do exist through the presentation of government-spending issues. Along similar lines, Asher's work on the subject (1995) shows how the results from similar questions asked with slightly different content, can be interpreted in drastically different ways.

Impact of Polls

The results of public opinion polls can be used to influence policy decisions (Page & Shapiro, 1983) as well as influence the public's support of certain issues. In 1992, Muntz used an experimental design to study the concept of "impersonal influence" - the influence of perceived opinion of a group on the opinions of an individual. She found that under certain conditions, opinions of a group could influence individuals to say they feel a certain way. Mehrabian found similar results, regarding support for the "bandwagon effect" - the phenomenon of individuals to show support for a view that the majority holds, when phony data was shown to respondents. These studies both show that when participants have extremely strong opinions about an issue, they were far less likely to be influenced by the opinions of the majority, but when they did not have strong opinions about the issue, they were susceptible to what they believed to be the opinions of others. In line with these results, Lang and Lang (1995) found that individuals' knowledge of the majority opinion about a particular issue can often dampen the support for the minority view.

Issue Salience

The salience of an issue can also impact the results of public opinion polls on certain topics. Typically when survey respondents answer attitudinal questions that they possess previously formed opinions about, they simply retrieve their opinions, and answer the question based on the belief they have already formed about the topic at an earlier point in time. When survey respondents answer questions about topics with which they are unfamiliar, the majority of respondents typically state that they do not know or cannot answer the question.

However, research has shown, that a significant minority of respondents provides answers to questions when they know little about the topic (Tourangeau, 2000). In research conducted by Bishop, Oldendick, and Tuchfarber in 1986, it was found that respondents are sometimes even willing to provide answers to survey questions when the issue in question is fictitious. These respondents are likely to rely on general attitudes and values or on impressions when answering the questions. Because of their reliance on sources beyond the question meaning, those who are unfamiliar with the topic at hand are the most likely to be swayed by differences in question wording and to give inconsistent answers when interviewed about the same topic on different occasions (Zaller). On the other hand, respondents who have strong feelings about an issue are more likely to give consistent answers, both when question wording in the survey instrument differs and when they are interviewed at multiple points in time.

Research conducted on the relationship between public opinion and policy issues has found that public policy is often congruent with policy decisions, especially for issues with high salience. This finding has held true through repeated studies by different

authors, each of whom have measured salience through a method unique to their study. For most issues there tends to be no previously created index of issue salience, so researchers have needed to come up with creative ways to measure it on their own.

In 1983, Page and Shapiro, while measuring congruence between changes in policy and in preference, measured salience through two methods: 1) the frequency with which opinion questions on public opinion polls about a particular topic were repeated; and 2) the proportion of respondents answering “don’t know” or “no opinion” to survey questions. They assert that issues that are more frequently asked about in public opinion polls have higher salience; and that the percentage of “don’t know” or “no opinion” answers to a survey question has an inverse relationship with the salience of an issue.

In 1998, Monroe, while also researching the consistency between decisions of the U.S. government and preferences of the public, measured salience by the responses to the open-ended Gallup Poll question that asked “What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?” He asserts that issues with higher salience will be higher in the rank ordering in the results for the most important problem facing the country. However, Monroe acknowledges the potential issues with this measurement, such as inconsistencies with coding of response items, the matter of multiple responses, and the absence of well-known policy issues.

Lax and Phillips (2009) used yet another measure of salience while studying how policy-specific public opinion impacts policies affecting gays and lesbians. They measured salience by the number of times the issue they were studying was written about in an article published in the New York Times during a defined time period. They determined that the more articles an issue appeared in, the more salient the issue.

Page and Shapiro (1983), Monroe (1998), and Lax and Phillips (2009) all measured salience through different measures, but found similar results among their research: more salient issues tend to have policies that are congruent to the public opinion on those issues.

Energy

Gas at the pump was higher during the summer months leading up the fall 2008 presidential election than it has ever been in the past, peaking in July 2008 at an average of over \$4 per gallon (Energy Information Administration website, 2009). The frontrunners in the 2008 campaign began announcing their candidacy for president as early as January 2007, giving them nearly two years to campaign, debate, and run in primaries before the presidential election in November 2008. In early 2007 when the campaigning started, gas prices hovered around \$2.50 per gallon, which was lower than what the American public had seen in the prior couple years when gas has reached an average at the pump price of \$3. Throughout the year and a half of campaigning, the American public experienced the average at the pump price of gas raise to more than they had ever paid in the past. After September 15th, gas prices took a quick downward turn until it reached an average price of less than \$2 at the pump in December 2008, after the new president had been elected. By the time the elections had occurred in November, gas prices at the pump hovered around the same price they had been in early 2007 when the candidates had first announced their candidacy to run for president.

During the 2008 presidential election, a considerable portion of the energy debate was centered on domestic drilling. The debate focused on two main areas of domestic drilling: 1) Drilling off the coast of the United States, which is commonly referred to as

“offshore drilling”, and 2) Drilling in the American National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), which is an area of land in Alaska that is currently protected by the United States government.

Drilling off the coast of the United States is only permitted in specific areas, including parts of the coast in the Gulf of Mexico and parts of the Alaskan coastline. Of the coastline where drilling is currently permitted, it is only taking place in a portion of the areas. Drilling is currently not permitted on either of the East or West Coasts. In July 2008, at the height of the gas prices, during the time when the presidential campaigns were in full swing, George W. Bush lifted an executive order banning an increase on offshore drilling and drilling in ANWR. Due to the fact that there is currently a federal ban on increasing offshore drilling, his move was largely symbolic and did not change any policy (CNN, 2008).

Those who are in favor of domestic drilling and drilling in ANWR cite many reasons for their beliefs. Some of the main reasons include: gaining energy independence from the countries that the United States currently purchases oil from, reducing the price of gasoline at the pump, and creating new jobs. However, those who are opposed to domestic drilling are likely to believe that this method it will not actually decrease the price of gas, that promotion of this method will suppress exploration of other methods of energy, and that it is a large environmental risk that could cause irreversible damage without sufficient results.

During the 2008 presidential campaigns, John McCain favored domestic drilling - both offshore and in Alaska, while Barack Obama opposed it for the majority of his campaign.

Research Questions

With a groundwork of question wording effects previously established, as well as how others' opinions can impact the opinions of an individual, this paper examines multiple aspects of public opinion polling specifically regarding offshore and ANWR drilling prior to the 2008 presidential election. This issue is ideal for analysis because it was central to the presidential campaigns in the summer months prior to the election. With gas prices at an all time high in 2008 (Energy Information Administration website, 2009), the candidates had different opinions of how best to deal with the energy crisis, with McCain proposing to increase domestic drilling, and Obama opposing these actions for most of his campaign (Falcone, 2008). The media covered the energy debate extensively during the summer of 2008 (Weisbrot, 2008), and a substantial number of polls about the topic were fielded during that time.

To examine the level of public support for domestic drilling during the months leading up to the 2008 presidential election, I examined the results from a number of different well-known public opinion polls in order to estimate the support for such actions. I predict that there is a difference in public opinion between the different types of drilling – that is, domestic drilling generally and drilling in ANWR each garner different levels of support from the public. It is important to explore these differences because public opinion polls are often published, cited, and discussed. During the summer months leading up to the 2008 presidential election, the term “domestic drilling” and “offshore drilling” was often used interchangeably, when “domestic drilling” can also refer to drilling ANWR.

Following the estimation of support for domestic drilling, I examine the change in support for domestic drilling over time. Given that the issue was an integral part of the campaigns for the 2008 presidential election, I predict that as salience of the issue of domestic drilling increased, so did the support it received – both in ANWR and in offshore areas. I expect that before the summer and after the summer, support for domestic drilling is lower in comparison to the summer months of 2008. Additionally, I predict that as domestic drilling gained salience during the summer of 2008, support for wind and solar energy decreased.

The last issue I examine in this paper is how question wording impacts the results public opinion polls on drilling for oil and natural gas in or around the United States. Given the literature on question wording and survey design, I believe that changes in question wording in public opinion surveys regarding domestic drilling will impact the results and show a difference in support of these governmental actions.

METHODS

All poll data analyzed in this paper was gathered through the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research at the University of Connecticut. Using their iPoll search engine, survey questions and results relating to drilling in or around the United states were collected from well-known public opinion polls from January 2007 through December 2009. Data from the following polls were used in this analysis: CBS News Poll, CBS News/New York Times Poll, CNN/Opinion Research Corporation Poll, Democracy Corps Poll, FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll, George Washington University Battle Ground 2008 Survey, Los Angeles Times/Bloomberg Poll, and NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll. All polls were conducted by telephone among a national sample of US adults ages 18 and older, though some polls were limited to likely or registered voters. A full survey methodology for each poll can be found in the Appendix.

To analyze the public support for the different types of domestic drilling and to analyze the change of support over time, all polls on the topic were grouped into three main categories, consisting of: offshore drilling, ANWR drilling, and unspecified location domestic drilling. Questions from January 2007 through December 2009 from the aforementioned polling organizations that asked questions relating to these topics were included in this analysis. Polls that included reference to gas prices or other issues were excluded from analysis, so that the polls included measured pure support or opposition to domestic drilling. Polls measuring support for wind and solar energy were also included. Once again polls that measured support or opposition in a relatively straightforward manner were included, while others were excluded. For the first part of the analysis sample type – whether it was among the national public, among likely votes,

or among registered voters – was ignored. This was done due to the lack of available data on the topic and because of lack of need for precision. General estimation of public opinion on the topic was sufficient for the analysis because polls came from different sources, may have been conducted among slightly different sample groups, and may have had different question wording. Gas price data was gathered from the Energy Information Administration website. To examine how public support for domestic drilling changed as gas prices changed, data for both was plotted on the same graph covering a nearly two year period, starting in January 2007 and ending in November 2009.

Once general sentiment towards domestic drilling was established, the effects of question wording on the results of these polls were analyzed. Questions asked between the months of June through August 2008 were grouped into “comparable sets” based on their own survey methodology (see Appendix). Each comparable set is composed of two questions, with the exception of set A5, which has three questions. In order to be considered comparable, questions needed to be fielded within a close time frame of each other (the end date of one survey is never more than 10 days away from the start date of the other), through the same mode (all surveys were conducted by telephone), among the same population of respondents (likely and registered voters were considered the same in this analysis and were never compared to the national population), and about the same topic within the more general issue of domestic drilling. These requirements for grouping resulted in 6 comparable sets, composed of questions that differed in wording. The results of the questions within each set were then compared to one another.

RESULTS

Public Support for Domestic Drilling

The domestic drilling graph (see GRAPHS) shows the plotted points for public support of domestic drilling from January 2007 through December 2009. During the two years shown, the bulk of the data points fall between May and September 2008.

When focusing specifically on the time period from May to September 2008, it appears that support for offshore drilling hovers at around 70%, with a mean of 69% and a range of 62% to 75%. During the same time period, support for ANWR drilling remains at a lower level, with a mean of 55% and a range of 50% to 59%. There are only three data points on unspecified location domestic drilling (meaning that the question wording did not include a location for the domestic drilling). The first point from May 2008 shows support of 57%. In June and August 2008, support appears to increase for unspecified location drilling to 72% and 75% respectively.

Change of Opinion on Domestic Drilling Over Time

For offshore drilling, there are no questions that ask about public support for such actions between January 2007 and April 2008. All questions asked on this topic in a straightforward manner were asked from May 2008 forward so public opinion cannot be measured on the issue prior to that time. There is one data point on this topic asked about after September 2009. Fielded in March 2009, the mean support is at 69% from the time period of May to September 2008.

Data for ANWR drilling shows the opposite availability, with some data points available before the critical time period of May to September 2008, but none after. The three data points available show support of 39% and 40% in April 2007 and 42% in

February 2008. All of these three data points are over 10 percentage points lower than the mean from the May to September 2008 and are all below the bottom of the range during that time as well. There is no data available after September 2008 on this topic.

For unspecified location domestic drilling, there are no data points available from before May 2008. There is one data point available from after September 2008, showing 64% support in April 2009. This is roughly 10 percentage points lower than the average support in the summer 2008, but still higher than the results from a poll conducted in May 2008.

Opinions About Exploring Wind or Solar Energy

Surveys gauging support for pursuing wind and solar energy asked throughout the two-year timeframe under examination appear to be consistent over time, with an average of 86% and a range of 81% to 91%.

Effects of Question Wording On Survey Results

A1.

The first set of comparable questions (see Appendix A1), from the Democracy Corps Poll and the FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll was fielded at the beginning of the summer in mid to late June, among likely or registered voters, by telephone, regarding non-specified domestic drilling. The Democracy Corps Poll uses the words “currently protected by the federal government” to describe the areas where drilling would be increased. The FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll question includes the words “reduce the country’s dependence on foreign oil and make the United States more energy independent” as reason to favor offshore drilling and does not specify anything about where the increased drilling would take place. The two polls show a 21 percentage point

difference when the “strongly favor” and “somewhat favor” options from the Democracy Corps Poll are combined (76% Fox News/Opinion Dynamics Poll vs. 55% Democracy Corps Poll).

A2.

A comparison between two other questions can be made in a Democracy Corps Poll and a FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll (see Appendix A2) fielded in the same surveys previously described. However, these questions ask specifically about offshore drilling. The FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll question is phrased in the same way shown in A1, but this time the area of drilling is specified as the “Gulf of Mexico.” The Democracy Corps Poll question ties the issue offshore drilling to the presidential candidate John McCain and uses the words “to help lower the price of gas” as reason to favor such action. When the “strongly favor” and “somewhat favor” options in the Democracy Corps Poll are combined, these two questions show a difference of 16 percentage points in the proportion of registered/likely voters who favor offshore drilling (77% FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll vs. 61% Democracy Corps Poll).

A3.

The next set of comparable questions (see Appendix A3) analyzed here is from the Los Angeles Times/Bloomberg Poll and from the CNN/Opinion Research Corporation Poll, fielded in mid to late June, among a national sample of adults, by telephone, regarding offshore drilling. The CNN/ORC poll asked respondents if they favored or opposed increasing offshore drilling, with little other detail included in the question wording. The LA Times/Bloomberg Poll gives an elaborate description about potential dangers of offshore drilling in the question wording, explaining that some people believe

it is safe, while others believe it is not. When the response options for “Allowed with proper controls” and “Drilling should be allowed even if damage results” from the LA Times/Bloomberg Poll are combined and the response options for “Strongly favor” and “Mildly favor” for the CNN/ORC Poll are combined, there is a 5 percentage point difference in the proportion of adults who favor increased offshore drilling (68% LA Times/Bloomberg Poll vs. 73% CNN/ORC Poll).

A4.

Later in the summer, the next set of comparable questions (see Appendix A4), from the CBS News Poll and FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll, was fielded in late July to early August, among registered voters, by telephone, regarding offshore drilling. The CBS News Poll question includes the words “costs and risks” in the question wording for opposition to offshore drilling. On the other hand, the FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll question includes the words “reduce the country’s dependence on foreign oil and make the United States more energy independent” as reason to favor offshore drilling, offering no descriptive reason to oppose the action. The two polls show a 7 percentage point difference in adults who favor offshore drilling (71% FOX News/Opinion Dynamics vs. 64% CBS News Poll).

A5.

The following set of comparable questions involves one question from the George Washington University Battleground 2008 Survey and two from the NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll (See Appendix A5). Both surveys were fielded towards the end of the summer, in mid August, among registered or likely voters, by telephone, regarding environmental standards. The NBC News/WSJ Poll asks two questions about expanding

drilling – one about expanding areas for drilling for oil off the coast of the United States and the other about opening environmentally protected areas in Alaska for oil and gas exploration. The NBC News/WSJ Poll question reads that these are “steps that could be taken to ease America’s energy problems” and asks if this is a step in the right or wrong direction. The GWU Survey asked respondents if they favored or opposed “easing environmental restrictions” for the purpose of finding new domestic sources of energy. While the two questions do not ask about the exact same thing, they are getting at extremely similar topics because the expansion of areas for drilling off the coast and the opening of environmental protected areas in Alaska for oil and gas exploration asked about in the NBC/WSJ Poll will both involve the easing of environmental restrictions asked about in the GWU survey. When the “favor strongly” and “favor somewhat” options in the GWU survey are combined and the “Right direction-accomplish a great deal” and “Right direction-accomplish just a little” options are combined in the NBC/WSJ Poll, there is a difference of 16 and 10 percentage points in the number of people who favor or support easing environmental standards between the question in the GWU survey and each of the questions asked in the NBC/WSJ Poll (47% GWU Survey vs. 63% offshore drilling; 57% drilling in Alaska in NBC/WSJ Poll).

A6.

The last set of comparable questions is from the CBS News/New York Times Poll and the CNN/Opinion Research Corporation Poll (see Appendix A6), fielded toward the end of the summer. Both surveys interviewed a national sample of adults in mid to late August, by telephone, about domestic offshore drilling. In this comparison, the CNN/ORC poll asked respondents if they favored or opposed increasing offshore drilling,

with little other detail included in the question wording. However, the CBS/New York Times Poll used the words “costs and risks” in the question wording when describing opposition to offshore drilling. The two polls show a 12 percentage point difference in adults who favor offshore drilling when the “strongly favor” and “mildly favor” options from the CNN/ORC poll are combined (74% CNN/ORC vs. 62% CBS/NYTimes).

DISCUSSION

Implications

The results of this analysis show that there are in fact directional differences in the amount of support that the public has for offshore drilling and drilling in ANWR, during the time period from May to September 2008. A substantial majority (on average 69%) of the public appeared to support offshore drilling during that time, but only a slight majority (on average 55%) of the public supported drilling in ANWR. During this time, support for unspecified location domestic drilling appeared to be closer to that of offshore drilling than to drilling in ANWR.

It is difficult to analyze the change in support for domestic drilling over time, due to the lack data available on the subject. Based on the data points described in this paper, support for ANWR drilling appears to increase during the critical period from May to September 2008, but it is unclear what opinion on the policy is after September 2008 because of the lack of data on the subject. On the other hand, offshore drilling lacks data from before May 2008, but appears to remain around the same level after September 2008.

While there is a lack in the amount of available data points, directionally, it is clear that there is a higher level of support for offshore domestic drilling than there is for ANWR drilling. Though the polls are conducted by different polling companies and show differences among each other, the difference in support for ANWR drilling and offshore drilling during that time is clear.

Support for policy to explore wind and solar power remains roughly the same during the two-year period examined, and does not appear to be affected by the changes in attitude toward domestic drilling.

The critical time period for public opinion questions on domestic drilling occurred from May to September 2009, which coincides with the peak of the price of gas at the pump. It is unclear whether the increase in survey questions during this time is due to the rise in gas prices, or to the increased salience of the issues, brought to light by the presidential candidates during this key time period during the race. Perhaps, these factors are all related to one another. Regardless of the reason, there is a clear lack of data available about domestic drilling from before and after this critical period and a change in opinion over time cannot be thoroughly analyzed.

When ignoring the differences between question wording and sample source, the questions about domestic drilling can be separated into groups based on the topic of drilling. But, nuances in question wording can impact results quite significantly. The results of this analysis show that variations in question wording can produce different outcomes in public support of domestic drilling in the United States. In the questions analyzed in this paper, most wording differed by the inclusion of a reason to support or oppose offshore drilling. In each case, the inclusion of this extra wording resulted in an increase or decrease in support of domestic drilling in the expected direction when compared to a question that did not contain this wording. Set A5 deviated from this pattern, in that it compared questions about similar topics framed in different ways. The results of which showed drastically different support for increased domestic drilling.

Overall, the support for domestic drilling during the summer of 2008, appeared to hover around 60-70%, but the differences between polls can translate into very different meanings. As seen in comparable set A1, the Democracy Corps Poll showed support of 55% and the FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll showed support of 76%. While both show a majority support, the Democracy Corps Poll yields a weak majority support (just over half of likely voters). The FOX News/Opinion Dynamics poll finds over three-quarters of registered voters showing support – a clear and strong majority.

The implications of these results are potentially far-reaching and depend heavily on the amount of media pick-up each of these polls received in the months leading up to the election. The results of public opinion polls have the potential to be cited by politicians and policymakers, often for the use of convincing the public to support their cause. Although the differences in results may make sense when the full question wording is taken into consideration, often the results of such polls are boiled down to the basics when reported and it is unclear how the question was worded or framed. The American public may have a skewed feeling about support for domestic drilling because they heard the results of one poll and not the results of another. Future research should explore the extent to which each of the questions from these polls was reported by the media and cited by politicians and policymakers. Additionally, analysis of issue salience to determine how the rise of the domestic drilling issue came about would be beneficial.

Research Limitations

The analysis in this paper is limited for a number of reasons. There is a clear lack data from before and after the critical period from May to September 2008, making any conclusions about change in opinion over time directional in nature. The questions

analyzed in this paper used surveys fielded by different polling companies. While the survey mode, timing, and sample definition were matched as closely as possible, there are external factors that could have caused the observed differences in results. Factors such as demographic weighting/data adjustments and sampling techniques may differ between the polling companies. Timing is extremely important as well. While no questions that were compared in this paper were fielded more than 10 days apart (from end date of one survey to start date of another), a lot can happen in a seemingly short amount of time, especially in the months leading up to a presidential election. A debate, a scandal, or public crisis could change the public's opinion of the issues dramatically.

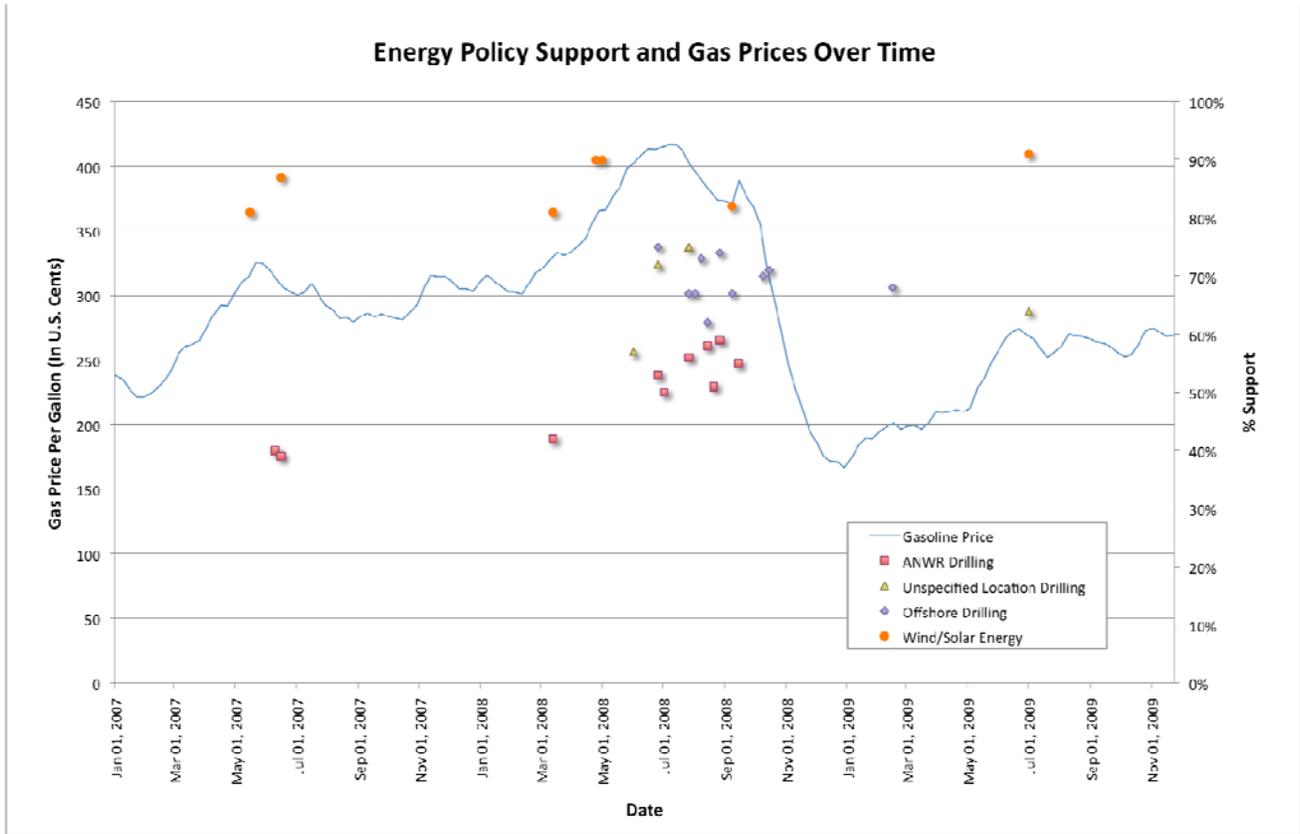
In this paper, questions from surveys that interviewed registered or likely voters were compared to one another even though the two populations are not the exactly the same. Additionally, the analysis did not take into account question order within the survey instrument, which has been shown to have an effect on survey results. Despite these factors, the questions included in this research resulted in real-world statistics that may have played a role in the course of the 2008 presidential election. Further research to confirm the results of this study through a "true" experiment would be beneficial.

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GRAPHS



APPENDIX (Comparable Sets)

A1. Democracy Corps Poll vs. FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll

Democracy Corps Poll

Given the high price of gas, would you favor or oppose allowing oil drilling in US (United States) coastal areas and wilderness areas that are currently protected by the federal government?

Strongly favor	38%
Somewhat favor	17%
Somewhat oppose	13%
Strongly oppose	25%
No opinion	6%

Methodology: Survey by Democracy Corps. Conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, June 22, 2008-June 25, 2008 and based on telephone interviews with a national likely voters sample of 2008. Question was asked of subpopulation of a quarter sample.

FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll

Thinking now about the energy situation, please tell me if you favor or oppose the following ways to reduce the country's dependence on foreign oil and make the United States more energy independent... Increased drilling for oil in the United States immediately?

Favor	76%
Oppose	20%
Don't know	4%

Methodology: Survey by Fox News. Conducted by Opinion Dynamics, June 17, 2008-June 18, 2008 and based on telephone interviews with a national registered voters sample of 900.

A2. Democracy Corps Poll vs. FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll

Democracy Corps Poll

As you may have heard, the Republican (2008 presidential election) Nominee, John McCain has proposed allowing oil drilling in some US (United States) coastal regions to help lower the price of gas. Do you favor or oppose this proposal? (If Favor/Oppose, ask:) (Is that strongly or somewhat favor/oppose?)

Strongly favor	39%
Somewhat favor	22%
Somewhat oppose	10%
Strongly oppose	25%
No opinion	5%

Methodology: Survey by Democracy Corps. Conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, June 22, 2008-June 25, 2008 and based on telephone interviews with a national likely voters sample of 2008. Question was asked of subpopulation of a quarter sample.

FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll

Thinking now about the energy situation, please tell me if you favor or oppose the following ways to reduce the country's dependence on foreign oil and make the United States more energy independent... Drilling in the Gulf of Mexico?

Favor	77%
Oppose	18%
Don't know	6%

Methodology: Survey by Fox News. Conducted by Opinion Dynamics, June 17, 2008-June 18, 2008 and based on telephone interviews with a national registered voters sample of 900.

A3. Los Angeles Times/Bloomberg Poll vs. CNN/Opinion Research Corporation

Los Angeles Times/Bloomberg Poll

As you may know, there have been some proposals made about opening up more land in the United States for oil and gas drilling, including off the nation's coasts. Supporters say such drilling can be done in ways that minimize harm to the environment. Opponents say that in practice, that seldom happens. Which of the following statements comes closest to your view: 'Drilling is usually done in a way that harms the environment and should not be allowed in environmentally important areas,' or 'Drilling can be done safely and should be allowed in environmentally important areas with proper controls in place,' or 'The nation's energy needs are so pressing that drilling should be allowed even if environmentally important areas may suffer damage as a result'?

Do not allow	24%
Allowed with proper controls	55%
Drilling should be allowed even if damage results	13%
Don't know	8%

Methodology: Survey by Bloomberg. Conducted by Los Angeles Times, June 19, 2008-June 23, 2008 and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1233. Question was asked June 20-23 only, sample size unknown.

CNN/Opinion Research Corporation Poll

How do you feel about increased drilling for oil and natural gas offshore in US (United States) waters--do you strongly favor, mildly favor, mildly oppose, or strongly oppose increased offshore drilling?

Strongly favor	48%
Mildly favor	25%
Mildly oppose	15%
Strongly oppose	12%
No opinion	1%

Methodology: Survey by Cable News Network. Conducted by Opinion Research Corporation, June 26, 2008-June 29, 2008 and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1026.

A4. CBS News Poll vs. FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll

CBS News Poll

Would you favor allowing increased drilling for oil and natural gas off the US (United States) coast, or do you think the costs and risks are too great?

Favor	64%
Risks too great	28%
Don't know/No answer	8%

Methodology: Conducted by CBS News, July 31, 2008-August 5, 2008 and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1034. Question was asked only of a subpopulation of registered voters, sample size unknown.

FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll

Thinking now about the energy situation, please tell me if you favor or oppose the following ways to reduce the country's dependence on foreign oil and make the United States more energy independent... Increasing offshore drilling in US coastal areas?

Favor	71%
Oppose	23%
Don't know	6%

Methodology: Survey by Fox News. Conducted by Opinion Dynamics, July 22, 2008-July 23, 2008 and based on telephone interviews with a national registered voters sample of 900.

A5. George Washington University Battle Ground 2008 Survey vs. NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll

George Washington University Battleground 2008 Survey

Now, thinking about the issue of energy and finding new sources of domestic energy. I would like to read you a list of proposals regarding finding new domestic sources for energy. Please listen carefully as I read each statement and tell me if you would favor or oppose each of these proposals...

Easing environmental restrictions

Favor strongly	26%
Favor somewhat	21%
Oppose somewhat	15%
Oppose strongly	35%
Unsure	5%

Methodology: Survey by George Washington University. Conducted by Tarrance Group & Lake Research Partners, August 10, 2008-August 14, 2008 and based on telephone interviews with a national likely voters sample of 1000. Likely voters are registered voters who said they are somewhat/very/extremely likely to vote in 2008.

NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll

I'm going to read you several steps that could be taken to ease America's energy problems. For each one, tell me whether you think this is a step in the right direction, a step in the wrong direction, or if you do not have an opinion either way...

Expanding areas for drilling for oil off the coast of the United States.

Right direction-accomplish a great deal	44%
Right direction-accomplish just a little	19%
Wrong direction	27%
No opinion	7%
Not sure	3%

Open environmentally protected areas in Alaska for oil and gas exploration.

Right direction-accomplish a great deal	38%
Right direction-accomplish just a little	19%
Wrong direction	33%
No opinion	6%
Not sure	4%

Methodology: Survey by NBC News, Wall Street Journal. Conducted by Hart and Newhouse Research Companies, August 15, 2008-August 18, 2008 and based on telephone interviews with a national registered voters with an oversample of Hispanics sample of 1075. The results shown are from the 1000 national registered voters sample excluding the Hispanic oversample of 70 registered voters. Each question asked of half the sample.

A6. CBS News/New York Times Poll vs. CNN/Opinion Research Corporation PollCBS News/New York Times Poll

Would you favor allowing increased drilling for oil and natural gas off the US (United States) coast, or do you think the costs and risks are too great?

Favor	62%
Risks too great	28%
Don't know/No answer	10%

Methodology: Conducted by CBS News/New York Times, August 15, 2008-August 19, 2008 and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1012.

CNN/Opinion Research Corporation Poll

How do you feel about increased drilling for oil and natural gas offshore in US (United States) waters--do you strongly favor, mildly favor, mildly oppose or strongly oppose increased offshore drilling?

Strongly favor	52%
Mildly favor	22%
Mildly oppose	11%
Strongly oppose	13%
No opinion	1%

Methodology: Survey by Cable News Network. Conducted by Opinion Research Corporation, August 29, 2008-August 31, 2008 and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 1031.

Question asked of subpopulation of half the sample.