Opinion-Responsiveness of Governing Agendas in the US and the UK: institutional filtering of issue priorities of the public

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Abstract

This paper argues that the effects of issue priorities of the public on governing agendas are mediated through the institutions in which priorities are stated or enacted – characterised as a form of institutional filtering. The institutional form and function of governing agendas determine the character of equilibrium and feedback processes in responsiveness to public opinion – and in particular whether shocks to the long-run agenda-opinion equilibrium are subject to short-run corrections or to the accumulation of equilibrium errors. This comparative analysis considers data for the United States and United Kingdom, from 1953 to 2003, on the policy content of executive speeches, laws and national budgetary expenditure according to function in combination with aggregate data on public opinion about the "most important problem". These datasets are coded according to the policy content framework of the Comparative Agendas Project (www.comparativeagendas.org). The results suggest that governing agendas become less responsive to public opinion as institutions and agendas become more procedural or substantive (i.e. budgets) and less concerned with agenda-setting and the signalling of policy priorities (i.e. executive speeches). The estimated models also suggest that the issue priorities of the public have stronger effects in the long-run than in the short-run.

1. Opinion-Responsiveness of Governing Agendas and the Politics of Attention

The responsiveness of governing institutions to public opinion is a defining feature of democratic politics (Dahl 1971, p. 1; Verba and Nie 1972, p. 300). Indeed, the design of electoral systems and prospective and retrospective behaviour of voters (Fiorina 1977; 1981) provide incentives for policy-makers to represent public opinion in their decision-making.

There is a large and wide-ranging literature that demonstrates responsiveness of policy to public opinion at the aggregate level (e.g., Page and Shapiro 1983; Stimson et al. 1995; Wlezien 1995; 1996; 2004; Erikson et al. 2002; Soroka and Wlezien 2004; 2005; 2010; Bartle et al. 2010). This builds upon classic studies of dyadic representation in the United States (Miller and Stokes 1963; Cnudde and McCrone 1966) concerning the link between representatives and the preferences of their constituents. There is an increasing comparative dimension to this research too (e.g. Brettschneider 1996; Petry 1999; Soroka and Wlezien 2004; 2005; 2010; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2005; 2008). Questions have further been posed about the degree to which preferences are heterogeneous and the extent to which policy-makers are more responsive to some parts of society than others (e.g. Gilens 2005; Bartels 2006; 2008; Wlezien and Soroka 2008; 2010).

While much of this literature on policy-opinion responsiveness concerns how public preferences are reflected in policy decisions and policy outcomes (e.g. Wlezien 1995; Soroka and Wlezien 2010), there is a growing interest in the responsiveness of policy-making to the issue priorities of the public (e.g. Cohen 1995; 1997; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2005; 2008; Jones and Baumgartner 2004; Jennings 2009; Jennings and John 2009; Jones et al. 2009). As Jones et al. (2009, p. 277) observe "…typical representation studies assess the extent to which policymakers' issue positions

correspond to those of the public, but do not investigate whether the issue priorities of policymakers correspond to those of the public." The degree to which issue priorities of the public are reflected in policy-making is nevertheless an important question for understanding of democratic responsiveness.

Information-Processing & Political Institutions

At any moment in time, policy-makers are confronted with an abundance of information about the state of the world (Simon 1971; Jones and Baumgartner 2005a). The attention-driven model of policy choice developed by Jones and Baumgartner (Jones 1994; 2001; Jones et al. 2003; Jones and Baumgartner 2005a; 2005b) argues that it is attention, rather than resources, which is most scarce for policy-makers in this world of information abundance. There are transaction costs associated with the retrieval and processing of information. Think tanks, interest groups, government departments, expert communities, media, political parties and the public all engage in supply of information to the policy-making process. With a multitude of competing issues and demands, policy-makers must choose which issues to attend to and which not -- on the basis of incomplete information. This leads decision-makers to make (implicit) approximations of available information, through a process of weighting and updating (Jones and Baumgartner 2005b, pp. 330-331). Such bounded decision-making (Simon 1971) creates inherent trade-offs in policy-making and leads to the prioritisation of some issues above others.

Political systems provide mechanisms for the parallel processing of thousands of issues through a range of governing institutions and policy subsystems (see True et al. 2007). Fewer issues are processed serially at the higher reaches of government by executives, legislatures and the judiciary. While this dispersion of policy-making activities across governing institutions and jurisdictions enables the simultaneous

handling of multiple issues, policy-makers must weight and prioritize the issues that are most urgent and important to them, and do so on the basis of a limited set of indicators. The attention-driven model suggests that at the same time as "[s]ome aspects of the world are unmonitored, unattended to; other aspects are incorporated into the decision process beyond their intrinsic merit" (Jones and Baumgartner 2005b, p. 334). This means that while a few issues – the economy, for example – are high on the macro-political agenda much of the time, pressure for change in other issue areas must exceed a certain threshold of attention before policy-makers act. This model implies a disproportionate pattern of attention and change (Jones and Baumgartner 2005a; 2005b) as long-run stabilities in policy tend to be maintained through incremental decision-making and path dependence, but subject to sudden changes occurring when certain issues are elevated into the realm of macro-politics.[1] This generates an iterative updating processing that entails extended periods of incremental updating, but is also subject to episodic corrections and over-corrections that deviate from this long-run equilibrium (see Jennings and John 2009). Selective attention to the issues therefore shapes both the structure and the content of governing agendas (Jennings et al. n.d.).

Issue Salience & Priorities

The public is – like policy-makers – faced with a multitude of competing issues and concerns, but cannot attend to all of them. Some issues are more important than others. Studies have long been interested in the importance attached to certain

[1] Studies from the US provide empirical evidence in support for this attention-based model. The reaction of policy-makers to information follows a pattern of proportionate and linear increments interrupted by disproportionate responses (Baumgartner and Jones 1991; 1993; Jones et al. 1998; 2003; Jones and Baumgartner 2005a; 2005b). Further research on policy agendas, legislative outputs and budget allocations in the US and a number of European countries including Belgium, France, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK have also shown non-normal distributions of attention (see Baumgartner et al. 2006; 2009; Breeman et al. 2009; Breunig 2006; John and Jennings 2010; John and Margetts 2003).

issues in voting behaviour (e.g. Berelson et al. 1954; RePass 1971; Miller et al. 1976). This is commonly referred to as issue 'salience' (see the overviews in Behr and Iyengar 1985 and Wlezien 2005). Salience indicates the prominence of certain issues in the public mind (e.g. Taylor and Fiske 1978). Salience is often measured with survey instruments that ask about the 'most important problem' (MIP) facing the nation (see Wlezien 2005; Jennings and Wlezien n.d.). Aggregate MIP responses are often used to represent the broader public salience of issues at particular points in time and over time at the macro-level (e.g. McCombs and Shaw 1972; MacKuen and Coombs 1981; Jones, 1994; McCombs and Zhu 1995; McCombs 1999; Soroka 2002; Jones and Baumgartner 2004; Jennings and John 2009; Jones et al. 2009). Salience in the aggregate indicates the level of attention that the public assigns to issues relative to each other.

If an issue is salient to the public as a whole, this does not, however, indicate consensus. An issue can be salient even if public opinion is polarized and spread across a wide spectrum of preferred solutions. For example, a large proportion of the public might be strongly opposed to increased defence spending while another section of the public are strongly in favour of it – but both groups could agree that it is an *important* issue.

Issue salience, in turn, affects priorities. If the economy is a more salient issue than defence, then it must be a priority ahead of defence. If defence is more salient than agriculture then it must be a priority ahead of agriculture, as is the economy. For this reason the salience of political issues is at the heart of most studies of agenda-setting; for both public and political agendas (e.g. Jones 1994; Soroka 2002; Jones and Baumgartner 2004; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2005; 2008; Jennings and John 2009; Jones et al. 2009) as well as the mass media (e.g. Cohen 1963; McCombs and

Shaw 1972; Funkhouser 1973; MacKuen and Coombs 1981). Issue Salience also has significant consequences for analyses of issue ownership (e.g. Petrocik 1996; Bélangera and Meguid 2008) as political parties have incentives to promote their competence on those issues that are more salient than others.

Institutional Filtering & Opinion-Processing

The processing of information about the issue priorities of the public is subject to variation across political institutions. Institutions can communicate their policy intentions and priorities through multiple agendas. Congress, for example, can debate issues, pass bills, set appropriations, approve appointments, conduct oversight and hearings and impeach and remove executive and judicial officers. Institutional filtering occurs because government attends to issues across a number of different institutional venues. Its ability and willingness to respond to public opinion varies according to institution. In some venues policy-makers are engaged in signalling their position and priorities to the public (e.g. Cohen 1995; 1997; Canes-Wrone 2001; 2005; Canes-Wrone and Shotts 2004; Jennings et al. n.d.). Venues concerned with communicating agendas therefore tend to be more concerned with public opinion and expressing policy priorities. Further, policy-makers are more responsive when their actions are visible to the public (Arnold 1990; Edwards et al. 1995; Jones et al. 2009).

There is a filtering process in responsiveness to issue priorities of the public as political institutions become less visible and engaged in processing of information about issues in increasing detail. The parallel processing of issues means that certain issues must be prioritised ahead of others. This disproportionate pattern of attention mediates the responsiveness of policy-makers to public opinion. Institutional rules and procedures determine the degree to which policy-makers are able to incorporate information about the issue priorities of the public in decision-making. For example,

the finite amount of time available on the legislative timetable means that policy-makers have limited opportunities to initiate policy responses or signal their attention. Other institutional features, such as sunset legislation, may require a fixed amount of attention and constrain the discretion policy-makers have in responding to public opinion in other issue areas. Further, incrementalism and path dependence (North 1990; Pierson 2000) are more prevalent within certain political institutions, such as in budgeting (Lindblom 1959; 1979; Wildavsky 1964), where large scale changes in policy are difficult to implement. In combination, priority signalling, parallel-processing and institutional procedures give rise to institutional friction (Jones and Baumgartner 2005a; 2005b). Because the institutional capacity of government for serial-processing of information is limited, the day-to-day business of policy-making tends to be incremental but subject to occasional shocks. As decision-makers weight information according to its importance, this produces a disproportionate pattern of attention (Jones and Baumgartner 2005a; 2005b).

2. On the Interaction of Salience and Preferences

One way of understanding policy-opinion responsiveness is through the effect that priorities of the public have on priorities of decision-makers. According to Wlezien's (1995; 1996; Soroka and Wlezien 2004; 2005; 2010) thermostatic model, the public's preference for policy (R_t) is equal to the difference some ideal amount of policy (P_t*) and the actual amount of policy (P_t).

(1) $R_t = P_t^* - P_t$

That is, the difference between what the public wants and what the public gets. It can want either more or less policy and adjusts in response to what policy-makers actually

do (Wlezien 1995).[2] The public can prefer more or less spending on welfare, more or less regulation of financial markets, more or less attention to the issue of crime, more or less assistance to certain industries, and so on.

Salience and preferences are not independent, however. Salience captures information both about preferences and importance. In theory, there should be a positive relationship between salience and the absolute distance between the public's ideal preference and the actual amount of policy. If this conceptualisation of public preferences is considered with reference to salience, salience is a function of the gap between what the public wants and what the public gets.

(2) $S_{it} = k_i + \beta_{it} | R_{it} |$

So salience is equal to some constant level of importance of a given issue, *i*, plus the effect (β) of the absolute value of relative preferences (R_t) – that is, the difference between the public's ideal preference for policy and the actual amount of policy. Salience is a function of the absolute value of relative preferences because it is simply a function of how far policy is from the ideal preference, not whether the public wants more or less policy. The constant term k_i captures the inherent salience of each issue area, independent of relative preferences. For example, there is reason to think that the economy is always a salient issue for the public, even if people are satisfied with the state of the economy. On the other hand, the effect of relative preferences on salience can vary according to the public's sensitivity to the difference between its ideal preference and the current level of policy. In other words, salience is a function of the gap between what the public wants and what it gets, just like relative preferences. At the same time, the inherently low salience of some issues might mean that this gap has

[2] This relative preference for 'more' or 'less' is the first difference of public opinion - the difference between what the public wants and what it gets – so is therefore stationary both in theory and practice (Wlezien 1995; 1996; 2004; Soroka and Wlezien 2004; 2005; 2010).

to exceed quite a high threshold to make it onto the public agenda. For example, in the UK agriculture is generally a low salience issue but on occasion has become a high priority for the public due to events or crises, such as the mad cow disease outbreak of the 1990s, after exceeding a certain threshold of importance. Regardless of the gap between ideal and relative preferences, some issues therefore rarely make it onto the public agenda.

This is not just a theoretical exercise. When the salience of an issue increases it sends a signal to policy-makers that government is not doing what the public wants. While policy-makers may respond to relative preferences (e.g. Wlezien 1995; 1996; 2004; Soroka and Wlezien 2004; 2005; 2010), they must prioritise their attention and policy action (e.g. Jones 1994; Jones and Baumgartner 2005a) in light of signals from the public about the salience of issues. Policy-makers may therefore use information about the salience of an issue to respond to public opinion. This information can reflect both the inherent salience of an issue (k_i) as well as the component of salience driven by the difference between the public's ideal preference and the actual state of policy.

One mechanism through which policy-opinion responsiveness may occur is in the effect that the issue priorities of the public have on the priorities of policy-makers. The salience of a political issue provides informs policy-makers about the public's relative preference for policy. The relationship between salience and policy change can be represented in the form of the equation:

$$(3) \quad |\Delta P_{ijt}| = m_{ij} + \beta_{ij} S_{it}$$

The absolute change in policy (ΔP_{ijt}) for issue *i* in a given institutional venue *j*, is a function of the salience of an issue at a given point in time in addition to an average

year-to-year change (m_0). Because salience does not indicate the direction of public preferences it affects absolute change in policy. For example, the issue of defence might be a priority for the public either due to preferences for increased spending on national security, such as towards the end of the Cold War in the US, or due to public opposition to unpopular military involvement overseas, such as Vietnam in the US or Iraq in the UK.

This model of policy-salience responsiveness is not identical to models of policy-preference responsiveness. While there is a proportional relationship between the relative preferences and issue salience of the public, see *Equation 2*, this is not one-to-one. The transmission of relative preferences into salience is affected by noise – both because the public have low information about certain domains and because issue salience is mediated by prioritisation between multiple competing issues *i* by the public, just as for policy-makers. The signal of public opinion should be most clear to policy-makers in those domains that are most salient to the public. It therefore follows that there is a greater likelihood of responsiveness to the issue priorities of the public in more salient domains.

There is, furthermore, an institutional filtering process in the responsiveness of policy-makers to the issue priorities of the public as governing institutions become engaged in parallel processing of information about issues in increasing detail. As the scarcity of attention leads institutions to prioritise multiple competing issues they are subject to the constraints of institutional rules and procedures and lose discretion to respond to public opinion. It therefore is to be expected that institutional filtering mediates responsiveness of policy-makers to the issue priorities of the public. This can be tested through comparison of the opinion-responsiveness of governing agendas across a number of institutional venues.

3. Data

This paper considers the effect of issue priorities of the public on governing agendas across institutional venues in the US and the UK. These cases provide for a classic comparative design in the contrast between governing institutions – between federal-presidentialism in the US and unitary-parliamentarism in the UK. The design of governing institutions produces cross-national variation in degrees of democratic responsiveness through its effects on the clarity of responsibility for policy decisions (Lewis-Beck 1988; Powell and Whitten 1993; Anderson 1995; Soroka and Wlezien 2010). At the same time, the internal structure of institutional filtering should be consistent across countries – as responsiveness to the issue priorities of the public might be expected to decline in all systems as governing institutions become less visible and engaged in the processing of information about issues in increasing detail and with decreasing regard to signalling the priorities of policy-makers. We therefore expect similarities between countries in the relative degree of responsiveness that is observed for institutional venues at different levels.

The Datasets

These analyses use data coded according to the Policy Agendas Project coding system (www.policyagendas.org) on public opinion, executive speeches, laws and budgetary expenditure in the US and UK from 1951 to 2003. The coding system consists of categories for major topics of public policy, such as macroeconomic issues, defence and health (see Table 1). The sixteen policy topics not investigated in the budgetary analysis of this paper are marked with an asterisk in Table 1.

This generates policy topic codes of the major activities of government. The advantages of this coding process are primarily twofold: first we use an established

method for coding government policy and secondly this policy content coding system makes this and other Policy Agendas Project data sources easily comparable across venues and across countries (see www.comparativeagendas.org). Put simply, in the context of this paper, what is considered healthcare policy in Britain is also healthcare policy in the US and is the same when referring to that portion of public opinion. The coding system measures the attention of government and the public to policy issues rather than government decisions on the specific provisions enacted in law or the left-right preferences of the public.

[insert Table 1 here]

Public Opinion

As discussed earlier, the issues priorities of the public are often measured with survey instruments that ask about the 'most important problem' (MIP) facing the nation (see Wlezien 2005; Jennings and Wlezien n.d.). Survey organizations have been asking about the most important problem (MIP) facing the nation for many years. Gallup first asked the question in the US in 1935 and in the UK in 1947. MIP data is not available in the UK after 2001, when Gallup ceased political operations in the UK. However, since 1977 Ipsos-MORI has asked a similar question about the 'most important issue' which enables a continuous measure of the issue priorities of the public.[3] The MIP and MII questions have been shown to exhibit a high degree of common variance and both provide a comparable indication of the issues that are on people's minds (Jennings and Wlezien n.d.) and, therefore, the degree to which the

[3] To measure issue priorities of the public in the UK, data from both Gallup's MIP and Ipsos-MORI's MII is used for these analyses. To accomplish this, the two series have been combined and averaged for 19 years, from 1982-2000, when there is regular overlapping data. This extends the duration of the data series for these analyses (past 2001) and ensures that the extension of the MIP/MII for future studies is possible and will be continuous.

public prioritizes certain issues above others. The MIP and MII categories are recoded to correspond to the Policy Agendas Project major topic codes.[4]

Governing Agendas

The effect of issue salience on governing agendas is tested on policy priorities in the UK and the US for three institutional venues, each described in detail below and summarized in Table 2. These provide measures of executive, legislative and budgeting attention for the two countries at the national level.

[insert Table 2 here]

Executive Speeches – The State of the Union and the Speech from the Throne

In many political systems the head of state or the head of government delivers an annual formal statement, on behalf of the executive, setting out its policy priorities for the year ahead. These speeches are forward-looking statements, communicating general priorities and specific measures that the executive intends to address in the next year. This substantive function of executive speeches is reflected in their effect on policy outcomes (e.g. Bara 2005; Bevan et al. n.d.).

The State of the Union Address in the US and the Speech from the Throne[5] in the UK are two prominent annual speeches that present the governing agenda of the executive for the year ahead. The policy content of these executive speeches were divided into quasi-sentences,[6] with each quasi-sentence assigned a single topic code.

[4] Because the Ipsos-MORI data on the "most important issue" used in addition to Gallup data on the "most important problem" combines defence and foreign affairs, our analyses aggregate the Defense (16) and International Affairs and Foreign Aid (19) Policy Agendas topics to ensure that the data is comparable over time and across countries. This combination generally produced better models and greater responsiveness than while testing these two topics alone.

[5] Otherwise known as the King's or the Queen's Speech or the Most Gracious Speech (see Jennings et al. n.d.).

[6] A quasi-sentence (or policy statement) constitutes an expression of a single policy idea or issue (see Volkens 2002). Often this unit of analysis is identifiable from the use of punctuation, though it is

Because of the timing of each speech (occurring in January in the US and at the start of the parliamentary session in the UK), the executive agenda is organized by calendar year in the US and by parliamentary session in the UK. This time interval is also used for the legislative outputs (see below) and for public opinion corresponding to the executive and legislative agendas. This difference in temporal aggregation is required because while the structure of the US governing agenda closely matches the calendar year, the agenda in the UK is organised according to parliamentary sessions which open with the Speech from the Throne and which can occur throughout the year (see Jennings et al. n.d.).

Legislative Outputs – Statutes of the US Congress and Acts of the UK Parliament

Lawmaking provides opportunities both for agenda-setting and the signalling of the priorities of policy-makers (e.g. Mayhew 1974; Schiller 1995) as well as for the enactment of substantive policy outputs. Legislative measures are often intended to enact major changes within a country and can be high profile and observable to the public as they pass through the legislature. Statutes of the US Congress and Acts of the UK Parliament are the major legislative outputs that are considered here. Each law is coded with a single topic which indicates the primary focus of the legislation. For the US, the date upon which the bill was signed into law is the observed time point, while for the UK the date of royal assent, when the monarch signed a bill into law, is the time point.[7] Commemorative legislation in the US is excluded from the analyses. As such, the US, directly comparable to the UK data, only contains legislative outputs that are intended to affect the functional workings of government.

possible for sentences to include multiple references to policy content (in particular those which address a series of major policy issues in a list).

[7] In the US, the formal process of passing a law is not complete until it has been signed. While in the UK, the process functionally ends after the vote following the third reading of a bill. However, all acts in a parliamentary session receive royal assent prior to the start of a new parliamentary session, which is marked by the Speech from the Throne.

Budgets – US Federal Budget and UK Government Expenditure

The budget of national government is an important, but often nebulous aspect of policy-making. While budgeting exhibits occasional large and dramatic shifts (Jones et al. 1998; 2003; Jones and Baumgartner 2005a; 2005b; Baumgartner et al. 2006; 2009; Breeman et al. 2009; Breunig 2006), it tends to be incremental for extended periods, with year-on-year growth in expenditure, as statutes and agencies become institutionalised once established. The US Federal Budget and UK Government Expenditure are therefore important from an opinion responsiveness perspective (e.g. Soroka and Wlezien 2005; 2010), but are also expected to be least responsive to the issue priorities of the public. This is not least because budgeting enables the parallel-processing of large numbers of issues, so faces fewer trade-offs than either executive speeches or legislative outputs in assigning attention to particular issues. This might be attenuated because the MIP measure of public priorities captures the *single* most important problem to the public (i.e. it is the plurality winner of important problems). Further, the functional classification of budgets in both the UK and the US presents a modelling limitation because many issues that are important to the public and receive attention in executive speeches or are subject to legislation do not receive funding from national government. For this reason, the analyses of responsiveness of budgets to public opinion is limited to a subset of seven topics from the total of sixteen (these are marked by an asterisk in Table 1).

4. Analyses

Error-Correction Models of Agenda-Opinion Responsiveness

In order to test further the dynamic relationship between public issue priorities and governing agendas, comparing different institutional levels and across countries, we next estimate error-correction models according to topic area. The responsiveness of policy-makers to the issue priorities of the public can be understood in both contemporaneous (Jones and Baumgartner 2004) and dynamic (Jennings and John 2009) forms. For responsiveness to occur public opinion can either be coincident to (at time *t*) or immediately precede policy (at time *t-1*).

The use of an error-correction model (ECM) enables us to consider both short- and long-run effects of issue priorities of the public on policy. The error-correction framework is selected in light of past studies which demonstrate that, in both theory and practice, that agenda-opinion dynamics "… coexist in a long-run equilibrium state that is subject to short-run corrections" (Jennings and John 2009, p. 838). In other words, responsiveness can arise from long-term trends in issue priorities of the public and from short-run variation and shocks, such as the global financial crisis or the swine flu pandemic. Choice of the ECM framework is appropriate when testing for both contemporaneous and lagged effects. The model can be represented in the form:

$$\Delta AGENDA_t = \alpha_0^* + \alpha_1^* AGENDA_{t-1} + \beta_0^* \Delta OPINION_t + \beta_1^* OPINION_{t-1} + \beta_2^* PARTY_t + \varepsilon_t$$

That is where short-run changes in legislative outputs relating to a particular issue ($\Delta ACTS_t$) are a function of short-run changes in the public's prioritization of that same topic ($\Delta OPINION_t$), the long run changes ($OPINION_{t-1}$), and where the lagged value of the dependent variable ($ACTS_{t-1}$) measures the speed of re-equilibration (α_1^*) in response to shocks to the long-run legislative-opinion equilibrium. Like other models of dynamic representation (e.g. Wlezien 2004; Jennings and John 2009; John et al. n.d.), this model includes a variable ($PARTY_t$) to capture contemporaneous

effects of indirect representation through partisan control of government. This controls for difference in the governing agendas of political parties, and is coded 1 for the Conservative Party in the UK case and the Republican Party in the US case and is coded 0 for the Labour Party in the UK and for the Democratic Party in the US.[8]

Within the ECM framework, changes in the governing agenda are estimated as a function of contemporaneous changes in the issue priorities of the public and the degree to which these are outside the long-run agenda/opinion equilibrium. This suggests that if the governing agenda deviates from its long-run equilibrium, as the institution commits either "too much" or "too little" attention to a particular issue, responsiveness is equal to the degree of equilibration that restores correspondence between the agenda and public opinion to its previous status quo.[9]

Results

The results of the ECMs of agenda-opinion responsiveness for executive speeches, legislative outputs and budgetary expenditure in the US and the UK are reported in full in Appendix Tables A1 to A6. Table 2 summarizes the short-run and long-run effects of the issue priorities of the public on the policy content each of these governing agendas by presenting the coefficient estimates for each Policy Agendas topic. The topics are reported in the first column and the responsiveness coefficients for each of the governing agendas are presented in turn across the columns of Table 2,

[8] For Statutes in the US and for US budgets the variable was coded according to which party was the majority party in the House of Congress. Other measures of partisan control in the US, such as Senate majority party and a variable measuring House, Senate and presidential control, were also tested and produce the same general inferences of the models using the House control.

[9] By construction, the coefficient for $AGENDA_{t-1}$ should be negative and equal to between 0 and -1, so that equilibrium shocks are corrected at a gradual rate. The closer the parameter is to -1, the faster the rate of re-equilibration. However, if the value lies between -1 and -2, then the correction of errors oscillates between positive and negative values but dissipates over time, tending towards zero. This generates an iterative process where, for example, the governing agenda under-corrects and then over-reacts in response to disturbance of public concern about a particular issue or in response to shocks to the political system, eventually returning to its long-run equilibrium (see Jennings and John 2009, pp. 841-842).

enabling comparison across the two countries and across institutions. For each topic, the responsiveness of governing agendas is reported for both the short-run and long-run effects of public opinion. The final two rows of Table 2 further summarize the overall pattern of agenda/opinion responsiveness, indicating the number of topics for which the issue priorities of the public have a (positive) short- or long-run effect on the policy content of each governing agenda for both countries.

[insert Table 3 here]

Overall, there is some evidence that governing agendas in both the US and the UK are responsive, to some degree, to the issue priorities of the public. Out of sixteen topics, there is evidence of either short- or long-run opinion-responsiveness in both executive and legislative agendas, but not in budgets. There is wide-ranging evidence of the effect of the issue priorities of the public on the policy content of governing agendas in the US and the UK over the period between 1951 and 2003. The executive agenda in the US is responsive to public opinion for health, agriculture, education, energy, law and order, social welfare and in the UK is responsive for macroeconomic issues, health, education, environment, law and order, and housing. The legislative agenda in the US is responsive for macroeconomic issues, environment, energy, social welfare, and defence and foreign affairs and in the UK for macroeconomic, labour and employment, environment, public lands and territorial issues and defence and foreign affairs. There is no evidence of responsiveness of budgets to public opinion in contrast to the findings for executive speeches and legislative outputs. Further, in a few cases the coefficient estimates are negative and significant, suggesting that the agenda leads public opinion on that policy topic. For example, a short-run increase in US spending on education precedes a decrease in the public's prioritisation of the

issue. It is therefore possible for governing agendas to shape the issue priorities of the public. Overall, however, the results provide strong evidence of a link between the issue priorities of the public and the policy agenda of governing institutions.

Of all governing institutions, the issue priorities of the public are found to have the strongest effect on average on the executive agenda in terms of both size and significance. Public opinion has a positive and significant effect at the 95 per cent confidence level on the policy content of executive speeches in six out of the sixteen topics in both the US and the UK (this is equal to eight topics for the UK at the 90 per cent confidence level). The next strongest link between public opinion and governing agendas is found for legislative outputs. Public opinion has a positive and significant effect on legislative outputs in five topics in both the US and the UK (this number rises to six for the US at the 90 per cent confidence level). Last, the results suggest there is no significant positive effect of the issue priorities of the public on budgetary expenditure in either the US or the UK – for each of the seven topics on which the effect of public opinion on budgetary expenditure is tested. In general, the results provide evidence consistent with the link between public opinion and governing agendas, subject to variation in the short- and long-run, across governing institutions and across countries. Further, the higher levels of opinion-responsiveness observed in each of the countries for executive speeches followed by legislative outputs, in comparison to budgets, suggest that some form of institutional filtering is occurring.

While there is some variation at the topic level between the US and the UK, there are many similarities in the responsiveness of governing institutions to the issue priorities of the public. For example, for defence and foreign affairs (topic 16/19) there is no responsiveness in the executive agenda or budgets in either the US or the UK while there is evidence of responsiveness in legislative outputs in both countries

in both the short- and the long-run (when long-run effects in the UK are significant at the 90 per cent confidence level). For law and order (topic 12) on the other hand, the executive agenda is responsive to public opinion in the long-run for both the US and the UK (as well as being responsive in the short-run for the US), while public opinion does not have a significant effect on legislative outputs or budgets in either country. There is nevertheless variation across institutions between the US and the UK. For example, for macroeconomic issues (topic 1) the executive agenda is responsive to public opinion in the long-run in the UK, but not in the US. Legislative outputs are responsive, however, in the US in the short-run and in the UK in the long-run (the short-run effect of public opinion in the UK is significant at the 90 per cent confidence level), while budgets are not responsive for either country. Institutional filtering can therefore affect both the overall pattern of responsiveness, where institutional agendas with a high profile tend to be more responsive, but also lead to variation in responsiveness across topics. This variation might occur because the responsiveness of policy-makers to public opinion is mediated by institutional rules and procedures, as the parallel processing of issues means that certain issues must be prioritised ahead of others. Further, certain policy problems and issues might tend to receive more attention from certain governing institutions than others (e.g. executive, legislative, budgets).

The non-responsiveness of budgets is an interesting finding, in light of the considerable evidence from other research that identifies a policy-opinion link for government expenditure (e.g. Ostrom and Marra 1986; Bartels 1991; Wlezien 1995; 1996; 2004; Soroka and Wlezien 2004; 2005; 2010). These studies have considered the effect of public preferences on budgetary spending, for example using survey questions concerning whether the public have a preference for “more” or “less”

spending in certain domains. Further, there is some evidence (Wlezien 2005) that spending is not responsive to public concern about the "most important problem" facing the nation, in contrast to preferences. This is perhaps because whereas budgets have directional implications, and the public can prefer either more or less spending in a particular domain, changes in the issue priorities of the public do not signal the desired direction of change. For example, the issue of healthcare might be highly salient to the public either because the government is spending too much or too little on it.

The size of the error-correction coefficients ($AGENDA_{t-1}$) that are reported in Appendix Tables A1 to A6 provide further insight into the equilibrating nature of the relationship between the issue priorities of the public and governing agendas. The results indicate a general pattern of correction for each governing institution in the US and the UK. First, the majority of error-correction coefficients for executive speeches are equal to values between -0.5 and -1, with a few exceptions. This indicates that the governing agenda returns to its long-run equilibrium after shocks at a relatively quick rate. Second, the majority of error-correction coefficients for legislative outputs is, in contrast, equal to values less than -1. This finding indicates an iterative process of equilibration, where the governing agenda cycles between under-correction and over-reaction in response to shocks, eventually returning to its long-run equilibrium (see Jennings and John 2009, pp. 841-842). Legislative outputs are therefore more prone than executive speeches to cyclical patterns of responsiveness in both the US and the UK. Third, the error-correction coefficients for budgets take on both positive and negative values close to zero. This indicates that the level of long-run equilibration for budgetary spending is very low and in a few cases is even subject to positive feedback

where deviations from the long-run equilibrium are amplified over time.[10] In both the US and the UK, budgets exhibit the lowest degree of responsiveness to public opinion and the weakest dynamic behaviour, diverging from the issue priorities of the public in a few cases.

In theory, the signal of public opinion should be clearest to policy-makers in those domains that are most salient to the public. When the salience of an issue increases it sends a signal to policy-makers that government is not doing what the public wants. The low inherent salience of some issues might mean that this gap has to exceed quite a high threshold to make it onto the public agenda. Because of this there should be a greater likelihood of responsiveness to the issue priorities of the public in domains where salience is higher. This theoretical expectation is addressed in Table 4, which presents the mean and standard deviation of MIP responses for each topic for the US and the UK.

[insert Table 4 here]

The results produce mixed evidence in support of this expectation that higher salience in part predicts greater responsiveness to public opinion. Several issues that are of high importance to the public – macroeconomics, law and order and defence and foreign affairs – exhibit opinion-responsiveness in Table 3, while other high salience issues – e.g. civil rights – show no such responsiveness. Further, some low salience issues like the environment also demonstrate rather strong responsiveness, which suggests that policy-makers can be responsive to variation in the issue priorities of the public, even at a low level of salience. These results suggest that other

[10] Budgetary expenditures in both countries from 1951-2003 is integrated for most major topics. The use of second differences to address this aspect of the data produces better fitting models, but leads to the same general finding concerning the opinion responsiveness of budgetary expenditures. With exceptions of significant, positive results in the long run effect of public opinion for US social welfare spending (13) and UK healthcare spending (3)

intervening mechanisms affect the degree to which governing agendas are responsive to the issue priorities of the public, beyond the underlying salience of each issue.

5. Conclusion

This paper has found similar evidence of the effect of the issue priorities of the public on the policy content of governing agendas in the US and the UK between 1951 and 2003 – across three institutional venues. These countries provide a classic comparative design in comparison of political systems – federal-presidentialism in the US and unitary-parliamentarism in the UK. There is wide-ranging responsiveness of the executive and legislative agenda in both the US and UK across a range of issues in either the short- or the long-run. In contrast, responsiveness to public opinion is not observed with respect to budgeting in either the US or the UK. Overall, the pattern of opinion-responsiveness across institutions is consistent within countries – supporting the presence of institutional filtering as it declines as institutions and agendas become more incremental or substantive (e.g. budgets) and less concerned with agenda-setting and the signalling of policy priorities (e.g. executive speeches). There are also clear similarities in the degree of responsiveness for certain issues in different institutional venues, suggesting that some policy problems and issues tend to receive more attention from certain governing institutions than others. Furthermore, there are differences between institutional venues in the dynamic response (error-correction rate) to shocks in both the US and the UK. This suggests that the dynamic relationship between the issue priorities of the public and governing agendas is similar across countries but subject to variation across institutions. Last, the results provide mixed evidence concerning whether the average level of salience of an issue also determines the degree of responsiveness of governance agendas to the issue priorities of the public. While the underlying level of salience of each issue appears to have some

influence on the responsiveness of policy-makers to variation in the issue priorities of the public, other mechanisms, such as feedback and institutional filtering are at work.

The comparative analysis of two countries – the US and the UK – across the executive, legislative and budgeting agendas of each political system suggests that the effects of issue priorities of the public on governing agendas are mediated through the institutions in which policy priorities are stated or enacted. This can be characterised as institutional filtering where responsiveness declines as institutional venues become less visible and engaged in the parallel processing of information about issues in increasing detail with decreasing regard to signalling the priorities of policy-makers. This is consistent with other studies of institutional responsiveness (Jones et al. 2009). There are similarities in the pattern of responsiveness observed within countries – as executive speeches are the most responsive institutional venue and legislative outputs the next most responsive venue, with no responsiveness observed for budgeting. Further, the dynamic response of governing agendas to shocks is most proportional for executive speeches whereas legislative outputs are prone to cycles of under- and over-reaction.

In contrast to executive and legislative agendas, budgetary expenditure is not found to be responsive to the issue priorities of the public in the same way.[11] This finding differs from past studies that demonstrate the effect of public preferences on budgetary spending (e.g. Ostrom and Marra 1986; Bartels 1991; Wlezien 1995; 1996; 2004; Soroka and Wlezien 2004; 2005; 2010). Budgets have directional implications, and while the public might possess a preference for either more or less spending in a particular domain, changes in the issue priorities of the public do not signal the desired direction of change. Nevertheless, it might be expected that an increase in the

[11] Note that our inferences regarding budgets are limited to the seven policy topics on which data is available, see Table 1.

public's prioritisation of a particular issue might be associated with a corresponding preference for increased spending. However, the results of this analysis suggest that this is not the case.

Previous single country analyses have generated tremendous insights on the character of dynamic representation of American governing institutions over the post-war era (e.g. Stimson et al. 1995; Erikson et al. 2002), while comparative analyses of democratic responsiveness have made important progress in identifying the effect of public preferences on government spending in the US, UK and Canada using data that dates from the 1970s (Soroka and Wlezien 2004; 2005; 2010). The analyses presented in this paper have provided comparative analyses of the responsiveness of multiple governing agendas across sixteen policy topics for the US and the UK from 1951 and 2003. This has revealed cross-national similarities in the pattern of responsiveness and systematic differences between venues that is consistent with institutional filtering. Such filtering occurs because governments attend to a multitude of issues across a number of different institutional venues and must prioritise information concerning the issue priorities of the public. Further, the ability and willingness of policy-makers to respond to public opinion varies according to institutional venue, due both to the rules and procedures that constrain policy choices and the other issues competing for space on the agenda.

Overall, the findings presented here suggest that it is possible to conceptualise the relationship public opinion and public policy through the effect that priorities of the public have on priorities of decision-makers. Salience and preferences are not independent. Salience captures information both about preferences and importance. As the difference between the public's ideal preference and current policy widens the salience of the issue should increase. In other words, salience is a function of the gap

between what the public wants and what it gets, just like relative preferences. When the salience of an issue increases it sends a signal to policy-makers that government is not doing what the public wants. The evidence suggests that there is indeed a link between the issue priorities of the public and governing agendas, in both the US and the UK. This paper has further demonstrated that theories of opinion-responsiveness must recognise that policy-makers prioritise their attention to issues (e.g. Jones 1994; Jones and Baumgartner 2005a) in light of signals from the public. The findings in relation to institutional filtering suggest that there is variation in the responsiveness of institutional venues.

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Table 1: Policy Agendas Project Major Topic Codes

1. Macroeconomics *
2. Civil Rights, Minorities, Migration and Civil Liberties
3. Health *
4. Agriculture
5. Labour and Employment
6. Education *
7. Environment
8. Energy
10. Transportation
12. Law, Crime and Family Issues *
13. Social Welfare *
14. Community Development, Planning and Housing Issues *
18. Foreign Trade
20. Government Operations
21. Public Lands and Water Management (Territorial Issues)
16/19. Defence, International Affairs and Foreign Aid *

Note: * Indicates a Major Topic that is tested for budgetary expenditure in this paper.
UK Policy Agendas Topic Codebook, see www.policyagendas.org.uk

Table 2: Government Agendas by Country and Venue

	United States	United Kingdom
Executive	State of the Union	Speech from the Throne
Legislative	Statutes of the US Congress	Acts of the UK Parliament
Budgetary	The US Federal Budget	UK Government Expenditure

Table 3: Summary of the Effects of Public Opinion on Government Agendas

		Executive		Legislation		Budget	
		US	**UK**	**US**	**UK**	**US**	**UK**
1	Short	-0.064	0.056	0.129*	0.080†	0.441	76.661
	Long	0.269	0.083***	-0.032	0.055*	-0.272	-20.561
2	Short	-0.156	-0.439***	-0.119†	0.034		
	Long	-0.140	-0.062	-0.101†	-0.042		
3	Short	0.515	-0.030	-0.558*	0.072	72.67	-12.04
	Long	0.972*	0.111***	-0.042	0.031	-72.47	62.20
4	Short	4.435*	-0.090	1.929†	-0.206		
	Long	2.274	-0.169	0.740	-0.322		
5	Short	-1.001	0.082†	0.253	0.009		
	Long	1.826	0.082†	-0.247	0.086*		
6	Short	6.476**	-0.031	0.487	0.110	-1675.42*	49.73
	Long	4.014***	0.283*	0.191	0.035	-421.28	146.88
7	Short	3.407**	0.376*	1.846†	-0.396†		
	Long	0.249	0.527***	2.293**	0.490*		
8	Short	0.628	0.020	0.215	0.058		
	Long	2.759***	0.236	0.446*	-0.006		
10	Short	14.760	0.500†	14.725	0.259		
	Long	47.080	0.121	36.067	0.517		
12	Short	1.312**	0.032	0.085	-0.178	-5.905	-82.27
	Long	1.235***	0.462***	-0.047	0.113	-7.519	-155.72**
13	Short	1.860†	0.064	0.160	-0.113	1151.91	-106.97
	Long	1.321*	0.100	0.411*	-0.196**	855.52	-246.71
14	Short	3.028	-0.174	1.321	-0.132	-6772.07	-216.41
	Long	1.808	0.161*	1.257	0.138	-2370.94	62.03
18	Short	-1.080	0.070	-3.594*	0.030		
	Long	0.600	0.123	-5.615**	0.097		
20	Short	-0.617	0.359	1.370	-0.502		
	Long	0.247	0.134	-2.049†	-0.695		
21	Short	-34.261	0.123	-383.446	0.073		
	Long	15.206	0.019	-269.913	0.445**		
16/19	Short	-1.191	-0.367**	0.446*	0.122*	403.25	12.61
	Long	0.904	-0.181**	0.348*	0.045†	555.18	-25.41
Total	Short	4	1	2	1	0	0
Responsive	Long	4	6	3	4	0	0
Topics	Either	6	6	5	5	0	0

Note * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$, † $p \leq 0.10$

Table 4: Mean and SD of Public Opinion by Major Topic, 1951-2003

	US		UK	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	29.992	18.806	45.209	22.721
2	9.348	10.128	2.926	4.447
3	3.563	6.550	5.549	7.347
4	0.365	0.855	0.393	2.045
5	0.937	0.902	4.503	6.047
6	1.780	2.519	2.943	2.806
7	0.845	1.189	0.491	1.217
8	1.568	3.774	0.429	1.216
10	0.013	0.043	0.680	1.217
12	8.111	8.460	3.022	3.579
13	3.566	3.188	3.487	3.435
14	0.089	0.176	4.433	3.881
18	0.309	0.560	0.447	1.703
20	3.040	2.928	0.347	1.081
21	0.003	0.017	1.918	3.400
16/19	23.140	19.310	15.204	13.134

Table A1: State of the Union ECMs by Major Topic, 1951-2003

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
$\Delta OPINION_t$	-0.064	-0.156	0.515	4.435*	-1.001	6.476**	3.407**	0.628
	(0.281)	(0.256)	(0.448)	(1.916)	(1.496)	(1.77)	(1.195)	(0.63)
$OPINION_{t-1}$	0.269	-0.140	0.972*	2.274	1.826	4.014***	0.249	2.759***
	(0.169)	(0.209)	(0.437)	(2.319)	(2.017)	(0.98)	(1.022)	(0.617)
$AGENDA_{t-1}$	-0.799***	-0.991***	-0.852***	-0.884***	-0.810***	-0.991***	-1.072***	-0.952***
	(0.139)	(0.146)	(0.142)	(0.146)	(0.138)	(0.154)	(0.136)	(0.129)
$PARTY_t$	4.772	1.140	-8.397	1.814	-4.277	-0.956	-0.339	5.658
	(6.149)	(3.951)	(5.122)	(3.127)	(2.752)	(3.363)	(2.219)	(3.995)
Constant	20.532*	10.309*	12.642**	3.424	9.160**	5.182†	5.591**	-1.776
	(7.734)	(4.122)	(4.658)	(2.449)	(3.355)	(3.052)	(1.798)	(3.24)
Adj. R^2	0.376	0.456	0.404	0.445	0.408	0.459	0.575	0.511
Bgodfrey	1.038	1.008	1.931	0.093	3.415†	3.697†	1.136	3.496†

	10	12	13	14	18	20	21	16/19
$\Delta OPINION_t$	14.760	1.312**	1.860†	3.028	-1.080	-0.617	-34.261	-1.191
	(35.44)	(0.452)	(1.043)	(6.215)	(1.751)	(1.403)	(52.008)	(0.823)
$OPINION_{t-1}$	47.080	1.235***	1.321*	1.808	0.600	0.247	15.206	0.904
	(49.621)	(0.325)	(0.618)	(7.851)	(1.897)	(1.088)	(67.079)	(0.62)
$AGENDA_{t-1}$	-1.030***	-0.967***	-0.870***	-1.006***	-0.779***	-0.907***	-0.988***	-0.829***
	(0.145)	(0.146)	(0.144)	(0.146)	(0.142)	(0.146)	(0.145)	(0.135)
$PARTY_t$	3.089	-2.368	1.966	-0.154	-0.810	0.779	1.477	6.618
	(3.145)	(4.529)	(3.583)	(2.212)	(1.825)	(5.982)	(1.839)	(21.96)
Constant	0.737	3.427	3.990	4.068*	5.272**	15.914*	2.108	47.569†
	(2.548)	(4.479)	(3.716)	(1.816)	(1.817)	(6.468)	(1.497)	(24.063)
Adj. R^2	0.481	0.498	0.419	0.463	0.356	0.411	0.468	0.442
Bgodfrey	1.980	1.781	1.064	0.873	0.136	1.219	5.943*	0.655

Note * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$, † $p \leq 0.10$, N=52

Table A2: Speech from the Throne ECMs by Major Topic, 1951-2003

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**
$\Delta OPINION_t$	0.056	-0.439***	-0.030	-0.090	0.082†	-0.031	0.376*	0.020
	(0.037)	(0.122)	(0.041)	(0.104)	(0.046)	(0.204)	(0.152)	(0.167)
$OPINION_{t-1}$	0.083***	-0.062	0.111***	-0.169	0.082†	0.283*	0.527***	0.236
	(0.021)	(0.075)	(0.025)	(0.149)	(0.042)	(0.133)	(0.154)	(0.234)
$AGENDA_{t-1}$	-0.840***	-1.073***	-1.078***	-0.561***	-0.728***	-0.919***	-0.906***	-0.852***
	(0.145)	(0.124)	(0.12)	(0.131)	(0.136)	(0.14)	(0.144)	(0.138)
$PARTY_t$	-2.089*	-2.989***	-1.338***	0.507	-0.770†	-0.192	-0.383	-0.578
	(0.836)	(0.705)	(0.347)	(0.457)	(0.456)	(0.761)	(0.31)	(0.427)
Constant	3.925***	4.248***	2.056***	0.925*	2.182***	2.501**	1.003***	1.295**
	(1.163)	(0.75)	(0.372)	(0.447)	(0.537)	(0.91)	(0.297)	(0.4)
Adj. R^2	0.377	0.625	0.630	0.221	0.394	0.439	0.433	0.430
Bgodfrey	0.069	1.243	0.407	0.818	0.001	1.468	0.051	0.388

	10	12	13	14	18	20	21	16/19
$\Delta OPINION_t$	0.500†	0.032	0.064	-0.174	0.070	0.359	0.123	-0.367**
	(0.272)	(0.223)	(0.089)	(0.123)	(0.231)	(0.478)	(0.179)	(0.12)
$OPINION_{t-1}$	0.121	0.462***	0.100	0.161*	0.123	0.134	0.019	-0.181**
	(0.22)	(0.119)	(0.084)	(0.079)	(0.285)	(0.45)	(0.124)	(0.068)
$AGENDA_{t-1}$	-0.743***	-0.862***	-0.952***	-0.806***	-0.443***	-0.745***	-0.625***	-0.654***
	(0.143)	(0.133)	(0.15)	(0.136)	(0.124)	(0.136)	(0.146)	(0.133)
$PARTY_t$	-0.800	-1.830*	-1.466*	-0.261	0.166	-3.060**	0.591	3.242*
	(0.528)	(0.739)	(0.586)	(0.595)	(0.567)	(1.005)	(0.821)	(1.583)
Constant	2.229***	4.180***	2.643***	1.405*	1.028†	6.167***	4.653***	15.434***
	(0.619)	(0.894)	(0.698)	(0.66)	(0.596)	(1.26)	(1.211)	(3.52)
Adj. R^2	0.407	0.436	0.422	0.442	0.161	0.346	0.247	0.359
Bgodfrey	0.821	3.791†	0.074	1.265	4.955*	5.226*	0.596	1.573

Note * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$, † $p \leq 0.10$, N=52

Table A3: Statutes of the US Congress ECMs by Major Topic, 1951-2003

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
$\Delta OPINION_t$	0.129*	-0.119†	-0.558*	1.929†	0.253	0.487	1.846†	0.215
	(0.06)	(0.062)	(0.249)	(1.148)	(0.345)	(0.816)	(0.978)	(0.179)
$OPINION_{t-1}$	-0.032	-0.101†	-0.042	0.740	-0.247	0.191	2.293**	0.446*
	(0.037)	(0.052)	(0.268)	(1.358)	(0.492)	(0.547)	(0.843)	(0.168)
$AGENDA_{t-1}$	-0.856***	-1.318***	-0.196	-0.974***	-1.333***	-0.948***	-1.425***	-1.271***
	(0.138)	(0.14)	(0.133)	(0.151)	(0.134)	(0.142)	(0.135)	(0.14)
$PARTY_t$	-5.296**	0.659	-2.792	-9.346***	-3.548***	-5.931	-4.812*	-0.996
	(1.949)	(1.232)	(3.593)	(2.469)	(0.925)	(3.663)	(2.304)	(1.435)
Constant	7.567***	6.984***	3.345†	12.872***	7.515***	8.522***	12.169***	7.365***
	(1.767)	(1.065)	(1.908)	(2.059)	(0.861)	(1.523)	(1.565)	(1.041)
Adj. R^2	0.445	0.627	0.222	0.466	0.663	0.446	0.682	0.606
Bgodfrey	1.228	3.866*	7.406**	1.509	4.016*	2.343	10.509***	3.800†

	10	12	13	14	18	20	21	16/19
$\Delta OPINION_t$	14.725	0.085	0.160	1.321	-3.594*	1.370	-383.446	0.446*
	(32.966)	(0.207)	(0.256)	(1.553)	(1.449)	(1.48)	(324.636)	(0.186)
$OPINION_{t-1}$	36.067	-0.047	0.411*	1.257	-5.615**	-2.049†	-269.913	0.348*
	(47.364)	(0.199)	(0.172)	(1.999)	(1.749)	(1.171)	(416.094)	(0.165)
$AGENDA_{t-1}$	-0.746***	-1.219***	-1.241***	-1.086***	-1.093***	-1.076***	-1.066***	-0.769***
	(0.141)	(0.14)	(0.151)	(0.14)	(0.147)	(0.146)	(0.144)	(0.145)
$PARTY_t$	-11.196*	-2.438	-4.669**	-3.462***	-4.590*	1.353	-26.276†	-22.812**
	(4.3)	(4.343)	(1.419)	(0.807)	(2.021)	(8.105)	(15.008)	(7.512)
Constant	15.307***	17.153***	5.131***	5.070***	11.704***	78.287***	78.418***	32.993***
	(3.46)	(2.442)	(0.847)	(0.734)	(1.822)	(11.446)	(12.314)	(7.31)
Adj. R^2	0.328	0.587	0.580	0.527	0.508	0.571	0.515	0.345
Bgodfrey	14.843***	2.307	1.148	0.333	1.410	2.743	7.233**	3.559†

Note * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$, † $p \leq 0.10$, N=52

Table A4: Acts of the UK Parliament ECMs by Major Topic, 1951-2003

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
$\Delta OPINION_t$	0.080†	0.034	0.072	-0.206	0.009	0.110	-0.396†	0.058
	(0.041)	(0.071)	(0.05)	(0.151)	(0.045)	(0.14)	(0.219)	(0.139)
$OPINION_{t-1}$	0.055*	-0.042	0.031	-0.322	0.086*	0.035	0.490*	-0.006
	(0.021)	(0.044)	(0.028)	(0.216)	(0.04)	(0.09)	(0.188)	(0.19)
$AGENDA_{t-1}$	-0.876***	-1.099***	-1.002***	-0.960***	-1.111***	-1.168***	-1.203***	-1.215***
	(0.144)	(0.161)	(0.144)	(0.145)	(0.143)	(0.143)	(0.126)	(0.146)
$PARTY_t$	-0.897	-0.930*	0.345	0.793	-0.112	0.176	0.045	0.527
	(0.844)	(0.456)	(0.416)	(0.657)	(0.456)	(0.523)	(0.434)	(0.358)
Constant	4.914***	2.101***	2.213***	2.542***	1.818***	1.926**	1.892***	1.909***
	(1.226)	(0.53)	(0.504)	(0.692)	(0.5)	(0.605)	(0.412)	(0.372)
Adj. R^2	0.406	0.471	0.481	0.441	0.531	0.553	0.648	0.588
Bgodfrey	2.183	0.551	0.101	1.132	1.201	0.708	1.309	0.151

	10	12	13	14	18	20	21	16/19
$\Delta OPINION_t$	0.259	-0.178	-0.113	-0.132	0.030	-0.502	0.073	0.122*
	(0.482)	(0.404)	(0.074)	(0.15)	(0.12)	(0.563)	(0.177)	(0.05)
$OPINION_{t-1}$	0.517	0.113	-0.196**	0.138	0.097	-0.695	0.445**	0.045†
	(0.396)	(0.181)	(0.073)	(0.096)	(0.148)	(0.531)	(0.137)	(0.024)
$AGENDA_{t-1}$	-0.872***	-0.975***	-1.118***	-0.934***	-0.617***	-1.182***	-0.870***	-1.336***
	(0.145)	(0.144)	(0.143)	(0.142)	(0.14)	(0.144)	(0.134)	(0.137)
$PARTY_t$	1.793†	1.755	-0.243	0.570	-0.111	-0.126	1.958*	-0.233
	(0.949)	(1.291)	(0.444)	(0.723)	(0.302)	(1.046)	(0.856)	(0.622)
Constant	2.444*	7.374***	2.865***	2.307**	0.489†	7.797***	1.076	4.263***
	(0.997)	(1.803)	(0.566)	(0.843)	(0.283)	(1.305)	(0.815)	(0.738)
Adj. R^2	0.415	0.466	0.536	0.464	0.253	0.554	0.438	0.651
Bgodfrey	0.068	1.274	0.118	0.342	0.041	3.402†	1.122	0.013

Note * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$, † $p \leq 0.10$, N=52

Table A5: US Federal Budget ECMs by Major Topic, 1951-2003

	1	3	6	12	13	14	16/19
$\Delta OPINION_t$	0.441	72.673	-1675.423*	-5.905	1151.909	-6772.070	403.245
	(1.013)	(197.173)	(641.526)	(27.024)	(898.006)	(22334.3)	(479.816)
$OPINION_{t-1}$	-0.272	-72.474	-421.279	-7.519	855.517	-2370.936	555.181
	(0.648)	(236.916)	(438.149)	(25.762)	(812.166)	(28777.44)	(383.886)
$AGENDA_{t-1}$	-0.210*	0.067***	-0.033	0.046*	0.025*	-0.287**	-0.057
	(0.097)	(0.014)	(0.044)	(0.024)	(0.012)	(0.100)	(0.078)
$PARTY_t$	86.409*	-7106.637	6499.114*	696.608	-3978.508	-3138.519	31913.240†
	(40.049)	(4866.701)	(2921.977)	(718.447)	(5809.023)	(10426.77)	(16866.25)
Constant	53.544*	1860.910	1927.041	167.307	5677.128*	13580.090†	9509.406
	(23.8)	(1459.816)	(1167.794)	(249.261)	(2764.024)	(7002.519)	(38286.48)
Adj. R^2	0.079	0.589	0.135	0.270	0.326	0.078	0.040
Bgodfrey	0.002	0.941	0.012	1.643	2.533	5.412*	0.483

Note * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$, † $p \leq 0.10$, N=52

Table A6: UK Government Expenditure ECMs by Major Topic, 1951-2003

	1	3	6	12	13	14	16/19
$\Delta OPINION_t$	76.661	-12.042	49.732	-82.274	-106.974	-216.407	12.608
	(61.078)	(70.173)	(137.384)	(51.654)	(268.968)	(136.771)	(35.874)
$OPINION_{t-1}$	-20.561	62.198	146.878	-155.718**	-246.707	62.027	-25.406
	(28.593)	(63.558)	(92.504)	(52.625)	(276.053)	(97.299)	(18.33)
$AGENDA_{t-1}$	-0.094	0.019	0.020	0.118***	0.017	-0.089	-0.175*
	(0.076)	(0.028)	(0.019)	(0.027)	(0.017)	(0.066)	(0.076)
$PARTY_t$	-659.534	-295.495	-494.412	-66.166	-1.154	-810.323	594.086
	(1386.867)	(546.515)	(519.929)	(138.258)	(1657.102)	(657.275)	(499.731)
Constant	3370.918†	484.794	375.286	-203.253	2748.573	1419.903	5065.639*
	(1863.273)	(770.895)	(771.689)	(198.318)	(2600.71)	(1271.659)	(2221.256)
Adj. R^2	0.023	0.107	0.129	0.353	-0.016	0.100	0.035
Bgodfrey	0.085	4.079*	5.807*	0.817	4.456*	0.870	1.988

Note * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$, † $p \leq 0.10$, N=52