the course and outcome of policy debate?" (p. 104). This was not merely a rhetorical question; Azari intimates that the rhetoric resulted in policies that, once implemented, "changed the political conversation and invited a conservative backlash about race, culture, and the role of government that still shapes politics nearly fifty years later" (p. 104). Despite the irony that a rhetorician (me) is accusing a political scientist (Azari) of overstating the importance of rhetoric, I might venture that a different narrative would *not* have changed the political outcomes. After all, Azari notes how Johnson's team viewed rhetoric in instrumental terms—as something "that could help them achieve their goals" (p. 109)—rather than as a means of defining the policy agenda. In this regard, it seems likely that a mandate narrative would have served the same rhetorical function as Johnson's appeal to unity: Join the bandwagon and support the president's agenda. This is all to say that Azari treads on more precarious ground when discussing the relationship between presidential mandate rhetoric and political change, especially since it is largely divorced from the way in which each presidential administration viewed the role of rhetoric.

Even still, *Delivering the People's Message* is a fresh take on Skowronek's argument that presidential authority resides not just in getting things accomplished but in effectively controlling the definition of those accomplishments. Indeed, the book prompts readers to consider how a president's mandate rhetoric defines his role in the political process. For instance, Azari observes that the use of campaign promises as a significant rhetorical trope in the late modern period not only was an attempt to achieve strategic political ends but also implicated the president's status as representative by "automatically cast[ing] the president in the role of a delegate rather than trustee" (pp. 119–20). In my estimation, the highlight of the book comes in Chapter 5 and the conclusion, both of which address the partisan divide that plagues national politics. I found especially illuminating Azari's discussion of the "mismatch" that occurred when Bush and Obama incorporated mandate logic into their war rhetoric (pp. 160–61).

Ultimately, *Delivering the People's Message* illustrates how presidents define the terms of their election through mandate rhetoric that works alongside other partisan and ideological narratives. And it leaves the reader eager to see where future presidents will take their rhetorical leadership in an increasingly fractured and polarized America.

American Public Opinion, Advocacy, and Policy in Congress: What the Public Wants and What It Gets.
By Paul Burstein. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. 244p. $80.00 cloth, $27.99 paper.
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— Jason Barabas, *Stony Brook University*

Paul Burstein's book aims for an unbiased approach to the study of democratic responsiveness. In particular, Burstein is sensitive to a methodological blind spot affecting nearly all contemporary studies of opinion—policy representation: data selection. While most scholars studying this form of representation start by searching for public opinion data, and then move on to considering whether policy moved in consistent or coherent ways, Burstein does the opposite. He randomly samples from a measure of the public policy agenda before turning to the available survey data. Studying the topic in this manner is very important, and not only because the substantive conclusions Burstein reaches are so different. He shatters the conventional wisdom regarding democratic responsiveness, and his study should force scholars to reconsider how they study democratic performance in the future.

Burstein's critique centers on polling and sampling practices. He writes, "Public opinion polls focus on issues important to the public—the very issues on which the public is most likely to hold elected officials accountable, and on which, therefore, democratic governments are mostly likely to do what the public wants" (p. 45). Later he speculates (p. 56) that "previous research that included only issues on which opinion had been measured (however indirectly) probably ignored at least 40 percent of the proposals that Congress considers." All of this could mean that "current estimates of the impact of opinion on policy are too high" (p. 70).

The author's key innovation—in stark contrast to nearly all other major works in the field on opinion—policy responsiveness—is that he samples legislative proposals introduced before Congress in an attempt to provide what he hopes will be an unbiased assessment of democratic responsiveness. Specifically, Burstein starts with 5,977 public bills introduced in the 101st Congress during 1989–90 and then selects 60 to study, with 50 policy proposals chosen at random from the entire set and another 10 selected randomly from bills reported out of committee; the unit of analysis becomes the policy proposal, and so the 60 proposals "manifested in 417 bills over a 28-year period" (p. 33).

The core question of *American Public Opinion, Advocacy, and Policy in Congress*—and for democratic theorists more generally—concerns whether citizens get what they want from government. Burstein's startling conclusion—and the main way this book is likely to be cited—is that there is no statistical link between opinion and policy (p. 59). Opinion and policy were consistent for 18 times, which was nearly half of the time that public opinion data existed (i.e., 36 times out of 60). However, and in line with the motivation underlying this examination, public opinion measures were unavailable for nearly two dozen of the proposals. This meant that Burstein's estimate of consistency dropped to 31% of the time once the entire agenda was taken into consideration (i.e., 18 of 58 = .31, or 31%). In a telling moment that illustrates the challenges facing scholars attempting to link opinion to policy,

he omitted two of the original 60 due to conflicting opinion indicators.

Burstein's core intuition—alleging that sampling bias skews past studies of democratic—has merits. However, his method is itself not beyond reproach. One problem was that his sample was small. In particular, Burstein is conscious of sampling coverage bias as revealed in his decision to use random sample selection, but data quality depends upon how samples are selected as well as how big they are. In general, the larger the sample, the more precise it will be in that more observations typically mean less sampling error. The returns are especially great at the beginning with the fewest number of cases. A sample of 30 is better than 15, 60 is better than half that amount, and the benefits accrue quickly with subsequent observations as sample sizes approach the hundreds or thousands.

In his book, Burstein samples 60 issues (in reality, only 50 in a purely random fashion). He does so, presumably, because following 60 bills is not easy. However, few survey researchers would be comfortable drawing inferences about the population from a sample of 60 units. At the very least, margin of error with a sample of this size would be so large as to make any conclusions extremely tentative. Moreover, Burstein's sample shrinks further because public opinion data do not exist on some of the legislative proposals he investigated. Thus, it is not surprising that he failed to find a significant relationship between opinion and policy in such a small sample, one that lacks statistical power. The same holds for many of the statistical models that appear in the book; the number of variables used as predictors often goes well beyond what would be recommended for such a small number of observations, which again makes many of the null findings unsurprising. So while previous works may have been biased in their approach, many of the analyses are likely underpowered—which accounts for so many of the statistically insignificant results.

To be fair, Burstein acknowledges that his sample is small (p. 59) and he defends himself (p. 32, n. 5), pointing to other studies in the field that consider only a few dozen issues (e.g., Stuart Soroka and Christopher Wlezien's [2010] *Degrees of Democracy*, covers fewer than 35 issues). However, while past works may have studied only a handful of issues, the surveys underlying these studies are based upon interviewers with thousands of respondents, and the studies often span decades. Yet the relatively small size of Burstein's sample is likely because he is going to go into such depth—and he says so explicitly on page 32 by noting the "labor-intensive" nature of his project—following bills throughout their legislative path. The amount of work involved in discerning the legislative history and whether advocacy groups prevail is quite daunting. So the book makes up in depth what it lacks in breadth.

Another limitation of Burstein's analytical strategy, however, is that the legislative proposals he uses are created by lawmakers. That is, he only studies, or samples from, what has been introduced, but legislative leaders determine what is or is not going to be considered on the legislative agenda. Therefore, by studying bills that have been introduced, Burstein's sample might not be representative in the sense that it depends upon the strategic actions of politicians. Still, he shows great care and tenacity in his unrelenting search for evidence of legislative actions beyond the single congressional session that he selected; he looks for any manifestation of the legislative proposals, even if buried in omnibus bills, across many years.

Most political scientists might have stopped here, but this is where Burstein's training as a sociologist becomes important. In other words, while opinion—policy representation might be low or even nonexistent, such a finding "would not necessarily imply that democratic responsiveness is at risk" (p. 70). Specifically, the public might very well prevail through advocacy. With that insight, the second half of the book is devoted to picking up the pieces of the conventional wisdom that Burstein so thoroughly destroyed. In particular, he moves on to advocacy, conceived broadly. In other words, even though public preferences might not exist on issues—either due to a lack of data or because the public has no meaningful views—it could be that interest groups pressure lawmakers to act. There might also be any number of advocacy activities, such as riots, protests, or even letters to the editor. In studying this broader set of social and political phenomena, Burstein also moves beyond the 60 proposals to consider hundreds of similar pieces of legislation spanning many congressional years. In the end, the search did not turn up all that much. On many pieces of legislation (e.g., expanding the boundaries of natural parks, commemorative Olympic coins, improved governmental responses to oil spills), advocacy is as rare as the opinion data. Nevertheless, it is helpful to get an unbiased rendition of these potential behaviors, which again puts the author in a favorable light compared with past research.

Some readers will be disappointed that Burstein's conclusions are not splashier. That is, in many cases, the main results are inconclusive or they demonstrate what does not happen. However, anyone who cares about democratic performance needs to be aware of studies like this one. Burstein breaks from the past in his approach, and such a revolution will be long-lived. Even though the book is not without limitations, something like *American Public Opinion* should be more common and should have been written long ago. Burstein's book deserves to be on the required reading list of any graduate seminar in American politics and public policy. At the same time, it is written in such an accessible manner that advanced undergraduates and keen observers of politics will appreciate the insights. In the end, everyone benefits from deeper knowledge of whether democratic forms of government

actually achieve anything close to the lofty benefits so often promised.

Pathways of Power: The Dynamics of National Policymaking. By Timothy J. Conlan, Paul L. Posner, and David R. Beam. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014. 240p. $49.95 cloth, $29.95 paper.
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— Matt Grossmann, *Michigan State University*

Timothy J. Conlan, Paul L. Posner, and David R. Beam categorize and explain the factors governing policymaking across eight domestic policy issue areas since 1981. They offer a typology that will serve as an insightful tool for teaching public policy and include copious summaries of the politics behind many specific policy changes. This analysis is a useful antidote to one-dimensional models of politics and an answer to claims that major policy change is infrequent, requiring special and rare circumstances. Yet the project is methodologically limited, with post hoc storytelling using flexible and overlapping labels.

The foundation of *Pathways of Power* is a 2 x 2 table asking two fundamental questions to categorize a policy debate: 1) Is it driven mostly by ideas or interests? And 2) is participation narrow or broad? According to the model, experts drive narrow debates about ideas (called "expert"); interest groups drive narrow debates about interests (called "pluralist"); political parties drive broad debates about interests (called "partisan"); and public symbolism drives broad debates about ideas (called "symbolic"). The authors find a roughly even mix of these types of policymaking (which they call "the four pathways of power"), except that the partisan category is becoming more common. They find multiple types of policy debates within each of the issue areas they track (health care, gun control, farm policy, tax legislation, welfare policy, financial regulation, federal mandates, and budget policy and reform). Political conflict, they find, is high in partisan debates and low in pluralist and symbolic debates. Resulting policy changes are larger in partisan- and expert-driven cases and incremental in group-driven cases. Pluralist debates also produce more sustainable policies compared to those driven by parties or public symbolism.

The authors should be credited for the broad and diverse issues they tackle, though they are not fully representative of Washington policy debates. By design, they focus on legislation rather than agency rulemaking or court decisions, they only include domestic policy, and they mostly cover successful cases of policy development and adoption (even though the vast majority of legislative efforts fail). Compared to issues on the congressional agenda, their issues are of higher public salience and are broader in nature. The three issue areas where they devote the most focus (budget, tax, and federal mandate policy) feature more conservative policy proposals than other issue areas. Most case-selection methods would be biased in some fashion; the authors select on the basis of their own expertise, which shows in their in-depth understanding of each area's development. Yet a full accounting of congressional issues would likely show a lot more narrow areas driven by interest groups and experts and fewer where public symbolism plays a dramatic role.

The book's main method is a qualitative categorization of policy debates; each classification is reasonable and explained in detail. Many policy debates could easily have been placed in another category by a different set of coders, however; most issues are properly seen as incorporating actors with interests and ideas and could be placed on a continuum from limited to broad participation, rather than fitting squarely in one of the four boxes. To take one example, debates over national health care in 1993 and 2009 involved important roles for parties, groups, public symbolism, and experts. The typology would be particularly difficult to use in advance to predict how a policy debate will develop. Some of the outcomes the authors predict with their typology (such as the level of conflict and the size of a policy change) are associated with the evidence used for their initial categorization.

Nonetheless, the book advances perceptive answers to important questions. First, how do we know whether a policy change is sustainable? Consistent with work by Eric Patashnik, the authors show how the initial enacting coalition behind a public policy change matters for its sustainability: If a policy change goes against the interests of the most important actors in a field, it may not last for long. Policy experts may be particularly bad at the long game because they hope to set optimal policy without regard to satisfying important constituencies. Second, when can a small group of interest groups or experts keep policy questions to themselves? The authors admirably separate this question from the question of when interests or ideas dominate a political conflict, but it is still hard to know in advance when outsiders will succeed in widening the scope of conflict. Third, why does some legislation pass Congress easily with limited opposition? The book points to the role of focusing events that play out in the public eye, moving policy discussions toward symbolic goals.

One limitation of the authors' categorization is that it pays less attention to the action within Congress and the administration. Research by Scott Adler and John Wilkerson points to the critical role of impending deadlines and reauthorization in driving the amount and focus of lawmaking. Many of the policy changes described in this book also required painstaking compromises, satisfying many specific leaders and constituencies inside government. Policy entrepreneurs often make use of experts and interest groups in internal coalition building, rather than simply allowing government to serve as a forum for competition among outside groups. Individual leadership