

Drudge's World? The Drudge Report's Influence on Media Coverage

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Abstract

The conventional wisdom among political journalists is that the *Drudge Report* drives the traditional news media's agenda. Academic researchers, however, have been reluctant to test the *Drudge Report*'s actual influence on the media. This paper presents the first systematic empirical study of how the stories carried on the *Drudge Report* structure media coverage. Using vector autoregression to analyze the data derived from a detailed content analysis of print, broadcast and blog discussions during the last five weeks of the 2008 campaign, I test the hypothesis that the *Drudge Report* sets the mainstream media's agenda. Rather than the broad impact posited by professional political observers, I find that, even on issues where the site should be expected to have its largest impact, the stories highlighted on the *Drudge Report* exert a fairly inconsistent influence over what traditional media outlets chose to cover. Indeed, the time series analysis presented here shows evidence of a "Drudge effect" on print and broadcast coverage for only five of the 10 political scandals that received the most attention on the *Drudge Report* between September 30 and November 3, 2008. What's more, the links promoted on *Drudge* are no more influential for media coverage than the discussions taking place in the blogosphere. In other words, despite conventional wisdom to the contrary, there is little in the actual data to suggest that the *Drudge Report* "rules" the media's world.

Keywords: agenda setting, Drudge Report, journalism, blogs, political scandal

Introduction

The conventional wisdom among media consultants, campaign directors and political journalists is that the *Drudge Report* drives the agenda of the mainstream news media. In *The Way to Win*, for example, Mark Halperin and John Harris (2006) argue that, “Matt Drudge rules our world. With the exception of the Associated Press, there is no outlet other than the *Drudge Report* whose dispatches instantly command the attention and energies of the most established newspapers and television newscasts.” According to Politico.com’s Jonathan Martin and Ben Smith (2008), Matt Drudge has the “ability to drive the national conversation with what he chooses to highlight on his site.” Republican media consultant Alex Castellanos has claimed that “Drudge has become center court at Wimbledon. If it doesn't happen there, it doesn't happen” (Cillizza, 2008). Patrick Gavin of the DC Examiner has suggested that “You can rest assured that, once a story is linked to on Drudge, it will be on MSNBC, Fox, CNN and the rest” (Felling, 2007). As one anonymous CBS executive put it, “Drudge is like a megaphone in the cyber-world. Other news organizations and Web sites take their cue from him” (Sappell, 2007). Over the course of the last three years, other observers have referred to Drudge as “America’s bulletin board,” a “must-read for TV anchors and radio personalities” (Cillizza, 2008), the “national political assignment editor for those covering the campaign trail” (Cillizza, 2008) and “the most powerful journalist in America” (Weiss, 2007).

Despite these frequent and increasingly bold assertions, researchers have paid relatively little attention to the *Drudge Report*. In fact, it appears that only one peer reviewed article

focusing exclusively on the *Drudge Report* has ever been published in an academic journal.¹ In an exceptionally detailed study of the content of the *Drudge Report* between 2002 and 2008, Leetaru (2009) finds that Drudge displayed a clear preference for linking to coverage of presidential campaigns, global warming and the war in Iraq. Perhaps more importantly, Leetaru's data reveal that Drudge is extremely dependent on mainstream media coverage – drawing over 90 percent of its content from wire services and established news outlets. Unfortunately, Leetaru does not explore how these wire services and news outlets may be influenced by the stories highlighted by Matt Drudge.

The dearth of research concentrating solely on the site does not mean that researchers have completely ignored *Drudge*. Indeed, a search of *Google Scholar* reveals that over 400 conference papers, academic journal articles and books have mentioned Matt Drudge's site.² It is important to point out, however, that only two of these studies contain any detailed discussion of the *Drudge Report*'s impact on the American media's political news coverage. Both Williams and Delli Carpini (2000) and Perlmutter (2008) recount the role that the *Drudge Report* played in breaking the Monica Lewinsky story in 1998. The remaining studies that mention Drudge almost universally overlook the site's potential influence on the American media's political news coverage and, instead, examine the site as only one case in a more general study of media institutions. In an empirical assessment of ideological bias among news outlets, for example, Groschelose and Miylo (2005) ignore *Drudge*'s influence on journalists and focus instead on how far the site tilts to the right. Similarly, while Thurman (2007) explores the site's relative impact on newspaper website traffic in the United Kingdom, he leaves the question of the American

¹ A 2010 search of *Google Scholar* for conference papers, academic journal articles and books with "Drudge Report" in the title returns only one result.

² The search was conducted only for social sciences, arts and humanities sources. Legal journals and opinions were also excluded from the search.

media's dependence on *Drudge* unexamined. In their survey of blog readers, Lawrence, Sides and Farrell (2010) concentrate exclusively on the question of whether conservatives are more likely to visit the *Drudge Report* than liberals. There is, in other words, a yawning gap between the significance attributed to the *Drudge Report* by professional political observers and the status accorded to the site by academic researchers.

The research community's reluctance to explore the extent of *Drudge*'s influence over traditional media is curious. Questions about why media outlets choose to cover the issues they cover and debates about the impact of so-called "new media" actors on "old media" institutions have been fairly ubiquitous in scholarly circles over the last decade. Indeed, there have been literally hundreds of studies of media agenda building during the last thirty years³ and a burgeoning literature on the political consequences of Web 2.0 has attracted the attention of a new generation of political scientists, journalism researchers and mass communications specialists.⁴ When coupled with the aforementioned proclamations of the traditional media's army of self-confessed "Drudgologists" (Cillizza, 2008), these scholarly concentrations should have led more researchers to assess whether the *Drudge Report* is, in fact, today's "gateway for conventional journalism" (Sappell, 2007).

This paper presents the first systematic study of how the stories carried on the *Drudge Report* structure the traditional media's coverage of political developments. Using vector autoregression to analyze the data derived from a detailed content analysis of print, broadcast and blog discussions during the last five weeks of the 2008 campaign, I test the hypothesis that

³ Representative works include Cobb and Elder (1977), Semetko, Blumler, Gurevitch and Weaver (1991), Gilbert, Eyal, McCombs and Nicholas (1980), Lang and Lang (1981), Turk (1986), Weaver and Elliott (1985) and Dearing and Rogers (1996).

⁴ Representative works include Bloom (2003), Davis (2009), Drezner and Farrell (2008), Heim (2008), Perlmutter (2008), Roth (2004), Schiffer (2006), Wallsten (2007) and Wallsten (2010).

the *Drudge Report* sets the mainstream media's agenda. Rather than the broad impact posited by the coterie of professional political observers mentioned above, I find that, even on issues where the site should be expected to have its largest impact, the stories highlighted on the *Drudge Report* exert a fairly inconsistent influence over what traditional media outlets chose to cover. Indeed, the time series analysis presented here shows evidence of a "Drudge effect" on print and broadcast coverage for only five of the 10 political scandals that received the most attention on the *Drudge Report* between September 30 and November 3, 2008. What's more, the links promoted on Drudge are no more influential for media coverage than the discussions taking place in the blogosphere. In other words, despite conventional wisdom to the contrary, there is little in the actual data to suggest that the *Drudge Report* "rules" the media's world.

The Drudge Report

The *Drudge Report* has changed very little over the last ten years and, as a result, its design feels somewhat archaic – with the entire site consisting of nothing more than a single, three-columned webpage of hyperlinks. At the bottom of each of the three columns, the page provides static links to major news publications and websites that do not change on a day-to-day basis. The rest of the page, by contrast, features a constantly evolving set of links that appear and disappear based on the ever-changing editorial assessments of the site's editor – Matt Drudge.⁵ Rather than introducing these frequently-replaced links with a detailed blurb or with the headline provided by the reporting media outlet, Drudge chooses to provide readers with only a few short words that highlight one specific dimension of the story being linked to. The stories that Drudge believes are most newsworthy are placed at the very top of the page in a large, boldface font –

⁵ Andrew Breitbart also served as an editor for the site before passing away on March 1, 2012. It is important to point out, however, that even when Breitbart worked for the *Report*, Drudge made most of the decisions regarding site's content. Indeed, Breitbart frequently described himself as Drudge's assistant and even claimed that the site was "a one man show with a second guy."

typically appearing directly above a large image related to the topic of the story. For a small number of particularly important stories, Drudge adds a spinning siren image to the headline story. Importantly, the *Report* contains very little in the way of long-winded, opinionated political commentary or original reporting. Indeed, as Leetaru (2009) writes, “Rather than reporting its own news stories like a citizen journalist or commenting on stories like a blogger, the *Drudge Report* collects stories from the mainstream press and packages them into a concise broadsheet of links.”⁶

Why might this archaically designed “broadsheet of links” “rule” the media’s world? One reason for *Drudge*’s purported influence is the size of its readership. Although there are varying assessments of the exact number of users who stop by the site each day,⁷ every available measure suggests that the *Drudge Report* is one of the most frequently visited news sites on the Internet. The large audience that the *Drudge Report* commands means that the site can channel a great deal of traffic to the pages of traditional media outlets. A 2011 study by the Project for Excellence in Journalism, for example, found that links from Drudge were responsible for more than 19% of the unique visitors to the NYPost.com, 15% of the unique visitors to Washingtonpost.com and 11% of the unique visitors to FoxNews.com (Olmstead, Mitchell &

⁶ The absence of extensive editorializing makes the *Drudge Report* something of a novelty in today’s online media ecology. As a result, there is little consensus on how to best classify the *Drudge Report*. While most observers describe the Report as an aggregator of news stories, the site’s emphasis on linking probably aligns best with outdated definitions of what constitutes a blog. According to Blood (2000), the first blogs were simply a list of links with very little commentary by the blog’s author – commonly called link filters. The focus of these sites was on articles, links and stories that the author found interesting and wanted to share with his or her readership. These links were usually accompanied by short text commentary or story summaries. These blogs were designed to filter out the interesting from the boring in the rapidly expanding space of the internet. In other words, they help people find information and websites that are worth their time.

⁷ According to Nielsen NetRatings, for example, the *Drudge Report* attracted nearly 3 million users a day during the 2008 campaign. Similarly, the site is currently ranked number 115 in Quantcast’s list of most popular sites (ranking higher than other news domains such as washingtonpost.com, nypost.com and politico.com). At the time of this writing, Alexa.com ranked *Drudge* number 84 in overall Internet traffic.

Rosenstiel, 2011). In a similar study, Outbrain found that Drudge was responsible for 6.85% of traffic within their extensive publisher network that includes the *New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *MSNBC* and *Mashable*.

Because traditional media outlets must attract traffic in order to generate attention and revenue for their online operations, reporters may feel compelled to cover stories that the *Drudge Report* is likely to link to. As Jim Brady, executive editor of WashingtonPost.com, suggested, “journalists realize that getting a link on his website is crucial to their stories getting wider attention” (Sappell, 2007). More explicitly, a blogger on *Talking Points Memo* recently wrote, “Isn't one of the dirty secrets of the profession that reporters and editors on occasion actually tailor their stories to get Drudge links?” (Sargent, 2008) In other words, a dependence on traffic may drive traditional media outlets to cater their editorial decisions to the preferences of Matt Drudge.⁸

More important than how many readers the *Drudge Report* has, however, is who reads. To state the matter simply, the *Drudge Report* has an enormous potential to influence mainstream media coverage of political events because it is on the “must read” list for nearly every one of the people in charge of making day-to-day decisions about which issues should be reported on and which issues should be ignored. According to Chris Cillizza (2008), for example, “every reporter and editor who covers politics is checking the site multiple times a day.” Similarly, the *New Yorker* has claimed that all of the members of “the Gang 500” (which is composed of the strategists, pundits, campaign consultants, pollsters, and reporters who run the

⁸ Similarly, upsetting Drudge can lead to retribution that can be quite damaging to a news website's traffic. After the *New York Press* ran a column criticizing Drudge, for example, Drudge dropped their site from his list of newspaper links. Almost immediately, the paper's traffic dropped by a third.

modern-day political establishment) religiously visit the *Drudge Report* in order to determine which stories are worth further attention.

Why does Drudge draw such a large and influential readership? Many media observers claim that they are drawn to the site because Drudge has a keen sense for assessing which underreported stories will be interesting to a broader audience. According to Chris Cillizza's (2008) informal poll of "Drudgologists," the site attracts attention from political professionals because of Drudge's ability to "sniff out" a potentially important story when others in the media miss it at first glance. Similarly, an anonymous Republican strategist has claimed that Drudge "can identify what's a big deal even when the reporters who actually cover and report on an event don't realize what they have." In his book *Attack the Messenger* (2007), Craig Crawford claims that Drudge is successful in influencing media because "he is a highly skilled news editor" who provides readers with a "constantly updated read of interesting items." As Leetaru (2009) concludes from his extensive study of the links found on site, Drudge's "ticket to success seems to be a particular knack for finding the small stories on the news wires and in obscure outlets that will grow big the next day." The exact nature of Drudge's influence, in other words, is to draw journalistic attention to stories that would otherwise be ignored.

While the considerable size and influence of Drudge's readership means that the site may exert a broad influence over what traditional media outlets choose to cover, there is some evidence to suggest that Drudge may be particularly influential when it comes to reporting about presidential campaigns. According to Politico.com's Jonathan Martin and Ben Smith, "What nobody who follows the daily cut and thrust of American politics questions is Drudge's continuing power to drive the stories and shape the narratives that define presidential politics." Similarly, Washingtonpost.com's Chris Cillizza called the *Drudge Report* the "single most

influential source for how the presidential campaign is covered in the country.” The 2004 Republican National Committee’s communications director stated that “no single person is more relevant to shaping the media environment in a political campaign” (Rutenberg, 2007) and Phil Singer, former deputy communications director for Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign, said that walking through any press filing center at a presidential debate immediately reveals that every other laptop has Drudge's website on its screen (Cillizza, 2008). During the last few months of the 2008 campaign, ABC News Political Director Mark Halperin even went so far as to list Drudge as one of “the five most important people in American politics right now who aren't running for president.” In short, the *Drudge Report* likely has its greatest influence when it draws attention to less known stories about presidential campaigns.

Methods

Measuring the “Drudge Agenda”

The first step in empirically exploring Drudge's influence on traditional media coverage was to track the issues discussed on the *Drudge Report*. In order to obtain a complete measure of the *Drudge Report*'s agenda during the last five weeks of the campaign, I extracted every link (and its accompanying anchor text) contained on the site between September 30 and November 3, 2008. Because the linkage data was not collected live during the period of study, I was forced to rely on the database maintained by DrudgeReportArchives.com. Since November 18, 2001, the *Archives* have taken a snapshot of the *Drudge Report* every two minutes. Rather than recording all of these snapshots, the *Archives* only indexes copies of the *Drudge Report* when its content has changed. In the only study of the frequency with which the *Drudge Report* is updated, Leetaru finds that the site was updated an average of 67 times per day between 2002

and 2008. During the period of this study, the *Drudge Report* archives show that the *Drudge Report* was updated only 65 times per day.

The *Drudge Report* contains three different kinds of links. First, at the top of the page, the site provides links to the specific news stories that site's editors believe are most important at any given moment. Second, at the bottom of the page, the site provides permanent links to the homepages of traditional media outlets, wire services and opinion columnists that the sites editors frequently read. Finally, the site runs a number of advertisements that link to various companies around the Internet. Because I am concerned here only with the way journalists react to the news stories highlighted by Drudge, the permanent links to media outlets and advertisement links were dropped from the analysis.⁹ Overall, the *Drudge Report* linked to 3,169 news stories during the last five weeks of the 2008 campaign.¹⁰

Testing the hypothesis that the *Drudge Report* drives traditional media coverage required coding each of the 3,169 stories for the issue they discussed. As an initial step in this coding, I employed the categorization scheme used by the Project for Excellence in Journalism. As part of their yearly News Coverage Index (NCI), the Project for Excellence in Journalism places every news story carried on a broad range of media outlets (including newspapers, television news broadcasts, radio programs and websites) into one of 26 mutually exclusive, issue-based categories.¹¹ Table 1 provides a list of all of the categories used in the NCI.

⁹ As Leetaru points out, *Drudge* also occasionally produces his own news reports and special features. Consistent with Leetaru's findings, I found that these reports are relatively rare features of the *Drudge Report*. As a result, they were also excluded from the analysis.

¹⁰ The 3,169 stories is the total obtained from adding the number of news story links found on the *Drudge Report* each day across the period of study. Because a particular link is often carried on the site across multiple days, the 3,169 number dramatically overstates the number of unique news stories linked to by Drudge. During the period of study, 1,811 unique stories were linked to on the site.

¹¹ Because the Project for Excellence makes the details of its NCI coding scheme publicly available, researchers can easily use adopt this classification scheme for their own analyses of media coverage. The details can be found at: http://www.journalism.org/about_news_index/methodology. In order to increase the reliability of the coding, I

[INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Applying the NCI coding scheme to the anchor text descriptions extracted from the *Drudge Report*, I was able to construct a picture of the Drudge agenda during the last five weeks of the 2008 campaign. As Table 1 shows, the *Drudge Report* provides links to a wide range of stories.¹² Indeed, links to stories about government actions, the health of the economy, events occurring in foreign countries and entertainment news were fairly common on the *Drudge Report* – with each constituting over five percent of the total number of stories during the period of study. Despite this diversity, however, the *Drudge Report* was primarily an aggregator of campaign and election stories between September 30 and November 3, 2008. To be exact, nearly 40 percent of stories linked to by the *Drudge Report* in the run up to the 2008 election focused on campaigns and elections.¹³ What’s more, as Figure 1 illustrates, *Drudge*’s attention to reporting on elections and campaigns was fairly consistent across the last five weeks of the campaign.¹⁴

[INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

For each of the 1,218 campaign and election stories linked to by Drudge between September 30 and November 3, I carried out some additional coding. Because most of the claims

added one set of additional instructions to the scheme provided by the PEJ. Coders were instructed to classify any link mentioning “Obama,” “McCain,” “Palin” or “Biden” as a “campaign/election story.”

¹² As Table 1 also shows, approximately seven percent of stories could not be classified. The fairly large number of stories that could not be classified was a direct result of the fact that Drudge’s editors only include a few words or a very brief sentence to describe each story and, in many cases, these may not provide a clear sense of the story’s topical focus.

¹³ Despite the relatively short descriptions given by Drudge, there was a high degree of intercoder reliability. This is a result of the fact that the editors want to make it clear to their readers what the stories are about.

¹⁴ In order to determine the reliability of my coding, an additional coder was trained to apply the rules from the NCI. After discussing the rules together, I coded 100 randomly selected links with the coder. This tandem effort revealed a shared understanding of the coding scheme and a high level of agreement about how to classify each link. The additional coder then classified 905 randomly selected links into one of the 26 categories from the NCI (exactly half of the unique number of links extracted from the *Drudge Report Archives*). Intercoder reliability statistics were then computed for this subset of links. The intercoder reliability analysis revealed 82.4% agreement between coders and a Krippendorff’s alpha (nominal) of .79.

about Drudge's influence revolve around his coverage of presidential campaigns, I further classified each news story link as focusing either on the presidential election (i.e. mentioning Obama, Biden, McCain or Palin) or on a lower-level race (i.e. not mentioning Obama, Biden, McCain or Palin).¹⁵ This analysis reveals that Drudge has relatively little interest in highlighting coverage of non-presidential campaigns. Of the 1,218 stories on campaigns and elections, 1,058 focused exclusively on the race between Obama and McCain, only 160 centered on congressional or state-level elections. In other words, while it is certainly true that the *Drudge Report* is an aggregator of a wide variety of news stories, the Matt Drudge appears to have a strong preference for linking to stories about the presidential campaign during election season.

The presidential campaign links carried on *Drudge* include a diverse hodgepodge of stories – ranging from celebrity statements to the conduct of each candidate's supporters. Indeed, in addition to campaign boilerplate such as “McCain rips congress Dems over subprime turmoil,” “Obama hits McCain on economy” and “race tight in Colo., Mo. and Fla.,” the *Drudge Report* also included links to stories about a dead bear covered with Obama signs, Brigitte Bardot claiming Sarah Palin was a “disgrace to women,” Obama sneezing on a reporter, John Kerry making a joke about John McCain wearing adult diapers and Joe Biden allegedly receiving Botox treatments.

In order to extract some generalizable conclusions from this motley group of stories, I coded each of the 1,058 presidential election links for the kind of issues and events they centered on. Specifically, I placed each link into one of seven mutually exclusive categories: (1) coverage of recently released public opinion polls; (2) coverage of one of the presidential or vice presidential debates; (3) coverage of predictions and commentary made by political pundits; (4)

¹⁵ All campaign and election links that did not explicitly mention the presidential or vice presidential candidates were coded as “non-presidential.”

coverage of campaign fundraising and advertisements; (5) coverage of statements and actions on the campaign trail; (6) coverage of endorsements by political leaders and public figures; or (7) coverage of scandals. Stories not fitting in to these categories were grouped in a “miscellaneous” category.¹⁶ The details of the coding scheme used to classify each link can be found in Appendix A.¹⁷

[INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Table 2 displays the results of this coding of presidential campaign stories. As Table 2 shows, the *Drudge Report* provided extensive coverage of the presidential horserace. Articles about public opinion polls, fundraising numbers, advertising strategies, election forecasts, stump speeches and endorsements made up over half of the links found on *Drudge* leading up to the election. As Table 2 also shows, however, Drudge focused a great deal of attention on political scandals. Specifically, nearly one in three stories linked to on the site addressed a potentially damaging, publicized transgression of a moral code, law, norm or value.¹⁸

In order to explore Drudge’s influence on traditional media coverage, I selected ten of the most frequently linked to scandals during the period of study. Each of these topics was linked to by the *Drudge Report* on at least two separate days and was covered in more than five unique news reports. Additionally, each of these scandals emerged and ultimately faded into the background during the period of study. The complete list of these topics can be found in Table 3.

¹⁶ Included in the miscellaneous category were fourteen stories whose focus could not be determined. These stories were clearly about the presidential election (e.g. mentioning McCain, Obama, Palin or Biden) but the anchor text provided by Drudge provided little other information about the content of the story.

¹⁷ In order to determine the reliability of my coding, an additional coder was trained to apply the rules spelled out in Appendix A. After discussing the rules together, I coded 100 randomly selected links with the coder. Once again, this tandem effort revealed a shared understanding of the coding scheme and a high level of agreement about how to classify each link. The additional coder then classified each one of the 1,058 links about the presidential campaign into one of the seven categories described in Appendix A. The intercoder reliability analysis revealed an 85.1% agreement between coders and a Krippendorff’s alpha (nominal) of .81.

¹⁸ This definition of scandal is derived from Thompson (2000).

[INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

Although it may seem somewhat dubious, *prima facie*, to make broad claims about the site based on such a quick and narrow peek into “Drudge’s world,” the stories listed in Table 3 constitute a “critical” (Yin, 1989) or “crucial” (Eckstein, 1975) set of cases for the theory that Drudge drives mainstream news coverage. Indeed, because the testimony of most media observers attributes the *Report*’s significance to its ability to draw attention to presidential election stories that would normally fall outside of the purview of political reporters, an absence of influence on these highly promoted scandals would necessarily raise serious questions about whether a “Drudge effect” truly exists. In fact, implicit in most characterizations of the site’s position within the larger media ecology is the notion that Drudge does not drive news discussion on the issues and events, such as candidate debates, polling numbers and policy pronouncements, that reporters are likely to include in their election coverage anyway. Put differently, if Drudge is not effective in catapulting these short-lived scandals onto the traditional media’s agenda, the site is also likely to be ineffective in launching any of the myriad of issues it covers out of obscurity and into national prominence.¹⁹

Measuring the Television and Newspaper Agendas

Assessing the impact that *Drudge*’s focus on political scandals has on media coverage requires not only a measure of the issues covered on the *Drudge Report* but also a measure of the issues covered on a variety of more traditional media outlets. Because the broadcast media’s agenda is likely to differ in important ways from the print media’s agenda (Graber, 2002), I decided to measure each separately. In order to measure the print media’s coverage of the political scandals highlighted by the *Drudge Report*, I used Lexis-Nexis to search all “U.S.

¹⁹ As George and McKeown (1985) argue “the performance of a single ‘critical’ case can serve to reduce substantially the amount of confidence we attach to that theory” (50).

newspapers and wires” for the issue keywords listed in Table 3 during the last five weeks of the campaign.²⁰ In order to measure broadcast coverage of these political scandals, I used the Lexis-Nexis television news transcript archives to search for the same set of keywords.²¹

Measuring the Blog Agenda

A growing body of evidence suggests that discussions taking place in the blogosphere have an important impact on the issues that print and broadcast media outlets choose to cover (Bloom, 2003; Davis, 2009; Wallsten, 2007; Wallsten, 2011). Any study of the determinants of traditional media coverage must, therefore, control for the influence that the blog agenda exerts over the agendas of newspapers and television news programs. Although the notion of a blog agenda is conceptually clear, it does present some significant measurement and sampling problems. Indeed, unlike the print and broadcast agendas discussed above, there is no immediately obvious way to measure the blog agenda and, as a result, there are important questions about how to proceed in tracking the issues that are given attention by bloggers. Which blogs, for example, should be used to gather data on the issues on the blog agenda – only popular blogs, only less popular blogs or a mix of both? Should researchers only include political blogs or the more numerous non-political blogs? Similarly, how should “attention” be measured – by keyword use, link topics, amount of discussion or some other factor?

As a result of these problems and of the general uncertainty about how to best measure the blog agenda, I decided to track issue discussion in the blogosphere by searching the Lexis-

²⁰ Rather than search the entire document for these keywords, I limited the Lexis-Nexis search to the “headline and lead paragraphs” of each story.

²¹ It is important to point out that a relatively small number of keywords were selected for identifying discussion of each issue. Indeed, most of the ten issues studied here were identified by the one or two words that I deemed essential to clearly discussing the issue. As such, the data presented below slightly underestimate the actual amount of attention each of these issues received.

Nexis archives of blog discussion for each of the keywords listed in Table 3. The Lexis-Nexis archive is useful for my purposes here because it tracks the content carried on a wide array of blogs – ranging from obscure political blogs to well-travelled entertainment blogs. What’s more, the Lexis-Nexis archives are easily searchable and dramatically lower the costs of measuring discussions on a large number of issues across specific time periods. The primary drawback, however, is that it does not archive discussions found on a few of the most well-known political blogs. *Daily Kos*, *Huffington Post* and *RedState.org*, for example, are not covered by Lexis-Nexis. The exclusion of these blogs is particularly problematic given that recent research into citation patterns (Wallsten, 2011) and recent surveys of political journalists (Davis, 2009) reveal that these blogs are the most influential in determining media coverage.²²

Data Analysis

Even with clear measures of the various agendas, assessing the impact of the *Drudge Report* on traditional media coverage is tricky business. As suggested above, the *Drudge Report* is, first and foremost, an aggregator of the news stories that are carried on other media outlets rather than an independent producer of journalistic reports. As such, the *Drudge Report*’s agenda is inherently dependent on the agenda of other media outlets. The dependence of Drudge’s content on traditional media outlets does not mean, however, that the site does not exert an independent influence on the issues print and broadcast outlets choose to cover. Indeed, as the numerous journalists quoted above testify, the *Drudge Report* has the power to attract attention to a story by convincing the reporters who lurk on the site that an issue is interesting, important

²² As a result of the fact that there is no central database that aggregates the content of popular political blogs, gathering a measure of the blog agenda based on popular political blogs requires searching each blog individually.

and worthy of further discussion. In other words, it is likely that the agenda of the *Drudge Report* simultaneously influences and is influenced by traditional media coverage.²³

The complex, multi-directional relationship that is likely to exist between the agendas of traditional media outlets and the *Drudge Report*, makes estimating the exact size of a “Drudge effect” on news coverage particularly difficult. Any approach that assumes the site’s agenda is exogenous to the agendas of other media outlets will inevitably provide misleading estimates of the impact *Drudge* is having. Fortunately, vector autoregression provides a useful tool for assessing the independent effect of interrelated variables in contexts such as this.²⁴ VAR models use lagged values of all of the variables in a system of highly correlated variables over time to predict the current value of each variable in the system (Bartels, 1996).²⁵ This approach is attractive for my purposes here because VAR models, unlike structural equation models, relax a priori assumptions about the direction of causality between variables and the number of time lags to be included in the analysis.²⁶ Indeed, many previous studies of agenda setting and agenda building (Soroka, 2002; Edwards & Wood, 1999; Wallsten, 2010) have successfully employed VAR analysis for exactly this reason.

The first step in VAR analysis is to determine the appropriate number of lags to include in the system of equations that is being estimated.²⁷ Following Sims (1980), I determined the

²³ It is important to point out that the other variables discussed here – namely, print coverage, broadcast coverage and blog discussion – are also interrelated.

²⁴ For an overview of the use of vector autoregression in political science see Freeman et al. (1989). For empirical examples of VAR see Wood and Peake (1996) and Bartels (1996).

²⁵ In the context of this study, VAR models the activity of each actor as a function of the past behavior of the other three actors in the analysis.

²⁶ More specifically, VAR treats all of the variables in the system as endogenous to the equation rather than forcing the researcher to specify the relationship between the variables prior to the analysis.

²⁷ Determining the appropriate number of lags (p) in VAR analysis is crucial. As Enders (2004) writes, “appropriate lag length selection can be critical. If p is too small the model is misspecified; if p is too large, degrees of freedom are wasted” (281). In addition, Gujarati (1995) points out that Granger exogeneity tests can be highly sensitive to lag

number of lags to include in each model by sequentially adding lags to the system of equations and testing for the statistical significance of each additional lag using a modified F-test.

Additional lags need to lead to a significant improvement in the fit of the VAR model in order to be included.²⁸ Based on Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC) and the Final Prediction Error (FPE) as well as degree of freedom considerations, I selected a lag period of either one or two days for each of the media sectors on each of the ten issues.

The next step in VAR analysis is to conduct "Granger causality" tests in order to detect the causal relationships that exist between the variables in the system of equations.²⁹ "Granger causality" is based on the idea that "variable X causes another variable Y, if by incorporating the past history of X one can improve a prediction of Y over a prediction of Y based solely on the history of Y alone" (Freedman, 1983; 328) and Granger causality tests, therefore, provide statistical evidence for whether lags of one variable Granger cause any of the other variables in the system. More specifically, a chi-squared statistic is used to test the null hypothesis that the lags of the independent variables are significantly different from zero. A significant chi-squared test means that the independent variable "Granger causes" the dependent variable while an insignificant chi-squared test means that the independent variable does not "Granger cause" the dependent variable.

Findings

lengths.

²⁸ Although it is possible to include separate lag lengths for variables, most studies using VAR analysis use the same lag length for all equations (Enders, 2004).

²⁹ Because VAR is sensitive to non-stationarity in the data, I conducted a Dickey-Fuller test and examined the autocorrelation and partial autocorrelation coefficients for each of the time series. While most of the variables for each issue showed strong evidence of stationarity, a number of variables did not. In order to achieve stationarity, I differenced these variables one time.

The *Drudge Report* contained a total of 3,169 links to news stories during the last five weeks of the campaign. Consistent with Leetaru's findings, the *Drudge Report* linked to a wide range of sources – ranging from elite national newspapers such as the *Washington Post*, the *Washington Times* and the *New York Times* to entertainment gossip sites such as entertainmentwise.com, hollywoodreporter.com and variety.com. In total, links to 303 different domains were carried on the *Drudge Report* between September 30, 2008 and November 3, 2008. Contrary to a 2005 *CNET* article claiming that Drudge shows “little preference for any of the sites he links to,” however, some sites received far more attention from Drudge than others (Sandoval, 2005). As Table 4 shows, eleven domains account for over 50 percent of all links found on the *Drudge Report* during the period of study and only two domains – breitbart.com and apnews.myway.com – account for over 25 percent of all links. In short, while the *Drudge Report* aggregates content from a large number of sources, the stories carried by some sites are far more likely to influence the Drudge agenda than others.

[INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

The large number of domains should not obscure the fact that the *Drudge Report* is almost entirely dependent on the online coverage provided traditional media outlets. As Table 4 shows, with the exception of youtube.com, every one of the 20 most frequently linked to domains are newspaper, television, wire service or news aggregation sites. Four kinds of sites are noticeably absent from the population of sites linked to by the *Drudge Report*. First, the *Drudge Report* almost never links to political blogs. Of the 3,169 links found on the *Drudge Report* during the last five weeks of the campaign, only two led to political blogs found on Karpf's Blogosphere Authority Index and only one led to a blogspot.com, livejournal.com, or typepad URL. Second, the *Drudge Report* almost completely ignored content posted on candidate-run

websites. Indeed, only one link to a candidate's campaign website was carried on the *Drudge Report* during the last five weeks of the campaign – a link to Barack Obama's social networking platform my.barackobama.com. Third, the *Drudge Report* did not draw on material provided through university homepages. Specifically, only four links to .edu domains were posted on the *Drudge Report* in the waning days of the 2008 campaign. Finally, government websites are not frequently linked to by Drudge. During the five weeks of this study, only 12 links to .gov URLs were found on the site. To put all of this more simply, the large number of unique domain names should not obscure the fact that the *Drudge Report* seems to scavenge for interesting stories exclusively among a fairly well-defined population of mainstream newspapers, magazines, wire services and television stations rather than digging deeply into the far reaches of the Internet to find previously undiscovered sources of information.

It is, of course, unsurprising that the *Drudge Report* is dependent on the coverage provided by traditional media outlets. More interesting is the question of whether the *Drudge Report*, in turn, exerts an influence on the stories carried in newspapers and discussed on television news programs. In order to test the hypothesis that Drudge's coverage of political scandals drives print and broadcast reporting, I conducted Granger causality tests for each of the 10 issues listed in Table 3. As Table 5 shows, Drudge's coverage of political scandals does not always influence the coverage of other media outlets. In fact, links found on the *Drudge Report* failed to "Granger cause" broadcast news coverage on five of the 10 issues studied here and failed to "Granger cause" print media reports on five issues. As Table 5 also shows, Drudge was no more influential in the blogosphere – exerting a significant effect on exactly half of the political scandals emerging between September 30 and November 3. Interestingly, the *Drudge Report's* influence was fairly consistent across the three different kinds of media outlets. When

Drudge mattered for coverage of an issue on one kind of media, the site typically also mattered for coverage on the other kinds of media. Similarly, when *Drudge* did not matter for one kind of media, it did not matter for the other kinds. In short, the VAR analysis reveals that reporters are often not persuaded to provide more coverage of a political scandal simply because *Drudge* has decided to extensively promote it on his site.

A quick glance at the issues showing evidence of a “*Drudge effect*” on traditional media coverage suggests that *Drudge*’s influence is greatest on controversies about the behavior of journalists. To be precise, newspaper and television news coverage of all three of the scandals focusing primarily on questions about media actors – Florida news anchor Barbara West’s contentious television interview with Joe Biden, Gwen Ifill’s debate moderation and the *Los Angeles Times*’ decision to withhold a video tape of Obama praising Palestinian-American history professor Rashid Khalidi – were influenced by the number of links carried on the *Drudge Report*. The site’s strong influence over coverage of the fabricated assault on McCain campaign volunteer Ashley Todd and over coverage of Zeituni Onyango (Obama’s aunt who was living in Boston despite being asked to leave the country by an immigration judge in 2004) also suggests that *Drudge* may be influential on issues sitting at the intersection of politics and illegal behavior. *Drudge*’s influence, in other words, appears greatest when the site draws attention to potential media misbehavior and legal scandals involving individuals who are loosely connected to important politicians.

[INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE]

By contrast, the *Drudge Report*’s linkage patterns appear to matter very little for traditional media coverage of issues focusing exclusively on the actions and statements of political elites. The *Report*’s promotion of stories about Barack Obama’s distant past, for

example, had no effect on print and broadcast news reporting. Indeed, as Table 5 indicates, the VAR analysis shows no evidence whatsoever that the significant amount of attention *Drudge* devoted to Obama's relationship with Bill Ayers and to a seven year old audio recording of Obama claiming it was a "tragedy" that "redistribution of wealth" was not pursued by the Civil Rights Movement led to more coverage of these issues in newspapers and on television programs. *Drudge's* fairly extensive discussion of "Troopergate" was similarly ineffectual. The absence of a "Drudge effect" on stories centering on the actions and statements of political elites suggests that journalists make judgments about the newsworthiness of many stories entirely independent of the attention devoted to the issue on the *Drudge Report*.

It is important to put these findings in some perspective. In a set of analyses not shown here, I also explored whether blog posts are an important factor in structuring traditional media reporting. The results of this analysis show that the links provided by *Drudge* were no more influential in shaping news coverage than the discussions taking place in the blogosphere. Specifically, the aggregated number of blog mentions exerted a significant effect on newspaper and television news stories for the same group of five political scandals that showed evidence of a "Drudge effect." Put differently, while the analysis shows that *Drudge* wields a significant influence over election coverage, this influence is far from unique and his site is clearly only one of the many different stops on the web that reporters make along their way to reporting the news.

Conclusion

As suggested at the start of this paper, the hypothesis that the *Drudge Report* sets the agenda of America's newspapers and television news programs receives nearly unanimous endorsement from the nation's media consultants, campaign directors and political journalists. Succinctly summarizing this prevailing wisdom, ABC News Political Director Mark Halperin

has claimed that “Matt Drudge can influence the news like Walter Cronkite did.” But is Matt Drudge really the “Walter Cronkite of his era?” Beyond the breathless proclamations of these “Drudgologists,” is there any systematic evidence to suggest that the *Drudge Report* actually drives the traditional media’s coverage of politics?

This paper has provided the first empirical assessment of the *Drudge Report*’s influence on the agenda of mainstream news outlets. Rather than a lemming-like media that blindly follows Drudge off every cliff he chooses to leap from, I find only limited evidence of a “Drudge effect” during the final five weeks of the 2008 campaign. Specifically, *Drudge Report* links to stories on political scandals showed evidence of Granger causality for print and broadcast media coverage in only 50 percent of cases. Interestingly, the *Report* appears to have a much stronger influence over traditional media coverage when he highlights stories about the behavior of media actors during presidential campaigns than when it promotes coverage of more established political actors. In other words, despite frequently heard concerns about “Drudge-driven journalism” (Markay, 2010), there are strong indicators that journalists from traditional media outlets frequently ignore the campaign stories emphasized by Matt Drudge.

The conclusions presented here suggest three areas for future research. First, this study explored the influence of the *Drudge Report* during one short and fairly unrepresentative period of time – the last five weeks of the highly contentious 2008 presidential campaign. As a result, the findings presented here probably tell us relatively little about the site’s impact on traditional media coverage across different periods of its seventeen year lifespan. There are good reasons, for example, to suspect that the size and scope of the “Drudge effect” was considerably larger prior to 2008. When Drudge was launched in 1994, the population of online news sites was relatively small and Drudge’s minimalist design was the norm. Over the last ten years, however,

the dramatic development in blogging and social networking software has exponentially increased the number of sites competing for influence and created new standards for interactivity and accessibility. In fact, all of the most trafficked sites on the Internet today – whether political blogs such as *Daily Kos*, *Huffington Post* and *Talking Points Memo* or social networking sites like *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *YouTube* – all eschew Drudge’s one-way communication and function primarily as online hubs where like-minded users can gather to engage in dialogue and form communities of interest. Indeed, as Perlmutter puts it “to this day, Drudge is Drudge: one man, no interaction, no community” (58). It is quite possible that Drudge’s reluctance to update his design, coupled with the increasingly crowded online environment, has undermined the site’s credibility and limited the attention it attracts from journalists. Studies of Drudge’s influence prior to 2008 may, therefore, produce dramatically different conclusions than the ones presented here. In particular, an analysis of the site’s impact on traditional media coverage between 1994 and 2008 may reveal that while Drudge ruled the media’s world for most of the last decade, he has recently witnessed his reign of influence crumble under the weight of a rapidly evolving media ecology. Moreover, studies of Drudge’s control over the traditional media’s agenda may paint a considerably different picture when there is not a presidential election looming on the horizon. In order to specify exactly how time bound and contextual “Drudge effects” are, future work should explore the relationship between the Drudge and traditional media agendas at different moments across the site’s fairly long and controversial history.

Second, this paper explored Drudge’s influence on a small set of political scandals related to the 2008 presidential campaign. While coverage of scandals in particular and the presidential election in general were a primary focus of the *Drudge Report* between September 30 and November 3, 2008, the site also linked to a large number of stories on a variety of other issues.

To be specific, even during the hurly burly of the campaign, over 61 percent of stories carried on Drudge addressed topics, such as the health of the economy, the progress of high profile criminal prosecutions and the inefficiencies in implementation of government policy, having nothing to do with electoral politics. Does the *Report* have any influence over traditional media coverage on these issues? Future work should extend the analysis presented here and look for evidence of “Drudge effects” on a broader swath of issues.

Finally, because the data used to measure the print and broadcast agendas was drawn from an extensive search of all “U.S. newspapers and wires” and all major television news program transcripts, the findings presented here apply only to the *Drudge Report*’s influence across the entire population of mainstream news outlets in the United States. While such a broad analysis gives a good estimate of the “Drudge effect” on American media in general, it inevitably obscures the role the site may play in more narrowly defined segments of the media environment. In particular, the findings presented here cannot assess whether the *Drudge Report* has an even greater impact on the so-called “conservative media establishment” (Jamieson & Cappella, 2008) than it does on less partisan news outlets. There are, of course, strong reasons to suspect that the site may occupy a central position in the right wing “echo chamber” created by media powerhouses such as Rush Limbaugh, Fox News and the editorial staff of the Wall Street Journal (Jamieson & Cappella, 2008). Indeed, in addition to the site’s overwhelmingly conservative reputation and its popularity amongst Republican Internet users,³⁰ there is a large body of anecdotal evidence to suggest that important opinion leaders on the political right are greatly influenced by the stories carried on the *Drudge Report*. According to Jonathan Martin

³⁰ Lawrence, Sides and Farrell (2009), for example, show that Drudge’s readers are predominantly conservative.

and Ben Smith (2008), for example, the site is often seen over Rush Limbaugh's shoulder on his "Dittocam" and regional conservative talk radio hosts across the nation openly admit to taking their cues for what to talk about from Drudge. In order to more accurately characterize Drudge's role in the overall ecology of American media, future work should build on the analysis here and focus exclusively on the agenda setting effect that the site has on the universe of unabashedly conservative radio shows, magazines, editorial pages, blogs and television programs.

Appendix A – Coding Scheme for Links about the Presidential Election

(1) Public Opinion Polling

All anchor text descriptions of a survey result should be included in this category. Links that reference the following organizations should be coded as a polling story: Gallup, Rasmussen, Zogby, CBS/NYT, Mason-Dixon, RealClearPolitics, AP Poll. In addition, links that simply report Obama’s and/or McCain’s name with a number or percentage next to it (e.g. “Obama +5.8%”) should be included here.

(2) Vice Presidential and Presidential Debates

All anchor text descriptions about the vice presidential or presidential debates should be included in this category. Any anchor text description that includes the word “debate,” mentions the number of viewers for the debates or quotes one of the participants in the debates should be coded as a debate story.

(3) Predictions and Commentary Made by Pundits

All anchor text descriptions of predictions and commentaries from media pundits should be included in this category. Quotes attributed to specific opinion columnists and political pundits (e.g. Dowd, Brooks, Buchanan, Fineman, Krauthammer, Kristol, Krugman, Paglia, Rich, Rove, etc.) as well as quotes attributed to specific newspapers (e.g. WSJ, NYT, Post, etc.) should be included here. In addition, quotes attributed to unspecified papers, radio broadcasters and authors should be coded as a pundit prediction and commentary story. The pundit predictions and commentary must qualify as non-scandalous to be included in this category. If the story involves a potentially damaging transgression of a moral, law, norm or value, it should be coded as a scandal and not included this category.

(4) Campaign Fundraising and Advertisements

All anchor text descriptions of campaign fundraising and advertisements should be included in this category. Links dealing with overall fundraising numbers, individual campaign contributions, the content of campaign advertisements and the amount of money spent by each candidate should be classified as a fundraising and advertisement story. The fundraising and advertisement discussions must qualify as non-scandalous to be included in this category. If the story involves a potentially damaging transgression of a moral, law, norm or value, it should be coded as a scandal and not included this category.

(5) Statements and Actions on the Campaign Trail

All anchor text descriptions of a candidate’s statements or actions on the campaign trail should be included in this category. Quotes or actions attributed to McCain, Obama, Palin or Biden as well as any political figure campaigning on behalf of one of these candidates should be coded as a statement or action on the campaign trail. Reports of attendance at campaign events or the behavior of audience members should be included in this category as well. In addition, reports on what candidates will do once in office if elected should be included here (e.g. discussions of

appointments, meetings of transition teams, etc.). The statements and actions from the campaign trail must qualify as non-scandalous to be included in this category. If the story involves a potentially damaging transgression of a moral, law, norm or value, it should be coded as a scandal and not included this category.

(6) Endorsements by Political Leaders and Public Figures

All anchor text descriptions of presidential endorsements should be included in this category.

Any link that uses the words “endorse” or “endorsement” should be coded as an endorsement. In addition, any link that discusses a political figure, celebrity or interest group publicly stating their support for one of the presidential candidates should be included here.

(7) Scandals

All anchor text descriptions of scandals should be included in this category. Scandals are defined as any story that focuses on a potentially damaging transgression of a moral code, law, norm or value. Scandals include accusations of racism, illegal behavior, corruption, voter fraud, media bias and dishonesty by public officials. All stories that are described as “shocking,” “a shock,” “controversial” or a “controversy” should be included in this category. Additionally, stories that involve accusations of an individual attempting to hide or conceal a piece of potentially damaging information should also be coded as a scandal. Apologies or explanations for transgressions of moral codes, laws, norms or values should be classified as a scandal as well.

(8) Miscellaneous

This category should include all stories that do not belong in the categories described above. Anchor text descriptions that are too short or vague to classify should be included here.

Figure 1 – Links on *Drudge Report* by Issue Area Over Time

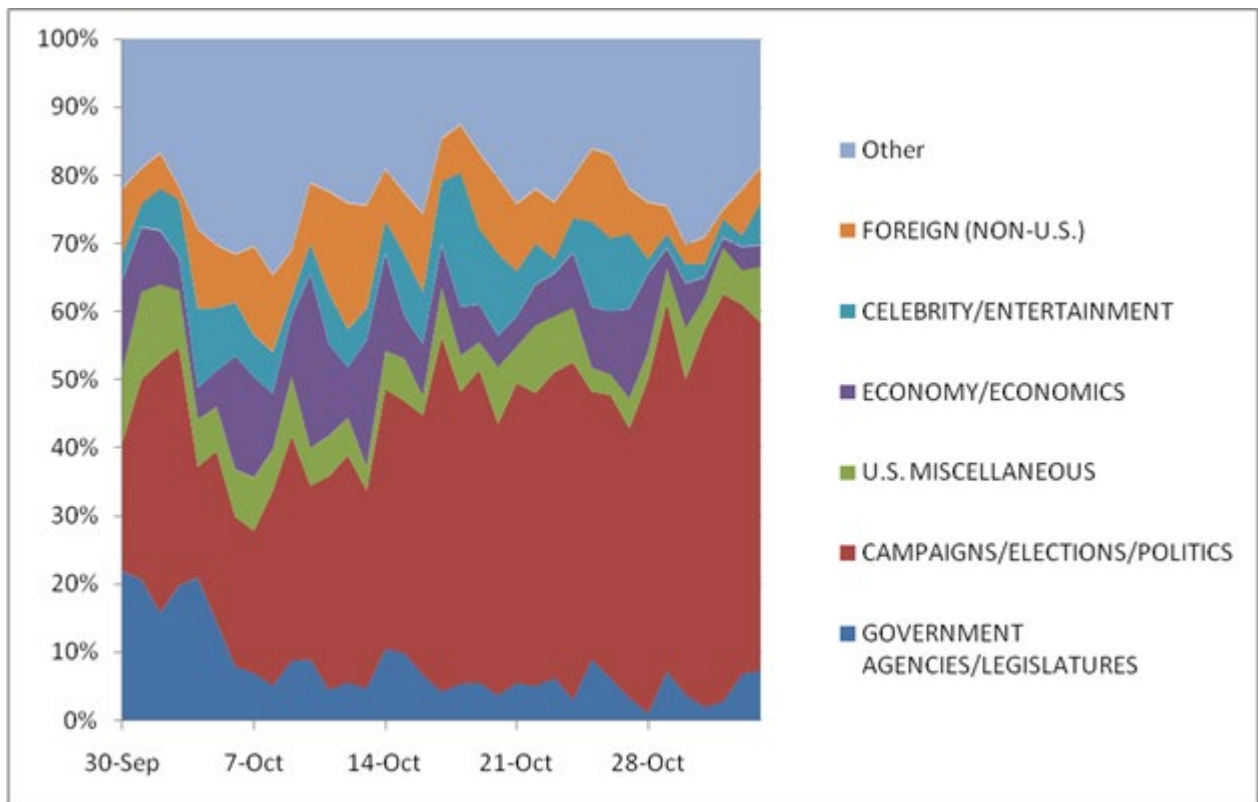


Table 1 – Links on *Drudge Report* by Issue Area

Issue	Percent
CAMPAIGNS/ELECTIONS	38.43%
ECONOMY/ECONOMICS	8.71%
FOREIGN (NON-U.S.)	8.17%
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES/LEGISLATURES	8.11%
U.S. MISCELLANEOUS	6.88%
UNKNOWN/NOT CLASSIFIED	6.63%
CELEBRITY/ENTERTAINMENT	6.37%
BUSINESS	4.23%
CRIME	3.03%
DISASTERS/ACCIDENTS	1.86%
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY	1.39%
U.S. FOREIGN AFFAIRS	1.26%
HEALTH/MEDICINE	0.98%
MEDIA	0.95%
SPORTS	0.79%
COURT/LEGAL SYSTEM	0.44%
DOMESTIC TERRORISM	0.35%
DEFENSE/MILITARY (DOMESTIC)	0.32%
RELIGION	0.32%
RACE/GENDER/GAY ISSUES	0.25%
ENVIRONMENT	0.22%
IMMIGRATION	0.19%
ADDITIONAL DOMESTIC AFFAIRS	0.13%
DEVELOPMENT/SPRAWL	0.00%
TRANSPORTATION	0.00%
EDUCATION	0.00%
LIFESTYLE	0.00%
Total	100.00%

Table 2 – Links to Presidential Campaign Stories on the *Drudge Report*

Story Type	Percent
Public Opinion Polling	13.33%
Debates	3.50%
Pundit Predictions and Commentary	6.24%
Fundraising and advertisements	4.73%
Statements and actions on the campaign trail	27.88%
Endorsements	3.12%
Scandals	31.66%
Miscellaneous	9.55%
Total	100.00%

Table 3 – Scandals and Search Terms

Topic	Search Terms
Alleged attack on McCain supporter Ashley Todd	"Ashley Todd"
Gwen Ifill's book "Age of Obama" and debate moderation	"Gwen Ifill" and "Age of Obama"
ACORN and voter registration	"ACORN" and "voter registration"
Immigration status of Obama's aunt, Zeituni Onyango	"Obama" and "aunt"
Los Angeles Times' decision to withhold video of Obama at Khalidi dinner	"Obama," "Khalidi" and "video"
Florida news anchor asks Biden whether Obama is a "Marxist"	"Biden" and "Marx"
Obama's relationship with Bill Ayers	"Obama" and "Bill Ayers"
Troopergate	"Palin" and "Wooten"
Joe the Plumber	"Joe the Plumber"
Obama radio interview claiming it was a 'tragedy' that 'redistribution of wealth' not pursued by the Civil Rights Movement	"Obama," "redistribution of wealth" and "tragedy"

Table 4 – The Top 20 Domains Linked to by the Drudge Report

Domain	Percent
breitbart.com	16.54%
apnews.myway.com	9.21%
news.yahoo.com	5.40%
reuters.com	4.48%
bloomberg.com	2.93%
biz.yahoo.com	2.87%
politico.com	2.37%
youtube.com	2.24%
ft.com	1.89%
nypost.com	1.77%
telegraph.co.uk	1.77%
dailymail.co.uk	1.64%
timesonline.co.uk	1.64%
washingtonpost.com	1.33%
iht.com	1.23%
wcbstv.com	1.17%
online.wsj.com	1.14%
thesun.co.uk	1.07%
nytimes.com	0.95%
washingtontimes.com	0.95%

Table 5 – Granger Causality (Drudge Report Links as Independent Variable)

Topic	Lag	Newspapers		Television News		Blogs	
		Chi-Square	p	Chi-Square	p	Chi-Square	p
Alleged attack on McCain supporter Ashley Todd	2	16.99	.00	143.88	.00	204.95	.00
Gwen Ifill's book "Age of Obama" and debate moderation	1	34.59	.00	129.94	.00	73.01	.00
ACORN and voter registration	1	1.25	.26	.58	.45	.02	.88
Immigration status of Obama's aunt, Zeituni Onyango	1	695.27	.00	614.16	.00	524.28	.00
<i>Los Angeles Times</i> ' decision to withhold video of Obama at Khalidi dinner	2	1305.00	.00	249.26	.00	152.93	.00
Florida news anchor asks Biden whether Obama is a "Marxist"	2	152.83	.00	5.83	.05	2.59	.27
Obama radio interview claiming it was a 'tragedy' that 'redistribution of wealth' not pursued by the Civil Rights Movement	2	2.59	.11	.02	.88	.01	.94
Obama's relationship with Bill Ayers	2	2.04	.36	4.17	.12	1.22	.54
Troopergate	2	.57	.75	.89	.64	.37	.83
Joe the Plumber	2	1.08	.58	4.82	.09	3.04	.22

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