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TERRORISM WARNINGS AS STRATEGIC APPEALS:

AN ANALYSIS OF PRESS REPORTING AND PUBLIC REACTIONS

by

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A DISSERTATION

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Terrorism Warnings as Strategic Appeals:

An Analysis of Press Reporting and Public Reactions

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University of Nebraska, 2012

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Do politicians appeal to fear, and if so, how does the public respond to potentially fearinducing messages? I reason that changes in the political environment necessitate entrepreneurial efforts if politicians hope to maximize positive attention. Scholarship indicates that presidents can often shape press coverage or move public opinion, particularly in the domain of foreign policy or during national crises. In this dissertation I conceptualize government-issued terrorism warnings as a type of fear appeal. Specifically, I examine the relationship between changes in aggregate presidential approval and the timing of terrorism warnings over the two and one-half years after the 9/11 attacks, and whether warnings were related to changes in the overall tone of news coverage for the Bush administration and select policies. On balance, the evidence suggests that strategic considerations informed the timing of terrorism warnings as presidential approval was negatively associated with publicly disseminated terrorism warnings, and the tone of coverage tended to become more positive following each alert.

I then use experimental methods to examine patterns of individual-level responses to mediated messages about terrorism. Drawing insights from the fear appeals literature and political science research, I reason that cognitive (threat perceptions and confidence in government) and affective (fear and anger) responses to news coverage about terrorism-related threats should relate to policy preferences and presidential approval. Further, because terrorist threats target the national group, I consider how one's sense of identification with the American people relates to cognitive and affective responses. The experimental results are mixed as cognitive and affective responses relate to policy attitudes in meaningful ways, but are unrelated to presidential approval, and national identity is largely unrelated to the outcomes of interest. In sum, this dissertation contributes to a more robust understanding of the types of strategic considerations salient at the elite level as politicians strive to maintain approval. Moreover, it extends our understanding of how people respond to terrorism-related messages by moving beyond 9/11 specifically. This study provides valuable insights for future research seeking to examine the use of emotional appeals in the political realm.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The terrorist threat facing our country has evolved significantly in the last ten years—and continues to evolve—so that, in some ways, the threat facing us is at its most heightened state since [the 9/11] attacks.

-- Janet Napolitano, Secretary of Homeland Security to President Obama, 2011

I've not seen in my lifetime any politician who is a heroic figure. The manipulation that all politicians use on one level or another is so transparent.

-- Dean Koontz

The events of September 11, 2001, and the United States government's response to the attacks continue to condition American politics. For example, the Department of Homeland Security replaced the Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS) on April 26, 2011. Gone is the five level color-coded chart introduced in the months following the attacks. In its place is the streamlined National Terrorism Advisory System (NTAS), intended to "more effectively communicate information about terrorist threats by providing timely, detailed information to the public, government agencies, first responders, airports and other transportation hubs, and the private sector" (Department of Homeland Security 2011). The NTAS is viewed by many as a response to the criticisms that plagued the color-coded HSAS chart (Schwartz 2010), and while the story generated significant news coverage a far more prominent event unfolded less than one week later. Late in the evening of May 1, President Barack Obama announced the death of Osama bin Laden. The culmination of a successful and daring raid carried out by U.S. Navy Seal Team Six in Abbottābad, Pakistan, bin Laden's demise realized one of the major goals of the war on terrorism.¹ Thus, in the span of less than one week—and nearly ten years after the 9/11 terrorist attacks—two of the most recognizable features associated with the attacks were, in one way or another, eliminated.

While these events are distinct and the developments leading to each are different, they likely share similarities in the public mind due to their shared origin. Osama bin Laden was responsible for orchestrating acts of great violence intended to harm the United States and its interests, allies, and citizens. Americans responded to the attacks with great horror and fear, among other reactions. The color-coded HSAS chart, on the other hand, was one of the United States government's most visible responses to the 9/11 attacks specifically and the threat of terrorism more generally, and changes to its status consistently garnered press attention and public reactions. For example, the Department of Homeland Security raised the HSAS threat level two days after Secretary of State Colin Powell's

¹ In the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, approximately two in three Americans believed the war on terrorism would not be a success without the capture or killing of Osama bin Laden (Huddy et al. 2002). While such sentiment dropped to 44 percent in March 2002, one CNN/Opinion Research poll administered shortly after the announcement of bin Laden's death found 67 percent of Americans considered it to be a "major achievement for the United States" (http://pollingreport.com/terror.htm. Accessed May 21, 2011).

United Nations testimony on February 5, 2003, and then advised Americans to stock up on duct tape and plastic sheeting to prepare for chemical or biological attacks. While many Americans did just that,² others did nothing as some commentators found the timing curious. Although anecdotal, this example suggests that terrorism-related news stories have the capacity to frighten the American public and raises the possibility that the timing of the warnings was of questionable veracity.

In this dissertation I am interested in examining strategic considerations that may account for when terrorism-related information is more likely to be salient in the press, and whether potentially fear-inducing content actually arouses fear in the news consuming public and, if so, to what effect. To be sure, volumes have been written about the events leading up to September 11th, the attacks themselves, and the threat of terrorism more generally. Nonetheless, many intriguing questions remain. In particular, conventional wisdom suggests that political actors routinely use threatening messages and emotion appeals to marshal support for or against particular ideas, policies, or candidates (Curtis 2004; Pratkanis and Aronson 2001; Scatanburko-D'Annibale 2005). However, systematic tests of this claim are relatively rare.

Indeed, fear has a particularly long pedigree in political theory and practice. Aristotle ([1981] 1992), for example, argued that fear could ensure the longevity of constitutions:

for through fear... men keep a firm hold on their own constitution. So it becomes the duty of those who have interests of the constitution at heart to create terrors so that all may be on the lookout and, like sentries at night, not allow their watch on the constitution to relax; the distant fear must be brought home (Book 5, viii, 1308a24).

Similarly, Niccolò Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes, among others, each contemplated the position of fear in public life. Machiavelli argued that it is safer for a prince to be feared than loved, and Hobbes believed that all political life was founded upon the mutual fear of each other. Modern campaign ads extend the repertoire by using subtle techniques to tap into fear and other emotions (Brader 2005, 2006; Crigler, Just, and Belt 2006), and recently scholars have identified patterns in the

² In fact, the supply of duct tape was exhausted in some parts of the country, leading to increased production runs to help meet demand (Isidore 2003).

use of select emotional appeals in campaign advertising (Ridout and Searles 2011).³ Fear-based appeals are not, however, restricted to paid political advertising in contemporary American politics.

For example, in referencing the alleged nuclear threat posed by Saddam Hussein, Condoleezza Rice, President Bush's first National Security Advisor famously said, "The problem here is that there will always be some uncertainty about how quickly he can acquire nuclear weapons. But we don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud" (Blitzer 2003). While Rice prefaced her strong claim with an uncertainty caveat, it was the visceral "smoking gun-mushroom cloud" image that garnered much media attention. More to the point, her choice of words appears to have been a calculated decision. Michael Gerson, a speechwriter for President Bush, offered the smoking gun-mushroom cloud metaphor as a way to make the case that Saddam Hussein posed a serious threat. According to Isikoff and Corn (2006), the White House believed the phrase "perfectly captured the larger point about the need to deal with threats in the post-September 11 world." The authors also document that:

the plan had been to place [the phrase] in an upcoming presidential speech, but WHIG [White House Iraq Group] members fancied it so much that when the [*New York*] *Times* reporters contacted the White House to talk about their upcoming piece, one of them leaked Gerson's phrase—and the administration would soon make maximum use of it (p. 35).⁴

The extent to which the phrase proved beneficial remains an open question, however, the idea that it helped set the tone of debate for the next few election cycles is consistent with at least one earlier example. Specifically, in a January 2002 speech before members of the Republican National Committee in Austin, Texas, Karl Rove argued "We can go to the country on this issue because they trust the Republican party to do a better job of protecting and strengthening America's

³ While I am unaware of any formal criteria for the classification of fear-based campaign ads, Reagan's 'bear in the woods' ad, the Willie Horton ad, George W. Bush's 'wolves' ad, Hillary Clinton's '3 a.m.' ad, and most famously, the 'daisy' spot have all been interpreted as attempts to tap into salient fears.

⁴ The discussion of the metaphor reportedly took place on September 5, 2002. Condoleezza Rice's interview took place three days later, as did a number of other appearances by administration officials. The most well-known appearance being Vice President Dick Cheney's appearance on NBC's *Meet the Press*. In this interview Cheney referenced a story in the *New York Times* pertaining to Saddam Hussein's stockpiling of chemical and biological weapons (Rich 2006, 59). This particular story draws heavily on unnamed administration officials and critics cite it as an example of how officials surreptitiously used the press to leak intelligence information that the White House would not normally discuss openly (Moyers 2007).

military might and thereby protecting America" (McClellan 2008, 112-13; Rich 2006, 44; Suskind 2006, 78). That is, in no uncertain terms, and consistent with the analytic concept of issue ownership (Petrocik 1996; Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003-04), Karl Rove recommended emphasizing the president's leadership in the war on terrorism as the top campaign issue in the 2002 midterm elections and beyond.⁵ Indeed, terrorism and the war in Afghanistan dominated the midterm elections, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan dominated the 2004 presidential election.

Emphasizing national security and defense as a campaign tactic did not go unnoticed. Critics argued that political considerations influenced when and how terrorists threats were discussed (see, e.g., Ignatius 2004; Rich 2006, 143-49),⁶ and even administration officials expressed misgivings about the veracity of evidence used to trigger HSAS increases and the frequency of increases (Mintz 2003).⁷ However, few observers were more vocal in questioning the motives behind government-issued terrorism warnings than MSNBC pundit Keith Olbermann. On multiple occasions Olbermann (2005, 2006, 2007) aired a segment entitled "The Nexus of Politics and Terror." The hallmark of these episodes, as explained in more detail in Chapter 2, was the pairing of terrorism warnings with select events that arguably reflected poorly on the Bush Administration. In each instance the purportedly negative story was in the news days prior to the public dissemination of a government-issued terrorism warning. In short, critics argued that the Bush administration used the threat of terrorism to divert the press and the public's attention from other potentially embarrassing events.

While these anecdotal examples are suggestive of the specific claims leveled against the Bush administration and the widespread belief that politicians routinely appeal to fear, the evidence to date

⁵ At this time Gallup polling showed the Republican Party holding a 38 point advantage over Democrats on the question of which party was most trusted to keep Americans safe (McClellan 2008, 113).

⁶ Political considerations also proved to be a common retort for Republicans in responding to critical allegations. For example, when CBS News reported on President Bush's August 2001 daily intelligence briefing warning of a possible attack involving hijacked airplanes congressional Democrats were "gravely concerned" and demanded to know "what the president...knew." Republicans saw the suggestion that the President did nothing in the face of danger as "incendiary" and within the White House it was viewed as "all in service of...election results" (see McClellan 2008, 112-18).

⁷ The most cited example of this seems to be Tom Ridge, who, as the first Director of Homeland Security, was quoted as saying "Sometimes we disagreed with the intelligence assessment. Sometimes we thought even if the intelligence was good, you don't necessarily put the country on (alert). ... There were times when some people were really aggressive about raising it, and we said, 'For that?'" (Hall 2005, A.1).

remains thin. This leaves leave many interesting questions unanswered. For example, do politicians actually use fear-based appeals strategically (e.g., when they or their policies are being portrayed negatively in the press)? Do such appeals have political traction and, if so, under what conditions? Do fear-based appeals yield political payoffs (e.g., favorable swings in the tone of news coverage)? Who is likely to be persuaded by such messages? Do different people weigh competing considerations or discount certain types of information? These questions are intriguing, particularly in light of the gains in public approval that President Bush accrued in the wake of the September 11th attacks (Willer 2004), but also the fact that the threat posed by terrorist organizations to the American public continues to be a focus of national policymaking.

As stated, I am interested in the strategic use of potentially fear-inducing messages and their effects, specifically in the realm of American politics. The content and discussion in the chapters that follow is guided by two sets of orienting questions:

- (1) Do political actors use fear-based communications such as terrorism warnings strategically? Is there a pattern between decreases in presidential approval and the timing of government-issued terrorism warnings? Moreover, does the content and tone of media coverage vary in relation to the timing of warnings?
- (2) How do people respond when confronted with potentially fear-inducing content such as news stories about terrorism-related threats or the potential consequences of terrorist attacks? Is exposure to mediated fear appeals associated with greater support for antiterrorism policies and presidential approval? If so, what are the mechanisms responsible for this association?

I explore these questions within the context of the war on terrorism. Because these questions deal with issues of the timing and effects of government-issued terrorism warnings at different levels of abstraction, I approach each question using different data and methodologies. Thus, the analytic portion of the dissertation is divided into two parts, each consisting of two chapters. As I discuss below, the first set of questions is examined using aggregate public opinion data and a quantitative content analysis of front page New York Times coverage, and the second set of questions is examined using individual-level experimental data. In both cases I assume that politicians are strategic and that the patterns of political behavior are predictable. The challenge, however, is to clearly identify what is expected and then to systematically test these expectations against objective evidence. It is my hope that the chapters that follow adequately capture some of the distinct elements that characterize both elite-level and mass political behavior. In the remainder of this chapter I outline briefly how each successive chapter contributes to this end.

Overview of the Dissertation

The first substantive section of the dissertation considers whether politicians use potentially fear-inducing messages strategically to divert attention from other ostensibly embarrassing developments and negative news coverage more generally. I examine this issue by treating the post-9/11 environment and the Bush administration's use of government-issued terrorism warnings as a case study. The point of departure for the dissertation is Robb Willer's (2004) examination of terrorism warnings and presidential job approval post-9/11. As I describe in more detail in Chapter 2, Willer found modest but consistent increases in President Bush's job approval ratings following the public dissemination of these messages. Left unanswered, however, is whether presidential approval was decreasing in the weeks leading up to each warning and, if so, whether a similar "decline and surge" pattern was present in the content of national news reporting.

In exploring this possibility, I critically analyze and test the idea that the Bush administration used terrorism warnings strategically to offset losses on presidential approval. Specifically, I conceptualize government-issued terrorism warnings as a fear-based persuasive appeal. Commonly termed fear appeals, these are persuasive efforts intended to change opinion and behavior by establishing the negative consequences associated with disagreement or inaction. While the systematic study of fear appeals has yet to be applied to political communication, there are a handful of published studies linking the timing of emotionally-laden rhetoric in speeches to efforts to achieve policy goals. For example, Australian Prime Minister John Howard was found to use more feararousing rhetoric in his speeches when national security policies dealing with the war on terrorism were up for public debate (De Castella, McGarty, and Musgrove 2009), and fear and anger inductions spiked in President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair's speeches prior to the start of the war in Iraq (De Castella and McGarty 2011). Further, although the authors did not include systematic tests, they argue that Bush's use of emotional appeals occurred as his public approval was declining.

I extend these studies by considering government-issued terrorism warnings rather than speeches, and accounting for patterns in news reporting. In particular, I systematically analyze the relationship between terrorism warnings and changes in presidential approval, and examine whether patterns in the overall tone of press coverage varied accordingly. Emphasizing the role played by the news media is important given its role as a linkage mechanism. According to Paul Light, a scholar at the Brookings Institution, the public gauged the threat level based on media coverage of the war on terrorism and the war in Iraq far more than on the color-coded HSAS (Lee and Goo 2003). Thus, key to the claim that terrorism warnings provided the administration with an opportunity to indirectly shape public sentiment is the idea that the press is integral to the governing process (Cook 1998a) and that media content—contrary to one popular dictum—can affect what people think (Entman 1989). To be sure, "manipulation of the press is critical to the White House operation" (Wood and Peake 1998, 175), and cranking up the rhetoric and alleged severity of the threat likely maximizes the chance that the press, and ultimately the public, will take notice.

Consider that the mainstream press routinely indexes news coverage to elite discourse, and reporting tends to reflect relative levels of agreement among influential elites. That is, the range of perspectives appearing in the news corresponds to the diversity of opinion expressed by news sources (Bennett 1990; Iyengar 2011, chap. 4). In domains such as foreign policy and international relations the balance often tips towards the president. Further, when the nation must confront external threats the executive branch is in the strongest position to influence the news as it has access to information that others do not (Brody 1991, 63; Entman 2003, 418-20; Grossman and Kumar 1979, 44-46). Because administration officials are viewed as highly credible and have informational advantages that can enhance the White House's news management strategy, the boundaries of discussion are often narrowly circumscribed as partisanship fades and the executive branch dominates coverage in times of international conflict and war.⁸

I elaborate this line of reasoning in Chapter 2 and argue that government-issued terrorism warnings may have served as an additional opportunities for the White House to temporarily influence news content. In laying out the theoretical framework I draw insights from literatures dealing with permanent campaigning, going public, rally effects, agenda setting and priming, and strategic political communication. Contemporary American politics is often characterized as a never-ending campaign with elected officials using the resources of their office to enhance their reelection prospects (Ornstein and Mann 2000) and by making public appeals in an effort to ultimately sway recalcitrant lawmakers (Kernell 2007). However, presidents are increasingly finding it difficult to reach a national audience (Baum and Kernell 1999; Edwards 2003). Nonetheless, in some instances—such as when the nation is threatened—presidents can still emerge as strong leaders, particularly when partisan interests are temporarily cast aside (Hetherington and Nelson 2003; Kam and Ramos 2008).

In the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, President Bush enjoyed the highest approval ratings on record, while also benefitting from periodic and high profile government-issued terrorism warnings. In effect, the warnings served as rally-like events, resulting in small but consistent public approval gains for the president (Willer 2004). To be sure, all recent presidents have closely followed public opinion and sought to influence the press through news management strategies (Green 2002; Iyengar 2011, chaps. 4 and 7; Jacobs and Shapiro 1994, 1995), but the potential use of government-issued terrorism warnings as a type of strategic diversion is a new possibility. While the various

⁸ In their analysis of media coverage prior to the beginning of the second Iraq war, Hayes and Guardino (2010) found that "Bush administration officials were the most frequently quoted sources in the news, the voices of anti-war groups and opposition Democrats were barely audible, and the overall thrust of coverage supported a prowar perspective" (p. 61).

literatures summarized in Chapter 2 do not all lead directly to testable hypotheses, their synthesis helps to establish context and provides the raw materials from which to build a set of theoretical expectations about why the White House might communicate potentially-fear inducing information, when they may do so, and to what effect.

Chapter 3 focuses on the empirical tests of the expectations developed in Chapter 2. Specifically, the chapter addresses two issues. First, I examine the relationship between fluctuations in aggregate measures of presidential approval and the timing of government-issued terrorism warnings. The goal in this section is to determine whether public opinion related to the likelihood of terrorism warnings or not. Willer (2004) showed that public approval responded to governmentissued terrorism warnings, but he did not consider whether terrorism warnings were also a response to decreasing presidential approval. A significant result will bolster the claim that terrorism warnings served a strategic purpose. The second section, then, extends this logic to news content. Specifically, the focus is on the relationship between terrorism warnings and the content of news reports in the week preceding and following each publicly-disseminated terrorism warning. In particular, the goal is to examine the political context broadly rather than focusing on discrete events as illustrated by the anecdotal examples already discussed.

I conceptualize the information environment as consisting of newsworthy events as reported by the mainstream press. In other words, I defer to the discretion of journalists and editors to determine which stories are important and therefore potentially consequential in influencing the actions of administration officials. The advantage of this approach is that it sufficiently captures the way many people learn about political developments. Obviously such an effort is an enormous undertaking, and so in the interest of parsimony I focus on a single entity. For better or worse, and as I defend in Chapter 3, the *New York Times*, considered the paper of record and an agenda setter for other news outlets (Entman 2003, 420; Kiousis 2004, 74-5; McCombs 2005, 164), serves as a proxy for the media as a whole. The primary analytic component of Chapter 3, then, involves the systematic investigation of news content and tone and how it relates to the timing of government-issued terrorism warnings. All front page *New York Times* content for each day was collected and content analyzed over a 28 month period in which a total of 32 government-issued terrorism warnings were issued. This chapter determines that the relationships between public opinion and terrorism warnings on one hand, and terrorism warnings and news content on the other hand, are consistent with claims that the Bush administration sought to focus attention on terrorism, and away from other ostensibly negative content by timing the release of threat-related information to coincide with periods of relatively negative news. In turn, these warnings resulted in temporary and modest increases in the overall tone of news coverage. An important caveat to these results, and one that I return to later, is that they do not represent definitive proof that the Bush administration manipulated the threat of terrorism. While the pattern of results are consistent with the tested claim, data measuring actual motivations at the time decision makers chose to issue terrorism warnings likely does not exist.

In the second section of the dissertation I shift my focus from strategic political considerations and press behavior to the potential outcomes of mass media relayed terrorism-related messages. Of particular interest are individual-level responses to news stories about terrorism-related threats. As noted, President Bush enjoyed modest yet consistent gains in his public approval numbers following each terrorist warning (Willer 2004). This study fits nicely with the rally effects literature and the idea that rallies can be enhanced when the White House effectively manages these events. As Baker and Oneal (2001) argue, "the public does not rally in response to crises in and of themselves…but rather the presentation of events" (p. 682). However, this insight also suggests some limitations of Willer's approach. Specifically, the study is silent on the issue of how terrorism warnings were described by the news media. If the seriousness of the threat and probability of an attack are high we might expect different reactions among the public than if the probability is low or previous antiterrorism efforts have been largely successful. A related point is why, given the

existential danger associated with threats, more people did not rally behind the president following each terrorism warning.

These issues inform the argument I develop in Chapter 4. Because I treat terrorism warnings as a type of fear appeal, I begin the chapter by delineating how scholars understands and typically operationalizes fear and fear appeals. I then briefly summarize the academic literature on fear appeals (much of it is in the field of health communication). This discussion culminates in a description of what is arguably the most robust model to date: the extended parallel process model. The EPPM is an intrapersonal model that focuses on perceived threat, fear, and self-efficacy to explain how people process fear appeal messages. Although I draw insights from this model in an effort to understand how people respond to potentially fear-inducing messages such as terrorism warnings, I also consider what I see as the model's conceptual shortcomings. Specifically, I reason that because the nature of terrorist threats necessitates responses from government, trust and confidence in government is a more appropriate explanatory factor than self-efficacy. Moreover, because the threat posed by terrorists has strong implications for the national group, I reason that one's level of identification with the American people may moderate individual responses. In doing so I draw on research in psychology and political science dealing with threat perception, appraisal theory of emotion, political affect, and research on group identification and intergroup emotion theory to formalize a series of hypotheses about how people may respond to mediated warnings about terrorist threats.

Chapter 5 describes the experimental methods used to test the hypotheses developed in Chapter 4. I begin by summarizing the data collection procedures and the analytic approach used for the individual-level analysis. In brief, the experiment involved the random assignment of subjects (college undergraduates) to different experimental conditions crafted to mimic the variation in terrorism coverage in the mainstream press. The experiment was a 2 x 2 between subject design in which threat severity (high-low) and the reported effectiveness (effective-ineffective) of the government's antiterrorism efforts were manipulated. Consistent with the hypotheses enumerated in Chapter 4, the explanatory variables include perceived threat, confidence in government, fear, and anger. These variables are used to examine whether people exposed to different messages about terrorism are more or less likely to support antiterrorism policies and approve of the president's job performance. In addition to an examination of the main effects of these independent variables on policy endorsement and presidential approval, I also consider whether subjective attachment to the national group (strong versus weak national identifiers) moderates support for antiterrorism policies and presidential approval. On balance, the results generally confirm to expectations for the policy outcomes whereas the presidential approval is largely unrelated to the independent variables, and national identity does not consistently moderate the relationships.

In Chapter 6, the concluding chapter, I summarize the project and the results, and I make connections between the two parts of the dissertation. Here I focus on locating the results in the literature, as well as some limitations and possible directions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORIZING STRATEGIC CONSIDERTATIONS AND PRESS BEHAVIOR

The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed—and hence clamorous to be led to safety—by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary.

-- H.L. Mencken

Nothing just happens in politics. If something happens, you can be sure it was planned that way.

-- Franklin D. Roosevelt

On September 17, 2001, television comedian Bill Maher juxtaposed previous U.S. military actions against the actions of the 9/11 hijackers. Specifically, he described as "cowardly" the "lobbing [of] cruise missiles from 2,000 away" whereas "staying in the airplane when it hits the building, say what you want about it, it's not cowardly" (Gerstein 2001).⁹ When asked about Maher's comments White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer cautioned that people "need to watch what they say, watch what they do...this is not a time for remarks like that; there never is" (Tapper 2001).¹⁰ In early October the Bush administration successfully obtained a joint agreement from major network and cable news organizations limiting their editorial discretion to air recordings from Osama bin Laden (Carter and Barringer 2001). Two months later, while testifying before the Senate Judicial Committee, Attorney General John Ashcroft argued against critics of the PATRIOT Act by cautioning that scaring "peace-loving people with phantoms of lost liberty…only aid[s] terrorists, for [these actions] erode our national unity and diminish our resolve" (Ashcroft 2001).

Together these examples illustrate an administration working to shape public discourse by defining some commentary and behavior as out of bounds. This was perhaps most evident at the Defense Department where Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld went to great lengths to control press coverage. When *Washington Post* reporter Thomas Ricks was excluded from a trip to cover special-forces operations he was told, "We don't like your stories, and we don't like the questions you've been asking" (Confessore 2002, 13). To be clear, there is nothing particularly outrageous about administration officials working to shape news content. All presidents seek to influence the terms of debate in an effort to ensure their messages and perspectives gain traction, if not dominate subsequent news cycles. The bottom line is that "no one…expects the White House to play nice. And it's neither unusual nor unwarranted for reporters to catch flak after their stories run" (Confessore 2002, 12).

⁹ Susan Sontag expressed the same sentiment to considerably less fanfare when she wrote "if the word 'cowardly' is to be used, it might be more aptly applied to those who kill from beyond the range of retaliation, high in the sky, than to those willing to die themselves in order to kill others. In the matter of courage (a morally neutral virtue): whatever may be said of the perpetrators of Tuesday's slaughter, they were not cowards. Available here: http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2001/09/24/010924ta_talk_wtc.

¹⁰ The official White House transcript of the briefing omitted Fleischer's warning (Carter and Barringer 2001).

Beyond direct efforts to shape discourse, the U.S. government responded to the 9/11 attacks with a number of different initiatives. On the domestic front the most salient and wide-reaching actions involved creating the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and reorganizing the intelligence community. Today, DHS is a complex cabinet-level department with primary jurisdiction in counterterrorism, border security, and disaster preparedness and relief. One of the department's primary charges is the dissemination of information regarding the risk of terrorist acts to federal, state, and local authorities and to the American people, and protecting the nation and its infrastructure. The department also oversaw the now defunct five level color-coded Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS), which served as the nation's primary indicator of the threat posed by terrorists.¹¹

Not surprisingly government-issued terrorism warnings received major press attention. Considering factors such as the magnitude of the 9/11 attacks, the stated purpose of the warnings, the relative prominence of national security, the president's constitutionally-specified role as commander-in-chief, the volume of news coverage devoted to terrorism, and the tendency for the public to rally behind the president in times of crisis, we might expect assessments of President Bush to increase following the public dissemination of government-issued terrorism warnings. In fact, this is precisely what has been found.

Using aggregate polling data over the first 39 months of George W. Bush's presidency, Robb Willer (2004) identified a consistent and positive relationship between government-issued terrorism warnings and public approval of the president. Specifically, his models estimated an average increase of three percentage points in presidential job approval for each government-issued terrorism warning. While the substantive gain was relatively small, it is important to remember that President Bush received the highest approval on record the week following the 9/11 attacks; having hit a ceiling with extraordinarily high approval immediately after the attacks, the modest gains are perhaps

¹¹ In practice the five level color-coded HSAS amounted to a two-level terrorism warning system. It was originally set at "yellow," the third highest level, and while the HSAS was increased a total of eight times, it never rose above "orange," the second highest level.

not surprising. Interestingly, government-issued terrorism warnings also had a consistent and positive impact on President Bush's economic job approval rating over this same time period (Willer 2004). That is, fluctuations in presidential approval are, in part, accounted for by salient warnings about possible terrorist attacks, but the effect is also found in unrelated policy domains. Given the attention presidents pay to public opinion (Jacobs 2005; Jacobs and Shapiro 1994, 1995), one interpretation of this evidence is that the HSAS specifically, and terrorism warnings more generally, may have been used to condition the political environment and create a more hospitable context for President Bush and his policies.

To be sure, some degree of skepticism about the actions and communications of government is to be expected. However, the communication of threat-related information is a legitimate function of government. Ari Fleischer, for example, advocated publicly "[sharing] information so that all appropriate actions can be taken by law enforcement officials" (Eggen and Woodward 2001, A.1). Similarly, in response to a question about "crying wolf" John Ashcroft defended the administration's approach saying, "It's important for the American people to understand that these are to be taken seriously, but by taking them seriously on a continuing basis, we can have the good outcome of avoiding very serious additional terrorist problems" (Rosenbaum and Johnston 2001, A.1). At the same time the White House was sensitive to allegations that the threat level was changed for political reasons; so much so that it altered the criteria used to trigger an alert and moved to issue more regional alerts than national alerts (Eggen 2002; Ridge 2009). However, in the cynical world of American politics (Cappella and Jamieson 1997) the execution of, and motives behind, most actions are soon challenged.

To date there has been considerable conjecture and anecdotal evidence brought to bear on the topic of political manipulation of terrorism warnings. While skepticism about the veracity of the information and questions about the timing have come from various sources (Ignatius 2004; Locy 2002; Miller 2002; Mueller 2006; "The Warning Overdose" 2002; Zimbardo 2003), perhaps best known is Keith Olbermann, the former host of the MSNBC show *Countdown*. On at least four occasions between October 2005 and July 2007 Olbermann ran a segment entitled "The Nexus of Politics and Terror." The main thrust of these pieces was the pairing of select terrorism warnings with political events in the days immediately preceding the announcements.

One illustrative example involved FBI whistleblower Coleen Rowley, who, on June 6, 2002, testified before Congress that the bureau mishandled information about Zacarias Moussaoui—the alleged 20th hijacker—prior to 9/11. The implication was clear: the FBI missed an opportunity to upset the 9/11 plot (Tyler 2002). However, the White House did its best to offset the news value of this event (Rich 2006, 49). That same evening President Bush delivered a nationally televised speech outlining his support for the proposed Department of Homeland Security.¹² Also, four days after agent Rowley's testimony Attorney General John Ashcroft announced the FBI had disrupted a terrorist plot and arrested Jose Padilla for reportedly planning to set off a dirty bomb (he had been in custody for nearly one month by this point). While Olbermann was careful to point out that the pairing of alerts and developments that seem to reflect poorly on the administration does not definitively prove a connection, this example, and the roughly dozen other examples identified by Olbermann nonetheless paint a picture of an administration willing to use terrorism in the service of distracting the public from other issues.¹³ That is, the communication of terrorism-related information had become a weapon in the arsenal of the "public relations presidency" bent on strategically diverting attention away from some issue by focusing the public mind on terrorism.

Although these examples provide anecdotal evidence that the White House selectively emphasized the danger of terrorism, the issue of whether the overall media tone was changed in response to the terror alerts remains unexamined. In light of the persistent gains in presidential approval following government-issued terror alerts, it is worthwhile to more systematically consider whether the timing of the announcements may have been strategic and whether the press responded accordingly by then reporting more positively on the administration and its policies. Regarding the

¹² Previously the White House had been against the idea of creating a Department of Homeland Security.

¹³ Interestingly, this example is the lone outlier in Olbermann's list as it does not involve a government-issued terrorism warning. However, it does follow two separate alerts issued on May 21 and 24 and precede two other alerts issued on June 21 and 29.

former, there has been little effort to assess whether decreases in public opinion *before* the alerts increased the likelihood of warnings. Regarding the latter, evidence to date has essentially been selected on the dependent variable; only instances in which a plausible connection between a government-issued terrorism warning and some other events have been selected. This leaves no opportunity to reject the hypothesis that terrorism warnings were used for political purposes. Indeed, Willer (2004) identified 26 separate instances of government-issued terrorism warnings between September 2001 and May 2004 (some involved changes in the HSAS and others did not) whereas the portion of Olbermann's list covering roughly the same period identifies only seven pairings. One alternative, and a more systematic approach, is to examine the relationship between terrorism warnings and the overall tone of prominent news coverage before and after each alert. Only by expanding the focus to include presidential approval in the pre-alert phase and moving the media analysis beyond the presence of a single select story in close proximity to an alert can we be more confident in interpreting emergent patterns.

As outlined in Chapter 1, I am interested in the strategic use of potentially fear-inducing messages. The orienting questions are two: 1) Do political actors use fear-based communications in an effort to shape public opinion and media content in ways believed to be beneficial to their cause? and 2) Do people respond accordingly, at the individual level? In this chapter I discuss relevant theoretical considerations and explanations pertaining to the first question. Specifically, I draw on related theories from political science, communications, and psychology. I start broad by first describing the phenomenon of the permanent campaign and the practice of going public. While this discussion does not lead to specific hypotheses, both concepts assume the fusion of campaigning and governing, and help to establish the appropriate context for the remaining discussion. Second, I draw on the rally effects and strategic communication literatures to argue that government-issued terrorism warnings effectively served as an opportunity for the White House to temporarily and perhaps dramatically influence the terms of debate, not only in terms of public approval as Willer (2004) shows, but also the tone of media coverage. Finally, I also draw on agenda setting and priming

research to specify when and under what conditions policy coverage may trigger government-issued terrorism warnings.

In short, I posit that the post-September 11th political environment created unique opportunities for the Bush administration to exploit public fear and concerns about terrorism. This chapter consists of the theoretical basis for the analyses that follow in Chapter 3, where I test the predictions developed below by analyzing aggregate public opinion data and government-issued terrorism warnings over President Bush's first term to determine whether the two variables are systematically related. I also examine prominent news coverage of the Bush administration and select policies relative to the timing of publicly disseminated government-issued terrorism warnings between September 2001 and December 2003.

Literature Review

The Permanent Campaign in American Politics

Beginning in the 1980s pundits, reporters, and scholars increasingly noted the apparent merging of two conceptually distinct activities: campaigning and governing. Sidney Blumenthal (1982), one of the first to write about the phenomenon of the permanent campaign, identified the goal as remaking "government into an instrument designed to sustain an elected official's popularity" (p. 7) and whereby elected officials "exploit the resources and opportunities of their offices...to advance their reelection prospects" (Ornstein and Mann 2000, vii). The merging of campaigning and governing parallels the transition from hierarchically structured party organizations based on service and loyalty to candidate-centered campaigns emphasizing strategy and image, and exploited through opinion polling and new technologies. Relying on consultants, advisers, and technology, permanent campaigns establish an environment where "thousands of orchestrated appeals...are constantly underway to build and maintain favor of...certain publics and targeted elites for one or another policy cause" (Heclo 2000, 16). In short, this shifts the orientation of governing from the public interest to the professional and political aspirations of office holders, and to a climate where the outlook rarely extends beyond the next election.¹⁴

Arguably the most compelling evidence supporting the idea of the permanent campaign comes from descriptive accounts of how the White House manages public relations and press interactions. The Office of Communications and the Press Office coordinate messages throughout the administration, and the growth of these offices closely tracks efforts by presidents to lead the public and the press (Grossman and Kumar 1979; Iyengar 2011, 200-04). In fact, a growing literature argues that the expansion of polling operations within the White House (Jacobs and Shapiro 1994, 1995) provides presidents opportunities to discuss their policies in ways that seem to convey responsiveness but actually provide cover as they pursue their own goals (Baker and Balz 2005; Green 2002; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000; Shapiro and Jacobs 2002). In the post-Kennedy era all presidents have paid close attention to public opinion, with recent presidents more willing to use public opinion to test the language used to make appeals to the American public about the White House's policies.

It is widely believed that President Bush's eventual support for the creation of the Department of Homeland Security helped portray Republicans as committed to protecting the American public from future terrorist attacks. That is, beyond the governing function, the president's support for the effort played a key role in the Republican Party's electoral strategy. While Karl Rove declared the proposed department to be "outside of politics," he also conceded that President Bush's job approval rating had dropped two points per month and that "having a bold proposal like [the department] goes even further toward confirmation of people's strong positive feelings" (Bumiller and Mitchell 2002, A.1). To be sure, campaigning and governing are difficult to disentangle as incumbency often lends itself to more press coverage if not public support. In fact, the scholarly

¹⁴ For example, in 2002 Democrats faced a dilemma by sticking close to President Bush on the war on terrorism while struggling to turn the political debate to domestic issues. As Iraq moved to center stage, many Democrats expressed misgivings of Bush's policy. However, "their positions [were] complicated by the fears of prominent Democrats about how the issue could play in the November elections and even in the 2004 campaign" (Mitchell 2002, A.1).

record demonstrates the intermingling of policy, electoral considerations, and campaign strategies nearly a decade before Blumenthal's account (e.g., Mayhew 1974). Over roughly the same period of time our understanding of presidential politics has also been revised from one of institutionalized pluralism to one of individualized pluralism based on direct appeals made by the president and targeted at the public.

Going Public: A Communication Strategy

Institutional changes in Congress, increasingly ideological political parties, and numerous technological advances have altered the political landscape. Rather than engaging in quiet negotiations with congressional leaders and other officials (Covington 1987; Neustadt 1990), presidents increasingly seek to leverage their popularity in order to gain policy ground by making direct appeals to citizens as a way of indirectly influencing lawmakers.¹⁵ In other words, presidents who seek policy compliance from Congress may choose to go over the heads of legislators, taking their case directly to the public.

This approach emphasizes the link between presidential leadership and public approval, and is predicated on a few key assumptions. First, public opinion is a critical resource for presidents. As the only nationally elected official, presidents with the strong wind of public opinion at their back are often perceived as formidable and capable of prodding recalcitrant legislators (Kingdon 2003, 25-6). Second, presidents must be proactive by taking their case to the public. According to Mike McCurry, President Clinton's press secretary, "the modern presidency revolves around this question of how you use or how you penetrate the filter of the press to go directly to the American people, which is your ultimate source of political strength" (quoted in Kumar 2007, 5-6). Considering the relatively low levels of political knowledge and interest of the American public (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996), potential benefits of any given policy may not be self-evident to the public. Thus, it is up to the president to make their case. Third, it is widely believed that presidential communication efforts can

¹⁵ The most common methods used by presidents to reach a mass audience include major speeches (e.g., the State of the Union), press conferences, and asking for television time to address the nation.

move public opinion. In short, presidents are well-positioned to engage in strategic communication and use "crafted talk" (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000) to move public opinion and make issues more salient, if not also alter the criteria by which people make assessments.

Although going public is not exclusively a feature of the modern information age, it is largely a strategic adaptation to the wide availability of broadcast media which enables presidents to reach a national audience while traditionally minimizing the editorial influence of journalists and news organizations. In the early days of television the three broadcast networks were the only game in town and the public was generally enamored with the new medium.¹⁶ At this time the networks also took more seriously their public interest obligations as market pressures associated with relinquishing valuable airtime for presidential communications were negligible because viewers had few programming alternatives. In terms of news content, both print and broadcast coverage during this era tended to be more substantive than sensationalistic, the tone of reporting was less negative, and the major outlets each offered a similar picture of the president (Cohen 2004, 493-94; Grossman and Kumar 1981, 256, 265; Patterson 2000). In contrast, presidents today face a press corps that is in perpetual pursuit of scandal (Sabato 2000) and prone to asking adversarial questions (Clayman et al. 2006). On balance, news reporting in a "low-choice media environment" (Prior 2007, 256), and one adhering more closely to orthodox norms of journalism (Graber 2005), tended to benefit presidents. However, as these features of the media environment changed presidents became more proactive, tailoring their actions and communications to the needs of journalists and reporters.

Most scholars identify the presidency of John F. Kennedy as the point at which the White House became truly media savvy. While Presidents Truman and Eisenhower appeared on television periodically, it was President Kennedy who redefined the relationship between the president and the press. Just as President Roosevelt recognized the value of radio broadcasts to bypass newspaper editors and take his message directly to the American public, President Kennedy effectively ushered

¹⁶ Indicative of the television's ascendance, American National Election Studies data shows that the proportion of people who reported getting information about presidential campaigns from television surpassed newspapers in 1956, and that between 1952 and 1968 the number of people relying only on television more than doubled (Cohen 2004, 497-98).

in a "golden age of presidential television." Relying on a host of activities such as public addresses, interviews, personal appearances, and an increasingly busy travel schedule, presidents hoped not only to capture the press's attention but to engage the public and enlist their help on particular issues.¹⁷ Advantages associated with this strategy may have been short-lived, however (Baum and Kernell 1999). Beginning in the late 1970s cable television and other developments (e.g., the widespread use of video cassette recorders) provided viewers with programming alternatives, and risk-averse network executives became more selective in giving presidents airtime (Cohen 2004, 512; Steinberg 2005).¹⁸ The media environment became increasingly fragmented as 24-hour cable news channels redefined the news cycles and tilted the scales towards opinion and commentary and away from straight news reporting. The Internet provides still more opportunities for news, information, and perspective to reach the public, and the rise of social media shows no signs of slowing these trends. In sum, these changes contribute to a balkanized media environment and greatly complicate the practice of going public.

Despite these changes, going public remains an intuitive and parsimonious theory. Considering the centrality of the president to national political coverage the accumulated evidence is consistent with the idea that "the more recent the president, the more often [he] elects to go public" (Kernell 2007, 110; also see Eshbaugh-Soha 2010; Kumar 2007, chap. 4). But how successful are presidents when they choose to take their message public? Does public opinion shift in the president's direction following public appeals?

In theory, the logic of presidential leadership is straightforward. The constitutional responsibilities of the office ensure that presidents play a central role in major political decisions, and the institutional resources supporting the president are unmatched by other leaders. Moreover, presidents enjoy the most consistent access to the news media, and therefore the public (Cook and

¹⁷ Kernell (2007) argues that the practice of going public increased incrementally with each president doing a little more than his predecessor.

¹⁸ The diversification of mediums not only contributed to the renegotiation of the relationship between presidents and the press, but also sustains low levels of political knowledge, and increase political disengagement (Prior 2007).

Ragsdale 1995). Through their communication efforts (e.g., speeches, press conferences, photo ops, etc.) presidents seek to focus attention on particular issues (Baumgartner and Jones 1993), elevate the status of certain ideas (Druckman and Holmes 2004), or expand the scope of conflict (Schattschneider 1960). When successful these efforts result in increased public support, success in setting the national political agenda, or priming evaluations of the president or his policies. Thus, it is easy to understand why so many people assume presidents can lead the public through their rhetorical efforts. But does the scholarly record support this view of presidential leadership?

Much of the research on presidential leadership has considered the agenda setting ability of major presidential speeches. For example, attention to foreign policy, the economy, and civil rights in State of the Union addresses has been shown to lead to greater public concern for these same issues over the short term (Cohen 1995). But benefits stemming from major speeches are not restricted to salient policies. To the extent that the policy content of State of the Union addresses focuses on issues on which the president is perceived to have performed well public approval is likely to increase (Druckman and Holmes 2004). Evidence also suggests that presidential expressions of economic optimism relate to improved consumer confidence and lead to positive gains in economic indicators (Wood, Owens, and Durham 2005). While these results comport with popular expectations, they must be balanced against other evidence suggesting that presidents are largely unsuccessful in moving public opinion.

Evidence against the effectiveness of the public relations presidency also relies on analysis of presidential speechmaking. Specifically, Edwards (2003) argued that even presidents who are generally lauded for their communication skills are often unable to consistently gain public support, even for their top policy priorities (also see Edwards 2009). For example, as President Clinton sought to build support for health care reform he lost public support (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000), and President Reagan experienced a similar outcome with his efforts to increase spending on national defense. Peake and Eshbaugh-Soha (2008) find that only 35 percent of presidential speeches across four policy areas increased press attention in the following month and only 10 percent increased media attention beyond one month.¹⁹ Thus, in terms of delivering national addresses the empirical record indicates that presidents have had modest success at best (Edwards 2003, 28-34).

Explanations for this conclusion often focus on changes in the media landscape. As discussed, a fragmented media environment with many outlets and diverse programming choices has resulted in diminishing returns for presidential appeals (Baum and Kernell 1999). Presidents are no longer guaranteed airtime upon request; rather, the networks are hypersensitive to relinquishing valuable airtime for fear of losing audience share. Of course presidents have adapted to these realities by diversifying their approaches to communication; in fact, a growing body of research indicates that presidential leadership is conditional and efforts are strategic. The institutional position of the president—serving as a head of government and a head of state—provides opportunities to withdraw publicly while still maintaining a degree of stateliness. For example, presidents may pursue a "Rose Garden strategy" whereby they seek to leverage the symbolic value of the office in an effort to avoid negative press coverage (Cook 1998b, 28-29). According to Allen (2007), all presidents since Lyndon Johnson have cut back on press conferences and other public events as criticisms of their policies mounted. Presidents have also responded to changing conditions by taking their message on the road and tailoring their messages to particular groups (Cohen 2010; Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake 2006), a tactic that to date has yielded some success (Tedin, Rottinghaus, and Rodgers 2011).

Less formal efforts to shield the president from criticism may also involve counter-attacks on critics. That is, by suggesting that aspersions cast against the president—particularly during a national threat or crisis—are unpatriotic, the administration or its surrogates may seek to shout down malcontents (e.g., Rich 2006, 48). "Looking presidential" is one component of the executive's incumbency advantage (Campbell 2005; Grossman and Kumar 1979; Weisberg 2002), and it is plausible that wartime presidents stand to benefit from emphasizing their constitutionally mandated role as commander in chief (Norpoth and Sidman 2007, 180). Jacobson (2003, 5), for example, contends that criticisms of George W. Bush's domestic policies and connection to Enron went

¹⁹ The four policy areas examined by Peake and Eshbaugh-Soha (2008) are the economy, energy policy, drug policy, and U.S. policy in Central America.

largely unmentioned by his political opponents in the 2002 midterms due to his high popularity and status as commander in chief.²⁰

All of these examples suggest that effective leadership requires entrepreneurial effort in how presidents communicate with the public and negotiate newsworthiness with the press. The implications of various changes in the media, and how they affect presidents and their ability to influence the public, remain unsettled. New technologies, programming diversity, and shifting journalistic norms (e.g., increased emphasis on negativity, sensationalism, and cynicism) make it more difficult for presidents to reach a national audience with their message. Among those who are interested and engaged, reliance on news outlets and information sources whose orientations are ideologically similar to their own appears to be more common (Project for Excellence in Journalism 2010; Stroud 2011). Selective exposure among the most attentive creates an "echo chamber" amplifying homogenous messages while drowning out competing messages (Iyengar and Han 2009; Jamieson and Cappella 2008). As news consumption patterns grow increasingly balkanized presidents face even greater challenges in communicating with the American public.

On balance, the goal of presidential communications remains unchanged: exerting control over their message and building support for their initiatives. Yet the rewards are more uncertain now than in decades past. The merging of campaigning and governing suggests that politicians, by crafting and communicating persuasive messages, can coax the public closer to their own position. However, in the absence of a truly national audience, and within a fragmented media environment consisting of strong partisans on the left and right divided by a largely inattentive public in the middle, perhaps the best opportunity presidents have to gain the nation's attention is when potentially fear-inducing or tragic events—terrorist attacks, natural disasters, etc.—galvanize the public. When dramatic and catastrophic events befall the nation, the press and public tend to focus their attention on the president, opposition voices usually fall silent, and presidents command attention.

²⁰ Immediately after the 9/11 attacks the White House sought to portray President Bush as "a resolute wartime leader." At least one Republican with close ties to the administration attributed this to the White House "overcompensating" for criticism of the President's low profile on September 11th (Sanger 2001, A1).

Rally Events and Presidential Leadership

One special class of events that often benefits presidents—at least temporarily—is the socalled rally event. As defined by Mueller (1973, 209) rally events are international developments that involve the United States and president directly, and must be specific, sharply focused, and dramatic. The causal factor explaining the upsurge in presidential approval following a rally event was originally assumed to be patriotism as the "president becomes the focus of national attention...symbolizing national unity and power" (Lee 1977, 253). The fit between rally events and public reactions, however, is not always clear. For example, Brody (1991, 61-3) challenged the patriotism explanation based on variation in public responses to ostensibly similar events (e.g., the Cambodian Navy's capture of the *Mayaguez* versus the North Koreans' capture of the *Pueblo*). Specifically, Brody (1991; Brody and Shapiro 1989) argued that the disparate results are a product of differences in news content as political elites may wish to avoid criticizing the president (or express cautious support for his actions) during crises. Rather than a knee-jerk surge in patriotism by the public, opinion leadership and indexing offer alternate explanations for rally effects.

The opinion leadership account hinges on the idea that the incentives for political elites to comment are altered during crises. As Brody (1991) explained, "when events are breaking at an unusually rapid pace, when the administration has a virtual monopoly of information about the situation, opposition political leaders tend to refrain from comment[ing]." He further argued that "opposition spokespersons are motivated to alter their normal stance by an unknown (probably unknowable) mix of patriotism and outrage at the threat to the country and the desire not to appear...intemperate as the situation becomes clearer" (p. 63-4). The opinion leadership perspective assumes the public takes its cues from political elites as communicated by the press (Zaller 1992). In other words rally effects are more likely when political elites self-censor and refrain from criticizing the president. This elite-level spiral of silence (Noelle-Neuman 1993) is then "communicated" to the public by the press.

The professional standards of news reporting contribute to the phenomenon of opinion leadership. Specifically, indexing is the process of adjusting coverage to reflect the level of disagreement expressed by political elites (Bennett 1990; Zaller and Chiu 1996). In most circumstances political reporting adheres to journalistic norms such as objectivity and reliance on prominent and credible sources, and draws on competing perspectives where sources work to get their ideas, issues, and frames into the story. This is perhaps most evident in campaign coverage, however, these norms guide reporting in non-electoral contexts as well. Across different issues the list of potential sources is dictated by story content. By relying on "official" or "legitimate" sources and omitting other voices the press essentially bestows status selectively, thereby implying that other potential sources are less legitimate. Within the context of foreign policy and international relations indexing often results in the "near-total official control over the news" (Iyengar 2011, 94). In short, the press is left with only official sources representing a single perspective—usually from the White House—rather than multiple competing perspectives.

Opinion leadership, then, focuses on the responses of political elites to crises whereas indexing concentrates on the news media's presentation of political elites. To the extent that disagreement is dampened and press coverage reflects this change, it amounts to an opportunity for unchallenged presidential leadership. Both theories are congruent with scholarship indicating that military action undertaken during international crises produces favorable swings in presidential approval (Meernik and Ault 2001) and results in greater presidential influence over the media agenda (Wanta and Foote 1994). Moreover, increases in presidential approval in the realm of foreign policy far outstrip gains from those of domestic policy (Marra, Ostrom, and Simon 1990). Again, if press coverage reflects the absence of criticism directed at the president, the "public will be given the implied or explicit message 'appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, the president is doing his job well" (Brody 1991, 66).

The crux of rally effects may well lie in how effectively the White House manages the press. Rather than reflexively rallying as the patriotism explanation suggests (e.g., Lee 1977), the public must be mobilized, and the press plays a vital role in this process. Oneal and Bryan (1995) estimated that front page *New York Times* coverage of the president's response to major crises results in rallies that are eight percentage points higher, on average, than when it does not make the front page. That is,

what appears to matter most in regard to the size of the rally effect is not the nature of the dispute itself but *how effectively the White House manages the presentation of the dispute* through presidential statements, prominent media coverage, and the garnering of bipartisan support (Baker and Oneal 2001, 682, emphasis added).

It stands to reason that presidents will gain at least temporary advantages from crises and threats given their constitutionally-mandated role and the fact that the press and their political opponents often defer to them.

On their face, government-issued terrorism warnings are qualitatively distinct from rally events. Considering Mueller's three criteria (international in nature, involves the U.S. and president directly, and must be sharp, focused, and dramatic), it is not immediately clear how frequently government-issued terrorism warnings met these criteria. By definition threats to homeland security involve the president. However, the alerts were often of vague origin and included little specific information.²¹ While the question of whether the announcements provided useful information or not remains open, Willer's (2004) results showing that President Bush's job approval ratings increased three percentage points, on average, following the public dissemination of each new terrorism warning suggest the possibility that the Bush administration used government-issued terrorism warnings in an effort to create rally-like events.²² The size of the shift in public approval roughly equals the average size estimated for militarized disputes during international crises (Baker and Oneal 2001). More importantly, these data points emphasize, again, that national security policy is an area where presidents can effectively influence press attention and public opinion.

²¹ Eight months after the introduction of the color-coded HSAS the *New York Times* editorialized that the newly minted warnings "offer no specific information about the location, timing or method of attack, and are all but useless to the average citizen, or even to local law enforcement officers" ("The Warning Overdose" 2002).

²² I use the term "rally-like event" to emphasize what is ostensibly the desired result—moving public opinion towards the administration's position. This moniker overlaps with "media events," which are events—either planned or unplanned—that result in significant press coverage, and illustrate the power of the press to focus public attention on a particular event or issue.
Strategic Political Communication

If government-issued terrorism warnings served a strategic purpose, when should we expect to see them used? As the epigrams at the start of this chapter capture, information management and strategic communication are part and parcel to governing as effective exploitation of information can yield political advantages. To be sure, entrepreneurial communicators anticipate how the press will report their words and behaviors, and how the public will respond. While the newsworthiness of events are continually negotiated (Cook 1998b), political actors have developed sophisticated strategies to manage or circumvent the news, shape their image, or channel public perceptions (Manheim 1991; Miller and Krosnick 2004; Terkildsen, Schnell, and Ling 1998). Jarol Manheim (1994) understands strategic communication to encompass

the creation, distribution, control, use, processing, and effects of information as a political resource... [and] incorporates the use of sophisticated knowledge of such attributes of human behavior as attitude and preference structures, cultural tendencies, and media-use patterns—as well as knowledge of such relevant organizational behaviors as *how news organizations make decisions regarding news content* and how congressional committees schedule and structure hearings—to shape and target messages so as to maximize their desired impact while minimizing undesired collateral damage (p. 7, emphasis added).

As applied here, strategic communication offers four principles: 1) communication efforts focus on themes believed to resonate with the target audience; 2) strategies vary based on the characteristics of the communicator; 3) attitudes and opinions are most malleable when messages are coherent and display thematic consistency; and 4) the success of strategic efforts will likely diminish as public scrutiny increases. As a descriptive tool, these tenets provide a succinct and reasonably accurate description of the post-9/11 political environment, and the alleged use of terrorism warnings to move public opinion or shape media content.

First, government-issued terrorism warnings dealt with an important issue that continues to condition in national politics. The unpredictable nature of terrorist attacks has obvious implications for national security, public safety, presidential involvement, and press attention. Moreover, the 9/11 attacks impinged negatively on people's psychological well-being (Huddy et al. 2002; Marshall et al. 2007; Silver et al. 2002), as did, presumably, the intermittent reinforcement of the threat via terrorism

warnings contributed. Second, following from Americans' propensity to be relatively uninformed about politics, particularly international affairs, foreign policy actions by the president can result in significant shifts in public approval, particularly if the White House dominates media coverage (Baker and Oneal 2001). Government-issued terrorism warnings are, on their face, credible messages, and Willer's (2004) study shows that President Bush experience gains in his approval rating following their dissemination. Importantly, however, this research does not examine pre-alert fluctuations in presidential approval so it is difficult to argue that the alerts were used strategically. Nonetheless, these two tenets suggest that any concerted effort to maximize political gain by issuing of terrorism warnings only needs to meet a minimal threshold to resonate with the public.

The third tenet suggests that repeated and consistent messages are more likely than idiosyncratic messages to shift opinion, all things being equal. However, there is likely a tipping point where, over time, any positive effect suffers from the law of diminishing returns. While the analytic focus in the following chapter is on the relationship between presidential approval prior to terror alerts and the timing of the terrorism warnings, as well as variation in salient media coverage immediately before and after alerts, the issue of coherence and consistency in the warnings is theoretically important in the larger context. Finally, the last tenet is relevant because criticism of the HSAS and the administration's use of terrorism warnings were publicly debated (e.g., Olbermann 2005, 2006, 2007). Effective communicators should be attentive to such developments and willing to modify their approach accordingly so as to continue to maximize the effects. As discussed above, the White House did alter the criteria used to determine when changes to the nation's threat level were necessary (Eggen 2002; Ridge 2009).

In short, strategic communication and information management are central to the political process, and rational actors are assumed to work to alter the information environment in ways that benefit their position (Wolfsfeld 2001). In contemporary politics, threatening messages and potentially fear-inducing appeals are a common class of communications, regardless of whether they appear in speeches (De Castella and McGarty 2011), paid political advertising (Brader 2005; 2006;

Crigler, Just, and Belt 2006) or as incidental elements in free media coverage. However, claiming ubiquity is not the same as demonstrating a systematic pattern of use consistent with predicted outcomes. Whether the communication of threat and the use of the HSAS covaried with fluctuations in presidential approval remains an open and intriguing question.

Predicting the Relationship between Terrorism Warnings and Public Approval of the President. The phenomena of the permanent campaign and the practice of going public, at their core, deal with efforts to influence the political agenda through the actions of government and via strategic communication. When news consumption increases under conditions of crisis and threat (Althaus 2002), and the political opposition falls silent (Bennett 1990; Brody 1991; Entman 2003), presidents experience enhanced opportunities to move public opinion. In representative political systems such as the United States, the public is eventually implicated in the political process (e.g., Schattschneider 1960). Although it does not always determine the outcome, public opinion often plays an important role in determining which problems warrant attention and what, if any, action government should take to address salient concerns. In this respect the ideas and concepts elaborated in literatures on permanent campaigning and going public capture contextual elements, tactics, and strategies available to entrepreneurial communicators-in this case presidents-who seek to exert influence over public opinion. The rally effects literature indicates that international relations or national threat more specifically creates an environment conducive to the strategic use of terrorism warnings. If the Bush White House was selectively issuing terrorism warnings, one likely motivation behind the timing may have been to offset losses in presidential approval by drawing attention to a domain that favors the president. This leads me to first expect that:

H₁: The likelihood of government-issued terrorism warnings should increase as public approval of the president decreases.

While Willer (2004) has already shown that the public rallied behind the president in response to terrorism warnings, his study does not directly speak to the channels of influence. Consistent with

opinion leadership and indexing, I posit that press coverage of the president and select policies changed in the wake of the warnings.

Predicting the Relationship between Terrorism Warnings and Media Coverage. The strategic communication framework assumes the two most important features of the information environment are visibility and valence. The former concerns the *amount* of news coverage a politician, group, or issue receives, whereas the latter captures whether the *tone* of coverage is favorable, unfavorable, or relatively balanced (i.e., neutral). Both dimensions help to explain the strategic behavior of political candidates (Covington et al. 1993; Haynes and Rhine 1998; Manheim 1991). For example, a politician receiving disproportionately negative coverage might work to avoid attention for an extended period of time and then reappear only after negative associations have been weakened. Only after reemerging does the politician then pursue a campaign to proactively shape opinion to her advantage (Manheim 1991, 50-1). Surreptitious efforts are not all equivalent, however. Communicators are likely advantaged by their position, and, all things being equal, the president is the most visible politician. To that end, I argue that within the context of presidential politics valence is more important than visibility. That is, while the executive branch is formally made up of many different agencies staffed by thousands of people, the president is the focal point (Cook and Ragsdale 1995). Moreover, the issue domains of terrorism specifically, and foreign policy and international relations more generally, necessarily involve the president. Therefore it stands to reason that the relative visibility of the president would not change as a result of government-issued terrorism warnings.

If, however, the White House used terrorism warnings strategically, the overall valence of news coverage should become more positive following the public dissemination of a terrorism warning, particularly if opposition voices die down thereby depriving the press of conflicting sources. In determining when to attempt to influence coverage the relative primacy of negative information is likely to be particularly salient. Poor economic news, for example, can spell disaster for incumbent presidents. Beyond this truism of American politics, journalists also believe that negative events, controversy, and mistakes are newsworthy (Rosentiel et al. 2007), particularly when the president is involved (Cohen 2004; Patterson 1993). More generally, negative information tends to stand out more than positive information, exerts a greater influence in the decision making process, and can lead to the downward revision of originally positive assessments (Richey, McClelland, and Skimkunas 1967). Within the context of terrorism and national security, and consistent with the tendency of political elites to refrain from openly challenging the president at the outset of a crisis, presidents may enjoy temporary advantages, even if the pre-alert coverage is relatively negative. In other words, terrorism warnings may have permitted President Bush to go public in a new way. Rather than relying on the Office of Communications to plan an extensive campaign (e.g., Edwards 2007, chap. 6), the White House was able to focus attention on terrorism by simply raising the alert level. Thus, in terms of press coverage terrorism warnings may benefit the president by shifting the overall tone of news coverage focusing on the White House.

H₂: Prominent news coverage of the Bush administration should become more positive (less negative) after the public dissemination of government-issued terrorism warnings.

As the leader of his political party, it is possible that any presidential halo effect may extend to the political party as well. Thus, as presidential coverage becomes more positive or negative, the overall tone of the party's coverage may vary as well.

H₃: Prominent news coverage of the Republican Party may become more positive (less negative) after the public dissemination of government-issued terrorism warnings.

Beyond partisan-based assessments, the benefits of terrorism warnings may extend to policy coverage as well. In the final section I describe the agenda setting function of the news media, and link it to the strategic behavior of politicians via issue ownership.

Agenda Setting and Priming

The most famous dictum about the power of the news media is that the press "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about" (Cohen 1963, 13). This succinct and oft-repeated claim captures the phenomenon of agenda setting, or the idea that the press confers status on ideas, events, people, problems, and policies simply by devoting attention to them. Because many Americans are habitually inattentive to most political developments or actively involved in the political process, the press performs the valuable role of providing information about political developments to the public. Journalists act as gatekeepers sifting through information and distilling the larger world into manageable chunks that are believed to merit wide dissemination (Graber 2006). News consumers are, then, exposed to a sampling of stories drawn from the larger population of potential stories. This ongoing process of selection, distillation, and presentation announces to the audience the news and events worthy of attention.

Focusing on the link between salient content and public opinion, McCombs and Shaw (1972) provided the first successful demonstration of the agenda setting power of the news media. Over subsequent decades scholars carried out hundreds of studies (Dearing and Rogers 1996) confirming that the public tends to respond to reported events rather than the events themselves (Behr and Iyengar 1985; Funkhouser 1973; Bosso 1989). This body of research confirms that agenda setting effects are quite robust as they are found across different policy domains, in the context of national and local politics, during election and non-election years, and in the United States and other countries. By concentrating on the link between media content and public opinion, and the claim that the public's attention tends to be directed towards those individuals, issues, and events portrayed in the press, agenda setting has proven to be a very influential theory in the realm of political communication and behavior (McCombs 2005). However, scholars also contend that agenda-related phenomena are broader in scope and more significant than the basic theory can accommodate (Manheim 1994, 149). Thus, scholars have also examined, among other things, how the media agenda is set, and who can effectively influence it.

The real power of agenda setting is not limited solely to the transfer of salience from the press to the public. Rather, it extends to how stories are presented (i.e., the tone of coverage and

particular aspects of stories). Thus, the goal for strategic communicators is to move beyond agenda formation or synchronization by shaping how topics are discussed, and ultimately how the public responds to the issue. As I argue, the institutional resources available to presidents (Iyengar 2011, 200-17; Kernell 2007, chap. 4; Kumar 2007), and their ability to move public opinion, at least on foreign policy (Marra, Ostrom, and Simon 1990; Meernik and Ault 2001; Mueller 1973), places the White House is in a strong position to shape the news.²³

The content and presentation of news can prime select issues or aspects of issues. As the press pays more attention to particular topics people are increasingly likely to rely on what they know about salient issues when asked to assess them, and these evaluations often draw on information that is easily accessible (Iyengar 1991; Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Zaller 1992). The key to the priming effects is that judgments are criterion based. As Druckman and Holmes (2004) argue, "priming occurs when an individual changes the *criteria* on which he or she bases an overall evaluation... whereas persuasion involves altering what an individual thinks" (p. 757, emphasis in original). Priming effects are found in many domains but much of the research in political science focuses on policies and candidate evaluations. Using survey evidence, for example, Krosnick and Kinder (1990) found President Reagan's job approval was increasingly tied to opinions about the Iran-Contra scandal as press attention to the story persisted. Similarly, using an experimental design, Valentino (1999) found that evaluations of President Clinton decreased after subjects read stories about crime, and that the greatest loss occurred when negative racial attitudes were primed.

Of course policy priming overlaps with image priming, and when presidents (or other politicians) choose to engage in image management they do so strategically (Druckman, Jacobs, and Ostermeier 2004). As a candidate in 1960 John F. Kennedy relied on private opinion polls to stake out policy positions, and used those positions to emphasize certain personal attributes (Jacobs and Shapiro 1994). President Bush also successfully engaged in image priming when, after his 2002 State

²³ However, the direction of influence between the president and the press is not consistently unidirectional (e.g., Bosso 1989). Even on foreign policies such as U.S.-Soviet relations and the Arab-Israeli conflict the press may lead (Edwards and Wood 1999; Wood and Peake 1998).

of the Union address, public perceptions of his integrity and strong leadership bolstered his approval ratings (Druckman and Holmes 2004). In light of President Bush's post-9/11 transformation (Greenstein 2002) and widespread support for the war on terrorism immediately after the attacks, public perceptions of the president's image likely complimented traditional issue-based reputations.

According to issue ownership theory, political leaders routinely seek to exploit their party's policy-based reputation "produced by a history of attention, initiative, and innovation" towards problems and lead "voters to believe that one of the parties (and its candidates) is more sincere and committed" to solving the problems (Petrocik 1996, 826). Emphasis on owned issues is found in campaign advertising in presidential contests (Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003-04) and congressional elections (Brazeal and Benoit 2008; Mitchell and Nagourney 2002), and suggests that resources are consistently used to define the political context in ways that reflect relative advantages (Simon 2002).²⁴ Of particular importance for this study is the idea that partisan-based issue-handling reputations may influence news reporting.

Issue ownership is essentially a partisan stereotype, and heuristics play an important role in how people evaluate candidates, parties, and policies (Brady and Sniderman 1985; Hayes 2005; Rahn 1993). Popular beliefs about issue ownership are well-known among journalists who pay attention to public opinion and incorporate the latest poll results into their campaign narratives (Patterson 1993). When Democrats adhere to ownership expectations journalists describe them as being "assertive on traditionally Democratic issues" (Nagourney 2002, A.1). Similarly, when Republicans seek to poach issues from Democrats they are described as "ventur[ing] into traditionally Democratic issues" (Seelye 2000, A.26). Familiarity is an important criterion journalists use when selecting stories (Graber 2006, 101), and as Petrocik, Benoit, and Jansen (2003-04) argue, journalists tend to "subscribe to strong notions of what is typical of the parties, they are sensitive to issue differences between the candidates, and reports on campaigns are certainly conditioned by these images and

²⁴ Politicians do not stick exclusively to their party's owned issues. Contrary to Valentino's (1999) experimental results, President Clinton proved to be quite adept when it came to co-opting Republican issues—even crime (Holian 2004). That is, strategic politicians may work to gain comparative advantages by poaching issues from their opponents.

expectation" (p. 615). While research on the idea that issue ownership can influence press coverage has been thin there is some evidence to support this idea. Issue reputations of both Democrats and Republicans, for example, had a significant and predictable influence on candidate-centered media coverage in the 1992, 1996, and 2000 elections (Hayes 2008). Extrapolating from research on the link between issue ownership and candidate evaluations it stands to reason that government-issued terrorism warnings may have led to differences in press coverage on defense-related issues—a traditionally Republican-owned issue and one that falls within the constitutional domain of presidents.

If, for example, one's overall assessment of the president is somewhat unfavorable, a salient issue such as the threat of terrorism may lead people to temporarily augment their assessment of the president by more heavily weighing, say, perceptions of strong leadership in response to the threat. There is little question that this occurred immediately after the 9/11 attacks. Moreover, repeated warnings about suspected terrorist threats may have resulted in higher levels of public approval for President Bush precisely because the alerts primed issues traditionally owned by Republicans. Willer's (2004) evidence of consistent gains in public approval in the wake of repeated terrorist alerts corroborates this line of reasoning. However, decisions about when to announce new terrorist threats may have been influenced by the overall tone of media coverage in particular policy domains. In light of the time-honored advantages both Republicans and presidents enjoy as "owners" of the domain of national defense, and extrapolating from Hayes (2008), I propose that tone of policy coverage may have varied with terrorism warnings. Specifically:

- H₄: Prominent news coverage of the war on terrorism should became more positive (less negative) after the dissemination of government-issued terror warnings.
- H₅: Prominent news coverage of national defense should became more positive (less negative) after the dissemination of government-issued terror warnings.
- H₆: Prominent news coverage of the war in Afghanistan should became more positive (less negative) after the dissemination of government-issued terror warnings.

The Iraq war is the other salient issue within this policy domain. Although this line of reasoning suggests that a similar pattern should emerge for news coverage of the Iraq war, there are a number of reasons to believe that such a pattern may not emerge.

First, consistent with President Bush's claim that Iraq was "the central front" in the war on terrorism ("Bush vows" 2003), many Republicans saw the Iraq war as vital to the broader conflict. Democrats and independents, however, tended to see them as distinct, with Iraq actually complicating the war on terrorism (Pew Research Center 2005). Second, by the fall of 2002 when the administration began to actively build its case for war in Iraq, skepticism about the usefulness of information contained in government-issued terrorism warnings was common as questions started to arise about the timing of the terror alerts (e.g., "The Warning Overdose" 2002). In addition, when the federal government lowered the color-coded HSAS at the end of February 2003, it was widely acknowledged by Bush administration officials that the reduction was due to the possibility of war with Iraq and that the threat level needed to be reduced in order to allow it to be increased just before the start of the war (Lee and Goo 2003). That is, lowering the HSAS was dictated not by a reduction in the threat level per se, but a desire to avoid the ramifications of reaching the highest level. Most candidly, one unnamed official said, "We don't want to be in a situation where we have to go red alert, which involves shutting down public facilities and could create a real panic" (Shenon and Lichtblau 2003, A.1). A third issue is the temporality of the warnings and whether each new alert brought diminishing returns. That is, by repeatedly 'crying wolf' the administration may have exhausted whatever credibility it had built up on the issue of terrorism warnings by the autumn of 2002 (Rosenbaum and Johnston 2001). If this was the case, the pattern predicted for other policies may not hold for coverage of the Iraq war. Perhaps most compelling is public opinion evidence that the Iraq war actually resulted in considerable reputational losses for Republicans on national security issues, and that the drop-off began shortly after the onset of the war (Goble and Holm 2009). The tentative hypothesis that follows from this line of reasoning, then, is that:

H₇: Prominent news coverage of the Iraq war should not shift significantly after the dissemination of government-issued terror warnings.

In Chapter 3 I assess these hypotheses, focusing my analysis on the relationship between the timing of government-issued terror warnings, and the political environment as captured by front page *New York Times* coverage.

CHAPTER THREE: PUBLIC OPINION AND CONTENT ANALYSIS METHODS AND RESULTS

Everybody [uses reports from newspapers to measure the decline of political violence...]. That's basically the general source.

-- Thomas Enders, Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs to President Reagan, 1983

It is a truism of American politics that elected leaders are goal-directed and tailor their behavior accordingly. While the confluence of considerations and agents acting on elected officials is dense, the news media is one agent that political leaders habitually follow. Members of Congress, for example, "modify their behavior based on how journalists report news about their Washington activities," and when journalists cover a story thoroughly "they increase the probability that citizens will notice what a representative is doing" (Arnold 2004, 11). A similar logic applies to presidents as well. As Cook and Ragsdale (1995) argue:

In recent decades, the White House has become more and more the central newsbeat in Washington, making the president the central protagonist not only of that beat, but perhaps the entire national news... The media presume that, because of the president's centrality as head of state and head of government, virtually anything that presidents do could well be newsworthy. Indeed, the president is probably the only political figure in the United States whose activities are followed twenty-four hours a day (p. 306).

All modern presidents, then, occupy a privileged place in the political environment; one that regularly provides opportunities to shape political discourse. However, even the White House, with its massive communications infrastructure, faces great difficulty in leading the public and press (Edwards 2003; Edwards and Wood 1999). This state of affairs has resulted in presidents pursuing new ways to gain advantages in leading the public.

In Chapter 2 I summarized the claim that in the wake of the 9/11 attacks the Bush White House sought to shape public discourse by disseminating information about suspected terrorist threats and periodically increasing the color-coded Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS). If these actions were carried out with strategic intent, we might expect to see them related to decreases in presidential approval and news coverage that portrays the administration, its policies, or the Republicans Party in a relatively unfavorable light. While a number of anecdotal examples seem to support these claims, the priority in this chapter is to more rigorously assess such charges. Working back from research showing that presidential approval increased following the public dissemination of terror alerts (Willer 2004), if the analyses indicate a systematic relationship between decreases in presidential approval and subsequent terrorism warnings the argument that the White House used the warnings strategically stands on firmer ground. Still a stronger case can be made if news content also varies predictably before and after terror warnings. Placed in the larger context of the public relations presidency, the present question examines the Bush administration's activities as they relate to the issuing of terrorism warnings and whether the likelihood of these announcements moves in tandem with changes in presidential job approval and prominent news content.

This chapter is organized into two major parts, with each consisting of a methods and results section. In the first part, I briefly summarize the public opinion portion of the study and discuss data collection and the coding of the dependent, independent, and control variables. In the second section I report the results of a series of logistic regressions designed to empirically test the hypothesis that terrorism warnings after 9/11 were more likely when presidential approval was decreasing.

I move beyond public opinion to consider whether the overall tone of media coverage varied in relation to terrorism warnings over the 28-month period following 9/11. I begin by outlining my rationale for using *New York Times* coverage to capture media content. Political communication and media scholars do not speak with a unified voice on the question of how to parsimoniously conceptualize the media environment. Some researchers opt for multiple outlets from a single medium such as newspapers (Hayes 2008; Peake 2007) or broadcast (Farnsworth and Lichter 2004), others sample outlets over multiple mediums (Jamieson and Cappella 2008; Shaw 1999; Zaller 1998), and still others use a single outlet (Brody 1991; West 1991). Because there is tremendous variety in research strategies it is incumbent upon analysts to discuss and defend their choices. I engage these matters before summarizing the data collection process and the coding of the variables. The second section summarizes the analytical approach, which utilizes on analysis of variance (ANOVA) and multiple regression to examine the relationship between publicly disseminated terrorism warnings and news content to determine whether the tone became more positive (less negative) after the alerts. Finally, I conclude with a brief summary and discussion of the analyses.

Examining the Relationship between Presidential Approval and Terrorism Warnings

Public opinion is a vital resource in American politics, and presidents who can lay claim to public support are believed to be more formidable in the policy arena. However, presidents who wish to influence public opinion do so strategically, keenly aware of the larger political context. Canes-Wrone (2006), for example, argues that presidents usually avoid publicizing issues that face strong opposition and prioritize issues that resonate with the public. As George Edwards (2009, 54-55; 2003, 72-74) convincingly argues, President Reagan's policy efforts were most effective on issues that were already supported by the public. Post-9/11 President Bush's dominant policy focus was combating terrorism—an issue of great importance to the American public and one on which the president was viewed favorably. Thus, efforts to use terrorism to boost President Bush's approval ratings were likely advantaged over other policies. While previous scholarship indicates that public approval of President Bush increased following government-issued terrorism warnings. If the likelihood of terrorism warnings increased as public approval decreased we can be more confident in claiming that the alerts were used strategically. Thus the first test seeks to determine whether public approval of President Bush predicts the likelihood of government-issued terrorism warnings.

Methods for the Public Opinion Analysis

Dependent Variable. The dependent variable in the first set of analyses is the timing of governmentissued terrorism warnings. In the wake of the 9/11 attacks the federal government began issuing terrorism warnings and subsequently implemented the color-coded Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS). Some of the terrorism warnings were intended for wide public dissemination whereas others were sent directly to local law enforcement agencies. For example, in the first six months after the 9/11 attacks a total of nine known warnings were issued. Four of these warnings were publicly announced by an agent of the federal government whereas the remaining five were issued to state and local officials initially, and then relayed to the public.²⁵ On occasion state officials also issued their own terrorism warnings, however, the federal government usually distanced itself from these warnings (Eggen 2002; Nieves and Winter 2001). In the analysis that follows I only consider terrorism warnings issued by the federal government.

To ensure a robust and accurate indicator the dependent variable I consulted multiple sources. Initially, front page *New York Times* coverage was used to identify publicly disseminated terrorism warnings between September 2001 and July 2004. This information was used to create a baseline list of alerts. The next step involved augmenting the baseline tally using Willer's (2004) list compiled from the first section of the *Washington Post* between September 2001 and May 2004. Together this strategy produced 30 distinct government-issued terrorism warnings. However, two additional steps were taken to ensure that the list of terrorism warnings captured all known public announcements. First, I cross-checked this list against the much shorter list used by Keith Olbermann in his "Nexus of Politics and Terror" segments. Second, I performed key word searches using the ProQuest Newspaper TM search engine.²⁶ This produced two additional alerts for a grand total of 32 distinct government-issued terrorism warnings.²⁷

The warnings are spread unevenly over the 35-month period with some occurring in very close proximity to one another whereas others are spaced months apart. For example, three separate alerts were issued in April 2002, all within the span of five days. Two of the alerts were based on information obtained from CIA interrogations of Abu Zubaydah, and while intelligence officials

²⁵ In addition to direct communication with local law enforcement agencies the FBI also communicated threat information through information-sharing partnerships such as the National Infrastructure Protection Center's InfraGard program. According to InfraGard's website, the program is dedicated to the prevention of hostile acts against the United States. Specifically, it is a partnership involving the FBI, state and local law enforcement agencies, business, academic institutions, and other partnerships (http://www.ingragard.net/. Accessed October 3, 2011).

²⁶ Search terms included "FBI," "terrorism AND warning OR alert," and "Tom Ridge OR John Ashcroft." ²⁷ Although the true number of terrorism advisories remains unknown, the number is higher than the tally employed presently. For example, in June 2002 the *New York Times* reported that "18 other terrorist advisories [had] been issued to state and local police agencies" in the first half of 2002, but only "about six of these were [sic] subsequently became public" (Van Natta and Johnston 2002). As Woolley (2000) cautions, "the 'real event' is the concept the scholar is trying to measure, and the 'coded record' is the original set of publications that reported or commented on the issue in question" and so "we rarely know with confidence the true universe of events" (p. 157). Nonetheless, the present list appears to capture all of the alerts that were publicly known, at least through 2003.

emphasized the "unsubstantiated" nature of the information they nonetheless alerted local law enforcement agencies in the northeast "out of an abundance of caution" (Miller and Shenon 2002, A.1). The third alert, issued by the State Department, was a public message warning Americans in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula about possible terrorist attacks. None of these alerts, however, resulted in an increase in the nation's threat level.²⁸

The period between September 2001 and July 2004 amounts to the most appropriate time period to examine the relationship between public approval of the president and government-issued terror alerts. While the decision to end the series in July 2004 may seem somewhat arbitrary it actually provides a reasonable end point. The number of terrorism warnings declined sharply after the summer of 2003 with relatively few alerts issued after the two year anniversary of September 11th. The only other terrorism warning issued in 2003 came in the wake of the capture of Saddam Hussein in December. In fact, Willer (personal communication) actually collected data through 2006, but found only three alerts in 2004 and one in 2006. The drop-off in the number of alerts is likely attributable, at least in part, to modifications made by DHS at the end of 2003. Specifically, the department implemented a "more tailored approach" whereby rather than issuing national alerts, they targeted specific areas or sectors (Goo and Eggen 2004, A.1). This decision appears to be based largely on complaints about the costs incurred by state and local agencies in staffing and resource allocations required to implement extra security measures. Congress, too, was concerned and members were activity considering legislation to force the administration to adopt a more narrowly focused terrorist warning system.

The dependent variable *terrorism warning* is dichotomous and captures whether the news media reported that an agent or agency of the federal government had declared an increase in the terrorism threat level. The unit of analysis is the week (Monday through Sunday) and is coded 1 if an alert was issued on any day during that week and is coded as 0 in all other weeks. Here I assume that

²⁸ News reports of the first alert surfaced on April 19 and dealt with alleged attacks targeting financial institutions in the northeast. The second alert surfaced on April 24 and dealt with possible attacks targeting shopping centers. The State Department warning was also issued on April 24. For the purposes of the analyses in this chapter I count the two April 24 alerts as a single alert.

the White House closely monitored public opinion, and if the alerts served a strategic purpose this coding strategy aligns changes in presidential approval with the pending likelihood of a governmentissued terrorism alert. Because multiple terrorism warnings were occasionally issued within days of each other, a few weeks actually saw more than one alert. However, in the analysis I do not distinguish between weeks with one and two alerts. This resulted in a total of 28 terrorism weeks.

Independent Variable. To explore the possibility that terrorism warnings served strategic purposes for the Bush White House I collected data on presidential approval from Gallup's long running time series. Specifically, a random sample of Americans are periodically asked "Do you approve or disapprove of the way [first & last name] is handling his job as President?" For the purposes of the present analyses I examine the opinion polls conducted from March 5, 2001 through August 11, 2004. Over this duration Gallup data were available for 138 public opinion polls. The number of days between successive polls in this period ranges from a low of two days to a high of 24 days with a mean of 9.4 (SD = 4.86). The total number of weeks over this same period of time is 179. The uneven spacing between Gallup polling periods creates two problems. First, the irregular polling periods sometimes straddled the demarcation point for the unit of analysis. Second, as the descriptive statistics indicate, the overlap between the polling periods and weeks is imperfect. To accommodate the former, presidential approval for each week is determined using the most recently completed Gallup poll.²⁹ The latter issue is handled by using the same approval number for successive weeks when the duration between polling periods extends beyond one week.

Using the weekly approval measures I then calculated an *approval difference* score to capture changes in presidential approval over time. For each observation I calculated the difference between that week's approval number and the number from four weeks previous. Here I reasoned that one

²⁹ To illustrate, Gallup conducted two public opinion polls in August 2003: August 4-6 and August 25-26. Because the polling period started on a Monday (August 4), I recorded the approval number from the most recently completed Gallup poll (July 25-27) for that week. For the next two observations (i.e., weeks) the August 4-6 approval number served as the weekly measure of presidential approval. Then with the week beginning Monday, September 1, I used the August 25-26 approval rating.

month would be less noisy than calculating differences between successive polls which, again, are not evenly spaced. That is, a month provides a sufficient period of time to see meaningful trends in the data as each four week period includes at least two opinion polls. I interpret this measure to have strong face validity because, as discussed in Chapter 2 (see p. 21), Karl Rove indicated that he was monitoring the monthly fluctuations in Bush's approval numbers (Bumiller and Mitchell 2002). The range for *approval difference* is 47 points with a low of -14, a high of 33, and a mean of -0.75 (SE = .43). This measure is the primary explanatory variable in the logistic regression analyses.

<u>Control Variables.</u> I created a number of control variables to capture major events and traditional activities that presidents use to influence public opinion. Specifically, I created event dummy variables to control for September 11th, the start of the U.S. military bombing campaign in Afghanistan, major U.S. military combat in Iraq, the capture of Saddam Hussein, and the publication of photos in the Abu Ghraib scandal. Following Willer (2004), the control variable for September 11th lasts for 12 weeks whereas all other controls last for four weeks. For example, beginning the week of September 10, 2001, and going through December 9, 2001, each week received a code of 1 and all other weeks received a code of 0. I also coded two dummy variables to control for major presidential speeches and press conferences. Both activities serve as opportunities available to presidents who wish to go public in the hopes of enhancing their approval numbers.

While presidents experience difficulties in consistently moving public opinion (e.g., Edwards 2003), recent scholarship finds that that presidents nonetheless use such opportunities strategically and are more likely to take such initiative as their approval ratings decrease (Eshbaugh-Soha 2010). Similar to the coding of the terror alert variable, I code as 1 the week in which President Bush held a press conference or delivered a major speech as well as the three weeks preceding each press conference and speech (see Tables 3.1 and 3.2) for the list of qualifying speeches and press conferences). Again, I assume that the administration monitors trends in public approval and factors

this information into decisions about when to go public, whether via conventional means such as speeches or press conferences or through the use of terrorism warnings.

[Insert Tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 about here]

Finally, Table 3.3 summarizes the bivariate relationships between the variables used in the reported analyses. The simple correlations suggest that while some of the independent variables are modestly correlated with one another multicollinearity is not an issue.

Results for the Public Opinion Analysis

Logistic Regression Analyses. To test the hypothesis that government-issued terrorism alerts may have been used strategically I conducted a series of logistic regressions. I tested different combinations of independent variables to examine the pattern of results relative to variation in presidential approval. Table 3.4 shows the results for three different specifications. The baseline model is a binary logistic regression model with changes in presidential approval as the only predictor of terrorism warnings. The negative coefficient indicates support for the hypothesis that as presidential approval decreases the likelihood of a government-issued terrorism warning increases (p= .039). Specifically, the coefficient indicates that for a one percent decrease in presidential approval the logged odds of terror warnings increase 0.061. Another way to interpret this result is to speak in terms of odds ratios, which describe the percentage change in the odds that the dependent variable will occur given a one unit change in the independent variable. By subtracting 1 from the Exp(*B*) value and multiplying by 100 we see that a one percent decrease in presidential approval increase the odds of a terror alert by six percentage points.

While odds ratios are more straightforward than logged odds I also calculated the predicted probability of a terror alert assuming a two standard deviation decrease in presidential approval. Substantively this means that the probability of a terror alerts increases approximately 0.162 for a drop in presidential approval of approximately 10 percentage points. The initial evidence bears out the expectation that terrorism alerts were used strategically, and the chance of an alert being issued

increased as President Bush's approval decreased. Importantly, we still do not know whether this relationship holds when accounting for events and other, more traditional, means of going public.

[Insert Table 3.4 about here]

The second and third columns (Models B and C) in Table 3.4 indicate that the relationship between public approval of the president and the likelihood of terror alerts is robust. Again, decreases in presidential approval are associated with an increased likelihood of government-issued terrorism alerts even when controlling for events and other strategic opportunities. The odds ratio in both models indicates that the odds of a terror alert being issued increased 12 percent for a one unit drop in presidential approval. I again calculated predicted probabilities by setting the various control variables (i.e., dummy variables) to their modal response and estimated the change in probability given a two standard deviation decrease in presidential approval. This produces an estimated probability increase of 0.35 when presidential approval drops 10 percentage points in a single month.

In addition, the positive and significant coefficients for September 11th and major speeches indicate that the timing of terror alerts was related to these events. The probability of a governmentissued terrorism alert in the three months following 9/11 was 0.45 more likely than at other times. Also, the probability that a terror alert would occur in close proximity to a major speech is estimated to be 0.43. This latter result suggests that terror alerts were not necessarily stand-alone events; rather, they were sometimes paired with other, more traditional means of going public. The other control variables were not significant across these and other model specifications.³⁰ Finally, the primary difference between the two models is that the third model controls for the time between terror alerts.³¹ However, this does not significantly contribute to the overall model or substantively alter the

 $^{^{30}}$ In the analyses reported below I drop the controls for Saddam Hussein's capture and the Abu Ghraib scandal because neither variable contributed meaningfully to the analysis (all *p* values >.90). I drop Afghanistan from the analysis as well because it is highly correlated with the control for 9/11.

³¹ The reported analysis considers changes in presidential approval over four weeks, however, I also ran analyses looking at changes in public approval over a two week period. The pattern of results across these specifications largely replicates the results reported in that the coefficients retain their signs and most of the relationships remain statistically significant, albeit at more permissive levels. The only substantive difference found in examining the shorter period is that the relationship between *approval change* and the timing of terror alerts does not achieve statistical significance in the baseline model (p=.17), although the relationship remains negative. The *approval change* coefficient does achieve statistical significance in the full specified models.

interpretation that the loss of public approval is associated with the increased likelihood of government-issued terrorism warnings.

On balance, then, the evidence thus far suggests that the timing of government-issued terrorism warnings post-9/11 were related to decreases in presidential approval. That is, the likelihood of terror alerts increased as public approval declined. Although it may strike some as obvious, there is little in the published record that supports a systematic relationship between approval and the timing of terror alerts. Moreover, these results provide an interesting addendum to Willer's (2004) research; not only did presidential approval increase following government-issued terrorism warnings, but the timing of the warnings was related, at least in part, to decreases in public approval. With these results in mind, I next examine whether media content and tone varied in similar ways. Extrapolating from research on opinion leadership and indexing, and given the news media's role as an agenda setter for the American public, it may be the case that the tone of news coverage became more positive (less negative) after the warnings were publicly disseminated.

Examining the Relationship between Terrorism Warnings and the Tone of News Coverage

The agenda setting literature often operationalizes media content using volume (i.e., quantity). The idea being is that quantity of media coverage—whether measured as the number of stories (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; McCombs and Shaw 1972), the number of paragraphs (Steger 1999; Zaller and Chiu 1996), the duration of coverage (Edwards and Wood 1999; Wood and Peake 1998), or some other metric—captures the relative salience of issues. However, tone is theoretically and substantively important to the present analysis because it carries evaluative information. For the news consuming public relatively positive or negative information may lead to the reconsideration of opinions or the recalibration of evaluative judgments (Shaw 1999). For presidents and other political figures the tone of prominent press coverage is potentially valuable information as it helps determine whether ongoing political strategies require modification (Covington et al. 1993; Manheim 1991).

Of course, news about politics often emphasizes negative events and developments. This is largely a function of market-based considerations and journalistic norms suggesting that negative

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coverage is more likely to pique the interest of potential consumers, thereby maximizing revenues (Rosentiel et al. 2007). News stories tend to achieve maximal value to the extent that they include conflict, novelty, and drama (Gerber 2006, 98-102), and negativity more often than not comports with these criteria.³² For example, news coverage of the economy is demonstrably more negative than positive (Hetherington 1996), and when objective economic indicators are bad there are more negative news stories about the economy relative to positive stories when objective economic indicators are relatively good (Fogarty 2005, 150). Research indicates that the amount of negative news coverage has increased over time (Patterson 2000), particularly for presidents (Cohen 2004; Patterson 1993). Tone of coverage, then, is important because critical coverage over a sustained period can create problems for presidents. If the analyses show that tone of media coverage was altered significantly by the issuing of terrorism warnings we can be more confident that the alerts served a strategic purpose. Thus, the second set of analyses examines whether terrorism warnings were used to systematically alter the overall tone of news coverage.

Methods for the Content Analysis

<u>Capturing the Media Environment</u>. To address the question of whether media coverage changed relative to the public dissemination of terrorism warnings I first must develop measures to capture broad trends in media coverage. For reasons of parsimony and practicality I used front-page *New York Times* coverage to capture the content (i.e., visibility) and valence of national political stories. In doing so I follow the lead of Benjamin Page (1996), who argues:

The [New York] Times... is one of the most prestigious and authoritative publications in the United States. It is read by... decision makers and policy experts, as well as by the editors, reporters, and commentators who decide what will appear in other mass media. Thus, the opinions voiced in the [New York] Times also tend to find their way—directly, or through syndication, or by trickle-down processes involving editors, writers, and commentators in other media—to a mass audience (p. 17).

³² Additional considerations include events that relate to well-known themes, are likely to be perceived as meaningful by the news consumer, display familiarity, and timeliness.

Despite this persuasive argument, relying on one source as a proxy for the entire news media may give pause, both in terms of changes in the marketplace and variation across news rooms.

As discussed in Chapter 2, television supplanted newspapers as the dominant medium for political news in the late 1950s (Cohen 2004), and while television news continues to be the primary source of information for many people, online sources are the only medium currently showing sustained growth (Pew Research Center 2010). However, even the most vociferous proponents of "new media" acknowledge that it relies largely on traditional news outlets; those organizations located further upstream and closer to the news headwater. And for the vast majority of new media outlets the source is a newspaper (Frontline 2007).³³ In fact, the Project for Excellence in Journalism (2008) concludes that "more people today in more places read the content produced in the newsrooms of American daily newspapers than at any time in years" (p. 1).

Beyond changes in media consumption habits, it is also important to consider how news outlets influence each other. Inter-media agenda setting occurs when, for example, *New York Times* coverage is picked up by other outlets. Of course the same story presented in different outlets is not guaranteed equivalent emphasis or placement, and headlines or lead paragraphs may be edited for various reasons (e.g., length considerations, perceived relevance for readers, etc.). While these arguments are plausible as local newspapers do modify wire content (Peake 2007), a hierarchy does exist in the mainstream press (Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston 2007, 59; Crouse 1973, 78, 84; Kiousis 2004, 75). For example, the content of international news in the *New York Times* correlates positively with that night's network evening news (Golan 2006; Vliegenthart and Walgrove 2008), as well as with other national and local media (Ostrom and Simon 1985). The argument that the *New York Times* leads the networks is valid on its face due to the temporal ordering of publishing and

³³ To be sure, the number of national political reporters is declining, and as newsroom budgets continue to be reduced traditional media outlets will increasingly compromise their ability to act as a watchdog (Dreier and Martin 2010; Pérez-Peña 2008). However, prestige outlets such as the *New York Times* continue to maintain large news bureaus and their own wire service, and this likely enhances their inter-media agenda setting power.

broadcasting.³⁴ In addition, there is initial evidence that traditional newspapers are more influential than online publications when it comes to inter-media agenda setting.³⁵

News organizations also look for cues about the 'real world' from other media outlets. Because journalists operate in a unique environment and have little contact with their audience (Dearing and Rogers 1996, 33), they "routinely look over their shoulders to validate their sense of news by observing the work of their colleagues, especially the work of those at elite organizations such as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, and national television networks" (McCombs 2005, 164). Journalists, then, scan the environment searching for stories with characteristics such as novelty, conflict, and timeliness, but take cues from each other, and the *New York Times* is one of the elite news organizations. While the *Times* is not read by a true cross-section of the American public, media professional and political elites pay attention to its content. Thus, the paper is "a major power force in American thinking" (White [1973] 2010, 258).

Finally, selection of the *New York Times* is also justified on practical grounds. Anecdotal examples suggest the White House used the paper to help establish credibility for their claims, particularly in the lead up to the Iraq war in 2003 (Isikoff and Corn 2006, 33-42; Rich 2006, 59). As discussed in Chapter 1 (see fn. 4), Vice President Dick Cheney, appearing on NBC's *Meet the Press* on September 8, 2002, cited "a story in the *New York Times* this morning" that discussed Saddam Hussein's alleged desire to acquire aluminum tubes (*Meet the Press* 2002).³⁶ On balance, these diverse arguments indicate that the *Times* is at the apex of national political reporting, regularly exerts intermedia agenda setting influence, and political leaders pay close attention to its coverage.

In determining what content to used I sought to balance insights from the empirical record and practical considerations such as the investment required to code more than 7,000 articles (e.g., coder training and reliability assessments). I assume that people scan the front page to get a sense of

³⁴ The pattern in the published literature is that print sources lead broadcast sources, regardless of whether it is national media (Golan 2006) or local media (Mondak 1995).

³⁵ Specifically, Lee (2004, as cited by Golan 2006) examined the inter-media agenda setting relationship between print and online newspapers in Korea and found print leads while online follows (see p. 327).

³⁶ It was only later revealed that the Vice President's chief of staff was the source of this information (Calame 2005).

important developments even if they do not read the entire article. Front page content is considered "the most important space in the paper" (Pérez-Peña 2009, B3), and it is the "billboard, [a] way of making a statement about what is important, and stories trumpeted there are often picked up by other news outlets" (Kurtz 2004).³⁷ Many studies capture adequate variation in the salience of events by relying on front page stories (Brody 1991; Canes-Wrone 2006; Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake 2008; Epstein and Segal 2000; Oneal and Bryan 1995; Peake and Parks 2008) or article abstracts (Althaus, Edy, and Phalen 2001; Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Baumgartner, De Boef, and Boydstun 2008; Zaller 1998). In an effort to balance parsimony and practicality, coding of front page articles included headlines, abstracts, and the first five paragraphs. Given the inverted pyramid style of print journalism, coding headlines and leads captures and correctly weighs the tone of the most commonly read parts of stories (Peake 2007). In short, the front page captures stories deemed most important and more likely to be disseminated by other media outlets, and thus stand a greater chance of being noticed by political elites and the public alike.

<u>Coding Procedures.</u> Coders were instructed to code for the overall tone of coverage for various topics or issues. Following Zaller and Chiu's (1996, 403) lead, coders were verbally instructed to read each headline, lead paragraphs, and article abstracts from the perspective of "an ordinary middle-of-the-road American." Written instructions further outlined the applicable standards to use in coding specific content. For example, instructions for scoring the tone of Republican coverage (i.e., *Republican favorability*) were as follows:

For articles that mention Republicans, the default code for this category is neutral/equally negative and positive. Assessment of more or less favorable coverage must be supported by clear evidence in one direction or the other. If the content deals with a specific policy failure, set-back, problems with a proposed policy, or is generally negative, emphasizing disagreement, uncertainty, criticism, etc., code the abstract as mostly negative. If, on the other hand, the information is linked to a specific policy success or is generally positive, emphasizing agreement, certainty, praise, etc., code the abstract as mostly positive.

³⁷ Barnhurst and Nerone (2001, 190) place this idea in perspective arguing that the front page has historically been the face of the newspaper, declaring its identity, showcasing its content, and signaling the real function of the paper.

The logic underscoring these instructions draws on discussions of elite consensus on foreign policy and studies of media favorability. For example, O'Heffernan (1994) argues that the job of the White House chief of staff is to build consensus around desired policies, and "when this effort is successful...the ability of the media to obtain critical or policy-negative information is drastically reduced" (p. 242).

Further justification for this approach comes from recollections of former administration officials. Consider that at separate press conferences on the same day in May 2003, Bush administration officials gave conflicting accounts. Specifically, Attorney General John Ashcroft asked the public to be on the lookout for terrorist suspect Abu Suhayb as terrorists had a plan that was 90 percent operational. At another press conference Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge described the level of intelligence traffic as "unchanged." The next day Ridge was admonished for undermining the Attorney General. The preference within the Bush White House was that such disagreements "usually led to private reassessments and a unified public message" (Ridge 2009, 228-29). The Bush administration, like its predecessors, had an interest in presenting a singular perspective in their public messages, and the Bush administration was no different.

In addition, media favorability studies often conceptualize factual events such as nominating conventions as positive coverage for the sponsored candidate (Shaw 1999). Similarly, popular candidates may receive more favorable coverage as journalists integrate polling results into their reporting (Jamieson and Waldman 2003, 24-7; Patterson 1993, 81-3). Applying these insights to political parties and the administration, I reason that groups whose members are more message-homogeneous and do not contradict one another are effective communicators, and thus deprive the press of negative information. A similar approach was applied to the coding of each of the policy tone variables (see Appendix 3.3 for full descriptions of each variable).

Four undergraduate students—all of whom were blind to the research hypotheses—served as the primary coders in exchange for course credit.³⁸ Training sessions were held over the course of two academic quarters, and front page *Washington Post* and *New York Times* articles were used as training materials. The *Post* articles were randomly selected from the same time frame as the current study (September 2001 – December 2003) whereas the *Times* training articles were sampled from 2005 and 2006.³⁹ During the training phase all coders met weekly with the researcher. Coders submitted their weekly training files ahead of time for assessment, and then in group settings additional content was coded and discussed, and any questions about the coding instructions were answered. As each coder achieved reliability over multiple weeks they began coding independently. After coding was completed approximately 10 percent of the entire sample was recoded (≈15 randomly selected abstracts per month). Cohen's Kappa, which accounts for agreement by chance, indicates that reliability was well within the acceptable range.⁴⁰ For all of the primary content and tone variables the reliability estimates ranged from .71 to .83, which qualifies as "substantial" or "near perfect," respectively (Stemler 2001).

Dependent Variables: I use six different dependent variables to examine the relationship between the media environment and the timing of terrorism alerts. Each dependent variable captures the overall tone of coverage for a select policy domain or the relative favorability of select political groups. The coding instructions specified relatively broad criteria to maximize getting meaningful variation covering as many days as possible for each variable. In addition to *Republican favorability*, the White House is assessed using *administration favorability*, which is based on all content directly involving the

³⁸ In its entirety the training, coding, and reliability assessment of the 28-month period took approximately 18 months.

³⁹ Using the *Washington Post* provided an opportunity to orient coders to the time frame used in the study whereas the *New York Times* allowed coders to become familiar with the news source used in the actual study. ⁴⁰ Cohen's Kappa is calculated: $K = \frac{P_A - P_C}{1 - P_C}$. P_A measures the proportion of coder agreement, and P_C measures the proportion of agreement expected by chance.

president, administration officials, and administration policies.⁴¹ Media coverage of the war on terrorism is assessed using *war tone*. This variable captures substantive reporting dealing with the government's efforts to combat terrorism, confront its perpetrators and supporters, and generally defend U.S. interests domestically and internationally.⁴² *Defense tone*, on the other hand, captures all reports involving national security and defense, and may focus on internal security efforts (e.g., airport security measures) or external security efforts (e.g., specific actions by the US military or intelligence agencies). Both *Afghanistan tone* and *Iraq tone* are based on all stories dealing with economic, social, or political situation in each country as it pertains to US action and involvement, either militarily or diplomatically.

Consistent with Brody's (1991) contention that assessments of president are influenced by the balance of positive and negative coverage, each tone variable is coded trichotomously, capturing variation as "mostly positive," "mostly neutral," or "mostly negative." Articles were coded using a "substantive content" standard. What this means is that rather than forcing an article into a single category (war on terrorism or national security), each article could conceivably include information that contributes to multiple tone variables. Instructions stipulated that content had to be factual and substantive; passing mentions did not contribute to the codes. If, for example, an article described a successful military operation resulting in the ouster of the Taliban from an area in Afghanistan, then *mar tone, defense tone*, and *Afghanistan tone* could all conceivably be coded as "mostly positive." Each individual score essentially captures a "running tally" of the evaluative content of each article.

The content analysis covers a 28-month period beginning September 1, 2001, and continuing through December 31, 2003. I argue that this provides the most natural break point. As discussed, the frequency of terrorism warnings declined sharply after the summer of 2003. Of the 32 distinct

⁴¹ Originally I tried to isolate media coverage of the president specifically, but initial tests indicated that this was too restrictive as the president was not prominently featured in many of the test articles. Thus, the coding strategy was expanded to include not just the president but also prominent administration officials such as cabinet-level advisors, under the assumption that they speak for the president.

⁴² This definition is based largely on the Bush administration's description of the war on terrorism (http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030214-7.html. Accessed January 6, 2009).

alerts identified, 23 of them were issued in the first 15 months after 9/11, six were issued during 2003, and only three of them were issued in 2004. Thus, the date range captures the vast majority of known terror warnings.

As elaborated below, the unit of analysis used to investigate the relationship between the tone of prominent national news coverage and the timing of government-issued terrorism warnings is the day. That is, each article was scored according to the coding instructions and then all front page articles were aggregated to create daily measures of content and tone. Content that was deemed "mostly positive" was coded as 1 whereas content identified as "mostly neutral" and "mostly negative" were coded as 0 and -1, respectively. Summing across the articles yields an aggregate daily tone score where positive and negative content influences both the summed tone score and the calculation of the average whereas neutral content does not influence the overall tone but is factored into the calculation of averages.⁴³

Independent Variables. To explore the possibility that government-issued terrorism warnings were used to influence the content and tone of news coverage I needed to construct a measure to capture time before and after each warning. I reasoned that a single day would not be sufficient to capture adequate variation in media content. Turning to the anecdotal evidence summarized in Chapter 2, I found that most of the examples Keith Olbermann identified consisted of a spread between each terrorism warning and some earlier event of no more than a few days (usually four or less).⁴⁴ To ensure sufficient variation in the tone variables discussed above, I elected to extend this spread to capture the week before and after each warning.

⁴³ For example, assume that eight articles appear on the front page of the *New York Times* on a particular day, but only six deal with national politics, and only four significantly involve President Bush or members of his administration. Of these four articles assume further that two discuss the White House in "mostly positive" terms, one is "mostly neutral," and one is "mostly negative." The non-national news articles are omitted from further consideration leaving a total of six national news stories, of which 66.7 percent involve the Bush administration. Of the six national news articles 33.3 percent qualify as positive, 16.7 percent are neutral, and 16.7 percent are negative. The tone variable is calculated by summing the four tone scores, which yields a score of +1 (out of a possible +4/-4). This value is then divided by the total number of national news articles which yields an *administration favorability* score for that day of 0.167.

⁴⁴ The longest spread between an ostensibly negative event and the issuing of terrorism warning in Olbermann's "Nexus of Politics and Terror" segments is six days.

My primary interest is in comparing the pre-alert and the post-alert phases. However, inspection of the pattern of government-issued terrorism warnings across the 28-month period suggests that a four-category variable is needed to properly isolate each phase of the alert process. To do so I created blocks lasting up to seven days to isolate the period prior to the public dissemination of each terrorism warning (i.e., the date on which the news media reported on each alert) from the day of publication and the six days after. This strategy produces a pre-alert and post-alert category where each day is coded identically within each respective category.⁴⁵ A third category captures instances when two warnings were issued in close proximity to one another. If multiple warnings were issued on the same day (e.g., April 24, 2002) I counted these as a single alert, whereas if warnings were issued on successive days (e.g., November 13 and 14, 2002) or within days of one another (e.g., June 21 and 29, 2002), I coded both warnings as distinct events. On six different occasions terrorism warnings were issued less than two weeks apart (see Appendix 3.2 for the full list of terrorism warnings). To accommodate these instances I created a post-second alert category to isolate the time after a second closely-timed alert. In the instances when two alerts were issued within two weeks of each other I split the time between the alerts. Finally, the no alert pending category serves as a baseline. It is coded starting one week after an alert and captures each day until seven days before the next terrorism warning. In sum, 20 distinct terrorism warning blocks were created with four distinct categories: no alert pending, pre-alert, post-alert, and post-second alert. Fourteen of these blocks have observations for three of the categories (no alert, pre-alert, and post-alert) and six blocks have observations for all four categories.

For the multivariate analysis I converted this four-category terrorism warning variable into three dummy variables. Specifically, I created a dummy variable capturing the no alert pending phase, the post-first alert phase, and the post-second alert phase while pre-alert serves as the reference

⁴⁵ An alternate approach to distinguishing between the pre-alert and post-alert phases could drop the day of publication and categorize the seven days before publication and the seven days after publication. I chose to include the day of the alert because I reasoned that if terrorism alerts led to systematic changes in prominent news coverage evidence of such a pattern should be found on the day of the report as well as over the days following.

category. As my primary interest is in comparing the week before and week after terrorism warnings this strategy lends itself to this assessment and permits the other two categories to be checked against the "pre-alert" phase as well.

<u>Control Variables.</u> To control for other factors that might reasonably influence the overall tone of media coverage I created a number of variables to capture other events in the political environment. First, I coded two dummy variables to control for more traditional means of presidential influence. Specifically, I used the same list of presidential speeches and press conferences discussed above to control for the seven day period following each event. For example, on October 7, 2002, President Bush delivered a speech in Cincinnati, Ohio, outlining the administration's belief that Iraq posed an imminent threat. To isolate any effect of this speech on subsequent news coverage I coded each of the next seven days (October 8-14) as 1 before reverting to 0 on the eighth day. I repeated this approach for each speech and press conference listed in Tables 3.1 and 3.2.

I also created dummy variables to control for four of the five events used in the logistic regression results reported earlier. Following the same strategy, the September 11th dummy variable is coded as 1 for three months after 9/11, starting on September 12th, to isolate the unique effects of this national tragedy on the overall tone of media coverage. Three other dummy variables control for the start of the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, respectively, and the capture of Saddam Hussein. However, these variables are coded to isolate only the month following each event.⁴⁶ Finally, because it is outside of the present time period, Abu Ghraib is not included.

Another factor that may influence media coverage is presidential approval. Because popular presidents tend to have more influence relative to unpopular presidents, and presidential influence is channeled through the press, it stands to reason that relative popularity may shape the context for news coverage, both for the president and his policies. Journalists pay attention to polls, and polling is increasingly integral to political reporting and most major news organizations have their own in-

⁴⁶ Because the present time period ends December 31, 2003, the control for the capture of Saddam Hussein only last for 17 days.

house polling operations. As the press focuses more on conflict and negativity (Patterson 2000), declines in presidential approval may lead to more negative coverage. For example, the press may be more likely to ignore the substance of presidential communications when public opinion is faltering. Similarly, persistently low approval numbers may lead the press to discredit presidents' efforts as pointless. On the other hand, popular presidents can more effectively set the national agenda (Cohen 1995). By extension, presidents with strong support may also experience more positive news coverage. Both of these ideas receive support in the literature as both positive and negative swings in presidential approval motivate news coverage (Groeling and Kernell 1998). Thus, to control for these possibilities I recalculated the *approval difference* measure described above to obtain daily measures of the trend in presidential approval over the prior month.

Finally, because most changes in the political environment are the result of inertia (Jones and Baumgartner 1993), I also created a lagged version of each of the various *media tone* variables. While news coverage is largely driven by events and the availability of new information, I assume that news coverage also tends to move incrementally, at least from one day to the next. *Tone lag* captures the tone of news coverage from the previous day. Controlling for past levels of news tone focuses the analyses on changes in the dependent variables.

Description of the Front Page New York Times Content. A total of 7,090 individual entries were coded. These observations capture all of the written content appearing on the front page of the New York Times between September 1, 2001 and December 31, 2003, as catalogued by the ProQuest NewspaperTM search engine. Each observation was coded first as either a news article, news analysis, or other content (e.g., obituary, summary of multiple stories appearing within the paper, sport reports, etc.). This yielded a total of 5,384 news articles (76 percent), 217 news analyses (3.1 percent), and 1,489 pieces categorized as other content (20.9 percent). Across the entire duration the New York Times averaged 192.3 news articles per month (SD = 8.3) whereas news analysis and other content averaged 7.8 (SD = 3.9) and 53.2 (SD = 10.6), respectively. In the empirical analysis I aggregate

articles and analysis pieces into daily averages. At this level the daily count of news articles ranged from three to eight stories daily, and across 852 days an average of 6.6 articles (SD = 0.61) appeared on the front page of the *New York Times*.⁴⁷

[Insert Table 3.5 about here]

The first substantive code for each observation involved determining whether the story qualified as a national news story or political event or not. For the purposes of this project, national news stories deal with any topic, issue, policy, problem, or event that is considered to be within the domain of the national government, involves an agent or agents of the U.S. government, or had immediate national implications. Taking into account this broad definition, the total number of coded front page national news stories is 3,948. Of these stories 3,153 were news articles (79.8 percent), 173 were news analysis pieces (4.4 percent), and 625 were classified as other content (15.8 percent). Across the entire duration national news averaged 112.6 front page stories per month (SD = 15.8) whereas news analysis and other national content averaged 6.2 (SD = 3.8) and 22.3 (SD = 9.0) pieces, respectively. Combining national news articles and analysis pieces appearing on the front page of the New York Times (N = 3,326) yields a daily average of 3.9 national articles (SD = 1.3) across 852 possible days with a daily range of zero to eight articles.⁴⁸ For expository purposes Figure 3.1 graphs the percentage of all front page content (news articles and analysis) qualifying as national news for each month. As one might expect, the proportion of national news articles increased in the months surrounding the initiation of major military conflict in Afghanistan (October and November 2001) and Iraq (March and April 2003) and reached nadirs during the congressional summer recesses (August 2002 and 2003).

[Insert Figure 3.1 about here]

⁴⁷ The low end of the news article count occurred five times (0.6 percent) over the course of the study whereas the high end count occurred eight times (0.9 percent). The median number of articles was six (348 days) and the mode was seven (387 days).

⁴⁸ Only one day saw no national news articles published on the front page and only 18 days contributed a single article to the sample. On the other hand, the article count reached six or more only 77 times during the study period. The median and modal number of articles was four (272 days).

Description of the Dependent Variables. The six dependent variables capture the overall tone of news coverage for the most prominent topics on the front page *New York Times* coverage between September 2001 and December 2003. The tone of news coverage focusing on the content that makes up all six dependent variables tended to be neutral or equally negative and positive more often than it was either positive or negative (see Table 3.6). In each case, neutral stories account for more than half of all coverage. However, summing across these values indicates that the overall tone of coverage tipped negative for six of the seven tone variables. The only tone variable to achieve a positive average over the 28-month period was *administration favorability* (M = .02, SE = .012). Among the other variables, *defense tone* and *Afghanistan tone* were slightly negative averaging -.02 (SE = .014) and -.05 (SE = .034), respectively. *War tone* (M = -.10, SE = .013) and *Republican favorability* (M = ..17, SE = .019). On balance, then, the tone of news coverage was more neutral than not, and to the extent that coverage shifted negative or positive, the change was not dramatic.

[Insert Table 3.6 about here]

Results for the Content Analysis

I begin by summarizing a series of one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs). Specifically, I enumerated hypotheses about the relationship between terrorism warnings and the tone of coverage for four policy areas (the war on terrorism, national defense and security, Afghanistan, and Iraq), the Bush administration, and Republicans. If government-issued terrorism warnings affect the way journalists and editors report the news, at least over the short term, favorability ratings should be more positive (less negative) in the post-alert conditions than in the pre-alert conditions. These analyses were conducted to assess aggregate differences in the tone of news coverage for the various topics before and after the public dissemination of each government-issued terrorism warning. <u>ANOVAs.</u> Across the entire 28-month period a number of significant main effects are found for terrorism warnings across different content area. Figure 3.2 illustrates the aggregate pattern for each dependent variable across the four phases of the terrorism warning cycle (no alert, pre-alert, post-alert, and post-second alert). Again, my primary interest is in comparing the pre-alert and post-alert phases, and I expect to find that the tone of coverage becomes less negative (most positive) in the post-alert phases relative to the pre-alert phases. Visual inspection of Figure 3.2 offers initial confirmation of this expectation for five of the seven comparisons shown.⁴⁹ The overall tone of news coverage focusing the White House, Republicans, the war on terrorism, national defense, and Afghanistan is more negative in the pre-alert phase than in the post-first alert phase. In fact, the tone variable shifts directions from negative to positive for four of these five variables; only *Republican favorability* remains negative on average, albeit slightly less so that in the pre-alert phase. The question, however, is whether these mean differences are reliably different.

[Insert Figure 3.2 about here]

Beginning with coverage of the administration specifically we see that *administration favorability* varied across the four terrorism warning conditions, F(3, 840) = 3.71, p = .011. Whether there is no alert pending or it is immediately prior to an alert being issued the overall tone of coverage was slightly negative ($M_{no alert} = -.04$, SE = .02; $M_{pre-alert} = -.05$, SE = .04) whereas in both the post-first alert ($M_{first alert} = .10$, SE = .04) and post-second alert ($M_{second alert} = .08$, SE = .06) phases overall tone tended to be positive. Statistically significant differences emerge between the post-first alert phase and no alert phases ($MD_{first alert - no alert} = .13$, SE = .05, p = .004), and post-first alert and pre-alert phases ($MD_{first alert - pre-alert} = .15$, SE = .06, p = .009). Mean differences between the post-second alert phase and the no alert and pre-alert phases approach statistical significance (p = .105 and p = .12, respectively). These comparisons indicate initial support for the hypothesis (H₂) that coverage of the White House, as measured by *administration favorability*, improved following terrorism warnings.

[Insert Table 3.7 about here]

⁴⁹ While I did not specify a hypothesis regarding *Democratic favorability*, it is included here for expository purposes. I discuss the pattern for this variable below.

Turning to the Republican Party, the one-way ANOVA for *Republican favorability* indicates the presence of at least one significant difference across the conditions F(3, 759) = 3.82, p = .010. Overall, news coverage of Republicans tended to be somewhat negative with the no alert phase being the most negative ($M_{no alert} = ..17$, SE = .02) followed by the pre-alert ($M_{pre-alert} = ..11$, SE = .04), and post-first alert ($M_{first alert} = ..09$, SE = .03) phases. Only the post-second alert phase crept across the theoretical median ($M_{second alert} = ..02$, SE = ..04). Comparing mean differences yields three significant differences. First, the post-second alert condition is significantly more positive than the no alert condition is significantly more positive that the pre-alert condition ($MD_{second alert - no alert = ..19$, SE = ..06, p = ..004). Second, the post-second alert condition is significantly more positive that the pre-alert condition ($MD_{second - alert - no alert = ..19$, SE = ..06, p = ..004). Second, the post-second alert condition is significantly more positive that the pre-alert condition ($MD_{second - alert - no alert = ..13$, SE = ..07, p = ..061). Third, the post-first alert condition is less negative than the no alert pending condition ($MD_{first-alert - no alert = ..07$, SE = ..04, p = ..061). On balance, these results suggest that while overall *Republican favorability* varied across conditions, the issuing of terrorism warnings did not produce consistent short-term fluctuations (comparing one week before and one week after each warning produces virtually identical means, p = ..70). In short, the basic results lead me to tentatively reject the hypothesis (see H₃) that differences in tone would emerge for Republicans.

Moving to the policy variables, we see that the ANOVA indicates significant differences for *war tone*, F(3, 734) = 12.75, p = .000. As reported in Table 3.7, the average tone score for news coverage of the war on terrorism is modestly negative in the no alert pending phase ($M_{no alert} = -.19$, SE = .02), and becomes about six percentage points more negative in the pre-alert phase ($M_{pre-alert} = -.25$, SE = .04). In comparison, in the post-alert phases the tone shifts to either slightly positive in the post-first alert phase ($M_{first alert} = .05$, SE = .03) or slightly negative after a second closely timed alert ($M_{second alert} = -.04$, SE = .06). Significant mean score differences are found when comparing the no alert phase to both post-alert phases ($MD_{first alert - no alert = .24$, SE = .05, p=.000; $MD_{second alert - no alert = .15$, SE = .08, p = .05), as well as for the pre-alert phase and both post-alert phases ($MD_{first alert - pre-alert = .21$, SE = .08, p = .000; $MD_{second alert - pre-alert = .21$, SE = .08, p = .01). The slight uptick in negative coverage in the week preceding terrorism warnings relative to the no alert phase is consistent with
the expected pattern, but fails to achieve statistical significance (p = .15). Similarly, the difference between the post-first alert and post-second alert phases does not achieve statistical significance (p = .25). On balance, the differences between the *pre-alert* and *post-alert* phases provide initial support for the *war tone* hypothesis (see H₄).

Prominent national news coverage of defense and security issues also varies systematically across the different conditions, F(3, 639) = 5.97, p = .001. The average score in the no alert phase is slightly negative ($M_{no alert} = -.08$, SE = .02), becomes a little more negative in the week preceding terrorist warnings ($M_{pre-alert} = -.14$, SE = .04), and then shifts to positive in the week following the public dissemination of terrorism warnings ($M_{first alert} = .10$, SE = .04) before reverting back to minimally negative following a second closely timed terrorism alert ($M_{second alert} = -.05$, SE = .07). The major difference between mean scores on national defense and security is found between the postfirst alert phase and both the pre-alert ($MD_{first alert - pre-alert} = .25$, SE = .06, p = .000) and no alert phases ($MD_{first alert - no alert} = .19$, SE = .05, p = .000). Comparing mean differences for all other possible combinations fails to yield additional significant differences. In short, the positive and significant difference found comparing the week before and the week after publicly disseminated terrorism warnings provides basic support for the hypothesis that *defense tone* would improve following government-issued terrorism warnings (see H₅). Also, it is important to note that while the pattern of main effects follows that of *war tone*, these variables capture distinct phenomena.⁵⁰

Results for the one-way ANOVA comparing the tone of coverage about the war in Afghanistan over the four terrorism alert conditions also yields a significant main effect, F(3, 198) =3.78, p = .011. As with coverage of the war on terrorism and national defense, the no alert phase is generally negative ($M_{no alert} = -.19, SE = .07$) and becomes slightly more negative in the week preceding the public dissemination of terrorism warnings approaches ($M_{pre-alert} = -.22, SE = .08$). Once a terrorism warning is publicized the tone of reporting on Afghanistan becomes somewhat

⁵⁰ The tone of coverage for the war on terrorism and national defense are correlated, however, the coefficient is small r = .08 (p = .02, one-tailed, N = 738), indicating that the shared variance between these two variables is minimal.

more positive when there is only one ($M_{\text{first alert}} = .13$, SE = .11) or two alerts in close proximity ($M_{\text{second alert}} = .16$, SE = .13). The major mean differences for *Afghanistan tone* emerge when the no alert phase is compared to both post-alert phases ($MD_{\text{first alert} - no alert} = .32$, SE = .13, p = .014; $MD_{\text{second alert} - no}$ alert = .35, SE = .02, p = .018), and the pre-alert phase is compared to both post-alert phases ($MD_{\text{first alert} - no alert = .37$, SE = .17, p = .024). There are no significant differences between the no alert and pre-alert phases, or the post-first alert and post-second alert phases. This pattern indicates initial support for the expected relationship between prominent news about Afghanistan and the timing of terrorism warnings (see H₆).

The one-way ANOVA examining the tone of coverage for the war in Iraq also indicates at least one significant difference, F(3, 461) = 3.58, p = .014. However, the pattern for *Iraq tone* does not follow that of the previous tests. That is, the tone of Iraq coverage does not improve (become less negative) in the periods after terrorism warnings relative to the week before alerts. Overall, the no alert phase is the most negative ($M_{no alert} = -.27$, SE = .03) whereas the pre-alert phases is the least negative ($M_{pre-alert} = -.09$, SE = .06), and the post-first alert phase shows a small uptick in negative tone ($M_{first alert} = -.14$, SE = .07).⁵¹ Both of these mean scores are significantly different (less negative) than the no alert pending phase ($MD_{pre-alert - no alert} = .19$, SE = .07, p = .005; $MD_{first alert - no-alert} = .13$, SE = .04, p = .041), however, the pre-alert and post-first alert phases are not significantly different.

Recall that I cautiously hypothesized that prominent news coverage about Iraq would not follow the same pattern as the other variables when terrorism warnings were publicly disseminated (see H₇). I speculated a number of theoretical explanations for why this might be the case. One possibility was that while the White House sought to link Iraq and the war on terrorism, many Americans and, I assume, most members of the national press corps were less willing to make this connection, at least without sufficient evidence. A second and related possibility was that by 2003

⁵¹ Note that there are only two days with qualifying observations in the post-second alert phase. This is due to the fact that by the time Iraq became a central focus of the administration and the press in the fall of 2002 the only double-alert occurred in November when media outlets publicized two separate alerts on November 13 and 14. Therefore with only two observations (i.e., days) in the post-second alert category the estimate does not contribute meaningfully to the present discussion.

press accounts of alleged manipulation of the alerts began to accumulate (e.g., Shenon and Lichtblau 2003). Combined with the usual dose of skepticism that most reporters possess (Schudson 2008, 14-16), this suggests that even if a pattern exists early on between news tone and terrorism warnings it will decay over time. Still a third possibility was that the relative frequency of unfocused warnings (at least according to local law enforcement officials) may have led some people to discount the warnings. While data limitations prevent empirical assessment of these explanations, a fourth possibility—the idiosyncrasy of events—seems to be the most parsimonious explanation.

Two events specifically seem to drive the main effects of terror alerts on news coverage of Iraq. In February 2003 the *New York Times* prominently featured a number of articles that highlighted the U.N. debate surrounding the Bush administration's push for war in Iraq and in December 2003 a number of articles dealt with the capture of Saddam Hussein. For the former, the framing of the articles and the overall tone of coverage on Iraq was determined in large part by the skepticism expressed by France and Russia. For the later the U.S. government issued a terror alert *after* Saddam Hussein was captured. That is, the pattern of coverage reversed due to the fact that a number of stories prominently featured details about this success and led to relatively positive coverage of Iraq before the next drop off, which happened after the alert. When these two terrorism warning blocks are removed from the analysis, the ANOVA for *Iraq tone* becomes non-significant indicating that by the time Iraq becomes a major national issue media coverage does not change appreciably across the terrorism warning conditions.

Finally, Table 3.7 and Figure 3.2 also include one ad-hoc test. Considering that perceptions of issue ownership on national defense traditionally favor Republicans (cf. Goble and Holm 2009), and that the White House sought to strategically prime this association (McClellan 2008, 113), we might also expect that as overall *Democratic favorability* improves the likelihood of terrorism warnings would increase. It is plausible that terrorism warnings could have been used to brush back Democrats. That is, if the overall tone of coverage begins to favor the opposition, perhaps terrorism warnings warnings can shift the focus by priming a Republican owned issue. Although the pattern shown in

the bottom row of Table 3.7 is consistent with this idea, the differences are not significant, F(3, 367)= 1.14, p = .332. That is, while Democrats receive their least negative coverage in the weeks preceding terrorism warnings, and see a small uptick in their proportion of negative news in the following week, it is far from significant (p = .56). Moreover, only one of the six possible comparisons yields even a marginally significant difference ($MD_{pre-alert - no alert} = .10$, SE = .06, p =.08). On balance, then, terrorism warnings do not seem to have been used to disarm Democrats.

The story emerging so far is that differences appear in the overall tone of coverage for the White House, and select policies across different phases of the terrorism warning cycles. The pattern of results is consistent across four of the dependent variables (*administration favorability*, *war on terrorism tone*, *national security and defense tone*, and *Afghanistan tone*), at least for the comparison of primary interest. Specifically, coverage is more negative in the week preceding terrorism warnings and becomes relatively more positive in the seven days that follow. The mean differences for each of these comparisons are statistically significant.

It is interesting to note that the magnitude is not consistent across the different dependent variables as the overall tone sometimes becomes more positive after a second closely timed alert, whereas at other times it becomes less positive. One possible explanation for this is that a threshold exists. That is, because the tone of press coverage shifted after the first warning the chances of it becoming even more positive after the second alert are diminished. An alternate explanation is that cynicism might set in after the second alert; journalists tend to be a skeptical lot by nature, and even if they respond accordingly to the first one, too many terrorism warnings within a short period of time may have a boomerang effect. Visual inspection of the front page articles announcing the terrorism warnings shows that when the messages piled up in close proximity, the articles tended to include more critical commentary. This suggests some support for the second explanation, but for now the important point is that the initial evidence confirms many of the hypothesized relationship and suggests that real differences exist in news content when national threats are salient.

<u>Multivariate Regression Analyses.</u> For each of the six dependent variables I ran a series of OLS regression tests. The results for these models are summarized in Tables 3.9, 3.10, and 3.11. First, each set of models begins with a baseline model that includes only the three dummy variables capturing the distinct phases for each government-issued terrorism warning block (the pre-alert phase is the reference category). These models essentially repeat the ANOVA results discussed above, and provide a point for comparison. The second model adds controls for presidential speeches and press conferences, two traditional methods used by presidents in going public. The third model controls for four specific events (September 11th, the start of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the capture of Saddam Hussein) that may have contributed to positive news coverage for the administration and key policies. The final model includes variables measuring changes in presidential approval and a lagged dependent variable controlling for past levels of each specific tone variable.

Turning first to the multivariate examination of *administration favorability* as summarized in Table 3.8, we see that the difference in tone in the weeks following a terrorism warning is positive and statistically significant relative to the weeks before an alert. Consistent with the second hypothesis, that prominent news coverage of the Bush administration would become more positive (less negative) after the public dissemination of government-issued terrorism warnings, all four models indicate that the tone of coverage featuring the White House becomes more positive after the public dissemination of terrorism warnings. While the estimated effect is largest in the baseline model, the effect remains significant as the controls are entered into the equations, indicating that the relationship is robust. A second, closely-timed terrorism alert, however, does not reliably contribute to more positive coverage relative to the pre-alert phase.

In addition to terrorism warnings, presidential speeches exert a positive and significant effect on the overall tone of coverage focusing on the administration. Among the dummy variables controlling for specific events, both September 11th and the start of the Iraq war contribute positively to the overall tone of coverage. All things being equal, neither result is particularly surprising in that the pattern suggests rally-like effect. That is, both events are associated with more positive coverage for the administration during the three months immediately following 9/11, and the month after the start of the U.S. military campaign in Iraq. The only other significant variable is the lag controlling for past levels of news coverage. Specifically, positive coverage is related to previous levels of coverage.

[Insert Table 3.8 about here]

I also ran a number of alternative regression models to examine the influence of different specifications of the lagged dependent variable (results not shown). Including a lag for the average tone over the last seven days rather than the previous day modestly increases the total variance explained and the omnibus *F*-test is incrementally larger, however, the substantive results do not change. Similarly, when two dependent variable lags are included (controlling for the previous day and the mean tone over the last seven days) all of the variables again retain their signs and remain significant, albeit *administration favorability*_{t-1} achieves only marginal significance (p = .089). Thus, on balance the multivariate analyses confirm the hypothesis that the overall tone of prominent news coverage focusing on the White House would improve in the days after government-issued terrorism warnings were widely disseminated to the American public.

The right side of Table 3.8 summarizes four separate tests examining the overall tone of news coverage about the Republican Party. These models examine whether Republicans generally benefitted from changes in the terrorism threat level. If terrorism warnings prime latent opinions about which political party is more capable of handling threats, and if issue ownership patterns are present in news reporting (e.g., Hayes 2008), the tone of coverage focusing on Republicans may improve, as it did for the Bush administration. While the ANOVA results indicate that the post-second alert phase tended to be more positive for Republicans, the multivariate results only corroborate this in the baseline and the going public models (i.e., the second model). Specifically, comparing the "post-second alert" phase to the "pre-alert" phase yields a marginally significant effect (p = .061) in the expected direction, and this relationship is stronger in the second model (p = .049). However, the association disappears when controls are included. The only other variables to achieve

statistical significance are presidential speeches and the post-September 11th dummy variable. Both indicate that the tone of coverage specific to Republicans was more positive following presidential addresses and in the three months after the 9/11 attacks. This pattern of results indicates that the research hypothesis predicting that coverage of Republicans would generally benefit from the public dissemination of terrorism warnings must be rejected. In short, while coverage of the White House fared better after the public dissemination of terrorism warnings, the effect did not extend to images of the Republican Party.

Turning to news coverage of the war on terrorism broadly and national defense specifically, recall that the ANOVAs indicated that the overall tone of press coverage fit the fourth and fifth hypotheses. Table 3.9 summarizes the multivariate examination of tone of coverage for the war on terrorism and national defense. For the fourth hypothesis, we see that the effect of terrorism warnings on the tone of coverage for the war on terrorism persists when statistically controlling for other factors. The independent variables of interest are the three dummy variables capturing variation in the evolution of terrorism warnings (again, the pre-alert phase is the reference category). Across the four models nine of twelve coefficients reach conventional levels of statistical significance and one is marginally significant. The positive coefficients for the no alert phase indicate that coverage tended to be more positive when no alert was pending relative to the week immediately preceding terrorism warnings. In other words, the overall tone of coverage became more negative prior to an alert. The post-first and post-second variables also indicate that coverage then improved in the weeks following terror alerts. All four post-alert coefficients are strongly significant as are two of the post-second alert coefficients.

[Insert Table 3.9 about here]

The positive tone for prominent news coverage of the war on terrorism was also related to presidential speeches, the 9/11 attacks, the start of the Iraq war, prior news coverage, and, to a lesser extent, changes in presidential approval. The robust effect for presidential speechmaking is perhaps not surprising considering that 13 of the 20 speeches identified in Table 3.1 deal with terrorism and

war. As scholars have argued, there seems to be a general tendency for political elites to refrain from critical commentary during crises or when military action is pending. This often results in one-sided reporting that often reflects the administration's perspective or generally contributes to an environment that favors the White House. On balance, we can confidently reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the overall tone of news coverage, as measured by *war tone*, improved markedly after government-issued terrorism warnings.

News coverage of national defense also benefitted from media reports about the alleged threat of terrorism. Consistent with the fifth hypothesis, we see that the effect of terrorism warnings on *defense tone* is positive, significant, and robust. Whether in the baseline model or in the other models, the tone of defense-related coverage is more positive than in the week following the public dissemination of terrorism warnings relative to the week before. The no alert phase is also significant, indicating that coverage tended to be more positive in the interim relative to the week preceding a terrorism warning.

The control variables, for the most part, parallel the analyses already discussed in that presidential speeches, the post-September 11th environment, the start of the Iraq war, the previous day's news reporting, and presidential approval are related to more positive coverage. Somewhat surprisingly the coefficient for Afghanistan is negative and marginally significant. This means that *defense tone* tended to be more negative all things being equal in the month following the start of fighting in Afghanistan. Inspection of the *New York Times* abstracts indicates that while initial reporting was more positive than not, stories depicting the difficulties associated with chasing the Taliban through the mountainous regions of Afghanistan, and problems related to the reluctance of some members of the Northern Alliance to fully engage with the U.S.-led effort became common. That is, while front page *New York Times* stories were not uniformly negative in reporting on the U.S. military, they tended to emphasize the difficulties associated with the mission, particularly after the first few days of fighting.

Similar to the investigation of *administration favorability*, I also ran a series of regressions to examine alternate models using different specifications of the lagged dependent variable (results not shown). Here, again, the results are largely unchanged when the lag captures either the mean tone of reporting on the war on terrorism and national defense over the past week or both the mean tone and the tone for the previous day. The only substantive change for both *war tone* and *defense tone* is that when both lags are included presidential approval becomes nonsignificant and the no alert variable achieves only marginal significance. No other estimates, for either dependent variable, change substantively or significantly when different lag specifications are included.

The final set of multivariate analyses to consider deal with the tone of coverage focusing on the campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq specifically. Table 3.10 summarizes these results. For news coverage of Afghanistan specifically, the influence of terrorism warnings is positive but marginal (p =.063 and p = .068 in the third and fourth models, respectively). The only variable to achieve conventional levels of statistical significance is the post-September 11th environment. This indicates that coverage of Afghanistan tended to be more positive at the outset than later in the campaign.⁵² The weaker results for terrorism warnings on news reporting dealing with Afghanistan make sense considering that terrorism warnings dealt with domestic threats and did not directly involve events in Afghanistan per se. Nonetheless, the results indicate that the tone of *New York Times* coverage was influenced by context. On balance, I conclude that there is modest support for the sixth hypothesis.

[Insert Table 3.10 about here]

Finally, turning to news coverage of Iraq, the results are not unexpected. Consistent with the speculative hypothesis that any relationship between terrorism warnings and the overall tone of news coverage may be diminished by the time Iraq becomes the predominant national political issue, the estimates indicate that the effect of the few remaining terrorism warnings issued in 2003 had no discernible influence on news coverage about Iraq. The White House's plan to confront Iraq was

⁵² Iraq only came into sustained focus well after the 9/11 attacks, and as it did coverage of Afghanistan largely disappeared from the front page of the *New York Times*. Thus, in examining *Afghanistan tone* I omitted controls for the start of the war in Iraq and the capture of Saddam Hussein. Similarly, in examining *Iraq tone* I removed controls for September 11th and the start of the war in Afghanistan from the analyses.

contested much more openly and vigorously than the war in Afghanistan, and news coverage tended to reflect these disagreements. This is particularly true of international news as reported by the *New York Times*. Specifically, the administration's diplomatic efforts in early 2003 were subject to critiques by France and Russia, and to a lesser extent by congressional Democrats.

On balance, the relationship between government-issued terrorism warnings and changes in the overall tone of prominent news coverage conforms to the expectations outlined in Chapter 2. The strongest effects are found for reporting on the Bush administration, the war on terrorism, and national defense. Given that the administration was responsible for issuing the warnings, the alerts directly relate to the broader war on terrorism, and the involvement of agencies responsible for national defense and security, the strong and robust effects make sense. Somewhat weaker results are found for reporting on Afghanistan, and as expected, the tone of Iraq coverage is not consistently related to terrorism warnings. The only test that resulted in rejection of the research hypotheses was found in the examination of the relationship between terrorism warnings and the tone of coverage for Republicans in general.

Summary

The empirical analyses described above bolster claims that the Bush administration may have used government-issue terrorism warnings strategically. Specifically, decreases in aggregate public approval of the president were found to be reliably related to the increased likelihood of terrorism warnings between September 2001 and mid-August 2004. This result, in concert with evidence that Republicans were viewed more favorably on national security-related issues (McClellan 2008, 113; Petrocik 1996) and that the Bush administration closely tracked fluctuations in public opinion (Bumiller and Mitchell 2002; Green 2002), and in light of previous research showing that aggregate presidential approval increased following the terrorism warnings (Willer 2004), suggests that warnings were used to prime terrorism-related threats. This fits well with my argument that aside from the functional purpose of alerting the American public to homeland security dangers, terrorism warnings also provided the White House with an additional option in going public. That is, as presidential approval decreased, the likelihood of government-issued terrorism warnings—messages dealing with the lingering dangers to Americans posed by terrorist organizations—increased significantly over the 34 month period following 9/11.

Further, the "beneficial" effects of government-issued terrorism warnings emerge when the overall tone of media coverage is considered. For four of the six topics examined, the tone of news reporting for prominently featured stories improved in the days following the public dissemination of terrorism warnings. In particular, the relationship was strongest for the issues of the war on terrorism and national security and defense; the very issues that most directly relate to terrorism warnings, and on which news organizations have admitted to less than rigorous coverage when these issues are salient (Kurtz 2004; "The Times and Iraq" 2004). To be sure, the pattern across the different phases of the terrorism blocks is compelling as Figure 3.2 shows that tone in the days immediately preceding the warnings was more negative than in the interim between terrorism warning blocks (i.e., the no alert phase). Considering that these are two issues helped to shape the focus of the Bush presidency, and strongly played into Bush's approval ratings following 9/11 (Bumiller and Sanger 2002; Huddy, Khatib, and Capelos 2002), this pattern makes a good deal of sense.

One of ideas that motivated this project is the belief that political actors strategically appeal to fear—a belief that appears to be widespread (Curtis 2004; Glassner 1999; Pratkanis and Aronson 2001, 207-15; Scatamburlo-D'Annibale 2005). According to Glassner (2004), the functional purpose of fear appeals for political actors is to:

use and abuse collective anxieties for narrow political gains. [Once they have] helped to instill fears, they capitalize upon them to win elections, to solicit campaign contributions, and to push through pet programs that tend to increase the coercive power of the state (p. 819).

While such claims are intuitively appealing and anecdotal examples are numerous, systematic evidence has been hard to come by. Even when scholars have sought to address this question, their ability to draw strong conclusions is seriously limited. In particular, caution is warranted for at least two reasons. First, it is difficult to determine the political intentions behind potentially-fear inducing messages (De Castella, McGarty, and Musgrove 2009). Important methodological limitations often preclude scholars from identifying the "real motives" that drive individual choice as the necessary data is hard to come by (Krebs and Jackson 2007). Without objective information about the true motives behind an action, arguably the best available option is to identify an empirical pattern that follows a compelling theoretical account. I believe the expectations outlined in Chapter 2 concerning the maintenance of presidential approval and the shift in media tone for prominent news related to the Bush administration, and the empirical tests summarized above sufficiently meet this standard.

Beyond the issue of communicator intent, the second complicating factor deals with the audience. That is, if politicians do employ potentially-fear inducing rhetoric selectively (De Castella and McGarty 2011; De Castella, McGarty, and Musgrove 2011), it is important to ask whether the audience responds, and, if they do, how do they respond. If politicians do indeed wish to scare their audiences from time to time, it is important to consider how people respond to such messages at the level of the individual, and whether these responses lead to desirable outcomes. Up to this point, neither my analysis of fluctuations in aggregate public opinion prior to the terrorism warnings, nor the media content analysis permits the sorts of fine-grained conclusions necessary to determine how people respond to potentially-fear inducing messages such as terrorism warnings.

Certainly the content and tone of news stories is important. Negative media, in particular, is believed to be consequential for public attitudes about ongoing military conflicts. Even if people do not scour newspapers and websites, or closely monitor 24-hour cable news channels for the latest political developments, prominent news stories can provide important cues. However, people do not respond to cues—whether they are threatening or non-threatening—in the same way. If, for example, some people respond to terrorism warnings with heightened fear, whereas others respond with anger, we might expect political support to diverge accordingly (Huddy et al. 2005; Lerner and Keltner 2000; 2001). In the next two chapters I consider how the public, at the level of the individual, reacts to potentially-fear inducing messages. That is, I shift my focus from aggregate opinion and media tone to individual-level responses to terrorism-related information. Specifically, I am interested in peoples' cognitive and affective reactions to potentially fear-inducing information such as terrorist threats, and whether these relate meaningfully to antiterrorism policies and presidential approval. In Chapter 4 I selectively summarize previous research and lay out the theoretical expectations, and in Chapter 5 I hold the expectations up to empirical scrutiny.

Date	Content
January 20, 2001	Inaugural address
February 27, 2001	Administration goals
August 9, 2001	Stem cell research
September 11, 2001	Terrorist attacks
September 20, 2001	Terrorist attacks
October 7, 2001	Start of war in Afghanistan
November 8, 2001	War on terrorism
January 29, 2002	State of the Union address
June 6, 2002	Proposal for the Department of Homeland Security
September 11, 2002	Commemorate 9/11
October 7, 2002	War in Iraq (Cincinnati)
January 28, 2003	State of the Union address
February 1, 2003	Space Shuttle Columbia
February 26, 2003	War in Iraq
March 17, 2003	War in Iraq and ultimatum to Saddam Hussein
March 19, 2003	Initiation of the military campaign against Iraq
May 1, 2003	War in Iraq
September 14, 2003	Post-war reconstruction of Iraq
December 14, 2003	Address to the Nation regarding the capture of Saddam Hussein
January 20, 2004	State of the Union address

TABLE 3.1: List of George W. Bush's Major Speeches

Sources: Edwards (2003, 79-80); http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/

Date	Content
February 22, 2001	Administration's initiatives
March 29, 2001	Middle East
May 11, 2001	Budget and death penalty
August 24, 2001	Joint Chiefs of Staff nominations
October 11, 2001	9/11, Afghanistan, and related developments
March 13, 2002	Judicial nominations
June 8, 2002	Congressional action
November 7, 2002	Post-election and legislative agenda
March 6, 2003	Iraq
July 30, 2003	Iraq and the war on terrorism
October 28, 2003	Iraq and legislative agenda
December 15, 2003	Capture of Saddam Hussein
April 13, 2004	Iraq
June 1, 2004	Formation of interim government in Iraq
November 4, 2004	Post-election
December 20, 2004	President's legislative agenda and Iraq

TABLE 3.2: List of George W. Bush's Solo Press Conferences

Sources: http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/data.php; http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/

	0	0				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1						
162*	1					
.125^	.251**	1				
090	.258**	042	1			
.265**	.244**	.000	.145^	1		
.046	.120	.016	113	067	1	
.011	143^	181*	072	.062	.076	1
	1 162* .125^ 090 .265** .046 .011	$ \begin{array}{c ccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$	$\begin{array}{c ccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$	$\begin{array}{c ccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$	$\begin{array}{c ccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$	$\begin{array}{c ccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$

TABLE 3.3: Correlation Matrix for the Logistic Regression Variables

	Mode	el A	Mode	el B	Model C	
	Coefficient	Exp (<i>B</i>)	Coefficient	Exp (<i>B</i>)	Coefficient	Exp (<i>B</i>)
Variables	(SE)		(SE)		(SE)	
Weekly Δ in	061*	.94	128**	.88	130**	.88
pres. approval	(.03)		(.034)		(.034)	
Sept 11			2.02*	7.54	1.99*	7.28
-			(.793)		(.797)	
Iraq			-1.07	.342	-1.11	.330
-			(1.40)		(1.41)	
Major speech			1.92**	6.83	1.94**	6.97
			(.440)		(.443)	
Press conference			.560	1.75	.581	1.79
			(.362)		(.365)	
Weeks since last					017	.98
alert					(.036)	
Constant	.143	1.154	736**	.479	686*	.503
	(.154)		(.264)		(.285)	
-2 Log Likelihood	241.7		211.33		211.11	
Nagelkerke r ²	.04		.24		.24	
N	179		179		179	

 TABLE 3.4: Logistic Regression Examining the Relationship between the Timing of Terror

 Alerts and Presidential Approval

Note: $^{=}p \le .10; *=p \le 0.05; ** = p \le 0.01.$

	1	All Front P	age Conte	nt	National News Only				
Month	News	News	Other		News	News	Other		
& Year	Articles	Analysis	Content	N=7,090	Articles	Analysis	Content	N=3,948	
Sep 01	66.8	3	30.2	265	71.3	3.8	24.8	157	
Oct 01	65.2	6.2	28.6	276	69.5	8	22.5	200	
Nov 01	74.5	2.4	23.1	255	76	1.7	22.3	179	
Dec 01	73.9	3.1	23	261	81.5	4	14.6	151	
Jan 02	71.4	3.7	24.9	269	73	4.6	22.4	174	
Feb 02	75.2	2	22.8	246	81.4	2.5	16.1	118	
Mar 02	75	5.1	19.9	256	76.5	8.1	15.4	136	
Apr 02	73.9	4.4	21.7	249	81.8	5.5	12.7	110	
May 02	80	2.9	17.1	245	86.4	5.1	8.5	118	
Jun 02	75.3	3.6	21.1	247	82	5.5	12.5	128	
Jul 02	74.8	4.6	20.6	262	78.2	7.3	14.5	124	
Aug 02	79	0.4	20.6	257	85	0	15	107	
Sep 02	76.2	2.4	21.4	252	85.4	4.6	10	130	
Oct 02	80.3	1.5	18.1	259	83.6	2.3	14.1	128	
Nov 02	75.1	2.7	22.2	257	77.6	5.6	16.8	125	
Dec 02	75	2.2	22.8	268	84.8	2.1	13.1	145	
Jan 03	76.2	5	18.8	260	77.2	6.6	16.2	136	
Feb 03	78.1	2.2	19.7	228	83.7	3.4	12.9	147	
Mar 03	73.5	5.1	21.3	253	77.8	6.9	15.3	189	
Apr 03	77	5.9	17.2	239	78.1	7	15	187	
May 03	83.1	3.2	13.7	249	86.7	3.9	9.4	128	
Jun 03	75	2.8	22.2	252	81.8	4.2	14	143	
Jul 03	77.7	1.2	21.1	256	83.3	0.7	15.9	138	
Aug 03	78.5	2	19.4	247	79.7	4.2	16.1	118	
Sep 03	74.6	2	23.4	252	78.2	2.7	19	147	
Oct 03	83	1.7	15.4	241	86.2	1.7	12.1	116	
Nov 03	79.4	3.4	17.2	238	78.7	5.9	15.4	136	
Dec 03	81.3	0.8	17.9	251	83.5	1.5	15	133	
Averages	76.0	3.1	20.9		80.3	4.3	15.4		

 TABLE 3.5: Summary of New York Times Front Page Content, Sept. 2001 – Dec. 2003

Note: All cells are monthly averages except the N columns which are raw counts. Calculated by the author.

THE S.O. Tone of News Coverage for the Dependent Valuaties								
	Negative		Ne	eutral	Po			
	N	Percent	Ν	Percent	N	Percent	Mean Tone	
Administration	731	22.3	1,760	53.7	784	23.9	.02	
Republican favorability	372	19.6	1,387	73.2	135	7.1	13	
Democratic favorability	89	16.5	426	79.0	24	4.5	12	
War on terrorism tone	440	21.9	1,335	66.3	238	11.8	10	
National defense tone	227	15.4	1,056	71.4	195	13.2	02	
Afghanistan tone	99	25.4	211	54.2	79	20.3	05	
Iraq tone	280	27.8	619	61.5	108	10.7	17	

TABLE 3.6: Tone of News Coverage for the Dependent Variables

Note: Mean tone ranges from -1 to 1 with a mid-point of 0.

	No GI Pend	TW ing	Week B GIT	efore W	Week GIT	After 'W	Week Se GIT	econd W	
Dependent	Mean	Ň	Mean	Ν	Mean	Ν	Mean	Ν	F
Measures	(SE)		(SE)		(SE)		(SE)		
Administration	035	537	052	136	.096	130	.081	41	3.71*
favorability	(.02)		(.041)		(.037)		(.062)		
Republican	167	478	112	128	093	119	.021	38	3.82**
favorability	(.017)		(.039)		(.037)		(.045)		
War on	190	464	254	124	.054	114	042	36	12.75**
terrorism	(.021)		(.040)		(.035)		(.055)		
tone									
National	082	397	144	111	.103	101	051	34	5.97**
defense tone	(.023)		(.045)		(.043)		(.067)		
Afghanistan	190	101	215	43	.128	34	.160	24	3.78*
tone	(.068)		(.082)		(.112)		(.132)		
Iraq tone	271	327	086	66	139	70	.000	2	3.58*
	(.026)		(.064)		(.066)		(.000)		
Democratic	143	238	039	64	085	53	125	16	1.14
favorability	(.027)		(.045)		(.06)		(.125)		

 TABLE 3.7: Aggregate Comparisons for Tone of News Coverage Before and After

 Government-Issued Terror Warnings

Note: $^{=}p \le .10$; $^{*=}p \le 0.05$; $^{**} = p \le 0.01$. Cell entries are based on daily averages. Values range from -1 (negative tone) to 1 (positive tone).

		Admini	istration			Republicans				
	В	В	В	В	В	B	В	В		
Variables	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)		
No alert	.017	.040	.046	.052	055	042	022	028		
	(.044)	(.044)	(.045)	(.045)	(.038)	(.038)	(.039)	(.040)		
Post-first	.148**	.118*	.116*	.112*	.019	006	.000	.013		
	(.057)	(.056)	(.056)	(.056)	(.049)	(.049)	(.049)	(.050)		
Post-second	.134	.137^	.104	.085	.133^	.138*	.097	.108		
	(.082)	(.081)	(.083)	(.082)	(.071)	(.070)	(.072)	(.074)		
Speech		.221**	.186**	.151**		.181	.154**	.149**		
		(.049)	(.050)	(.051)		(.042)	(.044)	(.045)		
Press conference		.068	.082	.080		014	005	006		
		(.064)	(.066)	(.065)		(.055)	(.056)	(.058)		
Sept 11			.128*	.108			.143**	.164**		
-			(.065)	(.070)			(.055)	(.058)		
Afghanistan			027	021			009	.003		
			(.102)	(.101)			(.087)	(.090)		
Iraq			.284**	.232**			.032	046		
_			(.084)	(.090)			(.076)	(.085)		
Hussein			.053	022			.032	018		
			(.115)	(.123)			(.106)	(.118)		
Δ in Pres. approval				.001				003^		
				(.003)				(.002)		
Favorability lag _{t-1}				.124**				.006		
				(.034)				(.039)		
Constant	052	094*	117**	111**	112**	139**	165**	.031		
	(.040)	(.041)	(.042)	(.042)	(.034)	(.035)	(.036)	(.113)		
F	3.71*	6.66**	5.46**	5.69**	3.82**	6.01**	4.36**	3.83**		
Adj. R ²	.010	.032	.045	.058	.011	.032	.038	.043		
Ν	843	843	843	834	762	762	762	689		

TABLE 3.8: Effects of Terrorism Warnings on Tone of News Reporting about the Administration and Republicans (OLS Regression)

Note: $^{=}p \le .10$; $^{*}=p \le 0.05$; $^{**}=p \le 0.01$.

			National	Defense				
	В	В	В	В	В	В	В	В
Variables	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)
No alert	.064	.087*	.108*	.102*	.063	.080^	.088^	.109*
	(.044)	(.044)	(.044)	(.046)	(.049)	(.049)	(.050)	(.055)
Post-first	.308**	.279**	.283**	.248**	.248**	.215**	.220**	.230**
	(.056)	(.056)	(.055)	(.057)	(.062)	(.062)	(.062)	(.069)
Post-second	.212**	.214**	.159^	.118	.093	.096	.060	.085
	(.082)	(.081)	(.082)	(.087)	(.089)	(.088)	(.090)	(.095)
Speech		.218**	.169**	.159**		.184**	.139**	.104^
		(.047)	(.048)	(.087)		(.053)	(.054)	(.060)
Press conference		.055	.075	.075		.017	.043	.039
		(.063)	(.065)	(.066)		(.072)	(.075)	(.086)
Sept 11			.218**	.182**			.170**	.147*
_			(.061)	(.064)			(.065)	(.070)
Afghanistan			105	130			144	171^
			(.095)	(.094)			(.100)	(.102)
Iraq			.267**	.246**			.307**	.309**
			(.078)	(.078)			(.083)	(.085)
Hussein			.143	.083			.112	.141
			(.116)	(.123)			(.127)	(.141)
Δ in Pres. approval				.003^				.003^
				(.002)				(.002)
Tone lag _{t-1}				.128**				.079^
-				(.039)				(.044)
Constant	254**	297**	340**	501**	144**	178**	211**	461**
	(.039)	(.040)	(.041)	(.128)	(.043)	(.044)	(.046)	(.151)
F	12.75**	12.37**	9.78**	9.41**	5.97**	6.15**	5.70**	4.97**
Adj. R ²	.046	.072	.097	.121	.023	.039	.062	.077
Ν	737	737	737	669	642	642	642	521

TABLE 3.9: Effects of Terrorism Warnings on Tone of News Reporting about the War on Terrorism and National Defense (OLS Regression)

Note: $^{=}p \le .10$; $^{*}=p \le 0.05$; $^{**}=p \le 0.01$.

		Afgha	inistan			Ir	aq	
	В	В	В	В	В	В	В	В
Variables	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)
No alert	.025	.012	.178	.206	185**	170*	197**	078
	(.118)	(.117)	(.118)	(.145)	(.066)	(.069)	(.069)	(.080)
Post-first	.343*	.249	.274^	.291^	053	063	082	030
	(.149)	(.153)	(.146)	(.158)	(.084)	(.085)	(.084)	(.100)
Post-second	.375*	.293^	.170	.090	.086	.108	.106	
	(.165)	(.173)	(.167)	(.187)	(.353)	(.353)	(.349)	
Speech		.291*	.091	.131		.101	.077	.072
		(.132)	(.133)	(.154)		(.072)	(.072)	(.078)
Press conference		.166	.352	.265		.014	.030	.122
		(.215)	(.216)	(.243)		(.094)	(.094)	(.102)
Sept 11			.522**	.586**				
			(.116)	(.146)				
Afghanistan			202	208				
			(.150)	(.158)				
Iraq							.328**	.306**
							(.091)	(.094)
Hussein							012	070
							(.147)	(.193)
Δ in Pres. approval				.012^				.010*
				(.007)				(.005)
Tone lag _{t-1}				.085				.128*
-				(.090)				(.052)
Constant	215*	235*	480**	-1.54**	086	108^	106	805**
	(.099)	(.098)	(.109)	(.594)	(.060)	(.065)	(.065)	(.305)
F	3.78*	3.48**	5.71**	5.04**	3.58*	2.54*	3.70**	4.27**
Adj. R ²	.040	.058	.141	.220	.016	.016	.039	.065
N	201	201	201	129	464	464	464	376

TABLE 3.10: Effects of Terrorism Warnings on Tone of News Reporting about the Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (OLS Regression)

Note: $^{=}p \le .10$; $^{*}p \le 0.05$; $^{**}p \le 0.01$.



FIGURE 3.1: Proportion of *New York Times* Front Page News Articles Qualifying as National in Focus per Month, Sept. 2001 – Dec. 2003



FIGURE 3.2: Aggregate Comparisons for Tone of News Coverage Before and After Government-Issued Terror Warnings

Date of GITA	Day of the Week	HSAS	Description
September 21, 2001	Friday	N/A	• News reports indicate that US authorities have evidence that a second round of attacks is imminent. Boston, MA may be a target.
			Sources: DePalma, Anthony. 2001, September 22. "Fear and Vigilance as Security Plans are Reviewed." The New York Times, B.6.
			Connolly, Ceci, and Dan Eggen. 2001, September 22. "Rumors of New Attacks Leave Cities on Edge" The Washington Post. A 21
			Weiss, Rick, and Ellen Nakashima. 2001, September 22. "Biological Attack Concerns Spur Warnings." <i>The Washington Post</i> , A.4.
September 25, 2001	Tuesday	N/A	• The FBI and Department of Transportation warns officials in various cities about the possibility of trucks being used in chemical attacks or as truck bombs.
			<i>Source</i> : Johnston, David, and Neil A. Lewis. 2001, September 26. "F.B.I. Says 20 in Custody Sought to Transport Hazardous Materials." <i>The New York Times</i> , A.1.
October 7, 2001	Sunday	N/A	• As the war in Afghanistan begins the FBI warns the public to observe "highest state of alert" and the State Department issued a 'worldwide caution' to U.S. travelers.
			Source: Pear, Robert, and Judith Miller. 2001, October 8. "Entire Nation on High Alert as Security is Stepped Up." The New York Times, B1.
			Pianin, Eric, and Bradley Graham. 2001, October 8. "At Home and Abroad, Security is Stepped Up." <i>The Washington Post</i> , A.3.
			Major broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, and Fox News) aired an unedited tape in which Osama bin Laden threatens further harm to Americans.
			Source: Nacos (2003, 47).
October 11, 2001	Thursday	N/A	• Although lacking a specific target, the FBI warns that new terrorist attacks are possible in the coming days and advises law enforcement officials to be on "the highest alert"
			Sources: Johnston, David, and Philip Shenon. 2001, October 12. "Agency Offers No Information about Threats." New York Times, A.1.

Appendix 3.A: List of Mediated Government-Issued Terrorism Warnings

			Eggen, Dan, and Bob Woodward. 2001, October 12. "Terror Attacks Imminent, FBI Warns." The Washington Post, A.1.
October 29, 2001	Monday	N/A	• The Attorney General warns that terrorist attacks are likely being planned against the U.S. in the weeks ahead and the Justice Department issues a "terrorist threat advisory" to 18,000 state and local law enforcement agencies based on "highly credible evidence."
			Sources: Rosenbaum, David E., and David Johnston. 2001, October 30. "Ashcroft Warns of Terror Attacks Soon Against U.S." The New York Times, A.1. Eggen, Dan, and Bob Woodward. 2001, October 30. "FBI Issues 2nd Global Attack Alert." The Washington Post, A.1.
November	Monday	N/A	• The FBI warns of threats against natural gas infrastructure.
26, 2001			Sources: Eggen, Dan. 2001, November 27. "Ashcroft Defends not Listing Detainees." The Washington Post, A.4. Washington, Wayne. 2001, November 27. "Gas Companies are Warned of Terrorist Threat." Boston Globe, A.1.
December 3, 2001	Monday	N/A	• The director of homeland security issues the third urgent alert since September 11 warning that intelligence indicates that terrorists are talking about potential attacks.
			<i>Sources</i> : Mitchell, Alison. 2001, December 4. "White House Issues Alert of New Terrorism Threat." <i>The New York Times</i> , B.6. Pianin, Eric, and Bill Miller. 2001, December 4. "Ridge Issues 3rd Alert of New Attack Threat." <i>The Washington Post</i> , A.1.
January 29, 2002	Tuesday	N/A	• The National Infrastructure Protection Center sends a bulletin through InfraGard, an information-sharing partnership between NIPC and industry warning that terrorists are collecting information on the systems that control water distribution and treatment.
			Source: http://www.securityfocus.com/news/319
February 11, 2002	Monday	N/A	• The FBI issues an urgent warning that new terrorist attacks could occur against American interests in the US or Yemen – as early as the next day. The bureau identified Fawaz Yahya Al-Rabeei – a 22-year-old Yemeni born in Saudi Arabia – as one of a number of conspirators in the alleged plot.

			Sources: Johnston, David. 2002, February 12. "Attack Possible in U.S. or Yemen, the FBI Warns." The New York Times, A.1. Eggen, Dan. 2002, February 12. "FBI Warns of Attack Possible for Today." The Washington Post, A.1.
March 12, 2002	Tuesday	Yellow	• The Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS) is introduced. Tom Ridge sets the national threat level at "yellow," or "Elevated: Significant risk of terrorist attack."
			Sources: Shenon, Philip. 2002, March 13. "Color-Coded System Created to Rate Threat of Terrorism." <i>The New York Times</i> , A.16. Miller, Bill. 2002, March 13. "National Alert System Defines Five Shades of Terrorism Threat." <i>The Washington Post</i> , A.15. <u>http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/history/editorial_0844.shtm</u> .
April 19, 2002	Friday	N/A	• The FBI warns that banks and financial institutions in the northeast could be targeted by terrorists.
			<i>Sources</i> : Miller, Judith, and Philip Shenon. 2001, April 20. "Qaeda Leader in U.S. Custody Provokes Alert. <i>The New York Times</i> , A.1. Pincus, Walter, and Bill Miller. 2002, April 20. "Terror Alert Issued for Banks Here, in Northeast." <i>The Washington Post</i> , A.1.
April 24, 2002	Wednesday	N/A	 A warning is issued about possible attacks at shopping malls and supermarkets. However contrary to the bank warning issued in a specific region and sector of the economy earlier in the week, the "informationwas too vague to warrant a public announcement." The State Department also issues an unrelated warning to Americans traveling abroad about the terrorists preparing an attack in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula.
			Sources: Shenon, Philip. 2002, April 25. "FBI Warns of a Threat by a Leader of Al Qaeda." The New York Times, A.16. Eggen, Dan, and Bill Miller. 2002, April 25. "U.S. Told of More Possible Attacks." The Washington Post, A.12.
May 21, 2002	Tuesday	N/A	• Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld warns Senators that it is inevitable that terrorists will gain WMDs. The FBI/National Infrastructure Protection Center releases a statement warning that terrorist elements may be trying to obtain "offensive scuba diver capability."

			Sources: Barry, Dan, and Al Baker. 2002, May 22. "Security Tightened in New York After Vague Threats of Terrorism." The New York Times, A.1. Miller, Bill, and Christine Haughney. 2002, May 22. "Nation Left Jittery Latest Series of Terror Warnings." The Washington Post, A.1.
May 24, 2002	Friday	N/A	• The FBI warns that small airplanes may be used to carry out attacks within the US.
			<i>Sources</i> : Goo, Sara. 2002, May 25. "Transit System Gets Terror Alert." <i>The Washington Post</i> , A.9. "Subways, Transit Systems Warned of Terrorist Threat." <i>USA Today</i> . <u>http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2002/05/24/terror-threat.htm</u> .
June 21, 2002	Friday	N/A	• The FBI warns its field offices and local law enforcement agencies that terrorists may use fuel trucks in attacks synagogues and Jewish schools.
			Sources: Shenon, Philip. 2002, June 22. "FBI Warns of Possible Threat to Synagogues." The New York Times, A.9. Miller, Bill. 2002, June 22. "FBI Warns Terrorists May Attack with Fuel Trucks." The Washington Post, A.11.
June 29, 2002	Saturday	N/A	• Beginning on June 26 the FBI warned state and local law enforcement agencies of the possibility of a terrorist attack around the Fourth of July holiday. While the warning was not directed to the public, numerous alerts issued to government agenciesof fuel tankers attacking synagogues, of suicide pilots, of scuba divers attacking shipshad been made public by the news media.
			<i>Sources</i> : Van Natta, Don, and David Johnston. 2002, June 30. "New FBI Alert Warns of Threat Tied to July 4th." <i>The New York Times</i> , A.1. Fahrenthold, David. 2002, June 30. "Added Precautions to Bring Fourth Security." <i>The Washington Post</i> , C.1.
September 10, 2002	Tuesday	Orange	• Based on debriefings of a senior al Qaeda operative the U.S. intelligence community warned of possible terrorists attacks timed to coincide with the anniversary of the September 11th attacks.
			Sources: Sanger, David E., and David Johnston. 2002, September 11. "U.S. Steps Up Alerts as Solemn Day Arrives." The New York Times, A.1. Eggen, Dan, and Ellen Nakashima. 2002, September 11. "White House Raises Terrorism Alert." The Washington Post, A.1.

September 24, 2002	Tuesday	Yellow	• After reviewing various pieces of intelligence and a threat assessment by the intelligence community, and along with the passing of the anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks and the disruption of potential terrorist operations in the United States and abroad, Attorney General John Ashcroft, in consultation with the Homeland Security Council made the decision to lower the threat level from "orange" (high risk of terrorist attacks) to "yellow" (significant risk of terrorist attacks).
			<i>Source</i> : Johnston, David. 2002, September 25. "Bush Reduces Threat Level After Arrests of Suspects." <i>The New York Times</i> , A.13. <u>http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/history/editorial_0844.shtm</u>
October 9, 2002	Wednesday	N/A	• FBI officials warn state and local authorities that recent taped statements by al-Qaeda leaders may signal that another US-based attack has been approved. However, the national alert status remains at yellow because officials do not have specific information detailing where and when an attack may occur.
			Sources: Holmes, Steven. 2002, October 10. "F.B.I. Urges Heightened Vigilance as Result of Videotaped Threats." The New York Times, A.19. Miller, Bill. 2002, October 11. "FBI Warns that Al Qaeda May Be Planning Attacks." The Washington Post, A.13.
October 24, 2002	Thursday	N/A	• The FBI distributed an intelligence update warning state and local law enforcement of recent reporting that al-Qaeda may be preparing to target US infrastructure such as the railway sector.
			Sources: Brinkley, Joel. 2002, October 25. "F.B.I. Issues a Terror Warning, Citing Possible Threat to Trains." The New York Times, A.15. "Railroads May be Targeted, FBI Says." 2002, October 25. The Washington Post, A.14.
November 13, 2002	Wednesday	N/A	• Intelligence officials warn that a new audiotape released this week was part of a disturbing pattern indicating that terrorist groups may be planning a new wave of attacks on Washington targets.
			<i>Source</i> : Risen, James, and Neil MacFarquhar. 2002, November 13. "New Recording May Be Threat from Bin Laden." <i>The New York Times</i> , A1.
			Eggen, Dan, and Glenn Kessler. 2002, November 14. "Signs of Terror Said to Increase." The

http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/history/editorial 0844.shtm

			Washington Post, A.1.	
November 14, 2002	Thursday	N/A	• Based on uncorroborated information, the FBI told warned officials in Houston, Chicago, San Francisco and Washington of possible threats to hospitals.	
			Sources: Yardley, Jim. 2002, November 15. "Hospitals in Four Cities Increase Vigilance After an F.B.I. Warning." The New York Times, A.19. Cohn, D'Vera. 2002, November 15. "Area Hospitals Get Conflicting Messages on Terrorism Threat." The Washington Post, B.7.	
			The FBI sent a bulletin to law enforcement agencies (then reported by the media) warning of possible "spectacular" attacks by al Qaeda intended to result in "mass casualties, severe damage to the US economy, and maximum psychological trauma."	
			<i>Source</i> : <u>http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&contentId=A58969-</u> 2002Nov15¬Found=true.	
February 7, 2003	Friday	Orange	• The Bush administration raised the terror alert to "high" and warned that al Qaeda may be planning attacks on hotels, apartment buildings, and other targets in the U.S.	
			Sources: Lichtblau, Eric. 2003, February 8. "Bush Heightens U.S. Terror Alert." The New York Times, A.1. Eggen, Dan. 2003, February 8. "Nation Put on Higher Threat Alert." The Washington Post, A.1. http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/history/editorial_0844.shtm.	
February 27, 2003	Thursday	Yellow	• After millions of Americans stocked up on duct tape and plastic sheeting to protect against a chemical or biological attack the White House lowered the threat level due to decreased "chatter."	
			<i>Sources</i> : Shenon, Philip, and Eric Lichtblau. 2003, February 28. "U.S. Lowers Warning Level to 'Yellow,' but Cautions that Serious Threat Remains." <i>The New York Times</i> , A.14. Lee, Christopher, and Sara Kehaulani Goo. 2003, February 28. "Terror Index is Lowered to Yellow." <i>The Washington Post</i> , A.1. <u>http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/history/editorial_0844.shtm</u> .	
March 17, 2003	Monday	Orange	• Government officials raised the terrorism threat level from "elevated" to "high" due to warnings from the intelligence community that terrorists will attempt attacks against US and coalition targets in the event of a military campaign against Saddam Hussein. A variety of sources, some of	97

			which are highly reliable, indicate that al Qaeda may claim to be defending Muslims and the people of Iraq rather than Hussein's regime.
			 Sources: Stevenson, Richard. 2003, March 18. "Bush Gives Hussein 48 Hours, and Vows to Act." The New York Times, A.1. Shenon, Philip, and Jodi Wilgoren. 2003, March 18. "Government Raises Alert Level and Asks States for Assistance." The New York Times, A.1. Mintz, John. 2003, March 18. "U.S. Heightens Alert, Asks for Guard Call-Ups." The Washington Post, A.1. http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/history/editorial_0844.shtm.
April 16, 2003	Wednesday	Yellow	• Although still worried that agents of Saddam Hussein might carry out terrorist attacks against US or coalition targets the Bush administration lowered the terrorism threat level to from "high" to "elevated."
			Sources: Shenon, Philip. 2003, April 17. "Administration Reduces Level of Terrorism Alert to Yellow." The New York Times, B.7. Mintz, John. 2003, April 17. "Terror Threat Level Dropped to Yellow." The Washington Post, A.2. http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/history/editorial_0844.shtm.
May 20, 2003	Tuesday	Orange	• Based on reports that recent bombings in Saudi Arabia and Morocco have been linked to al Qaeda, and fearing terrorists may attempt attacks against targets in the US, the Bush administration raised the terrorism threat level.
			Sources: Shenon, Philip. 2003, May 21. "U.S. Raises Terror Alert to Next to Highest Level:
			Orange." The New York Times, A.19. Mintz, John, and Susan Schmidt. 2003, May 21. "Government Raises Terror Alert Level to Orange." The Washington Post, A.1. http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/history/editorial_0844.shtm.
May 30, 2003	Friday	Yellow	• Citing a drop in terrorist threats, the nation's threat level was lowered.
			<i>Sources</i> : Shenon, Philip. 2003, May 31. "After Holiday Passes Peacefully, Officials Lower Terror Alert to 'Elevated' from 'High." <i>The New York Times</i> , A.7. Mintz, John. 2003, May 31. "U.S. Lowers Terrorism Alert Level to 'Yellow." <i>The Washington Post</i> , A.2. <u>http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/history/editorial_0844.shtm</u> .

July 29, 2003	Tuesday	N/A	• Citing possible terrorist attacks against Americans, including the possibility of suicide hijackings, the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department issued a public warning.
			Sources: Shenon, Philip. 2003, July 30. "Government Issues New Terror Warning." The New York Times, A.10.
			Schmidt, Susan. 2003, July 29. "Al Qaeda Planning More Hijackings, Officials Warn." The Washington Post, A.8.
September 11, 2003	Thursday	N/A	• The State Department warned Americans abroad to beware of terrorist attacks in the coming weeks, citing possible dangers in places where US citizens congregate overseas.
			Sources: Bumiller, Elisabeth. 2003, September 12. "Washington Remembers 'a Sad and Terrible Day." The New York Times, A.2.
			Mintz, John. 2003, September 12. "U.S. Warns Travelers Of Terrorism Danger." The Washington Post, A.23.
December 21, 2003	Sunday	Orange	• The Bush administration raised the nation's antiterrorism alert status to "high," indicating a new, heightened concern about possible terrorist attacks in the next few days.
			Sources: Cushman, John. 2003, December 22. "Terror Alert is Raised to 'High,' Increasing Scrutiny of Travelers." The New York Times, A.1.
			Mintz, John. 2003, December 22. "U.S. Threat Level Rises to Orange." <i>The Washington Post</i> , A.1. <u>http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/history/editorial_0844.shtm</u> .
January 9, 2004	Friday	Yellow	• The Bush administration lowered the terrorist threat status on Friday to "'elevated'" after almost three weeks at high alert. Heightened security continued, however, for industries like aviation, banking and energy that are regarded at risk of attack.
			Sources: Lichtblau, Eric, and William K. Rashbaum. 2004, January 10. "Terror Threat is Lowered to 'Elevated,' Ridge Says." The New York Times, A.7.
			Goo, Sara Kehaulani, and Dan Eggen. 2004, January 10. "Threat Level Lowered to Yellow." The Washington Post, A.1.
			http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/history/editorial_0844.shtm.

Notes: The Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS) consisted of five color-coded levels: green (low risk of terrorist attacks), blue (general risk of terrorist attacks), yellow (significant risk of terrorist attacks) orange (high risk of terrorist attacks), and red (severe risk of terrorist attacks).

Appendix 3.B: New York Times Coding Instructions

The instructions are intended to provide guidance in how to numerically summarize textual information (i.e., the *NYT* abstracts). The source material for this project is *NYT* abstracts (summaries of the articles and other material that appeared on the front page of the *Times* between September 1, 2001 and December 31, 2003. The abstracts will be made available as electronic files, with each Excel file containing an entire month's worth of material. <u>Under no circumstances should coders modify the master files unless instructed to do so by the researcher. If you find errors or have any problems with the files, please bring it to the researcher's attention immediately.</u>

Prior to each coding session, please read the instructions through one time in their entirety. This will help to refresh your memory and orient you to the task at hand. In reading the abstracts/articles, you should adopt the point of view of a neutral observer or the average citizen (i.e., someone who is non-ideological or non-partisan).

GENERAL GUIDELINES

• Please take this project seriously and limit any distractions that may divert your attention while you are coding

• Accuracy is more important than speed when coding. Coders should take their time and be sure to record all of the information for each abstract and that codes are recorded clearly and accurately.

• Please read each abstract at least two times. First, try to get an overall feel for the material and determine whether it meets the criteria as outlined below. In reading the abstract a second time code for all relevant variables. This guideline applies to the full text as well.

• Treat the title of the abstract/article as part of the article.

• The unit of analysis is the individual abstract/article. As such, each unit is a stand-alone data point and all variables must be coded without regard to other abstracts/articles.

• Variable labels are listed below in **bold** print and within the [brackets], coding labels follow and are also in **bold**, and variable descriptions and codes follow the colon.

FULL TEXT TRIGGERS

• This project utilizes newspaper abstracts to summarize full text articles. One of the goals is to balance accuracy in summarizing political discourse with parsimony in data collection. Because the abstracts distill larger articles into more manageable units coding will be augmented in the following way. Refer to the first <u>FIVE</u> paragraphs of the article if any of the following are true of the abstract:

- it is coded as national
- it mentions the war on terrorism
- it mentions anyone of the following:
 - Republicans
 - Democrats
 - Identifies someone as a member of Congress specifically or by context (e.g., representative, senator, legislator, etc.), an executive cabinet-level position or the individual serving in that capacity (a list of such appointees is included at the end of this document), or any other agent of the federal government.

• When using the full text article, code all variables based on the title, abstract, and the first five paragraphs.

• Access to the full text articles may be obtained through the ProQuest Newspaper search engine available through Western's library website or by searching for the article in the *New York Times Index* (located on the left-hand side of the *NYT*'s homepage, just under the banner).

• Coders may use the subject terms in the data files to help determine context and when to consult the full text.

INSTRUCTIONS

[en#] EndNote #: Each abstract has an Endnote number which serves as an identification tag for the files in the EndNote program. This number is already included in the electronic files. Coders can ignore this value.

[coder] Coder: This column is a record of the unique identification number for each coder. When coding the variables coders must record their identification number in this column for each abstract.

[datecode] Date Coded: This column is a record of the date on which coders completed the coding of each abstract. Coders must fill-in this date for each abstract, following the month-day-year approach.

[caseid] Case ID#: Each abstract has a unique identification number. These are three number segments separated by hyphens: four-digit year, two-digit month and two-digit day, and a three-digit number. The case ID is already included in the electronic files, but coders will need to record it when paper scoring.

• For example, articles originally published on January 1, 2002 might be numbered 2002-0101-001, 2002-0101-002, etc. whereas articles published on January 15, 2002 might be numbered 2002-0115-110, 2002-0115-111, etc.

[word] Word count: This column is a record of the total number of words in full article as reported by ProQuest. The word count is already included in the electronic files, but coders will need to record it when paper scoring.

[artype] Article type: This column is a record of whether the abstract/article is a news article, news analysis, or something else. Article type is already included in the electronic files, but coders will need to record it when paper scoring.

- 1 =News article
- 2 = News analysis; military analysis; other type of analysis
- 3 = All others (e.g., obituaries, captions, summaries, etc.)

[date] Article date: This column is a record of the publication date of the article. The article date is already included in the electronic files, but coders will need to record it when paper scoring.

[author] Author: This column is a record of who wrote the full text article. Unless otherwise instructed, coders may ignore this information.

[title] Title: This column is a record of the title of the article. Treat the title as the first sentence of the abstract/article.

[abstract] Abstract: This column represents one of the primary data sources for this project. Coders must read the title and abstract before assessing and recording the elements described below.

[5_parag] First Five Paragraphs: This column is a record of the first five paragraphs of each article. For all national stories coders must cut and paste this material into the data file.

[subject terms] Subject Terms: This column is a record of *NYT*-supplied search terms. Coders do not need to record or alter the information in this column, but may use the subject terms to help establish context for the abstracts and to make decisions about when to consult the full text.

[page #] Page Number: This column is a record of the location of the stories when originally printed. Coders do not need to record or alter the information in this column.

[nation] National: This variable captures whether the abstract/article deals with a topic, issue, policy, problem, or event that is generally considered to be within the domain of the national government, involves an agent or agents of the US government, or has immediate national implications. The idea is to separate issues that involve the federal government from those that do not.

1 = Non-national issue (e.g., state or municipal politics, foreign politics, sports stories, obituaries, entertainment news, etc.)
5 = National issue

Code all national issues as 5. Such abstracts/articles must focus on some element of the federal government or an issue that is within its constitutional domain. To qualify as a national story the abstract/article must focus on rather than merely mention at least one of the following:

• One or more of the three branches of the federal government (executive, legislative, or judicial), including election stories (whether primary or general);

• An officer of these branches, a federal agency, an employee of a federal agency;

• An issue/event with immediate national implications (e.g., the anthrax attacks);

• Clearly deals with the result of federal policy;

• The social, economic, or political situation in Iraq; or

• Stories that deal with Enron specifically or the broader corporate scandals (e.g., Arthur Anderson, Worldcom, Tyco, etc.)

Code all non-national issues as 1. Such stories might include, but are not limited to, state or local issues (economic or social); political issues like local elections or primary contests that are not explicitly linked to national politics; issues involving foreign governments without explicit links to the US, national governing institutions, or political figures; sporting events; technology reporting; entertainment stories; obituaries; etc.

For example, a national story may discuss American military conflict or include quotes from US officials about events in foreign countries, whereas a story about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that does not draw a clear link to the US is non-national. Also, a story about the legislative debate surrounding the passage of No Child Left Behind qualifies as 5 as do stories about the impact of NCLB, even if the emphasis is on how schools are dealing with the mandates. A story about the state of American education that does not clearly reference NCLB or other federal laws qualifies as 1.

The variable [nation] amounts to a filter. When [nation] receives a code of 5, code all other variables per the instructions and when [nation] receives a code of 1, code all other variables as 88.

[domain] Domain: This variable captures whether the article/abstract deals primarily with an international issue or foreign policy versus a domestic issue.

1 = International issues or US foreign policy

5 = Domestic issues

88 = N/A; all others when [nation] = 1
Code the abstract/article as 5 for domestic political issue if it deals with an issue/event that involves domestic politics (i.e., occurs within the territorial borders of the US). Such stories might include, but are not necessarily limited to, action by US officials or the administrative arms of the federal government, domestic intra-governmental relations (e.g., debate between the executive and legislative branches), or domestic inter-governmental relations (i.e., federal-state).

Code the abstract/article as 1 for foreign policy or international issues involving the US if it deals with an issue/event that has implications beyond the country's domestic borders. Such stories may include, but are not necessarily limited to, developments involving the US government and foreign governments or the officials of these governments (e.g., treaty negotiations, diplomacy, etc.); the activities of US intelligence agencies or the military; etc.

Some issues will have both domestic and international implications (e.g., 9/11). For these abstracts code them as 1 if there is any substantive discussion of international issues or US foreign policy and only code them as 5 if the content is wholly domestic.

[threat] Threat level: This variable captures whether the abstract/article mentions the threat of terrorism generally or the Homeland Security Advisory System specifically. The intent of the color-coded terrorism alert system (i.e., HSAS) is to communicate information to government officials, state and local first responders, and the public. However, note that the system was not consistently used. Sometimes discussions of threats referenced the color-coded system whereas other times announcements were made without reference to the color-coded system (i.e., relevant discussions of the threat level are not necessarily confined to mentions of changes in the color-coded system).

Code all abstracts that reference the same threat level change as unique events. For example, if two separate stories discuss the same change, code each mention as a change. Do this regardless of whether the stories appear on the same day or on different days.

Code only those threats that occur between September 2001 and December 2003. Threats discussed outside of our timeframe (e.g., the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center) do not qualify unless they are explicitly linked to contemporary events. If the timing is unclear, reference the full text. If the timing cannot be verified, flag the abstract for verification and let the researcher know ASAP.

1 = No mention of the terror threat level

5 = Mentions the terror threat level

88 = N/A; all others when [nation] = 1

[threatchg] Threat level change: This variable captures whether the abstract/article discusses changes in the threat level or whether the threat of terrorism is said to be increasing, decreasing, or static. That is, even if the abstract/article does not reference a change in the official color-coded HSAS system, the abstract may discuss increased or decreased concern about suspected threats.

1 = Decrease in the HSAS threat level is mentioned or officials comment about a lower threat level.

3 = No change in the HSAS threat level is mentioned.

5 = Increase in the HSAS threat level is mentioned or officials comment about a higher threat level.

88 = N/A; all others when [nation] = 1

99 = N/A; all others when [nation] = 5 and [threat] = 1

[terror] Terror: This variable captures both explicit and implicit mentions of terrorism. *Explicit* mentions include references to "terrorism" as a tactic, an event labeled as such, or other similar terms (e.g., terror, terrorist, terrorist network, terrorist training, terrorist training camp, etc.). *Implicit* mentions of terrorism include discussions of the September 11th attacks, the aftermath of the attacks, the anthrax scare, Osama bin Laden, and al Qaeda, even in the absence of an explicit link to terrorism. The idea is that through the cognitive process of spreading activation,⁵³ terrorism may be associated with particular words. Specifically, we are assuming that those terms most closely associated with the events of September 11th, 2001, may prime thoughts or feelings about terrorism.

1 = Terrorism against the US or its interests is neither implied nor explicitly mentioned 5 = Terrorism against the US is implied and/or explicitly mentioned

88 = N/A; all others when [nation] =1

[Note that coders will need to exercise some discretion in coding terror. Given the focus of the project stories about a mugger "terrorizing" a neighborhood, for example, do not qualify. Code any and all discussions of terrorism or a terrorist group that are not directly linked to the US or US interests as 88.]

[warter] War on terrorism: This variable captures whether the abstract/article deals with the war on terrorism. As defined by the Bush Administration, this includes activities aimed at: 1) identifying, locating, and destroying/defeating terrorists and terrorist organizations, 2) combating those who sponsor, support, and provide sanctuary for terrorists, and 3) defending US citizens and interests domestically and internationally.⁵⁴

If the war on terrorism is referenced in the abstract consult the full text, review the first <u>FIVE</u> paragraphs, and code <u>ALL</u> variables based on the title, the first five paragraphs, and the abstract.

1 =War on terrorism is neither implied nor explicitly mentioned

5 = War on terrorism is implied and/or explicitly mentioned

88 = N/A; all others when [nation] = 1

For the purposes of this project, September 11, 2001, demarcates the beginning of the war on terrorism. Thus, stories about the US government's response (e.g., the 9/11 Commission; the build-up to, the prosecution of, and the aftermath of the Iraq war; etc.) receive a code of 5. Note that phrases such as "war on terrorism," "global war on terrorism," "war in Iraq" or variations of these need not be explicitly included in the text. However, do not code tangential mentions (i.e., using terrorism as a lead-in to an unrelated story). Only code abstracts/articles as being about the war on terrorism if it is a significant component of the story.

⁵³ Anderson, John. 1983. "A Spreading Activation Theory of Memory." *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior.* 22: 261-95.

⁵⁴ http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030214-7.html. Accessed January 6, 2009.

[wartone] War on terrorism tone: This variable captures whether the reporting on the war on terrorism or the prosecution of the war is positive, negative, or neutral. For articles that discuss the war on terrorism, the default code is 3 for neutral/equally negative and positive. Assessment of more or less favorable coverage must be supported by clear evidence in one direction or the other. If the content presented describes a specific failure, mistake, difficulty, or is generally negative in tone, code the abstract as a 1 for mostly negative. If, on the other hand, the content is linked to specific successes, progress, or is generally positive in tone, code the abstract as 5 for mostly positive.

If the war on terrorism is referenced in the abstract consult the full text, review the first <u>FIVE</u> paragraphs, and code <u>ALL</u> variables based on the title, first five paragraphs, and the abstract. If [wartone] cannot be adequately assessed code it as neutral.

1 = Mostly negative
3 = Neutral or equally negative and positive
5 = Mostly positive

88 = N/A; all others when [nation] = 1 99 = N/A; all others when [nation] = 5 and [warterror] = 1

[issues] Issues: This variable captures whether the issue content addressed in the abstracts/articles fits into one or more defined issue categories. Because abstracts may focus on more than one issue/topic, coders will need to be attentive to all substantive issue mentions. Code up to the first three issues considered in each abstract/article using the following categories:

Iraq
National security/defense/ War on Terrorism
Regulation via governmental agencies
Scandals
Social class/groups (women, labor unions, farmers, etc.)
Social issues (e.g., abortion, gay marriage, stem cells,
etc.)
Social programs (e.g., Social Security, Medicare,
Medicaid, etc.)
Taxes
All others

Each issue will have its own column in the data file and all that will need to be recorded is whether the issue(s) is(are) a substantive part of the abstract/article. Code each unique issue as 5 and nonmentions as 1. If there is a national story that does not correspond with the above-specified categories code it as 5 in the "all others" column and include a short description of the issue/content in the adjacent column immediately to the right (i.e., no more than a few words). If it is a nonnational article code all issue variables as 88.

1 = No mention5 = Mentions a particular issue

88 = N/A when [nation] = 1

[isdesc] Issue description: This is an open ended category that should only be used when the issue(s) discussed in the article has been coded as 'all others.' If the issue/topic does not fit logically into at least one these categories, write a short description of the issue (aim to be succinct yet precise; no more than a couple of words).

[presapp] Presidential approval: This variable captures whether the abstract/article discusses public approval of the president or support for how George W. Bush is carrying out his official duties (i.e., job performance) as recorded by public opinion polls. Assessments by campaign operatives, for example, do not count as references to presidential approval unless they also reference a public opinion poll.

1 = No mention of presidential approval

5 = Mentions presidential approval

88 = N/A; all others when [nation] = 1

[prestone] Presidential approval tone: This variable captures whether the abstract/article discusses an increase or decrease in presidential approval. Any such discussion may reference numerical values (e.g., "public approval of the president dropped 3 percentage points...") or it may communicate any change in words (e.g., "public approval of the president increased slightly since Gallup's last opinion poll two weeks ago...").

1 = Decrease in presidential approval3 = Presidential approval remains unchanged5 = Increase in presidential approval

88 = N/A; all others when [nation] = 1 99 = N/A; all others when [nation] = 5

[repfoc] Republican focus: This variable captures whether Republicans are specifically mentioned or quoted in the abstract/article. Do not code the abstract/article as having a Republican focus if, after consulting the full text, the reference is only a passing mention. A passing mention is defined as any mention that is only establishing context or is not explicitly linked to a specific event or development, judgment, or other substantive aspect (see the example below). Direct quotes, however, constitute focus and must be coded as such.

Because all cabinet-level officials and/or political appointees serve at the pleasure of the president, coders should assume that such individuals, whether referred to by name or by title, are de facto Republicans. A list is included at the end of this document identifying many of the applicable positions and appointees. Also, any substantive mention of Congress as an institution, and one not tied to either party, must result in identical focus and favorability scores for both parties.

For example, an abstract/article that discusses the failure to pass legislation while faulting "partisan squabbl[ing]" in Congress would result in partisan focus codes of "yes" for both parties and the favorability would be "mostly negative."⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Shenon, Philip. 2003. "Antiterror Money Stalls in Congress." New York Times, February 13. [2003-0213-096]

If Republican officials or the party is referenced in the abstract consult the full text, review the first <u>FIVE</u> paragraphs, and code <u>ALL</u> variables based on the title, the first five paragraphs, and the abstract. If focus cannot be clearly assessed code the abstract as a non-mention.

[repfav] Republican favorability: If the abstract/article focuses on Republicans, is the tone neutral or does it present them in a more or less positive light? The correct method for assessing tone is to take make the judgment based on the aggregate meaning of the entire abstract/article.

For abstracts/articles that mention Republicans, the default code for this category is 3 for neutral/equally negative and positive. Assessment of more or less favorable coverage must be supported by clear evidence in one direction or the other. If the content deals with a specific policy failure, set-back, problems with a proposed policy, or is generally negative, emphasizing disagreement, uncertainty, criticism, etc., code the abstract as a 1 for mostly negative. If, on the other hand, the information is linked to a specific policy success or is generally positive, emphasizing agreement, certainty, praise, etc., code the abstract as 5 for mostly positive.

In coding the abstracts/articles keep in mind that effective political communication is a key strategy. To that extent, groups whose members are more message-homogeneous, speak with one voice, and do not contradict one another tend to be more effective communicators than discordant groups.

1 = Mostly negative
3 = Neutral or equally negative and positive
5 = Mostly positive
88 = N/A; all others when [nation] = 1

99 = N/A; all others when [nation] = 5 and [repfoc] = 1

[demfoc] Democratic focus: This variable captures whether Democrats are specifically mentioned or quoted in the abstract/article. Do not code the abstract/article as having a Democratic focus if, after consulting the full text, the reference is only a passing mention. A passing mention is defined as any mention that is only establishing context or is not explicitly linked to a specific event or development, judgment, or other substantive aspect (see the example below). Direct quotes, however, constitute focus and must be coded as such.

Again, substantive mention of Congress as an institution, and one not tied to either party, must result in identical focus and favorability scores for both parties (see the example above for repfoc).

If Democratic officials or the party is referenced in the abstract consult the full text, review the first <u>FIVE</u> paragraphs, and code <u>ALL</u> variables based on the title, the first five paragraphs, and the abstract. If focus cannot be clearly assessed code the abstract as a non-mention.

1 = No 5 = Yes88 = N/A; all others when [nation] = 1 **[demfav] Democratic favorability**: If the abstract/article focuses on Democrats, is the tone neutral or does it present them in a more or less positive light? The correct method for assessing tone is to take make the judgment based on the aggregate meaning of the entire abstract/article.

For abstracts/articles that mention Democrats, the default code for this category is 3 for neutral/equally negative and positive. Assessment of more or less favorable coverage must be supported by clear evidence in one direction or the other. If the content deals with a specific policy failure, set-back, problems with a proposed policy, or is generally negative, emphasizing disagreement, uncertainty, criticism, etc., code the abstract as a 1 for mostly negative. If, on the other hand, the information is linked to a specific policy success or is generally positive, emphasizing agreement, certainty, praise, etc., code the abstract as 5 for mostly positive.

In coding the abstracts/articles keep in mind that effective political communication is a key strategy. To that extent, groups whose members are more message-homogeneous, speak with one voice, and do not contradict one another tend to be more effective communicators than discordant groups.

1 = Mostly negative3 = Neutral or equally negative and positive5 = Mostly positive

88 = N/A; all others when [nation] = 1 99 = N/A; all others when [nation] = 5 and [demfoc] = 1

An example of focus and favorability coding: The following sentence appears in a Washington Post article from March of 2002: "The Bush administration has raised questions about Democratic approaches to clear-air regulation, and is reviewing the [Clinton] administration's efforts to require expensive pollution controls at many coal-fired power plants."⁵⁶ Based on this sentence, the abstract/article should be coded as follows:

Republican focus $= 5$	Republican favorability $= 3$
Democratic focus = 5	Democratic favorability $= 1$

This abstract/article makes references to both parties so [repfoc] and [demfoc] receive a code of 5. The code is 3 for [repfav] is because Republicans are used as a source and the quote substantively targets Democrats, and the mention of Republicans is not substantively evaluative. The phrase "efforts to require expensive pollution controls" has a negative tone, thus [demfav] is coded as 1. If, however, this sentence included "policies" rather than "efforts to require expensive pollution controls," the appropriate code would be 3 for [demfav] due to the replacement of the more negative statement with a neutral term.

⁵⁶ Tucker, Neely and Michael Grunwald. 2002, March 27. "US Court Upholds Pollution Standards; Whitman Says EPA Will Support New Air Quality Rules." *Washington Post*, p. 1.

CHAPTER FOUR:

THEORIZING PUBLIC RESPONSES TO FEAR APPEALS

Fear is an important element to be bred in the civilian population.

-- George Creel, circa 1917

The analyses discussed in Chapter 3 show that the likelihood of government-issued terrorism warnings increased as presidential approval decreased, and that the overall tone of prominent news coverage tended to become more positive (less negative) in the days following the warnings relative to the preceding weeks. The first result parallels research showing that potentially fear-inducing appeals are used selectively in the public communications of political leaders (De Castella and McGarty 2011; De Castella, McGarty, and Musgrove 2009; John et al. 2007),⁵⁷ and is consistent with the broader strategic aim—shared by all modern presidents—of maintaining public support, muting criticism, and advancing policies (e.g., Bumiller and Mitchell 2002). The second result fits nicely with empirical work showing the press regularly indexes coverage to the general tenor of elite political discourse in times of crises (Bennett 1990; Hutcheson et al. 2004). However, one problem with many of the aforementioned studies examining the use of fear rhetoric post-9/11 is that they focus largely on the content of the message (e.g., speech) without adequately examining individual-level reactions. If, for example, terrorism warnings were used to frighten the public and scare them into supporting particular policies, the evidence of effectiveness to date remains surprisingly thin.

Ostensibly, the effect of terrorism warnings on presidential approval and policy support were channeled through the news media. To be sure, the content and tone of news reports matters, but to properly study the relationship between terrorism warnings and support for antiterrorism policies, and terrorism warnings and presidential approval, scholars need to ensure that people are actually exposed to relevant messages and then measure their individual reactions.⁵⁸ One way to do this is through experimental methods. Thus, in this chapter and the next, I go beyond the aggregate public opinion and content analysis results summarized in Chapter 3 to consider how individuals respond to mediated terrorism warnings, and whether their reactions relate to presidential approval and policy support.

⁵⁷ For example, Kepel (2004) contends that the phrase "war on terror" was "engineered to heighten fear while simultaneously tapping into the righteous indignation of citizens in 'civilized nations' against barbaric murders who would perpetrate despicable atrocities on innocent victims" (p. 112).

⁵⁸ This argument parallels Doris Graber's (2001) critique of the standard approach to measuring political knowledge. That is, under normal circumstances the textbook-style questions fail to probe for salient information that respondents are likely to have been exposed to recently.

The focus in this chapter is on the literature review and theory, whereas Chapter 5 describes an experiment designed to test the predictions derived below and summarizes the results. Specifically, I focus on two sets of research questions. First, how do people respond to news reports about terrorist threats? What are the mechanisms involved? Are cognitive and affective responses related to antiterrorism policy support and presidential approval in meaningful ways? Second, because terrorist threats often target groups rather than individuals, and shared threat can prime group-based considerations, I ask how one's sense of attachment to the national group (i.e., American national identity) relates to policy endorsement and presidential approval? In other words, are the associations between cognitive and affective responses and support for the president and antiterrorism policies different for strong versus weak identifiers? Are the mechanisms responsible for the association different for these two groups?

The political environment has changed considerably since the 9/11 attacks. In the months following the attacks Americans perceived great threat to the nation, and many people willing supported military responses and domestic security measures. Evaluations of President Bush were linked closely to support for the war on terrorism and, eventually, the war in Iraq. In contrast, President Obama is not as closely associated with the war on terrorism as the topic has been less central to his tenure, and terrorism warnings are no longer ubiquitous as they were in 2002.⁵⁹ Although the topic occasionally returns to the fore, the salience of terrorism has generally decreased over time, supplanted by stories about health care and the economic recession and recovery, most prominently. When terrorism has reemerged in the news the stories have tended to focus on isolated domestic events such as the shooting at Fort Hood in 2009 or the attempted car bombing in Times Square in 2010. Nonetheless, questions about whether the White House exploits potential catastrophes for political gain continue to reverberate (Cooper and Baker 2010), and some people question whether there has been much substantial change in how President Obama has prosecuted the war on terrorism relative to his predecessor (McCrisken 2011). Thus, examining links between

⁵⁹ There are, of course, notable exceptions to the pattern of fewer terrorism-related news stories as the death of Osama bin Laden and the American-born Anwar al Awlaki illustrate.

mediated stories about terrorist threats and political support can provide perspective, and may offer further insight into how people process threatening and potentially fear-inducing messages.

I take seriously the idea that individual differences in how people respond to potentially fearinducing messages matters. It is not simply exposure to, or knowledge of, terrorism warnings that relate to presidential approval or policy endorsement, but how people respond to the threats described in mediated messages about terrorism that matters. In the present chapter I draw on recent political science research as well as research on fear appeals, appraisal theory, and the influence of identity in elaborating a series of hypotheses to help unpack individual-level characteristics and considerations relevant to peoples' responses to potentially fear-inducing messages, and whether those responses are reflected in political support for the administration. Despite a number of high quality studies examining the impact of the 9/11 attacks specifically, the issue of how people respond to potentially-fear inducing messages about terrorism more generally remains relatively underdeveloped (although see Gadarian 2010; Merolla and Zechmeister 2009).⁶⁰ This line of inquiry is particularly relevant, as government officials issued repeated warnings about alleged terrorist threats after 9/11, and in light of ongoing discussion about the nuclear capabilities of North Korea and Iran. If mediated terrorism warnings amount to fear-based persuasive appeals the evidence to date remains thin.

In the next section I summarize my theoretical framework by delineating key concepts and outlining the elements of fear appeals. Scholarship has produced hundreds of studies examining the construction, use, and effectiveness of fear appeals as a persuasive tactic. While a full account of the various models is beyond the scope of the present study, I draw insights from the extended parallel process model (Maloney, Lapinski, and Witte 2011; Witte 1992). The generalizability of this model to the political domain remains largely unexplored. As I elaborate below, there are likely key differences

⁶⁰ At first blush, one place to look for insights is the rally effects literature. These studies make many valuable contributions to our understanding of trends in presidential approval, however, their ability to illuminate the mechanisms involved in individual-level processes is limited due to the diverse criteria associated with the onset of rallies (Brody 1991; Mueller 1973) and a heavy reliance on aggregate data (although see Baum 2002; Edwards and Swenson 1997). The problems associated with inferring individual-level characteristics from aggregate data are well-known (Robinson 1950).

in message components, and the types of considerations and responses relevant to wide-ranging threats such as terrorist attacks compared to personally-targeted health messages, where most fear appeals work is done. However, the EPPM provides a parsimonious point of departure for the examination of potentially fear-inducing messages.

I extend the literature review by considering how politically meaningful factors might be integrated with insights from the fear appeals literature. To the extent that these studies account for affective responses, they focus exclusively on fear. However, accounting for variation in emotional responses is important because not all people will respond to stimuli in the same manner, and different emotions can lead to distinct attitudinal and behavioral responses. I draw on appraisal theory (Lerner and Keltner 2000, 2001; Smith and Ellsworth 1985) to make sense of existing research and outline expectations for how fear and anger may differentially relate to presidential approval and support for antiterrorism policies. In addition, while the fear appeals literature focuses on selfefficacy as a pivotal variable, I argue that trust in government is theoretically more appropriate for understanding how people respond to potentially fear-inducing messages such as terrorism warnings.

Finally, the orthodox approach in the fear appeals literature is to attempt to evoke fear by highlighting relevant personal threats (e.g., Janis and Feshbach 1953; Roskos-Ewoldsen, Yu, and Rhodes 2004; Witte 1994; although see Murray-Johnson 2001). In politics, however, threats are often more applicable to large groups rather than individuals. Thus, in outlining how and why social groups are relevant, I elaborate a social identity perspective (Tajfel [1981] 2010; Tajfel and Turner 1986) in which subjective identification with the national group is emphasized. While the national group is a large and diverse group, it is very much an imagined community (Anderson 2006) and people do feel a part of it (Theiss-Morse 2009). An increasing body of research supports the idea that identification with a group is related to shared emotional experiences (Mackie, Devos, and Smith 2000), even if members do not share the same direct experiences (Branscombe and Wann 1992; Dumont et al. 2003). Thus, mediated terrorist threats may prime group-based considerations, at least for some

people. In short, if the broader fear appeals literature is to offer insights into political behavior, the models may require some extension to adequately capture relevant political factors.

Literature Review

The 9/11 terrorist attacks were sudden and dramatic events characterized by surprise and a lack of provocation. They resulted in the catastrophic loss of thousands of lives, threatened the nation's well-being, and greatly disrupted routines. The American public's response to the attacks is well-documented: presidential approval surged initially (Hetherington and Nelson 2003; Huddy et al. 2005; Schubert Stewart, and Curran 2002) and repeatedly (Willer 2004), attentiveness to the news increased (Althaus 2002) as did knowledge of issues related to 9/11 (Prior 2002). Cynicism about government decreased as concern about international events displaced domestic issues (Chanley 2002), the perceived threat of terrorism increased (Huddy, Khatib, and Capelos 2002), and support for retaliatory military action and domestic counterterrorism efforts increased (Davis and Silver 2004a; Huddy et al. 2005). In contrast, there is less certainty about how the American public responded to the mediated stories about terrorist threats more generally moving away from 9/11.

The political context has changed considerably in the decade since the attacks. All things being equal, we might expect that the farther removed we are from 9/11 the less powerful peoples' reactions to terrorist threats will be in shaping contemporary political attitudes and conditioning behavior. That is, as new problems and issues take precedence our cognitive and emotional reactions to the attacks may lose potency. On the other hand, the magnitude of the attacks may have indelibly conditioned peoples' responses to terrorism-related information. Among the few published studies examining how more general terrorist threats shape political attitudes, evidence indicates that when threat is high people tend to assign more charismatic qualities to the president and other political leaders, and that these assessments indirectly influence retrospective judgments (i.e., assigning blame for policy failure) and voting intentions (Merolla, Ramos, and Zechmeister 2007; Merolla and Zechmeister 2009). Similarly, exposure to emotionally evocative televised news reports is associated

with more hawkish foreign policy views (Gadarian 2010). On balance, then, these studies corroborate earlier work examining reactions to the 9/11 attacks, and show that threat relates to political attitudes in general, and presidential support and foreign policy more specifically.

Together these studies are instructive, however, they are also limited in several ways. One issue with the recent experimental work is that the stimuli still draws on well-known 9/11 imagery making it difficult to disentangle whether responses are to terrorism threats more generally or reminders of the 9/11 attacks specifically. This is an important distinction as the relationship between threat perceptions and attitudes about the war on terrorism have evolved over time. Specifically, the association between President Bush and support for the war on terrorism had weakened considerably by the spring of 2004 (Davis and Silver 2004b), and experimental evidence recorded during the 2008 presidential election shows that while news stories about terrorist threats increased concerns about homeland security they were unrelated to overall candidate preferences (Willer and Adams 2008).⁶¹

A second issue is involves the measurement of the independent variables. Much of the research on individual-level reactions to terrorist threats has focused exclusively on perceived threat without directly assessing emotional responses such as fear or anger on the outcomes of interest, or has relied on blunt measures of perceived threat by using dummy variables to capture condition assignment rather than individual-levels measures of threat. Few studies consider the independent effects of threat and fear (or anxiety) on outcomes. One exception is Huddy et al. (2005) who report that, consistent with their expectations, greater perceived threat and heightened anxiety actually led people to endorse different types of policies. To be sure, threat and fear are related, however, they can lead to distinctly different response tendencies, with important bearing on presidential and policy support and risk assessments (Huddy, Feldman, and Cassese 2007; Huddy et al. 2005; Lerner et al. 2003). Given our increasingly sophisticated understanding of cognitive and emotional processing, and political decision making (e.g., Huddy, Feldman, and Cassese 2007; Marcus, Neuman, and

⁶¹ This result aligns with Goble and Holm's (2009) argument that President Bush was largely responsible for the Republican Party's reputational losses on the issues of national defense and security.

MacKuen 2000), accounting for discrete emotions may contribute valuable insights into how people respond to mediated terrorist threats.

Third, many of these studies examine the impact of terrorist threats on presidential evaluations and foreign policy endorsement, few studies consider support for domestic antiterrorism policies. Considering the overall pattern of results in the published record, changes in the political context, and the limitations already discussed, reexamining the relationships between mediated terrorism warnings, public responses to such messages, and expressed political support is warranted.

Finally, it is worth considering responses to terrorism warnings beyond perceived threat and basic emotions. In particular, trust in government and group identification may be important factors that provides a more complete picture of the relationship between terrorism-related threats and political support. Davis and Silver's (2004a) examination of the trade-off between civil liberties and security under conditions of threat is instructive. Both sociotropic threat and trust in government were related to greater support for safety and security over civil liberties. However, the multiplicative effects indicate that regardless of perceived threat, those scoring low on trust in government were unwilling to endorse a liberties-for-security trade-off. This study suggests that when it comes to potentially fear-inducing threats, especially those that target a large group and involve government responses, accounting for factors such as peoples' general orientations towards government and social identity orientations are important as group-based threats may lead some to perceive greater danger than others. Treating mediated stories about terrorist threats as a type of fear appeal offers some guidance about how factors other than perceived threat may relate to presidential approval and support for antiterrorism policies.

Defining Threat and Fear

Because people use different words to describe and discuss emotional phenomena, an important starting point is to outline terminology. Here I focus briefly on three core concepts: threat, emotion, and fear. Threat is conceptualized as consciously perceived danger in the presence of some aversive stimulus (although more broadly, environmental cues can be subconsciously perceived, see Zajonc 1982). That is, threat as it is examined here is synonymous with the cognitive representation of danger; it is perceived and thought about.

Following Brader (2006) I construe emotions as "physiological and mental dispositions triggered by the brain in response to the perceived significance of a situation or object for an individual's goals" (p. 51). Emotions, then, are conceptually distinct from feelings and affect. Feelings amount to subjective awareness of one's emotional states whereas affect is a general class of phenomena that includes mood, feeling, emotion, and basic human drives (Brader 2006; Fiske and Taylor 1991). Thus, the experience of emotion arises when "people conceptualize their core affective state as an instance of emotion" (Lindquist and Barrett 2008, 898). I am specifically interested in the subjective experience of emotion (or what Brader and others label as "feelings") in response to potentially fear-inducing media messages about terrorist threats.

Appraisal theory provides a useful and compelling description of conditions necessary to elicit the types of discrete emotions commonly associated with terrorist threats. It is a cognitionemotion framework in which the experience of emotion "result[s] from the appraisal of events with respect to their implications for well-being or for the satisfaction of goals, motives, and concerns" (Frijda 1993, 357-58; also see Lazarus 1991; Roseman and Smith 2001) and distinct emotions are hypothesized to be the result of different cognitive appraisal patterns. Smith and Ellsworth (1985) identified six dimensions that account for appraisal patterns, four of which are related to the experience of fear: the relative pleasantness of the event, responsibility for the event, control of the event, and causal attributions. According to this framework, fear is precipitated by an unpleasant event, usually caused by external factors, and is associated with less certainty and a lack of control.⁶² Fear, then, is a specific aversive feeling in response to a danger or threat and is characterized by a

⁶² Much of the research in political science uses the term anxiety rather than fear, although these are related emotional states both arising from perceived danger. Cottam et al. (2010) describe fear as being "associated with a clear and certain threat" and manifests behaviorally in a desire to "avoid or escape the threat" whereas anxiety is "associated with uncertainty about the threat" and how to handle it (p. 53). Despite the conceptual distinction, anxiety and fear are often used interchangeably.

high level of physiological and psychological arousal (Öhamn 2000; Witte 1992). Functionally, the body's energy is focused towards alleviating the cause or fleeing the situation (LeDoux 1996, 45-46; Öhamn 2000). Within the context of persuasive appeals, fear can incentivize the acceptance of a recommended course of action and is related to attitudinal and behavioral changes across a range of issues (Haas, Bagley, and Rogers 1975; Janis and Feshbach 1953; Roser and Thompson 1995; Roskos-Ewoldsen, Yu, and Rhodes 2004; Witte 1994).

Delineating Fear Appeals

The implicit theory of fear appeals is straightforward: persuasion follows fright. In practice, communicators (e.g., presidents) who wish to closely align the audience's opinions with their own (e.g., national security is of vital importance) should structure messages to highlight the unpleasant outcomes (e.g., public safety disruptions) that await if the recommended course of action (e.g., a particular policy solution) is not followed. Historical and contemporary figures from Aristotle and Niccolò Machiavelli to Lee Atwater and Karl Rove have described or used fear as a means to an end, while others such as Jonathan Edwards (the 18th century theologian) and former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop have highlighted the unpleasant consequences of select behaviors for what are arguably more sociotropic purposes. As a persuasive device, the core assumption of fear appeals is that attitudinal or behavioral change follows from the subjective experience of fear, as produced by a severe threat to which the perceiver is highly susceptible.

Fear appeals are usually operationalized in one of two ways. First, the receiver-oriented approach distinguishes between "strong" and "weak" appeals based on the audience's response. Strong appeals are those messages capable of evoking greater fear, whereas messages that elicit less fear qualify as weak appeals. It is the subjective experience, an expressed reaction, rather than the content of the message that defines it as a strong or weak appeal. The source-oriented approach, on the other hand, differentiates strong and weak fear appeals based on the properties of the messages. Appeals containing explicit and vivid descriptions of some danger and the impending negative consequences qualify as strong messages while those with placid descriptions are weak appeals.⁶³ The primary problem with this approach is that it does not account for the audience's response. Even if the face validity of the message is maximized, it is possible for both strong and weak messages to arouse the same degree of fear in the target audience (or no fear at all). In theory these two approaches may result in the same message being classified differently depending on the standard applied. In practice, however, researchers now draw on both approaches. Consistent with the receiver-oriented approach perceived fear is most often gauged using self-report measures whereas source-oriented aspects of are addressed based on the face validity of messages, and empirically using manipulation checks.⁶⁴

The Empirical Record. The theoretical perspectives concerning fear appeals are many, the research is extensive, and as might be expected, the results are varied. Nonetheless, according to O'Keefe (2002), a number of general conclusions offer a reasonably sound summary of this literature.⁶⁵ First, messages with stronger content tend to arouse more fear. One recent meta-analysis found message strength and emotional arousal to be correlated at .30 (Witte and Allen 2000; also see Mongeau 1998). Two explanations for the moderate effect seem to be that individual differences exist in what people find scary, and that communicators may sometimes misjudge what their audiences will find fear-inducing. While this may be interpreted as at least partly corroborating Jorgensen's (1998)

⁶³ For example, in a study of dental hygiene habits, Janis and Feshbach (1953) constructed a "high" fear appeal using graphic content and personalized language (e.g., "If you ever develop an infection of this kind...it will be an extremely serious matter because these infections are really dangerous. They can spread to your eyes, or your heart...and cause secondary infections which may lead to diseases such as arthritic paralysis, kidney damage, or total blindness" [p. 79]). In contrast, a "moderate" appeal emphasized factual information and used impersonal language and a "minimal" appeal avoided discussion of the unfavorable consequences.

⁶⁴ Rogers (1983) found a close correspondence between self-reports and physiological measures (heart rate and skin conductance) but argued that "verbal measure[s] may be more sensitive than the physiological measures" because they are more likely to capture the overall global state and be less volatile (p. 164). The debate about appropriate measurement strategies has only recently been revived in the fear appeals literature (see, e.g., Odroñana et al. 2009).

⁶⁵ Some theorists posit that increasingly strong fear appeals are effective only up to some undefined tipping point, and that as perceived threat becomes too severe the likelihood of persuasion is diminished. To date there is little empirical evidence supporting the curvilinear hypothesis (Witte and Allen 2000, 595, 598).

conclusion that arousing fear in the laboratory is not easy, there is evidence that sufficiently strong messages do generally result in greater fear.

In addition to evoking more fear, stronger appeals tend to be more persuasive than those with weaker content. Specifically, the estimated correlations range between .12 and .17 (Witte and Allen 2000; also see Mongeau 1998), depending on the outcome of interest (attitude change, modifying behavioral intentions, or actually changing behavior). This weaker effect is compatible with the idea that emotional arousal acts as an intervening variable by mediating the effect of the message on persuasive outcomes (O'Keefe 2002; Witte 1992, 1994). More recently, de Hoog, Stroebe, and de Wit's (2007) meta-analysis found greater nuance as different operationalizations of threat perceptions related to different outcomes. Specifically, perceived severity affected attitudes only, whereas both severity and susceptibility judgments affected intentions and behavior.

While the first two conclusions follow from the source-oriented approach, a third conclusion follows from the response-oriented approach. Specifically, messages capable of generating more fear tend to be more persuasive than messages that arouse less fear (Witte and Allen 2000). That is, raconteurs who can scare their audiences often wind up being more persuasive than other communicators, all things being equal. Consistent with these results, if the White House wishes to use fear in an effort to rally greater political support for the president or his policies, themes might emphasize uncertain existential threat or danger for maximum effect.

Theorizing the Role of Fear in Persuasive Communication. A systematic review of the competing theoretical perspectives on fear appeals is beyond the scope of the present project. However, it is relevant to note that the role of fear in studies of persuasion has varied tremendously, ranging from a primary causal factor (Janis and Feshbach 1953) to a non-factor (Rogers 1975).⁶⁶ As Dillard (1994) argues, "Fear was virtually excluded from the study of fear appeals. In…investigations based strongly on the cognitive perspective, fear has been treated as a control variable...*if it is measured at all*" (p. 301,

⁶⁶ For reviews of this expansive literature see de Hoog, Stroebe, and de Wit (2007); Dillard (1994); and Witte (1992), among others.

emphasis added). No longer treated as a "nuisance variable" (Dillard 1994, 301), communications scholars have again hypothesized a central role for fear in their models. In the remainder of this section I focus on the extended parallel process model (EPPM; Witte 1992), a relatively recent addition to this literature, and arguably the model that offers the most robust account to date of both effective and ineffective fear appeals.

The EPPM essentially synthesizes prior models (e.g., Hovland, Janis, and Kelley 1953; Leventhal 1970; Rogers 1975, 1983), and was developed to assist in the elaboration of "effective risk communication messages, specifically messages that elicit adaptive behavioral responses" (McMahan, Witte, and Meyer 1998, 247-48) in the area of health communications.⁶⁷ The EPPM assumes that messages pair threatening information with explicit action recommendations meant to alleviate the threat. In response to messages containing both elements, people are assumed to initiate two distinct appraisals. The first appraisal focuses on the *severity* of the threat (i.e., the seriousness of the negative consequences) and judgments about one's own *susceptibility* (i.e., how likely is it that I will directly experience the consequences). Importantly it is not the actual threat, but the perception of it that matters. If the threat is perceived as sufficiently severe and people believe they are susceptible (i.e., eliciting high fear), they are likely to also appraise focusing on *response efficacy* and *self-efficacy* (Witte 1992). The former assess the message's proscribed course of action, and the latter focuses on the perceiver's ability to perform the action.

Together these two appraisals predict three possible outcomes: (1) an intended effect (i.e., persuasion), (2) an unintended effect (e.g., reactance), and (3) a null effect. When a threat is perceived as severe and personally relevant, people become scared and fear motivates them to take action aimed at reducing arousal if efficacy assessments are sufficiently high. Termed *danger control*, this is primarily a cognitive process whereby people consciously think about ways to deal with the threat and reduce their fear. Conversely, when people perceive a strong threat and low efficacy, *fear control* is activated. This process is driven by emotional arousal, and leads to defensive processing whereby

⁶⁷ In practice, then, tests of the model often take on an applied flavor as many of the studies seek to assess how effective messages components are in bringing about behavioral change.

people seek to control fear by suppressing thoughts about danger which may involve denial (e.g., it cannot happen to me), reactance (e.g., someone is trying to manipulate me), or avoidance (e.g., I'll focus my attention elsewhere) in an effort to minimize fear without confronting the danger. Finally, Witte (1994) argues that if threat and efficacy are perceived to be low (i.e., eliciting low/no fear) processing will cease and the message will be ignored. Developed to explain and predict reactions to fear appeals in health communications, the model has received considerable empirical support (McMahan, Witte, and Meyer 1998; Murray-Johnson et al. 2001; Witte 1994; Wong and Cappella 2009). Overall, when danger control processes dominate (high threat-high efficacy) fear appeals have the most positive effect on attitudes and behaviors, whereas when fear control processes dominate (low threat and low efficacy) messages rarely produce positive change (O'Keefe 2002; Witte and Allen 2000).

The Generalizability of the EPPM to Politics

Despite robust evidence supporting the main predictions of the EPPM, the model's ability to offer insights beyond health communications remains largely untapped. To the extent that fear appeals are used strategically to boost support for presidents and their policies, the model offers insights about the operationalization of perceived threat, the role of fear, and importance of response-related assessments. In the next section I integrate these insights, along with two modifications, with the post-9/11 terrorism literature in political science to specify a series of research hypotheses about how mediated information about terrorist threats relate to threat perceptions, emotional responses, and political support (presidential approval and policy endorsement), and whether one's level of identification with the American people might moderate responses. Before doing so, I briefly address one conceptual issue that may explain, at least partly, why political scientists have not previously considered fear appeals research.

The lack of attention paid to the fear appeals research in political science may involve conceptual differences between the structure of fear appeal messages and the target audience in

health communications versus the political world. Specifically, health messages tend to emphasize the clarity of the action recommendations, as stimulus materials regularly pair threatening communications with clear and explicit messages calling for individuals to take particular courses of action to offset danger. In the latter, clear and effective action recommendations may be more elusive. Politicians, for example, may choose to appeal to fear when they believe it will be to their benefit (De Castella and McGarty 2011; De Castella, McGarty, and Musgrove 2009; Glassner 2004; Hutcheson et al. 2004), but their goals in doing so (i.e., what actions people should take) are not always clear. This is complicated by the fact that while politicians can influence how the press frames issues, their control over the final product (i.e., the presentation) is more limited.

As I discuss in Chapter 2, the development and use of the smoking gun-mushroom cloud metaphor (Isikoff and Corn 2006, 34-35) was used to build support for the eventual invasion of Iraq in March 2003. While the threat was relatively clear (the possibility of a nuclear "mushroom cloud"), the press did not consistently pair it with a clear solution. In the six months between the introduction of the metaphor and the start of the war, discussions involved various forms of sanctions, weapons inspections, or a military campaign. That is, even if this phrase (or even government-issued terrorism warnings) effectively focused the public's attention, we do not know who was more likely to support which policy and to what effect. In applying this model, it requires looking beyond individual behaviors and intentions, and seriously considering how threat perceptions and emotional responses relate to policies and political leaders.

While I argue that this issue complicates the applicability of the EPPM to the study of political behavior in response to mediated stories about terrorist threats, the model nonetheless offers valuable insights for the present study. In particular, the EPPM parsimoniously focuses on a few aspects and offers an account of all possible responses to fear appeals (Maloney, Lapinski, and Witte 2011). The primary focus is on the relationship between perceived threat and fear which, together, condition appraisals about threat reduction strategies. Attitudinal or behavioral change is not guaranteed if a strong threat arouses sufficient fear, however. Rather, additional appraisals in conjunction with perceived threat and fear may provide a more robust account of responses to potentially fear-inducing messages such as mediated terrorist threat warnings.

Model Development and Hypotheses

Explaining Policy Support and Presidential Approval Following Terrorist Threats

<u>Threat Perceptions</u>. One factor that drives people's assessments of danger and relates to policy support and presidential approval within the context of the war on terrorism is perceived threat. For most people it is not the events themselves that drive public responses; rather it is the portrayal of events by the news media that condition threat perceptions. The salience of threats in the political environment is often influenced by the quantity and tone of media coverage, particularly when the danger exists outside of peoples' immediate experiences (e.g., Gross and Aday 2003). As discussed in Chapter 3, agenda setting research shows that topics covered by the news media predict public perceptions of issue importance (Bosso 1989; McCombs 2005; McCombs and Shaw 1972), and that people tend to weight salient information more heavily when they are asked to make political judgments (Krosnick and Kinder 1990). This is the case for specific issues (Iyengar 1991; Iyengar and Kinder 1987), but also for more general orientations. For example, when news reports emphasize political incivility the public becomes more cynical and trust in government decreases (Cappella and Jamieson 1997; Mutz and Reeves 2005). In terms of events, negative events such as catastrophes and crises tend to stand out and be more memorable than less threatening topics (Graber 2007; Newhagen 1998). The portrayal of the 9/11 attacks in particular—with the news media repeatedly showing images and recounting vivid and graphic descriptions of the attacks and aftermath-led to increased threat perceptions (Huddy, Khatib, and Capelos 2002) and greater support for antiterrorism policies (Huddy et al. 2005; Lerner et al. 2003). Beyond the 9/11 attacks themselves, the messages and images associated with terrorism more generally make for compelling news (Nacos 2007). It follows that news outlets may contribute to threat perceptions by not only describing threatening stimuli, but also by making danger more salient and accessible in the public mind. This in

turn conditions support for policy responses aimed at confronting relevant threats. Thus I expect that:

H₁: Greater perceived threat following exposure to a mediated story about terrorism will result in more support for antiterrorism policies.

The fear appeals literature shows that for attitudes, intentions, and behaviors, greater perceived threat leads to persuasion in the direction of the advocated position (Mongeau 1998; Witte and Allen 2000). As summarized above, heightened threat perceptions following the 9/11 attacks were associated with greater political support not only for counterterrorism policies, but also presidential support (Hetherington and Nelson 2003; Huddy et al. 2005; Schubert Stewart, and Curran 2002). Experimental work examining reactions to terrorism-related threats more generally (but still relying on 9/11 imagery) indicates that assessment of leadership following exposure to information about terrorist threats to be more consequential for voting decisions (e.g., Merolla and Zechmeister 2009). Additionally, greater threat perceptions ostensibly played a prominent role in driving public support for President Bush following various terrorist warnings (Willer 2004). While Willer's reliance on aggregate data makes it difficult to say for certain what drove public support for Bush after the terrorism alerts, the pattern of results is consistent with the claim that greater perceived threat resulted in positive gains for the president. However, there is also reason to believe that the link between perceived threat and presidential support may be more tenuous in the absence of a strong and immediate threat (Davis and Silver 2004b; Willer and Adams 2008). Nonetheless, on balance the evidence from many studies relying on diverse methodologies suggests a link between perceived threat and presidential support. I reason that the way terrorism stories are presented by the press influences not only the public's views about appropriate responses, but also their assessment of the president. Thus, I expect that:

H₂: Greater perceived threat following exposure to a mediated story about terrorism should result in higher levels of presidential approval.

<u>Fear and Anger.</u> Beyond the cognitive response of perceived threat, emotional arousal is itself an important consideration in explaining how people respond in threatening situations. Although some

political science research confuses fear and threat (e.g., Gordon and Arian 2001, 210), an account of both types of responses will likely provide for more robust explanations of political phenomena. Threatening messages that induce stronger fear responses tend to be more persuasive (Mongeau 1998; Witte and Allen 2000). Potentially fear-inducing news stories such as those about the 9/11 attacks did not result in uniform responses among the American public, however. Survey evidence indicates that while many Americans perceived greater threat following the attacks, a smaller number of people actually reported feeling fearful. Moreover, these reactions—one cognitive and one affective—can lead to distinctly different patterns of policy endorsements. Among people reporting greater perceived threat, support for retaliatory military action was greater, whereas heightened anxiety was related to isolationist policy options and less support for President Bush's handling of the war on terrorism (Huddy et al. 2005). Logically, threat perceptions and fear responses are related,⁶⁸ so why would perceived threat and anxiety lead to different responses?

One possibility, consistent with the EPPM, is that fear can lead people to either accept or reject a recommended course of action meant to alleviate threat. Recall that danger control processing increases the likelihood that people will change their attitudes and behaviors when a recommended course of action is perceived to be effective in removing a threat. On the other hand, when fear control processing dominates people devote resources to dealing with their fear (e.g., reactance) rather than considering threat reduction strategies (Witte 1992, 1994). In the former, cognitive processing outweighs emotion reactions, and in the latter emotion reactions take precedence. This perspective is consistent with psychological research that indicates that at high levels fear can impair cognitive functioning (Lerner and Keltner 2000, 2001), and underscores that both cognition and affect contribute to our understanding of how people respond to environmental threats (Marcus 2003; Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000). For terrorist threats, then, presidential support and policy endorsements are likely influenced by both cognitive and affective reactions.

⁶⁸ For example, Huddy et al. (2005, 598) report a correlation of .57 for their threat and anxiety scales.

A second explanation is that in addition to fear, people may experience other emotions in response to mediated stories about terrorist threats. The two emotions most relevant in the context of terrorist threats are arguably fear and anger.⁶⁹ These emotions share some similarities in terms of appraisal dimensions. In particular, both fear and anger are unpleasant states and are typically triggered by external threats that are deemed to be personally relevant (Lazarus 1991; Smith and Ellsworth 1985). They differ, however, in terms of perceived control, certainty about the initiating event, and their relationship to action readiness. Anger is more likely to arise when a threat is determined to be personally relevant, there is a high degree of certainty about the perpetrator(s), and the chance of successful retaliation is high. Fear, on the other hand, is expected when perceived control is low and people focus on their inability to cope with threat. Anger and fear also differ in terms of how they relate to risk assessments (Lerner and Keltner 2001, 2001) and approach and avoidance tendencies (Carver and Harmon-Jones 2009; Mackie, Devos, and Smith 2000; Skitka et al. 2006). Specifically, anger leads to optimistic judgments and approach behavior whereas fear leads to more pessimistic assessments and a desire to avoid the threatening stimuli. Given the patterns in risk assessments and action readiness, then, it follows that anger and fear may lead people to different policy endorsements in the face relevant and serious terrorist threats.

Research confirms this conceptual understanding, and demonstrates the differential effect of anger and fear on risk assessments within the context of the war on terrorism and the war in Iraq. In a field experiment conducted shortly after 9/11, Lerner et al. (2003) found that experimentally induced anger lowered risk estimates about future attacks while fear produced greater risk assessments. In addition, those experiencing anger were less likely to engage in precautionary actions relative to fearful respondents. Similarly, peoples' support for offensive military policies (Sadler et al. 2005; Skitka et al. 2006) and assessments of risk and support the war in Iraq (Huddy, Feldman, and Cassese 2007) were influenced more by anger—which led to lower perceived risk and greater support

⁶⁹ Much of the research examining emotion responses to terrorist threats focuses on "negative" emotions. However, Gross, Brewer, and Aday (2009) showed that Americans' response to the 9/11 attacks also included pride and hope, and that these positive emotions predicted more positive evaluations of political institutions.

for confrontation—than by fear. Military responses are risky precisely because they can result in retaliatory action by targeted groups. In contrast, nonoffensive policies such as domestic antiterrorism efforts likely do not involve retaliatory risks. If terrorism warnings consolidated the public's support for President Bush (Willer 2004) and his policies, it may not have been because of fear. In fact, Huddy et al.'s (2005) study suggests that anger rather than fear may have been responsible for rallying support for aggressive policy options (also see Sadler et al. 2005; Skitka et al. 2006).

The fact that fear and anger can lead people in opposite directions has interesting implications for whether people are willing to support governmental responses to threat. In the present study I focus on both offensive (i.e., foreign) and nonoffensive (i.e., domestic) antiterrorism policies. Based on the differences in terms of approach and avoidance tendencies for anger and fear, expressed support for or against antiterrorism policies may depend on discrete emotional responses. I assume the difference will be most pronounced for offensive policies and that:

- H₃: Those people who report greater fear in response to mediated information about terrorist threats should be less likely to support offensive foreign policies.
- H₄: Those people who report greater anger in response to mediated information about terrorist threats should be more likely to endorse offensive foreign policies.

Nonoffensive policies likely involve little risk of retaliation compared to offensive military responses, and previous research indicates that anxiety is unrelated to support for domestic antiterrorism policies (Lerner et al. 2003; Huddy et al. 2005). However, I am not aware of any research examining how anger might relate to support for nonoffensive antiterrorism policies. On one hand, anger may lead people to be less supportive of non-offensive policies because they do not take the fight to the enemy. On the other hand, anger may predict support for surveillance efforts that are believed to decrease the threat posed by terrorist elements. Because both explanations are plausible, I refrain from making a strong prediction; rather, I will explore how anger is related to support for domestic antiterrorism policies.

Many of the studies examining the influence of discrete emotions on political support concentrate on policies rather than presidential approval. However, the very crux of a war time presidency seems to be in the ability to retaliate against perceived aggressors. Extending appraisal theory to politics suggests that surges in presidential approval in the face of a serious threat may be related more to approach emotions such as anger than to avoidance emotions such as fear. If this line of reasoning is accurate, I expect that:

H₅: Those people reporting greater anger in response to mediated information about terrorist threats should be more supportive of the president than those reporting fear.

Additional Considerations for Presidential and Policy Support Following a Terrorist Threat

One of the major components of the stimuli used in most experimental fear appeal studies is that threatening messages are paired with action recommendations meant to alleviate the danger. However, as discussed above, potentially fear-inducing messages in politics are of a different vintage compared to health communication studies. Relatively few fear appeal studies consider the effect of threatening messages in the absence of clear action recommendations. Among those that do, proposed solutions appear to be unnecessary in bringing about attitudinal and behavioral change (Haas, Bagley, and Rogers 1975; Roser and Thompson 1995).⁷⁰ This is an important point in that the absence of specific action recommendations (e.g., a call for specific government action) more closely approximates potentially fear-inducing media reports about terrorist threats as they occur in the real world.

Because potentially fear-inducing messages in politics are rarely paired with clear action recommendations, people are left largely to their own devices in dealing with such messages. Further, in situations that involve uncertain risks to groups rather than individuals, self-efficacy assessments are likely less meaningful as the onus to respond falls squarely on government. Thus, I do not include a specific action recommendation in the experimental stimuli and I do not assess self-efficacy. However, at least two additional considerations are theoretically relevant. Specifically, I consider trust and confidence in government and peoples' attachment to the national group.

⁷⁰ In a recent meta-analysis of 105 studies, efficacy assessments were unrelated to changes in attitudes and behavior (De Hoog, Stroebe, and de Wit 2007).

Trust and Confidence in Government. Trust is an important concept in social exchange and democratic politics, in particular. Although trust can be conceptualized in many ways (Horne 2012; Kramer 1999), I follow the definition that political trust is a "general orientation toward the government predicated upon people's normative expectations of government operation" and whether political institutions are producing desired outcomes (Hetherington and Globetti 2002, 254). While the general decline in political trust is well-known (Dionne 1991; Hetherington 2005; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2001), trust is meaningfully associated with behaviors and attitudes. For example, trust predicts compliance with government demands (Scholz and Lubell 1998) and is related to voters' willingness to support out-of-power political candidates (Hetherington 1999) among other things. Beyond these behavioral outcomes, political trust also relates to attitudes about the proper roles for government (Chanley, Rudolph, and Rahn 2000; Hetherington and Nugent 2001). Of particular relevance are studies indicating that in times of threat and foreign policy crises public evaluations of government tend to increase. For example, public assessments of governing institutions increased during the first Persian Gulf War (Parker 1995) and in the wake of the 9/11 attacks (Chanley 2002; Hetherington and Nelson 2003). Beyond these discrete events, Alford (2001) argues that the pattern of political trust and the proportion of Americans citing foreign policy and defense as the most important issue is consistent with the idea that political trust rises in conjunction with external threats. Based on this evidence, I expect that:

H₆: Greater perceived threat following exposure to a mediated story about terrorism should result in higher levels of trust and confidence in government.

According to Hetherington (2005), the link between threat and increased trust in government is attributable to two factors. First, actual and perceived threats often result in rallies for presidents and political institutions alike. Consistent with the perspective tested presently, Hetherington contends that rallies can occur as the result of credible rhetoric alone. Second, to the extent that people evaluate the military positively and connect these feelings to government (e.g., the president is the commander in chief), trust should increase during periods of danger (see Hetherington 2005, 33-35). In other words, there is spillover in that trust in government relates more or less strongly to different outcomes depending on the context. In terms of government responses to serious threats, then, trust in government acts as a reservoir of support for the government's actions. Research shows that many people willingly supported security policies and accepted certain encroachments on liberties following the 9/11 attacks, and that this was related to trust in government (Davis and Silver 2004a). Of course since the attacks there have been a number of controversies (e.g., the Iraq war, Abu Ghraib, and the NSA's domestic surveillance programs) that have likely weakened the link between trust and policy support. Nonetheless, trust and confidence should still predict one's willingness to grant the government greater leeway in pursuing policy solutions. This suggests that:

- H₇: Trust and confidence in government should be related positively to endorsement of both domestic and foreign antiterrorism policies.
- H₈: Trust and confidence in government should be related positively to presidential approval.

National Identity. There is some evidence that trust and confidence in the federal government may be higher when threats originate from an outgroup rather than the ingroup. Consider that the proportion of the American public expressing "a great deal" or "a good amount" of confidence in the government's ability to prevent terrorist attacks averaged 55 percent in the years before the Oklahoma City bombing and dropped to 36 percent over the two years following (Kuzma 2000). However, the six month average after 9/11 was 60 percent, exceeding the pre-Oklahoma City levels (Huddy, Khatib, and Capelos 2002). The Oklahoma City bombing was carried out by U.S. citizens, and although traumatic, the impact tended to be more local than national whereas the 9/11 attacks were viewed as an affront by "others" and the dominant frame used by the White House and echoed by the news media was "us versus them." In short, when a terrorist threat originates from an outgroup, the tendency is for ingroup members to rally behind the president and political institutions (even if the government technically failed to prevent an attack).

While the fear appeals literature offers important insights into how different aspects of threatening messages relate to attitudes and behaviors, it is limited when applied to politics in that the types of messages examined tend to deal with threats to the individual rather than the group. Among the few available fear appeals studies that examine whether group-based considerations matter, the results are mixed (Murray-Johnson et al. 2001; Rhodes and Wolitski 1990; Witte and Allen 2000). Recent political science research, however, reports that important differences emerge when sociotropic threat is distinguished from personal threat. For example, greater perceived threat to the nation following 9/11 was associated with more pessimistic economic predictions and disrupted travel plans whereas personal threat did not (Huddy et al. 2002), and a similar pattern was found for support for security measures versus civil liberties (Davis and Silver 2004a). Extrapolating from this work showing that sociotropic threat uniquely relates to political attitudes and behaviors, I also examine whether national identity contributes to our understanding of how people respond to potentially fear-inducing messages.

As I argue above, relatively few political science studies have examined how people respond to terrorist threats other than the 9/11 attacks. Even fewer studies, however, have directly assessed the impact of national identity on responses to terrorist threats. When the news media concentrates on a serious threat with the potential to impact a large group, the chance that people will coalesce around a shared identity increases. For example, experimental work examining identity within the context of the 9/11 attacks showed that priming a shared identity that included American victims led to more powerful fear responses among students in the Netherlands and Belgium (Dumont et al. 2003). Further, the rhetoric of political elites may help to perpetuate a sense of a shared purpose or common fate. In the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks government officials routinely emphasized core American values while demonizing the enemy, and the press tended to reflect these themes uncritically (Hutcheson et al. 2004). Given the nature of threats in the political environment at that time, and the 'us versus them' frame that dominated political discourse, I draw on social identity theory to postulate how national identity may influence individuals' responses to mediated information about terrorist threats. Although national identity opens a whole vista of theoretical possibilities, I limit my investigation to the primary outcomes of interest: policy endorsements and presidential approval.

Political scientists have increasingly turned to social identity theory to make sense of group membership, identification, and political behavior (Green et al. 2002; Greene 1999; Theiss-Morse 2009). This framework is a situationist approach to understanding how seeing one's self as a member of a group helps to define the self and influence behavior (Tajfel and Turner 1986). Formally, social identity includes "that *part* of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel [1981] 2010, 255, emphasis in original). Moreover, it is assumed that as "people define themselves in terms of a shared social category membership, there is a perceptual accentuation of intragroup similarities and intergroup differences on relevant correlated dimensions" (Turner 1999, 11). While most people have many different identities (Brewer 2001), national identity is the most pertinent in the present context.

I follow Theiss-Morse's (2009, 23) lead in construing national identity as a perceived closeness to others, or "feeling part of one's national group...and holding that national group as part of one's sense of self."⁷¹ Identification with a group, then, is subjective and involves an internalized sense of belonging which is distinct from mere membership (Huddy 2003). This is a critical insight because it provides an opportunity to extend the fear appeals literature, which has yet to find consistent effects for individual difference variables such as group membership on attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (Witte and Allen 2000). One possible explanation for this is that it is the choice to identify with similar others rather than mere membership that imbues the group with

⁷¹ Although national identity and patriotism are related concepts (Huddy and Khatib 2007), the theoretical differences are not always made clear in the literature (Theiss-Morse 2009, 23-26). Kam and Ramos (2008), for example, offer a compelling account for the decline in presidential support following rally events. Key to their explanation is the relative salience of national identity and partisanship. However, in operationalizing national identity they use two questions that measure patriotism: (1) "Do you consider yourself strongly patriotic, somewhat patriotic, or not very patriotic?" and (2) "How proud are you to be an American—extremely proud, very proud, moderately proud, only a little proud, or not at all proud?" (see p. 644).

psychological meaning, leads people to accentuate intragroup similarities, conform to group norms, and engenders a sense of community.

The choice to identify with a group, then, is a matter of degree, not kind. That is, identification varies between individuals in terms of their strength of commitment, and such variation likely has important consequences for attitudes and behavior (Deaux 2000; Terry and Hogg 1996), particularly if an affront to the group leads to emotional arousal (Mackie, Devos, and Smith 2000). High identifiers tend to act and think in terms of group membership, are more likely to stick by the group, defend it during hard times, and help fellow members (Doosje, Ellemers, and Spears 1999; Theiss-Morse 2009). The strength of one's commitment to the group is of particular importance for political groups precisely because people affiliate with such groups by choice (Huddy 2003). As Theiss-Morse (2009) argues, national groups are a type of political group. At the extreme end, the fact that people are willing to die for their country demonstrates that national groups can foster very strong attachments. But even in less intense situations, strong identifiers may react differently than weak identifiers in the face of threat. For example, strong American identifiers are more likely to experience physiological arousal while watching a fellow national lose a sporting competition and subsequently make more negative attributions about the outgroup (Branscombe and Wann 1992). Research in the intergroup emotions framework also shows that approach emotions such as anger increase the tendency of strong identifiers to want to confront the outgroup whereas anxiety does not (Mackie, Devos, and Smith 2000; Smith, Seger, and Mackie 2007). In other words, these empirical patterns suggest that because strong identifiers more consistently think and feel in terms of the group, how they respond to potentially fear-inducing messages should be distinct from weak identifiers. This leads me to expect that:

H₉: Strong American identifiers will perceive more threat, and experience higher levels of fear and anger than weak national identifiers.

Because the group's well-being is an integral part of the self, strong identifiers want to see the group do well and persevere. Moreover, when an outgroup threatens the ingroup, strong identifiers are much more likely to defend their group if not move against the outgroup (Mackie, Devos, and Smith 2000). To the extent that strong identifiers perceive terrorist threats as threats to their ingroup, I expect them to more readily endorse offensive measures intended to retaliate against the likely perpetrators.

H₁₀: Strong American identifiers will be more supportive of offensive antiterrorism policies than weak identifiers.

Because domestic antiterrorism policies do not focus as clearly on an outgroup as do military responses, strong identifiers may be less inclined to endorse domestically-targeted antiterrorism policies relative to weak identifiers. However, if these policies are perceived as keeping the ingroup safe, strong identifiers may be more supportive of them. While I refrain from making a strong prediction here, I nonetheless will examine the relationship between national identity and domestic antiterrorism policies.

Finally, the relationship between national identity and presidential support may be difficult to predict. On one hand, the president serves as a symbolic representative of the nation and its people, particularly in times of crisis. On the other hand, the executive branch is a part of government, and the president is the head of a political party. All things being equal, these different ways of viewing the presidency would seem to result in divergent evaluations. In times of crises, however, the evidence tends to comport with the former rather than the latter (Brody 1991; Kam and Ramos 2008; Mueller 1973). If presidents are at least temporarily viewed as representative of the national people in times of threat, I expect strong national identifiers to be more supportive of the president than weak identifiers in the face of a strong mediated threat message.

H₁₁: People who identify strongly with national group (Americans) may be more supportive of the president than weak identifiers in the face of a mediated terrorist threat.

Again, despite recent and high quality studies examining responses to different types of terrorism-related threats, and how cognitive and emotional responses relate to policy endorsements (e.g., Gadarian 2010; Huddy et al. 2002; Huddy et al. 2005), we know comparatively less about how they relate to presidential approval and domestic policies. In addition, evidence as to whether ones' sense of national identity relates to their interpretation of potentially fear-inducing events such as terrorist threats is even thinner. It will be interesting to see whether the relationship between perceived threat and political support in the aftermath of 9/11 persists under a different administration or whether response tendencies shift as the war on terrorism progresses (e.g., Davis and Silver 2004b; Willer and Adams 2008). To be sure, the salience of terrorism has changed considerably since the 9/11 attacks, however, these issues remain vitally important in contemporary politics. I now turn to the empirical assessments the above-outlined hypotheses.

CHAPTER FIVE:

EXPERIMENTAL METHODS AND RESULTS

The terror event represents a powerful form of leverage simply because of its media value.

-- Robert H. Kupperman, 1982

The aim of this chapter is to test the hypotheses enumerated in Chapter 4. In doing so I use experimental methods to first assess how people respond to potentially fear-inducing messages dealing with terrorism-related threats and the government's ability to effectively minimize such threats. Specifically, I consider how two cognitive responses (perceived threat and trust and confidence in government) and two emotional responses (fear and anger) relate to the experimental manipulations. I then use the cognitive and affective measures to examine who is more likely to endorse offensive and nonoffensive antiterrorism policies and express greater presidential approval. Finally, because the nature of terrorist threats within the American political context pose dangers to the national group, I consider what role, if any, American national identity may play in moderating emotional and cognitive response to terrorism-based threat.

Methods

The administration of the surveys and experiments was carried out using Qualtrics, an online computer-based survey system. The recruitment procedure described that the researcher sought to investigate what people learn about contemporary events as they are discussed by new media relative to traditional media outlets. Specifically, the recruitment script and instructions indicated that due to recent and ongoing changes in the media marketplace, some people have expressed concern about the relative quality of information available to news consumers and that while previous research found important differences in the information provided, additional research is needed to examine further the implications of the initial findings.

College students were sampled from one mid-sized state university in the Pacific Northwest and one large Midwestern university during the spring and summer of 2010. At the former institution recruitment was carried out in-person (i.e., in-class announcements) and via email, and sampled students from introductory psychology and political science classes. Recruitment at the latter occurred via email and sampled students from political science classes. All potential participants received an email message announcing the survey and describing the parameters, participation
requirements, and compensation. A follow-up email sent a few days later stipulated the time frame over which the survey would be available and included the URL address to access the experimental materials. A final email was also sent approximately 48 hours prior to the close of the experiment reminding students of the opportunity and deadline. No students were coerced into participating.⁷²

Sample. A total of 377 participants submitted surveys. Visual inspection of the data indicated that non-response on some key items could lead to modest variation in the sample sizes across different conditions. In particular, the affective response items displayed both non-response (i.e., missing data) and response invariance (i.e., the same value, usually 0, entered for each of the ten discrete emotions). Thirty-seven observations characterized by invariant responses were removed from the data file used in the reported analyses.⁷³ In addition, adjustments were made for missing data on multi-item scale responses. Following Marcus et al. (1995, see pp. 245-46) I used a mean value substitution strategy. Specifically, in order to preserve as many observations as possible I substituted mean values for missing values, but only when a majority of scale items had a valid response. For example, four items were included in the post-test survey to assess emotions associated with anger. In order to recode missing values for any one item, valid responses on each of the other three items was mandatory. Similarly, three items recorded emotions associated with fear. In order to substitute the mean score for any one missing value, the other two items each needed to have valid responses.⁷⁴ This approach to handling partially missing data saved an additional 18 responses, resulting in a final sample of 340.

Demographic information for the whole sample and select subsets of the sample based on location and experimental condition is summarized in Table 5.1. Considering the populations from which the sample was drawn, the overall demographic portrait is about what we might expect. That

⁷² All students had an opportunity to earn extra credit by either participating in the experiment or completing an alternate extra credit assignment. For those electing to participate in the study, informed consent materials indicated that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. Finally, the exact value of the extra credit varied from class-to-class because it was determined by each instructor.

⁷³ To help ensure that participants were paying attention to the survey I embedded a single item to test whether participants were paying attention. Specifically, the prompt instructed participants to enter a specific numerical value. Two participants failed to give the requested response, and were thus removed from all analyses.
⁷⁴ If, for example, a participant indicated a value of 60 for "worried" and 70 for "afraid," but a score for

[&]quot;scared" was not recorded, I recoded the missing value as 65.

is, the mean age is 20.7 years, largely white (91.2 percent), and about evenly balanced between males and females (51.6 and 48.4, respectively). Also, the sample is nearly three times more Democratic (46.2 percent) and liberal (47.1 percent) than Republican (15.9 percent) and conservative (17.1 percent). Geographic location contributes to modest demographic differences and significant variation in professed political orientations. Comparing the Northwest and Midwest subsamples indicates marginally significant differences for age, F(1, 334) = 3.07, p = .081 and sex F(1, 338) =3.60, p = .059 with the Northwest sample slightly younger and comprised of more females. These subsamples are also different in terms of their professed partisanship. To ensure adequate groupings on political variables I created dichotomous variables to capture partisan (Republicans and Democrats) and ideological (conservatives and liberals) identification compared to self-professed non-partisans and ideological moderates.⁷⁵ On balance, the subsample from the Midwest was more Republican F(1, 338) = 34.29, p < .001 and conservative F(1, 338) = 27.70, p < .001 whereas the Northwest sample was more Democratic F(1, 338) = 15.38, p < .001 and liberal F(1, 338) = 24.26, p < .001.

[Insert Table 5.1 about here]

Finally, I also assessed differences in demographic and political characteristics across the experimental conditions (details of the experimental conditions are provided below). Here the only significant difference to emerge is on sex F(4, 335) = 2.86, p = .024. Specifically, the proportion of females in the low threat-uncertain coping and control conditions are significantly lower relative to the other three conditions. In light of the differences associated with geographic location and sex in the subsamples I control for both using dummy variables in the multivariate analyses below.

Experimental Manipulation

⁷⁵ For the Republican dummy variable I coded all strong and weak Republicans as 1 and all others as 0 and for the Democratic dummy variable I coded all strong and weak Democrats as 1 and all others as 0. Non-partisans thus serve as the reference category. The same approach was employed in creating the conservative and liberal dummy variables (i.e., ideological moderates are the reference category).

The study design consisted of two surveys with one of four possible manufactured newspaper articles embedded between the pre- and post-tests. All participants were randomly assigned to one of five possible conditions: four experimental scenarios and one control condition. The experimental conditions involved the systematic manipulation of information about the likelihood of a domestic terrorist attack (high versus low threat) and the ability of the federal government to adequately combat the threat (effective versus ineffective coping). Thus, the 2 x 2 factorial design yields four distinct groupings: high threat-uncertain coping (N = 70), high threat-certain coping (N = 71), low-threat-uncertain coping (N = 67), and low threat-certain coping (N = 69). The control condition was similarly sized (N = 63).

All participants received an email message announcing the availability of the study and one of five possible URL addresses (each condition had a unique address). Once the hyperlink was activated a webpage opened with instructions reiterating the cover story for the study and explained that everyone would complete two questionnaires, that most participants would be asked to read either one newspaper article or blog entry dealing with a current political issue, and that the topic would be selected based on their answers to a set of general policy questions on the pretest.⁷⁶ The pre-test consisted of questions about media use, contemporary issues, political knowledge, American identity, and general attitudes about government. The post-test was designed to capture affective and cognitive reactions to the article, political attitudes about government policies and presidential performance, and demographics. All participants assigned to one of the experimental conditions read one article on terrorism, and the content varied in terms of descriptions about the likelihood of another terrorist attack within the United States, and the effectiveness of the federal government's response to previous threats. Participants assigned to the control group did not read an article.

The choice to rely on text rather than audiovisual stimuli was purposeful. According to Graber (2007), it is "the magnitude of a danger related in the story, rather than its visual and vocal aspects, [that] seems to be the most important aspect of arousal" (p. 289). To be sure, there is much

⁷⁶ The issues covered in the pre-test included terrorism, health care, the economy, and the war in Afghanistan.

diversity in the fear appeals literature overall with researchers using verbal appeals (Roskos-Ewoldsen, Yu, and Rhodes 2004), audiovisual messages (Janis and Feshbach 1953; Roser and Thompson 1995), dramatic audio recordings (LaTour and Rotfeld 1997), and textual materials (Calantone and Warshaw 1985; Hass, Bagley, and Rogers 1975; McMahan, Witte, and Meyer 1998; Witte 1994). However, the EPPM has almost exclusively been tested using written messages. In fact, in a recent twenty-year assessment, only a single published study was identified as using visual messages to test predictions derived from the EPPM (Maloney, Lapinski, and Witte 2011, 213). Equally as important, by utilizing printed materials I maintain consistency with the stimulus across the content analysis on *New York Times* coverage reported in Chapter 3 and the experiment.

With respect to the content of the articles, subjects needed to interpret the information as credible and realistic. To that end, I drew heavily on actual news reports from the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, as well as publicly available government reports. Beyond surveying recent news and reports, I also examined the full text of all front page *New York Times* articles reporting on terrorism warnings collected for the content analysis. These articles tended to display a common organizational framework with the first part of the article concentrating on the nature of the threat and descriptions of the information that led government officials to issue the warning. In the second half of the articles, the content often shifted to a discussion of specific actions taken by the government, and whether these efforts were perceived to be effective.⁷⁷

The finished product represented an amalgamation of details from front page stories recently published by national news outlets, and was organized to match the format of *New York Times* articles during the period of greatest concern. To the extent that I exercised editorial discretion in modifying actual newspaper content, it focused primarily on establishing consistency and flow of the story, and changing dates to maintain the integrity and relevance of time-sensitive material. In constructing the articles I concentrated on drafting four distinct sections or "halves" that were then combined to create the finished articles. This means that while each distinct half (high threat, low threat, certain

⁷⁷ As discussed in Chapter 3 (see p. 70), visual inspection of these articles indicated that the likelihood of critical commentary was more common when terrorism warnings piled up in close proximity to one another.

coping, and uncertain coping) is identical in the two articles it appears in, no two articles are exactly the same length.⁷⁸ In addition, each article has a unique title meant to draw attention to a strong or weak threat and to suggest the government's ability to deal with such threats. The high threat-certain coping article is the longest (849 words), followed by the high threat-uncertain coping (809 words), the low threat-certain coping article (707 words).⁷⁹

In addition to the text, each article included one of two pictures. The pictures were chosen to enhance the realism of the article, but also with the goal of helping to elicit affective responses (Brader 2006; Huddy and Gunnthorsdottir 2000). The two high threat articles included a picture taken shortly after a terrorist attack targeting a train. The image showed the bodies of a number of victims scattered throughout the background while the foreground showed a man sitting on the ground with a pained expression on his face. The two low threat articles featured a photograph of an adolescent girl wearing a hijāb and peering out from behind a make-shift American flag. In the background, other women and a little boy are also holding American flags and smiling. The caption for each picture was also modified to reflect the overall message of each respective article. The full text of each article is included in Appendix 5.2.

<u>Threat Information</u>. The content of the high threat articles began with a strong declarative statement asserting a growing threat of another terrorist attack, and the enumeration of a series of terrorism-related events that had recently been featured prominently in news. The article then went on to discuss an intelligence report and related congressional testimony in which the Director of National Intelligence asserts the certainty of another attempted attack in the United States within the next six months. The low threat articles also began with a summary of recent terrorist threats. However, the

⁷⁸ The threat portion always precedes the coping portion regardless of the manipulation. That is, I followed the logical order of a fear appeal by leading with the threatening message.

⁷⁹ One risk in drafting relatively longer articles rather than relying on succinct and direct messages is that subjects may be overloaded with details that actually dilute the components of the stimulus meant to arouse particular responses. However, the experimental articles are shorter than the average *New York Times* article. Among those used in the content analysis described in Chapter 3, all of the experimental articles are within approximately one standard deviation of the average (M = 1,484, SD = 652).

emphasis was on the fact that the specific attempts were unsuccessful and the alleged perpetrators were apprehended. The articles went on to explain that the terrorist threat has decreased dramatically since 9/11, that the tactics used by terrorists are increasingly discredited in the Muslim world, and that popular support for groups such as al Qaeda is diminishing throughout the Middle East. The distinction between low threat and high threat is also meant to approximate some of the distinctions that played into the coding of tone in the content analysis. Specifically, low threat approximates positive tone and high threat is meant to capture negative tone.

<u>Coping Information</u>. The content of the coping material began by focusing on the U.S. government's efforts to prevent future attacks, both domestically and in collaboration with foreign governments. In the uncertain coping condition experts and officials were quoted as expressing skepticism about the likelihood that contemporary antiterrorism efforts will improve safety or prevent future attacks. In the certain coping condition the government was portrayed as taking "proactive" steps to combat terrorist threats both domestically and internationally, and the content of quoted sources was modified to reflect a more positive assessment of contemporary counterterrorism efforts. As with threat, the distinction between effective and ineffective coping is meant to capture some of the elements that were included in the coding of positive and negative tone in the content analysis. Specifically, governmental efforts portrayed as effective approximate a positive tone, whereas ineffective efforts tend to be negative.

Measures

Each of the four independent variables and one of the dependent variables described below are comprised of multiple survey items. In the analyses reported below, all variables were converted to range from 0 to 1 to facilitate comparison across variables and models. Dependent Variables. The antiterrorism policies examined below weight more heavily towards nonoffensive antiterrorism efforts than offensive options. This decision is due to the fact that as a presidential candidate Barack Obama took a decidedly different approach to foreign policy in general and the war on terrorism specifically, relative to George W. Bush. Specifically, he promised to end direct military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, and as president he signed an executive order banning harsh interrogation tactics and sought to rebuild international alliances that had frayed after 9/11. That is, on many of the most visible policy options Obama sought to distinguish himself from Bush. Given these and other changes in the war on terrorism, many of the policy options used in the present investigation focus on nonoffensive (i.e., domestic) antiterrorism efforts rather than offensive (i.e., military) actions. This decision reflects the reality of the political environment at the time of data collection. Specifically, in the months preceding the study a number of national news stories focused on isolated acts of terrorism or attempted attacks (e.g., the shooting at Fort Hood, TX in November 2009; the attempted bombing on an international flight destined for Detroit, MI on Christmas day 2009; and the Times Square bombing plot in May 2010). In response to these incidents much of the discussion about preventing future attacks focused on nonoffensive efforts such as improvements to airport security or relaxing civil liberties protections associated with evidence gathering. In constructing the survey instrument in early 2010, I identified common questions about various antiterrorism policies used by reputable polling organizations over the previous three month period.

In the analysis I focus on four domestic antiterrorism policy options and one foreign policy option. The defining feature of the domestic items is that all four deal with the security-liberty trade-off. Specifically, respondents were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale whether they opposed or favored: (1) relaxing provisions related to obtaining search warrants, (2) prohibiting the media from reporting on sensitive national security issues, (3) compelling suspected terrorists to provide information, and (4) permitting indefinite detention of alleged terrorists. These items were combined to create a single scale measuring *domestic policy endorsement* (alpha = .688, M = .347, SD = .215). To address *foreign policy endorsement* I used one question about support for the use of unmanned drone

airplanes in foreign countries (M = .506, SD = .323). The use of targeted killings, often carried out using unmanned drones, in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other countries was expanded under President Obama, and it was not without criticism. The concerns related to this policy option touch on human rights and humanitarian law, and involve heightened risk to civilians (Miller 2011; O'Connell 2012). Unfortunately, I have no way of assessing whether participants were sensitive to this debate or not.

Finally, I used a single item mirroring Gallup's presidential job approval question to measure *presidential approval*. Specifically, participants were asked, "Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president?" However, rather than relying on a dichotomous "approve" or "disapprove" range, responses were recorded on a 100-point scale (M = .617, SD = .250).⁸⁰ Interpreting the mean value as a proportional measure of presidential approval indicates that the sample demonstrated a greater tendency towards presidential approval than the average survey respondent. For the sake of comparison, Gallup's aggregate presidential approval numbers hovered between 51 and 44 percent between April and July 2010.

Independent Variables. To the extent that political scientists have considered how terrorist threats relate to political opinions and behavior, much of the work has concentrated on *threat perception*, or more specifically, beliefs about the severity of the threat. Consistent with the more robust approach recommended in the EPPM literature participants in the present study were asked to respond to questions designed to measure both severity and susceptibility judgments. Specifically, severity was assessed with four questions about how "severe" the threat was for the American people and their way of life, whether terrorism posed a "serious" threat to the American people's economic wellbeing, and whether it poses a "significant" threat to the nation. Susceptibility was assessed with two questions about the "risk" and "likelihood" of another terrorist attack (see Appendix 5.3 for the wording of the questions, and descriptive statistics for each item). Participants were asked to indicate how strongly they agreed with each statement along a 7-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree"

⁸⁰ Converting the continuous approval measure to a dichotomous measure yields an overall approval rating of 67.1 percent.

on the low end to "strongly agree" on the high end for each question. Although these two concepts are conceptually distinct, the conventional approach in the EPPM literature is to create a single scale. The data indicates these six items hang together quite well (alpha = .818, M = .620, SD = .186).

While a number of studies provide valuable insights into the relationship between threat and policy endorsement in the context of the war on terrorism, many of these studies are correlational (Huddy et al. 2005; Huddy et al. 2007; Sadler et al. 2005; Skitka et al. 2006), and even the experimental studies are limited in how they inform the present study. The experimental research discussed previously examined threat without directly accounting for emotions, or by relying on indirect measures of emotional responses (Gadarian 2010; Merolla, Ramos, and Zechmeister 2007; Merolla and Zechmeister 2009). To the extent that experimental studies assess emotion they do so with a dichotomous variable capturing each participant's assigned experimental condition rather than a direct measure of affective responses. In effect, this strategy treats all participants in each condition as the same rather than considering individual differences. However, when researchers include direct measures of emotional responses these variables are more consequential as the dichotomous condition typically becomes statistically insignificant (Lerner et al. 2003). This is consistent with the idea that different people find different things arousing (LaTour and Rotfeld 1997) and underscores my argument that it is important to account for individual variation in emotional responses as different people do not respond to the stimuli in the same way.⁸¹

To capture individual differences in emotional responses to each assigned article, all experimental participants were asked to respond to a series of prompts about their feelings in responses to the article. Consistent with my argument that group-based considerations may be paramount in the face of terrorist threat, the prompt stated that "Now that you have read the article, we would like to have you answer a series of questions about it. We are specifically interested in your opinions and feelings about the issue and your reaction to the information included... to what extent

⁸¹ This critique also applies to those experimental studies examining perceived threat. By using a dichotomous condition variable rather than individuals' actual responses, researchers assume that threat conditions affect all participants equally.

do you, as an American, feel each of the following emotions?" Participants rated their emotional state for 10 specific feelings using the "slider format" (Marcus, MacKuen, and Neuman 2010).⁸² The measurement of possible responses is continuous, ranging from 0 ("not at all...") to 100 ("very..."). The emotion labels used included scared, worried, afraid, enthusiastic, hopeful, proud, hateful, angry, bitter, and resentful. Consistent with previous research (Marcus, MacKuen, and Neuman 2010), these items were used to create multi-item indexes capturing fear, anger, and enthusiasm. Consistent with the hypotheses in Chapter 4, I only consider the fear and anger scales in the analyses below.⁸³ The *fear scale* consisted of scared, worried, and afraid (alpha = .908, M = .388, SD = .241) and the *anger scale* consisted of hateful, angry, bitter, and resentful (alpha = .888, M = .353, SD = .222).

Trust and confidence in the federal government was measured using two context-specific questions. The first question asked, "When it comes to protecting Americans, in your view, how much progress has the United States government made since the September 11th terrorist attacks?" The second question asked, "How much confidence do you have in the ability of the United States government to protect the American people from future terrorist attacks?" Response options included, in ascending order, "none at all," "not very much," "a fair amount," and "a great deal." As expected, the items are strongly related and therefore were combined to create a *confidence in government* scale (alpha = .680, M = .658, SD = .187). High scores represent greater trust and confidence.

I measured *American identity* with four questions designed to capture identification with the national group. Each item required participants to indicate on a 7-point scale whether they strongly disagreed or strongly agreed with each statement. One question captured identification with the national group in a general sense by asking participants to record whether "I am a person who identifies with the American people." The other questions each capture one of the three conceptually

⁸² The standard approach for EPPM scholars is to use a slightly larger set of affective labels (N=15) to measure emotional responses to experimental stimuli. Also, the measurement strategy typically relies on a seven-point scale ranging from "not at all..." to "very much..."

⁸³ Enthusiasm follows a linear pattern across the experimental conditions. That is, enthusiasm is highest in the low threat-certain coping condition, lower in the low threat-uncertain coping and high threat-certain coping conditions, and lowest in the high threat-uncertain coping condition. The mean level of enthusiasm in the control group falls approximately half-way between the two low threat conditions.

distinct dimensions of identity (Tajfel [1981] 2010). Measurement of the cognitive dimension was assessed by asking whether "Being an American is important to the way I think of myself as a person," and the affective dimension was measured with "I am a person who feels strong ties to the American people." Finally, participants had an opportunity to provide an overall evaluative endorsement by responding to the prompt "Overall, I think the American people are a great group of people."⁸⁴ These four items were then combined to create an American identity score for each participant (alpha = .864, M = .647, SD = .214). Higher scores represent stronger identification.

<u>Control Variables.</u> I use six control variables in the multivariate analyses reported below. First, I include two dummy variables to distinguish between the *threat conditions* (high threat = 1) and *coping conditions* (ineffective = 1). As mentioned, due to some demographic differences across the experimental conditions (see Table 5.1), I included dummy variables for *sex* (female = 1) and *geographic location* (Pacific Northwest = 1). In addition, I include two dummy variables to capture partisan identification (Republican = 1 and Democrat = 1) with non-partisans as the omitted category (see fn. 4 above for details on the coding of the dummy variables).

Finally, following Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) and others, I used factual questions to capture *political knowledge*. Specifically, participants were asked to identify the branch of government with final responsibility in determining the constitutionality of laws, which branch nominates judges to the federal courts, and which party controlled the House. Unfortunately the internal consistency of these items is weak (alpha = .461), and therefore I do not use *political knowledge* in the hypothesis tests reported below. However, I do examine the concept as an extra descriptive variable in exploring who

⁸⁴ These items are borrowed from an earlier version of Theiss-Morse's (2009) American Identity Scale. While the identification, cognitive, and affective items do not differ substantively, I elected to use a single question to measure evaluative assessments of the American people rather than a series of polar adjectives capturing whether the extent to which Americans are perceived to be trustworthy-untrustworthy, selfish-unselfish, tolerant-intolerant, and informed-uninformed. Using a national random sample survey administered in early 2002 Theiss-Morse reports similar descriptive statistics for the updated version of the scale (alpha = .65, M = .73, and SD = .15).

is more likely to respond to terrorism warnings with heightened threat, fear, and anger (see Tables 5.3, 5.5, and 5.7).

Manipulation Checks. To assess whether the experimental treatments had the intended effect, I ran a series of ANOVAs examining perceived threat, fear, anger, and confidence in government by the experimental conditions. I collapsed the two high threat conditions (high threat-certain coping and high threat-uncertain coping) into a single condition and repeated this for the low threat conditions (low threat-certain coping and low threat-uncertain coping). This resulted in three groups: high threat, low threat, and control. Figure 5.1 shows that, as expected, the high threat conditions had the desired effect as greater threat was perceived in the high threat condition (M = .671, SE = .015) compared to the low threat (M= .598, SE = .015) and control (M = .554, SE = .025) conditions. Comparing these means shows that perceived threat was significantly higher in the high threat versus low threat and high threat versus control comparisons ($p \le .001$ for both).⁸⁵ The low threat versus control condition approaches statistical significance (p = .12).

[Insert Figures 5.1 and 5.2 about here]

The experimental conditions were also related to higher levels of fear and anger (see Figure 5.2). Here, again, the experimental manipulations had the intended effect as participants in the high threat conditions reported significantly more fear and anger compared to the low threat and control conditions F(2, 334) = 14.89, p < .001, and F(2, 323) = 11.27, p < .001, respectively. Comparing scores across the three conditions yields average scores of .468 (SE = .022) for the high threat conditions, a mean of .342 (SE = .019) for the low threat conditions, and a mean of .313 (SE = .026) for the control condition. Mean differences for the high threat versus low threat (p < .001) and high

⁸⁵ I ran an additional manipulation check using a question that asked participants to assess the likelihood "that there will be another terrorist attack in the United States within the next few months?" Four possible response options ranged from 0 (not at all likely) to 1 (very likely). Judgments about the likelihood of future attacks varied systematically across the conditions F(2, 338) = 9.14, p < .001. Specifically, participants in the high threat condition were significantly more likely to perceive the chance of another terrorist attack in the coming months to be greater (M = .707, SE = .019) relative to those in the low threat (M = .635, SE = .019) or control conditions (M = .561, SE = .034). All mean difference comparisons are statistically significant.

threat versus control are statistically significant (p < .001) whereas the low threat versus control comparison does not approach significance (p = .43). Comparing the mean anger scores across the three conditions yields average scores of .421 (SE = .020) for the high threat conditions, a mean of .303 (SE = .018) for the low threat conditions, and a mean of .319 (SE = .024) for the control condition. The difference for the high threat versus low threat (p < .001) and high threat versus control (p = .002) comparisons are significant but the low threat versus control comparison is not (p = .63). On balance, the mean differences indicate that the high threat condition had the desired effect in elevating not only perceived threat, but also fear and anger responses.

Figure 5.2 shows the relationship between the experimental conditions for coping and the confidence in government measure. Here again, I collapsed across coping conditions creating three comparison groups, where the effective coping group includes participants in the high threat and low threat certain coping conditions, and the ineffective coping group includes participants in the high threat and low threat uncertain coping conditions. Although the mean differences across these three conditions are smaller than for the threat condition comparisons, the pattern comports with expectations F(2, 337) = 5.12, p = .006. Specifically, participants in the effective coping conditions—those depicting the government's responses as competent—expressed more confidence in the federal government's ability to protect Americans from terrorism (M = .693, SE = .016) than those in the uncertain coping condition (M = .646, SE = .015) or the control condition and both the ineffective versus control conditions are statistically significant (p = .035 and .003, respectively) whereas the difference between the uncertain coping and control condition fall short (p = .17).

[Insert Table 5.2 about here]

Finally, Table 5.2 summarizes the zero order correlations between the dependent and independent variables used in the analyses. The largest correlation coefficient among the independent variables is between fear and anger. However, the overall pattern shows weak to modestly significant bivariate correlations between most of the variables.

Results

<u>Perceived Threat.</u> In line with previous research I predicted that threat perceptions following exposure to messages about terrorism-related threats would be more likely to endorse antiterrorism policies and support political leaders. The manipulation check summarized in Figure 5.1 indicates that respondents exposed to news articles reporting higher levels of terrorist threat are indeed more likely to perceive a more severe national threat and see the American people as susceptible to danger. As a more discriminating test of the relationship between the experimental stimulus and perceived threat I also regressed perceived threat on the covariates discussed above to get an idea of who might be more responsive to such messages. The first column in Table 5.3, which reports results similar to the manipulation checks, serves as a baseline and essentially repeats the manipulation check. The second column indicates that the positive relationship between perceived threat and the experimental manipulations persists when controlling for sex, geographic location, partisan identities, and levels of factual political knowledge. Among the control variables, Republicans and females are more likely to report greater perceived threat relative to Democrats and males, whereas people living in the Pacific Northwest are more likely to report lower levels of threat than those in the Midwest.⁸⁶

[Insert Table 5.3 about here]

Confident that the experimental manipulation had the intended effect, we can now ask whether perceived threat relates to the outcomes of interest. That is, are those people who perceive greater threat following exposure to news reports about the likelihood of future terrorist attacks more likely to support antiterrorism policies and to evaluate the president more positively? To test the first two hypotheses I regressed nonoffensive (domestic) and offensive (foreign) antiterrorism

⁸⁶ I also explored models specifications with additional control variables. In particular I included a media use index and questions about the current terrorism alert level. The former captured how often in the previous week each participant used different media (broadcast television, cable television, print, internet sites, and blogs) to get news and information whereas the latter consisted of two questions gauging knowledge about whether there had been any attempted terrorist attacks in the United States in the last year and the current DHS threat level. Neither media use nor awareness of the current terrorism alert level was related to perceived threat.

policy endorsements and presidential approval on perceived threat while controlling for the experimental manipulations, sex, geographic location, and partisan identity. I report two models for each dependent variable: a baseline including perceived threat and two dummy variables controlling for the experimental manipulations (high versus low threat and ineffective versus effective coping) and a full model including the standard controls previously discussed. This approach provides an opportunity to examine whether the relationship between the independent variables and each dependent variable changes when controls are added to the models.

Turning first to the issue of nonoffensive, domestically-focused antiterrorism policies, the results show that, as the first hypothesis predicts, greater perceived national threat has a significant and positive impact on support for domestic antiterrorism policies—even if they run the risk of infringing on certain civil liberties—and that the relationship is robust as the relationship persists when controls are included. That is, moving from the lowest to the highest value on perceived threat causes a shift of more than one-third of the entire range of domestic policy endorsement. Among the controls, the nonsignificant coefficient for sex indicates that males and females do not differ meaningfully when it comes to endorsing domestically-focused antiterrorism policies.

[Insert Table 5.4 about here]

The third and fourth columns show that perceptions of national threat also predict support for at least one type of offensive foreign policy. In contrast to previous studies that examined support for military action in the wake of 9/11 or the war in Iraq, the dependent variable here captures whether people endorse one of the major military efforts that is more closely associated with President Obama than with President George W. Bush (Miller 2011). Specifically, those participants who judge the threat posed by terrorists to the nation to be more severe are significantly more likely to endorse military action in foreign countries. Although the estimated effect is not as strong as the effect on support for domestic policies, it is robust and substantive.

In addition, it is worth noting that sex, geographic location, and Republican identification are related to policy support. Specifically, participants from the Midwest and Republicans are more likely to endorse antiterrorism policies regardless of whether they are offensive or nonoffensive relative to participants in the Pacific Northwest and nonpartisans. The fact that males are more likely to endorse confrontational policies is consistent with past research (Huddy et al. 2005; Nincic and Nincic 2002; Page and Shapiro 1992, 295). Finally, in both the foreign policy and domestic policy models, the conditions do not contribute meaningfully to our understanding of who supports which type of policy; rather, it is the threat perceptions that drive domestic policy endorsement.

Moving to the second hypothesis concerning the relationship between threat and presidential approval, the baseline model indicates that lower levels of perceived national threat are associated with greater support for the commander in chief. Although statistically marginal, this result is interesting because it is the opposite of what was hypothesized, and runs contrary to previous research. However, when controls are added, the marginal significance washes out and the sign flips. The only significant predictors of presidential approval in the full model are the partisan identity variables. Not surprisingly, Republicans are inclined to view President Obama unfavorably relative to non-partisans whereas Democrats are predisposed to evaluate the president more positively. The story thus far is that perceptions of national threat following exposure to news stories describing terrorist-related national threats are positively related to offensive and nonoffensive policy options but unrelated to presidential approval. On balance, then, the evidence supports the hypothesis that heightened threat perceptions predict support for antiterrorism policies (H₁), but fails to confirm the predicted relationship between threat perceptions and presidential approval (H₂), at least in the current political environment.

<u>Fear and Anger.</u> The next question is whether these patterns persist when both cognitive and affective responses are included in the models. Before examining whether fear and anger independently influence policy endorsements and presidential approval, I briefly consider the factors that predict fear and anger. Table 5.5 summarizes the results of these regressions, and shows that fear and anger are strongly related to perceptions of national threat. In particular, the estimated effect of

moving from the lowest to the highest value on perceived threat results in a shift of nearly one-half of the entire range of fear and nearly one-quarter for anger. Among the control variables sex and political knowledge achieve at least marginal significance. Specifically, females are more likely to report fear than males, and the negative coefficients for political knowledge indicate that those who know less about the American political system are more likely to experience both fear and anger following exposure to stories about the threat posed by terrorist organizations.⁸⁷ In contrast to threat perceptions (see Table 5.3), threat condition independently predicts increases in both fear and anger. Although the coefficients are relatively small, they are nonetheless statistically significant.⁸⁸ Importantly, comparing the adjusted r-squared values between the baseline and full models for each dependent variable indicates that the controls contribute very little to explanations of fear and anger over and above perceived threat and the experimental manipulations.

[Insert Table 5.5 about here]

I hypothesized that response to terrorism-related messages should be influenced not only by threat perceptions but also by emotional responses, and that the pattern of responses for different types of policies may depend on the specific emotions aroused. Turning first to support for domestic antiterrorism policies in Table 5.6, fear is unrelated to policy support while greater anger predicts more support. The former confirms previous research conducted immediately after 9/11 whereas the latter is a novel result. While I did not make a strong prediction about the relationship of anger to domestically-focused antiterrorism policies, the positive sign indicates that anger leads to support for domestic antiterrorism policies even when the policies infringe on civil liberties such as a free press and the right to privacy. In both of the domestic policy models fear and anger (as well as perceived threat) are positively related to endorsement, but only anger and threat achieve statistical significance.

⁸⁷ Controls for media use and prior knowledge of recent terrorist threats again proved to be unrelated to the dependent variables (see fn. 14).

⁸⁸ Early descriptions of the EPPM posited that threatening messages should be unrelated to self-reported fear, however, this is not always the case (Witte 1994). On balance, it is difficult to say how frequently threatening messages directly influence fear arousal as health communications scholars do not consistently report it in the literature.

In short, anger and perceived threat (but not fear) reliably predict endorsement of domestic antiterrorism policies, even when they infringe on valued civil liberties.

[Insert Table 5.6 about here]

Turning to foreign policy, we see that consistent with hypotheses 3 and 4, both fear and anger are significant predictors. As expected, those people who experienced more fear are less likely to endorse continued use of unmanned drones in foreign countries, whereas the experience of anger leads people to endorse more confrontational policies. Interestingly, although fear and anger are positively correlated (r = .58), they exert statistically equivalent and opposite effects on foreign policy attitudes. In addition, the contribution of fear and anger in accounting for variation in foreign policy attitudes is independent of threat, and remains significant when standard controls are included in the model. On balance, H₃ and H₄ are supported by the data, and the results update and extend previous research that was either carried out shortly after 9/11 or relied heavily on the images of the attacks.

Finally, contrary to the fifth hypothesis, the ability of the specified model to account for variation in presidential approval is minimal. Although perceived threat and fear are related to presidential approval in the baseline model, they account for a miniscule amount of the overall variance. In the full model the independent variables of interest are not significant predictors of presidential approval. Only experimentally-induced fear approaches significance (p = .113), indicating that more fearful participants tended to approve of President Obama. Consistent with the results reported above (see Table 5.4), support for the president is concentrated among Democrats and weakly related to geographic location (Pacific Northwest). Republicans, not surprisingly, were much more likely to evaluate the president less favorably relative to nonpartisans. This pattern of results leads me to reject the hypothesis that greater anger in response to mediated information about strong terrorist threats would result in higher levels of presidential support (see H₅).

On balance, then, the results thus far indicate that both perceived threat to the national and group-based emotional responses contribute to a more full understanding of how people respond to news stories about terrorism. In particular, heightened threat and anger are both positively related to support for confrontational policy options, with threat and fear leading people in different directions. There is also a differential effect for fear and anger on support for domestic policies but only anger (along with strong threat perceptions) reliably predicts support for domestic antiterrorism policies.

<u>Confidence in the Federal Government.</u> The EPPM posits that threat and fear are not the only factors that explain persuasive efforts. In applying this model to potentially fear-inducing messages such as terrorist threats, I reasoned that confidence in government may be an important factor. Based on past research the sixth hypothesis predicted a positive relationship between perceptions of national threat and trust and confidence in government. The results of the regression analysis are shown in Table 5.7. Overall the data confirms that threat perceptions are related to trust and confidence in government. In the baseline model, as greater perceived threat increases, so does trust and confidence. Interestingly, the experimental conditions also directly influence the dependent variable. Specifically, the negative coefficients indicate that participants in the low threat and certain coping conditions are more likely to express confidence in the government's ability to effectively combat the terrorist threat.

These relationships are replicated in the full model. Although perceived threat achieves only marginal significance (p = .068), it has the largest coefficient. Again, the negative coefficient for threat condition indicates that trust and confidence is significantly higher in the low threat condition whereas the coefficient for coping condition shows that confidence in government is higher when the news media reports relatively positive assertions by credible sources about the government's efforts. Finally, the coefficients for fear and anger fail to achieve statistical significance (p = .285 and .167, respectively), indicating that trust and confidence in the federal government's ability to combat terrorist threats is more consistently influenced by cognition than affect.

[Insert Table 5.7 and 5.8 about here]

In terms of the experimental condition variables, the fact that exposure to the certain coping condition is related to greater trust and confidence in the national government makes a good deal of

sense, as the article content indicated that antiterrorism efforts have been successful. On the other hand, the relationship between the low threat condition and greater trust and confidence is a bit more puzzling in light of the relationship between perceived threat and greater trust and confidence in government.⁸⁹ This indicates that the threat condition variable and perceived threat are measuring different factors. The unanticipated effect of exposure to the low threat condition is interesting as it may have led some participants to nonetheless perceive greater threat. This parallels Jorgensen's (1998) argument that different people find different things frightening, but this discrepancy also deserves attention in future research.

Turning to the connection between trust and confidence in government and the endorsement of antiterrorism policies and presidential approval, we see that the relationship is mixed. As summarized in Table 5.8, trust and confidence, although positive, is unrelated to domestic policy attitudes. Consistent with the results reported in Table 5.6, perceived threat and anger are the primary factors related to support for domestic security-enhancing measures. The pattern among the control variables indicates that Republicans and people in the Midwest continue to be more likely to endorse stronger domestic antiterrorism policies than are nonpartisans and those who reside in the Pacific Northwest. Exposure to the low threat condition is weakly related to greater support for nonoffensive antiterrorism policies.

While trust and confidence in government is not reliably related to support for domestic antiterrorism policies it does predict support for offensive foreign policy options. In fact, each of the four explanatory variables independently predicts levels of support for offensive military action. Specifically, those people who perceive greater threat respond with anger but also have more confidence in government and tend to support using unmanned drones to bomb sites in foreign countries. However, those people who experience fear in response to news about terrorist threats are far less supportive of these measures. Among these significant predictors, trust and confidence has the largest effect as a shift from the lowest to the highest level of confidence results in a shift of two-

⁸⁹ The bivariate correlations between the threat condition and coping condition variables are modestly related to trust and confidence (r = -.12 and -.13, respectively).

fifths of the entire range on support for continuing the use of unmanned drones to bomb foreign countries with links to terrorist organizations. On balance, the results offer partial support for the hypothesized relationships between confidence in government and policy endorsements (see H₇).

Turning now to assessments of the president, we see that, contrary to the eighth hypothesis, the independent variables of interest are largely unrelated to presidential approval. In the full model, only trust and confidence in government is related to approval, albeit marginally (p = .097). Among the control variables, Democrats and those residing in the Pacific Northwest are more approving of the president relative to nonpartisans and Midwesterners, and Republicans are more disapproving than all other participants. It is worth noting that as participants report more fear, they tend to be more approving of the job the president is doing (p = .138), although the relationship does not reach standard levels of significance. This pattern seems to be consistent with the orthodox expectation that fear appeals can be used to scare a population into supporting the incumbent. What makes this an interesting result is that the positive sign is the reverse of what Huddy et al. (2005) reported for the relationship between anxiety and support for President Bush in the months following the 9/11 attacks. I return to this point below.

Before examining the final three hypotheses, it is worth taking stock of the results thus far. Specifically, the comparison of interest is whether the inclusion of trust and confidence in the federal government's ability to protect Americans and prevent future terrorist attacks contributes to our understanding of policy endorsement and presidential approval. Empirically, only trust and confidence seem to contribute to our understanding of foreign policy attitudes. Comparing the adjusted r-squared values in Tables 5.6 and 5.8 show that the change is substantive as the reduced model including trust and confidence (see Table 5.8) accounts for an additional eight percent of the overall variance relative to the reduced model without the confidence measure (see Table 5.6). The same comparison for the fully specified models shows that including trust and confidence increases the overall variance accounted for by an additional four percent. I interpret this pattern to mean that people are willing to give the government the benefit of the doubt when it comes to foreign policy, but this assessment is largely unrelated to judgments about domestic antiterrorism policies.

National Identity. How might individual-level variation in national identification influence these and the other attitudes of interest? The questions used to assess threat perceptions and emotional responses specifically reference the American people, and therefore likely primed social considerations to some degree. Another angle available to capture possible social dimensions of terrorism-related threats is to include a direct measure of American identity. Thus, I report a final series of regression analyses explicitly accounting for American identity to determine whether strong identifiers respond differently to mediated messages about potentially fear-inducing terrorist threats than do weak identifiers.

The primary goal of this section is to determine whether American national identity relates to policy endorsements and presidential approval. If it is indeed a salient factor, it will be interesting to see whether it relates to each of the three dependent variables in the same way. I begin, however, by briefly examining the predictive power of American national identity on perceived threat, fear, and anger, and although I did not specify a hypothesis for trust and confidence in government I include it here for expository purposes. A simple comparison of mean differences is displayed in Figure 5.3. Specifically, I divided the sample into three groups along the identity dimension to create a low, medium, and high group. The figure shows that, on average, those participants identifying more strongly with the American people were increasingly likely to perceive greater threat, experience more fear and anger, and have more confidence in government than weak identifiers.

A more rigorous analysis in summarized in Table 5.9. Here, I again ran two OLS regression models for each outcome. The first model included American national identity as the independent variable and the two experimental condition dummy variables as covariates. The second model then includes the standard controls.⁹⁰ How, then, does American national identity relate to these cognitive and affective responses?

[Insert Figure 5.3 and Table 5.9 about here]

Across the four reduced models, American national identity seems to have a strong and consistent influence on how people respond to potentially fear-inducing messages. Confirming the ninth hypothesis, we see that people who strongly identify with their national group are much more likely to report perceiving a more severe national threat, experience more fear and anger, and also express more trust and confidence in the government's ability to protect the American people from terrorist threats. This provides initial support for the hypothesized relationship (see H₉). When standard controls are included the effect of American national identity remains positive, however, the relationship is far less reliable as significance washes out in three of the four statistical models. Specifically, the data indicates that high identifiers are much more likely to perceive greater threat to the ingroup after exposure to terrorism-related news than those scoring low on measures of American national identity. The relationship between American national identity and both fear and anger following exposure to news stories about terrorist messages are nonsignificant. On balance, the evidence offers partial support for the research hypothesis (see H₉). To the extent that American national identity predicts cognitive and emotional responses to potentially fear inducing messages, we see that cognitive responses are reliably different, however, emotional responses do not vary systematically along the dimension of American national identity.

The OLS regression results for the final two hypotheses are summarized in Table 5.10. For each dependent variable I ran three models. The baseline model includes only national identity and controls for the experimental conditions. The second model adds the other four independent variables (perceived threat, fear, anger, and confidence in government) and the battery of controls, and the third model includes a multiplicative term interacting American national identity by perceived

⁹⁰ Previously I used political knowledge as an extra covariate. However, because it was unrelated to threat perception and trust and confidence, and only marginally related to fear and anger, I opted to omit the variable this time.

threat. The research on group identification shows that strong identifiers are likely to respond differently to group-based threats than weak identifiers. Thus, the interaction term is used to explore whether the relationship between perceived threat and policy endorsements, and perceived threat and presidential approval is different at different levels of American national identity strength.⁹¹

[Insert Table 5.10 about here]

Turning first to domestic policy endorsement (i.e., nonoffensive policies), we see that American national identity has a positive effect on policy support, but that it is only significant in the reduced model. The coefficient indicates that the main effect of identity strength on support for domestic antiterrorism policies is positive and rather strong in the first model as a shift from the lowest level to the highest level of identity is associated with an increase in policy support of onequarter of the entire range. However, when the other explanatory variables and control variables are added, national identity no longer uniquely predicts domestic policy endorsement. Rather, among the independent variables of interest, only greater perceived threat to the nation and anger maintain statistical significance. In fact, the second model shows these two variables to be the strongest predictors of domestic antiterrorism policy attitudes.

In addition, the multiplicative term in the third model achieves statistical significance. Figure 5.4 displays visually the interaction term. Specifically, it shows that the relationship between perceived threat and domestic policy support is less positive at higher levels of American national identity. While I did not have a firm expectation about how national identity relates to support for domestic antiterrorism policies, this result suggests that strong identifiers experience very little movement in terms of the domestic policy attitudes when the ingroup is threatened whereas weak identifiers actually become slightly more supportive of strong domestic antiterrorism policies as perceived threat becomes more severe.

⁹¹ In addition to the interaction between American national identity and perceived threat, we might also expect identity to moderate fear and anger responses. However, national identity is not systematically related to emotional responses, and only weakly related to confidence in government (see Table 5.9). Nonetheless, I ran additional analyses including multiplicative terms interacting national identity with fear, anger, and confidence (results not shown). These additional interaction terms were nonsignificant, and the overall pattern of estimates did not differ substantively from the results I report.

[Insert Figure 5.4 about here]

While one's commitment to the national group does not contribute meaningfully to our understanding of support for nonoffensive policies, it does relate to foreign policy attitudes. In fact, all four independent variables relate significantly to foreign policy attitudes, and do so in meaningful ways. Consistent with the tenth hypothesis, in the main effects model strong identifiers are more likely than weak national identifiers to endorse offensive policies that take the fight to groups that are thought to be the source of threats to the ingroup. Moving to the second model, national identity, along with perceived threat, confidence in government, and anger, continue to predict foreign policy attitudes as the positive coefficients indicate that higher levels of each are associated with greater support whereas fear reliably predicts lower levels of support. Fear, on the other hand, predicts less support for offensive antiterrorism policies. The nonsignificant interaction term indicates that strong and weak American identifiers do not differ meaningfully in how they respond cognitively and affectively in the domain of foreign policy.

Finally, the eleventh hypothesis is not supported by the data. In the baseline model, contrary to expectations, American national identity is actually negatively related to presidential approval. However, the coefficient loses significance when other variables are added to the model. That is, presidential approval continues to be a product of political predispositions rather than responses to the experimental conditions. Other than identifying as a Republican or a Democrat, the only significant predictors are confidence in government (p = .091) and geographic location. I interpret the former as support for the idea that political trust and confidence in government generalize when external threats become more salient (Hetherington 2005) whereas the latter shows that, consistent with conventional wisdom about the red state-blue state divide, college students living in the Pacific Northwest tend to be more supportive of President Obama than college students living in the Midwest. The relationship between American national identity and presidential approval is interesting. While the relationship becomes nonsignificant once controls are added, the coefficient remains negative indicating that weak national identifiers tend to be more approving of the president.

On balance, these results lead me to reject the idea that strong national identifiers will be more supportive of the president that weak national identifiers.

Summary

The results of the experiment provide mixed support for the enumerated hypotheses. The evidence indicates cognitive and affective responses following exposure to potentially fear-inducing media messages about the threat posed by terrorist organizations relate meaningfully to endorsements of both offensive and nonoffensive antiterrorism policies. However, the independent variables are largely unrelated to presidential approval, and while the strength of one's attachment to the national group does predict foreign policy attitudes, it does not consistently moderate cognitive and affective responses or political support. The policy-based results are generally consistent with the spate of research following the 9/11 attacks, but also extends this work by examining the independent effects of distinct cognitive and affective responses on foreign and domestic policy preferences, and by testing these relationships within a political context that is qualitatively different from the post-9/11 environment.

This study extends political science research in a number of ways. First, it moves beyond prior research by exploring the effects of two cognitive and two affective responses to potentially fear-inducing media messages within the ongoing context of the war on terrorism. Drawing insights from the EPPM, but also modifying the list of relevant predictors based on recent political science research, I tested the effects of perceived threat and confidence in government, and fear and anger on antiterrorism policy endorsements and presidential approval. Comparing across the three dependent variables shows that the effects of the four independent variables are uneven, as perceived threat and anger have consistent effects on endorsements for both offensive and nonoffensive policies whereas fear and confidence in government are reliably related to foreign policy attitudes and marginally related to presidential approval. The consistency of perceived threat as a predictor of antiterrorism policy preferences makes a good deal of sense and reinforces previous scholarship (Davis and Silver 2004a; Gordon and Arian 2001; Huddy et al. 2005). Specifically, danger and uncertainty associated with existential threats lead people to support policies that are believed to minimize or eliminate the threat.

The factors that lead to policy support are interesting. Perceived threat is correlated with both fear and anger (r = .426 and .264, respectively, see Table 5.2). Across each model iteration threat and anger move in the same direction regardless of the type of policies participants are asked to endorse. However, fear leads people to reject offensive foreign policies and is unrelated to domestic antiterrorism policies. The point here is that perceived threat is an important factor, but so too are emotional responses associated with threat appraisals. Knowing whether people perceive more or less threat, and whether they respond with fear or anger provides a more robust description of the mechanisms that lead to policy support and can thus improve predictions. On one hand, if news stories about the threat of terrorism arouse anger, people tend to be much more tolerant of risk and endorse approach-related options that target likely perpetrators (Lerner et al. 2003; Skitka et al. 2006). Fear, on the other hand, leads to rejection of offensive policies and is unrelated to domestic antiterrorism policies. While researchers have started to pay attention to how different emotions such as anger and fear relate to policy attitudes (e.g., Huddy, Feldman, and Cassese 2007; Lerner et al. 2003), additional work is necessary to further clarify how affect relates to alternatives in this and other policy areas (e.g., Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008). Most of the research within the terrorism paradigm has focused on foreign policy attitudes and paid comparatively less attention to domestic policies (although see Davis and Silver 2004a).

Second, the present experiment differs qualitatively from much of the post-9/11 research examining terrorism. In particular, it moves beyond a focus on the 9/11 attacks themselves, and avoids using imagery or descriptions of the attacks in the experimental stimuli. As I argue above, recent experimental research offers keen insights into the effects of terrorism-related broadcast news on foreign policy attitudes (Gadarian 2010) and leadership evaluations (Merolla, Ramos, and Zechmeister 2007; Merolla and Zechmeister 2009), however, it relies on imagery associated with the 9/11 attacks. To the extent that the experimental stimuli in the present study reference specific events, they reference attempted attacks that occurred in the months immediately prior to data collection.⁹² In addition, while visual imagery is believed to be more emotionally evocative (Huddy and Gunnthorsdottir 2000), the present study shows that there remains value in using text-based materials. More importantly, the use of printed materials more closely approximates the material in the content analysis.

Across the board the experimental manipulations are largely unrelated to assessments of presidential approval. Previous research shows that during actual crises presidents often times, although by no means always, enjoy increased public support (Brady 1991). Crisis situations help create an environment in which people view political leaders differently and alter the criteria used to assess leaders when asked to evaluate their performance (e.g., Merolla, Ramos, and Zechmeister 2007). The fact that the experimental stimuli quotes President Obama only in the final paragraph may partially account for the null results. Rather than emphasizing the president, the articles focus largely on the level of threat and actions of government, and cite nonpartisan sources to minimize the influence of political predispositions. To the extent that the primary independent variables contribute to an understanding of presidential approval, it is the marginally significant effect of confidence in government (and the weak results for fear) that emerge. Taking the results of Tables 5.9 and 5.10 together, the negative coefficient for the experimental conditions indicate that exposure to articles depicting a low threat or effective government responses predict confidence in government, which in turn is related to presidential approval. This pattern follows from the idea that trust in government overlaps with presidential approval in times of crises (Hetherington 2005), but that relatively positive news (in this case a single story) can reliably predict shifts in presidential approval better than

⁹² Obviously experimental researchers strive to present stimuli that is as realistic as possible while also maintaining experimental control, and drawing on recent events in the news is one way to accomplish this. My suspicion is simply that using imagery and descriptions of the 9/11 attacks becomes less valid as the event becomes more distant. Specifically, it is more difficult to disentangle whether the reaction is to terrorism-related news and events more generally or the 9/11 attacks specifically. Both Merolla and her colleagues (Merolla and Zechmeister 2009; Merolla, Ramos, and Zechmeister 2007) and Gadarian (2010) rely on 9/11 imagery. Merolla et al.'s experiments were conducted in October 2004 and Gadarian's experiment was carried out during fall 2006.

negative developments. This result approximates the patterns identified in the content analysis showing an increase in positive press coverage following government-issued terrorist warnings. The experimental evidence suggests one of the ways that more positive coverage in the days following terrorism warnings may have modestly boosted President Bush's approval ratings.

The results can also inform the fear appeals literature. In particular, the EPPM posits that fear should not be directly related to outcomes (Witte 1992). Although the experimental stimuli used in this study are different than what EPPM scholars recommend (i.e., the messages did not include clear and unambiguous action recommendations), the fact that fear relates differently to foreign policy attitudes and presidential approval (albeit modestly) illustrates the complexity of emotions.⁹³ These results also demonstrate that messages designed to elicit fear may miss the mark, at least for some people, as anger is a closely related emotional response. Moreover, fear and anger differentially influence whether people accept or reject proposed fear-reduction strategies.

From a strategic communication perspective, if the purpose of politically oriented fear appeals is to scare people into supporting particular policies or the president, the experimental evidence suggests that strategic communicators might be better off choosing an alternate strategy. Ostensibly presidents are desirous of greater policy support and job approval whether they go public with a fear appeal or not. However, in this context, unless policy support is the priority, presidents might exercise great caution in appealing to fear.

In addition, the contextual differences between the present study and much of the post-9/11 experimental research may account for the weak results found between the independent variables and presidential approval across various models may be due, at least in part, to mundane realism. That is, even in a controlled experiment that succeeds in arousing threat perceptions and emotional responses, the stimuli may not be strong enough to override political predispositions in the context of the war on terrorism. Willer and Adams (2008), for example, found no main effect for terrorism-

⁹³ This marginally positive result for fear (p = .15 in Table 5.10) is worth noting because survey evidence collected in the months following the 9/11 attacks showed anxiety to be correlated negatively with presidential approval (Huddy et al. 2005).

related news on candidate preferences during the 2008 presidential election. It is possible that had the experiment been carried out at a time when political discussion was more intensely focused on terrorism rather than the economy, the hypothesized relationship between reactions to the threat manipulation and presidential approval would have been confirmed.⁹⁴

Arguably the most surprising outcomes of the experiment are the results for American national identity. Identity strength initially demonstrated a modest relationship with the primary independent variables (see Table 5.9). However, these relationships were rendered moot for all but perceived threat when standard demographic and political controls were entered in the models. Moving to the dependent variables of primary interest, American national identity does have a direct effect on foreign policy attitudes, indicating that high identifiers are more likely to support offensive actions against an outgroup than are weak identifiers. This result fits nicely with the understanding of identification laid out in Chapter 4. Namely, when the ingroup is threatened by a competing group it is high identifiers who are more likely to move against the outgroup, all things being equal. Social identity theorists understand this as a function of the member's psychological investment in the group such that when the group is threatened high identifiers essentially see an affront to the group as an affront to themselves. Because they are invested heavily in the group, threats to the collective are viewed as threats to the self.

The significant interaction term qualifies this interpretation, at least in the domestic policy model. Specifically, the positive coefficient for perceived threat can be interpreted as the effect of threat on domestic antiterrorism policy support when American identity is 0 (Jaccard and Turrisi 2003). The interaction coefficient shows that the effect of threat on domestic policy support is less positive at higher levels of identity. Specifically, the graph in Figure 5.4 illustrates how support for domestic antiterrorism policies changes as perceived threat increases for people scoring at the mean, and one standard deviation above and below the mean on American national identity. In the

⁹⁴ Aggregate Gallup data polling for the "most important problem" shows a consistent upward trend throughout 2008 with the proportion ranging from the mid-40s at the beginning of the year to approximately 80 percent by the end of the year (see <u>http://www.gallup.com/poll/1675/most-important-problem.aspx</u>. Accessed May 19, 2012).

experiment it was the low identifiers who tended to be susceptible to message content. Moreover, contrary to intergroup emotions theory (e.g., Mackie, Devos, and Smith 2000), emotional responses did not vary systematically as identity strength changed (results not shown). Unfortunately, this result does not help to clarify the role of group membership or identity as a moderator of how people respond to potentially fear-inducing messages (cf. Witte and Allen 2000; Rhodes and Wolitski 1990). This too may be driven in part by the experimental stimuli. While there is some evidence that group membership can be primed subconsciously (Seger, Smith, and Mackie 2009), cues about the national group may have been lost on participants as the articles focused more on the relative likelihood of an attack and effectiveness of government responses. I consider further this and other possibilities in Chapter 6.

On balance, the experiment suggests that potentially-fear inducing messages disseminated by the news media can affect political attitudes, but that influence depends on how people respond cognitively and emotionally to the messages. Individual differences matter as some people respond to terrorism-related messages with more or less fear, while others experience more or less anger. Importantly, the intensity of specific cognitive and emotional responses has implications for political behavior over and above mere exposure to the experimental conditions. Clearly the content and tone of news stories matters, but more important is how people respond to the stories. The present study demonstrates that policy support can be influenced by news stories about terrorism, particularly when perceived threat and anger drive peoples' responses. In comparison, presidential approval is relatively stable over the short-term. To the extent that the experiment succeeded in altering temporary evaluations of President Obama, it was concentrated among those people who expressed greater confidence in the government's ability to protect the American people from future terrorist attacks.

`	Whole	Northwest	Midwest	<u>^</u>				
	Sample	Subsample	Subsample	HTUC	HTCC	LTUC	LTCC	Control
Age								
Mean	20.71	20.57	21.07	20.61	20.63	20.81	21.06	20.41
Std. Dev.	2.32	2.29	2.37	2.95	2.04	1.83	2.71	1.81
Gender								
Female	48.4	51.4	40	52.9	56.3	38.8	56.5	34.9
Male	51.6	48.6	60	47.1	43.7	61.2	43.5	65.1
Race								
White	91.2	90.2	93.7	91.4	91.5	92.6	92.8	87.3
Non-White	8.8	9.8	6.3	8.6	8.5	7.4	7.2	12.7
Partisan characteristics								
Republican (strong & weak)	15.9	9	33.7	17.1	16.9	11.9	17.4	15.9
Democrat (strong & weak)	46.2	52.7	29.5	51.4	53.5	43.3	42	39.7
Independents	37.6	38.4	35.8	31.4	29.6	44.8	40.6	42.9
Ideological characteristics								
Conservative (strong & weak)	17.1	10.6	33.7	18.6	16.9	14.9	15.9	19
Liberal (strong & weak)	47.1	55.1	26.3	48.6	45.1	44.8	49.3	47.6
Haven't thought much about it	35.9	34.3	40	32.9	38	40.3	34.8	33.3
	N = 340	N = 245	N = 95	N = 70	N = 71	N = 67	N = 69	N = 63

Table 5.1: Sample Descriptives Statistics by Geographic Location and Experiment Condition

Note: All values are percentages unless otherwise noted.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	11	12
Domestic policy													
Foreign policy	.222**												
Presidential approval	154**	285**											
Perceived threat	.345**	.186**	132*										
Fear	.256**	068	.038	.426**									
Anger	.252**	.140**	101	.264**	.584**								
Trust	.103	.193**	.071	.109*	.021	074							
Sex	025	378**	.157**	.116*	.328**	.068	099						
Location	260**	287**	.292**	204**	047	085	110*	.103					
Republican	.346**	.350**	541**	.218**	.092	.121*	.084	097	303**				
Democrat	108**	253**	.518**	046	.001	045	.057	.204**	.209**	402**			
American identity	.203**	.280**	213**	.327**	.133*	.100	.168**	071	284**	.297**	154**		
Political knowledge	172**	.118*	.022	043	134*	131*	012	084	003	021	.046	045	

Table 5.2: Correlation Matrix Including All Dependent and Independent Variables

Note: $^{p} \leq .10$; $^{*} p \leq 0.05$; $^{**} p \leq 0.01$ (two-tailed). N ranges from 325 to 340.

	Perceived Threat		
	В	В	
	(SE)	(SE)	
Threat condition	.072**	.063**	
	(.021)	(.021)	
Coping condition	.005	.015	
	(.021)	(.021)	
Political knowledge		007	
		(.036)	
Sex		.053*	
		(.021)	
Location		070**	
		(.024)	
Republican		.083**	
		(.032)	
Democrat		003	
		(.023)	
Constant	.596**	.612**	
	(.018)	(.042)	
F	5.67**	5.66**	
Adj. R2	.03	.11	
N	273	272	

Table 5.3: The Determinants of Threat Perceptions (OLS Regression)

Note: $^{p} \leq .10$; $^{*} p \leq 0.05$; $^{**} p \leq 0.01$. All of the independent and dependent variables have been transformed to range from 0 to 1.

	Domestic Policy		Foreig	n Policy	Presidential Approval		
	В	В	В	В	В	В	
	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	
Threat	025	024	.027	.039	.007	021	
condition	(.024)	(.023)	(.039)	(.034)	(.031)	(.053)	
Coping	001	.007	001	016	.036	.027	
condition	(.024)	(.023)	(.038)	(.033)	(.030)	(.023)	
Perceived	.480**	.380**	.360**	.291**	142^	.028	
threat	(.068)	(.068)	(.109)	(.099)	(.086)	(.069)	
Sex		006		240**		.028	
		(.024)		(.034)		(.024)	
Location		076**		099*		.044	
		(.028)		(.040)		(.028)	
Republican		.140**		.183**		267**	
		(.036)		(.052)		(.037)	
Democrat		.018		028		.180**	
		(.026)		(.037)		(.026)	
Constant	.056	.142**	.258**	.483**	.668	.506**	
	(.045)	(.052)	(.073)	(.077)	(.058)	(.053)	
F	16.82**	12.48**	4.25**	16.57**	1.36	29.09**	
Adj. R ²	.15	.23	.04	.29	.005	.42	
Ν	271	271	271	271	270	270	

Table 5.4: Effects of Perceived Threat on Policy Endorsement and Presidential Support (OLS Regression)

Note: $^{p} \leq .10$; $^{*} p \leq 0.05$; $^{**} p \leq 0.01$. All of the independent and dependent variables have been transformed to range from 0 to 1.

	Fe	Fear			
	В	В	В	В	
	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	
Threat condition	.087**	.082**	.094**	.093**	
	(.027)	(.026)	(.027)	(.027)	
Coping condition	.028	.040	.028	.028	
	(.026)	(.025)	(.027)	(.027)	
Perceived threat	.531**	.457**	.285**	.234**	
	(.075)	(.075)	(.075)	(.079)	
Political knowledge		079^		098*	
-		(.044)		(.046)	
Sex		.139**		.015	
		(.026)		(.028)	
Location		.016		008	
		(.030)		(.032)	
Republican		.056		.038	
		(.040)		(.042)	
Democrat		009		031	
		(.028)		(.030)	
Constant	.011	.030	.119*	.237**	
	(.050)	(.068)	(.050)	(.073)	
F	24.61**	14.43**	11.39**	5.19*>	
Adj. R2	.21	.28	.11	.12	
N	272	271	259	258	

Table 5.5: The Determinants of Fear and Anger (OLS Reg	gression)

N 2/2 2/1 259 258Note: $^{p} \leq .10; *p \leq 0.05; **p \leq 0.01$. All of the independent and dependent variables have been transformed to range from 0 to 1.
	Domest	ic Policy	Foreign Policy		Presidenti	al Approval
	В	В	В	В	В	В
	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)
Threat	047^	048*	.052	.052	003	032
condition	(.025)	(.024)	(.039)	(.035)	(.032)	(.025)
Coping	001	.005	.005	013	.035	.026
condition	(.024)	(.023)	(.038)	(.034)	(.031)	(.024)
Perceived	.368**	.268**	.500**	.351**	186*	003
threat	(.072)	(.071)	(.115)	(.106)	(.094)	(.074)
Fear	.070	.090	496**	296**	.154^	.110
	(.065)	(.066)	(.102)	(.098)	(.084)	(.069)
Anger	.210**	.179**	.436**	.298**	142	023
	(.066)	(.064)	(.106)	(.096)	(.087)	(.068)
Sex		017		206**		.012
		(.025)		(.037)		(.026)
Location		080**		088*		.056^
		(.027)		(.041)		(.029)
Republican		.132**		.180**		254**
		(.036)		(.054)		(.039)
Democrat		.029		018		.187**
		(.025)		(.038)		(.026)
Constant	.032	.128*	.198**	.419**	.713**	.493**
	(.045)	(.053)	(.072)	(.080)	(.059)	(.056)
F	13.99**	12.16**	8.54**	13.75**	1.68	22.05**
Adj. R ²	.20	.28	.13	.31	.01	.43
Ň	256	256	257	257	255	255

Table 5.6: Effects of Fear and Anger on Policy Endorsement and Presidential Support (OLS Regression)

	Confidence in	n Government
	В	В
	(SE)	(SE)
Threat condition	051*	065**
	(.022)	(.023)
Coping condition	051*	058**
	(.022)	(.022)
Perceived threat	.142*	.126^
	(.061)	(.069)
Fear		.069
		(.064)
Anger		087
		(.063)
Political knowledge		023
		(.038)
Sex		066**
T		(.024)
Location		030
D		(.027)
Republican		.040
Demograph		(.035)
Democrat		.047
Constant	620**	(.023)
Constant	(041)	(062)
	(.0+1)	(.002)
F	4.83**	3.19**
Adj. R ²	.04	.08
Ν	273	257

Table 5.7: The Determinants of Confidence in the Federal Government (OLS Regression)

	Domest	ic Policy	Foreigr	n Policy	Presidenti	al Approval
	В	В	В	В	В	В
	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)
Threat	043^	047^	.082*	.078*	.000	025
condition	(.025)	(.024)	(.031)	(.035)	(.033)	(.025)
Coping	.003	.006	.032	.009	.038	.032
condition	(.024)	(.023)	(.036)	(.033)	(.031)	(.024)
Perceived	.356**	.264**	.417**	.298**	197*	019
threat	(.073)	(.072)	(.110)	(.103)	(.095)	(.074)
Confidence in	.076	.024	.523**	.402**	.066	.114^
government	(.067)	(.066)	(.102)	(.094)	(.088)	(.068)
Fear	.069	.089	502**	324**	.153^	.102
	(.065)	(.066)	(.098)	(.095)	(.084)	(.069)
Anger	.214**	.181**	.463**	.329**	138	013
	(.066)	(.064)	(.101)	(.093)	(.087)	(.068)
Sex		016		180**		.019
		(.025)		(.036)		(.026)
Location		079**		076^		.059*
		(.027)		(.039)		(.029)
Republican		.131**		.162**		260**
		(.037)		(.052)		(.039)
Democrat		.028		037		.182**
		(.025)		(.037)		(.026)
Constant	016	.112	134	.150	.671**	.417**
	(.062)	(.070)	(.094)	(.100)	(.081)	(.072)
F	11.88**	10.92**	12.24**	15.03**	1.49	20.26**
Adj. R ²	.20	.28	.21	.35	.01	.43
N	256	256	257	257	255	255

Table 5.8: Effects of Confidence in the Federal Government on Policy Endorsement and Presidential Support (OLS Regression)

;	Perceive	d Threat	F	ear	An	ger	Confiden	ce in Govt.
	В	В	В	В	В	В	В	В
	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)
Threat condition	.068**	.063**	.120**	.082**	.114**	.095**	049*	064**
	(.021)	(.020)	(.028)	(.026)	(.027)	(.027)	(.021)	(.023)
Coping condition	.010	.021	.029	.042^	.032	.030	046*	057**
	(.021)	(.020)	(.028)	(.097)	(.027)	(.027)	(.021)	(.022)
American identity	.248**	.205**	.157*	.082	.142*	.054	.151**	.089
2	(.048)	(.050)	(.066)	(.065)	(.062)	(.069)	(.050)	(.056)
Perceived threat				.442**		.232**		.109
				(.077)		(.082)		(.070)
Fear								.063
								(.064)
Anger								089
C C								(.062)
Sex		.063**		.147**		.024		061*
		(.021)		(.026)		(.028)		(.024)
Location		053*		.023		003		022
		(.024)		(.031)		(.033)		(.027)
Republican		.054^		.044		.031		.034
*		(.032)		(.041)		(.044)		(.036)
Democrat		001		013		034		.043^
		(.022)		(.028)		(.030)		(.024)
Constant		.457**	.230**	082	.198**	.119^	.620**	.629**
		(.046)	(.049)	(.067)	(.047)	(.072)	(.037)	(.060)
F	13.11**	8.68**	8.55**	14.37**	8.24**	4.75**	6.27**	3.54**
Adj. R ²	.12	.17	.08	.28	.08	.10	.05	.09
N	272	272	274	271	261	258	275	257

Table 5.9: The Effect of American National Identity on Perceived Threat, Fear, Anger, and Confidence in Government (OLS Regression)

	D	omestic Poli	су	F	Foreign Policy Presidential Approva			Foreign Policy Presidential Approval			roval
-	В	В	В	В	В	В	В	В	В		
	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)	(SE)		
Threat condition	.003	046^	048*	.041	.080*	.079*	001	025	025		
	(.025)	(.024)	(.024)	(.037)	(.025)	(.035)	(.030)	(.025)	(.025)		
Coping condition	.010	.006	.011	.013	.012	.015	.024	.033	.034		
	(.025)	(.023)	(.023)	(.037)	(.033)	(.033)	(.030)	(.024)	(.024)		
American identity	.257**	.026	.025	.465**	.169*	.167*	231**	017	017		
	(.058)	(.059)	(.038)	(.086)	(.084)	(.084)	(.071)	(.061)	(.061)		
Perceived threat		.258**	.243**		.257*	.245*		017	021		
		(.073)	(.073)		(.105)	(.105)		(.076)	(.077)		
Identity X Threat			701*			519			168		
			(.279)			(.405)			(.295)		
Confidence in		.021	.017		.383**	.381**		.119^	.118^		
government		(.066)	(.065)		(.095)	(.095)		(.069)	(.070)		
Fear		.087	.070		332**	345**		.106	.100		
		(.066)	(.066)		(.095)	(.095)		(.069)	(.070)		
Anger		.180**	.188**		.326**	.331**		011	008		
		(.065)	(.064)		(.093)	(.093)		(.068)	(.068)		
Sex		015	011		171**	168**		.019	.019		
		(.025)	(.025)		(.037)	(.037)		(.027)	(.027)		
Location		077**	071*		064	060		.057^	.059*		
		(.028)	(.028)		(.040)	(.040)		(.029)	(.029)		
Republican		.128**	.151**		.142**	.159**		258**	253**		
		(.037)	(.038)		(.053)	(.055)		(.039)	(.040)		
Democrat		.028	.031		037	035		.183**	.184**		
		(.025)	(.025)		(.037)	(.037)		(.026)	(.027)		
Constant	.176**	.100	.280**	.173**	.071	.342**	.754**	.422**	.401**		
	(.044)	(.075)	(.062)	(.065)	(.107)	(.089)	(.053)	(.078)	(.065)		
F	6.48**	9.91**	9.81**	10.32**	14.15**	13.14**	3.88**	18.31**	16.77**		
Adj. R ²	.07	.28	.29	.09	.36	.36	.03	.43	.43		
Ν	274	256	256	273	256	256	272	254	254		

Table 5.10: Effects of American National Identity on Policy Endorsement and Presidential Approval (OLS Regression)



Figure 5.1: Mean Comparisons for Perceived Threat, Fear, and Anger by Threat Conditions



Figure 5.2: Mean Comparison for Trust and Confidence in Government by Coping Conditions



Figure 5.3: Mean Comparison for Threat, Fear, and Anger by American National Identity



Figure 5.4: Endorsement of Domestic Antiterrorism Policies by Perceived Threat and American National Identity

Appendix 5.A: Experimental Stimuli and Questionnaires

High threat-uncertain coping article

Counterterrorism Officials Continue to Warn of Terror Attack on U.S. by July

By Scott Shane Published: April 4, 2010

WASHINGTON – Top counterterrorism officials are warning that Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups are working to test U.S. defenses and launch attacks on American soil.

This is the message officials have been repeating since Najibullah Zazi, a former shuttle driver at the Denver airport, plead guilty to plotting with Al Qaeda, training with explosives in Pakistan, and buying large quantities of hydrogen peroxide and other chemicals from beauty supply shops. Zazi admitted to bringing Triacetone Triperoxide to New York as part of a planned attack on the city's subway system intended to occur on the eighth anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

These revelations follow on the heels of Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab's attempt to blow up Northwest Flight 253 as it approached Detroit on Christmas Day. National Counterterrorism Center Director Michael Leiter called that event "the starkest reminder of the terrorist threat."

Because it shares a number of surface similarities with the September 11th attacks and there is an Al Qaeda connection, the Christmas Day attempt is the most recent and vivid example of the persistent threat posed by terrorist organizations. However, it is far from the only danger.



Associated Press

Officials point to the "Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community," which prominently features a section entitled "Homegrown Jihadists." The tragic violence at Fort Hood in November of last year underscores the concerns that many in the intelligence community have about the damage that even an individual or a small number of homegrown extremists can do if they have the will and access.

Terrorist attacks targeting public transportation remain a major concern. Some U.S. officials concede that counterterrorism efforts will never be one hundred percent effective.

On February 2, the day that a public version of the threat assessment was released, Dennis C. Blair, the Director of National Intelligence, testified before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. The chair of the committee, Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), asked the director to assess the possibility of an attack in the United States in the next three to six months. Mr. Blair replied "the possibility is certain" – a response that was affirmed by top officials at the C.I.A. and F.B.I.

Intelligence officials told the Senate panel that Al Qaeda has adjusted its tactics to more effectively strike American targets domestically and abroad. While he refrained from elaborating on this point in the public hearing, it is believed that Mr. Blair provided additional details in a closed-door meeting later in the day.

In his recent statement, Mr. Leiter also said that officials "know with absolute certainty" that Al Qaeda and others are refining their methods. "The biggest threat is not so much that we face an attack like 9/11," said C.I.A. Director Leon E. Panetta. "It is that Al Qaeda is adapting its methods in ways that oftentimes make it far more difficult to detect. What concerns us is that they are now recruiting people who don't fit the image of what people imagine is an international terrorist."

Washington has responded by taking additional security measures. The F.B.I. has retooled and expanded the Terrorism Screening Database, and the Federal Aviation Administration has done the same with the No Fly List. While officials at both the F.B.I. and Transportation Security Administration declined to discuss specific changes beyond that of greater information sharing across agencies, they confirmed that "additional measures" are also being taken.

U.S. officials have also sought cooperation from foreign governments. For example, major airports in Europe and other parts of the world with regular flights to the U.S. have been asked to use full body scanners and to subject all luggage to more rigorous inspection standards.

However, Harvey Kushner, a security administration expert at Long Island University who is often consulted by government agencies, noted that the implementation has taken longer than expected. In his judgment it is too early to tell how these changes might alter the likelihood of certain kinds of terrorist attacks occurring within the United States.

"Considering the appalling terrorist attacks of 9/11, the train bombings in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005, and the Christmas Day attempt, most Americans understand all too well that we are living in a world where unexpected and devastating attacks on free and open societies can, and will, occur in ways that we never before imagined." Mr. Leiter continued, "We are dealing with evil people who lack any semblance of moral authority."

President Obama gave what is perhaps the most telling comment. When pressed further during a short question and answer session after a recent speech in Grand Rapids he elaborated saying, "Make no mistake about it, the world has changed. And I think many Americans are still struggling with the idea that it will never quite be the same again."

High threat-certain coping article

Government Taking Action to Combat Ongoing Terrorist Threat

By Scott Shane Published: April 4, 2010

WASHINGTON – Top counterterrorism officials are warning that Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups are working to test U.S. defenses and launch attacks on American soil.

This is the message officials have been repeating since Najibullah Zazi, a former shuttle driver at the Denver airport, plead guilty to plotting with Al Qaeda, training with explosives in Pakistan, and buying large quantities of hydrogen peroxide and other chemicals from beauty supply shops. Zazi admitted to bringing Triacetone Triperoxide to New York as part of a planned attack on the city's subway system intended to occur on the eighth anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

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Terrorist attacks targeting public transportation remain a major concern, but U.S. officials say that counterterrorism efforts have proven far more effective in recent years.

Officials point to the "Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community," which prominently features a section entitled "Homegrown Jihadists." The tragic violence at Fort Hood in November of last year underscores the concerns that many in the intelligence community have about the damage that even an individual or a small number of homegrown extremists can do if they have the will and access.

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U.S. airports and mass transit systems have tightened security and more air marshals have been assigned to overseas flights. Officials have also sought cooperation from foreign governments. For example, major airports in Europe and other parts of the world with regular flights to the U.S. have been asked to use full body scanners and to subject all luggage to more rigorous inspection standards.

Harvey Kushner, a security administration expert at Long Island University who is often consulted by government agencies, noted that such changes are bound to improve safety and security. He added that according to a recent Gallup poll, 78 percent of frequent travelers in the U.S. reported feeling safer as a result of these changes.

John Brennan, a career C.I.A. official and President Obama's Deputy National Security Advisor for Homeland Security and Terrorism, expressed confidence in the government's ability, saying, "Missile strikes from drone aircraft in Pakistan have taken a steady toll on Al Qaeda. Beyond thinning the ranks of potential plotters, the strikes make it harder for terrorists to move, communicate, and plan." C.I.A. officials who oversee the drone program added that the long term effect will be far fewer trained terrorists seeking to enter the United States.

President Obama gave what is perhaps the most telling comment, "We've learned from the past; this time we are adapting before an attack." He added that, "Terrorist threats are not signals to stop your life. They are calls for Americans to be vigilant – to know that their government is on high alert, and to add their eyes and ears to the efforts to find and stop those who would do us harm."

Low threat-uncertain coping article

Despite Gains Mixed Signals Persist on Terrorism

By Scott Shane Published: April 4, 2010

WASHINGTON -- In the last few months F.B.I. agents arrested Najibullah Zazi, a shuttle driver at the Denver airport, who has plead guilty to training with explosives in Pakistan and buying bombmaking chemicals. In Dallas, a young Jordanian was charged with trying to blow up a skyscraper; in Springfield, Ill., a prison parolee was arrested for trying to attack the local federal building.

Michael Leiter, the director of the National Counterterrorism Center, said that while the failed Christmas Day attempt to bring down an airliner over Detroit is a reminder of the terrorist threat, it is also a reminder of how far the country has come in fighting terrorism.

While top counterterrorism officials concede that Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups have not been eliminated, many in the intelligence community cite evidence that the threat is actually decreasing.

Their argument is that the ideology of global jihad is in pronounced decline. Its central leadership has been thrown off balance as operatives are picked off by missiles and manhunts and, more important, with its tactics discredited in public opinion across the Muslim world.

According to Marc Sageman, a former top level C.I.A. officer in the Clinton and Bush administrations, "Nearly everything I've seen in the last two years suggests that the threat of terrorism on American soil is decreasing." He added, "Al Qaeda appears to be a diminishing problem."



Dr. Sageman is not alone in that assessment. Audrey Kurth Cronin, a professor at the National War College in Washington, thinks "Al Qaeda is in the process of imploding." She added, "It is not necessarily the end, but the trends are in a good direction."

Although optimistic, U.S. officials are uncertain whether their efforts will continue to foster improvements in how the United States is viewed in the Islamic world.

Associated Press

Indeed, a number of developments do point in a positive direction. One is the success of military Special Operations units, the C.I.A., and allies in killing prominent terrorists.

The second trend is older and probably more critical. Between 2002 and 2009, the view that suicide bombings are "often or sometimes justified" has declined, according to the Pew Global Attitudes Project, from 43 percent to 32 percent in Jordan; from 26 percent to 20 percent in Indonesia; and from 43 percent to 35 percent in Pakistan. Positive ratings for Osama bin Laden have also fallen.

Even with this success Washington has responded by taking additional security measures. The F.B.I. has retooled and expanded the Terrorism Screening Database and the Federal Aviation Administration has done the same with the No Fly List. While officials at both the F.B.I. and Transportation Security Administration declined to discuss specific changes beyond that of greater information sharing across agencies, they confirmed that "additional measures" are also being taken.

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However, Harvey Kushner, a security administration expert at Long Island University who is often consulted by government agencies, noted that the implementation has taken longer than expected. In his judgment it is too early to tell how these changes might alter the likelihood of certain kinds of terrorist attacks occurring within the United States.

"Considering the appalling terrorist attacks of 9/11, the train bombings in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005, and the Christmas Day attempt, most Americans understand all too well that we are living in a world where unexpected and devastating attacks on free and open societies can, and will, occur in ways that we never before imagined." Mr. Leiter continued, "We are dealing with evil people who lack any semblance of moral authority."

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Low threat-certain coping article

Rethinking Our Terrorist Fears

By Scott Shane Published: April 4, 2010

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Question Wording/Variable Description	Means	Std Dev
Affective Responses		
<i>Prompt:</i> We would like to understand how you feel about the story you just		
read. Many Americans experience various emotional reactions to stories like		
this one. Please concentrate on your FEELINGS rather than your thoughts.		
Fear scale: worried, afraid, and scared. Alpha = .908	.388	.24
As an American I feel worried	.454	.26
afraid	.357	.26
scared	.355	.25
Anger scale: hateful, angry, bitter, and resentful. Alpha = 888.	.353	.22
As an American I feel hateful	.287	.24
angry	.409	.27
bitter	.350	.25
resentful	.378	.25
Inreat Perception		
<i>Prompt</i> : Next, we would like to have you think about the information		
presented in the story you just read. This time, please concentrate on your		
1HOUGH18 rather than your teelings, and indicate the degree to which you		
strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree,		
somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree with each of the following		
statements.	(20)	4.0
I hreat perception scale. Alpha = .818.	.620	.18
The American people are at risk for another terrorist attack.	.694	.20
It is unlikely that the American people will be targeted by terrorists within	.699	.24
the next year [Reverse coded].	570	27
Terrorism is a severe threat to the American people.	.308	.27
refronsm is a serious threat to the economic well-being of the American	.308	.23
people. Tomorism is a significant threat to the nation	617	26
Terrorism is not a sorious threat to the American way of life Deverse	.017	.20 20
coded	.560	.28
coucuj.		
Presidential Approval		
Prompt: We would like to ask you to assess President Obama's job		
performance both in general, and on select issues that many Americans		
believe to be important.		
	(17	25
Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his	.617	.25
job as President? Range = 0 to 100		
Confidence in Government		
Confidence in government scale. Alpha = .680.	.658	.18
When it comes to protecting Americans, in your view, how much progress	.684	.21
has the United States government made since the September 11th		
terrorist attacks?		
How much confidence do you have in the ability of the United States	.632	.21
government to protect the American people from future terrorist attacks?		

APPENDIX 5.B: Question Wording and Descriptive Statistics for the Independent	and
Dependent Variables	

APPENDIX 5.B CONTINUED

		Std.
Question Wording/Variable Description	Means	Devs.
Policy Endorsements <i>Prompt</i> : We would like to ask your opinion about a number of ideas that are being considered to combat the threat of terrorism and strengthen national security. Some of these ideas may have been discussed in the article you read. Please indicate whether you strongly oppose, somewhat oppose, neither oppose nor favor, somewhat favor, or strongly favor each idea.		
Nonoffensive (i.e., domestic) policy endorsement scale. Alpha = .688. Relieve law enforcement officials of the burden of obtaining search	.347 .198	.215 .260
Allow the federal government to prohibit the media from reporting stories dealing with sensitive matters of national security.	.346	.317
Law enforcement authorities should be allow to compel testimony from persons suspected of terrorist activity.	.438	.296
Allow indefinite pre-trial detention of alleged terrorists.	.395	.313
Offensive (i.e., foreign) policy endorsement item. Continue using unmanned drone airplanes to launch missile strikes against suspected terrorists and terrorist groups in foreign countries.	.506	.323
American Identity <i>Prompt:</i> Regardless of whether you are a citizen of the United States or not, please indicate whether you strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree with each of the following items. American national identity scale. Alpha = .864.	.647	.214
I am a person who identifies with the American people.	.719	.225
I am a person who feels strong ties to the American people.	.663	.260
Overall, I think the American people are a great group of people.	.582	.289
Political Knowledge		
Political knowledge scale. Alpha = $.461$.	.767	.291
Who has the final responsibility to decide if a law is constitutional or not? (Supreme Court)	.718	.451
Whose responsibility is it to nominate judges to the Federal Courts? (President)	.732	.443
As things currently stand, which party has the most seats in the U.S. House? (Democrats)	.850	.358
Control Variables		
Sex (Female = 1)	.482	
Geographic location (Pacific Northwest $= 1$)	.721	
Republican	.159	
Democrat	.462	

CHAPTER SIX:

CONCLUSION

More than ten years after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the threat of terrorism continues to condition American politics. As of this writing, the salience and nature of the threat—or at least the way it is reported by the press—is qualitatively different relative to what it was through the 2004 presidential elections, and public opinion surveys asking about the "most important problem" facing the country show that the American public has largely been concerned with other issues (e.g., the economy). However, President Obama has prosecuted the war on terrorism in much the same way as his predecessor (Savage 2009), if not exceeded some of the precedents established by Bush (O'Connell 2012). Clearly, as the first epigram to Chapter 1 captures, the Obama administration believes that "...the threat facing us is at its most heightened since [the 9/11] attacks" (Napolitano 2011). Despite the persistence of terrorism as a national issue, the scholarly attention to this topic has waned without sufficiently addressing many lingering concerns. In this dissertation I have considered two lines of inquiry related to the use of government-issued terrorism warnings. The first issue dealt with whether political actors appeal to fear as part of their public relations strategies, and if so, under what conditions should we expect to see such messages. The second issue focused on how people respond to mediated messages about the likelihood of future terrorist attacks. In this chapter I briefly sketch the arguments and results, and then consider how the parts of the dissertation are linked. I conclude by addressing select limitations of the present research and discussing future research directions.

What Did this Study Aim to Accomplish?

By treating the two and one-half year period following the 9/11 attacks as a case study, I took seriously charges that the Bush administration used terrorism warnings to scare the American people into supporting the president and his policies (Gore 2007; Scatamburlo-D'Annibale 2005), and to divert attention from seemingly unfavorable media coverage (Olbermann 2005, 2006, 2007). To the extent that such claims have been supported, the evidence tends to be largely anecdotal. In my analyses I sought to more rigorously examine these ideas by analyzing the relationships between

aggregate presidential approval and the timing of terrorism warnings, and the overall tone of media coverage before and after each publicly disseminated terrorism warning. By using the overall tone for prominent stories, I avoided the difficulties associated with scanning the media environment for a single idiosyncratic event to pair with each warning.

In Chapter 2 I argued that in an era of permanent campaigning strategic presidents must pursue new opportunities in an effort to maintain a comparative advantage in influencing political discussions. The seeming ubiquity of going public as a communication strategy and the fragmentation of the news media have created new challenges. The fact that presidents, in particular, face increasing challenges in gaining access to national audiences (Baum and Kernell 1999) and moving public opinion (Edwards 2003) has led them to pursue new and varied strategies (Cohen 2010; Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake 2006). In light of this pattern, I reasoned that it is worth considering whether the introduction of terrorism warnings essentially provided the White House with a novel opportunity to command attention on an important issue that strongly resonated with the public. That is, following the 9/11 attacks, and with the introduction of intermittent terrorism warnings, the White House effectively had at its disposal a new method for resetting the agenda, one that reminded the press and the public about the existential danger posed by international terrorists to the American people.

This argument assumes that just as parties have policy-handling reputations (Petrocik 1996), presidents possess relative advantages in commanding attention in the domains of national security and foreign policy (Marra, Ostrom, and Simon 1990; Meernik and Ault 2001), particularly when the news media prominently features their actions (Oneal and Bryan 1995). These advantages are enhanced further when, during crises, political elites set partisanship aside (Brody 1991; Kam and Ramos 2008) and the press indexes its coverage accordingly (Bennett 1990; Hutcheson et al. 2004). The results reported in Chapter 3 show that the pattern of terrorism warnings was reliably related to decreases in aggregate presidential approval, as was the tone of media coverage for select issue areas (the war on terrorism, national defense and security, and Afghanistan) and the administration.

Specifically, the tone of coverage shifted from somewhat negative in the week preceding the warnings to somewhat positive in the week following. I interpret both results to be consistent with the perspective outlined in Chapter 2, and to extend prior scholarship. These results fit especially well with research showing public approval of the president increased following terrorism announcements (Willer 2004), and the willingness of elected officials to selectively use emotional rhetoric at key times (De Castella and McGarty 2011; De Castella, McGarty, and Musgrove 2009). Despite the confirmatory results, I also caution that definitive conclusions cannot be drawn as limitations exist in that the current study does not directly measure the motivations behind the announcements or their presentation.

Beyond issues of timing is the question of whether potentially fear inducing mediated messages have an effect on the public. That is, how do people actually respond to these types of messages? In particular, my interest was in identifying the mechanisms that drive support for antiterrorism policies and presidential approval. While aggregate shifts in the amount of positive and negative news coverage provides cues that inform politicians' tactics and strategies, if not also affect their political fortunes (Manheim 1991, 1994; Wolfsfeld 2001), tone is a relatively blunt instrument for determining the mechanisms by which people respond to message content. This is especially true in light of the emerging body of scholarship showing that emotions play an important role in political behavior (Brader 2005; 2006; Huddy et al. 2005; Lerner et al. 2003; Lodge and Taber 2005; Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000), and increasingly in linking the cues offered by political clites, and channeled through the news media, to the public opinion about policies (Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008; Gadarian 2010). Importantly, this growing body of research suggests a more discriminating approach is necessary to answer the questions of primary interest.

Thus, in the second part of the dissertation I examined how people respond cognitively and affectively to mediated messages about the likelihood of future terrorist attacks, and how responses related to policy support for antiterrorism efforts and presidential approval. The lack of data linking individual-level responses to terrorism warnings and related news stories precludes a more finegrained analysis within the post-9/11 context, and necessitates a different approach. Drawing on research in the areas of fear appeals, cognitive appraisal theory, and group identification, in Chapter 4 I reasoned that potentially fear-inducing messages such as terrorism warnings may result in responses other than fear, and that people might support different political goals depending on the specific thoughts and emotions elicited. Importantly, I argued that it is not exposure to the message itself that drives preference formation; rather it is how people interpret and respond to the message that matters.

In the analyses I focused on two cognitive (perceived threat and confidence in the government's ability to protect the American people) and two affective (fear and anger) responses. Moreover, because the threat of terrorism poses danger to the American people I posited that the degree to which respondents identify with the American people may also influence their political preferences. The empirical results summarized in Chapter 5 show mixed support in that cognitive and affective responses to government-issued terrorism warnings have implications for both offensive (i.e., foreign) and nonoffensive (i.e., domestic) policy support, but are less influential for presidential approval as political predispositions remain the strongest predictors, at least in an experimental setting. Further, while national identity was related to foreign policy attitudes, it did not consistently explain variation in cognitive and affective responses.

How Do These Two Parts Fit Together?

This dissertation investigated two overarching issues stemming from the conceptualization of government-issued terrorism warnings as a type of fear appeal: (1) under what conditions might we expect to see political actors make such appeals, and (2) how do individuals respond to potentially fear-inducing messages within the context of the war on terrorism. The first question only takes on meaning to the extent that the public responds to the message. If potentially fear-inducing messages such as terrorism warnings fall flat (i.e., individuals do not respond), concerns about manipulation of the press or public opinion are likely misplaced. The evidence summarized above indicates that both the public and the press have been responsive to terrorism warnings, at least those occurring in close proximity to 9/11. While the apparent causes of these responses are the same, the effects exist at different levels of abstraction. Because I use a mixed methods approach in an effort to understand two different responses to potentially fear-inducing messages, it is important to consider how the two parts of the dissertation align conceptually. In this section I outline the connection I see between the content analysis and experimental analysis.

The focus in Chapters 2 and 3 was on elite level behavior, and my concern was with the factors that might relate to the timing of government-issued terrorism warnings. Previous efforts to identify such patterns have relied exclusively on anecdotal evidence without considering the larger context. The problem with such efforts, as John Zaller (1994) pointed out, is that "it is too easy for someone with an active imagination...to spin out alluring stories" (p. 270). Indeed, social scientists are properly skeptical of such evidence. To overcome this criticism, I focused on the overall tone of front page *New York Times* reporting to better capture the diversity of prominent events that preceded and followed each government-issued terrorism warning. I chose this approach rather than trying to identify a single news story or political development that might qualify as the triggering mechanism for each warning.⁹⁵ I then created daily average scores for the different dependent variables, and it was these measures that were used in the media analysis. The coding of overall tone essentially captures a daily running tally for the evaluative content for each dependent variable.

Based on previous research (Brody 1991; Baumgartner and Jones 1993), I reasoned that a broad approach to capturing the information environment was necessary, particularly when analysts are interested in aggregate level phenomena over an extended period of time. The use of overall tone was further justified based the strategic communication framework that suggests that visibility and

⁹⁵ For example, one common criticism leveled against the Bush administration was that terrorism warnings were used to divert attention away from stories about the administration's relationship to Enron. The idea being that when stories about Enron dominated the news, terrorism warnings were issued to draw media attention away from this topic. In an effort to explore this idea I ran a series of crosstabs to examine the number of stories about Enron that appeared on the front page of the *New York Times* before and after each of the nine terrorism warnings issued during the first six months of 2002, when the Enron story was at its peak. Contrary to critics' expectations, the basic analysis indicated that the number of stories about Enron actually increased following the public dissemination of terrorism warnings (results not reported).

valence are the primary dimensions that guide the strategic behavior of political actors (Kiousis 2004; Manheim 1994). For presidents, because they are constantly in the news (Cook and Ragsdale 1995), the primary dimension from a strategic perspective is valence. Presidents are more concerned with levels of support than they are with the mechanisms that lead to public support, regardless of whether that support is reflected in press coverage or public opinion. Research examining the White House's internal polling operations is instructive. Presidents use internal polling to boost their own popularity and that of their policies, and challenge media coverage. Further, presidents seek to amplify positive coverage that might reflect well on them or bolster their image, and minimize negative coverage that might harm their standing or detract from their policy goals (Green 2002; Jacobs and Shapiro 1995, 1995-96). Applying these insights to media coverage, the coding of tone emphasized summary judgments of all substantive information included in the source materials.

The fact that the overall tone of news coverage shifted, pendulum like, from relatively negative to positive as terrorism warnings were issued suggests that content and tone matter, perhaps independent of events themselves. Moreover, it illustrates one of the ways that press behavior can be influenced by the political context.⁹⁶ However, it is important to recognize that while a simple valence approach more readily lends itself to the types of strategic considerations that concern presidents and other political actors, it does not necessarily lend itself to a more detailed analysis required to get at individual-level public responses. In moving from the strategic considerations of politicians to the individual-level responses of citizens it is necessary for more discriminating measures than overall tone.

To be sure, some events are widely viewed as clearly negative (e.g., a terrorist attack and economic downturns) or positive (e.g., diplomatic agreements and reductions in violent crime), and these types of stories are reflected in the content analysis. However, the overall tone of other stories may be more ambiguous. Consider a story about terrorism warning, specifically. On its face, a

⁹⁶ From an economic perspective, these patterns seem to indicate that "national unity is good politics" (Zaller's 1994, 267). That is, beyond the explanation offered by the opinion leadership and indexing perspectives, news organizations may also make calculated decisions such as emphasizing a patriotic perspective if it helps to attract viewers or readers (e.g., Rutenberg 2001).

terrorism warning could be interpreted as a positive or negative development. A positive interpretation may stem from the fact that it represents the government's effort to identify threats and keep the public safe. If a probable attack is known, disseminating a warning with as much detailed information as possible is a positive development and demonstrates effective government action. In terms of the coding scheme, this would result in a positive tone code. However, the same warning could also indicate that threats from terrorist organizations are ongoing and that the government is relatively powerless to effectively neutralize the danger.⁹⁷ The importance of adequately capturing individual differences in how people understand and respond to terrorism warnings is highlighted further by one media scholar's argument that:

Information about crises, even if it conveys bad news, relieves disquieting uncertainty and calms people. The mere activity of watching or listening to familiar reporters and commentators reassures people and keeps them occupied. It gives them a sense of vicarious participation, of "doing something."

News stories [can also] serve to reassure injured people that their grief and fears are shared (Graber 2006, 134).

The diversity of ways people can respond to the same media content, then, required moving beyond tone. Nonetheless, particular aspects that contributed to the coding of tone in the content analysis played into the creation of the experimental stimuli. For example, as described in Chapter 3 (see p. 70), news articles about terrorism warnings were more likely to include critical or skeptical voices (i.e., material that contributed to negative tone codes) when the warnings piled up in close proximity to one another. In constructing the experimental articles I attempted to capture variation along these lines. In particular, the low threat and effective coping portions approximated some of the types of material that qualified as positive in tone in the content analysis, whereas the high threat and ineffective coping portions approximated select aspects of reporting that qualified as negative in tone.

In the final analysis, only the aspects approximating positive and negative tone as it pertained to threat information related to the policy attitudes; the coping condition variable is unrelated to the

⁹⁷ This interpretation is perhaps more likely as the number of terrorism warnings accumulates over time.

dependent variables (see Table 5.10). Specifically, exposure to the low threat (i.e., positive tone) conditions predicted greater support for nonoffensive antiterrorism policies, whereas exposure to the high threat (i.e., negative tone) conditions related to greater support for offensive antiterrorism policies. The fact that both the threat conditions and the coping conditions are unrelated to presidential approval would seem to suggest that the overall tone of news stories may not have contributed to the increases in presidential approval identified by Willer (2004). However, under different circumstances this may change.

While the overall direction of media tone or public opinion continues to be a solid predictor of elite level behavior, the bottom line for individual-level phenomena seems to be that much work remains to be done to determine exactly how positive and negative tone relates to political attitudes and behavior. The experimental analysis suggests that such a broad approach is of limited utility if the goal is to understand individual-level phenomena.

Limitations and Future Research

In terms of limiting factors, here I focus briefly on two issues that have implications for the generalizability of the study's results. First, the content analysis relies on front page stories only, and does not use the full text of articles. Rather, the titles, abstracts, and the first five paragraphs of each article serve as a proxy for the full text. While this decision was based primarily on resource limitations, journalists acknowledge that the front page is the most important section of the entire newspaper (Kurtz 2004), and scholars have argued that these elements capture the content that most people are likely to read (Peake 2007). Further, the published record indicates that using proxies in place of full text still yields significant variation and theoretically meaningful results (e.g., Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Zaller 1998). While it is true that the approach adopted sacrifices some precision for practicality, "proxies can adequately represent original content when researchers are working at a high level of aggregation" (Althaus, Edy, and Phalen 2001, 721).

Second, the standard caveats about experimental work applies, particularly when the sampling procedures rely on captive audiences. This is typically an external validity problem that is applicable to a wide swath of experimental research (Sears 1986; although see Druckman and Kam 2011), and cautions that it is advisable to not read too much into the results of a single experiment. Arguably more important is the recognition that experimental participants had likely already been exposed to multiple terrorism warnings. To the extent that this is true, the experimental estimates do not represent a treatment effect in the strictest sense; rather they represent the average marginal effect of an additional treatment (Gaines and Kuklinski 2011). This caveat is of particular importance given political scientists' interest in external validity. Further, the fact that the experimental manipulation successfully produced significant differences in cognitive and emotional responses (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2) suggests that terrorism warnings retain credibility, and could well be used strategically at some point in the future.

These and other limitations notwithstanding, a number of avenues for future research are suggested by the current study. First, the focus on decreases in presidential approval and shifts in the tone of news coverage do not exhaust the list of factors that may relate to the timing of terrorism warnings. In particular, another possibility is that the warnings may have been synced with particular legislation, and timed in an effort to condition debate in Congress. If, for example, either the House or the Senate was scheduled to debate or vote on legislation on which the president had previously taken a position on, perhaps terrorism warnings served as an extra-legislative cudgel to goad recalcitrant legislators into supporting the White House's stated position. Previous research suggests that the communication patterns of the Bush administration in the weeks following immediately after the 9/11 attacks, along with an "echoing press," were "strategically delivered to marshal public support for [the Patriot Act] and to pressure Congress to act" (Domke et al. 2006, 306). Among the 32 terrorism warnings issued between September 11, 2001 and December 31, 2003, at least 14 of warnings were issued less than two weeks before roll call votes on legislation in the House dealing with issues important to the president. The question, then, is how these bills fared relative to other

similar bills placed on the calendar at other times, and whether the final outcomes are demonstrably different (e.g., a higher proportion of Democrats with the Republican Party) between the two groups of bills.

A second issue involving the Bush era terrorism warnings would be whether the content of reporting differed across media outlets. That is, it would be interesting to analyze a wider swath of news reporting to determine whether the presentation of the warnings varied, and, if so, how people responded to the competing presentations. While the *New York Times* continues to exert influence over the agendas of other news organizations, restricting the analysis to a single outlet may limit the generalizability of the content analysis. In particular, this idea takes on special meaning in light of my argument that it is not the event itself that matters, but the description of the event, and then, more importantly, how people respond to the description that ultimately matters for political outcomes such as policy endorsement or presidential approval. To the extent that news consumers engage in selective exposure as the media environment becomes more fragmented, in the future researchers will likely need to consider a more diversified sampling procedure.

A third recommendation is for future scholarship to continue to elaborate the study of fear appeals within political contexts. As I have argued, the assumption is that these types of appeals are quite common. However, our knowledge of their effectiveness is rather limited. The evidence summarized in Chapter 5, along with other studies (e.g., Huddy et al. 2005), suggests that arousing fear is not guaranteed to rally support. Rather, it seems to depend on the outcome of interest. This has implications for the issue of terrorism warnings specifically, but also applies to political communication efforts more generally. In terms of terrorism warnings, examining how the public responds to such messages over time would contribute greatly to our understanding of strategic communication. In addition, the fact that fear arousal is associated with diverse responses suggests that the study of political fear appeals should be pursued in other contexts to better understand how fear (and other emotions) relate to other politically meaningful outcomes. Finally, the results for American national identity warrant further consideration. The results show that American national identity relates to foreign policy support as expected, but it is generally unrelated to support for domestic antiterrorism policies and presidential approval. Reasoning that presidents are often viewed as exemplars of the national group in times of crises, I expected to find that strong identifiers would be more supportive of the president than weak identifiers. The null results indicate that this is not the case. One possible explanation is that some of the respondents did not view President Obama as stereotypically American. For example, strong identifiers tend set more exclusive boundaries for the group. In particular, strong identifiers see characteristics such as being white, Christian, and native-born as definitively American (Theiss-Morse 2009). Debate about whether two of these characteristics described President Obama was a relatively common topic in the press at the time of data collection.⁹⁸ This is an intriguing possibility, however, without more discriminating questions assessing the president, this issue is difficult to sort out presently.

A second possibility is that perhaps presidential evaluations are more weakly related to American identity than antiterrorism policies. On their face, antiterrorism policies, to the extent that they are perceived to be effective in protecting the ingroup, would seem to be related more directly to American identity than assessments of the president. It is likely that most participants had previously considered presidential performance (again, many of the students were recruited from political science classes), and that these assessments were more impervious to the experimental manipulations than policy attitudes. Foreign policy attitudes, in particular, tend to remain dormant until some shock, usually from news coverage (Powlick and Katz 1998). The experimental results support this idea as foreign policy support is the only dependent variable related to all five of the independent variables in the directions predicted (see Table 5.10).

Moving beyond the relationship between American national identity and presidential approval specifically, it is plausible that the research participants conceptualized national identity in

⁹⁸ There are large differences in the sample for American national identity and presidential approval when the sample is divided along geographic lines. Specifically, students in the Pacific Northwest tended to score lower on identity (M = .61, SD = .21) and higher on presidential approval (M = .66, SD = .22) than students in the Midwest (M = .74, SD = .19 and M = .50, SD = .28, respectively).

different ways. While the perspective I adopted nicely captures both the degree to which people see themselves as part of the national group and their commitment to the collective, the American people is a large group with much diversity. Indeed, while scholars have identified at least four distinct dimensions of American identity, public opinion is not necessarily organized in the same manner (Schildkraut 2007). I continue to believe that one's sense of attachment to the ingroup can have a meaningful influence when the group is threatened. However, it seems that either the experimental manipulation did not sufficiently prime national identity, or future research might consider more thoroughly how these "multiple traditions" relate to the types of outcomes examined in this project.

In closing, this dissertation has sought to offer insight into two different outcomes related to potentially fear-inducing messages. The first part of the dissertation strongly suggests, although cannot definitively prove, that strategic considerations played into the timing of government-issued terrorism warnings, and that these messages produced at least temporary advantages for the White House and their policies. On their face, these results show that entrepreneurial politicians can still manage to gain advantages by going public so long as their strategy sufficiently resonates with the press and the public. The second part of the dissertation indicates that terrorism warnings continue to resonate with the public, at least when making policy assessments. On the other hand, the experiment also provide some qualification for the content analysis. In particular, efforts to scare the public into supporting policies are contingent more on specific cognitive and emotional reactions, and less on the overall tone of information. Moreover, if the goal is to build policy support, fear might not be the best approach. Rather, getting the public riled up and angry appears to be a "better" and more reliable approach.

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