

Corporate Media Framing of Political Rhetoric:  
The Creation of a Moral Panic in the wake of September 11th 2001

John Paul Mason

Thesis submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science  
In  
Sociology

James E. Hawdon, Chair  
Dale W. Wimberley  
Anastasia S. Yogt Yuan

September 4, 2009  
Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: moral panic theory, 9/11, terrorism, social solidarity, corporate media



Corporate Media Framing of Political Rhetoric:  
The Creation of a Moral Panic in the wake of September 11th 2001

John Paul Mason

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the rhetoric and subsequent media framing of President George W. Bush during the years following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and how such frames have been able to generate and sustain a national moral panic. While a number of scholars have explored the effect of presidential rhetoric in generating panic (53; Cohen 1972; Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994; Hawdon 2001; Kappeler and Kappeler 2004), none have evaluated the effect of media framing on such rhetoric. This study will use three major sources of data: (1) National Public Opinion Data from Gallup Poll, (2) daily *USA Today* news articles, and (3) rates of international terrorism from the U.S. State Department. Employing a content analysis of *USA Today* articles pertaining to terrorism, I will evaluate the relevant themes used by the corporate media to frame the Bush administration's rhetoric, and further analyze the relationship between such rhetoric and the collective conscience across the eight years of the Bush presidency, while controlling for rates of international terrorism.

## Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	iii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Figures	iv
List of Tables	v
Chapter 1: Statement of the Problem and Introduction	1
Section 1.1: Statement of the Problem	1
Section 1.2: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature:	4
Section 2.1: From Durkheim to Simmel: Social Solidarity and Group Conflict	4
Section 2.2: Terrorism as a Social Construct	11
Section 2.3: Moral Panics and the Consumption of Fear	19
Section 2.4: Corporate Media Framing of Political Rhetoric	23
Chapter 3: Elaboration, Approach and Methods	27
Section 3.1: Review and Elaboration	27
Section 3.2: Definitions and Propositions	30
Section 3.3: Data Collection	38
Section 3.4: Content Analysis	43
Section 3.5: Statistical Analysis	45
Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion	50
Section 4.1: Moral Panic Theory Tested	50
Section 4.2: Corporate Media Framing of Presidential Rhetoric	68
Section 4.3: The Impact of Corporate Media Framing on Political-Social Solidarity	80
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion	86
Appendix A: Gallup Poll Questions	104
Appendix B: Created Indices and Factor Loadings	106
Appendix C: Methodology for the Conference Board Consumer Confidence Survey	108

## List of Figures

<b>Figure 3.1:</b> Gannett Company’s Interlocking Directorates as of 2004	29
<b>Figure 3.2:</b> Trend Plot of Severe Terrorist Incidents, General Terrorism Database (GTD) and Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (WITS), 2001 - 2008	42
<b>Figure 4.1:</b> Volatility Trend Plot - The Number of <i>USA Today</i> Articles per Month and per Day	51
<b>Figure 4.2:</b> Means Plot Articles per Day by Four Month Time Period	52
<b>Figure 4.3:</b> Combined Trend and Means plot of Respondents Who Say Terrorism is the Most Important Problem Facing the Nation (2001 – 2008)	54
<b>Figure 4.4:</b> Trend Plot of the Likelihood of Further Acts of Terrorism in the United States Over the Next Several Weeks	56
<b>Figure 4.5:</b> Crosstabulation of Hostile and/or Brutalizing Rhetoric by Time Period	59
<b>Figure 4.6:</b> Means Plot of Responds Who Say Immigration Levels Should <i>Decrease</i>	60
<b>Figure 4.7:</b> Percentage of Anti-Islamic Hate Crimes Victims of Total Religious Motivated Hate Crime Victims, Uniform Crime Report Hate Crime Statistics, 2005 - 2007	61
<b>Figure 4.8:</b> Trend Plot of Severe Terrorist Incidents Worldwide, per Month, 2001 - 2008	65
<b>Figure 4.9:</b> Trend Plot, Number of <i>USA Today</i> Articles, Number of Anti-U.S. Attacks, Number of Worldwide Incidents, and Number of Severe Terrorist Incidents, 1981-2008	66
<b>Figure 4.10:</b> Crosstabulation of Disproportional Media Claims by Time Period	67
<b>Figure 4.11:</b> Crosstabulation of Communitarian Media Frames by Time Period	71
<b>Figure 4.12:</b> Crosstabulation of Media Frames of Proactive Political Rhetoric by Time Period	74
<b>Figure 4.13:</b> Trend Plot of Media Framing of Proactive and Reactive Policy, 2001 -2008	75
<b>Figure 4.14:</b> Crosstabulation of Individualistic Media Frames by Time Period	77
<b>Figure 4.15:</b> Trend Plot of Communitarian and Individualistic Corporate Media Frames, 2001-2008	79
<b>Figure 4.16:</b> Crosstabulation of Media Frames of Reactive Political Rhetoric by Time Period	80
<b>Figure 4.17:</b> Trend Plot of Presidential Approval and Satisfaction with the Way Things Are Going in the United States, over Time	81
<b>Figure 4.18:</b> Trend Plot of Presidential Approval Scale, National Satisfaction Scale, and Political Solidarity Scale, Over Time	82

## List of Tables

<b>Table 4.1:</b> Computed Odds Ratio of Percent of Population Worried to % of Population Killed in a Terrorist Attack by Year	63
<b>Table 4.2:</b> Regression of Solidarity Index <sup>^</sup> on Communitarianism and Individualism Indices, Controlling for Consumer Confidence Index and Severe Terrorist Incidents	84
<b>Table B.1:</b> Factor Loadings and Variable Descriptions of Communitarianism Index	106
<b>Table B.2</b> Factor Loadings and Variable Descriptions of Individualism Index	107

## Chapter 1: Statement of the Problem and Introduction

“Our war on terror begins with al-Qaida, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated.”<sup>1</sup>

### Section 1.1: Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to examine the rhetoric and subsequent media framing of President George W. Bush during the years following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and how such frames have been able to generate and sustain a national moral panic. While a number of scholars have explored the effect of presidential rhetoric in generating panic (53; Cohen 1972; Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994; Hawdon 2001; Kappeler and Kappeler 2004), none have evaluated the effect of media framing on such rhetoric. This study will use three major sources of data: (1) National Public Opinion Data from Gallup Poll, (2) daily *USA Today* news articles, and (3) rates of international terrorism from the U.S. State Department. Employing a content analysis of *USA Today* articles pertaining to terrorism, I will evaluate the relevant themes used by the corporate media to frame the Bush administration’s rhetoric, and further analyze the relationship between such rhetoric and the collective conscience across the eight years of the Bush presidency, while controlling for rates of international terrorism.

### Section 1.2: Introduction

Immediately after the 9/11 attacks, a slew of politicians, religious leaders, terrorism “experts,” academics, and other social commentators engaged in a claims-making frenzy surrounding the apparent causes, motives, appropriate responses, and future socio-political implications that these attacks would have for the United States and the world. The American people were told that terrorism was the single greatest threat to humanity, and indeed, that

---

<sup>1</sup> President George W. Bush, address to Joint Session of Congress, 20 September 2001

“freedom and fear are at war.” In a September 20<sup>th</sup> 2001 address to Congress and the American people, President Bush asserted “the advance of human freedom -- the great achievement of our time, and the great hope of every time -- now depends on us.” Invoking a sort of divine calling, President Bush continued, “our nation -- this generation -- will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future.”<sup>2</sup> This new “calling of our generation” is reminiscent of attempts by Reagan to garnish support for the “War on Drugs” in the mid to late 1980’s (Hawdon 2001). In the weeks, months and years following the attacks on New York City and Washington D.C., the United States waged two wars, enacted various laws and provisions, created new governmental organizations designed to deal with a new and “dangerous” threat, and restricted various civil liberties; all of this was, and still is, justified as an offensive means of defending the United States against future terrorist attacks, and a way of spreading democracy and peace throughout the world.

I will begin by addressing relevant themes in the structural-functionalist literature regarding social solidarity and the implications of group antagonism for boundary maintenance. From this perspective, we can then examine how an event like 9/11 is capable of inflating levels of social solidarity and bolstering the collective conscience. As such, we will examine the dynamics of group boundary maintenance as it relates to a two-directional process of in-group glorification and out-group deviantization. I then turn to a discussion of the social construction of the concept “terrorism.” I argue that terrorism is a form of “self-help” (Black 2004) employed by individuals or groups as a form of “social control.” I then make the argument that *what* we today understand as “terrorism” does not have a socio-historic existence *sui generis*; instead, “terrorism” has emerged as a highly politicized category containing various meanings and interpretations afforded the concept by those in a position of power able to do so. By situating

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>



such acts of “terror” as a socially constructed phenomenon sensitive to the politicized and historic milieu in which the concept is reified as “good vs. evil,” we are better able to analyze the effects that various forms of political rhetoric, claims-making, and corporate media framing has on large social forces. This study will evaluate the specific rhetorical forms used to construct and situate “terrorism” for mass consumption following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, and then proposes to evaluate the social response to terrorism from the framework provided by Moral Panic Theory (see Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994; Hawdon 2001; Kappeler and Kappeler 2004; Rothe and Muzzatti 2004). Moral Panic Theory focuses on why some specific “problems” come to be defined in certain times and locations while others do not (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994). One goal of this study, then, is to analyze how the events of 9/11 and the resulting “War on Terror” *do or do not* fit within the current theoretical conceptualization of Moral Panic Theory. An attempt will then be made to map the ways in which the corporate media framed political rhetoric across various stages of the moral panic. Such a frame analysis seeks to elucidate the thematic discourse surrounding and internal to the dominant narrative of events. Finally, I plan to elaborate upon and further develop Goode and Ben-Yehuda’s (1994) elite-engineered model of moral panic creation.

## Chapter 2: Review of the Literature:

*“This is the reason why war with the outside is sometimes the last chance for a state ridden with inner antagonisms to overcome these antagonisms, or else to break up definitely” (Simmel 1955:93).*

### Section 2.1: From Durkheim to Simmel: Social Solidarity and Group Conflict

In Durkheim’s (1982) *The Rules of Sociological Method*, we are asked to “imagine a community of saints in an exemplary and perfect monastery” in which crimes of “ordinary consciences” (e.g. murder, theft, rape, etc) do not exist (100). The point of Durkheim’s metaphor is not to describe some idealistic utopian society free from crime, but instead, to make the point that even in a community of flawless individuals, certain behaviors will be deemed inappropriate, and certain actors will be labeled deviant. As Durkheim (1982) continues, “faults that appear venial to the ordinary person will arouse the same scandal as does normal crime in ordinary consciences” (1982:100). In this light, the presence or absence of “deviant behavior” within a community is not contingent upon some innate morality held common among the mass of individuals. The crux of Durkheim’s argument is the distinction between the “normal” and the “pathological.” While traditional “pathological” theories of behavior propound essentialist claims (i.e. deviant behavior is abnormal and maladaptive), such is not the case for Durkheim. Inasmuch as deviant behavior will emerge in one form or another in even the most perfect of imaginable societies should call our attention to the social aspect of defining deviance. While it may be possible to look within the moral boundaries of our own society and make a long list of behaviors we consider to be deviant, we must recognize that this list would not hold true across time and across space. In effect, Durkheim argues that deviant behavior would not simply cease to exist in a utopian “society of saints,” but would instead simply change forms. While “its form

changes; the acts thus characterized are not the same everywhere,” the functional necessity of defining something as “wrong,” “bad,” or “deviant,” is constant (Durkheim 1982).

Throughout the coming chapters, I will develop the idea that terrorism, like other forms of socially unacceptable behavior, can only be understood as a socially, politically, and culturally bound phenomenon that varies considerably between locations and across time. We gain nothing by viewing terrorism as a detestable act *sui generis*, but stand to learn a great deal by studying the discourse surrounding such social behavior. While pop-cultural accounts of crime tend to focus on the deviant “nature” of a criminal, “nature” does not exist in a vacuum. Even if something as loosely defined as “nature” existed, one would have to admit that “nature” always exists in interaction with other “natures,” as well as a number of other social and cultural processes. Why some behaviors come to be defined as deviant, while others do not, suggests relatively little about the nature of the act (or actor), and far more about the perceptions and interpretations surrounding such behavior and the actors who perform it.

An important question remains: what is “functional” about terrorism? The death of 3,000 people, alongside the destruction of the World Trade Center and part of the Pentagon appears to be, if anything, quite dysfunctional for society. The tremendous emotional pain that so many of the families and friends of victims experienced seems disintegrative and dysfunctional enough. Indeed, President Bush informs us that the terrorists – the perpetrators of such acts of violence are “evil and kill without mercy – but not without purpose.”<sup>3</sup> While recognizing the grief and anguish the victims and their families suffered and may still suffer, we can take a more distant, depersonalized view of these events. If we give pause and remember the displays of collective solidarity – the candlelight vigils – the singing of “God Bless America” – the “freedom fries” – the American flags that decorated so many homes, cars and businesses (see Collins 2004a) – the

---

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/09/20060911-3.html>

iconic speeches made by President Bush and New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani from the hallowed World Trade Center wreckage – we are reminded of the unique capacity that tragic and devastating events of the like have in bringing people together under the auspices of a collective conscience, or in the case of 9/11, the umbrella of nationalism. Let us not forget that in the wake of September 11<sup>th</sup>, with Presidential approval ratings skyrocketing to over ninety-percent (Gallup 2008), President Bush (with the overwhelming support of Congress) responded by mobilizing the armed forces, launching an attack on terrorist cells in Afghanistan, suspending various civil liberties including *habeas corpus*, and has since managed to institutionalize policies, programs, and governmental departments and bureaucracies of the like (i.e. The PATRIOT Act; The Office of Homeland Security) specifically designed to address this novel and emergent threat.

The above illustrations should reveal that while various behaviors may cause some degree of social harm (in terms of the loss of human life, loss of capital, etc), the fact that a behavior “offends certain collective feelings” at all suggests a functional analysis of any social problem has less to do with the objective behavior, and much more to do with social reactions to that behavior (Durkheim 1982:99). Insofar as “deviance” is socially constructed through a process of maintaining and defining boundaries (Erikson 1966), labeling actors as deviant acts to differentiate them from the collective, while simultaneously reifying the collective conscience of community. By making salient what is “inappropriate,” “wrong,” “evil” and “deviant,” the polemic collective in-group’s moral fiber is strengthened. The process of defining and reacting to deviance “would either help to redefine the moral boundaries of these symbolic-moral universes in a rigid way or help introduce elements of flexibility and hence change” (Ben-Yehuda 1990). Crime is positive for society – not because people die in terrorist attacks – but

because it establishes and maintains group boundaries through a process of creating highly identifiable categories of “us” and “them” (Erikson 1966; Hawdon 1996).

On Wednesday April 19<sup>th</sup>, 1995, Timothy McVeigh, Terry Nichols, and Michael Fortier set off a homemade car bomb in the garage of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The explosion claimed the lives of 168 men, women and children, and injured many others. Until 9/11, this was considered the deadliest “terrorist” attack on US soil. Except for the magnitude of scale, there is very little difference between the Oklahoma City Bombing and the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>. Inasmuch as both events are defined as terrorist attacks, the distinction between the two incidents appears to involve the origin of the conflict.

The act of defining a behavior as “bad” or “deviant” appears to bolster the collective conscience of the dominant in-group by simultaneously defining what the dominant group “is not.” The terrorist attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 did not – in and of themselves – directly *cause* an increase in social solidarity; solidarity was necessarily created from within the community boundaries, as a response to an external force. “Like a war, a flood, or some other emergency,” the events of 9/11 made people more aware of their common interests, and simultaneously helped draw “attention to those values which constitute the collective conscience of the community” (Erikson 1966:4). In a qualitative study titled “Rituals of Solidarity and Security in the Wake of Terrorist Attack,” Randall Collins (2004a) describes and analyzes the spate of patriotic displays and ritual group behavior within the framework of interaction ritual chain theory. According to Collins (2004a),

what creates the solidarity is the sharp rise in ritual intensity of social interaction, as very large numbers of persons focus their attention on the same event, are reminded constantly that other people are focusing their attention by the symbolic signals they give out, and hence are swept up into a collective mood. (55)

Likewise, Kai Ericson (1966) remarks that when a community comes together “to express their

outrage over the offense and to bear witness against the offender, they develop a tighter bond of solidarity than existed earlier” (4). Such shared experiences are neither purely micro, nor purely macro, but perhaps more appropriately, macro manifestations of instances of the micro-level performances. On the one hand, social solidarity appears to be, first and foremost, a macro-level force that takes the form of wide-spread, collective social and political sentiments; within just two weeks of 9/11, over ninety percent of the U.S. population reported that they were personally satisfied with President Bush’s job performance (Collins 2004a). This form of collectivity, however, does not simply materialize as the direct result of some outside stimuli. Instead, solidarity is effectively bolstered from within the community through the creation of a dynamic web of micro-level interactions, which together, form successive chains of shared, mutual focus. (Collins 2004b). This web forms the platform on which social solidarity, as we understand it in its macro form, is grounded.

Just as in-group solidarity increases when a group’s moral boundary conditions are contested, the collective conscience is strengthened when two groups engage in conflict with one another (Simmel 1955; Coser 1964). I propose that a group will experience three primary effects when it engages in conflict with another group.

*Increased solidarity and centralization.* As conflict with another group highlights the existing boundary conditions of a society or community, we expect a simultaneous demonization of an “enemy” and a strengthening of internal cohesion and solidarity. As Simmel notes: “A state of conflict, however, pulls the members so tightly together and subjects them to such a uniform impulse that they either must completely get along with, or completely repel, one another” (Simmel 1955: 92-93). While cohesion and solidarity is likely to increase in the face of inter-group hostility, the degree to which a society “pulls together” is subject to social values and

existing levels of cohesion before the threat was introduced. Anecdotally, consider the reification and construction of a “patriot” in the wake of 9/11. Even a cursory examination of solidarity rituals after 9/11 – the candlelight vigils, displays at sporting events, instances of civil religion, the increase in displaying symbols of collective identity such as the American Flag – reveals a socially approved, highly scripted definition of what constitutes a “good American.”

*Increased hostility towards out-group members.* As moral boundaries are brought to the forefront of the collective conscience, differences between in-group and out-group members tend to become more severe (Erikson 1966). Ericson (1966) accurately observes that “wars [...] can publicize a group's boundaries by drawing attention to the line separating the group from an adversary” (11). Inasmuch as this enunciation of the moral boundaries is dependent upon opposition, Simmel (1955) keenly notes that “the unity of the group is often lost when it has no longer any opponent” (97). There is, then, a certain function that maintaining hostility (or at least the appearance of such) plays in increasing group solidarity and unity. Nevertheless, we must immediately note that unity and solidarity, while perhaps dependent upon the delineation between the collective “us” and the deviant “them,” begins to maintain “*itself* beyond the period of struggle” so much so that the “latent relationship and unity” may eventually bear no relationship to the initial source of conflict (emphasis mine; Simmel 1955:101).

While the connections between group conflict and moral panics will be discussed at length in coming sections, we should note here at least, that one of the key elements of a successful moral panic is the articulation of a specific individual or group that is responsible for the apparent social or moral misgivings. Stanley Cohen (1972) most famously defined and articulated this deviatization of a specific and identifiable group, branding the group defined as “folk devils.” While there may be numerous political, social, and psychological factors that

contribute to hostility towards an outside group, the effect that such hostility has on boundary maintenance and unity within the in-group is distinctly sociological in nature.

*The creation of enemies, real or imagined.* People in a position of power may actively engage in a “search for enemies.” As Coser states: “...outside conflict need not even be objectively present in order to foster in-group cohesion” (Coser 1964). Likewise, Simmel contends that “within certain groups, it may even be a piece of political wisdom to see to it that there be some enemies in order for the unity of the members to remain effective and for the group to remain conscious of this unity as its vital interest” (Simmel 1955: 98). Certainly, the fact that enemies need not be “real” at all has broad ranging implications beyond an academic discussion of group processes.

Nor is this recognition about enemies a new concept. Carl Schmitt (1996), the infamous German political philosopher and legal theorist, argues that “to the state as an essentially political entity belongs *jus belli*. i.e. the real possibility of deciding in a concrete situation upon the enemy and the ability to fight him with the power emanating from the entity” (45). For Schmitt, the political, that is, the state, is defined by “the real existence of an enemy” (53) in the existential sphere of human rationality. This intense juxtaposition, Schmitt argues, has the effect of legitimating state sovereignty. So it goes, that enmity – as well as the war and conflict that inevitably stem therein - would no longer contain the entity we understand as “political” should the friend-enemy polemic cease to exist (Schmitt 1996). I bring all of this up at this point, because of Schmitt’s considerable influence in conservative thought (and later, neo-conservative) thought. If the state is defined first and foremost by the continual definition of a state-enemy, then the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks provided exactly such an enemy. As we move into a discussion on the social construction of terrorism, we must remember the political ramifications of labeling



a behavior as terrorism and a group of people as terrorists. And as we will explore later, there was nothing self-evident about the ways in which the corporate media grabbed hold of and strategically manipulated the events September 11<sup>th</sup>. By labeling a group of people as terrorists, I contend that the political and corporate elites were able to create an enemy perfectly suited for Schmitt's theory of political legitimation.

## **Section 2.2: Terrorism as a Social Construct**

As a social construct that is culturally and politically bound, a discussion of terrorism necessitates that we pose at least three questions. First, *how* does an act come to be defined as terrorism? That is, why are some acts labeled as terrorism while other acts, although potentially similar in nature, defined (or, perhaps justified) as something altogether different? Secondly, any discussion of terrorism requisites we ask, *who* is doing the defining? And finally, *what* happens when one group successfully labels another group as terrorists? This last question is of critical importance, as its answer suggests something about the underlying power-relations present in inter-group conflict.

HIV/AIDS, preventable diseases such as tuberculosis and malaria, hunger, and drunk driving accidents all claim considerably more victims each year than terrorism (Ruby 2002:9). Nevertheless, public discourse surrounding terrorism entered the political realm and captivated the media's attention after 9/11, at the expense of a great number of other social problems. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that about 438,000 people die each year in the United States from smoking cigarettes; worldwide estimates approach five million (2008b). Without doubt, there is a distinct qualitative difference between cigarette smoking and terrorism.

Nonetheless, in a year marked by an unprecedented number of deaths from terrorism, the number of U.S. civilian deaths from terrorism (about three thousand) was approximately seven percent of the total number of deaths resulting from tobacco use (2002c). To be sure, there are a great number of other social problems that are cause for as much or greater social concern than terrorism. As Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) note, “one of the more intriguing features of social problems is the fact that extremely harmful conditions may not be regarded as serious social problems, while relatively benign ones are” (152).

Why some issues emerge as “problems” in the first place, while other potentially more harmful processes do not, suggests relatively little about the conditions of the social fact in question, and far more about the actors doing the defining, and the context in which the defining takes place. As Berger and Luckmann (1967) note, specific constructs defined as real “pertain to specific social contexts.” A “social problem” therefore cannot be detached or removed from its particular construct; the relationship between a social problem and its construct “will have to be included in an adequate sociological analysis of these contexts” (Berger and Luckmann 1967). Joel Best (2008) makes a similar argument in his definition of social problems as “efforts to arouse concern about conditions within society” (10). Best (2008) argues that our analysis of social problems should be more focused on the “claims about conditions,” and less focused on the actual conditions. Consequently, in the following paragraphs, I will not be as concerned with the actual “nature” of terrorism, as with the historical, social, cultural and political milieu on which terrorism is manifested.

Context matters, so much so that something as socially undesirable as the taking of another person’s life is not *always* considered deviant, and may even, under certain conditions, be rewarded (Ben-Yehuda 1990). Judging the “rightness” or “wrongness” of a behavior depends

upon a number of situational factors, cultural norms, and socially constructed mores. Rhetorical devices are employed to help situate seemingly identical behaviors in a number of varied subjective universes. When a homicide is committed, the perpetrator is labeled as a “murderer;” when a war veteran kills an “enemy” in an “act of war,” the behavior is celebrated and defined as an honorable service to one’s country; if a doctor takes the life of terminally ill patient, the act is defined as euthanasia, mercy killing, or physician-assisted suicide. The way in which a behavior is interpreted and understood depends first and foremost on the context in which the behavior is situated as well as the “definition which the collective conscience lends them” (Durkheim 1982). What constitutes terrorism appears to be no different.

The point of this discussion is not to invoke a state of analytic anomie – the sort of “anything goes” mentality that undergirds many of the postmodern precipices. Nevertheless, such a thought experiment demonstrates the highly subjective nature to which even the most objective of behaviors is subject. While an executor may legitimately take the life of another person under the authority of the state, the general will which legitimates state execution under the social contract must exchange their individual “power to injure others for the enjoyment of their own security” (Rousseau 1968:77). Rousseau (1968) continues: “it is in order to avoid becoming the victim of a murderer that one consents to die if one becomes a murderer oneself” (79). Should I witness some heinous crime and decide to kill the perpetrator, I would most certainly be labeled a murderer. Should the state executioner fulfill their job by ending the life of the same perpetrator, the behavior is legitimized (and perhaps justified) by the general will. The “objective” behavior underlying each aforementioned behaviors are identical; it is our collective interpretation of each event that is fundamentally different. How we come to define a behavior

and the labels applied thereto, suggests far more about the normative moral boundaries surrounding the behaviors than the object itself.

What is “terrorism?” The most significant acts of “terrorism” committed on U.S. soil, the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks are objectively similar to the U.S. military operations in Afghanistan conducted in response to the attacks, but are defined as something all together different. If we are to invoke objectivism, are not the main differences between these two acts the fact that one group has hundreds of billions of dollars, and F-16’s, ICBM’s, hundreds of thousands of troops, and tanks at their disposal, while the other has very little money, home-made explosives, and hijacked planes? How is it possible for two acts so similar in nature to receive such divergent interpretations? While the object of analysis is important, like Berger, I contend that the culturally and politically charged contexts surrounding “terrorism” are far more important than trying to understand what specific acts and behaviors constitute “terrorism.” Murder is not met with state-sanctioned punishment because of anything inherent in the act. Murder is met with such punishment because of the slew of religious, cultural, social, ethical, and politically charged mores that surround our understanding of murder. As we look at terrorism, we must keep in mind that similar forces surround our understanding, and it is these forces to which we must now turn our attention.

During a primetime-televised address to the nation on the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11<sup>4</sup>, President Bush proclaimed, “the war against this enemy is more than a military conflict. It is the decisive ideological struggle of the 21st century, and the calling of our generation.” Earlier in the same speech, President Bush stated that *our* enemy is “evil and kill[s] without mercy – but not without purpose.” He goes on to assert: “we have learned that they form a global network of

---

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/09/20060911-3.html>

extremists who are driven by a perverted vision of Islam -- a totalitarian ideology that hates freedom, rejects tolerance, and despises all dissent.”

I must make it clear that the social reaction to terrorism is, at least at some level, grounded in some degree of concrete social harm. The political and social construction of terrorism is not simply a ‘fairy tale’ dreamt up in the imaginations of politicians and the corporate media. By saying that “terrorism is socially constructed,” I do not mean that terrorism is relative. Just as essentialist claims about the pathological nature of terrorists are erroneous, claims asserting that terrorism is a completely relative and subjective phenomenon denies the material context in which terrorism as politically motivated violence is grounded. Inasmuch as the premature deaths of about 3,000 people resulted in a great deal of lamenting, grief, and despair for those friends and family directly affected by the passing of their loved ones, September 11<sup>th</sup> should be remembered as a sorrowful day. To distinguish between the objective and subjective realms, however, makes unnecessary value judgments. Indeed, the liminal space between the form and content of terrorism is rather abstruse, and a distraction at best. Whatever the case, the storm of political claims-making about the “evil” (that is, pathological) “nature” of the perpetrators’ assault on the “innocent,” the initiation of an international military offensive, and even the categorization of such behavior as “terrorism,” warrants that we critically evaluate the context surrounding such an event, not as a self-evident process, but as something that has been purposefully manipulated by various political and corporate media actors with the intense desire of promoting their own self-interests.

Such a sociological analysis contends that terrorism is “not a given in the real world, but is instead an interpretation of events and their presumed causes” (Turk 2004). Insofar as terrorism is socially constructed, any analysis of terrorism, terrorists, and the “presumed causes”

therein, must include an analysis of the socio-political context in which the terrorism is defined and situated. And the significance of political actors applying the “terrorist” label to an individual or group of individuals appears to be the subsequent process by which existing moral boundaries are highlighted. Turk (2004) elaborates, “when people and events come to be regularly described in public as terrorist and terrorism, some governmental or other entity is succeeding in a war of words in which the opponent is promoting alternative designations such as ‘martyr’ and ‘liberation struggle.’”

But acts that could be described as “terrorist” are not novel phenomena. Even if we ignore the historical antecedents – from the Vandal’s “sack of Rome” in the year 455 to the Hashshashin raids of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century Persia, to the French revolutionaries’ 18<sup>th</sup> century actions against the oppressive government operations during the Reign of Terror (Tilly 2004) – we know that the United States has been collecting extensive data on terrorist attacks since 1980 (Ruby 2002). In fact, as Tilly (2004) finds, the number of international terrorist incidents had been on a general decline from the mid 1980’s through 2001. Why then, if rates of international terrorism had been declining for over a decade did the events of 9/11 suddenly erupt as the single greatest threat facing the United States? Even more, if objectivity alone determined our response to social problems in a formulaic “X situation produces Y outcome,” then a second question must be posed: why do some social problems like poverty, homelessness, alcohol and tobacco related deaths, and white-collar crime – social problems that result in a far greater degree of social harm (see Ruby 2002) – receive so little political and media attention in comparison to terrorist activities?

Defining terrorism is an arduous task in which even the U.S. State Department pleads some degree of humility, going so far as to state that “no one definition of terrorism has gained

universal acceptance” (2002c). Nevertheless, from 1983 until 2003 the U.S. State Department utilized the definition in Title 22, Chapter 38 of the United States Code § 2656f(d), which defines terrorism as “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents.”<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the ambiguity of what actually constitutes terrorism becomes apparent when we consider that in 2004, the State Department adopted a new definition that removed the “international” component from the definition, in effect increasing the number of terrorist incidents and fatalities from hundreds of incidents per year, to tens of thousands (2008d). As the State Department notes, the rate of domestic terrorist events has increased dramatically in the years following 2003 (2008d). And while the State Department justifies changing the definition on account of increased methodological capacities, it is plausible that simply changing the definition to be more inclusive has made terrorism seem like a much larger problem than it really is. Whatever the case, this methodological change makes comparing rates of terrorism before and after 2004 extremely difficult. Special attention will be given to this consideration in the methods section below.

If we return to Durkheim’s distinction of the “normal” from the “pathological” it becomes evident enough that terrorism is not something “involving psychopathology or material deprivation” as many political and religious pundits claim (Tilly 2004), but is instead a normal projection of what Donald Black (2004) calls “self-help.” Just as pure sociology considers the “multidimensional location and direction” of human behavior – Black (2004) conceptualizes “pure terrorism” as a form of “self-help by organized civilians who covertly inflict mass violence

---

<sup>5</sup> “The term ‘terrorism’ means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience. The term ‘*international* terrorism’ means terrorism involving citizens or the territory of more than one country. The term “terrorist group” means any group practicing, or that has significant subgroups that practice, international terrorism. The US Government has employed this definition of terrorism for statistical and analytical purposes since 1983” (2002).

on other civilians.” Austin Turk (2004) provides a similar definition of terrorism as “the deliberate targeting of more or less randomly selected victims whose deaths and injuries are expected to weaken the opponent's will to persist in a political conflict” (279). Furthermore, Charles Tilly elucidates “terrorism” as the “asymmetrical deployment of threats and violence against enemies using means that fall outside the forms of political struggle routinely operating within some current regime” (Tilly 2004:5). What all of these definitions have in common is the notion of “terrorists” as rational actors, using their agency in a calculating and strategic manner against an identifiable out-group with the intent of bringing about an identifiable political goal.

Just as we can think about terrorism as a socially constructed phenomenon, we should also realize that collective responses are constructed. As we look now towards the collective response to the 9/11 attacks, we should continue to look more towards the context surrounding the event, and less on the event itself, or the nature of the perpetrators therein. And in the same moment that we realize that something as despairing as the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks may actually be functional for society, insomuch as they highlight existing group moral boundaries, we must ask: for whom, and to what ends is such an incident functional? As this study proposes, the citizens of the United States rallied behind a form of patriotism and nationalism after 9/11 that was deliberately and intentionally manufactured by various political and corporate elites. By launching what sociologists call a moral panic, these elites were able to garnish the “democratic” support required to enact their contrived vision of a liberal society. *Cui bono? Who benefits?*



### **Section 2.3: Moral Panics and the Consumption of Fear**

The term “moral panic” describes a state in which the objective harm and the subjective fear of such harm are grossly disproportional. Since Stanley Cohen first introduced the concept in 1972, sociologists have successfully applied the term moral panic to a great number of scenarios, both past and present. Consider the Salem Witch Trials, periods of mass hysteria, the “war on drugs” and the current “war on terror.” Whether or not the social problem on which the moral panic is waged actually exists is of less concern than the subjective interpretation of the event (Becker 1963). None of the “witches” who were put on trial and eventually executed during the Salem Witch Trials were really “witches” (Ben-Yehuda 1985); in this case the social problem was an utter fabrication. The “war on drugs” and the “war on terror,” have at least some empirical grounding. In both cases, however, the important defining feature is the degree to which the objective social harm is disproportional to the perceived threat or social harm believed to exist by the collective conscience of the society. As Garland (2008) remarks, “moral panics vary in intensity, duration and social impact” (p. 13). When we give pause to reflect on the notion of a moral panic, we must at once realize we are not dealing with formulaic law and static forms, but a concept that varies considerably between geographies, across time, as well as in intensity of effect.

Morality is an ambiguous term that is invoked and used in such a wide gamut of contexts, so much so, that without more precise definitions, it is difficult to ascertain what exactly the invocation means. To this extent, Ben-Yehuda (1986:495) defines morality as “the set of social criteria used by social actors to evaluate objects, behavior and goals as good or bad, desirable or undesirable” with the function of defining “the boundaries of cultural matrices.” Goode (1993:93) defines a moral panic as “a widespread feeling on the part of the public that something

is terribly wrong in their society because of the moral failure of a specific group of individual. In short, a category of people has been *deviantized*.” This definition, however, begs the question: who, or perhaps more accurately, what, sets the stage for such a widespread deviantization? Understandably, a moral panic involves a number of highly complex social interactions between diverse groups, subgroups, and multi-mediated and non-interactive mediums. In fact, Rothe and Muzzatti (2004) identify six actors that must be present for a moral panic to come into being: “(1) folk devils, (2) rule enforcers, (3) the media, (4) politicians, (5) action groups, and, (6) the public” (329). Of specific interest to the notion of boundary maintenance are the “rule enforcers” or what Howard Becker (1966) calls “moral entrepreneurs.” Becker (1966) expounds “moral entrepreneurs” as people who try to advance their own socio-political and moral agenda by articulating and highlighting specific *moral boundaries* as a means of simultaneously vilifying an out-group while glorifying mores of the in-group. By pointing to the specific shortcomings of an entire group of people whose behaviors or ideas fall outside the normative moral boundary, moral entrepreneurs are able to garnish enough populist support to achieve their desired political or social outcome.

Moral entrepreneurs typically engage in “moral crusades,” an offensive designed to transform “the public’s attitudes toward a specific issue” while simultaneously attempting to “deviantize” some outside individual or group (Ben-Yehuda 1990). The creation of a vilified out-group – what Cohen (1972) dubs “folk-devils” – seeks to demonize the members of the group as evil and sub-human, while simultaneously blaming and linking them to social and moral failures of society. The folk devil is more than a Socratic *scapegoat*; the social response is more than a mere “spontaneous collective reaction” (Ben-Yehuda 1990). A moral panic is an intentional, deliberate, and a political act by one group to demonize another group of people

because of some notable moral failing or shortcoming. Engaging in highly stylized, planned and deliberate actions, moral entrepreneurs are able to generate widespread consensus that some identifiable group that is markedly different from the collective “we” is responsible for the social and moral shortcomings.

Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) specified five operational criteria present during a moral panic: consensus, concern, hostility, disproportionality, and volatility. First, there must be a heightened level of concern about the behavior of some identifiable group; the concern towards this group is then projected as hostility. That is, “a dichotomization between ‘them’ and ‘us’ takes place, and this includes stereotyping – generating ‘folk devils’ or villains on the one hand, and folk heroes on the other” (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994). Hostility towards this group need not be manifested in the form of overt physical violence; the mere designation of a generalized “them” that is purportedly responsible for threatening the values of the inclusive “us” is sufficient. Consensus describes the minimum level of agreement or shared belief that the threat posed by this outside group is “real, serious, and caused by the wrongdoing of a group of members and their behavior” (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994). Disproportionality describes a situation in which the social concern is “out of proportion to the nature of the threat” (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994). Specifically, Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) identify four indicators of disproportionality, including: exaggerated figures, fabricated figures, ignoring other harmful conditions, and changes over time (43-44). The last criterion, volatility, describes a process of quick eruption, before generally subsiding, or in some cases completely dissolving from the conscience of society. During this time period, it is not uncommon for various civil liberties to be pushed aside in an effort to address the perceived social threat. Although many moral panics may be short lived, most leave their mark as either a trail of bureaucratic institutions (which had

originally been designed as a way to “fix” the social problem) or altering ideology and values within the society (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994; Hawdon 2001).

It would be a mistake to conceptualize a moral panic as a unidirectional phenomenon, as if policy makers in Washington and members of the corporate media simply directed feelings of hostility, disproportionality, and fear onto the American populace. Fear - or as David Althetide (2006) specifies in regards to the war on terror – terrorism, is actively consumed. The consumption of terrorism took on both material and ideological forms as Americans were urged to: “(g)et on board. Do your business around the country. Fly and enjoy America's great destination spots. Get down to Disney World in Florida. Take your families and enjoy life, the way we want it to be enjoyed” (Bush 2001). Like other forms of consumption, the consumption of terrorism, patriotism and fear, help foster the creation of a perceived national identity. Other scholars (see Collins 2004a; Rothe and Muzzatti 2004) have focused extensively on how the act of material consumption shapes and affects the ideological aspects of fear. In a qualitative study of patriotism, for example, Collins (2004a) measures the wax and wane of American flags after the September 11<sup>th</sup> incidents. David Garland (2008) proposes two supplemental criteria to those provided by Goode and Ben-Yehuda: “the moral dimension of the reaction, particularly the introspective soul-searching that accompanies these episodes; and the idea that the deviant conduct in question is somehow symptomatic” (Garland 2008:11). The material and ideological consumption of fear helps shape national identity, as fear is internalized and personalized. The attack on several buildings in New York City and Washington D.C. evolved into an on “us” – an attack on America. The reaction by many people across the country reflected the process of “introspective soul-searching” described by Garland. Perhaps not knowing entirely how to respond, individuals turned to highly scripted symbolic displays of patriotism for support, and

internalized appropriate moral responses as their own.

The social script is rewritten and edited as politicians and the corporate media incorporate these acts of solidarity as evidence of widespread fear, patriotism, or solidarity. Fear was consumed in the form of terrorism, and patriotism was invoked as the antidote to such social unease. In essence, I contend that the social reaction to 9/11 cannot be accepted as a purely natural reaction to a traumatic event, but as reaction that was, to a large extent manipulated and manufactured. The notion of consuming terrorism, in its ideological form, suggests, as Altheide (2004:87-88) concludes, “popular-culture and mass-media depictions of fear, patriotism, consumption, and victimization contributed to the emergence of a ‘national identity’ and [...] collective action [...] was fostered by elite decision makers’ propaganda.”

#### **Section 2.4: Corporate Media Framing of Political Rhetoric**

A “strategic political tool used by presidents to augment their formal, constitutional powers” (Shogan 2006), presidential rhetoric invokes highly stylized and scripted forms of persuasive discourse. The corporate media, however, serves as an intermediary or filter of presidential rhetoric, shaping the content and the form in which various rhetorical devices are employed. The effect of presidential rhetoric in generating and sustaining a moral panic is fairly well understood (Hawdon 2001; Kappeler and Kappeler 2004). For example, in a qualitative study of political and ideological rhetoric, Kappeler and Kappeler (2004) outlined five types of rhetorical devices used by President Bush in the process of constructing a moral panic in the early phases of the “war on terror,” including: 1) “terrorism as epidemic,” where the threat of terrorism is disproportional to its reality; 2) “dehumanizing metaphors,” where terrorists are

described as being inhuman, barbaric, and animalistic; 3) “reification of civilization,” where the out-group is viewed as uncivilized and apparently envious of the in-groups civilized life; 4) “villains, heroes and good “volks,” in which a distinction is established between “us” and “them, and “good” and “bad,” and finally, 5) “situating terrorism,” where the response to and control of terrorism becomes a divine calling. I am more concerned, however, with the ways in which presidential rhetoric is framed by the corporate media. Many, if not all, of the aforementioned forms of presidential rhetoric certainly apply to an analysis of the corporate media. Analyzing the corporate media, however, provides the possibility of dissenting positions and divergent perspectives than that presented in presidential rhetoric.

Related to the question of primacy between the chicken and the egg, we could pose a similar question related to relationship between politicians, the reporting of news, and social reactions thereto. There is a growing body of evidence that suggests that newspapers as well as television network news relied heavily on administration sources that directed the focus and language of news coverage” (Altheide 2004:117-118). Shying away from critical investigative reporting, many news reports following the terrorist attacks contained little more than a series of verbatim sound bites from politicians and policy makers. Evidenced as truth, this form of reporting merely serves “to re-establish order and meaning by reinforcing State hegemony” (Rothe and Muzzatti 2004:335). Michael Getler, ombudsman for *The Washington Post* admits that part of the reason the Bush Administration was so successful in linking Iraq with 9/11 was due to “a failure by editors, a lack of alertness on their part, to present stories that challenged the administration’s line in a consistent way and that would have some impact on the public” (Staff 2004:46). Viewed as unpatriotic, many corporate media outlets faced criticism if they wrote articles or aired stories that criticized Bush Administration policies (see Leavy 2007; Rothe and

Muzzatti 2004). The question of whether or not the U.S. Government officially censored the media during the early stages of the “war on terror” is a distraction from the fact that, at least during the first several years of the Bush Administration, the corporate media (to a large extent, though not exclusively) simply published regurgitations of the White House’s official narrative. Immediately following 9/11, “journalists reported on the event within a socio-political context in which dissent was viewed as unpatriotic and there was great pressure on journalists to model hegemonic patriotism” (Leavy 2007:86). Though not entirely, the vast majority of articles and news stories that came out after 9/11 either directly quoted politicians’ rhetoric, or presented views and opinions which largely conformed to the state-approved narrative.

Various scholars (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994; Hawdon 2001; Kappeler and Kappeler 2004) have provided some insight into the way in which moral panics change and evolve over time. As discussed above, one of the criteria for moral panics is “volatility.” While volatility mandates that the strong social reaction is relatively short lived, it does not preclude the possibility of a number of related “aftershocks” – more nuanced periods of heightened solidarity that develop after the initial panic, as politicians and claimsmakers attempt to redirect focus back to the original (or a related) social malice (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994). Hawdon (2001) analyzes the effects of presidential rhetoric in creating a moral panic in the “War on Drugs” during the 1980s “drug epidemic.” In this study, Hawdon demonstrates that moral panics are not static conditions, and that the very success of the moral panic is in fact dependent upon strategic attempts by politicians to frame an issue of concern in different ways at different points in time. Hawdon (2001) delineates three distinct phases within the life course of “War on Drugs” moral panic of the 1980’s: 1) “communitarianism and the call to action,” during which time the collective is glorified and the “folk devil” is vilified, 2) “adopting a dualistic model” in which the

threat is maintained, yet progress in dealing with the problem emerges, and 3) the “implementation and the ending of moral panics” through institutionalization and normalization of policy. While the foci of various moral panics may vary, Hawdon suggests that these three phases of policy should be present in the rhetorical life course of any bona fide moral panic.



## Chapter 3: Elaboration, Approach and Methods

### Section 3.1: Review and Elaboration

After the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the United States entered a period of moral panic. The immediate response and call for action through the use of acts of military aggression by the United States was perhaps justifiable or understandable depending upon various personal ideological, moral, or political values. Nevertheless, whereas the objective number of international terrorist events had been declining in the years preceding the attacks, the perceived threat of terrorism suddenly became the single greatest threat to civilization, freedom, and humanity itself. During this time, terrorists and many people from Muslim societies were labeled, stereotyped and vilified as evil, sub-human and as “folk devils.” Consider the following quote by President George W. Bush at a press conference just five days after the terrorist attacks:

The American people should know that my administration is determined to find, to get them running and to hunt them down, those who did this to America. Now, I want to remind the American people that the prime suspect's organization is in a lot of countries - it's a widespread organization based upon one thing: terrorizing. They can't stand freedom; they hate what America stands for. So this will be a long campaign, a determined campaign - a campaign that will use the resources of the United States to win.<sup>6</sup>

In this one paragraph, we can find examples that compare terrorists to animals (“to get them running and to hunt them down”), repeated distinctions made between “us” and “them” (“those who did this to America”), and several examples of communitarian rhetoric – the glorification of the collective conscience (“They can’t stand freedom; they hate what American stands for”). I’m not proposing that the “War on Terror” is a total fabrication – a social construct void of substance; nor am I trying to discount the tremendous grief experienced by those affected by the

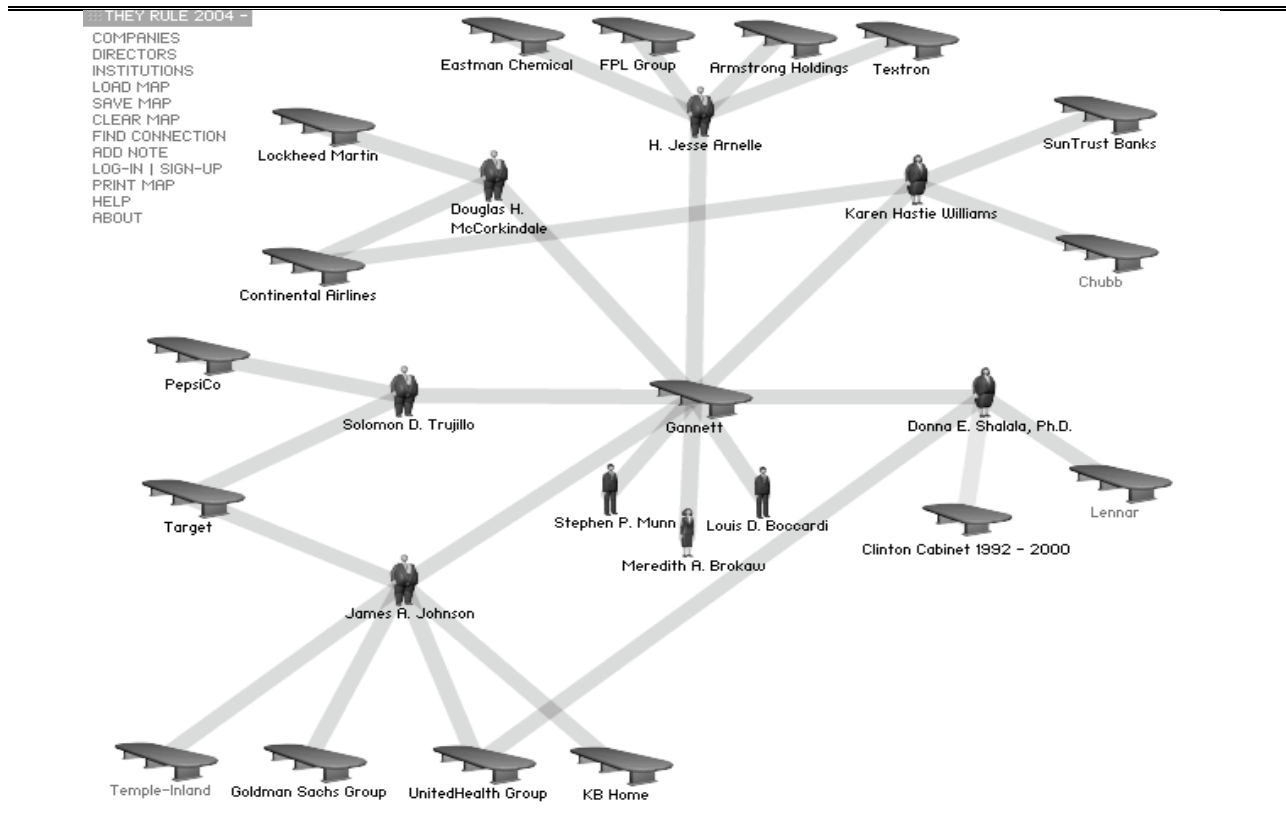
---

<sup>6</sup> President George W. Bush, September 16, 2001.

attacks. I am proposing, however, that *how* the media chooses to frame presidential rhetoric reflects the interests of a specific ruling elite. By glorifying the ideals of the “in-group,” and deviantizing the “out-group” as evil, the corporate media helped garnish a public mood in which over ninety percent of the American population approved of the Bush Administration (Kappeler and Kappeler 2004). Again giving pause to Durkheim’s insights into the social functions of deviance, we can begin to abstract how an event like 9/11 might be employed as a means of cultivating the popular consensus required by a “democratic” polity to advance the self-interests of a ruling-elite.

Throughout this study, I refrain from using the term “mass media,” as I find that qualification rather ambiguous, and instead use the term “corporate media.” Additionally, I draw a distinction between the “corporate media” and other forms of micro, independent, or non-profit media sources. Figure 3.1 (below) depicts Gannett Company’s interlocking directorates. The owner of a variety of news venues and mediums including *USA Today*, Gannett Company, Inc. like any other corporation, is an entity recognized by the state, legally acting as one person, yet owned and managed by many. As Figure 3.1 delineates, as of 2004, Gannett Company, Inc. shares board members with the Goldman Sachs Group, the United Health Group, Target, the Clinton Administration, Continental Airlines, and Lockheed Martin. I bring this up, not to imply corporate bias, but instead to elucidate what exactly I mean when I use the term “corporate media.”

**Figure 3.1:** Gannett Company’s Interlocking Directorates as of 2004



*Notes:* This figure was produced using the online database - “They Rule” <<http://theyrule.net>>. They Rule is a online database that “aims to provide a glimpse of some of the relationships of the US ruling class. It takes as its focus the boards of some of the most powerful U.S. companies, which share many of the same directors” (On 2004).

Before moving forward, it would be prudent to delineate the specific methodological direction I propose to take by posing several succinct questions. First and foremost, we must come to an understanding as to whether or not the reaction to the 9/11 attacks constitutes a moral panic as operationally defined by Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994). Secondly, we should ask whether or not, and if so, how, the criterion of a moral panic has changed over time? This leads to a third possible question, namely, why do these criteria vary over time? Finally we must ask how these changes have affected levels of social solidarity and presidential approval rating.

With these questions in mind, we can better advance towards precise operational definitions of each of these variables.

### **Section 3.2: Definitions and Propositions**

**Unit of Analysis:** The unit of analysis is the month owing to the fact that I am proposing to evaluate the ways in which the relationship between media frames and levels of social solidarity and presidential approval change over the course of time. In this case, media frames and measures of social solidarity and presidential approval are components of the month.

#### **Dependent Variables:**

1. **Socio-Political Solidarity:** the degree to which citizens of the United States possess a collective conscience during any one month period, as measured by the percentage of respondents approving of President Bush's job performance (see Appendix A, Question 1), plus the percentage of respondents who say they are generally satisfied with the way things are going in the United States (See Appendix A, Question 2).
2. **Moral Panic:** whether or not a society is marked by "a widespread feeling on the part of the public that something is terribly wrong in their society because of the moral failure of a specific group of individuals" (Goode 1993). As mentioned in the literature review, Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) identify five defining criteria that are present during a moral panic: consensus, concern, hostility, disproportionality, and volatility.<sup>7</sup>
  - a. **Consensus and Concern:** the percentage of respondents who classify terrorism as the most important problem facing the country (see Appendix A, Question 3).<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> See nominal definitions for each criterion in the independent variable section below.

<sup>8</sup> For the purpose of this study, consensus and concern can be measured using this one Gallup Poll question. Given the limited availability of trend data, the two concepts, while theoretically distinct, are similar enough in praxis to warrant such a concession.

- b. Disproportionality:** the percentage of respondents who express that they are either *very worried* or *somewhat worried* that they or a close friend or family member will become a victim of a terrorist attack (see Appendix A, Question 4).
- c. Hostility:** the percentage of respondents who think that current levels of immigration should be decreased, as measured by the Gallup Poll's question on immigration policy (see Appendix A, Question 5)
- d. Volatility:** the degree to which the frequency of *USA Today* articles drastically increases or decreases over the course of a short period of time, as indicated by a statistically significant deviation from the surrounding points.

**Independent Variables:**

- 1. Frequency of Newspaper Articles:** the number of *USA Today* articles per day, calculated as the number of articles per month, divided by the number of days in the month for each one-month period between and including January 2001 and the end of December 2008.<sup>9</sup>
- 2. Corporate Media Frames<sup>10</sup>:** whether or not,<sup>11</sup> and if so, which, of the following themes is made salient within any one *USA Today* article

---

<sup>9</sup> President George W. Bush was inaugurated on January 20, 2001, and left office on January 20, 2009. Accordingly, it makes sense for the scope conditions to include this entire time period, and to extend slightly beyond the exact dates of office to include all of January 2001 and January 2009.

<sup>10</sup> While it is likely the case that the relationship between corporate media frames and the conditions of a moral panic is autopoietic (that is, media frames are both influenced by and act upon the collective sentiments present in society), to the degree that the media serves as a medium between the object and subject, we can presume that at least at the outset, the relationship between the independent and dependent variables defined above is valid. More succinctly put, the presence of specific media frames is a precondition to, but not necessarily a direct cause of, the collective sentiments present during a moral panic.

<sup>11</sup> I will code each article using a binary coding scheme, so that articles containing a specific frame will receive a "1," while articles not containing a frame will receive a "0."

**I. Communitarianism:** whether or not any one *USA* article attempts to glorify the in-group's ideals (by making central appeals to core American mores, like "freedom" and "liberty"), and/or reports on laws, agencies or government actions designed to protect the collective group from the moral failings of specific individuals. Communitarian rhetoric employs proactive policy by constructing "a reality that supports decisive, aggressive action," potentially at the expense of individual rights and justice (Hawdon 2001:425). The following fourteen variables are subcomponents of communitarianism (see Appendix C)

- i. Disproportional Claims Making:** whether or not any one *USA Today* article grossly exaggerates the objective threat posed by terrorism or terrorists by making the number of persons involved in terrorism, or the number of people negatively affected by terrorism, larger than what can be objectively verified.
- ii. Sensationalist Reporting:** whether or not any one *USA Today* article contains reporter or "eye witness" accounts that are particularly overdramatized
- iii. Fear:** whether or not any one *USA Today* article describes or situates individual or social based alarm or panic of terrorism or terrorists.
- iv. Glorifies Collective Group:** whether or not any one *USA Today* article exalts the commonalities of members in the in-group, typically by referring to collective national identity or forms of American exceptionalism.
- v. American Mores:** whether or not any one *USA Today* article praises the socio-political structure of the United States by making appeals to words like democracy, freedom, liberty, or military strength.

- vi. **Patriotic Display:** whether or not any one *USA Today* article mentions a symbolic patriotic display, explicitly mentions patriotism, or refers to patriotic symbols (such as the American Flag).
- vii. **Us versus Them:** whether or not any one *USA Today* article frames content in a way that highlights or bolsters subjective moral boundaries, polarizing the *victimized* in-group identified as “us” as diametrically opposed to the *deviant* out-group defined as “them.”
- viii. **Polarization of Good and Evil:** whether or not any one *USA Today* article contrasts the “good” in-group (Americans) with the “evil” out-group, often invoking religious or moralistic imagery of “innocence” or “purity” to describe the in-group, and adjectives such as “vile” or “immoral”
- ix. **Hostile and Brutalizing Metaphors:** whether or not any one *USA Today* article contains themes of anger or outrage directed towards a distinct and easily identifiable “out-group,” by employing language that seeks to make such groups seem animalistic, barbarian, or subhuman.
- x. **Invokes God:** whether or not any one *USA Today* directly or indirectly appeals to a higher authority or deity to justify or add credibility to the United State’s response to terrorism.
- xi. **Appeal to Authority:** whether or not any one *USA Today* article attempts to substantiate a position or claim by using unnamed authorities, experts, or officials.

- xii. Proactive Policy:** whether or not any one *USA Today* article positively mentions proposed or implemented law, governmental action, a governmental institution, or set of policies specifically designed to counter the terrorism
- xiii. Military Action:** whether or not any one *USA Today* article positively describes offensive military action undertaken to “combat terrorism”
- xiv. War on Terror:** whether or not any one *USA Today* article mentions the “War on Terror”

**II. Individualism:** whether or not any one *USA Today* article aggrandizes the rights and civil liberties of the individual as super-ordinate to the goals of the collective (read: the state), as measured by popular dissent in reaction to violations to individual freedoms. As Hawdon (2001) remarks, with individualism, “the government’s primary function is to protect individuals from intrusive groups (e.g., corporate capitalism, religious institutions, and the state itself)” (426). Accordingly, individualistic rhetoric employs reactive policy designed to ensure the rights of the individual and protect individuals from proactive encroachments. The following three variables are subcomponents of individualism (see Appendix C).

- i. Reactive Policy:** whether or not any one *USA Today* article mentions or describes government law, regulations, or legal rulings in response to the proactive policy implementations enacted during the institutionalization of the moral panic.
- ii. Concern for Individual Rights:** whether or not any one *USA Today* article expresses concern or sympathy for the protection of individual rights and



freedoms, or mentions possible adverse consequences for perceived violations thereof.

- iii. **Violation of Constitutional Rights or Civil Liberties:** whether or not any one *USA Today* article reports on possible or confirmed violations of constitutional rights or civil liberties.

### **Control Variables:**

1. **Terrorist Incidents:** Despite its shortcomings, I will use the definition of terrorism utilized by the U.S. State Department (prior to 2004), which defines terrorism as the “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience” (2002c). For the purpose of this study, I will define “international” as whether or not a terrorist incident was carried out in a country different from the perpetrator’s country of origin.
  - a. **Frequency of Severe Incidents:**<sup>12</sup> The number of international terrorist attacks<sup>13</sup> (that is, not including domestic attacks) for every one-month period within the scope conditions of this study that resulted in the death of more than ten persons.

---

<sup>12</sup> The operational change in definition makes it impossible to compare pre and post 2004 State Department figures. As will be discussed below, I decided to use data from a number of sources. To increase the reliability of my searches, however, I bypassed the domestic/international distinction, and decided, instead, to search for terrorist incidents resulting in the deaths of more than ten persons. Searching using these criteria produced much greater inter-reliability between multiple data sets than did trying to search for incidents using other approaches.

<sup>13</sup> As we have already discussed, the means by which a group comes to be defined as a “terrorist” group is a political act, and reflects relatively little about the “objective” action, and far more about the power relations between the definer and the defined. Nonetheless, for the purpose of this study, I will only include terrorist groups defined as such by the U.S. Department of State (see Appendix C). By using such selection criteria, I hope to represent the greatest number of terrorism-related events on which the mainstream media (in this case the *USA Today*) might report. Moreover, it is highly likely that *USA Today* uses a similar definition of terrorism as the US Department of State.

**2. Consumer Confidence Index:** The Conference Board's computed index score of five variables measuring a respondent's appraisal of current business conditions, business conditions six months hence, current employment conditions, employment conditions six months hence, and their total family income six months hence. (2009a)

**Propositions:** The relationships between the variables described above are not simple, nor are they necessarily linear. Nevertheless, we can be reasonably sure about the time ordering between certain variables. For example, we know that conflict, in this case a terrorist attack, precedes political rhetoric about the incident, and the media's description of the incident. But as we begin to consider the interplay between political rhetoric and the media's framing of this rhetoric, the direction of the relationships between politicians, the corporate media, and social processes grows increasingly obtuse. President Bush's description of terrorism, as well as the media's portrayal of terrorist incidents, employs the strategic use of rhetorical devices. By conceptualizing terrorism as a socially constructed phenomenon, we are better able to conceptualize how rhetoric employs language as a form of power.

The effect of presidential rhetoric on a moral panic is already well theorized and studied (see Ben-Yehuda 2005; Hawdon 2001; Kappeler and Kappeler 2004). Accordingly, I only analyzed the ways in which the corporate media served as a filter, or lens, through which political rhetoric and terrorist incidents passed, and not the content of presidential rhetoric itself. While it may not be possible to meaningfully separate presidential rhetoric from the media's framing therein (and in all likelihood, the two are likely quite interdependent), by looking at the corporate media (but not at presidential speeches) we are able to discern what types of themes the corporate media sought to make especially salient.

1. There is a strong positive relationship between terrorist incidents per month (including fatalities and casualties), and the number of *USA Today* articles per month about terrorist incidents
2. There is a weak positive relationship between terrorist incidents per month, and the presence of a moral panic
3. There is a strong positive relationship between corporate media framing of political rhetoric in the *USA Today*, and the strength of a moral panic in society, as measured by the five criteria of a moral panic.
4. As time progresses, the consensus, concern, hostility, volatility, and disproportionality will become less pronounced.
5. There is moderate negative relationship between time and communitarian media frames
6. There is a moderate positive relationship between time and individualistic media frames.
7. There is a strong positive relationship between the presence of a moral panic, and the degree of social solidarity.

**Population and Scope Conditions:** Given the complexity of this study and the use of multiple data sources, I will be concerned with three distinct populations. The theoretical population for which I expect the propositions related to corporate media framing to hold true includes all corporate media sources, including, but not limited to corporately owned newspapers, magazines, internet news sites, television news and radio shows. In regards to Gallup Poll data, the population is the set of all individuals, aged 18 and older living in the United States at a given time. Finally, regarding acts of “terrorism,” the population is limited to all acts of “international” terrorism, as defined in the U.S. Code (see footnote 6). The scope conditions for which I expect

these theories and propositions to hold true are limited to the months between and including January 2001 and December 2008.

### **Section 3.3: Data Collection**

I used four primary sources of data, including: Lexis-Nexis Academic Search Engine (to search for *USA Today* articles), Gallup National Public Opinion Poll (to obtain public opinion trend data), the Consumer Research Center (for data from the Consumer Confidence Index), and The “Worldwide Incidents Tracking System” and the “Global Terrorism Database (to measure the number of severe terrorist attacks).

***USA Today:*** With the largest circulation in the United States and the thirteenth largest in the world (2005c), the *USA Today* circulated an estimated 2,310,000 copies per day in 2005, making this particular newsprint a particularly attractive option to analyze. Lexis-Nexis Academic Search Engine is a powerful database and search engine, and contains decades of electronic news articles as well as televised news transcripts and magazine articles. A text-only database, Lexis-Nexis does not currently provide any pictures or graphical content. A cogent median, pictures often compliment or refine the meaning of an article in such a way that words alone cannot accomplish. When a news article containing a picture is read in its original format, the picture, no doubt, contributes and possibly changes the way in which the news article is read and understood. To the extent to which Lexis-Nexis does not contain such images, it fails to reproduce the entire story as the staff writer, columnist, or editor *intended* the story to be read, and makes the content analysis of visual data impossible.

***Gallup Public Opinion Polls:*** The Gallup Poll collects data via telephone interviews using random digit dialing (RDD). Surveys typically yield sample sizes of approximately one

thousand U.S. adults. In an effort to avoid estimation, and given that the unit of analysis is the month, I attempted to use poll data that was asked at least once per month. Nevertheless, there are several months for which poll data are not available for certain variables. In such cases, I interpolated the values of the missing data based on the values from surrounding months. Conversely, several questions were polled more than once per month (including Presidential Approval Rating); in these instances, I averaged the values for that month so that only one data point per month exists.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, I computed the dependent variable by creating an index of two survey questions: Presidential Approval Rating (see Appendix A, question 1) and a question that asks respondents to indicate how satisfied they are with the way things are going in the United States (see Appendix A, question 2) ( $\alpha = 0.965$ ). Together, I argue, these two variables measure *one aspect* of politico-social solidarity. This index is valid inasmuch as these two variables measure the overall level of national like-mindedness. This index, however, clearly does not measure all aspects of social solidarity. I recognize this as a shortcoming of the present study, and must nuance the significance of my findings accordingly. Given the availability of relevant trend data, however, these two measures provide one of the best descriptions of national consensus available. Ultimately, the index is only one of many possible measures of social solidarity – one aspect of a much larger, much more abstract concept.

With each of these variables, I thought it important to differentiate between overall approval/satisfaction and the score that is obtained by subtracting disapproval/dissatisfaction from the approval/satisfaction scores. The second approach corrects for periods in which there are high levels of respondents who report that they have “no opinion.” The number of “no opinion” respondents was particularly high in the first months of President Bush’s first term in

office. Understandably, a large number of voters had yet to make up their mind about the president's job performance. By calculating the difference between approval/satisfaction and disapproval/dissatisfaction, we produce a scale score for each variable that measures the degree of *overall* favorability/satisfaction. Inasmuch as outright disapproval or dissatisfaction measures the opposite of approval or satisfaction, differencing the two measures allows us to determine the point in time in which disapproval outweighed approval. The "solidarity" score discussed in the following chapters is the computed index of Presidential approval minus disapproval and satisfaction minus dissatisfaction. The mean for this index was centered on zero.

The third Gallup Poll question (see Appendix A, question 3) asks respondents to indicate what they think is the number one problem facing the country *today*. An open-ended question, respondents are free to indicate a wide range of issues. At the time that data were collected for this study, in fact, the Gallup Poll was measuring at least seventy-five different variables. This poll data measures the degree of consensus and concern that terrorism is the greatest problem in the United States. As a means of comparison, I will contrast the percent of people who believe terrorism is the most important problem with the percent believing that the economy is the most important problem.

The fourth question (see Appendix A, question 4) asks respondents how worried they are that either they themselves, or a close friend or family member, might become the victims of a terrorist attack. As Ruby (2002) points out, the social response to terrorism is grossly disproportionate to the objective threat posed. This question measures the degree of generalized fear of terrorism embodied in American collective. As a means of comparison, I also computed yearly odds ratios, comparing the subjective fear of becoming a victim of a terrorist attack to the objective likelihood (of a U.S. citizen) becoming the victim of a terrorist attack.

***The Conference Board – Consumer Confidence Survey:*** The Conference Board administers monthly surveys to a nationally representative sample of U.S. adults, and publishes its findings monthly in the highly popularized Consumer Confidence Index. The Consumer Confidence Index (CCI) measures each respondent’s appraisal of current business conditions, business conditions six months hence, current employment conditions, employment conditions six months hence, and their total family income six months hence (for a detailed account of the Conference Board’s methodology, see Appendix C).

***The Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (WITS):*** As previously mentioned, the U.S. State Department changed its operational definition of terrorism in 2004 to include all forms of terrorism, including domestic and international. Unfortunately, simply changing the nominal definition of terrorism makes comparing rates of terrorism before and after 2004 quite difficult. From the 1960s until 2004, the State Department published terrorism trends in an annual report known as the Patterns of Global Terrorism (POGT). In 2004, however, the State Department centralized the reporting of terrorist incidents under the newly created National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), and mandated that they create a public access database. Designated the Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (WITS), the database contains extensive data about the victims, perpetrators, motives, date and location of terrorist incidents around the world. Unfortunately, WITS does not contain any data from 2001 to 2003.

***The “Global Terrorism Database (GTD):*** The University of Maryland is home to the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), and is one of eleven “Center(s) of Excellence” of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2009d). Known as the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), The University of Maryland and START collects, records, and maintains one of the largest public-access terrorism databases in the world.

The GTD has recorded data similar to that collected by the NCTC since the 1970s.

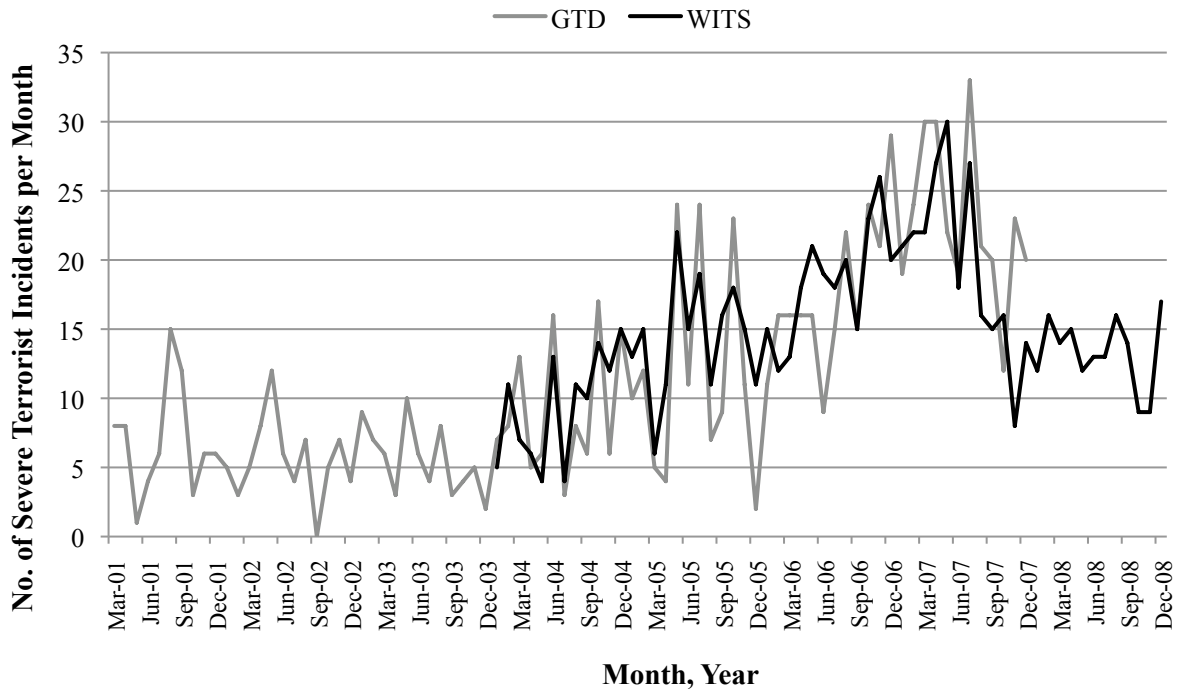
Unfortunately, the GTD is only updated through 2007.

Using two different databases presents a unique set of methodological challenges; all the same, I propose that utilizing both WITS and the GTD data provides a complimentary and reliable (albeit, not necessarily valid) measure of international terrorist attacks. Between the two datasets, incidents for all ninety-six months of the study can be measured. Additionally, there is a total of forty-eight months of overlap between the two databases. While not perfect, the inter-reliability between the two databases for these forty-eight months suggest that the data are complimentary (Chronbach's  $\alpha = .85$ ). A visual inspection of the number of severe terrorist incidents (those resulting in more than ten deaths) from each database confirms my decision to use data from both sources. Given that the GTD contains data for seven of the eight years (2001 – 2007), I only used data from WITS to fill in missing data during 2008.

**Figure 3.2:** Trend Plot of Severe Terrorist Incidents, General Terrorism Database (GTD) and Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (WITS), 2001 - 2008

---





Notes: Chronbach's  $\alpha = .85$

### Section 3.4: Content Analysis

While the theoretical population for this study includes *all* corporate media coverage of terrorism and the “War on Terror” from 2001 through 2008, the number of media sources, mediums of communication, and magnitude of information necessitates limiting the sampling population to a much more reasonable scope. Accordingly, I constructed a sampling frame limited to all *USA Today* newspaper articles containing the search terms “*Bush*” or “*White House*” and any derivative of the root *terror* within either the article title or the same paragraph in the body of the text.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The exact search string used to search the Lexis-Nexis database was: “((BODY(terror! W/p Bush OR White House) OR HEADLINE(terror! W/p Bush OR White House)) and DATE(>=2001-01-01 and <=2008-12-31) and ((Final Edition)))”

The articles in the population were not arranged periodically; accordingly, I decided to conduct a stratified random sample with a random starting point, as that would effectively randomly select cases proportionate to the population of articles per month, while producing a sample with a minimal sampling error (Babbie 2004:205). I chose to take a ten-percent sample of articles from the population so that  $k = 10$ . With a total population of 2,923 articles, the systematic random sampling technique yielded 292 articles. While systematic random sampling may minimize the sampling error, it also runs the risk of not selecting any articles from months with fewer than  $k$  articles. To ensure that all months were represented in the content analysis, I identified months in which no articles were initially selected. Performing a simple random sample, I extracted one article for each of these months, bringing the total sample size ( $N$ ) to 302.

I began the coding process by selecting ten articles at random from the sample population. At the time, my coding sheet consisted of five variables: communitariansim, individualism, us versus them/in-group versus out-group, hostile rhetoric, and disproportional rhetoric. Through an iterative process, I refined, expanded, and selected a total of twenty-five items for which I would code. I downloaded the selected articles from Lexis-Nexis as .pdf documents, and used “Skim” – a PDF reader for Macintosh computers to record each instance of a given variable. I coded the articles chronologically, recording data in Microsoft Excel using the binary coding scheme previously described. In total, I coded for twenty-five independent or control variables,<sup>15</sup> as well as each article’s section and page number, the number of words in the article, and the primary geographical location of the content in each article.

---

<sup>15</sup> The following variables were coded, but were not used in the present study: *GOVSPEND*: Government spends money or cuts funding to "terrorists"; *WMDS*: articles mentions Weapons of Mass Destruction; *APPEAL* = Appeal to authority/unnamed official ("Officials/Authorities said..."); *PEACE*: Articles discussed the peacekeeping/peace process; *PROTEST* = Article mentions/describes anti-war protest;

I aggregated the coded data to the unit of analysis (the month) by dividing the total number of coded frames per month by the total number of articles per month. For example, if there were twenty articles in any one-month period, and ten of these articles contained a specific media frame (i.e. hostility), then the aggregated percentage for the month equaled .50 or 50%. While computing such a proportion makes evaluating trend data easier, unweighted, it grossly inflates the score for months with a low number of articles. If, for example, any one given month contained only one news article, and that article happened to employ proactive political rhetoric, then it would appear that this proactive rhetoric was stronger for this month than a month with fifty articles, of which 40 contained proactive appeals. To correct for this bias, I weighted the aggregated percentage per month by the proportion of the sample size per month to the total sample size (N). Effectively making the monthly aggregated percentage proportionate to its size of the total sample, the weighted data could then be analyzed. Accordingly, I created two different data sets, one containing only the un-aggregated data collected during the coding analysis, and the other containing the aggregated *USA Today* data, as well as the aggregated trend data from the other data sources.

### **Section 3.5: Statistical Analysis**

This study uses two data sets: a data set containing only the recorded data from the coding analysis, and an aggregated data file with the weighted coding scores as well as the aggregated social trend data. In the second case, all of the cases in each variable correspond with a specific month. For each variable, there are ninety-six cases. The first complication presented itself in the form of aggregated data. Data collected from the Gallup Poll, the Global Terrorism

---

*HMANRGHT* = Tolerance/concern for human rights; *CONSPEND* = appeal to consumer spending;  
*DEATH* = Articles describes death or injuries resulting from terrorist attack

Database (GTD), the Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (WITS) and The Conference Board, represent data that has been averaged (aggregated) to correspond with given months contained within a time series date variable. Accordingly, I aggregated the original data from the content analysis of *USA Today* articles, using methods already described. The primary rationale for aggregating the data is to establish fixed points of comparison with equal distances between cases. The problem, of course, with aggregated data, is that it makes certain statistical analyses impossible (Hierarchical Linear Modeling, for example).

The aggregated data set contains all opinion poll data, coded data, and other control variable data such as the number of severe terrorist incidents. Each variable spans the time period from January 2001 through December 2008, and has exactly ninety-six cases, so that each case corresponds with a one-month period. For the most part, this data file was used to generate graphs and visual trend data. However, I also used the aggregated data with means testing. Using a one-way ANOVA, I was able to compare series means in discrete, four-month time blocks. I established the *last* four months of 2001 (September through December) as  $\text{Time}_{(\text{zero})}$  ( $T_0$ ), the first eight months of 2001 as  $T_{-2}$  and  $T_{-1}$ , the first four months of 2002 as  $T_1$ , and so on. This resulted in a total of twenty-four discrete time periods. Due to high levels of multicollinearity between many of the independent variables, I decided to run a factor analysis, and used the aggregated data set for the analysis, as the test failed to converge in its non-aggregated form. The factors and factor loadings for each variable are reported in Appendix B.

The non-aggregated data set is used to evaluate the changes in the previously described corporate media frames across time. Relying on the original, non-aggregated coding data, as well as the results of the factor analysis aforementioned, I was able to recode and collapse many of the original variables into two ordinal indices measuring “communitariansim” and

“individualism.” Such recoding allows us to explore the periods of time in which each variable was strongest using simple crosstabulation analyses. Additionally, I utilized crosstab analyses to help describe changes in the employment of various rhetorical forms within single variables, including an analysis of hostile/brutalizing rhetoric, “us” versus “them” discourse, and disproportional claims making by the corporate media. For example, in the early stages of a moral panic, we would expect heightened levels of expressed hostility. Using crosstabulations allow us to investigate to what extent the corporate media reported political rhetoric that was hostile and brutalizing nature during the period directly following 9/11. I created a grouping variable with eight categories; the first category includes the first eight months of 2001, the next six groups consist of twelve month time periods (from September through August the following year), and the last category includes the months from September 2007 through December 2008. While such static groupings are far from perfect (insomuch as they do not reflect more acute dynamic fluctuations), aligning the groups around 9/11 and the anniversaries give us a concrete benchmark from which to evaluate changes in the prevalence of certain form of corporate media frames over time.

The methodology for this study proved to be quite complex, and required a great deal of creativity. In the coming paragraphs, I will lay out both my successes and failures, as I hope doing so will explicate the challenges and shortcomings, as well as the successes of the present study. One of the main questions I sought to address in this study was, to what extent did the forms of media framing used affect the level of political solidarity. A number of complications made answering this question rather difficult. One complication arose around the nature of the data. Aggregated data is convenient for analyzing trend data, but makes many other forms of analysis impossible. As such, trend data typically violate a number of Ordinary Least Squares

(OLS) regression assumptions, including the assumption that the residuals be normally distributed, have a constant variance, and be independent of other residuals. Additionally, regression analysis does not account for the effect of systemic shocks (such as the effect of 9/11 or the invasion of Iraq), periodic effects (including the anniversaries of 9/11), and perhaps most important, autoregressive effects. Time series analyses (see Garson 2008), including Autoregressive Integrated Moving Average (ARIMA) attempt to transform the data, by differencing, lagging or leading variables, controlling for periodic effects, and moving average transformations. Autoregressive components account for the fact that with trend data, each element is based, at least in part, on the value of the case (or cases) prior. The purpose, of course, of applying such transformations is to “de-trend” the data, effectively making the data “stationary.” Unfortunately, time-series analyses are quite complex, and beyond the scope of the present study.

Regression with trend data violates the Gauss-Markov Theorem’s assumption that the residuals or errors are independent of one another. Failure to include autoregressive components in simple OLS or time series regressive models increases the likelihood of correlated residuals, effectively rendering “Goodness of Fit statistics and significance tests unreliable” (For more information, see: SPSS Trends 10.0, 1999). While the assumption of unrelated error terms tend to be violated in such circumstances, such a violation would not bias the predicted values. Despite these complications, however, I decided to regress the politico-solidarity index on the communitarianism and individualism indices, controlling for economic conditions (CCI) and the number of severe terrorist incidents per month. The results of the regression analysis are still meaningful, but the significance of the findings, in particular, must be interpreted with caution.

Considering the significant right skew in the dependent variable, I took the natural log of the political-solidarity score centered at one hundred.

At the beginning of this chapter, I posed four distinct questions: 1) Does the social reaction to 9/11 constitute a moral panic as defined by Goode and Ben-Yehuda's (1994) criteria? 2) Do these criteria vary across time? 3) Why do these criteria vary across time, and 4) How have these changes affected the presidential approval rating and levels of social solidarity? Addressing the first three questions proved rather facile; using simple crosstabulation analyses and one-way custom hypothesis simple contrast procedures, I have assembled a decently cogent account of the political, corporate media, and social reactions to 9/11 through the lens of a moral panic. The fourth question, however, was not so straightforward.

As a note of caution, I should also reiterate that the present study, given the constraints aforementioned, does not imply causation between the variables. Even more so, the independent and control variables represent a mere fraction of the total number of explanatory variables. I wholly recognize that many important explanatory variables are likely omitted. Surely no list of independent or control variables, no matter how inclusive, would ever be able to explain one hundred percent of the total variance of a dependent variable as complex and abstract as social solidarity. My attempt is not to make any such claims of causation, but rather to address the remarkable and unmistakable relationships between the variables included in this study, as they change and (d)evolve across the scope of time. In the results and analysis section to follow, I primarily chose to visually depict the relationship(s) between corporate media framing of presidential rhetoric and the changes in social solidarity.

## Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

The data presented in the sections below are not exhaustive of the data collected. In deference to the four questions posed in the last chapter, I will only present findings directly relating to these areas of inquiry. Most of the data presented in this study is visual; it is my hope that such a presentation is intuitively meaningful. All the same, I decided to also include the data in numerical format alongside, or in several cases, in lieu of, the visual representation. I have taken care to incorporate the majority of my findings around the graphs and tables presented herein. Beginning the discussion with an empirical and qualitative analysis of the social, political and corporate media's reaction to September 11<sup>th</sup>, I first tested my data against Goode and Ben-Yehuda's criteria of a moral panic. Next, I addressed some of the ways in which corporate media framing of presidential rhetoric changed over the course of the President Bush's term in office. Towards the end of the chapter, I began to address the myriad of complex, intertwined and interdependent relationships strung between political rhetoric, the corporate media's framing thereof, and the social, political, cultural, and economic response to and ramification of an event such as 9/11.

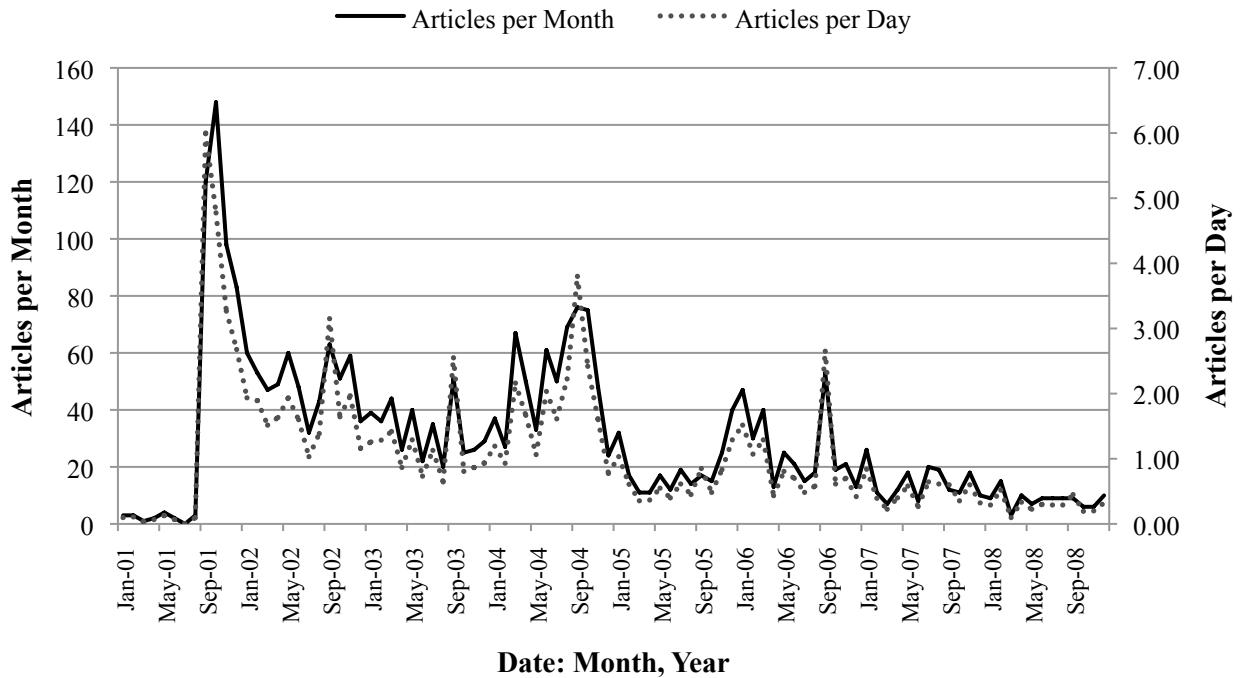
### Section 4.1: Moral Panic Theory Tested

**Volatility:** Volatility describes a condition in which there is a sudden eruption in the consensus, concern, hostility and disproportionality paid to a particular issue. This sudden eruption and eventual deflation is one of the hallmarks of a moral panic. Given the inability of moral crusaders to maintain heightened levels of fear, anxiety, or concern without the continual presence of an identifiable threat, moral panics are destined to dissipate and dissolve with time



(often time quite quickly). Nevertheless, as Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) have theorized, many moral panics, in the wake of their existence, leave behind a trail of institutions designed to combat the once grave danger and source of the moral panic. Figure 4.1 (below) depicts the number of *USA Today* news articles with the search terms “Bush” or “White House” and the root word “terror,” within the same paragraph, published per month and per day.

**Figure 4.1:** Volatility Trend Plot - The Number of *USA Today* Articles per Month and per Day



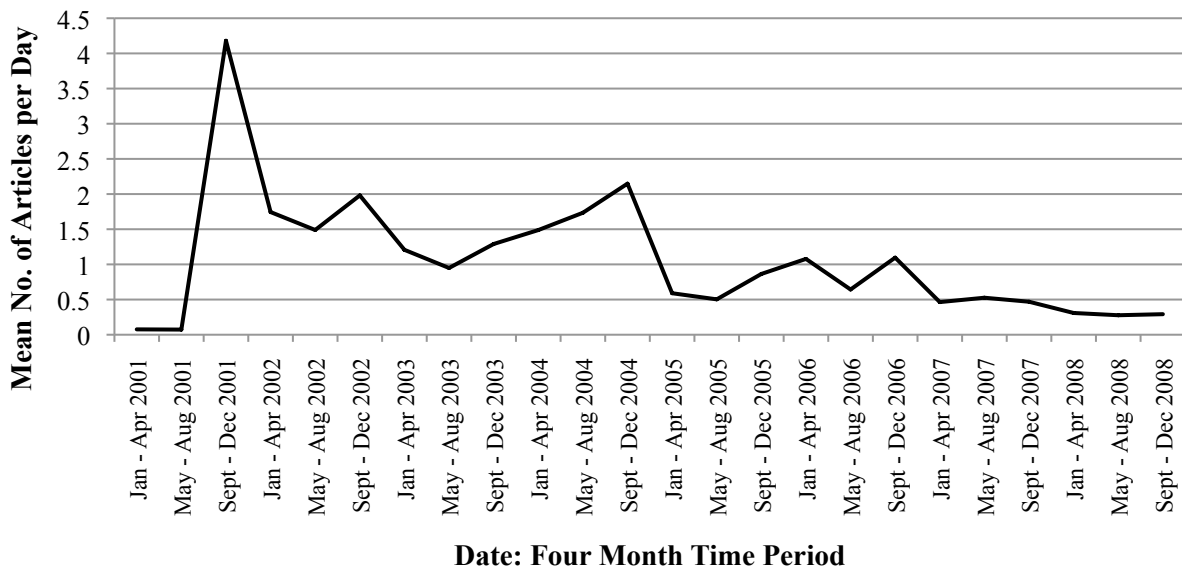
*Notes:* While the difference between the two trends is minimal, the articles per day trend controls for the number of days in a month.

Beyond the obvious explosion of news articles in September 2001, it should be clear that the number of news articles published by *USA Today* moderated rather quickly. By January of 2002, *USA Today* was averaging fewer than two articles per day, or about sixty articles per month. Interestingly, the invasion of Iraq did not appear to increase the number of news articles. Moral panics, however, no matter how short lived the initial “shock” are subject to repeated

“aftershocks.” Seldom as significant as the initial panic, these aftershocks (such as the increase in 2004 prior to the November elections) are “conceptual groupings of a series of more or less discrete, more or less localized, more or less short-term panics” (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994:159). While the election no doubt triggered debate over the course of the war in Iraq, as well as the fight against terrorism, news articles dealing with terrorism regained considerable news coverage. Again, notice the sudden decline in the number of articles in late 2004. The first three years of Bush’s second term in office can be noted for the apparent routinization of the reporting of terrorism, though as we will soon discuss, the nature of the media framing of terrorism changed considerably during this time period. Despite no major terrorist incidents in the United States, reporting of terrorism remained well above the pre-2001 levels.

Reviewing a means plot for the number of *USA Today* articles per day (Figure 4.2) reveals, and hopefully clarifies the previous trend analysis.

**Figure 4.2:** Means Plot Articles per Day by Four Month Time Period



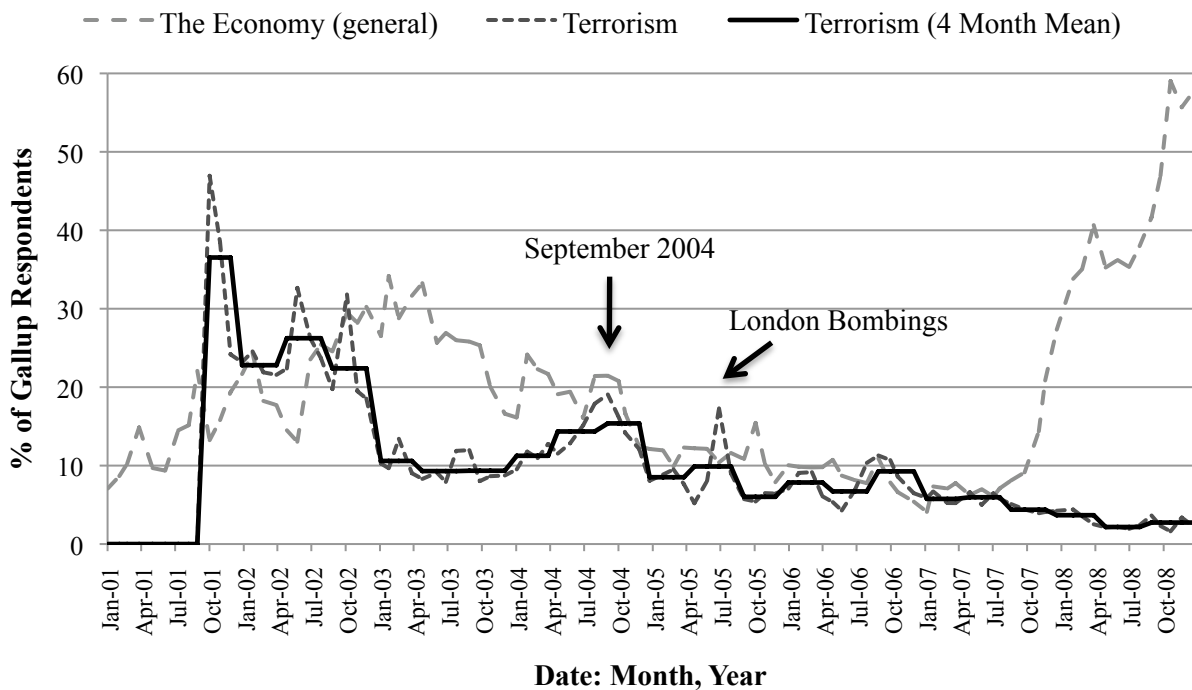
*Notes:* Equality of variance across groups is not assumed;  $F = 9.75$  ( $p < .000$ ),  $df = 23$ ; Custom hypothesis test (simple change analysis) with reference category set to group 3 (Sept – Dec 2001) confirms that the number of articles published per day during this time period is significantly higher than any other time period in the study.

To assist with an analysis of the trends over time, I grouped the time variable into discrete four-month time periods. As method of comparison, I will refer to September through December of 2001 as Time-Zero. I opted to conduct a custom hypothesis test to compare means on this and other variables used to test the criteria of a moral panic. Given the theoretical assumptions we have made about the volatile nature of a moral panic, a custom hypothesis test (such as a simple change analysis) better equips us to accept or reject the null hypothesis (that Time-Zero is significantly higher than the surrounding groups). Increasing to over four articles per day during the four months preceding Time-Zero, the number of articles had already retreated to an average of about 1.7 articles per day by the first four months in 2002. In both cases, the increase and subsequent decrease surrounding Time-Zero is highly significant ( $p < .001$ ), as are the contrasts with every other time period throughout the eight years of the study. And while the escalation in the number of articles in 2004 was not as explosive as that in 2001 (there were no statistically significant increases in the two time periods prior to the September – December 2004 period), the decline in the first four months of 2005 (following the November 2004 election) resulted in a highly significant contrast ( $p < .001$ ). As a final thought, volatility is perhaps more accurately regarded as a *subcomponent* of the other criteria. Hostility, disproportionality, consensus and concern, all react in a volatile *modus operandi*.

***Consensus and Concern:*** Consensus and Concern are two different concepts according to Goode and Ben-Yehuda (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994). While the theoretical distinction between the two may be concrete, the liminal space separating the two in practice is rather obtuse. I will discuss both criteria in unison in the coming paragraphs. Consensus demands a basic level of “agreement in the society as a whole” regarding some easily identifiable group of

concern; the threat this group of concern poses “is real, serious, and caused by the wrongdoing of group members and their behavior” (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994:157). It follows that for any one group or behavior of concern therein to become the object of contempt, there must first be a minimal level of agreement that the group, or the behavior of concern, poses a legitimate threat to society. In the case of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, the politically defined group defined as “terrorists” were immediately cast as the primary focus of concern, and as we will see, an overwhelmingly large number of American citizens agreed that these “terrorists” were dangerous and posed an enormous threat to the safety of American citizens across the country.

**Figure 4.3:** Combined Trend and Means plot of Respondents Who Say Terrorism is the Most Important Problem Facing the Nation (2001 – 2008)



*Notes:* Terrorism was not included as one of the categories in the Gallup Poll’s “Most Important Problem” question prior to the October 2001 survey; including September 2001 as part of Time-Zero biases the other values in the Time-Zero period. Accordingly, for this plot only, I included September 2001 as part of the previous time period; the mean for Time-Zero on includes the last three months of 2001.

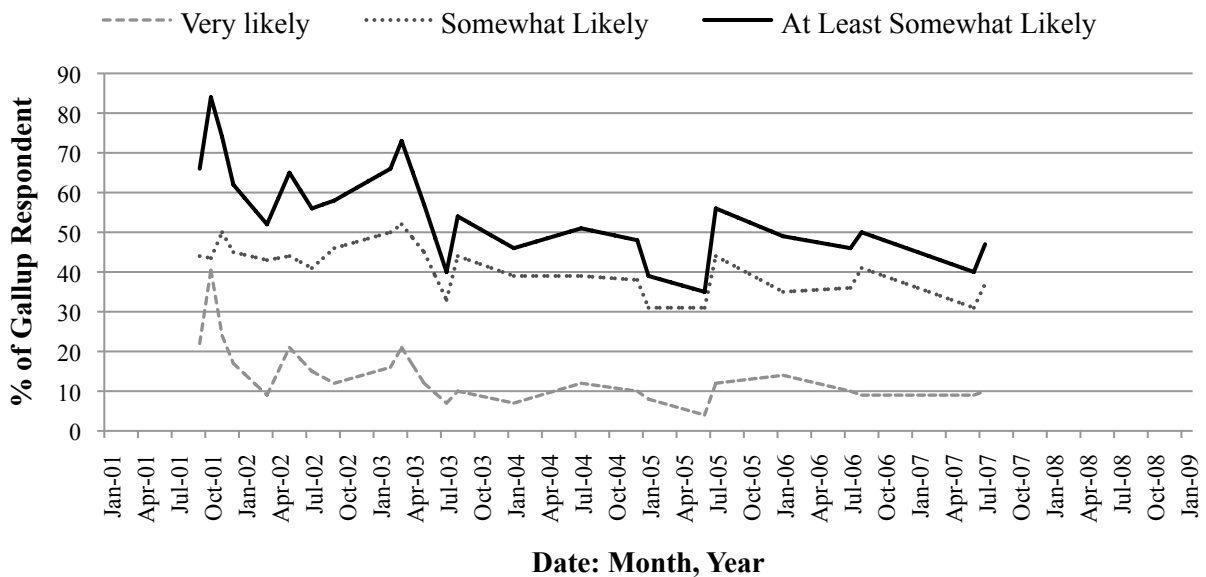
Equality of variance across groups is not assumed;  $F = 30.462$  ( $p < .000$ ),  $df = 23$

Since the 1930's, Gallup Poll has asked respondents to indicate what they think is the "most important problem facing the nation," but not until October of 2001 did Gallup Poll begin tracking "terrorism" as one of these problems. An open-ended question, this variable provides a reliable and unprompted assessment of the current state of affairs in the United States. That the question was not asked prior to October 2001 is indicative that terrorism did in fact emerge as a cause for great concern in the collective conscience of American citizens. Inasmuch as the survey is a nationally representative random sample of U.S. adults, the fact that nearly forty-seven percent of the U.S. population believed terrorism was the most important problem confirms that terrorism emerged as a great threat. As a means of comparison, I also plotted the trend data for respondents who list the economy as the most important problem (see Figure 4.3 above). Historically, economic conditions have maintained a top spot in the list of most important problems. Nevertheless, the percentage of people indicating the economy as the most important problem was dwarfed by terrorism after September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001.

To reiterate, like the other criteria of a moral panic, consensus and concern are marked by high volatility. After an initial explosion in October 2001, the percentage dropped by almost half by December. Despite some minor fluctuations, this percentage was maintained for the better part of the following year. A simple contrast hypothesis test of the means during this period confirm what is apparent in the trend data; after dropping off significantly by early 2003, the percentage of respondents listing terrorism as the most important problem again gained momentum by late 2004. Non-coincidentally, this percentage aligns with the number of news articles, and as we will address below, this increase also corresponds with patterns of proactive and communitarian media frames. ( $\text{Mean}_{\text{September} - \text{December } 2004} = 15.38$ ;  $\text{Mean}_{\text{January} - \text{April } 2005} = 8.52$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

I should also highlight the July 2005 increase in respondents reporting terrorism is the most important problem facing the country. Recall that on July 7<sup>th</sup> 2005, four suicide bombers carried out a planned attack on London’s mass transit center, killing fifty-two people, and wounding hundreds of others. Later that month, on July 21<sup>st</sup>, another planned attack similar to the attack two weeks earlier was discovered and thwarted before any bombs detonated (2008c). Consistent with our theoretical understandings of moral panics, such an event appears to have triggered an “aftershock” reaction, resulting in a smaller, but significant period of volatile consensus and concern. Although not in the United States, the attacks on a strong Western ally such as Great Britain appears to have raised concerns among citizens in the United States.

**Figure 4.4:** Trend Plot of the Likelihood of Further Acts of Terrorism in the United States Over the Next Several Weeks



Notes: There is no data for this question prior to September 2001, nor after July 2007. See Appendix A, Question 4, for the exact wording of the question, and information about missing data.

In Figure 4.4 above, we see a slightly different representation of consensus and concern. Asking respondents to say how likely they think another terrorist attack is in the next several

weeks, the Gallup Poll question provides us with a way to visualize widespread agreement that terrorism posed a threat, and even more, that another attack was imminent. By October 2001, forty-percent of respondents thought there would very likely be another attack, while close to eighty-five percent thought it at least somewhat likely. This question was not asked as frequently as many of the other questions used in this study (See Appendix A, Question 4), but from what data we have, it is apparent that the same volatile trend holds true during the early stages of the panic, and that the Invasion of Iraq and the London Bombings increased the level of consensus that another attack was likely. Both concepts – consensus and concern – require at least some degree of shared mutual focus on a group or groups of easily identifiable people who are supposedly responsible for the problem at hand. Were moral panics only to identify problematic groups and achieve group consensus that such behavior was indeed problematic, however, there would be very little, if any, substance to the panic. Consensus and concern are so powerful during these times of volatility because of hostility towards the stigmatized group.

**Hostility:** Much like the townsfolk in Ericson’s *Wayward Puritan* (1966) “come together to express their outrage,” and in so doing create “a sense of mutuality among the people of a community by supplying a focus for group feeling,” the events of 9/11 inspired whole communities to come together under the pretenses of patriotism (4). Underlying such symbolic displays of patriotism, however, was the shared focus on the group responsible for the attacks – the terrorists. As part of the moral panic, we expect hostility and outrage to engulf the discourse surround the “enemy.” Such is the case with Cohen’s (1972) discussion of the “folk devil” – the group or apparent group of people held responsible. Heuristics, or mental shortcuts, contribute to the vilification of an entire group of people, as peoples sharing an easily identifiable marker with the group (i.e. many Muslims and Arabs were stigmatized as “terrorists” for the color of

their skin, their accents, ties to Islam, or cultural traditions), while the dichotomization of the “us” and “them” categories becomes all the more strong.

As part of my coding analysis, I wanted to see to what extent newspaper articles in *USA Today* contained hostile themes. As part of this analysis, I included themes that attempted to brutalize a person or group of people by making them appear somehow less than human. Whether quoting a comment made by President Bush directly [e.g. “Bush's public comments made it clear that he intends to strike back forcefully. ‘Now is an opportunity to do generations a favor by coming together and whipping terrorism, hunting it down, finding it and holding them accountable,’ he said” (Keen 2001)] or as part of a regular news story [e.g. “It means making sure the Defense Department sets aside its appetite for Cold War weapons long enough to buy sturdy, low-tech weapons good for hunting terrorists in the mountains.” (2001a)], such discourse attempts to dehumanize the enemy by invoking words (e.g. “hunt”) that invite the reader to imagine that the way to get rid of terrorism is to shoot the terrorists as one might an animal. This sort of brutalizing imagery, as well as blatantly hostile forms of language seeks to deviantize and demonize a group of people. Consider the following two examples:

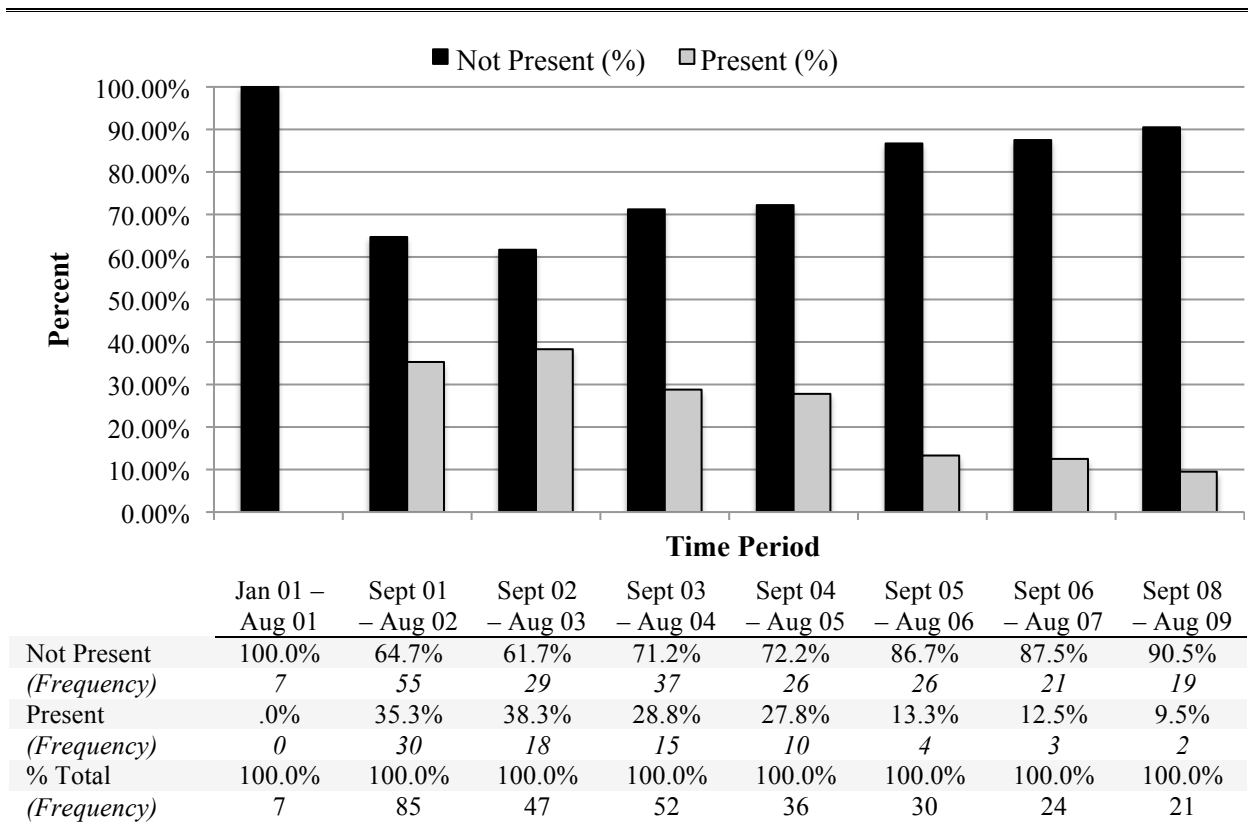
President Bush ramped up his increasingly tough anti-terrorist rhetoric Monday. He said he wants the prime suspect in last week’s attacks brought to justice “dead or alive.” Harkening back to the Old West mythology he remembers from his childhood, Bush said in response to a question about whether he wants militant mastermind Osama bin Laden dead, “I want justice. And there's an old poster out West, that I recall, that said, 'Wanted: Dead or Alive.' [...] “I slightly favor catching him alive,” says Brent Scowcroft, who was national security adviser to Bush's father. “The problem with killing him and making him a martyr is that you run the risk of turning him into a folk hero. It might be better to throw him into a cell next to (Panamanian dictator) Manuel Noriega and let him rot there.” (Hall and Benedetto 2001)

“This was an attack on freedom. And we're going to define it as such and we're going to go after it and we're not going to lose focus.” Bush’s public comments made it clear that he intends to strike back forcefully. “Now is an opportunity to do generations a favor by coming together and whipping terrorism, hunting it down, finding it and holding them accountable,” he said. (Keen 2001)



Hostile discourse not only highlights the undesirable nature of the group of concern, but it simultaneously reifies the moral boundaries of the in-group (Becker 1963; Erikson 1966; Hawdon 1996). Drawing upon these boundary differences, *USA Today* staff writers comment in another piece that “the attacks have also raised strong suspicions among many Americans about Arabs and Arab-Americans. That has prompted many to favor dramatic actions to monitor those ethnic groups.” (Memmott, Benedetto, and O’Driscoll 2001). Contained in this message is a condemnation of the apparent folk devil, and an immediate call to action to take care of the problem via “dramatic actions.”

**Figure 4.5:** Crosstabulation of Hostile and/or Brutalizing Rhetoric by Time Period



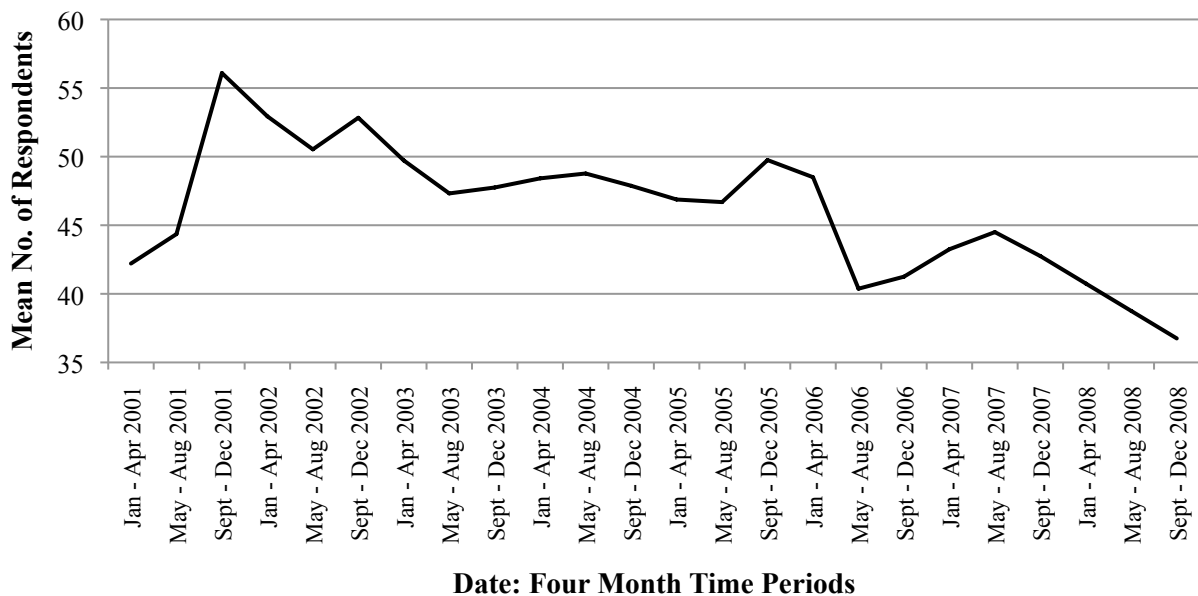
Notes: N = 302; Gamma ( $\Gamma$ ) = -.255 (p < .01)

Figure 4.5 (above) displays the percentage of articles in the sampling frame containing hostile and/or brutalizing rhetoric. The results are presented in discrete time periods, as labeled.

Despite low cell counts in the first time period (prior to September 2001), there were no hostile media frames present, while from September 2001 through August of 2002, about 35% of the articles contained hostile or brutalizing frames. Somewhat surprisingly, while the total frequency of hostile frames declined, the overall percentage actually increased slightly during September 2002 – August of 2003. In spite of that, the rest of the time periods throughout the eight years witnessed a gradual decline in the frequency and percentage of hostile media frames (Gamma = -.255,  $p < .01$ ).

A proxy measure of hostility, the trend plotted below in Figure 4.6, measures the percentage of respondents who believe that current levels of immigration should decrease. Despite the fact that this variable does not measure hostility directed at an identifiable folk devil (in this case, Muslims or people of the Islamic faith), it successfully embodies the degree to which Americans feel they should close off borders “outsiders.”

**Figure 4.6:** Means Plot of Responds Who Say Immigration Levels Should *Decrease*



Notes: Equality of variance across groups is not assumed;  $F = 63.696$  ( $p < .000$ ),  $df = 23$ ;

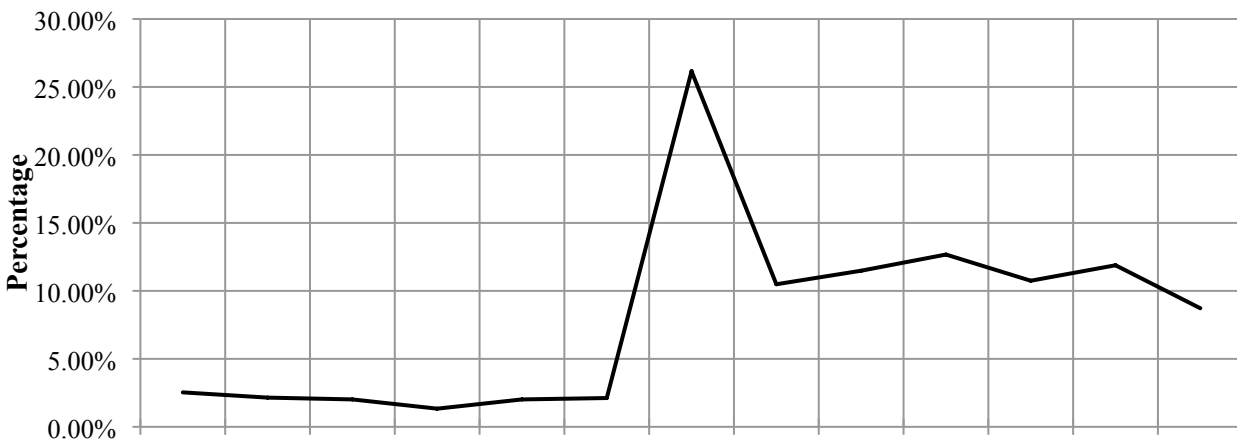
A simple t-test reveals that the mean at Time-Zero (56.1) is significantly larger than the

mean value across the other time periods ( $t = -20.00$ ,  $df = 23$ ,  $p < .001$  (two-tailed)). Whether or not this is the best measure of hostility is not as important as the fact that during Time-Zero, Americans felt the need to tighten the moral boundaries. As such, the out-group, however obscurely defined, posed a significant threat to many people in the United States, and prompted many Americans to favor a decrease in Immigration.

Finally, by looking at the frequency and percentage of anti-Islamic hate crime victims before and after 2001, we can hope to gain a better sense of directed hostility. The FBI collects and reports on hate-based crimes in a special section of the annual Uniform Crime Report.

Figure 4.7 (below) clearly demonstrates that the percentage of anti-Islamic hate crime victims exploded in 2001. With only thirty-six victims or roughly two percent of all religiously-based hate crimes, the number of anti-Islamic hate crime victims skyrocketed to over five hundred and fifty in 2001, or roughly twenty-six percent of the religious based hate crime victims.

**Figure 4.7:** Percentage of Anti-Islamic Hate Crimes Victims of Total Religious Motivated Hate Crime Victims, Uniform Crime Report Hate Crime Statistics, 2005 - 2007



	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Percent (%)	2.5	2.15	2.02	1.34	2.02	2.12	26.2	10.5	11.5	12.7	10.8	11.9	8.7
Frequency	41	33	32	23	34	36	554	174	171	201	151	208	142

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation. "Uniform Crime Report: *Hate Crime Statistics*" (2009e)

In the preceding paragraphs, I employed three different means of measuring hostility. The second two methods – the Gallup Poll data tracking public opinion towards immigration levels, and FBI crime data measuring the number of victims of anti-Islamic hate crimes – both measure the *effect* of hostile attitudes. The first method – the number of instances of hostile frames in *USA Today* articles – provides us with an understanding of how the corporate media helps situate hostility. While the creation of an out-group may be a normal sociological process of group relations, the scale and magnitude of the stage on which the folk devil was cast implores us to critically evaluate the means by which hostile media frames are used to shape, direct, and create a folk devil.

***Disproportionality:*** The last criterion of a moral panic – disproportionality – may in fact be the most difficult to define and, is certainly the most difficult to measure objectively. Critics of Moral Panic Theory (see Garland 2008), suggest that reliance on such a claim of disproportionality begs the question: (dis)proportional to what? A legitimate concern follows: when determining disproportionality within a framework of moral panic theory, is the researcher simply “measuring the reaction against some hard reality [...] against his or her own representation of the way things are (?)” (Garland 2008:22). Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994:158) outline four methods by which disproportionality can be established, including: exaggerated figures regarding the scope/threat, the threat is entirely fabricated (non-existent), the attention paid to the problem at hand is greater than the attention paid to another social problem of greater objective social harm, or the concern given to the threat is greater at one point in time than another without a change in the objective problem. I have devised three different approaches of assessing disproportionality consistent with Goode and Ben-Yehuda’s proposed methods.

The U.S. State Department keeps record of the number of U.S. citizens killed or injured in a terrorist attack. If we look at these records for the last eight years, we immediately notice that the number of U.S. citizens turned victims of terrorism is extremely low. Not including the 2001 victim count,<sup>16</sup> the average number of victims per year is forty-nine; including the victim count in 2001, the average is three hundred and ninety-seven. Using population estimates from the U.S. Census, and aggregated Gallup Poll data asking respondents to indicate how worried they were that they, or a family member, would become the victim of a terrorist attack, I calculated the total number of worried Americans out of the total estimated population. I then computed the odds ratio of being at least somewhat worried about becoming a victim of a terrorist attack to the objective odds of becoming a victim (based on the U.S. population proportionate to size).

**Table 4.1:** Computed Odds Ratio of Percent of Population Worried to % of Population Killed in a Terrorist Attack by Year

Year	Estimated U.S. Population *	Average % Worried <sup>#</sup>	Computed U.S. Population Worried	Number of Causalities	Odds Ratio
2001	285,039,803	44.80%	127,704,388	2,779 <sup>^</sup>	83,251.5
2002	287,726,647	38.43%	110,575,077	62 <sup>^</sup>	2,896,680.2
2003	290,210,914	36.83%	106,894,257	52 <sup>^</sup>	3,254,338.8
2004	292,892,127	38.50%	112,763,469	103 <sup>†</sup>	1,780,147.3
2005	295,560,549	41.00%	121,179,825	73 <sup>§</sup>	2,813,554.6
2006	298,362,973	44.25%	132,025,616	55 <sup>§</sup>	4,305,767.4
2007	301,290,332	44.82%	135,042,545	19 <sup>§</sup>	12,880,903.0
2008	304,059,724	39.53%	120,215,790	33 <sup>‡</sup>	6,025,000.9

Notes:

\* Data from U.S Census' 2008 Population Estimate (2009c)

# Data from Gallup Poll (See Appendix A, Question 5) (Gallup 2009e)

<sup>^</sup> Data from the U.S. State Department's "Patterns of Global Terrorism" reports (2002b; 2003; 2004)

<sup>†</sup> Data from the U.S. State Department's "A Chronology of Significant International Terrorism for 2004" (2005a)

<sup>§</sup> Data from U.S. State Department's "Country Reports on Terrorism" (2006; 2007; 2008a; 2009b)

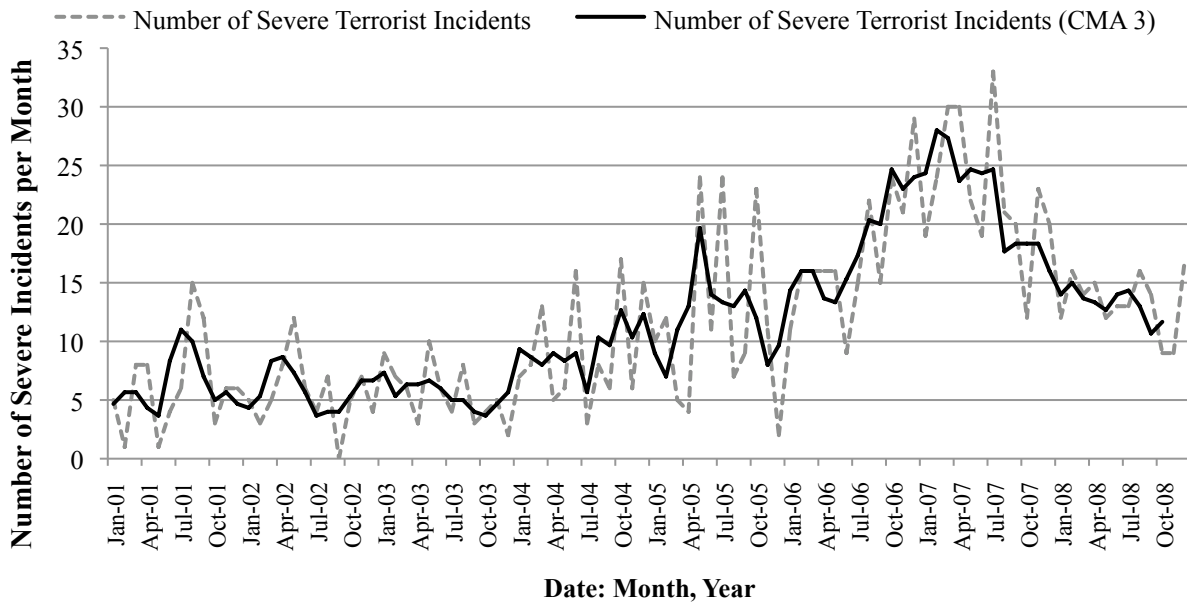
<sup>‡</sup> The State Department did not include injuries for 2008 in the "2009 Country Reports on Terrorism"

<sup>16</sup> Including the victim count for 2001 would skew the mean number of victims per year significantly.

Even in 2001, a year with an unusually large number of deaths resulting from terrorism, Gallup Poll data suggest that U.S. citizens were over 83,251 times more likely to be at least somewhat worried that they or a loved one would become a victim of terrorism than they actually were. At its greatest (in 2007), Americans were almost 13 million times more likely to be somewhat worried of becoming a victim of an attack than they actually were. These findings are likely not generalizable to the entire U.S. population, and should not be taken as such. In fact, as we can easily see, a minute change in number of U.S. victims per year significantly changes the odds ratio. All the same, we see quite clearly that the fear of becoming a victim of terrorism is monumentally larger than the “objective threat” posed. Recall from earlier chapters that an estimated 438,000 people die each year in the United States alone from tobacco-related causes. In this way, the fear generated by and the attention paid to terrorism is in fact disproportional to the objective threat, especially when other social problems are taken into consideration.

But even if someone rejects my line of thinking in the previous analysis on the basis that fear is entirely too subjective a phenomenon to establish any claims of disproportionately, then consider the following: the objective number of severe terrorist incidents has actually increased (substantially) between 2001 and 2008. The trend data presented in Figure 4.8 (below) trace the number of severe terrorist incidents worldwide, per month. Recall that I operationally defined a severe terrorist incident as an attack resulting in the death of more than ten (eleven or more) persons. Such a qualification bypasses the incongruities between the nominal definitions provided by the two databases used to assemble the trend data. The dashed grey line measures the actual number of attacks, while the solid black line is the centered moving average (spanning three months). Rapid fluctuations in the unsmoothed data make it more difficult to abstract the actual underlying trend in the data.

**Figure 4.8:** Trend Plot of Severe Terrorist Incidents Worldwide, per Month, 2001 - 2008



Notes: CMA 3: Three month Centered Moving Average

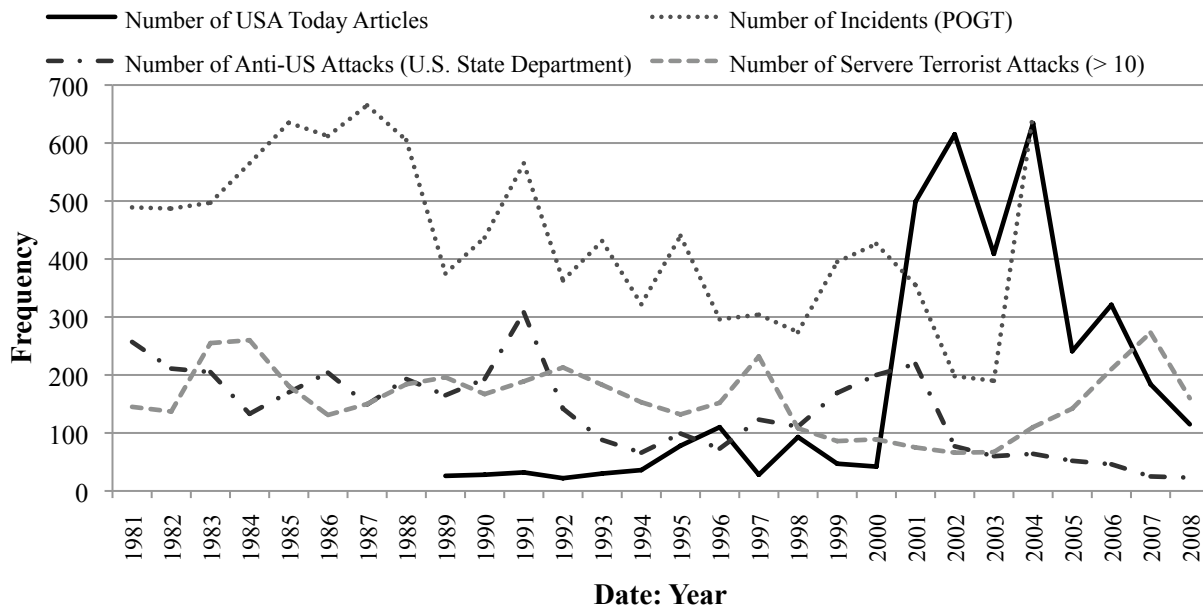
In 2001, there was an average of just over six severe attacks per month during 2001. In fact, worldwide, there were more terrorist attacks in August of 2001 than there were in September of that year. During the early stages of the “War on Terror” in fact, we see that the number of severe attacks did not change much from 2001 levels, and if anything, the number of severe attacks decreased slightly. Beginning in 2004, the number of attacks began to steadily increase, coming to a relative maximum of thirty-three severe incidents in July 2007.

When we take a step back and evaluate the aggregate trend data over the course of the last thirty years, we see similar patterns. In Figure 4.9 (below) the solid black line tracks the number of *USA Today* articles per year from 1989 through 2008;<sup>17</sup> the dashed grey line measures the number of severe terrorist incidents per year from 1981 through 2008. I collected two

<sup>17</sup> USA does not currently have electronic copies of news articles prior to 1989.

additional data series from the U.S. State Department: the first tracks the number of anti-U.S. attacks, while the second series<sup>18</sup> tracked the number of worldwide terrorist incidents prior to the nominal definitional change in 2004.

**Figure 4.9:** Trend Plot, Number of *USA Today* Articles, Number of Anti-U.S. Attacks, Number of Worldwide Incidents, and Number of Severe Terrorist Incidents, 1981-2008



Notes: POGT Patterns of Global Terrorism (2002b:171; 2004:176; 2005a:81);

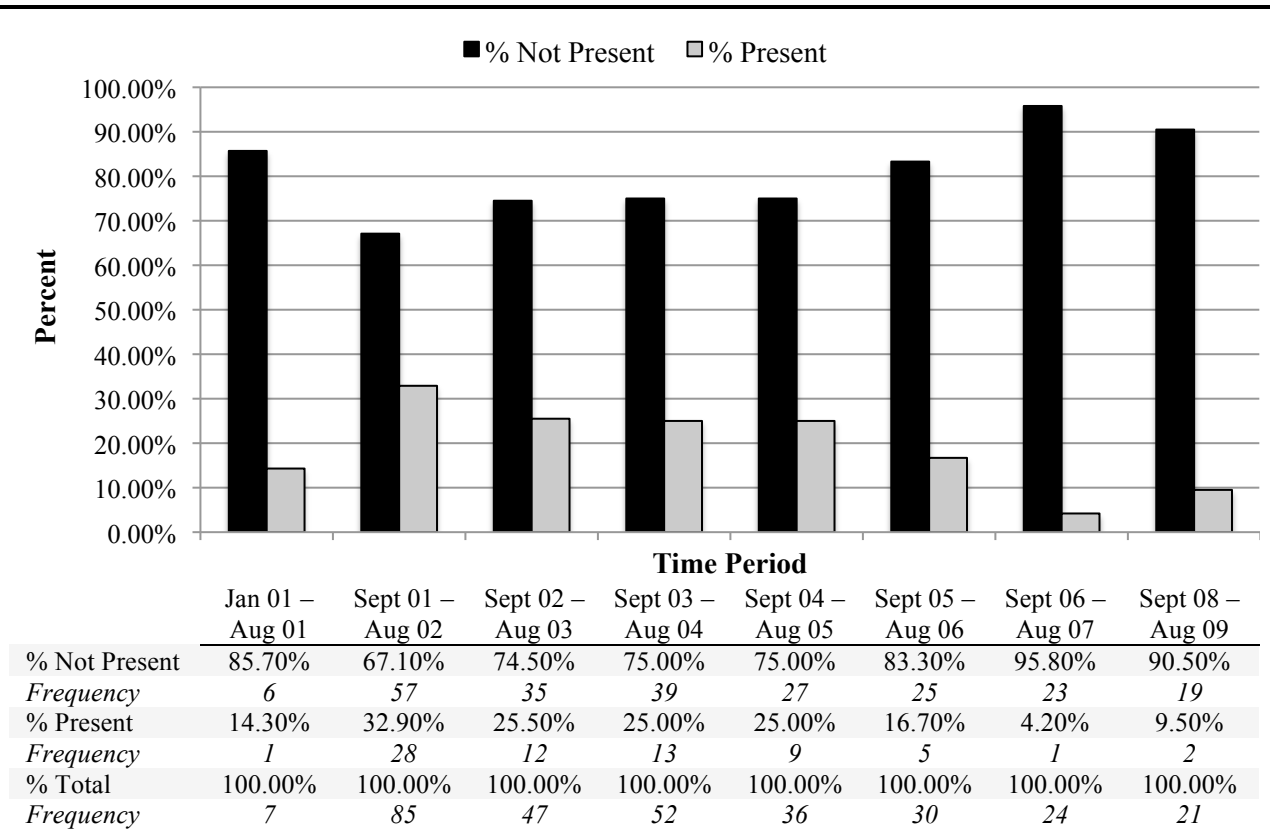
Without doubt, the amount of attention paid to terrorism in *USA Today*, post 9/11 is without parallel. As Tilly (2004) remarked “the State Department’s count of international terrorist incidents reached a high point in 1988 and generally declined thereafter,” and goes on to state that “the 346 attacks of 2001 lay far below the frequencies of the 1980s, and the overall levels of casualties declined as well from the 1980s onward” (pp. 8-9). It is particularly noteworthy that the most anti-U.S. attacks occurred in 1991 – a year in which *USA Today*

<sup>18</sup> State Departments Patterns of Global Terrorism (POGT) reports



published only thirty-two terrorism related articles.<sup>19</sup>

**Figure 4.10:** Crosstabulation of Disproportional Media Claims by Time Period



Notes: N = 302; Gamma ( $\Gamma$ ) = -.276 (p < .01)

As part of the coding analysis, I searched for frames in which terrorism was described and framed as “epidemic in proportion” (Kappeler and Kappeler 2004). As an epidemic, politicians and the corporate media claims that the threat is “global, the deviants are said to be widespread, and they have designs to use unthinkable weapons that threaten entire nations” (Kappeler and Kappeler 2004:179). Figure 4.10 displays the results of the crosstabulation of disproportional media frames over time, and with about thirty-three percent of articles containing

<sup>19</sup> I used a modified search string in Lexis Nexis so as to include President Clinton: “((BODY(terror! W/p Bush OR Clinton OR White House) OR HEADLINE(terror! W/p Bush OR White House)) and DATE(>=1989-01-01 and <=2000-12-31) and ((Final Edition))”

disproportional frames, such framing was particularly strong in the year following 9/11. Similar to the pattern we witnessed with hostile frames, disproportional frames spike, plateau, and then begin to decline more significantly after 2004 ( $\text{Gamma} = -.276; p < .01$ ).

The previous section demonstrates, with unequivocally clarity, that the 9/11 attacks and the political, media, and social response thereto, was as close to the ideal type of a moral panic as possible. Like many moral panics, though not all, the 9/11 moral panic was grounded in the objective. No one doubts that the World Trade Centers did in fact fall to the ground, or that a great deal of American citizens lost their lives on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001. In the minutes, hours, days and weeks following, however, an elite-engineered moral panic was waged, a folk devil was defined, the threat posed was made to seem epidemic in proportion, and widespread consensus was fostered. In the next section, I will examine how corporate media framing of political rhetoric changed over the course of President Bush's presidency.

#### **Section 4.2: Corporate Media Framing of Presidential Rhetoric**

A moral panics success depends in large part on the ability of politicians and the media to define the socio-political moral universe in which the panic occurs. Hall *et al.* (1978) describe this condition as “orchestrating hegemony” (57). By providing the populace with a framework, the success of the moral panic is not contingent on politicians or the corporate media overtly telling people *what* to think, but *how* to think. In so doing, the social response and reaction to terrorism becomes widespread – individual citizens adopt their own feelings of hostility, contempt, outrage, and ultimately politicians and the corporate media manipulate and redirect these feelings into a general consensus about the appropriate means of dealing with the emergent

threat. In this section, I will present additional results from the coding analysis, and detail how various forms of media frames waxed and waned as part of the life course of the moral panic. Specifically I will address the roll of communitarianism and individualism as rhetorical forms, the impact of proactive and reactive governmental policy, as well as the significance of several other important variables for which I coded.

***Corporate Media Framing of Communitarianism and Proactive Policy:*** Hawdon (2001) concluded that the first stage of a moral panic is most significantly marked by the incorporation of communitarian rhetoric with proactive policy. As discussed in the previous chapter, I ran a factor analysis of the twenty-five variables for which I coded, and two factors loaded strongly: communitarianism and individualism. The communitarianism index loaded with fourteen variables<sup>20</sup>, while the individualism index loaded with only three. For each factor, I created an index, and divided the index score into three discrete ordinal categories. Using the same eight time periods as the crosstabulations in the previous section.

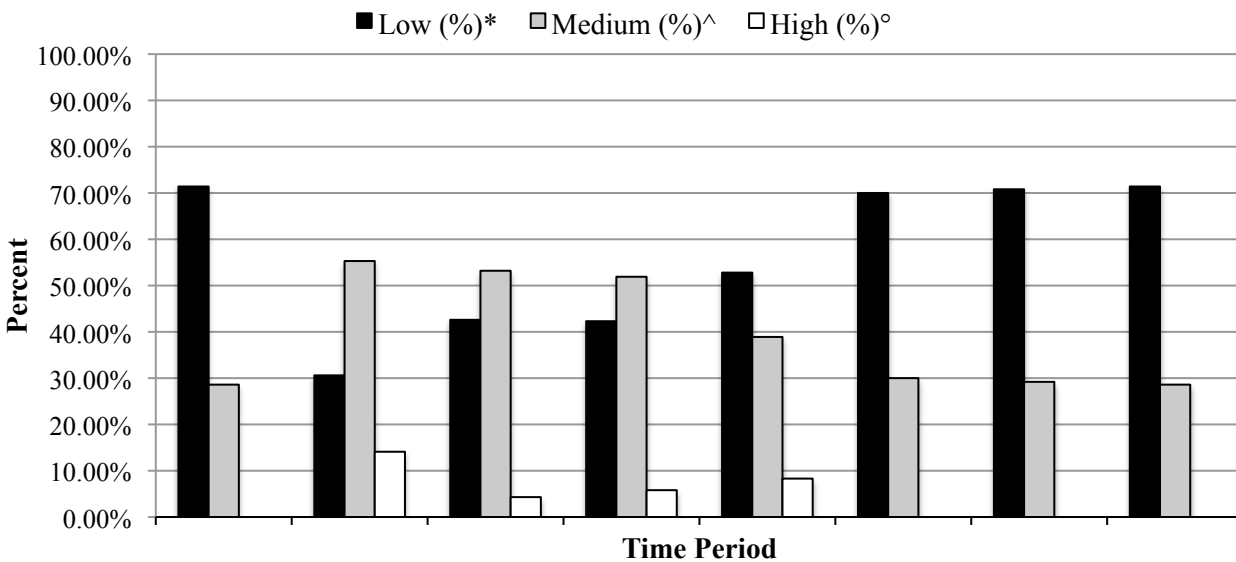
Communitarianism, without doubt, was particularly salient and strong in the first year following 9/11. With about fourteen percent of the eighty-five articles in this period containing between nine and fourteen communitarian frames, and over seventy percent with more than three frames, this time period, as well as the next three time periods maintained high levels of communitarian media frames. Broken into discrete ordinal categories, it is impossible to tell which particular variables from Figure 4.11 (below) contributed most significantly to the high

---

<sup>20</sup> The fourteen variables for which I coded include: (1) Disproportional claims making; (2) Describing or situating fear regarding terrorism; (3) Glorifying collective group?; (4) Appeals to good and evil, innocence and purity; (5) Hostile and brutalizing rhetoric; (6) Invokes God/Religion; (7) Describes U.S./Coalition military action; (8) Symbolic patriotic display; (9) Proactive law, action, or policy to counter terrorism; (10) Reporter or "eye witness" sensationalism; (11) Mentions American mores?; (12) Us/Victim versus Them/Deviant polemic; (13) Mentions "War on Terror" or "Combating Terrorism"; (14) Appeals to unnamed authorities, experts, or officials

levels of communitarian media frames. Nevertheless, taken as a whole, it's quite easy to see that by 2005 and 2006, levels of communitarian rhetoric had returned to their pre-9/11 percentages (Gamma =  $-.348$ ;  $p < .001$ ), albeit, there still were more articles being published about terrorism.

**Figure 4.11: Crosstabulation of Communitarian Media Frames by Time Period**



	Jan 01 – Aug 01	Sept 01 – Aug 02	Sept 02 – Aug 03	Sept 03 – Aug 04	Sept 04 – Aug 05	Sept 05 – Aug 06	Sept 06 – Aug 07	Sept 08 – Aug 09
% Low*	71.40%	30.60%	42.60%	42.30%	52.80%	70.00%	70.80%	71.40%
(Frequency)	5	26	20	22	19	21	17	15
% Medium^	28.60%	55.30%	53.20%	51.90%	38.90%	30.00%	29.20%	28.60%
(Frequency)	2	47	25	27	14	9	7	6
% High°	0.00%	14.10%	4.30%	5.80%	8.30%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
(Frequency)	0	12	2	3	3	0	0	0
% Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(Frequency)	7	85	47	52	36	30	24	21

Notes: N = 302; Gamma ( $\Gamma$ ) = -.348 (p < .000)

\* Low: 1 – 2 Frames; ^ Medium: 3-8 Frames; ° High: 9-14 Frames

Communitarian media frames played a powerful role in defining the subjective universe surrounding symbols, ritual interactions, and commonly coupled religious and patriotic themes together:

A USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup Poll of 1,032 adults taken Friday and Saturday showed [...] (a) deep profound sense that the country needs to pull together and that now's the time to reach out to family, friends and neighbors. The percentages of people who say they've prayed, showed more affection to loved ones, displayed a flag and attended memorial services are sky-high. Terri Elfner 43, of York, Pa., watched the news on television late into the night both Friday and Saturday. "I sat there both nights and bawled," she says. Then, "I went to church (Sunday) and cried my eyes out. I cried my eyes out. (Memcott, Benedetto, and O'Driscoll 2001)

Likewise, many articles highlighted the moral boundaries between the “us” and “them,” “deviant” and “victim,” and “good” and “evil.” In an article published by the *USA Today* about the role of the corporate media in publishing news that is potentially threatening to “national security,” *USA Today* staff writer Peter Johnson writes:

MSNBC chief Erik Sorenson agrees: “This is not Republicans against Democrats. This is maniacal killers against lovers of democracy.” Says CNN president Walter Isaacson: “We have to be objective and even skeptical at times, but I don’t think we need to be morally neutral on the question of whether terrorists who wantonly kill innocent people are evil.” (Johnson 2001)

Imagery such as “maniacal killers” and “lovers of democracy” dichotomizes and situates the “us” versus “them” paradigm in quite sensationalist vernacular. Invoking the terms “morally neutral,” “innocent people” and “evil,” invites the same polarization but with religious precipices. Particularly striking about this last example is that the quotes are from executives at MSNBC and CNN.

One of the central and most important components of communitarian rhetoric, however, is the glorification of the collective group (and the implied marginalization of the folk devil) through appeals to American mores and patriotism. Particularly common among politicians who utilize such rhetoric as forms of boundary maintenance, this language is often used as a heuristic, a mental shortcut, or what communications and propaganda scholars call “glittering generalities” (1938). As heuristics, “glittering generalities” work in the following way, according to the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (1938):

When someone talks to us about democracy, we immediately think of our own definite ideas about democracy, the ideas we learned at home, at school, and in church. Our first and natural reaction is to assume that the speaker is using the word in our sense, that he believes as we do on this important subject. This lowers our “sales resistance” and makes us far less suspicious than we ought to be when the speaker begins telling us the things “the United States must do to preserve democracy.”

Many of the articles appearing in *USA Today* during the days, weeks, months following 9/11

contained a spate of “glittering generalities.” To be certain, such discourse likely has a permanent place in the sphere of political rhetoric, but during periods of heightened ambiguity and novel situations, “glittering generalities” have a much greater influence. As the example from the Institute for Propaganda Analysis employs, rhetoric that contains appeals to democracy (and particularly the American form of democracy) serve as one of the most important of these “glittering generalities.” But appeals to other American mores – ideals such as freedom, liberty, Christianity, patriotism, morality, ethics, science, or authorities – all promote the development of American exceptionalism – a naïve reality constructed on words not accurately defined and commonly used incorrectly. For example:

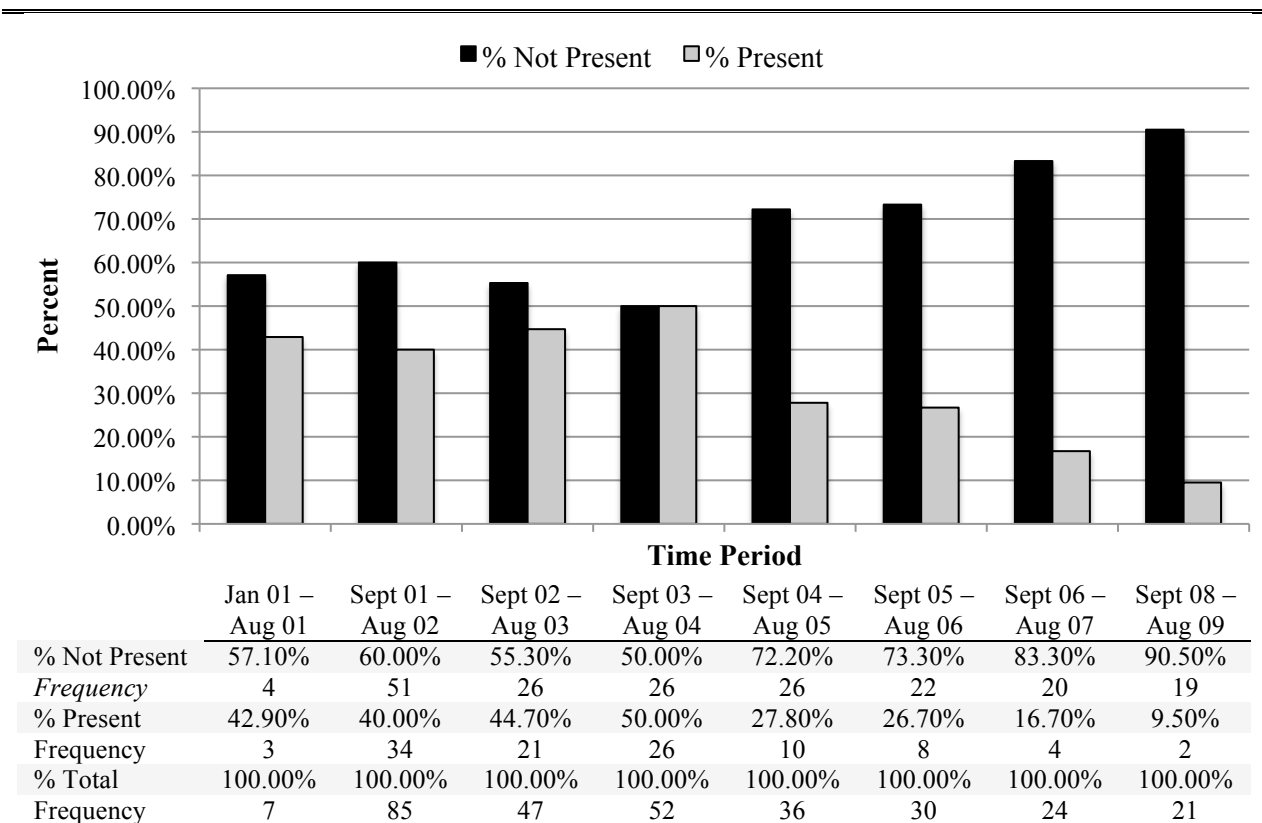
“Freedom and fear are at war,” Bush told lawmakers and a national television audience. In remarks aimed at reassuring Americans while letting them know the brutal attacks of last week will be avenged, Bush vowed, “This will not be an age of terror. This will be an age of liberty, here and across the world. We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail,” Bush said. (McQuillan 2001)

Presented without any further elucidation or clarification – “freedom,” “fear,” “age of terror,” and “age of liberty” are an ambiguous string of words – emotionally appealing, but void of any definitive meaning. Upon closer consideration, we see that freedom and fear – words used in contrast to one another in President Bush’s speech, have relatively little to do with one another. The same could be said of “an age of terror” and “an age of liberty.” What is more, it did not take long for citizens to start expressing similar sentiments in letters to the editor: “The best thing President Bush can do to create a robust economy is give freedom's enemies a robust butt-kicking. - Wayne Dunn, Nashville (2002a)” Whatever the source, these particular rhetorical devices serve to define in-group boundaries and subjective moral universe by bolstering individual member’s belief in the sanctity of the collective. The problem, of course, is that this is achieved by employing deceptive vague and misleading rhetoric. Hawdon (2001) argues that

“by glorifying the group and individualizing the problem, feelings of pride in and concern for the group are simultaneously generated” (427).

Communitarian rhetoric is typically accompanied by the employment of proactive policy (Hawdon 2001). I coded for instances of policy designed to actively address the emergent threat. Inasmuch as the continuation of a moral panic is dependent upon politicians working to deal with or counter the emergent threat, like communitarian media frames, proactive policy is likely to be particularly strong during the early phases of a moral panic.

**Figure 4.12:** Crosstabulation of Media Frames of Proactive Political Rhetoric by Time Period



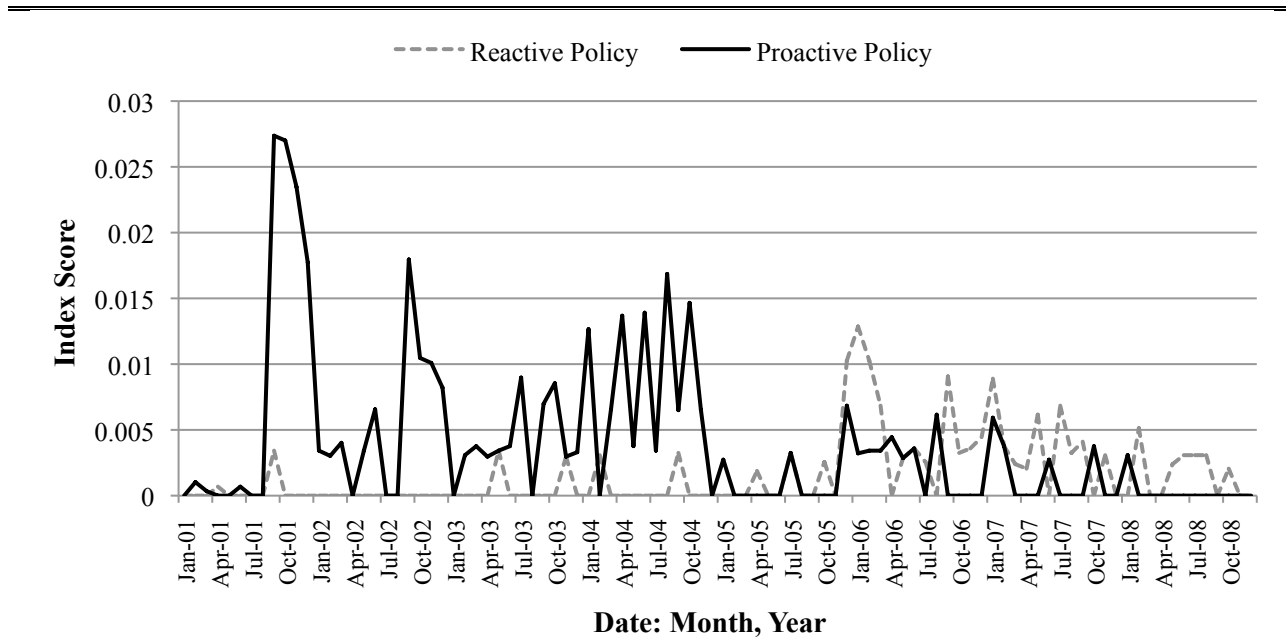
Notes: N = 302; Gamma ( $\Gamma$ ) = -.254 (p < .01)

Figure 4.12 (above) is somewhat misleading, but still confirms that levels of proactive rhetoric were initially high and then began to decrease sometime after the November 2004



elections. The trends presented in Figure 4.13 (below) further delineates the trend: the acute period of proactive policy immediately after 9/11 was followed by several months of relative inactiveness, before again increasing in the months leading up to the invasion of Iraq. Perhaps even more remarkable is the substantial increase before the November 2004 election. The solid grey line tracks the level of media framing of reactive policy, a topic we will return to shortly.

**Figure 4.13:** Trend Plot of Media Framing of Proactive and Reactive Policy, 2001 -2008



Fear, hostility, disproportionality, communitarian rhetoric, and proactive policy all play an important role in the framing of proactive policy.

In just 2 weeks, once-unthinkable threats now seem vivid. The country's 3,500 crop-duster aircraft, for example, each armed with 200 pounds of fuel and up to 600 pounds of poison, suddenly pose potential peril. Addressing that danger alone – one among scores – demands the attention of a sweep of agencies from the Federal Aviation Administration, which temporarily grounded the planes, to chemical regulators and a half-dozen or more law-enforcement and intelligence operations. Coordinating their responses while sorting out new home-defense priorities is an administrative nightmare that is about to fall to Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge, and no less to President Bush, who must define Ridge's authority as head of the soon-to-be-formed Office of Homeland Security. (USA Today, 2001b)

Fearing the hijacking and spreading of biological and chemical weapons via crop dusters, as well as other formidable threats, President Bush, with the backing of the American populace, swung into full force, created new government agencies (such as the Office of Homeland Security), implemented a series of economic sanctions, and won congressional support for military actions in Afghanistan. As part of the institutionalization of a moral panic, Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) note that to varying degrees, “panics result in laws and other legislation, social movement organizations, action groups, lobbies, normative and behavioral transformations, organizations, government agencies, and so on” (169). Over the coming months and years, the Bush Presidency would effectively garnish consent for warrantless wire-tapping, questionable military tribunals<sup>21</sup>, and repeatedly appeal congress to increase the military budget and scope of operations.

***Corporate Media Framing of Individualistic and Reactive Policy:*** Law is conservative in the sense that it is reactive and responsive. As Hawdon (2001) remarks, the implementation of law is usually restricted, or checked, by constitutional rights. Moral panics, however, as we have established, provide a unique window during which a wide gamut of policies and laws can be changed or enacted to counter the threat. Hawdon (2001) goes on to note that once institutions are created and policies are enacted in response to the emergent threat, the moral panic begins to subside.

Communitarian rhetoric and proactive policy can only last so long without systemic checks and balances. After time, proactive policies are questioned, readdressed, and even repealed. From the beginning, there were articles in *USA Today*, albeit far and few between, that sympathized with the social harm caused by the 9/11 event, but recognized that the proactive

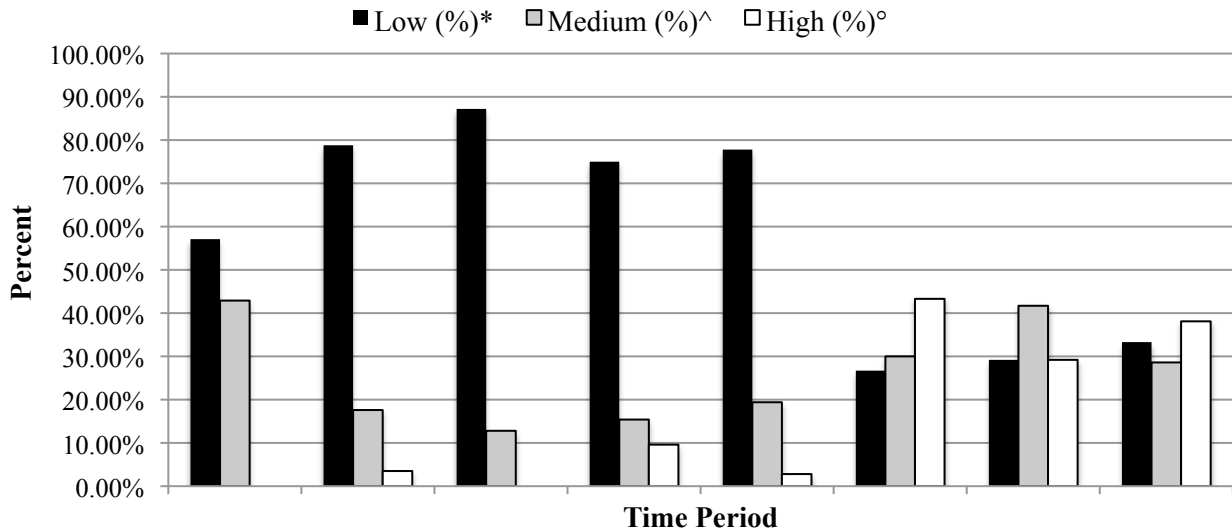
---

<sup>21</sup> 2001. “Secrecy Taints Bush Plan for Trying Suspected Terrorists.” in *USA Today*. Washington, D.C.: Gannett Company, Inc.

policies being proposed and implemented violated civil rights and individual liberties.

Nevertheless, very few articles openly criticized the war in Afghanistan. In fact, of all the articles I coded, only one mentioned anything about anti-war protests or opposition.

**Figure 4.14:** Crosstabulation of Individualistic Media Frames by Time Period



	Jan 01 – Aug 01	Sept 01 – Aug 02	Sept 02 – Aug 03	Sept 03 – Aug 04	Sept 04 – Aug 05	Sept 05 – Aug 06	Sept 06 – Aug 07	Sept 08 – Aug 09
% Low	57.1%	78.8%	87.2%	75.0%	77.8%	26.7%	29.2%	33.3%
(Frequency)	4	67	41	39	28	8	7	7
% Medium	42.9%	17.6%	12.8%	15.4%	19.4%	30.0%	41.7%	28.6%
(Frequency)	3	15	6	8	7	9	10	6
% High	.0%	3.5%	.0%	9.6%	2.8%	43.3%	29.2%	38.1%
(Frequency)	0	3	0	5	1	13	7	8
% Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
(Frequency)	7	85	47	52	36	30	24	21

Notes: N = 302; Gamma ( $\Gamma$ ) = .464 (p < .000)

\* Low: 0 Frames; ^ Medium: 1 Frame; ° High: 2-3 Frames

Figure 4.14 (above) presents the coding results analysis of individualistic media frames. The third time period in particular is most notable for the dearth of individualistic media frames. Even the year including and after 9/11 aroused more individualistic corporate media frames than the third time period. Consistent with our theoretical understanding of the life course of a moral panic, individualistic rhetoric begins to increase substantially during late 2005 and early 2006.

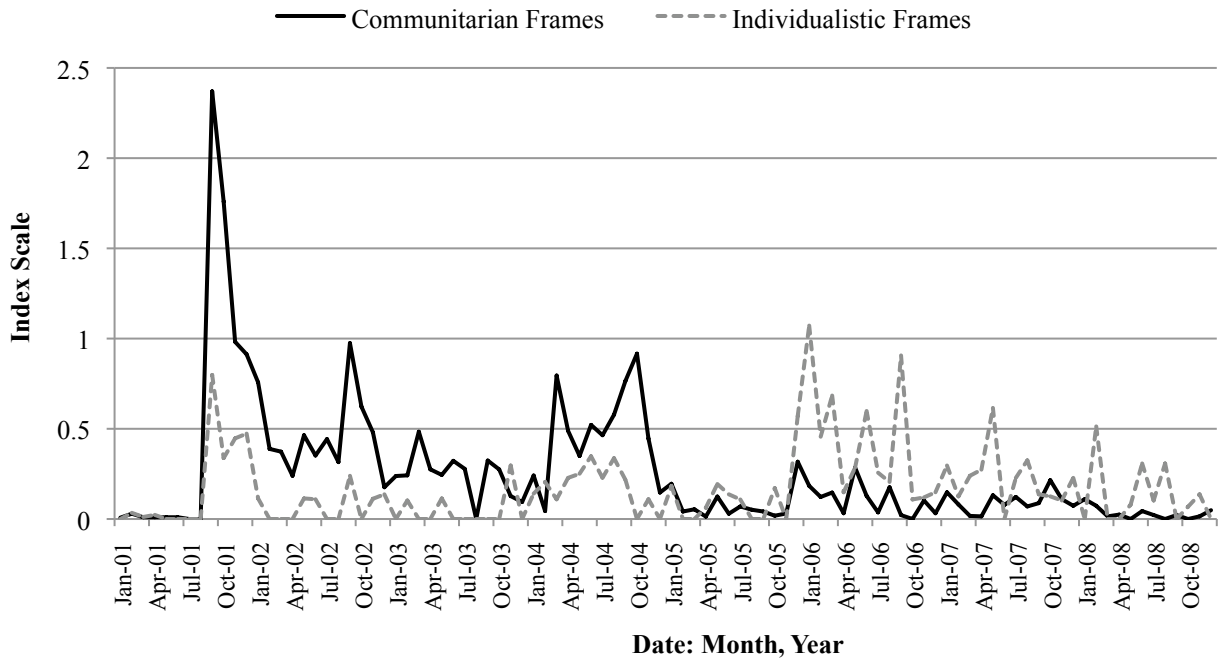
In January 2006, individualistic media frames demanded the highest percentage of total articles of the eight years of the Bush Presidency. Concern for individual freedoms and liberties were at an all time high, and the reporting of violations were as well. As the trend data in Figure 4.13 (above) made clear, reporting of reactive policy was also at a series high at this point in time. Previously caught up in the tide of patriotism and national pride, the corporate media had swung full circle, had started fervently reporting on the failings of intelligence, the atrocities of war, and calling into question the legitimacy of the War in Iraq. In an editorial piece, the *USA Today* writes:

Whether Bush jimmied the intelligence or not, he led the nation into war for reasons since proved invalid. His justification for the war was that Saddam Hussein was developing weapons of mass destruction, which the administration warned he might put into the hands of terrorists, presenting an imminent threat to U.S. national security. But no weapons were found, nor were any connections to Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda, or the 9/11 terrorists. (2005b)

While some degree of individualism had been present from the very outset, the content, frequency, and tenacity had taken on a new form by this time period. Unlike all of the other trend data and crosstabulations at which we have looked, individualistic and reactive policy frames are the only that increase with time ( $\text{Gamma}_{\text{Individualism}} = .464, p < .000$ ;  $\text{Gamma}_{\text{Reactive}} = .804, p < .001$ ).

Figure 4.15 (below) visually reinforces the magnitude of communitarian frames at the outset of the moral panic. While there was some dissent, this quickly faded, and would remain relatively suppressed until early 2006. The crosstabulation results presented below in Figure 4.15 reminds us of how repressed reactive frames were at the outset of the panic. Indeed, only one of the eighty-five articles in the first time period contained a reactive frame, compared to fifty-one proactive articles during the same time period.

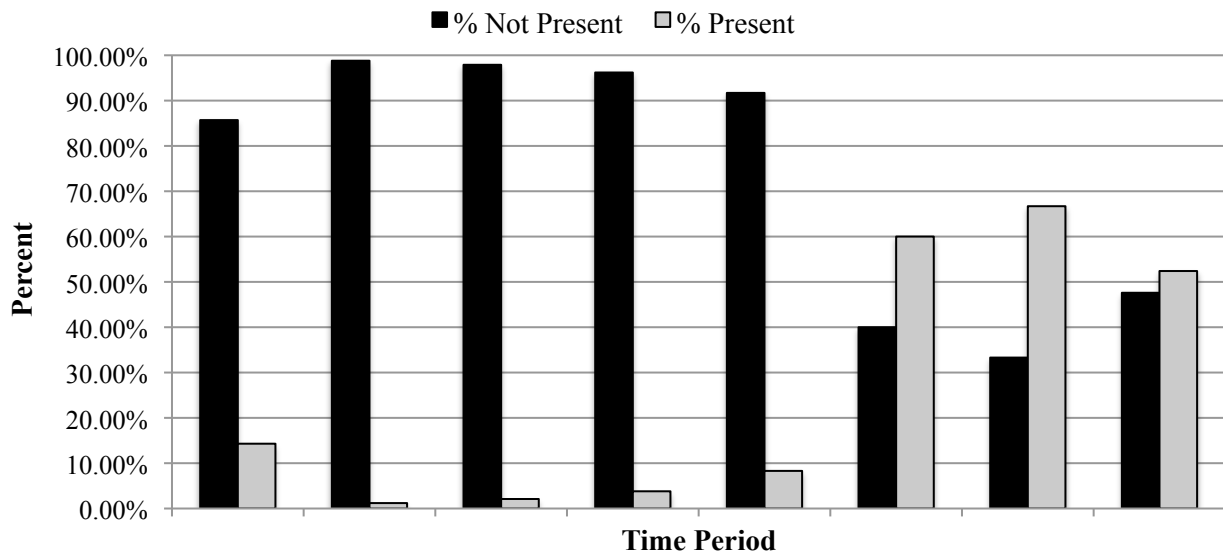
**Figure 4.15:** Trend Plot of Communitarian and Individualistic Corporate Media Frames, 2001-2008



As with any explosion, once ignited, the flames rapidly consume all available fuel; the longevity of the flames is dependent upon the amount of fuel (oxygen, combustible material, etc) as well as sufficient heat. Unless more fuel is added, the flame will, undoubtedly cease to exist. Moral panics, in much the same way, explode very quickly, but will eventually fall by the wayside unless some newly defined threat emerges. The main reason for this, of course, is that, as previously noted, law is conservative and not conducive to change. Changes are easier to enact during the hype and volatile early stages of a moral panic, but ultimately, these changes must stand trial in the American system of reactive checks and balances. Figure 4.16 (below) summarizes the drastic change in corporate media framing. Not surprisingly, corporate media framing of reactive policy received almost no attention until late 2005 and early 2006. To the extent to which reactive policy promotes the rights of the individual over the sanctity of the

group, the implementation of reactive policy brings about the demise of the moral panic, and the closure of the window in which institutional change was once possible.

**Figure 4.16:** Crosstabulation of Media Frames of Reactive Political Rhetoric by Time Period



	Jan 01 – Aug 01	Sept 01 – Aug 02	Sept 02 – Aug 03	Sept 03 – Aug 04	Sept 04 – Aug 05	Sept 05 – Aug 06	Sept 06 – Aug 07	Sept 08 – Aug 09
% Not Present	85.70%	98.80%	97.90%	96.20%	91.70%	40.00%	33.30%	47.60%
Frequency	6	84	46	50	33	12	8	10
% Present	14.30%	1.20%	2.10%	3.80%	8.30%	60.00%	66.70%	52.40%
Frequency	1	1	1	2	3	18	16	11
% Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Frequency	7	85	47	52	36	30	24	21

Notes: N = 302; Gamma ( $\Gamma$ ) = .804 (p < .000)

### Section 4.3: The Impact of Corporate Media Framing on Political-Social Solidarity

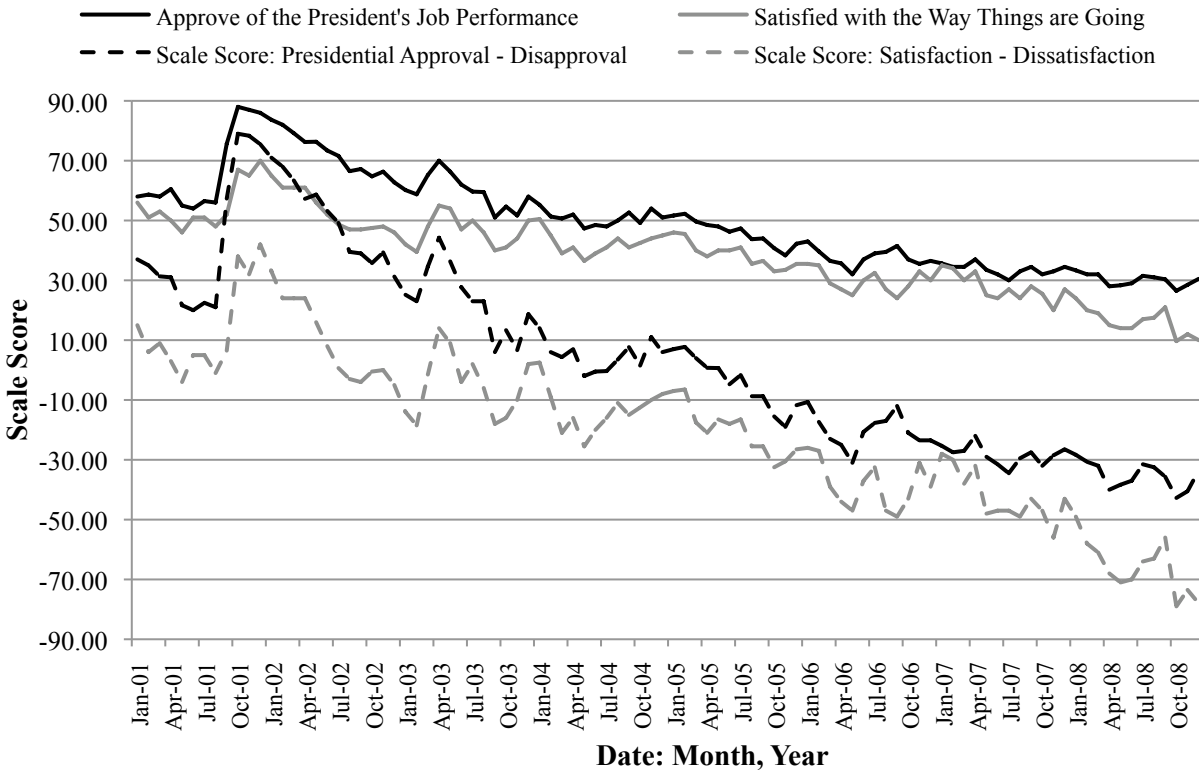
Supported by the trend data below, Collins (2004a:54) finds that the most intense period of solidarity around a “political figurehead” occurs about two weeks after a traumatic event, plateaus for about one month, and then beings a steady decline back towards previous levels of support. The creation of social solidarity, according to Collins, occurs on a macro level through the enactment of intense ritualistic micro performances. Aggregated trend data does not take

into account the array of nuanced micro performances, ritualistic displays of solidarity, or internalized meanings from such performances, but it does give us an idea of the overall level of politico-social agreeability.

Figure 4.17 (below) plots two slightly different ways of representing presidential approval and national satisfaction. The solid black line measures the approval rating of President George W. Bush. The solid grey line tracks how satisfied people are with the way things are going in the United States. By subtracting the “disapprove” and “dissatisfied” categories from their counterparts, I computed scale scores for each variable, depicted as dashed lines. The purpose of this computation, as described in the methods section, was to diminish response bias from respondents listing “no opinion,” as well as create, with a single score, the overall favorability or satisfaction.

**Figure 4.17:** Trend Plot of Presidential Approval and Satisfaction with the Way Things Are Going in the United States, over Time

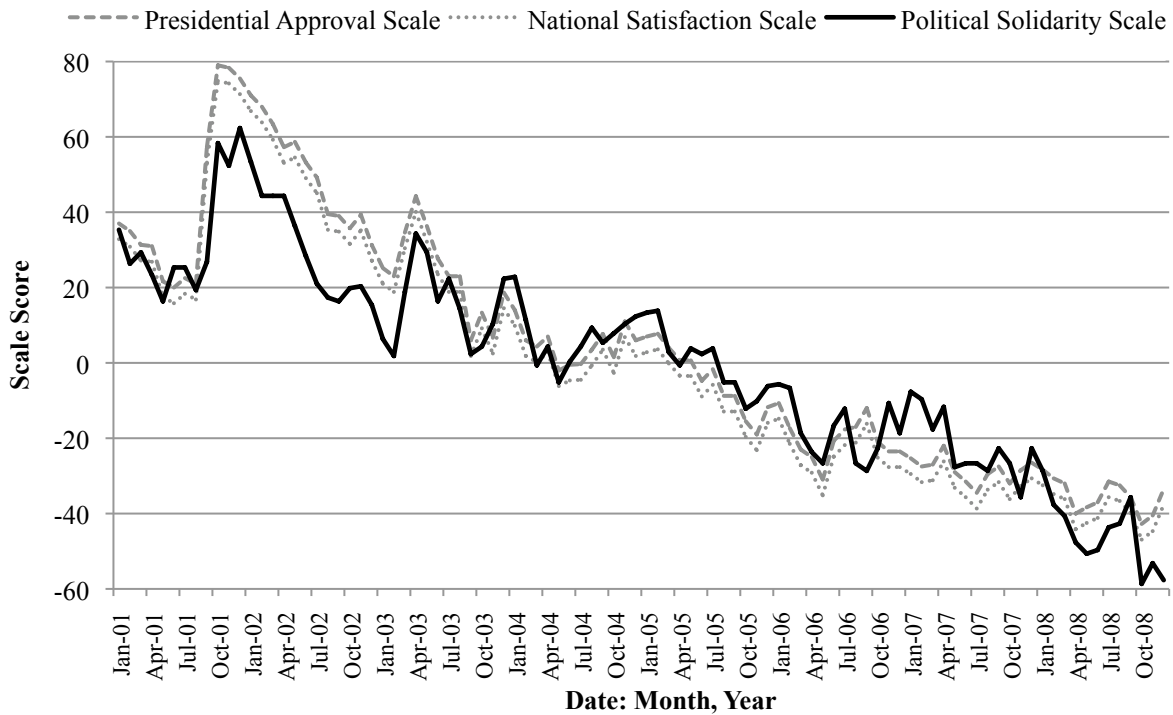
---



Similarly, Figure 4.18 depicts the president approval scale and national satisfaction scale, as well as the index of the two scales. Owing to the fact that the intercorrelation between the presidential approval scale and the national satisfaction scale was so high ( $\text{Alpha} = .95$ ), I created the “political solidarity scale,” an index of the two scales. I centered the political solidarity scale at zero. Based on Figure 4.18, it is apparent that disapproval/dissatisfaction outweighed approval/satisfaction for the first time in May 2004. From May 2004 through the summer of 2005, the scale score remained above zero, before decreasing to a series low (of about negative sixty) in October, 2008. Notice the volatile spikes in political solidarity after September 2001, as well as March 2003. Recall the invasion of Iraq was in March 2003, and the infamous “mission accomplished” speech was in May of that same year.

**Figure 4.18:** Trend Plot of Presidential Approval Scale, National Satisfaction Scale, and Political Solidarity Scale, Over Time





*Notes:* Presidential Approval Scale is the difference between approval and disapproval, with the series mean centered at zero; National Satisfaction Scale is the difference between Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction with the way things are going in the United States, with the series mean centered at zero; the Political Solidarity Scale is the computed index of the two aforementioned scales.

One of the central questions that piqued my interest in this study is, to what extent did various forms of media framing affect levels of solidarity. Inasmuch as the 9/11 moral panic, or any moral panic for that matter, relies on widespread consensus, it follows that the level of political solidarity should be directly related the level of media framing of communitarian rhetoric and proactive policy, and inversely related to the level of media framing of individualist rhetoric and reactive policy.

I ran a multiple linear regression analysis, regressing socio-political solidarity on communitarianism and individualism, controlling for economic conditions and the number of severe terrorist incidents worldwide. In the analysis, I ensured proper time-ordering by leading the dependent variable by one month. Doing so sequentially places the independent and control variables temporally prior to the dependent variable.

**Table 4.2:** Regression of Solidarity Index<sup>^</sup> on Communitarianism and Individualism Indices, Controlling for Consumer Confidence Index and Severe Terrorist Incidents

		<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2</u>	<u>Model 3</u>
Communitarianism Index	B	0.49***	0.51***	0.37***
	Std. Error	0.07	0.06	0.05
	Beta	0.58	0.61	0.44
Individualism Index	B	-0.43**	-0.55***	-0.36***
	Std. Error	0.13	0.11	0.09
	Beta	-0.30	-0.38	-0.25
Consumer Confidence Index	B		0.01***	0.01***
	Std. Error		0.00	0.00
	Beta		0.46	0.50
Number of severe (11 or more) terrorist incidents worldwide	B			-0.02***
	Std. Error			0.00
	Beta			-0.48
Constant	B	4.51***	3.81***	3.97***
	Std. Error	0.04	0.12	0.09
R-Square		0.33	0.53	0.72

Notes. \*p< .05; \*\*p< .01; \*\*\*p<.001 (two tailed-test; robust standard errors in parentheses); Dependent Variable is the natural log (ln) transformation of the solidarity index (with the mean centered at one-hundred);

The results of the regression analysis only confirm what is visually evident. Indeed, the greater the level communitarian framing, the higher the level of political solidarity. That is, as media framing of communitarian rhetoric increases, the level of political solidarity is likely to increase. The higher the level of individualism, however, are lower the level of political solidarity. Controlling for the Consumer Confidence Index or the number of severe terrorist incidents worldwide does not affect this relationship in any significant way, although both variables are significant predictors of political solidarity. The more favorable respondents are of economic conditions (CCI), the greater the level of political solidarity. As the number of severe terrorist incidents increases, however, we expect political solidarity to decrease. It is theoretically possible that the number of severe terrorist incidents and the economy explained most of the variance in the dependent variable, however, this appears not to be the case.

Communitarianism and Individualism are still strong predictors of political solidarity, even after controlling for economic conditions and objective rates of terrorist incidents.

## Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Throughout this study, I have adopted what might best be described as a constructivist perspective, influenced by conflict theory and the insights of Durkheim's functionalism. Functionalism, and the insights of Durkheim, makes it clear that the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, while destructive and harmful on an individual basis, played an extremely important role on the socio-political level. As with any criminal act or deviant behavior, terrorism must not be evaluated as a pathological disease inflecting modern industrialized societies; instead, I take the position that the set of behaviors defined as terrorism is *normal* in the sociological sense of the word. Asserting that there is nothing intrinsic in the "nature" of terrorism, I then argued that terrorism is a socially and politically constructed phenomenon. 9/11 created an array of distinct geographic, cultural and political spaces replete with increased levels of social solidarity. As people mobilize around and participate in highly symbolic displays of ritualistic behavior, levels of group cohesiveness increase, the collective conscience is strengthened, and normative moral boundaries are altered or redefined.

Moral panic theory offers a useful analytical framework from which to evaluate the social reaction to 9/11. Adopting a constructionist perspective, moral panic theory is grounded in the basic notion that social problems are situated within, and receive meaning from subjective moral universes. Reality, as such, is whatever society defines as reality; terrorism is a real threat inasmuch as society defines it as such. Integral to any moral panic is the role of the folk devil and the moral entrepreneur. The folk devil is the person, or typically the group of people sharing an easily identifiable common characteristic, *believed* to be responsible for the identified social ill; the moral entrepreneur is the person, people, or organization(s) responsible for helping situate

and define the problem as such – the entity responsible for leading the crusade against the stigmatized folk devil. Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) specified consensus, concern, hostility, disproportionality, and volatility as five criteria present during a moral panic; one objective of the study at hand was to determine the extent to which the social reaction to 9/11 does or does not meet these five criteria. A variety of differing perspectives exist regarding the genesis of moral panics. I have taken the position that social reaction to 9/11 constitutes an ideal type of an elite engineered moral panic. As such, I posited that the preservation of class interests and state legitimacy fueled the creation and maintenance of the moral panic. In this way, the corporate media serves as a means of controlling the content and reproducing the state-sanctioned narrative as fact.

This study is particularly timely given the period of time analyzed. As we have already established, moral panics are not isolated, one time events, but rather a series of multiple, related social reactions transpiring across a more or less well defined life cycle. As such, we cannot hope to gain a complete understanding of the socio-political reaction to 9/11 by studying the event in isolation. This study, then, has the advantage of being able to evaluate both the social reactions to and the methods of corporate media framing of presidential rhetoric. As such, this study provides a felicitous evaluation of the interplay between communitarianism and individualism, proactive and reactive policy, and ultimately helps us to develop a better understanding of the short and long-term socio-political impact of an event the magnitude of 9/11.

In this study, I started out to answer four basic questions about the socio-political reaction to 9/11: 1) did the social reaction to 9/11 in fact constitute a moral panic (as operationalized by Goode and Ben-Yehuda)? 2) did each of the criterion vary across time, and if so, how? 3) *why*

did these criteria vary across time? and lastly 4, *how* did these changes affect levels of social solidarity? The majority of my analysis revolved around answering these questions. Given the complexity of the social phenomena being studied, I typically provided more than one method of assessing each component.

The means of measuring and assessing a moral panic have come under increased academic scrutiny since Cohen first used the term (see Garland 2008; McRobbie and Thornton 1995); accordingly I have taken great efforts to engineer reliable methods of measuring abstract and complex social data. Using Goode and Ben-Yehuda's criteria as a foundation, I attempted, where possible, to evaluate the same criteria using different strategies and methodologies, with the hopes of increasing the validity of my findings. To the extent to which Goode and Ben-Yehuda's five criteria are valid indicators of a moral panic, the social reaction to 9/11 can unequivocally be defined as such. Although specified as a separate criterion, volatility appears to be a subcomponent of other criteria, rather than a component in and of itself. That is, consensus, concern, hostility, and disproportionality are all marked by temporal volatility. Even though the most severe reactions materialized in the months immediately following 9/11, as with many moral panics, a number of related mini-panics came to fruition in its wake. Although some of these attempts coincided with terrorist attacks on Western industrialized nations (e.g. Britain and Spain), other periods of heightened volatility, like the one during the months immediately preceding the November 2004 presidential election, do not appear to be related to any significant act of international terrorism.

Levels of agreement that terrorism posed a significant threat to the livelihood of Americans were highest in the months following 9/11. Measures of disproportionality were also highest during this period: *USA Today* made the greatest percentage disproportional claims

during the time period including and directly following 9/11; Gallup Poll respondents grossly overestimated the likelihood of becoming a victim of a terrorist incident (compared to the objective threat); and compared to the corporate media's coverage of international terrorism in previous years, the 9/11 and post 9/11 media coverage, was disproportionate to the objective number of terrorist incidents. Similarly, the identification of the folk devil, produced a climate in which: the percentage of hate crimes against people of Islamic faith exploded (of all religiously motivated hate crimes), more American's believed that too many immigrants were being allowed to enter the country, and *USA Today* articles contained an abundance of hostile and brutalizing frames.

The interplay between corporate media framing of communitarian and individualistic media frames, as well as proactive and reactive forms of political discourse demanded a considerable amount of attention in this study. The early stages of a moral panic are marked by high levels communitarianism and proactive policy. A call to action in which the collective group is valued and protected above the rights and liberties of the individual, communitarian rhetoric glorifies the in-group, deviantizes and stigmatizes the out-group, and makes repeated use of disproportional and hostile claims. In general, the strength and rate of communitarian media frames decreased with time. Proactive rhetoric includes media framing of state policies and initiatives created to deal with the emergent and dangerous threat. As with communitarian appeals, proactive frames spiked after 9/11, quickly subsided before again increasing through November 2004. With little doubt, discussions of terrorism leading up to the 2004 presidential elections were dominated by proactive policy, as presidential hopefuls and President Bush himself attempted to validate and substantiate war efforts amidst rising political uncertainty.

Inversely related to the rate of communitarian media frames and proactive policy are individualistic frames and reactive policy initiatives. Whereas communitarianism values the collective over the rights of the individual, individualism often serves as a check on policies and initiatives implemented and imposed during periods of marked communitarian national ideology. Individualism did not emerge in force until late 2005 and early 2006 as questions of the illegality of warrantless wiretapping and the use of torture, as well as the suspension of *habeas corpus* gained considerable attention in the corporate media. The implementation of reactive policy and individualistic ideologies brought about the demise of the moral panic, and relates directly with the decrease in political-social solidarity. Controlling for the number of severe terrorist incidents and the Consumer Confidence Index, corporate media framing of political rhetoric appears to increase political social solidarity, whereas individualistic media frames significantly decrease the degree of political social solidarity. It is not surprising that President Bush's job performance rating should drop to historically low levels by the end of his presidency. Whereas President Bush received his highest performance rating just weeks after 9/11 – the same time period in which the greatest number of American reported that they were extremely satisfied with the way things were going in the United States – the steady implementation of checks and balances through individualistic ideology and reactive policies guaranteed the eventual decline in the level of social-political solidarity.

I should temper my findings by mentioning the shortcomings of using a newspaper as a media source. As McRobbie and Thornton (1995) assert, the multi-mediated environment employs a “fragmentation of mass, niche, and micro-media” in such a way that causal or deterministic models of moral panics “could not possibly take account of the labyrinthine web of determining relations which now exist between social groups and the media, ‘reality’ and



representation” (560). With the development and expansion of real-time televised and internet-based news, as well as the more recent developments of second-generation web technology (web blogs, Real Simple Syndicate (RSS) news feeds, and user-based information exchange services such as Facebook and Twitter), it becomes increasingly difficult to determine the relationships between the state, media, and other social, political, cultural and economic forces.

Jeffrey Alexander (2004), a prominent constructionist and the father of cultural sociology analyzed the social reaction to 9/11 – the coming together of the American people, the heroic acts of firefighters, the resilience and strength of New Yorkers, the symbolic displays of patriotism – as part of a larger cultural “counterperformance” (Alexander 2004). Viewing acts of terrorism as “postpolitical,” Alexander contends that terrorism seeks to “draw blood,” create political, social and moral instability, and concludes that “postpolitical tactics are much less likely to succeed in societies that allow politics to mediate power, and this is particularly the case in legitimate, deeply rooted democratic regimes” (Alexander 2004). In essence, Alexander develops an analysis of terrorism in which the terrorist attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup> were merely a part of a larger series of performance and counterperformances between the East and West. In this line of reasoning, terrorists, and most notably the 9/11 mastermind, Osama bin Laden, scripted the terrorist attacks as a form of symbolic post-political violence – action with the symbolic intent of bringing about a counterperformance of despair. Such a perspective views the social reaction to 9/11, not as disproportional, hostile or volatile in nature, but as a pure social reaction, untainted by the corporate media – untainted by the state.

Viewing the reaction to 9/11 from the standpoint argued in this study – that is, from an elite-engineered model of moral panics – enables us to evaluate the role of the corporate media in *directing* the national symbolic “counterperformance.” It would be a mistake to view 9/11 as an

anomaly – as an event so rare and unparalleled in the history of the world – that its very existence justifies its place in the history of the American collective conscience. The events surrounding September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 are important only insofar as the social, political, and cultural spheres gives importance to these events. With the understanding that certain behaviors are made “deviant” simply by the “the importance which the common consciousness ascribes to them,” Durkheim ultimately deduces that “crime is necessary” (Durkheim 1982:101). Despite the negative consequences for the individual victim(s) of crime, crime serves an important functional component on the societal level. As such, social reaction to crime serves to reify the existing moral boundaries, while increasing overall levels of social solidarity. In this way, the reaction to 9/11 could be considered quite *normal* in the sociological sense of the word. Alexander’s notion of a social “counterperformance” is certainly valid in this regard. But as I have argued, this is most certainly not the case.

While coding the *USA Today* articles, I repeatedly came across articles that cited national consensus, concern, or displays of solidarity, often times evidencing public opinion polls as proof. Especially in the early months following 9/11, many articles reported on various vigils, memorials, or other examples of intense ritualistic and symbolic displays of patriotism around the country. In an article appearing just six days after 9/11, *USA Today* staff writers declare:

Like no other event in recent history – not the bombing in Oklahoma City, the war in the Persian Gulf or even President Kennedy's assassination – last week's terrorist attacks have forged a common sense of purpose among Americans. Pollsters and psychologists say the patriotic pulling together and the willingness to sacrifice are unlike anything seen since World War II. (Memmott, Benedetto, and O'Driscoll 2001)

This excerpt, I argue, is an example of manufactured solidarity. The sheer volume of people in the United States makes impossible the coming together of all three-hundred million people in one place and at one time, and effectively prohibits the “ritual intensity of social interaction”

(Collins 2004a:55) on a macro (national) level. The whole of the United States did not gather in New York or Washington D.C. to offer their support or express their patriotism. And still, a high degree of shared mutual focus was achieved, albeit in geographically and temporally dispersed settings. In this way, the corporate media served as both a filter of and a conduit for particular forms of information, and played a vital role in garnishing necessary levels of consensus and concern by defining, reporting on, and giving examples of solidarity displays. By providing the symbols, the vernacular, the folk devils, and examples of solidarity displays, the corporate media helped foster the formation of an idealized national identity around a mold of manufactured national solidarity.

*Qui bono?* Who benefits? Social reactions to crime and traumatic events are relatively well understood (Collins 2004a; Ryan and Hawdon 2008). Is it any surprise that the nation rallied behind President Bush after 9/11? Should it seem unusual that communities around the country – perhaps thousands of miles away from New York City or Washington D.C. simultaneously beat the drum of patriotism, coming together as “One Nation Under God?” After all, we understand that heightened levels of social solidarity are *normal* reactions to traumatic events and crime. People come together to grieve, share their experiences, and rally behind cultural symbols – in essence engaging in intense ritualistic micro performances on a national scale. Without doubt, civil divisions were diminished, and the ideal national identity – the self-sacrificing patriotic American – was forged in collective conscience. But from where did this idealized national identity emerge? And subsequently, how was this identity disseminated on such a large scale?

To continue with the dramaturgical metaphors, the reaction to 9/11 was scripted by the state, directed by the state’s figure head – President Bush, but was produced by the corporate

media. During the early stages of the moral panic, new federal departments were crafted (the Department of Homeland Security), legislation signed into law (the USA Patriot Act), and the transnational elite were given new opportunities to expand horizons as the United States launched wars on two fronts. In his influential book, *A Theory of Global Capitalism*, William Robinson (2004:158) writes:

The events of September 11, 2001, allowed the transnational elite to make a bid for newfound legitimacy, providing a justification for constructing the social-control state, for military mobilization and deployment around the world, and for the extension of coercive systems of social control to all walks of life.

The state-media cooperative benefits materialistically, but perhaps more importantly, it benefits ideologically. This is not a question of the media being “biased;” this is a question of, to what extent the corporate media serves to promote state interests; this is question of how the corporate media worked to bolster levels of social solidarity by creating an ideal national identity; this is question of how the corporate media works, not separate from, but integral to, the creation and maintenance of state hegemony. The fact that any form of public dissent, questioning, or derivation from the official state-sanctioned meta-narrative of 9/11 should give us pause to the utter strength and subversive nature of this state-media cooperative. While the social reaction to crime and traumatic events may be a normal (and even positive) function of modern organic societies, by not publishing alternative points of view or dissenting opinions, the corporate media effectively helped chronicle the events of 9/11 in such a way that reified the hegemonic state-produced narrative.

The creation and maintenance of this state-produced and state-sanctioned narrative did not depend on the regular use of overt force against U.S. citizens. Some state activities falling under the jurisdiction of the USA PATRIOT Act, including warrantless wiretapping, domestic surveillance, and the suspension of *habeas corpus* (with the arrest and detention of U.S. citizens

in military compounds), certainly constitute coercive state force. But the vast majority of willing consent was manufactured under the subversive guise of various cultural, social and political *ideological* forces. Discussing the “War on Crime” in the United States as “hegemonic strategy,” Beckett and Sasson (2000) adopt a Gramscian perspective, and argue that the dissemination of the welfare state under neo-liberalism is related to state-sanctioned ideology professing the “war on crime” as the solution to poverty. As with Gramsci, Beckett and Sasson (2000:64) agree that “the ruling class wins popular consent through hegemonic ‘projects’ or ‘strategies’ that seek to generate and solidify popular support for capitalist social relations.” Perhaps most important to our understanding of state hegemony, and indeed, our understanding of the importance of the corporate media in framing the “war on terror” is Gramsci’s distinction between strong and weak states. Whereas strong states require the use of coercive state-police force, weak states rely on the “highly developed mass media and educational institutions” to validate state legitimacy and the authority of the ruling, capitalist class (Beckett and Sasson 2000:63). The war on terror required a minimum use of coercive force; the authority to launch a two-front offensive, create new governmental bodies, and new laws transpired under the mantle of American democracy.

The war on terror was, and is, about much more than terrorism; it is about state legitimacy and national identity in crisis. Carl Schmitt’s (1996) infamous friend-enemy distinction is ultimately based on a politics of exclusion, and as such necessitates the continual recognition of the “other” in international politics. Schmitt’s insistence that enemies, as such, may be either real or imagined is of no less importance to our evaluation of the war on terror, as it was to Schmitt in his evaluation of post-WWII Germany. The distinction between friend and foe, good and evil, terrorist and American, ultimately serves the purpose of legitimizing state

authority. The corporate media is but a vestige of the state, and as such, serves first and foremost to promote and protect state interests. Armed with naught but the means of disseminating information on large scale, the corporate media effectively advanced a state-endorsed meta-narrative of 9/11 and provided important social cues in times of novelty. In so doing, the state imposed a form of subversive ideological control, captivating the hearts and minds of a highly malleable nation with illusions of patriotism and promises of war. An ideal type of an elite-engineered moral panic, the intense and relatively short-lived period of heightened national solidarity following the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 was shaped, honed, and amplified beyond the sociological phenomena we recognize as a *normal* social response to a traumatic event. In so doing, the state-media complex manufactured self-legitimacy, snuffed the possibility of meaningful public dissent, all the while moving closer to destroying the very freedoms and liberties on which the state claimed it was trying to protect. Rousseau's petition echoes true enough: "Free peoples, remember this maxim: liberty can be gained, but never *regained*" (Rousseau 1968:89).

## References

1938. Aaron Delwiche. "Glittering Generalities: *Common Techniques: Word Games.*"  
Retrieved June 12, 2009 (<http://www.propagandacritic.com/articles/ct.wg.gg.html>).
1999. *SPSS Trends 10.0*. Chicago, IL: SPSS Inc.
- 2001a. "Defeating Terrorism Requires Beating Bureaucracy First." in *USA Today*. Washington D.C.: Gannett Company, Inc.
- 2001b. "Defeating Terrorism Requires Beating Bureaucracy First." in *USA Today*. Washington, D.C.: Gannett Company, Inc.
- 2002a. "Americans Can Win Battle Over Obesity." in *USA Today*. Washington, D.C.: Gannett Company, Inc.
- 2002b. "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001: *Statistical Annex.*" U.S. State Department, Washington, D.C.
- 2002c. "Preface and Introduction: *Patterns of Global Terrorism.*" Retrieved February 8, 2009 (<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2001/html/10220.htm>).
2003. "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2002: *Statistical Annex.*" U.S. State Department, Washington, D.C.
2004. "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2003: *Statistical Annex.*" U.S. State Department, Washington, D.C.
- 2005a. "A Chronology of Significant International Terrorism for 2004: *Statistics on Significant International Terrorism.*" 79-87. U.S. State Department, Washington, D.C.
- 2005b. "Skewed Intelligence or Not, War was a Mistake." in *USA Today*. Washington, D.C.: Gannett Company, Inc.

- 2005c. "World Press Trends: *the World Association of Newspapers.*" Retrieved May 23, 2009 (<http://www.wan-press.org/article2825.html>).
2006. "Country Reports on Terrorism 2005: *Statistical Annex.*" 281-292. United State Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Washington D.C.
2007. "Country Reports on Terrorism 2006: *Charts Comparing 2005 and 2006.*" 17-37. United State Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Washington D.C.
- 2008a. "Country Reports on Terrorism 2007: *Statistical Charts and Graphs.*" 22-37. United State Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Washington D.C.
- 2008b. "Data and Statistics: Fast Facts: *Smoking & Tobacco Use.*" Retrieved February 8, 2009 ([http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/fast\\_facts/index.htm#toll](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fast_facts/index.htm#toll)).
- 2008c. "In Depth: London Attacks: *Special Reports.*" Retrieved May 19, 2009 ([http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in\\_depth/uk/2005/london\\_explosions/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/uk/2005/london_explosions/default.stm)).
- 2008d. "National Counterterrorism Center: Annex of Statistical Information: *Country Reports on Terrorism.*" Retrieved February 8, 2009 (<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2007/103716.htm>).
- 2009a. "Consumer Confidence Survey Methodology: Retrieved June 14, 2009 (<http://www.conference-board.org/economics/methodology.cfm>).
- 2009b. "Country Reports on Terrorism 2008: *Statistical Charts and Graphs.*" 19-34. United State Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Washington D.C.
- 2009c. Population Estimates Program. "Population Estimates: *2008 Population Estimates.*" Retrieved June 15, 2009 ([http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DTable?\\_bm=y&-](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DTable?_bm=y&-)



[geo\\_id=01000US&-ds\\_name=PEP\\_2008\\_EST&-  
mt\\_name=PEP\\_2008\\_EST\\_G2008\\_T001\).](#)

- 2009d. "The United States Department of Homeland Security: *Homeland Security Centers of Excellence*." Retrieved May 24, 2009 ([http://www.dhs.gov/xres/programs/editorial\\_0498.shtm](http://www.dhs.gov/xres/programs/editorial_0498.shtm)).
- 2009e. Federal Bureau of Investigation. "Uniform Crime Report: *Hate Crime Statistics*." Retrieved August 14, 2009 (<http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm#hate>).
- Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2004. "From the Depths of Despair: Performance, Counterperformance, and "September 11"." *Sociological Theory* 22:88-105.
- Altheide, David L. 2004. "Consuming Terrorism." *Symbolic Interaction* 27:289-308.
- . 2006. *Terrorism and the Politics of Fear*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.
- Babbie, Earl R. 2004. *The Practice of Social Research*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Becker, Howard Saul. 1963. *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*: Free Press.
- . 1966. *Social Problems: A Modern Approach*. New York: Wiley.
- Beckett, Katherine and Theodore Sasson. 2000. "The War on Crime as Hegemonic Strategy: A Neo-Marxian Theory of the New Punitiveness in U.S. Criminal Justice Policy." Pp. 61-84 in *Of Crime and Criminality: The Use of Theory in Everyday Life*, edited by Sally Simpson and Robert Agney. Thousand Oaks, California: Pine Forge Press.
- Ben-Yehuda, Nachman. 1985. *Deviance and Moral Boundaries: Witchcraft, the Occult, Science Fiction, Deviant Sciences and Scientists*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 1986. "The Sociology of Moral Panics: Toward a New Synthesis." *The Sociological Quarterly* 27:495-513.

- . 1990. *The Politics and Morality of Deviance: Moral Panics, Drug Abuse, Deviant Science, and Reversed Stigmatization*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- . 2005. "Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity, edited by Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004. Pp. 314." *American Journal of Sociology* 110:1848-1850.
- Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann. 1967. *The Social Construction of Reality: a Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Edited by Thomas Luckmann. Translated by Thomas Luckmann. New York: Doubleday.
- Best, Joel. 2008. *Social Problems*, Edited by Karl Bakeman. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Black, Donald. 2004. "The Geometry of Terrorism." *Sociological Theory* 22:14-25.
- Bush, George W. 2001. Office of the Press Secretary. "At O'Hare, President Says "Get On Board": Remarks by the President to Airline Employees: *The White House: President George W. Bush.*" Retrieved July 17, 2009 (<http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010927-1.html>).
- Cohen, Stanley. 1972. *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*. London: MacGibbon and Kee.
- Collins, Randall. 2004a. "Rituals of Solidarity and Security in the Wake of Terrorist Attack." *Sociological Theory* 22:53-87.
- . 2004b. *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Durkheim, Emile. 1982. *The Rules of Sociological Method*, Edited by Steven Lukes. Translated by Steven Lukes. New York: Free Press.

- Erikson, Kai. 1966. *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: Wiley.
- Gallup, Inc. 2009a. "Immigration: *Politics and Government: Topics A-Z*." Retrieved January 17, 2009 (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/1660/Immigration.aspx>).
- . 2009b. "Most Important Problem: *Politics and Government: Topics A-Z*." Retrieved January 17, 2009 (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/1675/Most-Important-Problem.aspx>).
- . 2009c. "Presidential Approval Rating - George W. Bush: *Politics and Government: Topics A-Z*." Retrieved February 3, 2009 (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/116500/Presidential-Approval-Ratings-George-Bush.aspx>).
- . 2009d. "Satisfaction With the United States: *Politics and Government: Topics A-Z*." Retrieved February 3, 2009 (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/1669/General-Mood-Country.aspx>).
- . 2009e. "Terrorism in the United States: *Politics and Government: Topics A-Z*." Retrieved January 17, 2009 (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/4909/Terrorism-United-States.aspx>).
- Garland, David. 2008. "On the Concept of Moral Panic." *Crime Media Culture* 4:22.
- Garson, G. David 2008. "Time Series Analysis: *Statnotes: Topics in Multivariate Analysis*." Retrieved May 12, 2009 (<http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/pa765/statnote.htm>).
- Goode, Erich. 1993. *Drugs in American Society*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Goode, Erich and Nachman Ben-Yehuda. 1994. "Moral Panics: Culture, Politics, and Social Construction." *Annual Review of Sociology* 20:149-171.
- Hall, Mimi and Richard Benedetto. 2001. "Bush Wants bin Laden 'Dead or Alive'; Which is Better?" in *USA Today*. Washington, D.C.: Gannett Company, Inc.

- Hall, Stuart, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, et al. 1978. *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*, Edited by Stuart Hall. Translated by Stuart Hall. London: Macmillan.
- Hawdon, J. E. 2001. "The Role of Presidential Rhetoric in the Creation of a Moral Panic: Reagan, Bush, and the War on Drugs." *Deviant Behavior* 22:419-445.
- Hawdon, James E. 1996. "Cycles of Deviance: Structural Change, Moral Boundaries, and Drug Use, 1880-1990." *Sociological Spectrum* 16:183-207.
- Johnson, Peter. 2001. "Media, War and Security." in *USA Today*. Washington D.C.: Gannett Company, Inc.
- Kappeler, Victor E and Aaron E Kappeler. 2004. "Speaking of Evil and Terrorism: The Political and Ideological Construction of a Moral Panic." Pp. 175-197 in *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism: Criminological Perspectives*, vol. 5, *Sociology of crime, law and deviance*, edited by Mathieu Deflem. Boston: Elsevier.
- Keen, Judy. 2001. "Security Advisers to Meet at Camp David." in *USA Today*. Washington D.C.: Gannett Company, Inc.
- Leavy, Patricia. 2007. "Writing 9/11 Memory: American Journalists and Special Interest Groups as Complicit Partners in 9/11 Political Appropriation." *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 35:18.
- McQuillan, Laurence. 2001. "'Freedom and Fear are at War,' Preident Says." in *USA Today*. Washington D.C.: Gannett Comapny, Inc.
- McRobbie, Angela and Sarah L. Thornton. 1995. "Rethinking 'Moral Panic' for Multi-Mediated Social Worlds." *The British Journal of Sociology* 46:559-574.

- Memmott, Mark, Richard Benedetto, and Patrick O'Driscoll. 2001. "Poll Finds a United Nation."  
in *USA Today*. Washington D.C.: Gannett Company, Inc.
- On, Josh. 2004. "They Rule: Retrieved July 17, 2009 (<http://www.theyrule.net>).
- Robinson, William I. 2004. *A Theory of Global Capitalism: Production, Class, and State in a Transnational World*, Vol. xvi, 200 p. ;. Baltimore :: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Rothe, Dawn and Stephen L. Muzzatti. 2004. "Enemies Everywhere: Terrorism, Moral Panic, and US Civil Society." *Critical Criminology* 12:327-350.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1968. *The Social Contract*. Translated by Maurice Cranston. London: Penguin Books.
- Ruby, Charles L. 2002. "The Definition of Terrorism." *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 2:9-14.
- Ryan, John and James Hawdon. 2008. "From Individual to Community: The "Framing" of 4-16 and the Display of Social Solidarity." *Traumatology* 14:9.
- Schmitt, Carl. 1996. *The Concept of the Political*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Shogan, Colleen J. 2006. *The Moral Rhetoric of American Presidents*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press.
- Simmel, Georg. 1955. *Conflict*, Vol. 195 p., Edited by Georg Simmel. Translated by Georg Simmel. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press.
- Staff, Columbia Journalism Review. 2004. "Brits vs. Yanks: Who Does Journalism Right." "*Columbia Journalism Review* 43:44-49.
- Tilly, Charles. 2004. "Terror, Terrorism, Terrorists." *Sociological Theory* 22:5-13.
- Turk, Austin T. 2004. "Sociology of Terrorism." *Annual Review of Sociology* 30:271.

## Appendix A: Gallup Poll Questions

*Q1. Satisfaction with the United States: “In general, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in the United States at this time?” (Gallup 2009d)*

Percent Satisfied  
Percent Dissatisfied

*Q2. Presidential Approval Rating: “Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president?” (Gallup 2009c)*

Approve  
Disapprove  
No Opinion

*Q3. Most Important Problem:<sup>22</sup> “What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today? [Open-ended]” (Gallup 2009b)*

The Economy (general)  
Terrorism

*Q4. Future Acts of Terrorism: “How likely is it that there will be further acts of terrorism in the United States over the next several weeks?” (Gallup 2009e)*

Very likely  
Somewhat likely  
Not too likely  
Not at all likely

---

<sup>22</sup> Missing data replaced using linear interpolation: Feb-01, Nov-04, Nov-06, Aug-07, Sep-07, Jan-08, Feb-07

*Q5. Victim of Terrorism:*<sup>23</sup> “How worried are you that you or someone in your family will become a victim of terrorism -- very worried, somewhat worried, not too worried, or not worried at all?” (Gallup 2009e)

Very Worried  
Somewhat Worried  
Not Too Worried  
Not Worried at All

*Q6. Immigration:*<sup>24</sup> “In your view, should immigration be kept at its present level, increased or decreased?” (Gallup 2009a)

IMMPRES = Present Level  
IMMINC = Increased  
IMMDEC = Decreased

---

<sup>23</sup> This survey question was not asked as frequently as the other questions included in this study. Missing data between existing points were filled using linear interpolation between points. The first month this question was asked in the scope of this study was September 2001. The last time the question was asked prior to this was April of 2000. I interpolated between points to fill missing data in the first months of 2001. Of course, a linear interpolation would suggest that the rate of change prior to September 2001 was uniform. This is, however, almost certainly not the case. This method was employed so as to remain consistent in my approach to missing values. For missing data *after* recorded months, I used the linear trend at point function. Gallup Poll has data for this question for the following months: Sep 5-7 2008; Jul 6-8 2007; Jun 11-14 2007; Aug 18-20 2006; Jan 20-22 2006; Dec 16-18 2005; Jul 22-24 2005; Jun 16-19 2005; Jan 7-9 2005; Dec 17-19 2004; Oct 14-16 2004; Sep 3-5 2004; Aug 9-11 2004; Feb 9-12 2004; Jan 2-5 2004; Dec 5-7 2003; Aug 25-26 2003; Jul 18-20 2003; Apr 22-23 2003; Mar 22-23 2003; Feb 17-19 2003; Jan 23-25 2003; Sep 2-4 2002; May 28-29 2002; Apr 22-24 2002; Mar 4-7 2002; Feb 4-6 2002; Nov 2-4 & 26-27 2001; Oct 5-6, 11-14 & 19-21 2001; Sep 11, 14-15, & 21-22 2001; Apr 7-9 2000

<sup>24</sup> This question was not asked as frequently as the other questions included in this study. Missing data between existing points were filled using linear interpolation between points. For missing data before or after recorded months, I used the linear trend at point function. Gallup Poll has data for this question for the following months: Sep 11-13 2000; Mar 26-28 2001; Jun 11-17 2001; Oct 19-21 2001; Jun 3-9 2002; Sep 2-4 2002; Jun 12-18 2003; Jun 9-30 2004; Jun 6-25 2005; Dec 9-11 2005; Apr 7-9 2006; Jun 8-25 2006; Jun 4-24 2007; Jun 5-Jul 6.

## Appendix B: Created Indices and Factor Loadings

Tables B.1 and B.2 provide the factor loadings, variable names, and a brief description for the variables that formulate the communitarianism and individualism indices. Of the twenty-five variables I originally coded, the factor analysis grouped fourteen variables around the “communitarianism” factor, and an additional three around the “individualism” factor.

**Table B.1:** Factor Loadings and Variable Descriptions of Communitarianism Index

<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>Variable Name</b>	<b>Variable Description</b>
0.855	DISPROP	Disproportional claims-making
0.898	FEAR	Describes or situates fear regarding terrorism
0.802	GLORIFY	Glorifies collective group?
0.791	GOODEVIL	Appeals to good and evil, innocence and purity
0.845	HOSTILE	Hostile and brutalizing rhetoric
0.847	INVOKEGOD	Invokes God/Religion
0.821	MILITARY	Describes U.S./Coalition military action
0.808	PATRIOT	Symbolic patriotic display
0.695	PROACTPOL	Proactive law, action, or policy to counter terrorism
0.865	SENSAT	Reporter or "eye witness" sensationalism
0.801	USMORES	Mentions American mores?
0.787	USVSTHEM	Us/Victim versus Them/Deviant polemic
0.661	WARTERROR	Mentions "War on Terror" or "Combating Terrorism"
0.662	APPEAL	Appeals to unnamed authorities, experts, or officials

*Notes:* Factor Analysis of aggregated data set; N = 96; Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis; Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization; Rotation converged in 5 iterations; Chronbach’s  $\alpha = .960$

Combining frames that invoke fear, dichotomizes the existence of good and evil, and draws upon easily identifiable American mores, such media frames demand attention and represent a deliberate and stylized call to action. A reliability analysis of the communitarianism factor’s variables confirms a high level of agreeability (Chronbach’s  $\alpha = .960$ ). With the understanding that proactive policy implemented during the “call to action” stage of a moral panic can only survive so long unquestioned, the individualism index represents the corporate media’s concern with state violations of individual freedoms, as well as the media’s reporting of governmental policy designed to curb or check previous infringements on civil liberties.



**Table B.2** Factor Loadings and Variable Descriptions of Individualism Index

<b>Factor Loading</b>	<b>Variable Name</b>	<b>Variable Description</b>
0.859	INDIVICON	Concern for Individual Constitutional Rights/Freedoms
0.802	REACTPOL	Reactive Government Law, Action, or Policy
0.584	INDIVVIO	Mentions Violation of Individual Constitutional Rights or Freedoms

Notes: Factor Analysis of aggregated data set; N = 96; Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis; Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization; Rotation converged in 5 iterations; Chronbach's  $\alpha = .652$

### **Appendix C: Consumer Confidence Survey Methodology**

The Consumer Confidence Survey is conducted for the Conference Board by TNS. The questionnaires are mailed to a nationwide representative sample of 5,000 households, of which roughly 3,500 typically respond. Each month, a different panel of 5,000 households is surveyed.

The Index is based on responses to five questions included in the survey:

1. Respondents' appraisal of current business conditions.
2. Respondents' expectations regarding business conditions six months hence.
3. Respondents' appraisal of the current employment conditions.
4. Respondents' expectations regarding employment conditions six months hence.
5. Respondents' expectations regarding their total family income six months hence.

For each of the five questions, there are three response options: POSITIVE, NEGATIVE, and NEUTRAL.

The response proportions to each question are seasonally adjusted. For each of the five questions (above), the POSITIVE figure is divided by the sum of the POSITIVE and NEGATIVE to yield a proportion, which we call the "RELATIVE" value. For each question, the average RELATIVE for the calendar year 1985 is then used as a benchmark to yield the INDEX value for that question. The Indexes are then averaged together as follows: Consumer Confidence Index: Average of all five Indexes; Present Situation Index: Average of Indexes for questions 1 and 3; Expectations Index: Average of Indexes for questions 2, 4, and 5.

*Source:* The Conference Board (2009a)