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PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR WAR: A COMPARISON OF VIETNAM AND IRAQ

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ABSTRACT

Extensive research has been done to determine which factors had the strongest influence on public opinion regarding American involvement in the Vietnam War. As a result of this analysis, we have a long list of variables that have been proposed as significant in affecting public opinion during this time period. However, because the Iraq War is so recent, there has been minimal research done regarding public opinion towards the war. This study intends to address this gap in research on the subject. By analyzing national public opinion polls, this study will apply variables found to be significant during Vietnam to the war in Iraq and determine if they are still relevant. Numerous variables could be utilized, but a subset was chosen as the focus of this study ranging from demographic to external variables, such as fatalities. Some of these variables were found to be influential in determining approval for the war in Iraq as they were for the Vietnam War. The discrepancy of the results between the two wars was more noticeable in terms of the magnitude of these indicators of approval and how the strength of their influence has changed from Vietnam to Iraq.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Not long after the Iraq War started in March 2003, the media, politicians, and the public were drawing parallels between the current conflict and the Vietnam War that ended almost thirty years earlier. With growing casualty numbers, unconventional fighting tactics, and an unclear purpose or end, many people wondered if Iraq was the next Vietnam. This sentiment was magnified by similarly decreasing levels of public support for the conflict. Research on this topic has proposed a variety of different hypotheses for this decline in opinion. Popular amongst these theories is the idea that the public conducts a mental cost-benefit analysis in order to determine their level of support. This assessment can include variables such as the number of combat fatalities, the financial costs, versus the importance of the intended outcome of the conflict. Alternatively, some scholars reject this idea that the public makes a calculated determination of their support and instead argue that individual, demographic factors influence a person's support for a war. A person's race, party affiliation, gender, education, and other personal characteristics are said to be the most influential variables. This topic is even further complicated by assertions that none of theories were in fact the main cause of the decline in public opinion during both the Vietnam and Iraq Wars. There have been numerous alternative theories for this decrease that have also been found to be credible, and these multiple factors make the subject of approval of wars very complex.

This paper explores these multiple theories by examining the variables that were found to be significant in influencing public opinion during the Vietnam War and applying these variables to the Iraq War. Due to the extensive amount of research conducted on this topic, this study

focuses on a specific subset of variables – national fatalities, local fatalities, race, gender, party affiliation, and divided government. The text will outline alternate theories briefly, but the main focus will be on these primary variables. They will be analyzed by utilizing public opinion polling data spanning the majority of the war. Within each of these surveys a question was asked that addressed whether a person approved or disapproved of the war. The subsequent text will expound upon this process by outlining my research design, which addresses my hypotheses, data, and both dependent and independent variables. The survey responses will then be analyzed along with the independent variables included in the subset, and the results will be compared to the findings regarding public support for the Vietnam War.

This analysis looks to find conclusions to two questions. First, which variables amongst an exhaustive list are the most significant in influencing public opinion about Iraq? Second, how similar or different are these findings from those regarding the Vietnam War? Answering these questions will provide a wide range of information. It will serve as an indicator of how and where the American electorate has changed in the forty years since the Vietnam War. This could serve as insight into a variety of social and political changes that have occurred over the decades, and how these changes have influenced opinions about war and government in general. This study also allows for a greater understanding of the war in Iraq. Since the war only officially ended in 2011, adequate research has not been done in order to fully understand the ramifications it had on society and politics. The analysis conducted here provides information about how individuals were affected by the war and how these effects varied from one person to the next. Furthermore, the findings of this study allow for extensive additional research. For instance, if this analysis finds that the opinion of Hispanics did not differ from whites during Iraq but it did during Vietnam, research could explore why this shift occurred. More broadly, this discrepancy could lead to the need to address other theories that may have changed from Vietnam to Iraq.

Chapter 2

Theories of Approval for Wars

While this study focuses on a limited subset of theories of approval for wars, there has been a multitude of other research conducted to address this topic. This section addresses the majority of these topics particularly those that have been the most prevalent within the applicable literature. This provides the appropriate framework for addressing the theories and variables that are utilized in this study. These variables are discussed in depth at the end.

Media

The constant presence of media during the Vietnam War has made the study of media's influence on public approval an unavoidable variable when studying public opinion about the war. Numerous studies have been done within various fields of research but there has been minimal evidence asserting a significant, causal relationship between media bias and public support. While it is popularly assumed that media bias has an impact on public opinion, studies have been conducted that support the opposite claim (Darley 2005; Hammond 1996; Mueller 1973; Hallin 1984). William Darley finds that despite the extensive collection of research that exists on media influence, minimal solid evidence has been posited to confirm a causal relationship between media bias and public opinion towards wars (2005). Instead Darley asserts that factors, such as strong leadership and human and monetary costs, should be examined. This finding is mirrored by the work of William M. Hammond regarding the Vietnam War which also asserts that there is little causal support for the variable (1996). Instead he finds the opposite in

that negative reporting often resulted in support for more aggressive military action and that the American people were already divided in opinion without the influence of the media.

Perceived Likelihood of Success

Scholars have conducted research to analyze the impact that internal cost-benefit analyses have on individual's support. One that has been researched thoroughly in regard to public opinion about wars is the perceived likelihood of success or failure of domestic forces (Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2005-2006; Feaver and Gelpi 2004; Kull and Ramsay 2001). In Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler's work, the authors challenge the view that levels of support for war are primarily correlated with the amount of combat fatalities. By examining the case of the Iraq War, they propose that the public's willingness to continue to support military operations depends upon if it thinks the original decision to start the war was correct and that the U.S. will prevail (2005-2006). The authors also analyze John Mueller's log of fatalities that apply to the Vietnam and Korean cases, and they find that this log does not fit the Iraqi case. They discover that fatalities do have an effect on presidential approval during certain stages of the war, but the effect is inconsistent. Instead, they find that the expectation of success has more influence on casualty tolerance when respondents are unsure about the justification of the war than their views about the rightness of the war.

Elites

In Adam J. Berinksy and James N. Druckman's collaborative piece reviewing Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler's work, the two argue that a causal relationship cannot be established between perceived likelihood of success and approval. They instead proposed that alternatives should be

explored, such as long term values, elite rhetoric, and individual-level variables (Berinksy and Druckman 2007). Berinsky also conducted his own analysis and found that military events do not influence public support for wars directly, but instead the interactions and conflicts among government elites regarding these occurrences are more important (Berinksy 2007). He found the same to be true regarding other theories as well, particularly the idea that people utilize cost-benefit analyses when considering events or fatalities. The role of elites was also extensively discussed in John Zaller's work where he found that individuals receive messages from political elites that then shape their opinions on the related topics (1992). This finding was briefly referenced in Gartner and Segura's work on the role of race along with fatalities in regard to forming opinions (2000). In their discussion they noted the role that racial leaders, such as Martin Luther King Jr., had on forming opinions about the Vietnam War among those within his race.

Government Unity

The composition and unity of the government is a variable that has been discussed when attempting to predict public opinion, but it hasn't received quite as much attention as alternative theories. In Daniel Hallin's study on the role of oppositional media during Vietnam, he found that the change in media coverage began to turn overwhelmingly negative when government consensus on foreign policy failed (1984). While this does not absolutely indicate that the public reacted in the same manner, it does suggest that society took cues from their government and its position on the war, particularly from the government elites. Berinsky's previously discussed research highlighted this role of political elites in influencing public opinion in his study of World War II and the Iraq War (2007). He found that when elites came to a mutual consensus on a political issue, the public was more likely to allow the government to exercise greater freedom

when going to war. Alternatively, when major political actors stood on opposing sides of whether or not to intervene, the public was likely to be split as well.

Individual Characteristics - Race

It is clear from discussing just this limited list of variables that the search to discover which factors actually do influence public opinion has been extensive and contradictory. This multitude of variables to select from and the differing opinions on each made the selection process complicated for this study, but ultimately three variables were focused upon in the analysis. The first theory is that the race of an individual influences public opinion. Race is often included with multiple other demographic variables, such as partisanship, education, and income, but it has been found to be one of the most consistently significant factors that influence public opinion about wars (Burris 2008; Verba and Brody et. al. 1967; Gartner, Segura, and Wilkening 1997; Gartner and Segura 2000). In his analysis of the Vietnam War, Burris found that race was regularly one of the strongest predictors of support for the war (2008). Throughout the entire time period of his analysis from Vietnam to Afghanistan he found that there were significant racial differences mostly when it was an offensive military action overseas, but not necessarily when the military was being used for humanitarian missions. Gartner and Segura come to the same conclusion about racial significance in their public opinion study specifically on race and fatalities (2000). While race was not found to significantly influence a person's reaction to fatalities, it did find that race alone was a determining factor in levels of direct support.

Fatalities – Local and National

Gartner and Segura also found that both county (local) casualties and logged national casualties were significant indicators of opinion (2000). Casualties as an influence on public opinion is another aspect of the cost-benefit analysis discussed previously in regard to belief in the likelihood of success. A person is perceived to be rational enough to determine their level of support for the conflict based upon the level of human costs that their country and local community has had to endure. This concept is also frequently used by those who argue that democracies do not fight wars because the costs are too high. Gartner and Segura found that local casualties were the most robust indicator amongst every variable examined in their study. Casualties were determined local if the soldier that died resided within the same county as the survey respondent. National casualties were found to be significant as well, but to a lesser extent. These findings have been echoed in other research involving Gartner as well as several other scholars, and the role of casualties in general has grown to become one of the central arguments in determining public approval for wars (Gartner, Segura, and Wilkening 1997; Gartner 2000; Althaus 2011; Holsti 1996; Mueller 1971). This prevalence amongst the research community led to its inclusion in this study of Iraq, but instead of casualties, they will be referred to as fatalities in this study in order to better fit the definition used here.

Chapter 3

Research Design

In this study, I will be doing an analysis using a subset of these theories. This was done in order to focus on more critical variables and on those of higher interest. The conclusions established by researchers analyzing the Vietnam War will be the basis of my hypotheses regarding these variables when they are applied to the Iraq War.

Hypotheses

Even though there have been decades of time between the two wars, I believe that the factors that influenced public support during the Vietnam era will remain important into today. As discussed previously, the conflicts have often been compared to each other due to their numerous similarities. These similarities between the conflicts should slightly control for large differences the in the nature of the wars. For instance, both wars had a relatively unclear purpose and direction even from the beginning of the conflict, and this uncertainty was prolonged due to the wars' lengths. Alternatively, other American wars such as involvement in World War II had a clear objective and progress was easily tracked and swift. Vietnam was also the first American war to have a strong media presence both in the theater of battle and on the home front, and this media involvement was still a large part of the war in Iraq as well.

The following three hypotheses will be tested through ordinary least squares regression:

H1: Aggregate national fatalities have an inverse, significant influence on an individual's level of support for the Iraq War.

H2: Local fatalities have an inverse, significant influence on an individual's level of support for the Iraq War.

H3: Whites and Asians have higher levels of support for the Iraq War than African Americans, Hispanics, and those of other races.

H4: Males have higher levels of approval for the Iraq War than females.

H5: Republicans will have higher and Democrats will have lower levels of approval for the war in Iraq than Independents.

H6: Divided government will have an inverse, significant relationship with approval for the war.

Much like the media, race was a more polarizing subject during the Vietnam era, which may result in different findings from one time period to the next. While this may be the case, these disparities could also be reduced by the fact that despite huge strides in human rights and equality in the U.S., race is still often a defining factor in how a person is raised, their educational and professional opportunities, and their political views. The lack of draft and more widespread information about military deaths through the use of the Internet, may also influence the results of the casualty variables. I believe that this change will be kept limited though because a person's reaction to the death of an American soldier should remain relatively constant throughout various time periods despite the evolved circumstances.

Data Set

I used public opinion polls conducted by the Gallup News Polling Service in conjunction with USA Today as the source of my data for my dependent variable and several of my independent variables. I chose Gallup as my primary source of data due to the consistency of its question wording over time and the high frequency in which questions regarding Iraq were asked

over the desired time frame. The Iraq War officially began on March 20, 2003 and ended on December 18, 2011, according to news services such as CNN (CNN Wire Staff 2011). Gallup provides applicable survey data spanning from March 22, 2003 to August 22, 2010. While this is not the entirety of the conflict, it was the most thorough source of data available from a single outlet.

The full analysis consisted of the compilation of two surveys conducted during each year in the time frame. The two surveys used for each year were primarily chosen according the month in which they were chosen. Ideally, a June and December survey were picked for each year, but this was not always possible, particularly during the most recent years when less data was available. Instead, surveys were chosen as close to the preferred dates as possible. The number of applicable respondents in each survey ranged from 883 to 1,587, while the median number of respondents was about 1,006. This resulted in sixteen individual surveys combined into one data set with a total of 17,646 applicable responses.

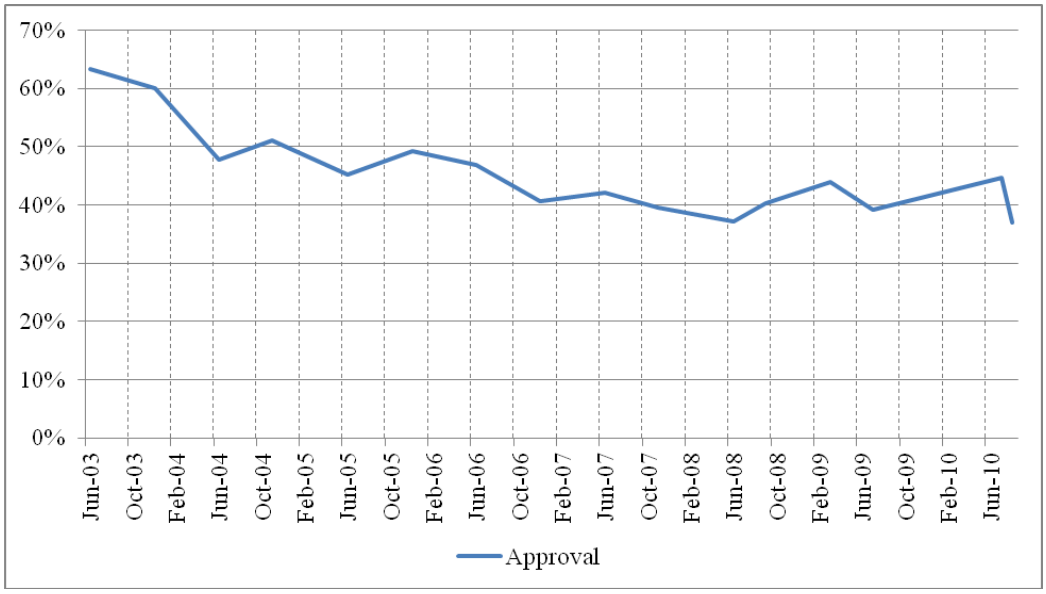
Dependent Variable

Questions were asked of respondents in three different wordings in order to determine their approval of the war. Here are the three wordings that were used:

> Do you favor or oppose the U.S. war with Iraq?
>
> All in all, do you think the situation in Iraq was worth going to war over, or not?
>
> In view of the developments since we first sent our troops to Iraq, do you think the United States made a mistake in sending troops to Iraq, or not?

Gallup alternates the use of one of these questions in their questionnaires throughout the time period, suggesting that it intended to the use of all three of the questions to gauge levels of

support[1]. Respondents that answered these questions in a manner that indicated approval or the war were coded as a 1, while those that responded in disapproval were coded as a 0. Figure 3-1 graphically displays the general decline in support that occurred during the war.



Source: Gallup Poll

Figure 3-1: National Approval for the War in Iraq

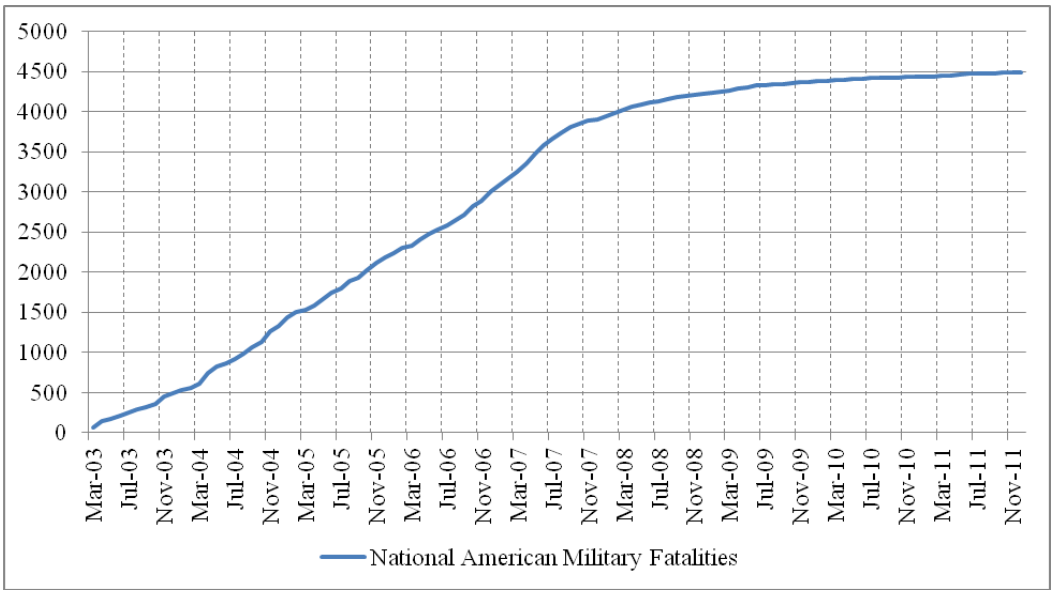
This figure shows the average number of respondents that answered in approval for the war in each survey. Approval began at 63.25% in June of 2003 and declined to 37.03% in August of 2010.

Independent Variables

Fatalities were split into two separate independent variables – local fatalities and national fatalities. Here, fatalities are defined as active American military personnel that died while serving in Iraq. National fatalities were measured by calculating the total number of American

[1] See Appendix A for a list of dependent variable questions along with their possible responses.

fatalities that had occurred nationwide regardless of home address. Local fatalities were measured by determining how many individuals were killed according to the state on record as their home address. Previous studies have decreased the level of this analysis even further to the county level, but that is outside the scope of this study. This analysis was done at year intervals, and the value was matched with the appropriate surveys conducted in that time period. This time period was determined after taking into account a one year lag on the casualty variable that was added in order to account for surveys that were conducted throughout the year before the total amount of fatalities in that year had occurred. The website iCasualties.org. was the source of these fatality numbers. It was chosen because of its use by the Brookings Institution and several established news outlets. Figure 3-2 graphically displays the increase and eventual leveling out of fatalities throughout the course of the war.



Source: iCasualties.org

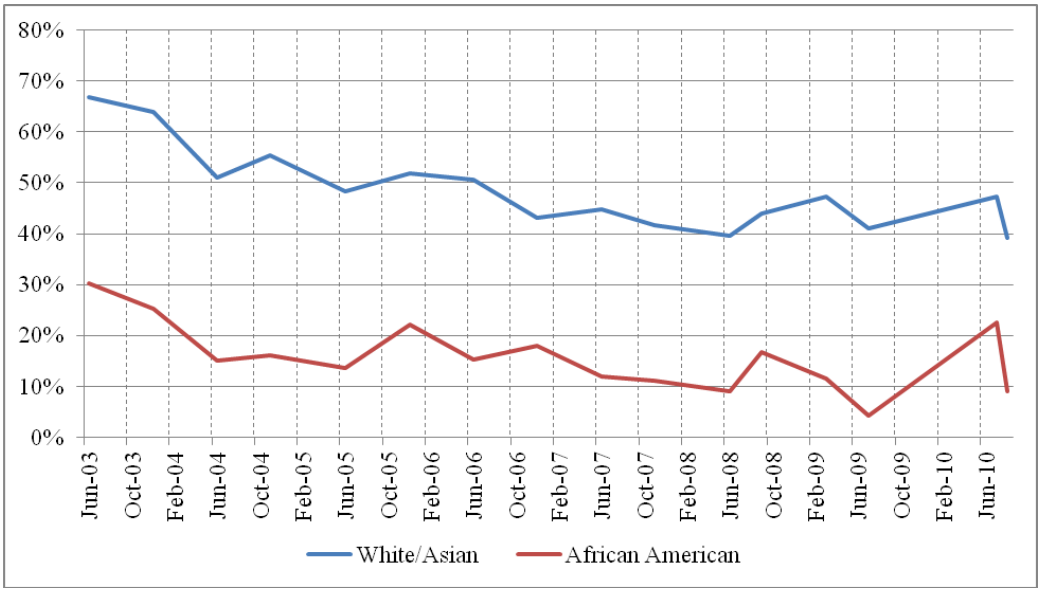
Figure 3-2: National American Military Fatalities in Iraq

Race was measured through the same Gallup survey data that was used to gather data on public opinion regarding the war. Interviewers asked each respondent which race they identified

with amongst a series other demographic questions. The race related questions were most commonly phrased in the following manner:

> What is your race? Are you white, African-American, Asian, or some other race?

The survey provided specific responses for four races – White, Black or African-American, Hispanic, and Asian – and these are the four races examined in this study due to the availability of data on these races. White and Asian were grouped together due to the limited information available on solely Asian respondents, as well as previous research that suggested the responses of the two races would be similar. Some of the surveys conducted from 2008 to 2010 phrase the race-related question differently and provide for more racial options to choose, as well as the ability to choose more than one racial identifier. This led to the inclusion of a multiple race variable in the analysis but only for applicable survey years[2]. Figure 3-3 graphically displays the relationship between race and approval throughout the course of the Iraq War.



Source: Gallup Poll

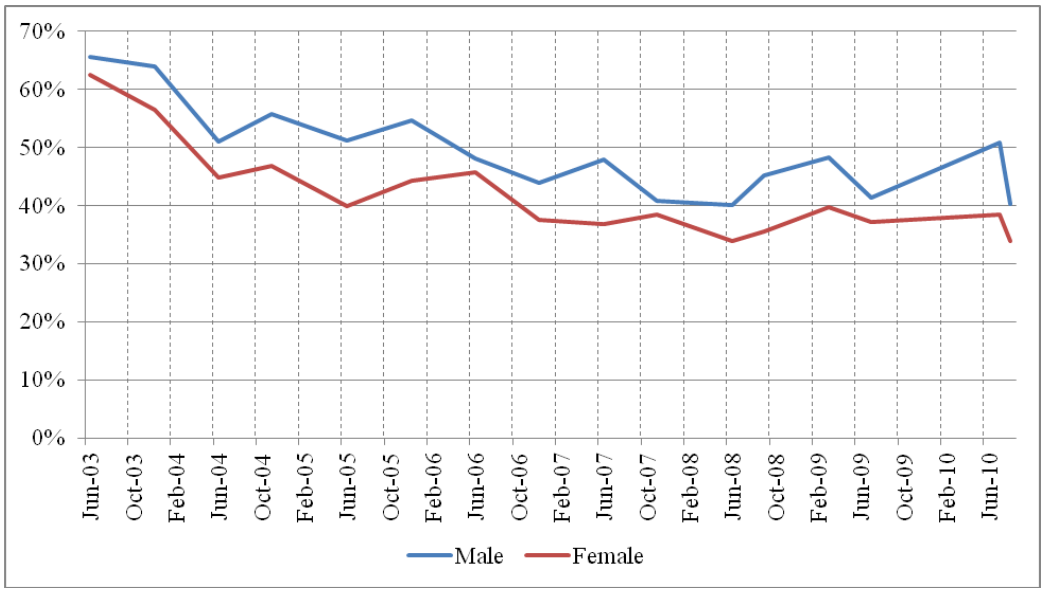
Figure 3-3: Approval for War in Iraq by Race

[2] See Appendix B for a list of independent variable questions along with their possible responses.

This graph depicts the average percentage of White/Asian and African American approval over time. Clearly there was a large difference in approval right from the beginning of the war. White/Asian approval began at 66.79%, whereas African American approval only started at 30.26% approval. This difference also remained relatively stable over time.

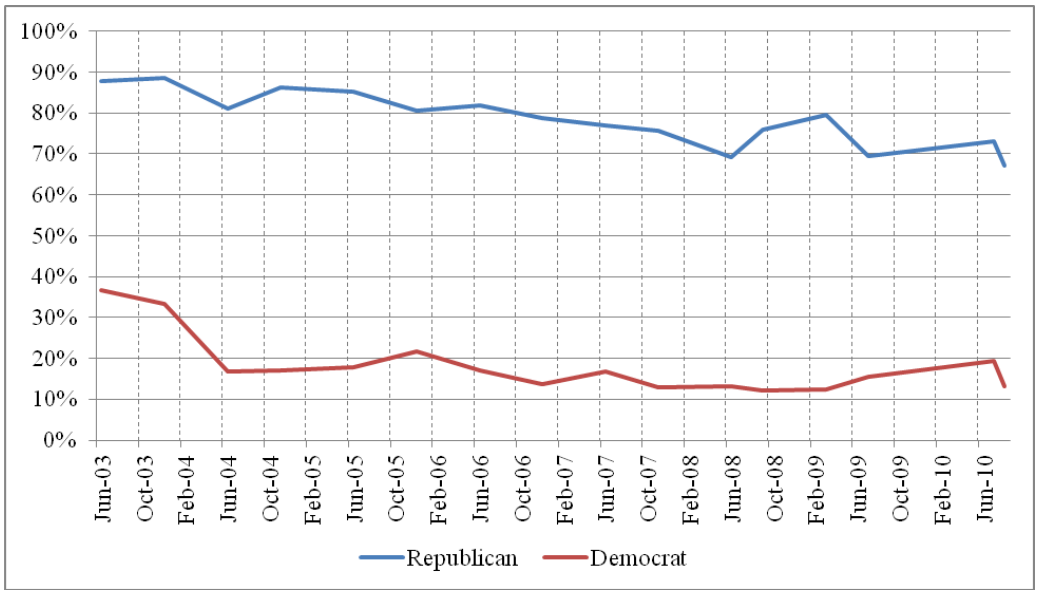
The presence of divided or unified government was included as well. I used the definition of divided government as it was operationalized by Baumgartner et. al. in their study of divided government in the United States and France (2012). The level of division in government was determined by the alignment of power of the President, the House of Representatives, and the Senate. A strongly unified government was coded if the President's party had both a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate (60 votes) and a majority in the House. A weakly unified government was one in which the President's party had a majority in both chambers but not a filibuster-proof one in the Senate. A government was said to be weakly divided if the President had an opposing majority in one of the chambers and strongly divided if in both of the chambers. These categories were determined simply by counting the number of Democrats and Republicans holding seats in each chamber. In the 2003 to 2010 time period examined here, this definition of divided government did not allow for much variation, so the divided and unified categories were combined, resulting in a divided government classification or a unified government one. The government was unified for every year in the time frame except for 2007 and 2008.

Two additional demographic variables were included in the analysis – gender and party identification. Both were measured through questions asked within the Gallup surveys. Gender was restricted to either male (male=1) or female (male=0), and party identification was limited to Republican, Democrat, or Independent based upon the answers respondents could choose from. Figure 3-4 graphically displays the relationship between gender and approval throughout the war, and Figure 3-5 does the same for party identification.



Source: Gallup Poll

Figure 3-4: Approval for the War in Iraq by Gender



Source: Gallup Poll

Figure 3-5: Approval for the War in Iraq by Party Identification

In both figures the average level of approval for the respective groups were plotted over time. Figure 3-4 shows that levels of approval between males and females were not that much different over time, but female support remained lower than male support throughout. Figure 3-5 tells a

more extreme story though with Democratic approval of the war remaining well below Republican approval during the entire time period.

Additionally, a variable was added to account for the effect on opinion that could result from a respondent identifying with the same party as the president at the time. This variable was created based off of respondents' answers to the survey question about their party affiliation. If a respondent identified with the same party as the president, then their response was coded as a 1 and all other responses were coded as 0.

Lastly, it is a generally accepted phenomenon that public approval for a war will decrease over time, particularly in democracies. In order to account for this inevitable decline and to separate the influence of time from other factors that influence opinions, a variable was added that included values for the years since the war began. This is particularly important considering the inclusion of the two fatality variables because fatality numbers can only increase as time does.

Chapter 4

Results and Analysis

This chapter includes a main analysis of the entire time frame of my study with all of the variables included. This is the analysis that I will be deriving my conclusions from. It also includes numerous sensitivity checks in order to be sure that my main results are supported by other analyses and are accurate. Among these sensitivity checks is an analysis of each of the demographic variables across each year in the time frame, including the president's party variable.

Full Time Period Analysis Including Years Since the Start of the War

My main analysis includes the sixteen individual surveys (17,646 respondents) and almost every variable in this study. Table 4-1 displays the regression coefficients and standard errors for the majority of variables considered in this study over the entire time frame, as well as their t-statistic and p-value.

Table 4-1: Approval from Jun. 2003 to Aug. 2010 with Years Since Start

	B	Standard Error	t	p
Republican	.316	.008	40.333	.000
Democrat	-.178	.008	-22.671	.000
Male	.030	.006	4.653	.000
African American	-.118	.013	-9.261	.000
Hispanic	-.018	.026	-.689	.491
Other Race	-.011	.015	-.714	.475
Years Since Start	-.017	.009	-1.996	.046
State Fatalities	-.000029	.000	-.848	.397
National Fatalities	-.000045	.000	-3.662	.000

This model also takes into account the number of years that the war had been fought through the inclusion of the Years Since Start variable. Variables were determined to be statistically significant indicators of approval for the war if they achieved a p-value of less than .05 and a t-statistic with an absolute value greater than two. Party identification was found to be a significant indicator of approval for the war. With Independent respondents as the base case in this analysis, the results show that Republican respondents were more likely to support the war by 31.6 percentage points with all else held constant. Democratic respondents were less likely to support the war by 17.8 percentage points with all else held constant. They were both also highly statistically significant with p-values of .000. The relationship between gender and approval was also found to be highly statistically significant with a p-value of .000. Male respondents were found to be 3.0 percentage points more likely to approve of the war than the base case, females. African American was the only racial variable that achieved significance in this model with a highly significant p-value of .000, whereas Hispanics and respondents of other races did not differ

from the base case of Whites and Asians. Alternatively, African Americans were 11.8 percentage points less likely to support the war in Iraq than Whites and Asians. This partially supports my hypothesis that African Americans, Hispanics and people of other races would be less likely to approve of the war (H3).

The two casualty variables had opposite results in this model. National fatalities were found to have a significant relationship with approval for the war, with state fatalities included in the analysis by achieving a p-value of .000. In this model, a single unit increase in national fatalities resulted in a less than .001 percentage point decrease in the level of approval of the respondent. While this is a small effect at the single unit level, the magnitude of relationship is larger when considering a larger amount of fatalities. For instance, a 1,000 person increase in the number of fatalities would result in almost a 4 percentage point decrease in approval. This supports my hypothesis that national fatalities would have an inverse, significant relationship with approval (H1). State level fatalities were not found to have a significant relationship with approval for the Iraq War. A regression was then run in order to see if state fatalities would achieve significance without national fatalities in the model. This was done in order to account for that the fact that national and state fatalities are correlated, but even in this model state fatalities were not found to be significant. The does not support my hypothesis that local fatalities would have a significant, inverse relationship with approval (H2). Table 4-2 displays this result.

Table 4-2: Approval from Jun. 2003 to Aug. 2010 without National Fatalities

	B	Standard Error	t	p
Republican	.316	.008	40.319	.000
Democrat	-.178	.008	-22.725	.000
Male	.030	.006	4.616	.000
African American	-.118	.013	-9.217	.000
Hispanic	-.016	.026	-.625	.532
Other Race	-.008	.015	-.511	.610
Years Since Start	-.048	.002	-29.133	.000
State Fatalities	-.000046	.000	-1.339	.180

The effect that divided government had on approval for the war in Iraq could not be determined through inclusion in this model. It was found to be too highly correlated with the years since start variable when national fatalities was also included. The same could be said in the reverse. For instance, the effect that years since the start of the war had on approval for the war was not able to be determined. This situation is less likely though considering the general trend of declining approval that was displayed in Figure 3-1. This inverse relationship between approval and years is shown by its negative coefficient in this model. When years since the start of the war was included alone or along with the other independent variables (except divided government with national fatalities), it maintained the same level of significance and coefficient value throughout. Also, there was not much information through variation in the divided government variable in order to interpret a solid relationship between it and approval. For these

reasons, divided government was excluded from this model while years since the start of the war and national fatalities were kept[3].

Full Time Period Analysis Excluding Years Since the Start of the War

I also wanted to explore whether the exclusion of years since the start of the war and addition of divided government affected the results. Table 4-3 displays the model for the entire time frame, but accounts for this change in dependent variables.

Table 4-3: Approval from Jun. 2003 to Aug. 2010 without Years Since Start

	B	Standard Error	t	p
Republican	.251	.008	40.406	.000
Democrat	-.177	.008	-22.580	.000
Male	.030	.006	4.651	.000
African American	-.118	.013	-9.269	.000
Hispanic	-.016	.026	-.633	.526
Other Race	-.009	.015	-.575	.565
State Fatalities	-.000029	.000	-.852	.394
National Fatalities	-.000073	.000	-29.642	.000
Divided Government	.041	.008	5.400	.000

The removal of years since the start of the war did not result in many changes to the coefficients or p-values of the variables in the original model. Both party identification variables, Republican

[3] When both divided government and national fatalities were included in the model, the coefficient for years since the start of the war was changed to positive. This was mostly likely due to high correlation between national fatalities and years since (Pearson Coefficient = .987) and to a lesser extent, divided government and years since (.225). This resulted in a false positive coefficient for the years since variable.

and Democrat, were still highly statistically significant in dictating approval, and the same can be said for males and African Americans. This again partially supports my hypothesis that African Americans, Hispanics and people of other races will be less likely to approve of the war (H3). One of the most noteworthy coefficient changes within this group was the .065 unit point decrease for the Republican variable. This implies that Republican respondents were 6.5 percentage points less likely to approve of the war compared to Republicans that took the duration of the war into consideration. Divided government was also included into this model in the anticipation that there could be a better interpretation of the relationship between it and approval in the absence of "years." Here, the relationship was found to be statistically significant with respondents 4.1 percentage points more likely to approve of the war during times of divided government than during times of unified government. This is opposite of the anticipated effect that divided government should lead to a decrease in approval for the war. Whether this is correct is difficult to determine though, considering the previous discussion about the lack of information that divided government is drawn from.

National fatalities were again found to have a significant relationship with approval for the war, with a p-value of .000 and coefficient less than .001. This further supports my hypothesis that national fatalities would have an inverse, significant relationship with approval (H1). State fatalities were not able to reach a level of statistical significance in this model with a p-value of .394. A second regression was then run in order to see if state fatalities would achieve significance without national fatalities in the model. The results of this model are shown in Table 4-2.

Table 4-4: Approval from Jun. 2003 to Aug. 2010 without National Fatalities or Years

	B	Standard Error	t	p
Republican	.325	.008	40.603	.000
Democrat	-.176	.008	-21.974	.000
Male	.029	.007	4.347	.000
African American	-.103	.013	-7.879	.000
Hispanic	.024	.026	.921	.357
Other Race	.011	.016	.676	.499
State Fatalities	-.001	.000	-18.174	.000
Divided Government	-.024	.008	-3.159	.002

Without national fatalities, state level fatalities achieved significance with a p-value of .000. Similar to national fatalities, a single unit increase in state level fatalities would result in a .1 percentage point decrease in the level of approval of the respondent. The does support my hypothesis that local fatalities would have a significant, inverse relationship with approval (H2). National fatalities maintained a p-value of .000 both with and without state level fatalities in the analysis. This suggests that both seem to have an effect on approval, but at the state level, this relationship is less certain because of their correlation as noted previously.

Demographic Variables from Year to Year

The inclusion of party identification and gender along with race allowed for a thorough analysis of how individual characteristics affected levels of approval throughout different time periods during the war in Iraq. The inclusion of party identification also allowed for its comparison to another factor that might influence opinion for the war, whether or not the

president in office at the time was from the same party that a person identified with. This relationship is represented in this study by the variable President's Party, meaning that the respondent did identify with the same party as the president in office. Table 4-5 displays the relationship between all of the demographic variables, including party identification, during each year in the time frame from 2003 to 2010. Table 4-6 depicts this same time frame and demographic variables in the same format, but with president's party instead of Democrat and Republican.

Table 4-5: Demographics Year to Year with Party Identification

Independent Variables	June 2003	June 2004	June 2005	June 2006	June 2007	June 2008	July 2009	July 2010
Republican	.214*** (.034)	.359*** (.033)	.458*** (.036)	.411*** (.034)	.443*** (.033)	.365*** (.026)	.308*** (.050)	.294*** (.049)
Democrat	-.266*** (.034)	-.266*** (.034)	-.196*** (.034)	-.218*** (.034)	-.132*** (.034)	-.175*** (.026)	-.213*** (.048)	-.219*** (.049)
Male	.006 (.028)	.008 (.027)	.064* (.028)	-.015 (.027)	.089** (.027)	.035 (.022)	.042*** (.040)	.070*** (.041)
African American	-.190*** (.054)	-.132* (.056)	-.133* (.028)	-.108* (.053)	-.135* (.055)	-.120** (.045)	-.179 (.095)	-.073 (.086)
Hispanic	.045 (.094)	-.045 (.085)	.129 (.115)	-.040 (.117)	-.114 (.110)	-.050 (.096)	.219 (.310)	-.196 (.204)
Multiracial	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	-.141* (.065)	.011 (.155)	-.191 (.167)
Other Race	-.075 (.057)	-.029 (.061)	.125* (.060)	-.034 (.056)	-.036 (.063)	-.232** (.088)	.045 (.175)	.225 (.204)

Note: p value<.05*, p value<01**, p value<.001***; standard error in parentheses

Table 4-6: Demographics Year to Year with President's Party

Independent Variables	June 2003	June 2004	June 2005	June 2006	June 2007	June 2008	July 2009	July 2010
President's Party	.334*** (.031)	.485*** (.095)	.558*** (.076)	.527*** (.029)	.502*** (.029)	.445*** (.024)	-.362*** (.043)	-.329*** (.047)
Male	.025 (.029)	.035 (.028)	.076** (.029)	.001 (.027)	.101*** (.027)	.054* (.022)	.016 (.041)	.091* (.042)
African American	-.256*** (.054)	-.187** (.057)	-.177** (.052)	-.170** (.053)	-.166** (.055)	-.161*** (.045)	-.192 (.099)	-.111 (.089)
Hispanic	.008 (.094)	-.079 (.087)	.131 (.117)	-.103 (.119)	-.110 (.111)	-.082 (.097)	.145 (321)	-.208 (.211)
Multiracial	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	-.008 (.086)	.040 (.160)	-.213 (.173)
Other Race	-.059 (.057)	-.003 (.063)	.137 (.061)	-.028 (.057)	-.019 (.063)	-.198 (.113)	.045 (.182)	.222 (.211)

Note: p value<.05*, p value<01**, p value<.001***; standard error in parentheses

President's party could not be included in the same model as Democrat and Republican because they are too highly correlated considering that it was created by using the Democrat and Republican variables.

The general findings of the two models are very similar and stable across time periods. The gender variable fluctuates in significance from one period to next, and its significance is usually mirrored in each model. African American is found to be statistically significantly different than White/Asian throughout the majority of the time frame, but then does not achieve significance during the last two time periods in each model. Hispanic, multiracial, and other race respondents are not found to differ significantly from White/Asian respondents within the majority of the time periods. Ultimately, when it comes to the race and gender variables there is not a noticeable difference between the two models' findings, indicating that the three variables relating to partisanship have relatively similar effects on the other variables included in their models.

The most notable finding about this comparison is that while both party identification and sharing the same party as the president are both highly significant indicators of approval for the war in Iraq, identifying with the same party as the president instead of the opposition results in a higher magnitude of change in approval. President's party maintained higher coefficients throughout the entire frame than both Republican and Democrat. The direction of the coefficient for president's party changed in 2009 when Barack Obama took office in January. This switch was expected because Obama was a member of the Democratic party, and Democrats were found to be less likely to approve of the war in Iraq. Obama also took office with plans to end the war during his first term.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

Hypotheses and Comparison to Vietnam

The multiple models included in this study resulted in varying levels of support for my hypotheses. Despite these varying sources of information, the main model considered in this study included the entire time frame of data under consideration (June 2003 to August 2010) and accounted for the duration of the war in determining approval. This model is displayed in Table 4-1. It is from this model that a comparison to the Vietnam War will be made and by extension, the accuracy of my hypotheses will be determined.

The model found national fatalities to be highly statistically significant in determining the level of approval for the war in Iraq, and that the relationship between the two variables was inverse in nature. This confirms my first hypothesis. Respondents were less likely to approve of the war as the number of fatalities increased at the national level. This finding was the same during the Vietnam War according to the work done by Mueller (1971), Gartner and Segura (2000), and Gartner, Segura, and Wilkening (1997).

My model found a different result for state level fatalities than my hypothesis. I hypothesized that local fatalities would have an inverse, significant relationship with approval, but the model did not find state level fatalities to be significant in determining approval when also taking the duration of the war into account. State level fatalities were only found to be significant when years since the start of the war was not included in the model. This indicates that decreases in approval cannot be solely attributed to local fatalities rather than a general decline due to the length of the war. This differs from the three studies involving Gartner, as well as the work done by Atlhaus that found local fatalities to be significant indicators of approval (Gartner 2008;

Gartner and Segura 2000; Althaus 2011). This difference in my results may be due to a few differences. One reason could be that my level of analysis for local fatalities only went to the state level, whereas the work involving Gartner was at the county level. Althaus's work also went to a lower level through the use of geographic placement with latitude and longitude. Another possible explanation could be that the research done on Vietnam may not apply to the war in Iraq because of a large discrepancy in the level of fatalities. During the Vietnam War, over 58,000 Americans died, but during the Iraq War, the number was less than 5,000. If this much lower number is then distributed across fifty states, the number becomes very low relative to during the Vietnam War. This lower number may have resulted in less of an impact on approval at the state level.

My next hypothesis was that African Americans, Hispanics, and those of other races would be less likely to approve of the war than Whites or Asians. This hypothesis was partially supported by my model. It found that African American respondents were less likely to approve of the war than Whites or Asians, but that approval did not differ for Hispanic respondents and those of other races. Burris's research on Vietnam found race to be significant, but did not break down race into subdivisions (2008). Gartner, Segura, and Wilkening found African Americans to be less likely to approve of the war than Whites but only during the second portion of the Vietnam War starting in 1968 (1997; Gartner and Segura 2000). My main model did not segment the Iraq War, but the models that analyzed demographics during each time period did provide a reasonable comparison. These models found that African American respondents were less likely to support the war throughout the entire conflict, which differs from the previous findings. Both of these previous studies also found that Hispanic respondents differed from Whites during the second portion of the war, which again differs from my results.

It is surprising that my model found race as a whole to be significant in a different way when determining approval for the Iraq War compared to the Vietnam War. The fact that African

American respondents and White and Asian respondents were the only races that differed in opinion could be an interesting finding though. Racial minorities other than African Americans could have started to form more similar opinions about war to the White majority after the Vietnam War, whereas African Americans may retained their divergent opinions in regard to war. African Americans may still have more unfavorable opinions about Vietnam that they carried over to the Iraq War. They may have clung to a cultural norm of opposition to involvement in war more adamantly than the other racial minorities. Alternatively, they could still have strong opinion leaders that oppose the war, and thus influence the race as whole. The explanations for this discrepancy could be multiple.

Additional Findings

The numerous models contained in this study seem to point to individual characteristics and national fatalities as the most steady and influential indicators of approval for the war in Iraq. In every model of the entire time frame, party identification, gender, and at least one racial variable were found to be highly statistically significant. The same can be said for national fatalities. When the other external variables were found to be statistically significant, the relationship was difficult to definitively determine, like in the case of divided government or state level fatalities. The demographic variables were also very stable across time periods. This analysis over time was not conducted for the external variables, but it does add to the robustness of the demographic variables' significance.

Looking the magnitude of the effects of the demographic variables versus that of national fatalities also provides for an interesting comparison. While the effect that one fatality has on approval is small (-.000045), considering the total amount of fatalities that occurred during the Iraq War increases its effect. For instance, 4,803 Americans dies in Iraq before the end of the war

in 2011. According to this model, this means that the maximum effect that national casualties should have on approval is -21.61 percentage points. This is the maximum anticipated effect and would only occur at the end of the war, but it is still greater in magnitude than every other variable except identifying as a Republican (.316).

This analysis of individual time periods also led to the finding that identifying with the same party as the president in office resulted in increased approval for the war relative to those who did not share the same party with the president. This variable was found to be extremely stable over each time period, as well as highly significant within those time periods. While this is not a variable that was applied to the Vietnam War according to the previous research, it does provide a potential area of further study and possibly an alternate theory on how support for a war is formed.

Conclusion

This study sought to determine which factors were the most relevant in determining levels of approval for the Iraq War and to compare these findings to those regarding the Vietnam War. The literature on public opinion, particularly on the Vietnam War, is extensive, but this study focused on a subset of critical variables that were prevalent in previous research. Through the use of Gallup data, I conducted a regression analysis of approval of Iraq as my dependent variable and multiple demographic and external factors as my independent variables. In addition to this primary analysis, I conducted a number of sensitivity checks to solidify my results.

These analyses resulted in numerous interesting findings when compared to those regarding the Vietnam War. First, this model found party identification to be the most robust indicator of approval for the war in Iraq. Related to this finding, identifying with the same party as the president was also a strong indicator of approval. While this is similar to findings that

partisanship was significant, it is contrary to previous findings by Gartner and Segura that local fatalities were the most powerful indicators of approval for the Vietnam War (2000). This conclusion by Gartner and Segura was also contradicted by this model's lack of support for state fatalities. Instead, national fatalities were found to be highly significant in determining approval, whereas the impact of state fatalities could not be definitively determined. National fatalities on its own have been found to be significant in multiple studies (Mueller 1971; Gartner and Segura 2000; and Gartner, Segura, and Wilkening 1997).

Lastly, race had differing levels of statistical significance from Vietnam to Iraq. This model found that African American respondents were the only ones to differ significantly from White/Asian respondents. Hispanics and respondents of other races did not diverge in their opinion about the war though. Alternatively, during Vietnam all respondents who identified as racial minorities differed from the white majority (Burris 2008; Gartner and Segura 2000; and Gartner, Segura, and Wilkening 1997).

This difference along with the others provide for multiple different avenues to continue research. One area of exploration could be into societal changes that could have caused the divergent results regarding race. This could also be applied to a discussion of partisanship and exploring if the increase in its importance is due to an increased polarization of party politics. The fact that this model found differing results than those regarding Vietnam could also lead to exploration of other theories about public opinion during Vietnam that could not be included in this study. The application of these theories to Iraq or other wars could lead to differing results as well.

Appendix A

Dependent Variable Survey Questions

Do you favor or oppose the U.S. war with Iraq?

Favor

Oppose

Don't know

Refused

All in all, do you think the situation in Iraq was worth going to war over, or not?

Yes, worth going to war over

No, not worth going to war over

Don't know

Refused

In view of the developments since we first sent our troops to Iraq, do you think the United States made a mistake in sending troops to Iraq, or not?

Yes, made mistake

No, did not

Don't know

Refused

Appendix B

Independent Variable Survey Questions

Party Identification

In politics, as of today, do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent?

Republican	Independent	Don't know
Democrat	Other party	Refused

Race

Next, I am going to read you a list of racial groups. As I read each one, please tell me whether you are -- or are not -- a member of that racial group. You may consider yourself to be a member of more than one racial group. How about – [READ A-E]?

Yes	Don't know
No	Refused

A. White

B. Black or African-American

C_1 and C_2. Some other race [IF YES, ASK: What is that?]

No other race	American Indian/Alaska Native	Refused
Asian	Other race (list)	No other mentions
Hispanic	Don't know	

What is your race? Are you white, African-American, Asian, or some other race?

White	Asian	Refused
African American	Other	
Hispanic	Don’t know	

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Honors and Awards

- Schreyer Academic Excellence Scholarship – Schreyer Honors College, Fall 2009
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- President's Freshman Award – Pennsylvania State University, Spring 2010
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- Phi Beta Kappa – Interdisciplinary Academic Honors Society, Spring 2013

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Professional Experience

Consulting by Degrees Commercial Consultant, IBM Corporation, August 2013

- Will provide innovative business strategy advice to numerous industry leaders through the use of advanced analytics and research.

Product Management Intern, Liberty Mutual Insurance, Summer 2012

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Research Interests

I have broad interests in domestic public opinion, as well as in international relations and conflicts. In regard to public opinion, I am specifically interested in exploring which factors are the most influential when a person is forming an opinion about a political topic and examining how these factors change over time. Within the realm of international relations and conflicts I am interested in the use of terrorism and other alternative fighting tactics in conflicts, as well as the role and use of women in fighting.