ABSTRACT

Title of Document: MEDIA FRAMING OF TERRORISM: VIEWS OF "FRONT LINES" NATIONAL SECURITY PRESTIGE PRESS

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This research investigates a critical tier in the global flow of information about terrorism. This qualitative study employs 35 in-depth interviews with national security journalists in the Washington, D.C. "prestige press" (Stempel, 1961) to explore their perceptions surrounding the collection, interpretation and dissemination process of terrorism news content. This study includes a review of the recent rhetorical shift from President Bush's "War on Terrorism" to "Overseas Contingency Operation" attempted by President Obama's Administration. Rarely studied, but extremely influential, these particular "front line" reporters offer substantial insider knowledge on evolving trends in the news media's production process on terrorism and national security. Their unique geographical position allowing for daily interaction among American governmental leadership, combined with their responsibility to cover what could be argued as one of the most influential topics of

our time – terrorism, offers readers an inside view of the daily constraints, strategies and perceptions of this elite group. Data analysis adhered to grounded theory methods using constant comparison. Findings include evidence of new and evolving journalist routines with implications for public policy and the evolving integrity of journalist practices. Moreover, extending the published literature in the mass communication theory and national security realms, this research offers value by analyzing and describing the news production processes and perceptions - for the first time - of the D.C. national security prestige press. Reported results should also offer practitioners new insight into best practices and an opportunity for information users to better understand and evaluate what they are receiving.

MEDIA FRAMING OF TERRORISM: VIEWS OF "FRONT LINES" NATIONAL
SECURITY PRESTIGE PRESS

By

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
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Dedication

To my husband and best friend, Bill, for his love, sacrifice and patience. For his support with many cooked dinners when I was too tired and chores to keep the house running while I was frantically writing my dissertation -- but especially the support from his prayers for me. You inspire me to serve God by serving others. Sweets, I could not have done it without you. I love you and I thank you so much.

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To my much loved 95-year-old Grandma Ginger, for your faithful love, for your many prayers and for teaching me that age is truly just a number. You are right, GG: "This, too, shall pass."

To my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who made the *ultimate sacrifice* that I might live and whose incredible faithfulness was beyond measure during this arduous process. As I look back, I see one set of footprints in the sand as I journeyed this difficult road: His. Thank you, Lord, for carrying me when I could not stand myself.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us." Hebrews 12:1

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Finally, to my family and friends across these long years, I offer endless thanks for enduring with me, often sacrificing precious time together. We did it!

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Chapter One – Introduction

Over the last decade, journalism studies have examined the news frames resulting from the events of September 11, 2001. In this framing study, the perceptions of national security prestige press are explored regarding how they frame terrorism as journalists.

Certainly, various theoretical approaches have been applied to media and terrorism scholarship, but none have prevailed in substance and momentum more than framing theory (Goffman, 1974). In fact, "framing studies have far outstripped" the other related mass communication theories in overall use over the past ten years (Weaver, 2007, p. 146) and have been broadly and often applied to media with regards to terrorism (Edy & Meirick, 2007; Entman, 1991; Schaefer, 2003; Ruigrok & van Atteveldt, 2007) as a basis for understanding how media cover terrorism.

Terrorism is not a modern phenomenon. However, until the events of 9/11, no single terrorist attack had killed more than 500 people (Hoffman, 2006, p. 19). Tragically, the United States experienced large-scale terrorism on 9/11 claiming 2,976 lives on American soil. Since then, the United States government has launched a more visible, global discussion on terrorism with an increased focus upon finding and stopping terrorists around the world under the "war on terror" banner, rhetorically-similar to the phraseology used in other policy campaigns such as "war on drugs" or the "war on poverty."

Terrorism is not new to scholarship. Researchers have parsed and examined myriad facets of this topic including its definition, group formation and motivation, radicalization, recruitment, female and youth participation, prevention, preparedness and response (Hoffman, 2006; Crenshaw, 1995; Crenshaw & Pimlott, 1991). Several

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have even explored the complex relationship between terrorism and the mass media, as well as the role of the media in communicating about terrorism (Altheide, 2004, 2006; Cho et al., 2003; Graber, 2003; Norris, Kern & Just, 2003; Nacos, 2007). As one scholar summarizes, "when one says 'terrorism' in a democratic society, one also says 'media'… for terrorism by its very nature is a psychological weapon which depends upon communicating a threat to a wider society" (Wilkinson, 2001, p. 177). It is for this reason that former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher famously termed publicity as "the oxygen of terrorism" for she understood that attracting the media is a primary component for the intended success of a "spectacular" terrorist event (Nacos, 2007, p. 175).

Terrorism is not new to journalism. Well, at least outside of America. American mass media followed the "war on terrorism" so closely that this group is itself credited (or blamed) for a "contribution to major changes in social definitions and meanings of….'9/11' and 'terrorism'" in America (Altheide, 2004, p. 304). Even with decades of experience covering terrorism, much of post-9/11 international literature faults even global journalists for conveying an "over-identification" with America -- writers who "merged with Americans in a cultural geography of attachment" using words such as "we" and "us" (Sreberny, 2002, p. 223). The attacks of 9/11 were defined by American news media as an attack not only on American culture, but on civilization itself (Altheide, 2004).

Post-9/11, terrorism media coverage in America not only increased, but also introduced new routines to the journalism occupation (Barnett & Reynolds, 2009). Scholarship is laden with many cases of a reporter's routine shifting to include a blind embrace of the "War on Terror" frame and an increased difficulty to gain access to

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national security-related information (Moeller, 2009). What research has tersely explored are the evolving routines and trends regarding terrorism-related news coverage from the insider viewpoint of the national security reporter, namely those journalists who are employed by a media outlet to seek out and disseminate information for their audiences on matters of national security and terrorism. These issues could include a wide variety of topics such as acts or attempted acts of terrorism, tragedies initially presumed to be terrorism, counterterrorism measures, government intelligence gathering, military action and coverage of the various government agencies handling national security matters.

Study Purpose

The broad purpose of this study is to examine Washington, D.C. national security prestige press perceptions regarding their beat, their word choice and their occupational future by broadly asking, "What's right with terrorism coverage?" and "What's wrong with it?" Generally, this can help to describe contemporary framing of media discourse about terrorism. Specifically, the perceptions of these journalists are explored at the individual level to better understand their news gathering routine and how these media understand and frame terrorism in their stories.

Using framing literature, this research examined how these reporters understand and frame terrorism issues in their own stories. Using scholarship that examines the media-terrorist relationship, this dissertation explored how this group understands the interplay of terrorist goals and radicalization with media coverage. This portion took a more historical look at journalist perceptions of United States government terrorism-related rhetoric choices, the evolution of terrorism rhetoric, as

well as their own assessment of immediate post-9/11 and War in Iraq reporting --
largely criticized in academic scholarship.

Moreover, building on Shoemaker and Reese's (1996) hierarchy of influences
model, this dissertation sought to explore, at the individual level, how D.C.-based,
national security TV, radio and newspaper reporters understand and engage with their
occupational routines in general. This included how they understand daily constraints,
freedoms and skill set requirements for their particular beat, the handling of sources
and their perceived role in beginning the global media wave.

Barring one mixed methods study (Rosten, 1937) credited as being the first to
attempt to describe Washington, D.C. newspaper journalists, there is little scholarship
that explores the many factors that influence D.C.-based reporter's decisions on the
news production process. Moreover, Rosten's classic work only analyzed the
newspaper medium and did not focus on the national security issue. Therefore, on a
broad scale, this dissertation updated Rosten's work to explore the perceptions and
attitudes of a reporter group who, it could be easily argued, serve as the initial portal
through which terrorism news coverage begins – Washington, D.C.-based, TV, radio
and newspaper journalists who cover national security and terrorism.

Likewise, this dissertation enhanced the important line of inquiry offered in
Lewis and Reese's (2009) study, but on a much larger scale. Their research explored,
via 20 minute in-depth interviews, the perceptions of 13 USA Today journalists from
across America regarding the "War on Terror" frame. This dissertation expanded
their work by employing 35 participant interviews averaging an hour each. Also, this
work focused solely on Washington, D.C. national security journalists and broadened
to include all mainstream media formats (TV, radio and newspaper).

Among other findings, this study revealed how Washington, D.C. national security journalists interact with their employers, audiences and sources. Moreover, research revealed evidence for decreased access to sources post-9/11 that has ushered in the new journalist routine employing increased acceptance and use of anonymous sources; this new routine, coupled with recent news industry cutbacks, has led to increased reporter autonomy. Moreover, there is new cynicism surrounding changes in, and use of, government rhetoric. Supporting recent framing research, this study also found support that the "War on Terror" frame has naturalized into the journalist psyche. Results showed that the "War on Terror" frame has not yet vanished, the "Overseas Contingency Operation" has not been able to replace this frame, and that reporter framing of terrorism may be directly affected by White House Administration "personality" perceptions. Finally, with the emergence of new technologies and recent economic downturns resulting in news industry cutbacks, this research revealed increasing challenges for managing new, high-speed paces in mainstream reporting as well as the prediction by many journalists of the impending death of the national security prestige press.

Concepts, Scope and Definitions

Several concepts utilized in this study require definition, context and clarity. The pertinent terms are *prestige press, press/media/journalist/reporter, news, the United States intelligence community, national security/homeland security reporting, terrorism* and the *"War on Terror" frame*.

Prestige Press

This study is unique for several reasons, but of utmost importance are its participants: the American *prestige press* regularly covering the topic of terrorism.

The "prestige press" is a term coined by G.H. Stempel (1961) to denote the 15-20 newspapers that were, at that time, influencing future story choices by other media. "Prestige press" in this case, denotes journalists who garner, often first-hand, information/accounts directly from Washington administration elite and other top government officials and serve as the front lines media who often begin the "news wave" (Fishman, 1980) of an "echoing press" (Domke, Graham, Coe, Lockett John & Coopman, 2006) caught up in a trickle down effect (Dimitrova & Stromback, 2008). This group serves as the funnel through which other global media adapt stories, definitions and frameworks. They are in a position to prompt, influence or even control much of the national discourse on the subject. As a matter of influence, the prestige press audience is not only the American public, but in most cases, key policymakers and the entire world. Sometimes referred to herein as "elite press," this should not be confused with an "elitist press" – which has been argued to piously spout one ideology over another.

In the 21st century (and therefore used herein), this term is often used to refer to those reporters from nationally-known media outlets of the three modern mainstream media formats (newspapers, radio and television) who enjoy direct access to government elites in Washington, D.C.; for this study, those reporters who have become the world's primary conduit for terrorism-related news coming out of the United States (Couldry, 2000; Kellner, 1995; Reese & Danielian, 1989). As one scholar argued regarding public policy communication channels, the personal "interface between journalists and elites is a key transmission point for spreading activation of frames" (Entman, 2004, p. 11). This small group of journalists, whom have also been termed elite (Lichter, Rothman & Lichter, 1986), has been argued to

have become the front lines of national security journalism (Dimitrova & Stromback, 2008; Entman, 2004).

Press/Media/Journalist/Reporter

In today's collegiate communication courses, students are often taught that "media" is the proper term for the broader public of journalists from all mass channels, as "press" has traditionally referred to the newspaper in relation to the printing press. However, for this study the terms "media" and "press" are used interchangeably to encompass both traditional and modern mass communication forms of daily information and opinion presentation including broadcast, print and electronic newsgroups, or any form of mass communication used to relay a message to the general public.

In line with other scholars, this study describes those within the population being studied as "those who had responsibility for the preparation or transmission of news stories or other information - all full-time reporters, writers, correspondents, columnists, photojournalists, news people, and editors" (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996, p. 248). This definition excludes freelancer journalists, tabloid writers and editorial staff, talk show hosts, cartoonists, librarians, camera operators, video/audio technicians and those journalists whose stories solely appear online.

News

News is defined in this study as a constructed reality of journalists using "pertinent information gathered by professionally validated methods specifying the relationship between what is known and how it is known" (Tuchman, 1978, p. 82-83). Ultimately, most scholars have agreed that news is a product that journalists create and construct (Schudson, 1978).

United States Intelligence Community

The Intelligence Community includes a broad range of executive branch agencies and organizations. These entities work in tandem to gather foreign relations intelligence and protect the national security of the United States. Members of this group include (in alphabetical order): Central Intelligence Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency, Department of Energy (Office of Intelligence & Counterintelligence), Department of Homeland Security (Office of Intelligence & Analysis), Department of State (Bureau of Intelligence & Research), Department of Treasury (Office of Intelligence & Analysis), Drug Enforcement Administration (Office of National Security Intelligence), Federal Bureau of Investigation (National Security Branch), National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, National Reconnaissance Office, National Security Agency/Central Security Service, United States Air Force, United States Army, United States Coast Guard, United States Marine Corps and the United States Navy. Additionally, the Director of National Intelligence serves as the head of the IC. This person advises the U.S. President, the National Security Council, and the Homeland Security Council, as well as supervises and employs the National Intelligence Program (National Security Agency, 2009).

National Security/Homeland Security Reporting

Given the hundreds of definitions for national and homeland security (Weimann, 2004) and for purposes of this study, these concepts will be operationally defined as they are perceived by study participants. Even for various media outlets, there is a stark difference among the understandings of national security versus homeland security. Generally, however, "national security" denotes a focus on *intervention* agencies which deal with the investigation of terrorists and attempted

and actual terrorism incidents. These agencies would include the Department of Justice, Central Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency and government contractors.

"Homeland security" is seen as denoting the *protection* agencies that seek to prevent and respond to a terrorist incident such as the Transportation Security Administration and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Other formal beat names include Intelligence, White House, Military, and Pentagon. Although bioterrorism issues are often handled by the Health & Human Services agency, "health" is, in most every major D.C. outlet, a separate beat outside of the terrorism realm, just as food protection by the USDA is considered a separate topic.

As the third largest United States Cabinet department, DHS contains 22 agencies under its umbrella that cover, per the demarcation above, both national (their response mandate) and homeland (their protection mandate) security practices (Department of Homeland Security, 2008).

Obviously, there is overlap when covering terrorism issues. Reporters, editors and producers often determine which beat a journalist(s) will cover by story topic (from beginning to end, regardless of its various angles) based on their staffing resources and on a case-by-case basis. For example, one D.C. media outlet has four reporters covering matters of national and homeland security, so they can better parse which angles and agencies each journalist will develop sources inside, whereas another outlet has only two reporters covering this beat, leaving them to delineate the agencies, and hence the scope of their beat, in a different way. For this study, the terms homeland and national security will be interchanged to denote all terrorism news coverage.

Terrorism

Although "terrorism" has more than 100 different definitions (Schaffert, 1992) and no widely agreed-upon definition even within any one realm (academia, intra-U.S. agency, international community, media), for the purposes of this research the term will be operationally defined in a broad sense to mean any deliberate or threatened violent act against civilian targets (whether event victims or event audience) intended to create fear within those targets and with a goal of media attention and political or ideological change.

"War on Terror" Frame

This frame first took root during the Reagan Administration to define the U.S.-led fight against state-supported terrorism occurring in the Middle East and Latin America (Chomsky, 2002). After 9/11, President Bush utilized this frame during his September 20, 2001 address to a joint session of Congress. Specifically, President Bush said, "Our war on terror will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated" (Wilson & Kamen, 2005) and "Our war on terror begins with Al Qaeda, but it does not end here" (Staff, 2010). Mainstream media rapidly adopted this frame and continued its use even after the Bush Administration attempted to change the phrase to "global struggle against violent extremism" just days later. However, it was too late; global media had easily digested the frame and thus began what has been a decade of debate regarding its impact on U.S. public policy and military action enacted in retaliation of the 9/11 attacks.

Fast forward to March of 2005 with the attempt of a rhetoric shift by the new presidential administration. As the *Washington Post* reported, the Obama

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Administration "appears to be backing away from the phrase 'global war on terror,' a signature rhetorical legacy of its predecessor… in a memo e-mailed this week (March 25, 2009) to Pentagon staff members, the Defense Department's office of security review noted that 'this administration prefers to avoid using the term 'Long War' or 'Global War on Terror' [GWOT.] Please use 'Overseas Contingency Operation'" (Wilson & Kamen, 2005). As comedian Jon Stewart predicted, the new phrase "will catch on like Crystal Pepsi" (Baker, 2009). In 2010, it is clear that this attempted change in rhetoric has failed as evidenced by media silence in using the term. Whether this media choice is due to the term's vague content, its wounded context or its source originator has not yet been determined.

Method

Because this dissertation explored the perceptions and roles of journalists, the study design utilized individual, in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted with Washington, D.C.-based national security reporters (in many cases, this is the actual formal beat name employed by their organizations) working for U.S. nationally-recognized newspaper, radio and/or television outlets who are the first point of contact to investigate news about terrorism with top government officials in D.C. Access to 10 of these reporters from a previous, IRB-approved study (Epkins, 2008) helped to recruit additional participants through a snowball, convenience sample of 35 interviews conducted over 10 months. Given several participants of this study shared that the national security prestige press of Washington, D.C. is approximately only 40 strong, it seems this research was able to capture a large portion of the total population.

All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Details on participant recruitment, procedure, and data analysis are included in Chapter 3. The recruitment

email is attached in Appendix A, Appendix B is the IRB consent form and the interview guide is attached in Appendix C.

Delimitations

In order to more specifically define the scope of this research, there are several delimitations to outline. First, barring directly relevant literature to the theoretical framework for this dissertation and given the vast amount of literature on mass communication theory, this dissertation primarily used post-9/11scholarship that also included media analysis. Classic and foundational works were also included, where appropriate, for a more robust understanding of the theories discussed. It follows, then, that unless the literature reviewed is relevant to media coverage of terrorism post-9/11 or are foundational or directly relevant works of theories discussed herein, it was not introduced.

Second, most of the literature is drawn from United States-based scholarship. Though there is modern media and terrorism scholarship that seeks to analyze global practitioners through the lens of 9/11 and the role of other national governments in their respective nation's handling of their specific terrorism issues and their press corps, (Cram, 2006; Orttung & Makarvchec, 2006; McBride, 2007), due to disparate media-government models and relationships within the global community and the variance in terrorist dealings per nation (Martin, 1985), as well as the prominence of American prestige media as a nexus point for international media (Couldry, 2003; Kellner, 1995; Reese & Danielian, 1989), particularly on terrorism issues, the literature review is delimited to focus on the dissertation area concerning how the American media -- particularly D.C.-based media -- covers terrorism information disseminated primarily by the American government.

Third, although ethical questions and answers did arise, given the extremely broad scope of media and journalism scholarship, this study did not explore the massive amount of literature surrounding media ethics, but instead focused more on the news production process, role and function of this study population.

Fourth, regarding type of media outlet studied, this was delimited to only include mainstream, nationally-recognizable newspaper, radio and television outlets based in Washington, D.C. Much of framing scholarship available has explored mainstream media channels, traditionally considered as most "prestigious," and research on new media has just recently flourished. Therefore, this study remained grounded in scholarship exploring Washington, D.C. major mainstream news media outlets.

Finally, for data collection, this study focused mainly on journalists who cover national security matters directly and on a daily basis. This excluded reporters who may cover the occasional terrorism-related issue for other beats such as the Department of Energy or Health and Human Services -- two government agencies that also engage in counter terrorism strategies. However, not only is a D.C. journalist solely covering these two agencies rare, this is not the case for any of the outlets examined herein.

<center>Research Significance</center>

This work contributed to mass communication scholarship by exploring, for the first time, the individual level perceptions of this rather new, post-9/11 genre of reporter -- Washington, D.C.-based, national security prestige press -- who cover terrorism-related issues on a daily basis as the initial portal or conduit through which this information is channeled to the American public and, in many cases, the rest of the world. Furthermore, this research updated the hierarchy of influences model

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(Shoemaker & Reese, 1996) to include this new reporter population and address its existence in a post-9/11 world.

Moreover, this research addressed one of the most important frames of the current era, the "War on Terror," and provided a timely exploration of a recently attempted frame shift by the Obama Administration to "Overseas Contingency Operation." Scholars have called for the expansion of framing theory when reporting on terrorism and have communicated an urgency to understand how these reporters consume, internalize and disseminate such information (Lewis & Reese, 2009; Reese & Lewis, 2009; Barnett & Reynolds, 2009). Given evidence supporting media "convergence" (Reese & Danielian, 1989), the "news wave" (Fishman, 1980), an "echoing press" effect (Domke et al., 2006) and prestige media influence over not only other news organizations (Dimitrova & Stromback, 2008) but also public policy (Entman, 2004), it is crucial to understand from the beginning of the wave, how these journalists adapt to changing routines and adopt (or not) the communication frames disseminated by government elites. This research expanded framing scholarship by finding that specific journalist perceptions regarding the Administration in power could be influencing how terrorism is presented in their work.

This research expanded terrorism and national securities scholarship by directly addressing the timely topic of terrorism and the communication channels so integral to terrorist goals. Generally, terrorism research is a burgeoning, albeit lacking field, potentially due to the capacity of every issue to be seen through a terrorism lens, leaving linkable scholarship well-dispersed across the disciplines. Concluding that the terrorism field has too few researchers because of the difficulty in studying the topic, a content analysis of new terrorism journals from 1995-1999 (Silke, 2001)

found that terrorism research was not only disparate across disciplines, but also methodologically lacking. For example, Silke's study found the use of only open source data and little first generation data and that more than 80% of the journal articles and the 160 terrorism-related studies over the decade prior to 2000 were each published as "one-offs" where the author never followed up. Moreover, Silke (2004) later argued that terrorism scholarship relies too heavily on secondary research with a dearth of scholars willing to utilize primary research. Another shortcoming in literature, according to a recent 15-year content analysis of framing literature in general, is the exclusion of non-content analysis studies on the strategic frames of the communicator themselves (Matthes, 2009). This study is one of only a few communication-based studies to explore these topics qualitatively, bringing relevant communication theory to the table while bridging the disciplines of national securities, political science and mass communication.

In the face of few qualitative terrorism studies, this research also offered methodological advances to aid in the understanding of how the national security prestige press of Washington, D.C. report on terrorism. With greater qualitative depth, a more holistic understanding of key news-building components that can only be discovered via in-depth interviews was obtained. This offered a balance of rich data sets exploring the personal opinions, beliefs and attitudes of journalists in action as evidence of (or fodder for) the theoretical set of mechanisms that construct and determine the process of disseminating news about terrorism.

Scholarship has also attempted a normative dialogue on *how* media should handle the breaking of such news. One media ethics scholar even posed great urgency for "the greater good of society, a much larger group than the terrorists" that now

requires the media immediately to go about "carefully analyzing communication about terrorist acts so as not to serve the needs of terrorist organizations and a small number of people who thrive on hate, fear and destruction" (Bowen, 2005, p. 81). Others have deeply anaylzed the process of frame transmission, reification and naturalization to examine its practical impact on public policy choice (Reese & Lewis, 2009). This dissertation collected current-day national security reporter perceptions on such matters.

Finally, this work sought to contribute to praxis by encouraging or discovering better ways of reporting about terrorism that might help discourage further violence and/or act as an effective catalyst of information, and perhaps even comfort, to their audiences (Entman, 2004; Fox, 2003; Nacos, 2007).

In Epkins's (2008) pilot study of 10 interviews with D.C.-based national security prestige press and Lewis and Reese's (2009) recent interview research with journalists across the U.S., both found that national security journalists *themselves* are frustrated with the use of the "War on Terror" frame by both government and their colleagues as they seek to succinctly but accurately communicate nebulous yet central terms to their audience. Therefore, the study findings offer practical contributions and identify best practices to journalists as they seek, consume, interpret, and disseminate the "War on Terror" frame and terrorism information in general, to the public at large.

Dissertation Outline

Chapter Two of this dissertation will review pertinent mass communication literature and note related national security/political science scholarship. Within mass communication, the literature will focus on the areas of building news content and framing theories as they relate to the media coverage of terrorism-related matters.

Within national security and political science literature, this study overviews classic political science scholarship by seasoned scholars who have examined the historical interplay between media and terrorism long before September 11, 2001. Chapter Two also provides the theoretical basis referred to throughout the dissertation.

In Chapter Three, methodology is detailed and the rationale for choosing a qualitative approach to examine research questions, including data collection methods and procedures, as well as data analysis, interpretation, validity and ethics issues is offered.

In Chapter Four, participant data results are presented. This section is organized by the four Research Questions outlined at the end of Chapter Two.

In Chapter Five, this study offers discussion and analysis, as well as identifying limitations of this research, with potential implications for future praxis and research on related theory and national security reporting for a post-9/11, Washington D.C. prestige press culture. Appendices include recruitment materials, IRB consent forms and the interview guide.

Chapter Two – Conceptualization

Overall, this dissertation used the application of theories that explain the building of news media content as well as literature that has explored the complex relationship among media, terrorists, the government and the citizenry. In general, media studies argue that journalists socially construct meaning for their audiences merely by the selection and omission of components making up a news story (Reese & Lewis, 2009). Furthermore, the concept of social constructionism has paved the way for the construct of framing (Scheufele, 2000). Therefore, numerous studies now link a journalist's background, characteristics and experiences to their personal and intrinsic "frame" (Reese & Lewis, 2009). Moreover, many individual level factors, including a journalist's personal background, experiences, attitudes, values and beliefs potentially shape media content -- all of which can be considered as their personal frame of reference (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 65). Therefore, the following literature streams provided a framework for this research: framing, the hierarchy of influences model, social constructionism, media and terrorism and national security studies.

Framing

This dissertation explored scholarship that uses the application of framing theory to examine news content building in a post-9/11, mediated environment (Bennett, 2003; Entman, 2004; Reese, 2007). Framing theory offers an opportunity to explore the intricacies of the news production process because this theory provides a window into the "selection, emphasis and exclusion that furnish a coherent interpretation and evaluation of events" (Norris, Kern & Just, 2003, p. 4). Furthermore,

framing studies have shown that a media frame affects the audience frame (Pfau et al., 2004).

Overall, framing describes the process of content selection and exclusion, highlighting certain aspects over others to communicate a particular point of view. In many ways, a frame facilitates the nature of an argument -- specifically, communicating a certain bent, context or angle of an issue that, in itself, lends an interpretive meaning of the communication. As Jamieson and Waldman (2003, p. 1) put it, "journalists deliver the world to citizens in a comprehensible form." Some scholars argue that framing "tells us how to interpret communication" (Bowen, 2008 p. 339). Perhaps the most utilized definition in scholarship, Entman denotes framing as selecting "some aspects of a perceived reality to make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (1993, p. 52). However, Reese more broadly defines framing (used as this study's operational definition) as "organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world" (2001, p. 11). However, the concept, scope and criteria of "framing" are inconclusive and still hotly debated in scholarship (Reese, 2007).

Unavoidably as reality is never "unframed," a frame is both an effective, and an affective narrative device beholden to an implicit or assumed worldview had the story been told through the eyes of another. Often seemingly innocent in its individual use, ultimately a frame can become part of a cycle where it is "transmitted" and "reified" so many times that it becomes "naturalized" (Lewis & Reese, 2009). The danger of this cycle is the frames' power to encourage certain interpretations and

negate alternative frames after mass acceptance. For example, in their content analysis of the associative framing that emerged from the impact of "the global event of 9/11," findings indicated that the 9/11 attacks created "a strong framework of Muslims as terrorists in all investigated media." (Ruigrok & van Atteveldt, 2007, p. 68, 86).

More specifically, frames exercise the power to control and shape public policy debate (Entman, 2004). This coupled with the power of media to influence both general public perceptions and specific public policy (Capella & Jamieson, 1997; Edy & Meirick, 2007; Patterson, 1993), and the implications are urgently relevant in a post-9/11 world.

Scholars have labeled and discussed specific interpretive media frames introduced immediately post-9/11, including the "manufacture of heroism" frame and "the demonization of Saddam" frame (Keeble, 2004, p. 52, 55), as well as older frames contributing to today's interpretive and ritual choices, such as the "us vs. them" frame beget during the Cold War (Moeller, 2004, p. 63). One scholar summarizes the utility of this frame in scholarship saying, "the 'war on terror' is a rich current framing case from the past, perhaps the most important of our time" (Entman, 2004, p. 152).

Frames emerge and strengthen where journalists and elites interact "and it is not always easy to determine where the line between "elite" and "journalist" should be drawn, or who influences whom" (Entman, 2004, p. 11). In fact, the "War on Terror" frame can no longer be directly associated to any one sponsor or political opinion, as this frame is now considered to have achieved a macro level status (Reese, 2007; Lewis & Reese, 2009).

A more recent framing study found support for the creation, promotion and spreading of frames, to both officials and the media, as a product from a hierarchy of political actors (Entman, 2003). The *cascading activation model* depicts the greatest power to frame among administration entities such as the White House, State, and Defense Departments. Moreover, this model allows for congressional members and policy think tanks to possess the ability to spread frames, albeit not as easily. Building on Bennett's (1990) influential indexing hypothesis, Entman predicted the escalation of alternative frames only in the face of elite disunity. Furthermore, Entman argued that alternative frames will only spread to the higher echelons in his model when society demands actually reach these powerful officials. Nevertheless, whoever "wins the framing contest…gains the upper hand politically" (Entman, 2004, p. 9).

Generally, literature on media framing of terrorism-related matters has centered on hindsight judgment, via case studies, and argues parochial framing of the lead up to the Iraq war after 9/11 that "complied fully with U.S. administration policy and never acknowledged the appropriateness of an entirely, alternative frame" (Boyd-Barrett, 2004, p. 29). Moreover, scholars posit that this was planned and induced by the Bush Administration (Moeller, 2004, Norris et al., 2003). As Boyd-Barrett (2004) further argued, this was specifically accomplished handily through the White House 'messages of the day' which allowed for intra-government agreement (framing) as well as controlling the day's media agenda.

Furthermore, while there is evidence that the government may initially set the media agenda, over time the public is also conditioned to understand the historic discourse of a topic, for example terrorism, within a certain framework that is reflected by public opinion (Sadaba & La Porte, 2006). Therefore, knowing this

public opinion, both the government and the media appeal to the audience in these well-traveled frames. Scholarship also supports prevalence of this kind of rhetoric utilization in countries with long histories of terrorism (Sadaba & La Porte, 2006, p. 86). The "War on Terror" frame, for example, has become the crux of both reporting and understanding homeland security issues in America (Norris et al., 2003, p. 4).

Framing the Framers. Overall, literature supports the extensive news coverage of 9/11 as the evolution for the "framing of terrorism into an 'event'" and the subsequent feel of "prime time terrorism" that has now surfaced as an ever-increasing component in "the strategic calculus of terrorists" (Volkmer, 2002, p. 238). While it is clear that terrorists attempt to infiltrate these news frames and government elites frame their messages for journalist use as well, it follows that journalists themselves are not immune to framing and are also susceptible to the framing of other journalists. Interestingly, journalists often frame their own pursuit of "truth" as a "heroic" quest… in the face of obstacles including sources with political agendas the journalist must see through" (Peterson, 2007, p. 256).

Scholars indeed have found empirical support for journalists adopting frames from other journalists – a type of contagious framing. While Nacos asserts that media patterns often engage in "follow-the-leader syndrome" (2002, p. 98), Entman more specifically argues that a few top news organizations are followed by the rest of media in "a pecking order" (2004, p. 10). In fact, there is evidence of a media "convergence" (Reese & Danielian, 1989), a "news wave" (Fishman, 1980) and an "echoing press" (Domke et al., 2006). While these concepts are often applied to media at large (Dimitrova & Stromback, 2008), some in scholarship argue that the prestigious group of media in Washington, D.C. likely serve as the funnel through

which other media glean their stories, definitions and frameworks from which to perform their own reporting routine, caught up in a trickle down effect (Dimitrova & Stromback, 2008; Entman, 2004, Epkins, 2008). From a media values perspective, the journalist knows that the mention (or framing) of terrorism, for example, inherently offers traction to any media story (Epkins, 2008), therefore, arguably "elite newspapers *can influence other news organizations* (italics added) and the policy makers in each country" (Dimitrova & Stromback, 2008, p. 207) by sparking copycat coverage.

Although journalists and their stories are often portrayed in classic communication studies as beholden to social context and common news production routine (Fishman, 1980; Gamson, 1989; Gitlin, 1980; Schudson, 1978; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Tuchman, 1978), reporters are "always engaged in practices of interpretation that precede and order their practices of representation" (Peterson, 2007, p. 256). Indeed, media framing is central to, and organizes, how people socially construct everyday reality. Given that people, like frames, are not static, one scholar posits that framing should be approached from "the more dynamic, 'organizing' ability of frames rather than the singular attributes of a frame" (Reese, 2004, p. 152).

The effects of framing have been voraciously debated in scholarship over many decades (Reese, 2001a; Reese, 2001b; Scheufele, 2000). Scholars generally agree that media profoundly impact the formation of opinion regarding the public agenda (Iyengar, 1987; Patterson, 1993). As Kern et al notes, media framing is "consequential" and influences "the political process, public policy and international affairs" (2003, p. 298). Therefore, even though Gilboa cautions that scholars have not yet found a theory "that effectively addresses the web of relations and influences

among the government, the media and public opinion" (2005, p. 337), if terrorists are aiming for publicity and media possesses the power to impact public opinion and public policy, then understanding the relationship between media framing and terrorism is crucial.

However, within the attempt to build operational models to explain post-9/11 media coverage, many scholars are concerned that the elite "discourse of fear" uses the media to frame and "promote a sense of disorder and a belief that 'things are out of control'…where fear reproduces itself, or becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy" (Altheide, 2006, p. 994; Chermak, 2003). Alternatively, newer literature suggests that the public is no longer responding to such framing attempts. Coining the word "routinization," Liebes and Kampf (2007) suggest that pervasive media coverage leads to a predictable, constrained and more aloof perception of terrorism coverage as time passes and a culture of *immunity or desensitization* protrudes. In fact, these authors posit that "coverage has turned from black and white to shades of grey in which the traditional villain is not exclusively evil and the hero is not exclusively righteous" (p. 115). Perhaps, both the media and the public are becoming hardened to the hype of terrorism media coverage, finding it all too routine and making it difficult to build operational media models.

Therefore, with the recent emergence of a "special terror-related genre within journalism," (Mogenson, 2008), the application of framing theory to this group of national security prestige press, and the acknowledgment of their role both as framers and frame consumers, offers the opportunity to build upon the individual level of Shoemaker and Reese's (1996) model of news content influence. By applying this micro-level of news production to the intersection among Washington, D.C. reporter,

terrorist and elite government sources, more can be learned more about contemporary national security media coverage in the United States.

Lewis and Reese Frame Cycle Model

In the second portion of a two-part study, Lewis and Reese (2009) explored how 13 *USA Today* journalists from across the country made meaning of the "War on Terror" frame in general, and whether their personal discourse matched the framing cycle (transmission, reification and naturalization) as proposed by Reese and Lewis (2009) in their previous content analysis of the same interviewed reporter's works from 2001-2006. Overall, Lewis and Reese (2009) found support for their hypothesis that journalist personal discourse showed strong evidence for the embracement of all three phases in the framing naturalization process. This second study also discovered support for "the malleability of the "War on Terror" frame—its *ability to stretch and evolve over time*, subsuming new enemies while occluding others" (p. 22).

Using the "War on Terror" frame, in their first study that introduced the journalist's "model for interpretive framing" (Reese & Lewis, 2009, p. 780), these scholars proposed a framing process that ranged from a simple policy description, reflecting what was proposed as the cascading effect (Entman, 2003) of a frame's influence from White House to press, to a frame's adoption by a journalist as an unquestioned "condition of life" (p. 784). Specifically, this cycle begins with transmission, or the words spoken by a frame's sponsor. Next, that frame is reified when journalists take and use an abstract frame as an uncontested fact. Finally, naturalization turns a frame "into a state of being – lifting policy into a larger narrative of struggle and heroism" (p. 788). However, the author's purport that this cycle does not necessarily occur in succession as each element was found throughout

their study's time frame.

Hierarchy of Influences Model

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) argue there are five levels they term the "hierarchies of influence" that affect the news building production process; these levels include individual, media routines, organizational, extra-media and ideological (p. 64). From micro to macro, these various levels examine the forces which shape news content building. In general, these authors argue that hierarchically, "what happens at the lower levels is affected by, even to a large extent determined by, what happens at the higher levels" (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996, p. 12). This model helps to explain the larger structure within which journalists function and "determine under which conditions certain factors are most determinative" (Reese, 2001b). Using a visual model of concentric circles (Figure 1) to illustrate various levels of influences on media content, the authors sought to provide a new direction for mass communication research arguing for a "shift in research tradition" (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 106, p. 223). Specifically, this model uniquely described the multi-

Figure 1

Ideological Level

Extramedia Level

Organizational Level

Individual Level

Media Routines Level

Updated Hierarchy of Influences Model
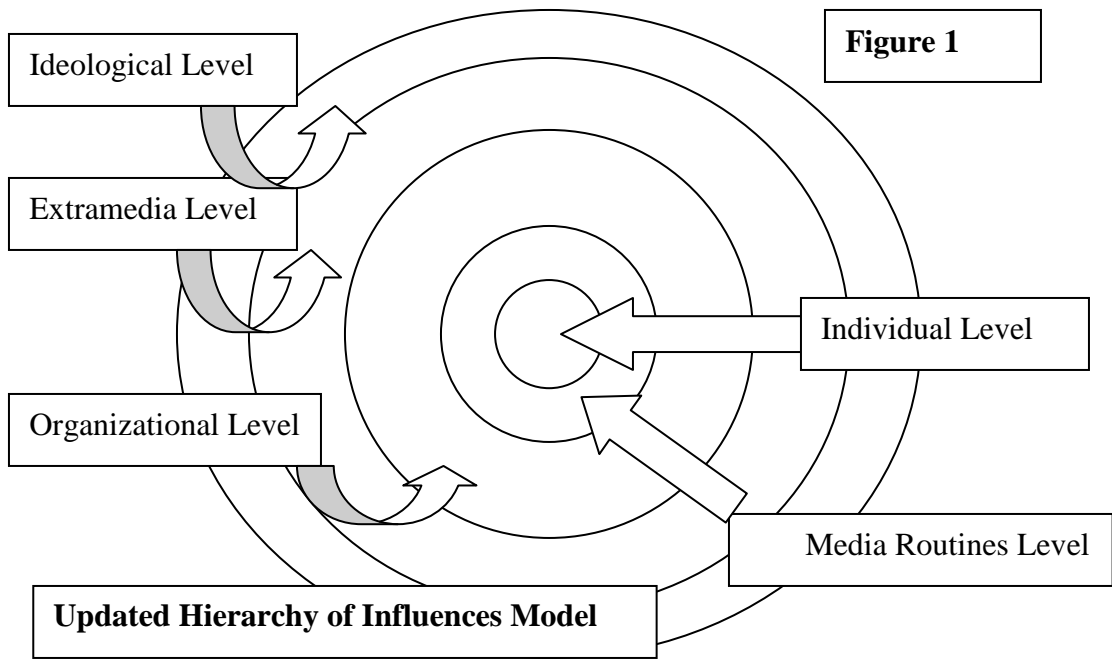
Original Hierarchy of Influences Model

layered process of news production as a series of hierarchal connections. This notion deflected the prevailing view in scholarship at that time that an individual reporter was the sole influence on media content (p. 17-20). Nonetheless, it is clear that this model presents each level in an order, a hierarchy, which indicates that one influence is *more powerful* than another. For example, these authors suggest that the power of media routines "take on a life of their own" and supersede the power of individuals to influence media content (p. 106). This logic continues to the ideological level of influence as the authors assert that this level "subsumes all the others we have been talking about and, therefore, is the most macro of the levels in our hierarchy of influences model" (p. 223).

    Individual Level of Influence. In a follow-on article to the hierarchy of influences regarding use of this model by one of its founders, Reese argued that although a journalist is not the sole force in the production of news, these levels can act separately and together. He further conceded that often "the power to shape news is held by the individual journalist, and journalist studies attribute great importance to individual characteristics in shaping the news product" but that these studies "are not often linked to specific outcomes." Reese also stated that a researcher must find "under which conditions certain factors are most determinative and how they interact with each other" (Reese, 2001b, p. 180).

    Furthermore, Reese asserted that normally, "studies treat journalists as typically undifferentiated with regard to their location in the organization, and the influence of elite journalists and key gatekeepers is understated by the attempt to emphasize the broad occupational features of this group" and continued by saying much of scholarship focused on journalists is examined as a group, denying the

"power of specific individuals within the group who have advantageous structural 'gatekeeper' locations" (Reese, 2001b, p. 180). It is clear that the hierarchy of influences model views the press as a social system and does not leave room for any journalist or group of journalists to act as independent social actors.

However, recent research has found mounting evidence for reporters breaking out of the hierarchy of influences model within the context of reporting on terrorism and national security-related matters. Specifically, scholarship has revealed that in breaking television news situations such as terrorism, a journalist's personal biases perhaps most strongly influence news structure and angle due to the instant news turnaround required and the need for journalist-as-source in these high-pressure, solo situations (Reynolds & Barnett, 2003). Similarly, in the case of journalist military embeds, evidence has been found for sole reporter autonomy with little to no censorship interference, including editor control (Fahmy & Johnson, 2009; Kim, 2010).

Moreover, other scholarship has supported this finding for journalists in general. In a panel study of 400 reporters regarding changes of professionalism for U.S. journalists, scholars found that reporter autonomy had risen three points from 2002-2007 with nearly half of the reporters sharing, "they had almost complete freedom to decide which aspects of a story to emphasize" (Beam, Weaver, & Brownlee, 2009, p. 282). Therefore, this study focused on the individual journalist level by investigating the personal perceptions of reporters themselves to determine the power of specific journalists who have the advantage of being located inside the national security prestige press of Washington, D.C.

Social Constructionism

Another helpful theoretical approach is the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This perspective might help explain why a reporter might depend on personal biases when covering a sensitive, out-of-the-ordinary-routine topic. Broadly, the theory of social constructionism suggests that people create their own reality from social interactions with others; the world as they know it is constructed via individual backgrounds, beliefs, knowledge and biases. When covering national security-related matters, this theoretical perspective also offers strong support that an individual's social constructions of reality may supersede, even consume, other hierarchy levels in situations where the immediacy of getting terrorism-related news to the public is often a one-shot opportunity.

One way to examine social constructionism is to unpack the ways in which individuals and groups share in the construction of their perceived social reality. Often, this includes exploring the means by which social phenomena are created, reified, institutionalized and understood. This process is ongoing and dynamic with a strong possibility for change, as meaning can shift from human to human and over time. Therefore, when studying framing – also a dynamic process – this notion of shared construction is also pertinent.

For example, as Norris, Kern and Just argued, there was an immediate, post-9/11 "shift in the predominant news frame used by the American mass media for understanding issues of national security, altering perceptions of risks at home and threats abroad" (2003, p. 3-4). Certainly this shift affected, and was in part created by, journalists as well. On the surface it appeared that every journalist beat, at least for a time, was reported through a terrorism lens. Not only did reporter routines change to

include questions about terrorism after any disaster or crime (Chermak, 2003), but presidential administration and government agency secrecy immediately heightened post-9/11 leaving journalists with a great need to allow additional anonymous sources into their stories in order to do their jobs (Epkins, 2008).

The national security prestige press of Washington, D.C. may operate in a culture unique only to them. Nevertheless, understanding how this "first responder" (Lepre & Luther, 2007) group who can begin the global "media wave" (Fishman, 1980) socially constructs news content is useful to explain the adoption of terrorism news frames, as well as unique routines, that may have even spawned *from* the individual level for this group in particular.

Media and Terrorism

Overall, recent terrorism and media scholarship rarely offers qualitative work, rather mostly broad conceptual, ethical and historical pieces, as well as specific news content analyses. In fact, use of qualitative methods has become a significant gap in terrorism literature (Horgan, 2010). However, there are several scholarly books and articles from other disciplines available that are helpful in understanding the intersection of terrorism and media.

One of the foremost scholars in political science regarding the multi-faceted relationship between terrorists and the media, Brigitte Nacos, asserted that terrorists commit violent acts seeking three main objectives: attention, recognition, and legitimacy (1994, p. 54). Most scholarship agrees with her assessment and has further concluded that for a terrorist, "there is no such thing as bad publicity" (Bowen, 2005, p. 86), often asserting that "terrorists see the media as a powerful tool" (Weimann, 2004, p. 383). In fact, it has long been established that "terrorist acts provide

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countless news stories for the media, and at the same time, terrorists exploit the media for both tactical and strategic purposes to mobilize support and gain public recognition" (Nagar, 2007; see also Martin, 1985; Dowling, 1986; Laqueur, 1976).

Even the now oft employed labels in literature of "mass-mediated terrorism" (Nacos, 2003) and "media-oriented terrorism" (Weimann & Winn, 1994) -- illustrating that the only way the public can understand terrorism is through the media -- serve as evidence of "the centrality of media considerations in the calculus of political violence that is committed by non-state actors against civilians" (Nacos, 2003, p. 23).

Scholars warn about the professional relationship between media and terrorist, cautioning that "news coverage of terrorist activities carries a double-edged sword of legitimizing the terrorists versus informing and warning audiences of threat" (Bowen, 2005, p. 81); without virulent publicity, terrorists would be unable to reach their objectives (Hoffman, 2006; Nacos, 2007). Nacos argued that for the terrorist, "political violence -- especially so-called 'terrorist spectaculars' -- always results in widespread news reporting and mass-mediated debates," thereby influencing public policy on at least the awareness level (2000, p. 175). Several scholars suggest that scholarship be updated to account for changes in a post-9/11 world (Moeller, 2004). More recently, content analysis scholarship showed that a new paradigm has evolved "whereby terrorists have become regular, sought after sources, achieving status in which they…to some extent set the agenda" (Liebes & Kampf, 2007, p. 78).

In fact, this profound media access ushers terrorists into close proximity with a democratic society and its' decision-making process, which in turn, can help increase the probability of a political decision that favors the interests of their group;

in modern times, "terrorist perception of mass media depends upon their perception of probable media impact" (Torres-Soriano, 2008, p. 2). Therefore, looking to increase their recognition and legitimacy, terrorists calculate their potential to attract media that provide them with an opportunity to become one side of the "triangle of political communication" (Nacos, 2003, p. 12). Not only do terrorist groups enjoy a 24-7 news cycle allowing for maximum exposure of their own violent acts, but modern communication technologies such as the Internet, have now enabled them to bypass mainstream mass media and communicate directly with individual citizens – even personally recruiting future members of their group (Sciolino & Mekhennet, 2008).

While many studies point to the power of the media (and now user-generated gatekeeping) as gatekeepers for what the public will think about (Lewis, Kaufhold, & Lasorsa, 2010), it is only recently that scholarship has examined media coverage of domestic terrorism in the United States. In a content analysis of terrorism media coverage from 1980-September 10, 2001, results indicated the media rarely covered domestic terrorism incidents, but would devote more articles and words to domestic terrorism incidents if they included casualties, domestic terrorist groups, airlines or hijacking drama (Chermak & Greunewald, 2006).

Government Role in a Post-9/11 Mediated Environment. The ability of the public to make informed political and economic decisions rests upon honest, open communication. In fact, democracy itself depends on the content and accuracy of terrorism-related communications (Mythen & Walklate, 2006). However, when national security is at stake, government restraint of available information, "in the interest of the public" can cause public and media suspicion of government expediency

and convenience in lieu of accountability. Several Washington, D.C.-based national security reporters concur that there "is a security lens for everything now" and "everything gets stamped 'national security' …and what's happened in many instances is government has become less transparent if you throw up the whole issue of security in front of it" (Epkins, 2008, p. 11).

American media pervades global culture via exportation and circulation on a greater scale than any other world media (Kellner, 1995). Therefore, much of the current research on media coverage of terrorism is generally informed by, if not centered on, the relationship between American media and American government officials. Currently, this literature ranges from tactical to practical operational strategies within the U.S. government, as well as inside the press corps, to manage the flow of information regarding terrorism matters in an age of burgeoning technological innovations; most discusses the *power* or *inability* of government to set the agenda for media.

For example, in his study on the "net effect" of new technology on the American government, Robinson revealed a "government loss of control over the information environment and a news media that was…more likely to be adversarial and 'off-message'" (2004, p. 99). But, this is not necessarily good news for the journalist since the same "24-hour news and real-time reporting may create the impression of greater transparency, accuracy, and diversity, but the superficial nature of such coverage can actually limit the overall depth and quality of reporting" (2004, p. 101).

While some scholars are leading us to consider that the government may be losing its ability to control framing, most scholars find copious evidence of a powerful government communications outcome. For example, in her mixed-methods framing

piece, Moeller argued that "after September 11… the US media generally acquiesced with the deliberate terminology chosen by the administration" using President Bush-originated terms like "the war on terror" and "terrorist" that eventually were applied "to Bush foreign policy goals without attribution" (2004, p. 69). She called this an "enormous success" in agenda-setting by President Bush. A more recent qualitative study of how Swedish and U.S. newspapers have framed the war in Iraq suggested "the media agenda is often set by government officials rather than by journalists or editors" (Dimitrova & Stromback, 2008, p. 207; Entman, 2004; Bennett, 2003), affecting the relationship between these institutions.

Scholars have insisted that the media can be unidirectional in its source choice through an over-reliance on official sources (Sparrow, 2006) with evidence to suggest that "media serve mostly as mouthpieces for government's rehearsed platitudes…and only mirror statist discourse" (Aday & Livingston, 2008, p. 103). For example, scholars have recently found that the U.S. and British coverage of war continued to utilize dominant national frames on both mainstream and media outlet websites relying on national security as justification for war, while Arab channels framed the war as Western imperialism (Powers & el Nawawy, 2009, p. 267). However, another research stream has emerged to support only specific criteria for such allegations.

"Event-driven news," spawned from dramatic events (i.e. terrorism), is not only "more likely" to occur in today's high-tech world, but begets an important exception to the media as government pawn argument (Lawrence, 2000; Livingston & Van Belle, 2005). Robert Entman's cascading model of state-media relations posits that journalists covering these events are "no longer fearful of adverse public relations reactions to what once would have seemed unpatriotic and disloyal….freed of Cold War

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constraints, themselves chose sources that seemed to swamp the administration's line" (2004, p. 98-99).

Similarly, Entman acknowledged that just because a person's credentials say "press" does not mean they check their citizenship at the door. There is even evidence that a journalist's claim to U.S. citizenship might help them do their job better. In Epkins' qualitative project interviewing Washington, D.C.-based national security reporters, one participant commented, "the agencies and government authorities seem to trust me more than most because they know I was with them on 9/11, that I am an American too" (2008, p. 17). Still, scholarship overwhelmingly negates this new-found "freedom" from Cold War restraints, and in turn, finds strong support for indexing (Altheide, 2004; Bennett, 1990; Graber, 2003; Hutcheson, Domke, Billeaudeaux, & Garland, 2004; Nacos, 2003) with many studies concluding that the media became foremost -- patriotic reporters -- who lost their objectivity and exhibited sensationalism, or at least initial blind alignment, with the U.S. government post-9/11 (Anker, 2005; McChesney, 2002, Reynolds & Barnett, 2003; Zelizer & Allan, 2002).

Likewise, copious scholarship suggests that media source choice surrounding 9/11 inhibited open discourse and discouraging alternative responses to military action (Reynolds & Barnett, 2003; Lewis & Reese, 2009). Some scholars go so far as to accuse the media of "manipulating history to eliminate information," "underwriting bipartisan support" for government's executive branch and "abandoning their curiosity," by succeeding to place America into "a 'spiral of silence' (Noelle-Neumann, 1984) whereby alternative viewpoints were inhibited by perceived sanctions" (Boyd-Barrett, 2003, p. 35, 39-40, 47; Dimitrova & Stromback, 2008, p. 216). One scholar diagnosed this as incomplete reporting, arguing that in the case of the 2003 Iraq War,

"the media were reflecting majority sentiments" and therefore did not cover the antiwar arguments available at that time (Entman, 2004, p. 161-162).

In summary, scholarship offers substantial evidence that an unquestioned adoption of a government-spawned frame, such as the "War on Terror," does not serve the public well. As one scholar put it, "The "war on terrorism became the window through which all international events were viewed;" due to President Bush's us vs. them frame, the media lost its "moral imagination" so that now, this "terrorism frame threatens a nuanced understanding of the world" (Moeller, 2004, p. 64, 74).

National Security Studies

With the advent of the United States Department of Homeland Security in early 2003, numerous sub-departments with various purposes were merged under this lone government agency -- 22 in all (Department of Homeland Security, 2008). It could be argued that because of the disparate goals of this third largest government cabinet department that scholarship thus follows. For example, many scholars have chosen to explore national security as it relates to national tragedy, such as Hurricane Katrina (Zawahri, 2007), while others examine espionage and whistle blowing (Vladeck, 2008). Overall, there are dozens of research streams within national securities literature and terrorism scholarship is but one.

Within terrorism scholarship, some of the most promising and compelling data collection would certainly include the recent construction of the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), offering among other outputs, an inside glance at the inter-mix of terrorism, counterterrorism and the media while looking at how state actions might lead to further terrorist action. The GTD is the largest open-source database of international and domestic terrorism events in the world (LaFree, Korte, & Dugan, 2006).

However, most databases and exploratory national security studies, including the GTD, focus mostly on terrorist radicalization and community resilience with only a terse mention of the media's role within the terrorist threat process. Even inside communication literature addressing the interplay of media and terrorism, scholars treat the label of terrorism the same as it is applied by media (Norris, Kern, & Just, 2002), rarely offering solutions for praxis.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

RQ1: How does the Washington, D.C. national security prestige press make meaning of the concept of the "war on terrorism?"

This research question identified personal journalist perceptions of the "war on terrorism" as a concept. This can help us to better understand the perceived media content influences that the prestige press draws upon when reporting on the topic of terrorism. Moreover, this question explored how participant meaning-making of "war on terrorism" may influence their professional practices overall.

Under this question, journalists revealed the strongest influencers contributing toward their personal definitions of "war on terrorism," including their personal experiences on 9/11, and whether they perceive reporting on terrorism as helping to legitimize terrorist goals. Moreover, reporters shared insights into how they are attempting to achieve the delicate balances required when reporting on this sensitive topic.

RQ2: How does this prestige press understand the U.S. government's role in the construction and use of the "War on Terror" frame?

This question offered a first-time glimpse at how these journalists perceive the U.S. government's role in the construction, use and evolution of the "War on Terror"

frame. Furthermore, this question helped to ascertain how these perceptions guide their own news content decision-making.

Under this question, reporters reflected on their personal post-9/11 and Iraq War reporting -- including lessons learned from their 9/11 reporting experiences. Additionally, journalists evaluated their own use of the "War on Terror" frame as a communication tool and offered insight into whether their self-assessment has changed with a decade of hindsight from post-9/11 reporting.

RQ3: How does this prestige press understand their use of the "war on terrorism" in praxis?

This question explored journalist meaning-making of the "war on terrorism" frame in their own work. This exploration allowed a deeper understanding of how this concept has influenced a decade of national security reporting and the news gathering processes required for this beat.

Reporters reflected on their frustration with the term, whether they still use this frame to communicate with their audiences and their perceptions regarding future use of this frame. Moreover, participants discussed the power of this frame to influence journalist routines.

RQ4: How does this press perceive the U.S. government rhetoric shift to "Overseas Contingency Operation" has influenced national security reporting?

As an attempted recent shift in American government rhetoric, this question explored reporter perceptions of the evolution of the "Overseas Contingency Operation" as a replacement frame for the "War on Terror." This examination provided an inside look at how this press views changing government rhetoric in general and their perceived role in repeating that rhetoric.

Under this question, participants revealed their evaluation and use of the "Overseas Contingency Operation" as a term and assessed its relationship to the "War on Terror" frame. Moreover, journalists unpacked their beliefs regarding the previous and current Presidential Administrations. Finally, reporters discussed whether the "War on Terror" frame has died.

Chapter Three – Method

Qualitative, in-depth interviewing was used as the method to address the dissertation's Research Questions. Below, the advantages and disadvantages of choosing this method are provided. Then, a detailed account is provided of the data collection procedures, as well as details of the recruitment process for participants and the construction of the interview guide. Finally, data management and analysis strategies are described, as well as how research validity was secured and how ethical concerns were addressed.

Rationale for Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative research is used when a scholar desires to better understand the broader implications of a research question so as to place it in a social, political, or historical context (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Moreover, a researcher "does not provide a complete picture of meaning and contextual codes" simply by quantitatively analyzing copious amounts of data (Gitlin, 1980). More than anything, qualitative researchers are storytellers (Wolcott, 1994) because this methodology utilizes the researcher as the instrument (McCracken, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Potter, 1996).

Qualitative researchers describe rather than explain phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) seeking rich, vivid, contextualized accounts with a "ring of truth" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10). This type of research is guided by acts of questioning and dialogue (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Qualitative methodology is effectively applied in a research atmosphere with properties of constant change and blurred boundaries (Potter, 1996) where the researcher wishes to explore a perceived situation, meaning or process (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002), such as pursued herein.

Rigorous qualitative research can be achieved in several ways. This method should ensure the exploration of representative concepts, not persons, because this kind of researcher is seeking conceptual linkages that explain or describe the meaning or process of a population or phenomenon being studied, not proving or determining a product or outcome that could offer generalizability of its participants to a larger population (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). During the process, the researcher should maintain reflexivity and give voice to participants, while focusing on a set of experiences that shape meaning and interpret that meaning (Denzin, 2001). Furthermore, the researcher should systematically interpret this meaning, using "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) where the researcher interacts with the "in vivo" (living) data, capturing the data with verstehen (understanding). Overall, this methodology seeks in-depth understanding by gathering rich, detailed examples to explain the "how" and "why" of the chosen topic. One of the guiding purposes for utilizing qualitative research is to "enter into the world of participants, to see the world from their perspective and in doing so make discoveries that will contribute to the development of empirical knowledge" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 16).

Kvale (1995) encouraged research methods to match research questions. Instead of proving theory, I sought to explore and describe a unique public whom had not been studied extensively -- the D.C. national security press -- and to understand the interrelationships of this particular kind of journalist with the government, their editors, their sources and themselves. With the purpose of elaborating on theory, I employed qualitative methods to obtain rich, in-depth insights into this particularly complex research setting from the, often elusive and extremely busy, participant. The conversations I entered into with reporters resulted in copious amounts of descriptive

data that I have analyzed and categorized according to each of the four research questions. In fact, there was so much descriptive data that additional findings of note are also shared. Furthermore, the relationships I fostered with these participants allowed me to conduct an iterative research process as each reporter allowed me to follow-up with further questions and member checks prompted by other participant responses. I then utilized their answers to formulate better questions into subsequent interviews. Therefore, qualitative methodology served as the best tool for answering this study's research questions.

In-Depth Interviewing

In seeking an increased understanding of how and why "from the inside" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10), I explored first-person, deeply-held perceptions of the journalist. Thus, utilizing the in-depth interview was appropriate. In fact, I was told by reporters that they would not be willing to devote time to a survey or more impersonal method of inquiry because they wanted the chance to more fully explain their answers under IRB protection. Moreover, they would not allow observation due to the sensitive nature of their work. Conducting one-on-one conversations helped to access rich data and to build rapport, as well as allowed for working around the sensitive subject matter and last-minute scheduling needs of this group (McCracken, 1998).

Journalists could obviously relate to the interview even if it was they who normally served as the interviewer. In fact, it is through just such a "cooperative" interview experience that participants were able to give voice to their concerns and opinions, finding an outlet to actively engage in shaping dialogue; for such an understudied and necessarily private group who often must muffle their own voice, the

interview experience also seemed to provide a positive outcome for them, both personally and professionally.

Long Interviews. According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), long interviews are semi-structured and iterative, allowing for shared contextual meaning to naturally emerge. In turn, this provides vivid, detailed and nuanced data (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, pp.10-12). Glaser and Strauss (1967) asserted that a researcher can stop interviewing once they have researched all perspectives, considered all negative cases and can reach saturation.

Silke (2001) argued that interviews offer the advantage of greater flexibility, control and a wider context, but interviews have their disadvantages, too. Not only can there be participant-researcher difficulty, but there can be potential deception by the participant for myriad reasons; furthermore, researcher inexperience in listening and questioning as well as copious, unwieldy amounts of data can yield possible lower quality data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Silke (2001) further cautioned that interviews are attached with a lack of anonymity and can fall victim to opportunity sampling, bias and great expense.

Study Procedures

Recruiting Participants and Sampling. As Rubin and Rubin argued, recruiting individuals with relevant, first-hand experiences and knowledge regarding the research questions will produce the richest and most convincing data (2005, p. 65). Therefore, participants were chosen from a convenience, snowball and purposive sample (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 1995) of D.C.-based, national security journalists. Interviews were conducted with 35 from this group working for nationally-recognizable

newspaper, radio and/or TV outlets and were the first point of contact with government elite on matters of terrorism.

During the recruitment process, only 27 formally-termed "national security" beat reporters from major outlets in D.C. were found. One reporter even emailed a response to the interview request where it was revealed that the study sought at least 35 reporters, asking "Are there even 35 of us in town?" Therefore, this research opened the sample to interview other reporters located in Washington, D.C. who have either covered these topics in the recent past, were editors to the reporters interviewed or who currently cover tertiary beats such as homeland security/intelligence, the White House specifically, or military affairs/the Pentagon.

All participants included Washington, D.C.-based journalists who currently, or most recently, covered national security and terrorism issues for their major media outlet. Therefore, all participants interviewed currently or recently held the formal title of "national security" reporter for their media outlet. Moreover, after data collection revealed that the trade press of Washington, D.C. was often the beginning of the news wave where the "national security" prestige press garnered many of their story ideas, the six main trades (as reported by the study's participants) were also included as participants. Also, reporters identified *themselves* as "national security beat reporters."

Each media outlet, barring the trade press, has a national reach (audience) (without using online communications) and has a formal "national security" beat reporter as part of their infrastructure of journalists. All outlets were primarily English-speaking outlets. For example, participants were drawn from a national newspaper, national wire service, national television network or national radio outlet. National

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magazines based in Washington, D.C. were excluded because there was no formal, sole "national security" beat reporter as part of their news team.

Newspaper, radio and television outlets were chosen because of their national recognition. In most cases, reporters also wrote for the outlet's online engine, but those stories were normally just a shortened version of their mainstream story airing on the radio or TV or appearing in print. I did not find a mainstream outlet that had an online national security journalist specifically. In fact, in most cases, media outlets had just one correspondent whereas there was one outlet that employed up to 7 journalists on the "national security team." In this case, I interviewed 4 reporters from that team. Likewise, some outlets had chosen a different formal beat name for national security such as *Intelligence, Pentagon* or *Justice* and some outlets with fewer staff had rotated in and out of the White House beat as well. In the end, the population included 11 females and 24 males with an age range of more than 50 years.

Each reporter was contacted by telephone or email. If the first contact was an email, in almost every case where they preferred to speak by phone instead of meet in person, we conducted most of our communication via email and first "met" by phone upon conducting the interview. Many times a journalist would refer me to another journalist. Generally, however, journalists wanted to protect their identity and did not want their names associated if I were to contact the journalist they referred me to; of course, I upheld that request in all cases and simply stated that "a D.C. journalist colleague suggested I contact you."

The recruitment process allowed for flexibility for journalists to choose the opportunity to conduct the interview by telephone at the recognition that, although D.C.-based, many reporters travel around the world and finding a time to sit down

might be difficult. For example, one reporter was interviewed while he was on assignment in the Middle East and another was on assignment in New York City. Furthermore, reporters were offered the option of two, half-hour sessions should their schedule not allow for a full time of discussion, but every interview turned into a lively discussion completed in one sitting – each lasting at least one hour.

Upon direct communication, I informed participants of the nature of the study and their potential participation was explained. I also informed them that the study received IRB approval, their names and media outlets would be kept confidential (except to be potentially shared with my Advisor), and that their participation was voluntary. The email recruitment script is included in Appendix A, the IRB consent form in Appendix B and the interview guide is attached in Appendix C.

Procedure. In order to ensure an ethical, respectful interview, there were several precautions I took as a researcher. Most interviews were conducted in-person and in a comfortable, quiet place and time of the participant's choosing -- such as a nearby coffee shop during a low-traffic time or a quiet hotel lobby. In some cases, a phone interview was the preferable method for reporters. Each interview lasted at least one hour. A guide for questions was used, but first pre-tested with two D.C.-based reporters from a different beat other than national security, so I could preserve my limited access base.

Prior to each interview, I demonstrated transparency by first reiterating the required IRB confidentiality procedures, including using pseudonyms for both the participant and their media outlet, keeping consent forms, transcripts and tapes in a locked file drawer accessible only to me, and storing electronic files on a secured, non-publicly accessible computer. After this, I obtained informed consent and permission to

audiotape our conversation. Finally, I shared the study's purpose, my background and interest in the topic, what I hoped to accomplish for practical application, and briefly overviewed the interview questions. At the end of the interview participants were offered a copy of their consent form as well as the final copy of this research.

During the interview itself, I stayed within the time frame promised to them, unless they wanted to talk more – which happened in many cases. In order to accomplish keeping time on track when interviews were running long, I chose to spend less time on low-priority probes and the ramp down questions at the end. I also re-scheduled five participant interviews to accommodate their changing availability and was never able to catch up with one originally-planned participant due to her scheduling constraints.

As a former reporter myself, I have experience in listening and questions, but certainly the copious amount of notes was daunting during the entire data analysis process. During the data collection process, I continuously tracked the large volume of data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) contained in more than 875 pages of transcripts via field notes and observer comments on transcripts, by utilizing Word documents and through management of my own reflexive memos. Specifically, just before and after each interview, I would write a reflexive memo regarding my own biases or opinions. Then, I would transfer these thoughts, as well as field notes and observer comments written on the interview protocol itself to a dated Word document. As various concepts emerged over time, I began to transfer those notes to the appropriate document with a specific conceptual heading. Meanwhile, I color coded the emerging concepts inside the transcripts themselves and transferred those to the appropriate, now color-coded Word document as well. In this way, I could see the data emerging

to place them under the corresponding concept. Eventually, these concepts could then be split into categories and so forth.

It was via reflexive memos that I reminded myself prior to each interview that the very act of questioning may make topics sensitive to the participant and therefore vocally stated to participants in the beginning of the interview that there were no wrong answers and I was looking forward to gleaning their personal insights -- this helped allay initial participant fears (Wolcott, 1994). Moreover, I often began with ice breakers to make the participant feel more comfortable and ramped up with broad, grand tour questions. I only asked sensitive questions when the participant opened the door and it was necessary to the study. Furthermore, I offered each participant a natural environment (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) in which to have our conversation. I also guarded against the danger in making assumptions about participants' meanings by using probes, clarification and follow up questions for greater accuracy. Finally, during in-person interviews, I often used facial recognition and continuous recording of notes to make the participant feel that they were being heard and understood, while ensuring their emotions were able to achieve closure by ramping down the questions into an easy, soft area to help round out the interview process (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). These steps were also taken in an attempt to avoid the participant telling me what they thought I wanted to hear (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 195).

As Wolcott cautions, scholars should always remember the "paradox of intimacy" which can occur as the increased trust between a researcher and participant prohibits further (or accurate and ethical) study (1994, p. 195). If anything, I overcompensated for this by presenting a friendly, but "firmer than normal for me" exterior, as I was quite nervous of this potential. Nonetheless, with a similar

background where I understood the daily reporter grind -- and in a few cases actually having worked with the participant prior to these interviews -- I was certainly able to break the ice to make them feel comfortable speaking with me. However, during data analysis, I may have used a harsher, more cynical eye on their responses than I may have otherwise – much like a parent who teaches their child in a school atmosphere may be harder on their child than they would another child to ensure an ethical and accurate bias. I noted this in my reflexive memos.

Furthermore, I inquired with several reporters regarding their actual news coverage to find evidence that supported or challenged what they shared. However, I felt very awkward in bringing up past stories because it seemed they felt like I was trying to trick them into contradicting themselves. In the end, this practice taught me, that for this population at least, 1) I should wait until the interview is almost over before introducing such material to ensure an honest, open, non-adversarial discussion (and did so after a few interviews of practice) and 2) In almost all cases, the point was moot anyway as most journalists were extremely honest and critical in their personal assessment of their own reporting.

After 20 interviews, I felt the saturation point was reached, but continued data collection to obtain 35 interviews, ultimately confirming the saturation point had been reached at 20. I felt this point was reached once no new answers were offered and similar themes continued to emerge during each interview.

After the interview, I either personally gave or mailed a $5.00 Starbucks gift card to each participant as a thank you for their time and insights. If I mailed the gift card, I also mailed a personal thank you note. If I gave them the gift card, I emailed them a personal thank you note after the interview. The goal here was to communicate

deep respect for their time and input into my study. Most reporters replied to this gesture with gratitude and a statement such as "It was a pleasure to discuss the topics you brought up. The gift was unnecessary." One reporter flatly emailed me that she could not and would not accept gifts of any kind. I also offered a copy of the final dissertation or abstract to each participant and plan to send each of them a copy of what they requested after final revisions have been made.

Finally, I conducted member checks, both during the interview itself as well as afterward. During the interview and with almost every participant, my goal was to ensure that I accurately understood their meaning. This practice also allowed me to briefly stop and inquire whether a particular story, quote or colloquialism would identify them to others. Therefore, I reconfirmed my commitment to them that I would not reveal their identity. Moreover, I conducted member checks after data analysis with those who had time to reply, to help me further gauge the study's validity, including attempts to disconfirm my data to ensure no alternative meanings could be offered. This also allowed me to express my deep appreciation to participants by inviting further feedback. If I had any question that I might, in any way, reveal a participant's identity by revealing a specific quote, story or colloquialism that could potentially be traced back to that participant, I left it out entirely – even if it was important to building the narrative or served as evidence toward the study's conclusions. As qualitative literature suggests can occur, many participants thanked me for the opportunity to voice their own opinions and reflect on their own experience in an introspective manner with the feeling that they had contributed to research and praxis in some way (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Wolcott, 1994).

Interview Guide. The interview guide included mostly open ended questions, began with an introduction and included a short explanation of the study (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Wolcott, 2001). The guide was first pre-tested with two D.C.-based reporters from a non-national security beat so I could preserve my limited participant list. As the project continued, slight adjustments in the wording of the interview guide helped to reduce participant confusion and provide richer results.

The interview guide began with grand tour questions aimed at achieving researcher-participant rapport (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). I also utilized non-threatening discussion of topics such as weather, common acquaintances, and self-disclosure, to provide a more comfortable, transparent and inviting atmosphere. Questions continued to gradually increase in depth and probes were used to clarify participant meaning or deepen understanding. Ultimately, questions decreased in intensity to mitigate participant vulnerability. At the close of the interview, I offered an opportunity to re-visit anything discussed in the interview and asked if the participant could be contacted for further clarification, if needed. Referrals for other interviewees were also solicited.

Specifically, the bulk of the interview guide was generally organized by Research Question (see Appendix B) following the literature and theory discussed in Chapter 2. Opening and closing questions were designed with the purpose to build researcher-participant rapport and to offer easy-to-answer questions that offer the participant a high level of confidence. Therefore, as seen in Appendix C and in the interest of respecting limited participant time, questions 1 and 2 utilized grand tour questions to ask how the participant entered journalism, what topics they normally covered and what stories they were most and least proud of reporting. Questions 3-6 began to dig deeper into their perceptions of their specific beat, how they separated

personal from professional and how 9/11 may have influenced their reporting to build a foundation for RQ3. In questions 7-16, sources, social networking and the day to day decisions they are faced with in covering national security and terrorism were discussed to better explore their perceptions of government officials/sources roles in the construction and use of the "War on Terror" frame. These questions also explored their perceptions about who sets the agenda and whether they believe they are part of the prestige press (RQ2). Questions 17-23 explored how they perceive their use of terrorism concepts in praxis and what role they believe that reporters play in the terrorist-media exchange (RQ1). Questions 24-25 examined reporter perceptions regarding post-9/11 reporting, as well as how the current Presidential Administration rhetoric change from "War on Terror" to "Overseas Contingency Operation" may have influenced their reporting (RQ4). Question 26 was designed to smoothly, briefly ramp down the session and offer the journalist a chance to summarize the future of national security reporting.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

For this research, all interviews were audio-taped and transcribed to allow for repeated listening and accurate quote collection and verification. I took copious notes both during and after each interview to highlight pertinent themes and to provide a cross-check on data interpretation. In addition, observer comments and other reflexive practices were incorporated to acknowledge any recognized bias as well as provide an opportunity to revisit original thoughts and interpretations of meaning (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Grounded theory, or the "constant comparison method of analysis" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 101-116), was employed to apply a systematic approach to the

collection, analysis and interpretation of data. This data analysis process detects formations of patterns and themes (Wolcott, 1994).

Strauss and Corbin (1990) argued that grounded theory more closely resembles reality because of its emergent, inductive process. Specifically, I engaged in three types of coding: open, axial and selective (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). During open coding procedures, I allowed the data to systematically speak in broad concepts (p. 184). For example, in discussing the RQ1 concept of the "war on terrorism," reporters often communicated they felt tension within their occupation, so I applied the descriptive code "tension" to those statements. I continued to do this by meticulously analyzing data, "line by line" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 72). This process provided emerging categories, for example the notion of accountability, also of a broad nature. Next, I conducted axial coding by examining the data rigorously so I could uncover, connect and validate relationships. Specifically, I tracked and grouped categories and potential subcategories along axes to discover any intersections, linkages or outliers. For example, the notion of accountability emerged from many participant statements when speaking of the various constituencies they serve. Therefore, I used the pattern code of "accountability" as one form of tension communicated by participants.

Next, I utilized selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to form a narrative from data patterns that also had the analytic power to bind research elements together. For example, when the code "accountability" was found in the data, participants were discussing one (or more) of five specific circumstances. These included, for instance, perceptions of accountability to themselves as a function of their personal 9/11 experience, to "remain true to myself in what I experienced on 9/11." Participants also attributed feeling accountable to their audiences, which was presented as a

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function of audience response to their media coverage. Accountability was also presented as a function of access to sources or the lack there of, and as a function of accountability to their employer. Finally, during these conversations, reporters often brought up their perceptions on accountability to the greater good due to the sensitive nature of their topic. Therefore, these five themes became a logical and useful basis for detailing research results for the reader to explain this Research Question.

Over the course of coding, I engaged in structured theoretical sampling where categories emerged, collapsed and converged whereby I was able to develop theoretical premises and/or confirm previous theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 180). For example in RQ1, audience feedback did contribute to reporter's meaning construction of "war on terrorism" and subsequent journalist choice/approach of "war on terrorism" coverage. This supports the theoretical premise that reporters tend to reflect the political leanings of their audiences (Cooper & Johnson, 2009).

I utilized Miles and Huberman's (1994) visual data display strategy to develop visual depictions that identified relationships among data. This process helped me to detect connections leading toward theory development. I cautiously abided by the participants' actual words to prevent missing subtle differences in various participant perceptions and consciously attempted not to force data to fit existing categories (Ellis, 1995).

Interview transcripts. Each of the study's participants granted me permission to audio record our conversation. Although the digital recorder was placed on the table between researcher and participant, each reporter seemed un-phased by the use of recording equipment perhaps because they, too, utilize equipment for recording interviews in their daily work.

Likewise, each interview was transcribed word for word, including vocal pauses such as "um" and "uh," as I feel that even in a pause, there can be meaning. I began the transcribing process after conducting five interviews and personally transcribed these interviews myself. After the initial five, I used START fellowship funding to hire a professional, confidential transcribing service. To ensure confidentiality, I took great care to have only one person, who had personally signed a confidentiality agreement, to transcribe most of the remaining interviews. Furthermore, I listened through the tapes this person transcribed to ensure accuracy. Additionally, when an interview included content that was controversial or highly sensitive in nature, I personally transcribed those remaining recordings.

During the interview, I noted body language and repeated phrases, and for in-person interviews, I recorded non-verbal communication of note. I also transferred these to the transcription after it was completed to ensure that as I coded, I did not miss any comments made with initial impressions or biases. If the interview was conducted by phone, I also recorded special mentions of participant tone of voice. Interestingly, I found that participants seemed to be more forthcoming by phone – perhaps because the phone served as a pseudo protection for them. In all cases, I recorded my own potential biases and any potential emerging themes as well as any questions I might need to go back and ask them. On several occasions and during member checks, I did use these notes to ask further questions.

As soon as possible following each interview, I listened to the recordings and read the transcripts word-for-word to allow for best recall of their actual words and the context in which those words were spoken. One tape did not record at all, and to mitigate, I immediately expanded the notes I normally took during interviews to full

sentences, as well as included additional observer comments to capture the essence of the context as I best remembered it.

Transcripts yielded categories which then revealed themes. Through the grounded theory process of coding, often direct quotes were revealed that formed evidence to support overall results.

Reliability

The essence of qualitative research rests upon a researcher's awareness of how their own biases and assumptions may influence data collection and analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). As a researcher, I took great strides to identify and mitigate any biases or assumptions. Regardless, I recognize that my interpretations of the data will be different from other researchers who may conduct a similar study. Therefore, I recognize that reliability, or the measure of the extent that a study's results could be generalized no matter how many times it is applied to random members of the same target group, is not an appropriate measure for this research. Moreover, producing a generalizable study is not the purpose of qualitative research. This dissertation aimed to describe and provide the context for the perceptions and experiences of national security prestige press. Therefore, the results of this study are not generalizable to journalism as a whole, nor other national security journalists.

Validity

Researchers must protect their participants, their study and their academic field. I recognize that by establishing relationships with participants, the resulting data is a co-construction of knowledge between the participants and the researcher that cannot be fully separated from those who make the constructions. Moreover, multiple interpretations of the same data can occur -- all of which are potentially meaningful.

Given that the researcher is the primary research instrument, the collection, selection, and interpretation of the data may be influenced with bias. Therefore, to support conducting a valid study, safeguards were integrated such that each of the following areas was achieved: craftsmanship, member checks, proper time in the field leading to saturation, and researcher reflexivity. The specific strategies for employing each component in this study follow.

Craftsmanship. Overall, I sought to achieve good craftsmanship through finding "*a* right interpretation" and not *the* right interpretation (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 240). To accomplish this, I turned to several scholars' approaches to achieve validity and credibility as a guide for my dissertation. For example, I followed Kvale's (1995) argument that validity is socially constructed and we can therefore establish a study's validity via three criteria: investigation (good craftsmanship/researcher credibility), communication (achieved through participant conversation and others outside the study to determine accuracy), and action (whether or not the study's findings are true in praxis).

To achieve researcher credibility, I prolonged my time in the field well after saturation was detected, recorded vivid descriptions of the interview process itself, as well as participant statements, and conducted member checks. To achieve communication validity, I asked for insights from my advisor and other scholars studying this area to ensure the theoretical conclusions that I was considering were plausible. I also formulated and presented two conference papers overseas on this subject matter, revealing some of the results to garner scholarly feedback and to elicit questions about the data that might reveal any inconsistencies. To achieve practical

validity, I investigated all potential negative cases and likely rival explanations to ensure I had confidence in my data.

Moreover, I utilized a skill I had developed during my own journalism training when conducting interviews: prolonged silence. This is a strategy that many reporters utilize not only to communicate that there is no rush to giving an answer (I wanted to communicate that I was there to listen to them and their responses were valued), but also to encourage the source to fill the silence themselves. This practice can also promote a more honest dialogue for the interview where the interviewer is not putting words in the interviewee's mouth. On many occasions, this technique resulted in the exposition of rich data often laden with common themes. In a few cases, I did rephrase the question when I sensed the reporter indicated confusion over the question. Overall, each journalist seemed comfortable sharing their inner perceptions, sometimes broaching quite controversial matters and sensitive information, during our conversations. This initially surprised me as I was prepared for guarded interviews given the nature of the topic this population covers. It was also gratifying as this indicated that I was receiving accurate, quality information.

Member Checks. Validity can also be promoted via member checks, helping to ensure the researcher has accurately captured the participant's voice (Kvale, 1995; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Therefore, I conducted member checks with 20 participants to ensure proper engagement in the "art of hearing data" (Ellis, 1995; Rubin & Rubin, 1995) by soliciting participant feedback via email and follow up telephone calls. Indeed, validity in this study was bolstered when participants said to me, "…that is the way we see it, too" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). In some cases, the participant and I engaged in another discussion, based on my findings, regarding

potential solutions to some of journalism's most pressing issues (i.e. scarce resources/layoffs, emerging new journalistic models, and the decline of traditional journalism). Each time the participant encouraged this research to continue and made a comment such as "you're doing important, timely work."

Time in Field/Data Saturation. I feel I was able to reach a rapport level in many cases where it seemed that quality in the field was what mattered, not necessarily time. For example, I was surprised that many participants engaged in personal-level conversations in which I learned of recent births, deaths or illnesses in their family.

Alternatively, I remained wary of what Kvale (1995) warned against as the "validity paradox," where a researcher in seeking too much validity, ends up negating validity in the process. In sharing a common occupation background with participants, I recognized that I was in danger of assuming an understanding of their responses, and potentially not probing enough or clarifying when appropriate and even possibly creating an atmosphere where the participant wanted to please the researcher. Trying to combat these potential realities, I stated at the forefront that there "were no right or wrong answers here" and forced myself to ask clarifying questions, even when I thought the understanding was clear. My original understanding of the participant answers normally matched, but this practice did, on occasion, helped clarify and ensured that I remained open to any alternate meanings.

Lindlof and Taylor (2002) argue that time in the field can end for practical reasons, but it *should* end when data has quality, abundance and redundancy. Therefore, I ensured that all negative cases were checked and rival explanations were examined (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). To this end, I collected data for 10 months and until it had a routine feeling where no negative cases or new themes emerged and I

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felt a heightened confidence that the data has reached theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Reflexivity. Since the researcher *is* the instrument, reflexivity is crucial to valid scholarship (McCracken, 1998) and should illuminate the decision making points in the research process (Potter, 1996). There are several means to keeping oneself in check including memo writing, observer comments and bracketing your biases (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994) – I implemented all three techniques as well as interrogating myself (Lincoln & Guba, 2003). In fact, this latter practice is quite familiar since I have personal experience as both as an interviewee, as well as a former reporter/on-air personality.

Through reflexive observer comments and memos (Miles & Huberman, 1994), I was not only able to closely examine my performance as a researcher, offering tips for improving future data collection, but I was also able to acknowledge and bracket turning points and personal bias to prevent losing the participant's voice. Perhaps ironically, as a former reporter, I experienced the opposite difficulty of identifying too closely with the participant as a practitioner. This not only ran the risk of abdicating my role as researcher, but I also found myself supporting many of their opinions on the inside – sometimes I had to control myself from agreeing verbally in a manner that would reveal my own opinion or agreement with their statement. Had I verbalized my thoughts, it could have interfered with the accuracy of my results if the participant thought they were saying something I wanted to hear. I also recognized that I believe that a broad range of perspectives should be available to the public for news consumption, but am troubled that it seems audiences are becoming increasingly polarized in seeking out news that only reinforces their own viewpoint instead of

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seeking out several sources and then making an informed decision. These experiences, frustrations and conclusions are also included in my memos and observer comments.

Ethics

I turned to Rubin and Rubin (1995) when considering ethical treatment of participants during the interview process. For example, I only asked sensitive questions if the participant wanted to discuss the topic on a deeper level or if they were necessary for study meaning. I often demonstrated empathy via listening and asking follow up questions when a reporter spoke about difficult circumstances, many times centering on their 9/11 or military embed experienced. Another way I demonstrated empathy was to listen to reporter "confessions" regarding leaked information from official sources, sometimes named, and reassured them that information would not be revealed. It was during those interviews in particular that I not only felt immensely honored that they trusted me with such sensitive information, but also that I had truly achieved a level of mutual respect where I was obtaining honest perceptions from the participant.

Moreover, I attempted to demonstrate transparency via a personally-customized, detailed explanation of our common background, as well as a candid discussion regarding my interests, purpose and research goals. I also offered a detailed description of roles and expectations during the interview process that included explaining the IRB consent form procedure and surrounding protections up front. I also tried to anticipate hot topics that could arise which might be misinterpreted by readers – likely, due to the sensitivity of the topic being studied (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Specifically, I clearly explained the steps taken to ensure their confidentiality, such as using codes or pseudonyms for both the participant and the media outlet in both

transcripts and any future articles or presentations; locking consent forms, tapes and transcripts in a file drawer only accessible to me and/or my Advisor; and filing all electronic documents on a secure, non-public computer (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). In some cases, it was difficult to convince the participant of anonymity because with a small sample and geographical area to begin with, most of these journalists know one another.

Finally, with this unique public in particular, and the visible sensitivity of the topics on which they report, scheduling and a private interview location was of prime concern. Therefore, I made sure to respect their timing needs and to conduct the interview in a private place of their choosing, or via phone.

Institutional Review Board. This research has strictly complied with Institutional Review Board guidelines by obtaining informed consent and permission to audio record the conversation (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The IRB consent form also educated participants on the study's purpose and protected them from deception by offering them the opportunity to ask questions, refrain from answering certain questions, or withdraw from the research process at any time and for any reason -- although no participants opted to not answer a question, nor to terminate the interview. IRB protocols and procedures ensured participant confidentiality and data security by protecting journalist identity via non-descript code and/or pseudonyms. Procedures also prohibited naming the participant's media outlet and required storage of all files and data on a private computer not connected to a server.

Chapter Four – Results

This chapter presents the results of participant interviews. Remaining aware of researcher biases and potential influence in the process of data collection and analysis, a genuine attempt was made to identify the emergence of pertinent themes by allowing the data to speak for themselves (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Out of 875 pages of data, there is recognition that the choices made for supporting evidence that lead to theoretical development are the researcher's own interpretations.

Specific results are detailed below in relation to each research question explored. In selecting data for presentation, representative concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) are offered and outlying concepts are only included if they are pertinent to theoretical development.[1]

RQ1: How does Washington, D.C. national security prestige press make meaning of the concept of the "war on terrorism?"

Overall, participants attributed great power to the concept of the "war on terrorism." This was made clear as each recounted how their meaning-making of this term manifested itself through their feeling of "greater accountability than before 9/11" to several constituencies. Therefore, the themes that arose for this question were the four groups to whom these participants felt accountable: 1) to themselves, 2) their audiences, 3) their sources and 4) their employer. An important fifth theme that arose was participant's *lack* of feeling accountable to, what could be argued as, the dangerous interplay of media reporting and terrorism. For consistency, this theme is titled 5)

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[1] To preserve confidentiality, only general descriptions were used to reveal where in their career timeline a specific participant falls. For example, terms such as "young," "up and coming" or "seasoned reporter" are used to offer the reader perspective on the data and a richer context from within which to interpret meaning.

accountability to the greater good. As evidenced in the results, journalists most often used the word "terror," and sometimes "War on Terror," instead of using the phrase "war on terrorism."

Accountability to Themselves

Several reporters regardless of age or experience, made meaning of the "war on terrorism" via their personal experiences stemming from 9/11 and their media coverage thereafter. Several journalists commented on feeling accountable to their own emotions, one pledging to "remain true to… what [they] experienced on 9/11."

Life History Influence. Most reporters pointed to either childhood upbringing or personal experience as one influencer on the approach they take when covering terrorism. For example, one participant new to reporting post-9/11, said "I view terrorism completely from the perspective of 9/11." This journalist relayed that she realized that her youth and sole experience with terrorism was born on 9/11. Therefore, she said that her reporting is overwhelmingly linked to that day as a frame for "most of" her stories. For example, she said, "When I am writing my piece, I tend to…refer to 9/11 throughout the story and to the emotions that were felt or recognized within myself…my colleagues and my audience…to connect better with them."

A more seasoned journalist could also articulate the deeper impact on the "essence" of her reporting that stemmed from her personal experience. She said,

> When I think of a definition for terror, I go for the more emotional
> impact…how I felt on the morning of 9/11 and I mean I was really, really scared
> and kind of just gobsmacked by what I was seeing…to me is the epitome of it
> [my reporting]."

Other reporters used more descriptive terms for terror like "the goblin aspect" or "the Joker" or "the boogie man in the alley waiting to jump out at you." One journalist said, "It's that fear that something's going to come out at you and that's different than an army some place." Another journalist was more introspective than most and said, "9/11 impacted my reporting in that I give less glory to terrorists." In most cases, participant's personal experience did impact what they chose to write, or at least how they approached their news coverage.

In fact, many journalists cited specific examples of how their understanding of terrorism changed post-9/11 and how this influenced their reporting to include "words that elicited the emotional side…the anger and sadness, of how we felt as a nation that day." One reporter admitted, "I quickly adapted the 'War on Terror' outlook because that's how I understood it at that point." Later, this reporter commented,

> We are humans with emotions too; I experienced 9/11 up close so I also felt attacked. The audience tends to forget that…especially during a Monday morning quarterback session."

Likewise, there were a few reporters who identified the influence their childhood upbringing had on their reporting style and their framing choices thereafter. "It's funny, I love to write narrative which is all about conflict but I'm too afraid I'm going to offend somebody…which comes from the way I was raised…living in a household where we sweep it under the rug." However, this journalist shared that he was able to "adjust the frame" to feel more comfortable with his stories. For example, this reporter shared that he framed the use of drones by a presidential administration such that he "merely showed number discrepancies" (current president has higher rate of use than previous one) and said, "You're not saying it's right or wrong, you're

saying there's a conflict here." This participant later admitted, "I shouldn't allow my upbringing to influence the way I cover terrorism, but I can't help it."

Many of these journalists had completed military embed stints and had covered previous wars in which the United States was engaged. By and large, these reporters tended to take on a more serious tone, often lowering their voice and slowing their speech patterns when speaking about how they viewed the "war on terrorism." One participant explained, "It *is* hard to objectively report on the same unit who is covering your back in an embed, but I think more than anyone, they deserve for the folks back home to know the truth about what they're going through." Another journalist expounded on his personal experiences across several wars including Vietnam and said, "That's what I think makes the war on terrorism different you know, it's not World War II where you could distinguish your enemy easily."

A seasoned participant may have stumbled onto why an embed operation might open a reporter to "the humanity perspective" of things and, at the same time, "feed into a journalist's need to cover conflict" in their stories to help "make their own personal careers." He said, "Embeds were among the cleverest things the U.S. did because we were as forward leaning on the war as anybody else. We had all sorts of reporters that were sitting around… waiting for the war to start."

Notably, those reporters who had not completed an embedded stint with the military often sounded more cynical in their comments on terrorism and the military response in general, choosing to focus more on the political and policy side of terrorism and not the operational and human side that comes with sending troops into battle. One journalist noted, "Military embeds can ruin a reporter's objectivity, especially when terrorism is just a policy game played in D.C."

Another common theme in this research question was making meaning of this term as their feeling accountable to their audiences, often explained as a function of audience response. For almost every journalist, audience response to their coverage not only informed how they perceived the concept of the "war on terrorism," but also played a large role in how they perceived their successfulness in relaying a national security story to the public -- which participants indicated also affected future story choice.

"It's complicated." Several participants expressed frustration with how national security issues are often quickly marred by a lack of separation by their audiences. In other words, "the war on terrorism is an umbrella for so many issues that different events are often blurred together." One participant gave a poignant example of how his perception of the audience has caused him to "hate writing about interrogation policy…because it is either perceived as me defending the practice or vilifying people who did it…you can't even write a dispassionate story about it…cause it's all wrapped up together even though different things were happening at different times to different people."

Many reporters were concerned about the potential negative emotional effect on their audiences stemming from what could be "a terrifying and terrible experience" just by consuming media about terrorism. For some, this also affected what they chose to cover for their audience. One participant said, "9/11 was a horrible experience for most of this country and the last thing we want to do is make them watch more." Another reporter said,

A lot of people also feel like there's nothing I can really do so why watch it, I

have enough troubles in my life. I want to come home and be entertained and

escape from daily stress…maybe that's why the American press is sanitized

more than the international press.

Notably under this theme, reporters acknowledged that their audiences have communicated to them a strong displeasure towards much of their post-9/11 coverage. Many journalists expressed frustration with their craft and indicated personally guilt-ridden consciences citing recognition of "an institutional-wide failure," particularly "in the case of the War in Iraq, our professional stance was out of control." Interestingly, however, about half of the participants indicated feeling a "third-person effect" with one participant defensively stating: "It was the government who never asked the right questions, we just report what they do." Still, there *is* evidence given by participants that both topic agenda-setting and terrorism frames used by the government elite are now evolving back into the reporter's professional grasp. One said,

We've been too focused on like listening to the government's concerns over

when's the next 9/11 coming instead of actually writing intelligently about the

culture of terrorism that seems to have evolved over the past 25 years.

Several journalists relayed a feeling that everything was "back to normal again," explaining that, with regard to framing terrorism in the news, "we're back in power now -- that's good and bad -- in that I now like have to figure out how to say "War on Terror" *without* saying it." For example, reporters offer accounts of having to "embed the term" by using "more precise" phrases such as "the war in Iraq" or "in the fight against Islamic extremism."

Finally, there is evidence that audience feedback does not only contribute to subsequent choices made by the journalist in both story topic or allowable violence level as mentioned above, but also for their sourcing strategy. One reporter commented that "anonymous sourcing isn't always bad since I've heard my audience often tell me, 'That usually that means you're actually getting the scoop'."

Accountability to Their Sources

Another theme that often arose when talking about how these journalists viewed the "war on terrorism" was as a function of their personal risk in accessing sources and their accountability to those sources that "other reporters don't have to deal with."

One reporter shared that they "saw a much more aggressive legal pursuit of journalists than we had ever seen before" and many were subpoenaed for various stories they were working, "so I typically just threw everything out." Another reporter said she "was once interviewed by TSA because I had written a story about sensitive security information." This risk held true for the source as well. One journalist said, "The government was getting very aggressive in terms of leak investigations." Another reporter lamented, "There are really no whistle-blower protections for people who work in national security agencies…one was fired because of what I wrote."

In light of these reporter perceptions of the difficulty in perfecting their final news product, their feeling of accountability has eerie merit. One explained, "This beat has to get every single thing right or there are serious repercussions… and you're lucky if you get 75% of the story right."

Accountability to Their Employer

Many participants made meaning of the "war on terrorism" as having the power to put enmity between journalists and government officials. One reporter shared he equated the phrase "war on terror" with the notion of "inciting fear among reporters that the Administration or other agencies might declare a 'war on my media outlet' if my coverage reveals too much." Likewise, several participants shared personal stories of why this term reminded them of the deep conflict they've seen "first hand" that can alter the balance between media outlets "more than ever." In other words, reporters interpreted the term as a reminder to be "on guard" to protect their job and hence, their employer. One shared,

> If anything, the 'war on terrorism' makes me more loyal to my organization not just because of what we all went through together (post-9/11), but also because it has caused many a reporter to rethink how far they'll go to get the story from the government to prevent, well, backlash in this emotionally-charged debate.

Another reporter put the notion of feeling accountable to his employer another way, complaining about the "hugely competitive landscape in D.C." and his organization's lack of access comparatively in a post-9/11 era. He said sources are "just going to call you 'cause you're the New York Fucking Times…it must be thrilling to be given secret information so easily." Other participants agreed with the assessment that the war on terrorism meant a "war to get the story." For example, one journalist said that as a national security journalist in a post-9/11 world, "If you're the little guy, you have to work a lot harder to make yourself relevant."

In many conversations, journalists were thankful *not* to be at odds with the current administration and mentioned a particularly "troubling" situation that one

reporter shared, "really makes me sit up and take notice." She said, "The Obama administration is giving quite a push back to Fox News" while another reporter cleverly said, "in the 'war on terrorism' they've declared 'war' on a news network, so it's like how do you feel if you're Major Garrett. I mean he must feel like crap."

Accountability to the Greater Good

The final theme that informed journalist meaning-making of the "war on terrorism" was as a function of the debated consequences resulting from the interplay of terrorism and media. In the course of conversation about their feelings of accountability to the four groups mentioned above, many times the topic turned to whether these participants felt accountable to the greater good of society, considering potential unintended harmful consequences resulting from their terrorism reporting. Even though several reporters acknowledged that their organizations have "held countless discussions" on whether their national security reporting might offer undue credibility to the terrorist, most participants held little concern about whether their reporting would further enable terrorist goals or place people in harm's way. In fact, although one journalist sarcastically said, "Yeah, I help 'em (terrorists) sell terror," most participants either denied or justified the news media's potential influence on further terrorist acts or serving as a mouthpiece for terrorist messages.

Most participants also focused their attention on the reality of the competitive journalistic landscape. One shared, "Well, if you didn't report on it first there are many other people who will and you'll miss the story… I think if you can interview them (a terrorist), you should." Another said,

> I mean certainly they're doing things to get publicity and they want us to
>
> cover them.   If Osama bin Laden puts out a message, the more coverage he

gets legitimizes him as a leader of a cause. So maybe it does to some extent

help their agenda, but that is on balance not a reason not to cover it.

One of the more seasoned reporters dismissed the possibility of publicizing the

terrorist agenda altogether and shared,

What's been interesting in the last 10 years is that publicizing the actions and

plans of terrorists, I think it's actually made them less attractive as people

throughout the world have seen the brutality of their actions. If there was a

moment when some terrorist groups might have been perceived as freedom

fighters for a particular cause or group of people who were oppressed, that

moment has passed… even the sensational wears thin.

Several others agreed with him. One participant likened terrorism to the popular TV

show, *24*, and said,

You know al-Qaida is like *24, 24* has lost its audience and people just don't

view terrorism the same way they did when *24* started. It's become mundane

and you need an audience to keep going…al-Qaida has lost its audience

because it's just killed off so many innocent people, people aren't following it

anymore.

Some of the more seasoned reporters termed this a "government spawned"

"age-old notion" of helping the terrorist agenda. One journalist said,

I don't want to sound cavalier when I say this, but I kind of don't care whether

it does or not, so it doesn't enter into my thinking…and I think that's a bogus

and lousy argument that government officials sometimes try to use to prevent

journalists from doing the kind of watchdog reporting they used to do.

In fact, several reporters leaned on their perception of serving a "larger role as watchdog" and seemed to view themselves in an advocacy role for the American public when it came to action against terrorism. One put his argument this way:

> If I tell you that the easiest way to smuggle a bomb into the country is in a cargo container then the government says, 'oh I just told the terrorists how to do it.' And, I guess that's the risk but I think it's more important to alert the readers to say there is this problem and you can fix it or not.

Many participants were quick to focus on the potential good that can come from reporting on terrorism. One journalist said,

> I think people pay more attention and might act, might choose to do something differently if they know that they were, you know, beheaded and strung up on a bridge and set on fire. So, as painful as some of the images are…around the dinner table… maybe just post it on the web and say okay if you want to see the actual video you know check it out here.

> A few participants found themselves stuck in their own words. One said, "I think that only relates to serial killers….(long pause) which I suppose is what terrorists are, so yeah I guess I'm part of the unfortunate, but necessary cycle."

> Moreover, there were several journalists who had worked extensively overseas and explained how they felt caught in the middle of the situation of this "odd give and take of the media-terrorist relationship." One reporter said,

> Terrorists don't like us because we don't carry the message they want us to. Now, journalists are a target of terrorists since Daniel Pearl. At the same time, we have the direct cell number for the Taliban spokesperson who are right now merging their goals with al-Qaida and want us to cover their moves.

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Another reporter conceded,

> We can be either enablers or debunkers and that's where you have to be
> careful that you don't become an enabler… I mean it's one of the major things
> that has changed that has allowed a group of potentially scraggly nobody's
> (terrorists) to end up, you know, international celebrities.

In conclusion, RQ1 results indicated that journalists made meaning of the
"war on terrorism" concept via their immediate, daily constituencies. While this
group communicated a feeling of strong accountability to themselves, their audience,
their sources, and their employer; when speaking about their accountability to society
in enabling terrorist messaging, participant responses ranged from sarcasm to
disbelief with summary statements such as, "I don't care," "What I report is justified
because terrorists ratings are down," and "I hadn't really thought about how my
reporting might influence further terrorism." On the whole, this group does not seem
to acknowledge any personal power to legitimize terrorism messages via news
reporting.

A second conclusion from these results is that these reporters believe that the
"war on terrorism" sentiment still impacts their daily routine. Many participants
expressed frustration at having to find a way to present and explain terrorism news
coverage without using such a handy "umbrella" term. To this end, most reporters said
they "didn't even notice the term wasn't being used anymore (in news)…because
really, it's still all over the news in really some form or fashion."

Finally, results indicated that reporter perceptions of their audience's
response matters when they subsequently choose news content. Moreover, these
journalists reveal that the national security beat requires that they place a high value

on how they treat, and are viewed by, both their sources and by government officials, to the point of curtailing their own behavior in order to "stay in the game."

RQ2: How does this prestige press understand the U.S. government's role in the construction and use of the "War on Terror" frame?

The two main themes that emerged under this research question saw the government's role in the construction and use of the "War on Terror" frame as ubiquitous and useless. In general, participants disrespect this term, finding it carries many disparate meanings (ubiquitous), and provided little clarity (useless) when trying to communicate clearly with their audience. For both themes, journalists offered extremely similar comments, making this the shortest section of results. Moreover, this question allowed data to emerge to suggest that participants view themselves as having earned their own role in marking American culture by using the "War on Terror" terminology.

Ubiquitous

Overall, journalists surmise that this term was constructed by President Bush to serve as "a blanket policy to make working the system easier on the government." As one journalist said, "You can even tie it into freaking environmental policy for the war on terror." Another agreed,

> Everything is under this umbrella now in the sense that immigration affects
> national security, drugs, space exploration, social security and healthcare affect
> national security, I mean you can't have a healthcare system that bankrupts
> America and makes it economically unstable…susceptible to foreign ownership
> which brings with it control.

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Reporters perceive the "war on terrorism" as a catchall for "all things terrorism," believing not only that the term became ubiquitous in its wide spread use to explain the complex matter of terrorism, but that it also came to refer to everything having to do with terrorism, and therefore in itself, encompassed a host of meanings, denoting ubiquity.

Useless

Overwhelmingly, journalists saw little use for the "War on Terror" as an explanatory term, especially at this point in time. One participant said, "I used to think I was communicating with my audience using that term, but now I realize that I wasn't really communicating as clearly as I should have." Another journalist agreed by saying, "In terms of reporting, the concept of 'War on Terror' is a stupid concept. It's an ill-defined term that is used to serve a political agenda." Still another reporter said, "It's a useless term… except in headlines and speeches."

Overall, participants saw this term as unhelpful, but conceded they did use the term at one point in their reporting. However, each reporter qualified this use by insisting they would "always caveat" the term by its source (in this case, President Bush) or by placing it in quotes.

In conclusion, perhaps fueling participant frustration over using this terminology choice was what some reporters acknowledged as "our dirty role in the term's promulgation." Several journalists conceded that "using the term placed us as yet another conduit to help define terrorism for an entire generation." Another reporter clearly expressing remorse said, "We did leave a mark on America when we chose to use the 'War on Terror' so widely." Participants rampantly communicated a love-hate relationship with the "War on Terror" as a term; perhaps the ubiquity of the term in the

face of a difficult task to explain terrorism and national security policy to the public was also its intriguing and flexible allure.

RQ3: How does this press perceive their use of the "war on terrorism" in praxis?

Reporters felt that the "war on terrorism," both as a phrase and as an action, had directly and profoundly impacted their daily routines. These journalists perceived a troubling dichotomy between their personal and professional use of this term, Regardless of their actual use of the term, participants also communicated a current debate among their colleagues regarding whether the "War on Terror" frame itself has died. Moreover, this term nearly always spawned a discussion regarding a *new*, post-9/11 routine: increased anonymous source acceptance. Therefore, the three themes for this research question are dichotomy, debated and the emergence of a new journalist routine.

Dichotomy

From the participant's viewpoint, professionally the phrase "War on Terror" gave them professional freedom and increased their power to communicate with their audience by providing a "short-hand," "umbrella" term for "conflict" that "made a great headline." In some cases, the participants felt this term even "helped elevate their position in the industry," but most reporters admitted to hiding behind the frame. One stated that the "'War on Terror' gave us the power to quickly communicate with our audience," and later said that "focusing on the conflict of the term and the issue, protected us from saying its right or its wrong...a great way to walk into it."

On an interpersonal level, not only did almost all reporters easily utilize the term "War on Terror" during our interview conversations, but one blatantly said,

I use 'War on Terror' still because I personally don't see a problem with it. I know this Administration is loathe to use the phrase… but I'm a journalist and I speak very fast and maybe not as politically correct as I should be but in terms of speaking broadly about ongoing conflicts that America is engaged in, it's easier quite frankly, faster and sometimes I have to operate in rapid fire mode.

Overall, reporters still use the term in personal communications, but choose to avoid it in their professional product. However, participants continue to internally negotiate how to explain the "war on terrorism" without directly stating the term.

Debated

Without exception, every participant somehow stated that the specific words of "war on terrorism" or any form of this phrase was "no longer used" in their reporting and claimed that at least "its heyday is over." One reporter clarified, "my words are more precise now." Another journalist shared, "we do work harder to find the conflict…it's a tougher sell to the American people." One reporter summed up what most said by commenting, "I only used that term when I said 'Bush's so called War on Terror' or 'the Bush Administration's War on Terror'."

However, even though each participant denied using the actual words "war on terrorism" in their stories, there was copious evidence to suggest this frame *lives on*. Several participants shared the following sentiment: "We are largely still reporting on the last administration…still *on* the 'War on Terror'….even if we aren't calling it that." Perhaps the statement of another participant helps to explain why: "The 'War on Terror' wasn't just propaganda, it reflected society's heart and will just after 9/11…we report what society feels." Interestingly, several reporters felt that "the

term may not be used now, but the policies have not changed with this administration" and therefore, "the framework for how we report on this topic doesn't matter anyway."

In conclusion, these reporters do not feel that the "War on Terror" frame has completely died; rather it is in muddy transition. Still, these journalists largely report that they have failed to offer real context for this term in lieu of "the ease of using it for quick media hits" and now realize that partially due to their collective treatment of the term, "it has now become a part of the American psyche." Another reporter blatantly acknowledged, "We were instrumental in why America and really the world now knows what that term means at all....if there *is* a one-world meaning."

Emergence of a New Journalist Routine

Reporters revealed a major change in journalist routine in the post-9/11, Washington, D.C. atmosphere that encompassed the crux of any reporter's story – sources. One participant complained that after the 9/11 tragedy, "I had to revamp my source strategy on the whole....our access is null now that terrorism is a major issue in America" and attributed this change in routine to the "new, post-9/11 news gathering culture." Specifically, reporters made meaning of the "War on Terror" in praxis by attributing its' heavy influence over their own news content and decision-making that eventually "caused new journalistic routines for my beat."

One reporter explained why this new routine surfaced and said, "Anonymous sources became the norm, much more than the usual Washington culture, because the government threw up huge secrecy walls… we had to get in somehow." Another journalist agreed and said, "The whole issue was so closed that if we wanted a story, we had to acquiesce to their terms." One reporter vividly explained that "D.C. shut down

on us and access to anyone other than Hill staffers was cut off like a beheading of our own."

While not a new practice, most journalists underscored the *feeling of a routine change* post-9/11, if not in actual practice then in greater acceptance by their editors. In fact, these reporters found themselves moving into the sole agenda-setting role for their respective news outlets. One reporter said, "After 9/11, my editor had to trust me to find the story…I noticed a marked difference in my leash length…whenever an editor wanted to change my story, even just the tone of it, I would always win the battle." Moreover, these journalists were tasked with finding and choosing sources, often anonymous, with "little to no assistance from my editor… of course the whole DHS was new, so he didn't know anyone anyway…I was the one building trusted relationships…a reporter is only as good as his source."

However, not all reporters are making the transition to this new routine. One reporter said he tries at all costs to get sources to go on record and explained, "You know you don't want to set off a mole hunt and the reader should know that this is not a mole. It's not someone who shouldn't be giving me something they shouldn't…this is a paid mouthpiece whose hiding themselves." There is even internal bickering about this practice. One reporter shared that he "once heard a reporter from *The New York Times* who claimed that he never talked to anybody off the record. Yeah, bullshit, I don't need it if it's not off the record."

As with most routines, reporters have adjusted and several shared their "back pocket" strategy around the access issue for D.C.: "I can get the *real* scoop from Hill staffers because they just want to get their story out…its so competitive up there, reporters often leverage that reality." Continuing with a contorted facial expression,

"National security is such a small community that I utilize sources repeatedly…I suppose this is bad since it keeps the news in one place…..but there is a silent code of agreement to attribute anonymously on this beat." The participant was suggesting that since it was too difficult to get *real national security news* on record, they continued to draw from the same sources for many of their stories. In other words, journalists seem to be constantly negotiating the battle of c*ongressional halls vs. agency walls* with much of the information being leaked from the U.S. Congress.

Overall, almost every participant relayed a personal story that expounded upon a new post-9/11 culture in which it was "expected of reporters not to share the names of sources who gave information… even on ridiculous things like 'the bathroom has 2 sinks'." Still, another reporter slyly said, "Seven out of ten people inside D.C. can figure out who your anonymous source is anyway." One journalist said this practice was so pervasive that "D.C. fashion stories used anonymous sources for opinion and gossip…it's gotten out of hand." But later he conceded, "I probably do way more anonymous sourcing than I really have to."   Interestingly, most reporters said there wasn't a rule for their outlet on this topic and they were free to decide on their own. One reporter shared that "we just got a piece of paper yesterday with like ethics things…I think that's the first ever paper on how we're supposed to use anonymous sources in many years." Perhaps this is evidence that the editors have begun to take noticed of the increasing use of anonymous sources.

In conclusion, participants attribute the adoption of this new routine to a new environment where they now deal with a huge decrease in access to government agencies, documents and FOIA information. Moreover, participants report they experienced an increase of autonomy *because* of the new decrease in access – their

editors had to trust them to get the story "at all costs including an unnamed source that sometimes I couldn't even tell my boss." In many cases, the new threat of legal action from heightened government investigations and the "secrecy that surrounded all things national security" caused reporters to "clam up at work." This new autonomy was only further exacerbated by the economic downturn causing many news outlets to operate with a skeleton staff. In fact, most of these participants' reported that they proffer unique autonomy that is "off the charts different post-9/11" in their jobs because of the sensitive topic they cover for their beat. One reporter said,

> I see my colleagues in D.C. working other topics that struggle with editor interference… I'm lucky to be on a beat in a city that is hush-hush for the most part so once I gain access, I've got it, and no one is telling me how to run my day or do my job.

Another said, "I'm the one in the trenches, protecting my sources ….since this topic is so 'insider,' I choose my own story ideas for the most part."

Each reporter seemed to carry a certain confidence when discussing how they treat sources and choose stories by themselves. One stated: "It took a lot of years, but I finally have this topic in the bag….not everybody has a high-up contact in the CIA…really it's the former government employees that are golden sources, so longevity on this beat matters."

Perhaps this confidence is one key reason why this study did not find evidence that media organization leadership interferes with the news gathering process for these particular reporters. Another possibility was shared by one journalist when he said, "With so many different forms of communication outlets now available to me, I have so

much more freedom to communicate with the audience and really without interference, because it's all so much quicker now, than ever."

RQ4: How does this press perceive the U.S. government rhetoric shift to "Overseas Contingency Operation" has influenced national security reporting?

Most participants saw this rhetoric shift as a non event. However, there were three themes that emerged in response to this government-led rhetoric shift. Reporters perceived this attempt by the Obama Administration to reframe the "War on Terror" as trivialized, sanitized, and strategized.

Trivialized

Reporters generally laughed and quickly dismissed the "Overseas Contingency Operation" as "trivial to my reporting" when speaking about whether to use the term in their reporting. One participant said, "The choice of everyday political terminology is a nonevent, I'm not even sure I reported on the change." Another said, "I don't use 'War on Terror' because it's so politicized, but I don't use 'Overseas Contingency Operation' because it's so stupid." Still another maintained that the "'Overseas Contingency Operation' feels detached…almost boring now, pulls the emotion out."

A common notion offered by many of the reporters centered on while they heard about this rhetoric change, they felt it was "an attempt to trivialize the war" and "a smokescreen, just another political dance." One reporter explained,

> I think that was part of the Obama project making a break with the Bush
>
> Administration. And, you know I have reported a lot I think on how the
>
> rhetoric and imagery of the Obama Administration on national security issues
>
> makes a bigger break from the past than the actual policies do.

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Other reporters expressed anger about the change that "almost makes fun of the war" by making statements such as,

> It's not a contingency operation, we have 200,000 fucking troops
> deployed…this is an ongoing conflict…we're not jumping into hot spots and
> getting out, that's what overseas contingency operation means, literally.

Another journalist believed that "'Overseas Contingency Operation' equals 'Counter Insurgency Lite'."

Sanitized

Overall, reporters felt the term "Overseas Contingency Operation" has helped to sanitize the fear-inducing "War on Terror" phrase to the point where it has even altered both their occupation and their story topic choices. One journalist simply said, "Well, it *has* influenced my reporting – I don't report much on terror anymore." An older journalist relayed,

> Let me put it this way, our organization has had countless conversations about
> how to use or not use and the implications of using, the phrase 'War on
> Terror' but we haven't had even one conversation on how to use the phrase,
> 'Overseas Contingency Operation'…because no one in their right mind is ever
> going to say a clunky phrase like that in the media.

Another reporter emphatically said, "America understood what the global war on terror is or was. If you start talking about overseas contingency operation, some guy sitting at home with a beer in Nebraska is going to bash his head." Another reporter agreed, "In TV we're taught don't use something higher than what a fourth grader wouldn't be able to understand and that certainly is not one of those phrases."

Some journalists thought that not only did President Obama sanitize the term "War on Terror," but that the press often sanitizes what the administration does. One journalist said, "The press sanitizes Obama every day." She continued,

Obama comes in and says we're going to close Gitmo by a certain date and then doesn't, right? If that was George Bush, could you just imagine the howling and the screaming by not only the U.S. press but by the international press...the Obama Administration's toned down rhetoric has done its job.

That said, this same reporter conjectured that another reason why President Obama may not be feeling the heat like President Bush may have is that the last election "happened to coincide with major layoffs in the news industry, so there aren't enough bodies to be on top of it now."

Strategized

Meanwhile, most journalists focused on the strategy behind the rhetoric shift. One journalist said, "The 'Overseas Contingency Operation' seems to work better with other world powers than the 'War on Terror'." However, most reporters felt that the rhetoric shift was a "blatant strategic move to reframe the debate" as one that is occurring abroad in order to detract from the issue happening here at home. One participant succinctly shared: "I feel like the breaks were slammed on, the issue moved overseas and the urgency slowed to a crawl."

In speaking of political strategy, many journalists shared their view of the former and current presidential administration. Overwhelmingly, when this group was speaking about President Bush, they commented on his "divisive nature that pitted America against the world" within an administration "laden with conflict." Alternatively, when speaking about President Obama, they often used words like

"hope" and "peace" and discussed his drive to "[bring America] on equal footing with other countries." For example, one journalist said, "He seems to see terrorism as a pursuit of common interests around the world."

Finally, one journalist pointed to a more recent strategic attempt by the White House to *again* reframe language regarding terrorism given the "Overseas Contingency Operation" has not picked up traction in the press. He said since the "OCO didn't seem to catch on… the Obama administration has tried it again with 'war on al Qaida'." An older reporter felt that while "Obama was smart to reframe it… the 'war on al Qaida' is giving more publicity to the enemy" in the end.

In conclusion, the "Overseas Contingency Operation" has not replaced the "War on Terror" frame and, is largely disrespected as a term. However, these journalists perceive a continuation of the "War on Terror" frame, not only in their continued reporting on the past administration as well as the new administration's unchanged policies, but also as immediately salient to these reporter's daily consideration of how best to communicate about national security to their audience. Moreover, there is evidence that a journalist's view of the current administration personality may contribute to the frame that reporter's choose when building news content. For example, whether deserved or not, the Bush Administration was seen as "laden with conflict" and therefore when reporters spoke about terrorism, they often framed this era as "America entering into a conflict of interests." Whereas with the Obama Administration, these reporters seem to attribute hope and change to this new President and framed terrorism as a "pursuit of common interests."

Additional Findings

In the course of data collection, additional notable findings emerged. These results offered a better understanding of how participants perceive the current state of national security reporting overall and how they view their role as a member of the D.C. national security press corps. Findings will be explained under the following themes: Journalist use of new technologies, terrorist use of new technologies, implications of new technologies, and the future of national security reporting. Additionally, one reporter shared such a compelling theory/narrative on why the news culture is changing so rapidly, and felt so strongly that her theory was the reason for the coming "death of the prestige press," that her thoughts are briefly included toward the end of this chapter under the heading, "One Reporter's Theory." Finally, reporters shared perceptions on whether or not they felt they were part of the prestige press. Surprisingly, there is evidence that in many cases, framing begins with the small, trade publications. These findings conclude Chapter Four under the theme, "We are Different."

Journalist Use of New Technologies

Journalist use of new technologies in their daily work is pervasive in many cases and null in others, but in every case reporters have emerging technologies on their minds. Age was the largest factor in determining the proclivity to employ new technologies, where younger reporters tended to utilize many forms of Internet communication including Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. One journalist boasted, "I used LinkedIn to cultivate relationships and sources because it brings credibility to my stature." Another reporter said, "I know a guy at XXX who got a worldwide scoop from Twitter because he followed XXX and said something about being in Iraq

and what was going to happen next." Still another reporter said, "Robert Gibbs, the White House Press Secretary tweets, so I've got to pay attention to that.

The older reporters, in general, shied away from engaging in this new routine – particularly if they had been with the same outlet for many years. One participant said, "A tweet does not meet the traditional threshold, how do you verify that the person is who they say they are?" However, there were several who branched out into the digital world cautiously. One participant said, "I have a pseudonym on Facebook. I don't want people finding me or my sources…the FBI doesn't need a warrant to go on Facebook." An older, well-connected reporter said, "I don't feel like I need to do that (use the Internet to connect to others). I feel like foreign policy and the players in the U.S. government, it's fairly evident who they are and I know them."

Many participants expressed shock and consternation at the way our new technologies have affected journalism overall. One reporter illustrated this emotion by saying,

> I'll never forget this, there was on the front page of *The Wall Street Journal*, a picture of a young woman who was shot and became the iconic image of the riots, and underneath it the caption said, 'in this unverified photo.' I thought to myself this is really a remarkable change that *The Wall Street Journal* would acknowledge an unverified photo on the front page which they certainly got off of You Tube.

Another common perception for reporters left them feeling "simply forced to comply" with the new technologies available. "It's constant deadlines because if someone is looking at the Internet it doesn't matter what time it is, they'll look at midnight or one….you just keep feeding the beast until you explode." Another

participant said, "Anybody's got a blog. If there's news coming our of the White House it doesn't hold for five minutes and within 2 hours it's old…I *have* to read the blogs."

Many shared in various ways that they felt their work load "had increased at least three fold" with the need to adapt to the constant flow of communication. One participant noted that "it makes the job for traditional journalists harder because you have to wade through a lot more disinformation now….there's a lot more false leads to run down which consumes time on writing a better piece." Another journalist is disgusted with his blogger interactions explaining, "They can be parasitical where you know they're taking our reporting and using it for their own ends and not doing their own reporting."

Sometimes, journalist use of social networking "backfired." One reporter said,

> My Facebook page has become much more like for friends although there are professional acquaintances there too and I don't know how to separate them. There's a story I put on Facebook and my sources said 'great piece,' but my friends were like, 'great piece, faggot' and I'm like 'damn you'.

In fact, this type of story was very common among participants who utilize Facebook.

Still, most reporters acknowledge and appreciate the rapidly changing power dynamic that stems from the digital age. One lamented, "Certainly the big news organizations no longer control the narrative. The narrative is now controlled by the cloud, you know the interconnected web we all exist in." However, the youngest participant in this population shared, "I rely heavily on the web for my reporting generally….and people my age tend to trust the Internet more…but I've never written a good story that did not involve personal conversation, ever." Perhaps even for the

new generation of journalists, the importance of face-to-face communication is not lost yet.

Terrorist Use of New Technologies

Another subject area that arose was terrorist use of new technologies, specifically the Internet. Most participants agreed that it does affect journalist work. In fact, most of them relayed that they cover all al-Qaida video messages in some form or fashion, even if it's simply on their media outlet website or blog. One reporter explained,

> The increased use of the Internet by terrorist groups has made monitoring and access much easier, at the same time it lessens the sensational, the shock value, because everyone can access it now. The press doesn't have something unique anymore.

On the specific topic of beheadings, one journalist commented that reporting should "always remain in context…since I don't see like millions of people being beheaded, I'm not sure what people can learn from seeing that now." He continued, "The beheading phenomenon seems to have passed. Or, maybe it's lost its appeal and just isn't covered inside our echo chamber anymore."

Another put the changing relationship manifesting itself via increased Internet use by terrorists as "a game changer," positing from his recent overseas experience that "the enemy doesn't need the media anymore or to set up a TV appearance, because they've got the Internet. I think they're being even more effective on the Internet."

The most recent press that terrorists have garnered is largely about their effective utilization of the Internet. In fact, one journalist said, "it's like match.com

for terrorists…people are being brought together who never would have met otherwise." Another participant commented, "Now, terrorist organizations can come out of nowhere and get these people radicalized just by looking at some Internet videos in a matter of months instead of years."

In a recent National Public Radio report, reporter Dina Temple-Raston (2010) terms this "different brand of terrorism that's much harder to recognize and much harder to fight" as "jihad lite." In her report, she asserts that the attempted car bombing in Times Square alerted counterterrorism officials to a growing problem; namely, the speeds with which people in America have been radicalized. Her sources told her that it used to take years to indoctrinate and train would-be attackers, but now it takes only months or even weeks. For example, Connecticut resident Faisal Shahzad, New York's Times Square bomber, went from financial analyst to alleged terrorist in just a matter of months.

While it's no secret terrorists use the Web for recruitment, one reporter said that "what is interesting is that this medium, while more ubiquitous and reaching more potential jihad followers, creates shallow followers who need getaway cars and are not willing to die for the cause."

Implications of New Technologies

Participants shared a heavy burden for how the changing economy and the introduction of new technologies are affecting their occupations. The frustration of participants was expressed best by one journalist's emphatic reply to the question posed: "Have these changes affected you at all?" to which he replied, "Yeah, I'm fucking unemployed." His position had been let go the week prior to our interview. Other journalists were more specific. One said,

It's brutal out here…*The Post* is laying people off. *The Times* (Washington) is

probably about to lay off 40% of its staff. *The New York Times* has been

retrenching. And all the papers have been closing Washington Bureaus or

merging them….and look what's happened to the Tribune papers.

Using the Homeland Security Advisory System coding as a frame, one participant put

it this way: "We're at Defcon One and using the color-coding system, we're probably

looking yellow right now."

Although many reasons for these news cutbacks were offered within

discussions, most blamed the poor business models of journalism and the decline of

traditional routines. One journalist said, "They didn't charge for online content and

now I have so many colleagues out of work simply because they can't sustain

traditional journalism anymore." Another participant stated,

Inflammatory things that are said online by people who don't stop to think

about these issues…you could take the best reporter in the world and their

blog would still not be as good as their reporting because no one is editing it.

An older journalist confidently diagnosed the problem and explained,

The problem is ubiquitous communication…it's difficult to get a scoop on

anything. The flow of information is uncontrollable. Twenty years ago people

knew the difference between the *Wall Street Journal* and the *National*

Enquirer and now they don't….everything becomes a shout fest and no one

believes anything anymore.

Still another participant revealed that "we just don't have the patience or time

anymore to backtrack like we should our sources and we rush to air with half-sourced

or a half-backed story." Many participants shared that new technologies have also

encouraged "freak out stories" where reporters are asked to "insinuate there is a terrorist threat when there really isn't any evidence of one."

Likewise, some journalists lamented that it's not just a lack of time, but a lack of depth that is now plaguing the industry. One said, "We don't cast our net as wide anymore. There is very little investigative, in-depth reporting now and at the same time we're fixated on like 3 stories, instead of the 30 we used to."

However, there were reporters who could also see positive implications of the new technology landscape. One journalist said, "In many ways it's the democratization of journalism. It's good that everyone has a voice and it's bad because everyone has a voice." Another journalist explained,

> The fundamental thing that has changed in journalism is the monopoly of information is no longer exclusive and has given way to a proliferation of different styles, reporters, organizations and sources…it's given life to a different global social conscience.

Another young reporter said new technologies made for stronger communication.

> The distance between reporters and viewers has gotten a lot smaller. So, people have more access to you…they feel a degree of intimacy with you and share things with you. If this were 15-20 years ago, you only saw a reporter on TV and if you wanted to send that reporter a message, you'd have to call headquarters in New York, send them a postcard and like six months later they don't even remember the story. Now, by the time you're off the air, someone has already sent you an email or a message on Facebook or Twitter.

This participant quickly followed up with a prediction. "Who knows? Maybe in another 15 years time, the director of the FBI will actually start giving you secrets on the Internet on his anonymous blog that he developed."

At the end of the day, most reporters lamented that the main casualties, other than jobs, are national security and foreign coverage. One quipped, "And Americans are dumber for it." Another reporter said the result of this landscape is,

> We don't have anybody at the CIA everyday anymore…I'm not saying that's where the documents came from I just mentioned, but you're going to miss important stuff if nobody's there. We're losing expertise.

Future of National Security Reporting

More than anything, reporters are concerned about a secure future for national security journalism. These concerns centered on the increasing digital age, failing business models of journalism, and whether national security topics are still relevant. One participant said,

> It's going to be much harder to protect the sources that we have because in the electronic age there are a lot more ways to leave trails and tracks and I don't think that bodes well at all for national security reporting…national security takes time and money and I think bloggers have time and money.

Another participant said, "It's just going to end up being The Times (New York) and the wires and maybe the Wall Street Journal." A third reporter staunchly said, "You can't cover national security matters with a 140 character tweet….that said in this economy, I think we're going to see more and more people covering national security out of the basement."

Overwhelmingly, 30 of the 35 interviews mentioned Pro Publica (a new, independent, non-profit online newsroom that claims to produce investigative journalism in the public interest) as the new wave of journalism for the future, many reporters admitting that they "didn't think they would succeed." One participant summed up their new online presence by saying, "Pro Publica has had the biggest impact since publishing paid traditional media." Another journalist said, "It seems that the private or nonprofit route is the avenue to go down and it could help bulk up national security reporting."

In the end, participants not only predicted a downward turn of national security reporting, but of "good reporting." Many of the seasoned reporters predicted that new media technologies, while convenient and productive, were so ubiquitous that they "would eventually be the demise of the press as we once knew it." In fact, they purport that the downward spiral has already begun.

One seasoned reporter equated online journalism to "bad reporting in general" and said, "I'm just concerned if nobody is reading newspapers, they're not going to read these long articles on a website either." Another participant agreed that "blogs have shifted the media landscape in terms of integrating opinion with fact and it's tough to discern where the line is anymore….I fear that the fact-telling, truth-bearing press won't be here much longer."

Several reporters were concerned about the recent emergence of "Guerilla Leakers" such as Wikileaks, calling it "an online giant with an agenda." One participant said,

> People will find a way to use the Internet for their advantage and in some
>
> cases with an agenda…Theoretically, I have training to decide this in terms of

bigger questions that should be asked…and a backstop, whereas Assange (the

founder of Wikileaks) does not.

Another reporter said, "This is the future… people no longer have to find a trusted

journalist to protect their information and present it in a thoughtful way they can just

dump it out themselves…Wikileaks totally changes the power dynamic.

Other participants pointed to the bleak future of national security reporting

given the new movement toward online citizen journalism and said, "Journalism is

changing and now citizen journalism is everywhere…I mean look what happened in

Mumbai. The only information coming out of there was from citizen journalists."

Other journalists are more skeptical of this new practice arguing,

CNN has that 'I report' thing and they frame it as a traditional quote using the

same anchor voice from the normal news but it's what they got from a Twitter

viewer….that may save money but it seems misleading at the very least, and

ironically, it's just adding to our own demise.

One Reporter's Theory

"It all started with soccer trophies." One seasoned reporter had an especially

compelling theory about the reason why the prestige press is dying given the

mentality of the upcoming generation of social media gurus who "often stay in their

basements to talk to friends." She believes that these "kids were all given soccer

trophies whether they won or lost the game," so the Internet generation has a sense of

entitlement and lack of personal accountability that is further magnified by the

inherent anonymity that the online world provides. She explained,

They are just encouraged to speak their mind whatever the consequence and

don't realize that every word is tracked online…these people have the same

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platform I have on the Internet but the difference is I made 25 phone calls and have been doing this nonstop for years and they have opinions based on vapor…this gets back to the prestige press and why our standards might be lowering.

Then, after talking about potential reasons for the recent trend of women suicide bombers, she said, "You know if I ever get Jihad Jane to sit down with me, I'll ask her if she ever got one (a soccer trophy)."

In conclusion, while there is evidence that both younger and older reporters can see positive outcomes of the new digital age, such as increased audience feedback, only the older journalists articulated negative concerns. These include the threat of "losing the mainstream press as we know it," future generations of enjoying online anonymity "which may breed a further sense of entitlement for the younger generation" and from a cultural perspective, losing Americans to seek online only what fits into their belief system (or to fit busy schedules to read shorter online articles) to encourage a culture where we are, as Neil Postman (1985) once wrote, "Amusing Ourselves to Death."

Moreover, there was a clear demarcation between younger and older reporters as far as personal use of the Internet for social networking purposes, including building a source list online, reading blogs and engaging with others via various online platforms. The younger journalists are using new technologies to develop sources, whereas the older journalists already have personal source relationships with the same people the younger journalists are "trying to hook."

In an age of a diverging American population seeking information consistent with their own beliefs and bias where journalists are "often mostly targeting particular

segments of people, relying on culture mores and political and historical myths in contextualizing international events" (Powers& el Nawawy, 2009, p. 267), the older participants are concerned that the increasingly polarized media choices are only "further exacerbated by the next generation of Internet-savvy users expressing themselves void from a meaningful return of responsible dialogue" – perhaps encouraged by their soccer trophies on the shelf just behind their computer. As one participant lamented, "Once the Internet generation become editors of our papers, the press as we know it now will be dead."

In summarizing their comments on the recently increased terrorist use of the Web and its affect on these national security journalists, reporters generally feel that it is harder for their outlet to find unique news now because anyone can find news online from terrorists. This has contributed to their choosing to cover other national security-related stories. One journalist notes: "If I could break that news, I might still be covering that stuff." Even though it seems that journalists are increasingly using terrorists as sources, terrorists themselves do not seem to be seeking out the mainstream media as they once did, in order to promulgate their messaging. Instead, these reporters say they are now often forced into quoting terrorists as sources online, as various terror groups are "getting better at leveraging the Web for their own purposes."

While the Internet has proven an effective medium for terrorists to tout strategic messaging and begin to proselytize others into a particular ideology, there are also perceptions that these fast followers are not as indoctrinated into radical ideology; second they are more willing to tell authorities pertinent information on who trained them and how they were recruited; and third, the Internet is an ineffective

tool in planning and operations. As evidenced in most, if not all cases, would-be

terrorists such as Faisal Shahzad (the NY Times Square bomber) -- while invited via

Internet -- still had to travel to Pakistan for training. Therefore, while the Internet's

advantage of stealth seems all but insurmountable, at some point would-be

perpetrators must ultimately emerge from the basement, according to participants.

We Are Different

Another finding of note surrounded the acute awareness of participants of

their inclusion within a "special" group – the national security prestige press of

Washington, D.C. Although the term "prestige press" was never offered by a

participant, almost every reporter communicated their involvement in this group

based on the two criteria for prestige press: 1) instances of their stories re-circulating

in other published press, even worldwide, and 2) direct access to government elites

that other members of the press do not have.

In fact, reporter perceptions of whether they included themselves as part of the

prestige press or not, went far beyond the two requirements of elite access and

beginning the news wave. Often, the phrase "we *are* different" came up in

conversation. For example, one journalist called their work "a higher stakes beat" that

was "certainly more important because it involves matters of life and death" and

"carries more pressure" than other beats. Another summed it up by saying, "In our

beat, you only get one shot at it."

When asked directly whether this they thought they were a part of a

prestigious group, one journalist said, "Yes, I'm the first point of contact to the

government on a substantial topic of international importance… I hate to sound crass,

but our outlet *is* prestigious and looked to for up-to-date national security news."

Surprisingly to me, one reporter was even more emphatic about this point arguing,

> I *do* play a very influential role…I believe the story I wrote on XXX (cannot
> reveal topic because reader could identify participant) raised the issue in the
> press…99% of what the public knows about national security is from the
> media.

Another reporter felt quite differently and was initially reluctant to admit he was part of the prestige press saying, "I don't think I am part of that group" but after reflecting out loud about other journalists who had "ripped off my story for the world to see," this particular participant recanted saying,

> Yeah…while we watch out for everyone else's agendas, because everyone has
> one, I guess I'd say I'm part of that group, the group that helps determine
> what America will think about that day…we do compete with others in the
> prestige press space.

Another reason these reporters believe the national security resides in a different arena is because of its origination. One journalist said, "My beat exists because of 9/11" and "I owe my job to Osama bin Laden." Similarly, another reporter said,

> A few years ago I was told that this is the golden age of reporting. In the 90's
> you couldn't get on A-1 with a national security story to save your life.
> Obviously, that's changed. I think it's probably seen its peak. It's become
> institutionalized now. There was a huge department at every news outlet.

Several shared some of the positives to covering national security saying, "We're different because we don't get burnt out as quickly as other beats because it's so

varied." Several reporters expressed humility, though. One ended the conversation by saying, "I do feel like we are on a different level, but maybe that's just pure hubris."

In general, these journalists feel their beat is not only different, but also more difficult to cover than others. Themes that emerged when discussing the challenges of this particularly beat included issues of access, process, sacrifice, risk, and location.

Access. Many participants saw their role in this beat as more difficult because of the unique access issues they experience and the heavy source development required. One reporter said, " It is much more difficult to cover in terms of developing sources…people are more reluctant to talk to you than let's say covering the airline beat." Most reporters not only talk about the "sources who all of the sudden have a foot in their mouth" but also "FOIA requests are way more difficult in this arena with a ton more exceptions."

On the whole, reporters did not seem put off by this hurdle and often spoke of access constraints from the viewpoint of their sources. One reporter said,

> As a new issue (terrorism) in America, people in the national security field are
> rightly hesitant to talk to reporters because one, they're afraid of divulging
> information they could go to jail over, or two, they don't have a lot of
> experience working with reporters.

Overall, these reporters perceive their access issues to be much more difficult than other beats in D.C. and are continuously striving to overcome this challenge.

Process. Another theme under why these reporters feel their beat is tougher to cover is the notion that their news gathering process is more complex than other beats. One reporter said, "Covering national security is a patchwork process unlike other beats." Another said "there are no documents to rely on and people's memories

are fallible so piece-mealing the story together is a key skill for the national security reporter." One reporter shared that he thought the national security beat was "distinguished from others reporters" because

> Much of what we deal with is classified, in fact probably almost all of it…so we have to construct what we know from many different memories and you have to fight literally for every word in every sentence. It's a taxing process.

In the end, when participants compare national security to other beats, many pinpoint the actual news building process as more cumbersome, requiring "a perfect memory, or else."

Sacrifice. On another, more personal level, this group shared stories of trying to remain immune and emotionally-detached to the horrors of what they saw, particularly at the Pentagon, many times unsuccessfully, and how this sacrifice sets them apart from other beats as well. Many participants had a personal story about how 9/11 affected not only their coverage, but their outlook on life in general. They each were required to closely confront the damage and aftermath of 9/11, which has, in turn, induced heavy personal feelings. Some even seem to have a martyr syndrome confiding, "the public has no idea the sacrifices we make…we are definitely first responders and unsung heroes." Another participant said, "one of the pictures I keep in my office is of like three days after the event when they put the two big light towers up…9/11 fundamentally moved and changed me…others went back to their normal lives, mine never did." Along the lines of sacrifice, many reporters said they chose not to vote and some claimed "this is a sacrifice for me not to participate in elections in order for me to do my job well and maintain an objective appearance."

Risk. The notion of risk was often brought up in context of how reporter's viewed their jobs as different from other beats. One type of risk often mentioned were the increased legal ramifications these reporters and their sources face. One journalist shared his "after-interview strategy" and said, "I don't keep any paper trails anymore. The Administration is really cracking down on investigating sources and terrorism information they read in the paper."

Of course, many reporters also mentioned the physical risk when meeting a terrorist or a shady source for an interview. One said, "I have to think very carefully about where I'm going….where the way out is. I will not let people take me in their cars to other events…I rent a car."

Another reporter shared her plan of getting away from a terrorist while being driven back to her hotel saying, "I had it all planned out. I was going to throw what I had in my arms at him and dive out of the car." These reporters say this type of concern is unique to their beat and makes for a "higher stress job" on top of the normal reporter deadline stresses.

Location. Some reporters focused on the locale of the national security beat and claimed their topic is different because "you can only do the job effectively in D.C….people don't want to talk on the phone or email, you have to meet them in person with this kind of information." "Another reporter said, "You have to be in there everyday. You can't really observe security from a distance." One journalist had a different perspective on this reality, however, saying "More than other places, there is the challenge of breaking out of the pack here -- especially in national security."

The location of national security news within the broader context of news was also discussed. One reporter said that in the end, national security is different than

other beats because "it often envelopes the rest of the beats across the United States" in that America's culture of news "lends itself to the seductive tendency to cast issues as national security issues in order to emphasize their importance." Perhaps in many ways, the beat's differences are also ironically its inherent dangers.

Finally, the location of many initial stories resides with the smaller trade press covering national security in Washington, D.C. More than two-thirds of those interviewed discussed the impact of trade story choice on their own topic choices for follow-on stories. One journalist summed the comments well by saying, "I've written them off relentlessly. And considering what they're paid, those guys are really pretty good." When I told several participants that those I had interviewed in the national security trade press did not think they were part of the prestige press that helps to begin the media wave in D.C. for story topic cycles, one chided, "Well, they're not reading my stories then."

In conclusion, these journalists are sharing that while the "War on Terror" was used in their reporting, it was highly disrespected as a term. Everyone remembers the days when that frame was "rampantly used by government and press" but almost all participants insisted they utilized qualifiers of the term from the beginning of use. Moreover, evidence suggests that the "Overseas Contingency Operation" is a failed attempted frame that also has little respect among these journalists. Moreover, the "War on Terror" lives on in journalist perceptions because nothing else has successfully taken its place. This is not only evidenced by their frequent use of "War on Terror" throughout our conversations, but also in the frustrations of having "to find other terminology to say the same thing."

Secondly, these reporters (minus the trade press) do view themselves as prestige press, although never using that terminology, insofar as attributing their special access to government elites as "prestigious." One reporter summed up many participant statements by saying, "We have the best access to the White House and other high-up government officials when other reporters don't, so it makes me feel important, yeah." While government access is one necessary ingredient for the establishment of a prestige press, the domino effect where news is then copied to other press around the world is another ingredient. However, many journalists do not seem to make the connection to their potential influence on the rest of the world's press, but rather focus on the "echo chamber here in D.C." where "my print story is then re-created in TV format and then I'm brought on to talk about the story" or frustrations that "my story is ripped off by D.C. bloggers all the time…and who knows where that ends up."

Finally, and perhaps ironically, it seems the trade press are, in many cases, the *actual* beginning of the media wave -- without even realizing their role in this process. With nearly all study participants pinpointing the D.C. trades as the place where they begin the news building process for many of their own terrorism stories, the trade reporters, also interviewed in this dissertation, do not recognize their power to frame stories as the very first point of contact with senior government officials on Capitol Hill. These stories, via the mainstream national prestige press, can then be easily promulgated to the rest of the world – along with their originally-tagged framing choices.

Chapter Five – Discussion

This chapter provides a discussion of theoretical connections and implications emerging from participant interviews. Limitations of this research are discussed and conclusions offered based on careful data analysis. Future research streams are also suggested.

This study explored how the Washington, D.C. prestige press made meaning of the concept of the "war on terrorism," how they understand the government's role in the construction and use of the "War on Terror" frame, how this population understands their use of "war on terrorism" in praxis and how they perceive and employ the Obama administration's recently attempted rhetoric shift from "War on Terror" to "Overseas Contingency Operation." Study results have yielded a better understanding of national security reporting in a post-9/11 world and uncovered the insider's viewpoint.

I conducted 35 in-depth interviews with D.C.-based national security reporters by utilizing a snowball sample. Study results indicated that there was importance in examining the post-9/11 news gathering process for this unique group of national security journalists in Washington, D.C. Among other findings, new patterns of routine and technology use were revealed for these participants that are rooted in post-9/11 realities. Moreover, evidence was found for an expansion of framing theory and the need to reconsider the hierarchy of influences model as applicable to a post-9/11 era.

Stemming from the research questions, journalists made meaning of the "war on terrorism" concept via accountability to themselves, their audience, their sources,

and their employer. Moreover, this group denies having the power to legitimize terrorism messages from news reporting.

Additionally, reporters believe that the "war on terrorism" lives on, not only in the current Administration's unchanged policies, but also by impacting their daily routine in several ways: First, this group reveals their daily struggle to create their *own* "War on Terror" frames when creating news content, now that the term itself is taboo – many wonder what will "catch on" next. Second, journalists reveal that the national security beat requires close personal monitoring of their own behavior when relating to the presidential administration in order to "stay in the game." Additionally, journalists report that the post-9/11 era has produced a new journalist routine of increased anonymous source acceptance helping to lead to an increased perception of autonomy.

Finally, reporters reveal great remorse when assessing their role in helping to promulgate the "War on Terror" concept and readily acknowledge their part in helping to support the Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. There is also evidence that a journalist's view of the current presidential administration personality may contribute to the frame that reporter's choose when building terrorism news content and that the hierarchy of influences model needs updating in a post-9/11 world. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that the D.C.-based mainstream national security prestige press consumes their own frames largely from the smaller trade publications.

Theoretical Connections to Research Findings

This study's literature review exposed 1) the need to elaborate framing theory in mass communications (Reese & Lewis, 2009), 2) the need for reconsidering the hierarchy of influences model (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996) to consider changes in a

post-9/11 era (Moeller, 2004), 3) the lack of primary scholarship regarding terrorism (Silke, 2004), 4) the dearth of research that reveals perceptions of the communicators themselves (Matthes, 2009), and 5) a gap in the literature that offers the integral connections between terrorism and mass communication scholarship in the context of media studies (Nacos, 2007). To expound, a discussion of theoretical connections to the research findings is offered below largely in reflection of the literature review order found in Chapter Two; two exceptions to this order is the addition of a new theory to help explain study results and an explanation of new journalist routines, which is foundational to the subsequent description of a post-9/11 hierarchy of influences model (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Agenda Setting

Since this study utilized grounded theory for data analysis, results uncovered the addition of another useful theory that may be helpful: agenda setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Agenda setting is the theory that media have a substantial influence on their audiences by choosing certain topics as "news" over others and therefore placing prominence on certain topics over others. Reporters commented on their ability to "play a very influential role" and to "set the agenda" during several interviews.

Although most reporters attributed this feeling of influence to their perceived increased autonomy, study results also revealed a perception of an increased use of journalist *as* source -- another form of agenda setting via reporter agency. This "new" routine seems to have come about due to the economic cutbacks leaving skeleton staffs to cover many news stories. As one journalist put it, "it's just easier to get the

original reporter for a story we don't have time to cover on the air to give that news to our audience."

Furthermore, this study found evidence of the "War on Terror" Frame evolving past general public naturalization (Reese & Lewis, 2009) and into the reporter's agency (internalization). For example, these journalists perceive this frame is no longer used in direct content, yet the concept lives on. This was evidenced by many participants sharing stories of their personal attempts to redefine the "War on Terror" Frame into new phrases on their own.

Framing Theory

By and large, journalists in the D.C.-based national security prestige press corps report that they do utilize framing practices when disseminating their stories. In fact, most recognize and even use the term "framing" when speaking about how they present their stories and rationalized the means via the end goal of audience comprehension (Jamieson & Waldman, 2003). In support of Peterson's (2007) argument that journalists frame their own work, participants often referred to their reporting in frames such as "a quest for truth" and offered allusions to their heroism to "be a light shining in the darkness" sometimes even as a "first responder."

Building on the Lewis and Reese's (2009) work, dissertation results supported that these journalists believe the "War on Terror" frame itself *has evolved* since 9/11 from transmission to reification to naturalization. Likewise, reporters agree that this frame has the ability to change in dynamics and definitions over time (Reese, 2001a). Additionally, this study's results supported that journalist's personal communications tag the "War on Terror" frame as naturalized into their own collective acceptance (Lewis & Reese, 2009).

Curiously, participants claimed the "War on Terror" frame was "useless" (Lewis & Reese, 2009), yet attributed worth to its ability to quickly communicate with their audience. Generally however, results indicated that journalists agreed with the operational framing definition used in this study to denote that this frame provided them with "organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world" (Reese, 2001a, p. 11). For example, many journalists discussed how the term helped them create social and symbolic meaning for their audiences by denoting that "when I used that phrase, everyone knew what I meant." Furthermore, reporters said they sought "an easy way to communicate" with their audiences and the "War on Terror" phrase "organized the complexities of the topic under one big umbrella for me." Perhaps when participants communicated they thought this term was useless, they really meant to say "vague," as this attribute would offer allure to any journalist seeking to intrigue and connect with their audience.

Indeed, journalists acknowledge the power of a frame to move the political dial, as Entman (2004), Iyengar (1987), and Patterson (1993) have argued. Moreover, journalists indicated recognition of their role in this process – namely, helping to condition the public over time to understand national security issues via "leaning on the 'War on Terror' terminology" as Norris et al (2003) and Sadaba and La Porte (2006) found. Even though participants said they would qualify the term when used with quotes or its source (President Bush) and some argued they "were only passing the terminology along," most considered "that time frame was an institutional failure" and often voiced heavy personal responsibility for the lack of questioning or quest for alternative frames, confirming what Lewis and Reese found in their journalist

interviews. Alternative frames would not have asked "How can the U.S. win the 'War on Terror'?" or "Which presidential candidate offered a stronger plan for the 'War on Terror'," but whether we should engage in a war in the first place.

A few reporters did indicate that they "helped determine whether we would enter this war or not" supporting the work of Boyd-Barrett (2004), Moeller (2004), and Norris et al (2003). Insightfully, some participants tagged the "War on Terror" frame as "an insidious means to help perpetuate fear across America," supporting what Moeller (2004) argued and pointedly revealing that they did "help describe the conflict against America," with "a blanket of support" for retaliatory actions requiring state sponsored violence (Lewis & Reese, 2009). Overall, this group acknowledged their continuous repetition of this term in their own news reports and the implications that ensued, some journalists even pointed to the deaths of many American soldiers.

Although journalists readily offered remorse for inhibiting open discourse and discouraging alternative responses to war (Lewis & Reese, 2009; Moeller, 2004; Reynolds & Barnett, 2003), study results also support the continued use of "dominant national frames" in reporting on national security as a justification for continuing in war, thus supporting the work of Powers and el Nawawy (2009). For example, journalists report that they continue to have difficulty communicating succinctly with their audiences about the current wars in the absence of employing a "War on Terror" frame. Not only does this indicate that participants are still engaged in framing the Wars in nationalist terms -- not seeking to challenge or change those frames -- but this also supports Moeller's notion that the media has lost its "moral imagination" and that the "War on Terror" frame successfully "threatens a nuanced understanding of the world" (2004, p. 64, 74).

Journalist statements also supported Entman's (2004) work by indicating that the "War on Terror" frame strengthened at the intersection of their reporting and the government's use of the term. For example, even though participants acknowledged a role in helping to promulgate the term, many fell back on the sentiment that "I was only reporting the news of the day" or "This was how my audience best understood the issue." As scholarship suggests, both the government and the news media utilize well-traveled frames to appeal to the public at large (Sadaba & La Porte, 2006). In fact, study participants said that in hindsight, they helped pave the road to war -- ultimately supporting what Anker (2005), McChesney (2002), Reynolds and Barnett (2003), Zelizer and Allan, (2002) and countless other scholars argue was a blind alignment with the U.S. government post-9/11.

However, study results challenged Entman's (2004) notion that a frame will only change in the face of elite disunity – when government officials begin to quarrel. Entman's assertion is logical considering that the media often follow conflict. However, as one reporter noted, "even after Congress was at each other's throats again, the 'War on Terror' phrase was still readily used… it was too late to turn back." It seems in this case, elite disunity over the term -- and even over the wars waged by the United States -- did not alter the media's love affair with the "War on Terror" frame at that time. The reluctance of the media to closely follow this elite disunity, for whatever reason, created a vacuum where alternative viewpoints were not heard (Moeller, 2004).

Furthermore, study results illustrated that the increasing availability of "event-driven news" helps to protect against indexing (Bennett, 1990) government sources alone (Lawrence, 2000; Livingston & Van Belle, 2005). Reporters said the fast pace

of a post-9/11 news atmosphere leaves them in control for most news content choices and they are not forced into repeating what government officials are messaging. However, evidence also suggested that when reporters do uncover government information, these journalists are often beholden to just a few of the same sources repeatedly (Entman, 2004).

Finally, study results found support for the "trickle down effect" (Dimitrova & Stromback, 2008) of the prestige press (Kellner, 1995). Specifically, participants report that the terrorism frames first chosen for use by the D.C.-based national security prestige press are 1) "bounced around in our D.C. echo chamber" and 2) often end up repeated throughout world media. Ultimately, journalists acknowledged both challenges influencing other U.S. media outlets with their own reporting, as evidenced in their accounts of requests to appear on TV to discuss their print story, for example, or hearing their "print story read aloud word-for-word on the radio with mistakes that had since been fixed," as well as using other media outlets to help frame the topic or angle they would report on for a given day. Many also pointed to media outlets outside of D.C. and across the world as having "ripped off my story word for word."

New Routines

As a result of decreased access, several reporters revealed that many Washington, D.C. newsrooms have changed their source naming policies, ultimately creating a new culture of what this study termed the "post-9/11 anonymous source phenomena." This paradigm shift occurred when national security reporters were given increased autonomy to "get the story" given the sensitive nature of the content sought, as well as the need for quickly establishing trusted relationships between a

new national security reporter and a source. One reporter lamented the implications of this "increasingly accepted routine" with the comment that "these people say things and then later in life get into really important positions of power but you don't have them on record saying things in the past that could relate to what they're doing….really frustrating."

Furthermore, although a 24-7 news cycle has been in play for more than a decade, this study's findings strongly support increasing pressure on reporters to continuously provide "instant news" to feed this cycle in the face of increasing technological demands and new online product venues, as well as dwindling economic resources and staff. Therefore, journalists attest that in this "high-paced atmosphere," there is "no time to check in with people back at the office," particularly in breaking news situations -- as terrorism-related issues often are. In fact, in these situations, as well as during less immediate terrorism related stories, this group of reporters asserted that they often are given or "forced into sole decision-making power." It is in these times, a reporter's social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) seems to supersede, even consume, other hierarchy levels. Through participant interviews, it seems this new autonomy level spreads throughout the framing of news process, supporting the findings of Lewis and Reese (2009), and not just during immediate, breaking news situations as Barnett and Reynolds (2009) found.

Hierarchy of Influences Model

This study found support for the usefulness of the hierarchy of influences model, although the need for evaluating the model in a post-9/11 era will be discussed under theoretical development. First, organization, structural changes do impact

journalists. For example, the recent news industry cutbacks could be one reason why journalists are experiencing increased autonomy; they are left with a skeleton staff.

Second, each of the levels in the model *has* impacted D.C. prestige press in some way. For example, the "War on Terror" frame ultimately became a prevailing ideological influence, the government's construction and promulgation of this term was an extra-media influence, media organizations did hold meetings to discuss how best to utilize this frame, and media routines impacted the length and pace of getting stories on terrorism published or aired. Nonetheless, this study did not find evidence of an ordered hierarchy, where the individual level is subsumed by all the others. Instead, study findings support what recent scholarship has revealed regarding breaking television news situations such as terrorism, namely that a journalist's personal biases perhaps *most strongly* influence news structure and angle due to the instant news turnaround required and the need for journalist-as-source in these high-pressure, solo situations (Reynolds & Barnett, 2003).

To reiterate, evidence in this study does not point to the individual level of the hierarchy of influence model functioning in a vacuum; rather this level should be re-evaluated in a post-9/11 era, including a consideration of how the worst economic downturn in America since the Great Depression has impacted media industry staff numbers. Perhaps then, we can appropriate the proper level of influence from (or as an exception for) this specific type of reporter.

However, at this heightened *level* of national security reporting responsibility, the hierarchy of influences model almost certainly requires modification as, at the *individual level*, a journalist's personal background, bias and opinion will provide the initial, if not the most enduring, framework for what their audience learns about the

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situation. Based on the evidence presented in the results section, national security

reporters indicated that they perceive having a stronger influence on news content

than the hierarchy of influences model suggests, particularly in an era where seasoned

terrorism reporters expressed experiencing little to no editorial oversight, usually win

the battle when they are challenged by editors, and operate in a city rife with

anonymous source acceptance. Nonetheless, while evidence clearly denotes a change

in journalist routine, based on this study, participant perceptions of increased

influence over news content is still just that, a perception.

Media and Terrorism

Participants studied did not voice concerns about potentially harmful

consequences that may arise from the media-terrorist connection. In fact, although

participants acknowledged that terrorists, like many others, have an agenda and do

attempt to garner media coverage, no participant in this sample discussed, from the

terrorist viewpoint, how a terrorist cause might gain credibility or a political win, by a

reporter deciding to give the terrorist media coverage (Hoffman, 2006; Moeller, 2004;

Nacos, 2007; Torres-Soriano, 2008). Thus, in line with their tradition, the vast

amount of scholarship that supports media coverage of terrorism impacting the public

policy process was not a consideration of these participants. At the same time

however, most reporters acknowledged that their reporting did often impact public

policy emanating from Washington, D.C. (Capella & Jamieson, 1997; Patterson,

1993) and sometimes, even supported what has been termed the "CNN Effect" –

where media from America can be the first to affect the public policy of governments

abroad due to the 24-7 news cycle that CNN founded (Gilboa, 2005).

Therefore, study results indicated direct opposition of reporters to accept what much of scholarship characterizes as the media-terrorism relationship, often terming that "uneasy" (Barnett & Reynolds, 2009) connection as a "double-edged sword" (Bowen, 2005) or "symbiotic" (Nacos, 2007; Nagar, 2007) -- leading to a legitimization of terrorist goals via media coverage (Bowen, 2005; Hoffman, 2006; Nacos, 2007; Weimann, 2004).

While several journalists did provide examples of instances where the government, or their audience, expressed anger for their terrorism coverage saying, "It might aid in terrorist knowledge or give credibility to a terrorist cause," most participants argued that such reporting is not only an issue of "the public's right to know," but also fills an important advocacy role for their audiences to ultimately gain the necessary knowledge to combat terrorism. Moreover, these reporters emphatically disagree with scholars who have concluded that all publicity is good for the terrorist (Bowen, 2005) and that without publicity, terrorist goals would never be achieved (Hoffman, 2006; Nacos, 2007). However, where scholarship and practitioners tend to agree regards what much of scholarship has called "media-oriented terrorism" (Weimann & Winn, 1994) or "mass-mediated terrorism" -- which among other factors asserts that the only means whereby the public can understand or learn about terrorism is from the media (Nacos, 2003).

Recent scholarship to examine the impact of new technologies, specifically the use of the Internet by terrorists, are supported by this study's findings as well (Weimann, 2004). Study participants agree that terrorists are now more often choosing to bypass main stream media to communicate directly with the individual citizen, especially in efforts to more personally recruit future group members

(Sciolino & Mekhennet, 2008). Likewise, reporters indicated that terrorists *as* sources are easier to come by due to the increasingly ubiquitous digital age and this new availability has become part of their source development strategy (Liebes & Kampf, 2007). Finally, most journalists acknowledged their integral role as framers with the power to choose or angle a story, although findings also support that this privilege is dispersing because of the non-stop communication flow now available online (Lewis, Kaufhold, & Larosa, 2010).

Scholarship exploring the lack of holistic domestic terrorism coverage in America was also supported (Chermak & Greunewald, 2006). Although participants claimed immediately post-9/11, they took great care to *not* panic the public by over-reacting when reporting on terrorism-related stories, many participants said there were too many stories to cover now, and therefore they only focused on the "most sensational stories" – those that would make for better ratings and ultimately a "happier employer."

While not directed by an editor or producer to do so, these journalists indicated the "normal routine" was now to choose the terrorism-related story that "made the audience's mouth drop," even though "I always felt dirty when I did." One reporter explained that while she could "probably combat this situation and win on her own," the "news trend" that many reporters indicated as "heightening the sensationalism of terrorism news" was "one of the main reasons" she had decided to leave her media outlet in the coming weeks. Perhaps "sensationalism" is another internally-understood and adopted frame inside media organizations that has now "naturalized" into the terrorism news gathering process deserving further examination.

Theoretical Development and Interpretation

Framing

Scholars have called for the expansion of framing theory in these areas and have communicated an urgency to not only understand how these reporters consume, internalize and disseminate such information (Lewis & Reese, 2009; Reese & Lewis, 2009; Barnett & Reynolds, 2009), but to also encourage or discover better ways of reporting about terrorism that might help discourage further violence and/or act as an effective catalyst of information, and perhaps even comfort, to their audiences (Entman, 2004; Fox, 2003; Nacos, 2007).

Elaboration on Framing Theory: *Presidential Administration Personality.* Participants revealed an interesting finding through interviews on their perceptions of how they 1) understood how government officials were framing the issue of terrorism, and 2) how they chose to frame terrorism under different presidential administrations -- namely the Bush and Obama administrations. At least partially, reporter perceptions of the government's terrorism framing seem to change with the administration in power and this affected the way they reported on terrorism.

For example, reporters relayed that they perceived the Bush Administration as laden with deep conflict, as several said, "whether deserved or not," and therefore, perceived the terrorism issue framed by government as *a conflict of interests.* However, with the Obama administration, it seems these same reporters see terrorism now being framed more as a *pursuit of common interests.*

This perception did not stop at an opinion, however, but in participant words "continued into my story angle." Often, reporters cited they feel obliged to inform the public of, not only the words said by government elites, but also the tone as well.

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Further research should attempt to match the prevailing reporter perceptions of an administration (laden with conflict, committed to change, a one-world viewpoint, etc.) with how reporters perceive the "personality" of that administration – a very complex, but likely important framing issue.

Reese and Lewis's (2009) Frame Cycle Model: Completing the Steps. Previous studies (Reese & Lewis, 2009) suggest that a frame cycle, while dynamic, only has three pieces: transmission, reification and naturalization. Using the "War on Terror" frame as the application, my findings indicated the presence of a fourth and fifth new piece to the frame cycle for this sample: *Construction* and *Internalization.*

Although these authors tersely mention the term, internationalization, they are doing so in the context of a journalist's attempt to utilize shared frames to communicate, such as the "War on Terror." However, internalization as this study argues, goes beyond the third framing element of naturalization that Reese and Lewis propose. This new element does not just address a frame's power to become naturalized into the public psyche whereby a journalist would use that specific frame to bridge understanding with their audience, but journalists are now faced with determining how their own collective naturalization has become personally internalized so that they can continue communication with their audiences regarding the "War on Terror" without using those words specifically. Given the "Overseas Contingency Operation" frame did not gain media traction, internalization is further evidenced by journalists' claim that the "War on Terror" frame lives on. This reality has now placed the post-"War on Terror" frame wholly in the reporter's hands to communicate their own understanding of this term, often as a function of their own

personal experiences and background, and in many cases as a function of their person 9/11 experience itself.

Likewise, Reese and Lewis's (2009) frame cycle is missing the genesis of the frame itself -- a beginning cycle step I have simply called *Construction*. Further study of the actual birth of a frame might also aid in a better theoretical understanding of a frame's complete cycle – beginning with what becomes dominant, or "catches on" and what does not. Construction does not only begin with extra-media entities such as the government or public relations professionals. For example, this study found evidence that the life history and experience for these journalists is an influencer on their framing choices and news content building approaches. Therefore, personal experience likely plays a role in the construction phase of a frame.

My two proposed additions to Reese and Lewis's (2009) frame cycle (construction and internalization) offers scholars a basis for richer understanding of how a frame first is *constructed,* becoming a catch phrase that will eventually be *transmitted* and *reified,* only to become *naturalized* into the public psyche, but may then transition further into *internalization*.

Although I believe these additional pieces to Reese and Lewis's (2009) frame cycle model can serve as a basis for further theoretical development to explain the framing cycle for journalists, they will likely require modification and revisions as future testing commences. For example, does the internalization of a frame by a top echelon journalist then reignite the construction/transmission process all over again? Also, what time frame is expected, or has precedent, for each step in the model? Is this model only applicable to terrorism frames, or D.C.-based prestige press, since those are the only circumstances yet studied for the model or does this hold true for

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other reporter populations and/or frames in other areas such as sports or health? Finally, since participants indicated their new autonomy was partly given as a function of a poor economy and a skeleton staff, what happens if the news industry rebounds with a full staff of editors, who once again engage in providing layers of approval?

New Journalist Routines. There is evidence that many Washington, D.C. newsrooms loosened their source naming policies post-9/11 to accommodate the changing news landscape, namely decreased source access. According to participants, this ultimately created a new culture of what this study calls the "post-9/11 anonymous source phenomena," where national security reporters were given increased autonomy to obtain the story, given the sensitive nature of the content sought, as well as the need for quickly establishing trusted source relationships.

This new autonomy seems to have increased rapidly due to two main factors: 1) a new culture of heightened security requiring more trust of the journalist by both source and editor and 2) the economic downturn and loss of jobs for journalists gave reporters still working more autonomy because they are now completing additional work, often times with the additional requirement of maintaining an online presence as well. It should be noted that industry cutbacks could be another explanation for increased autonomy, or at least a contributing factor. Therefore, the individual level of the hierarchy of influences model (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996) may need to be reevaluated to consider post-9/11 reporting routines, at least for this group of journalists.
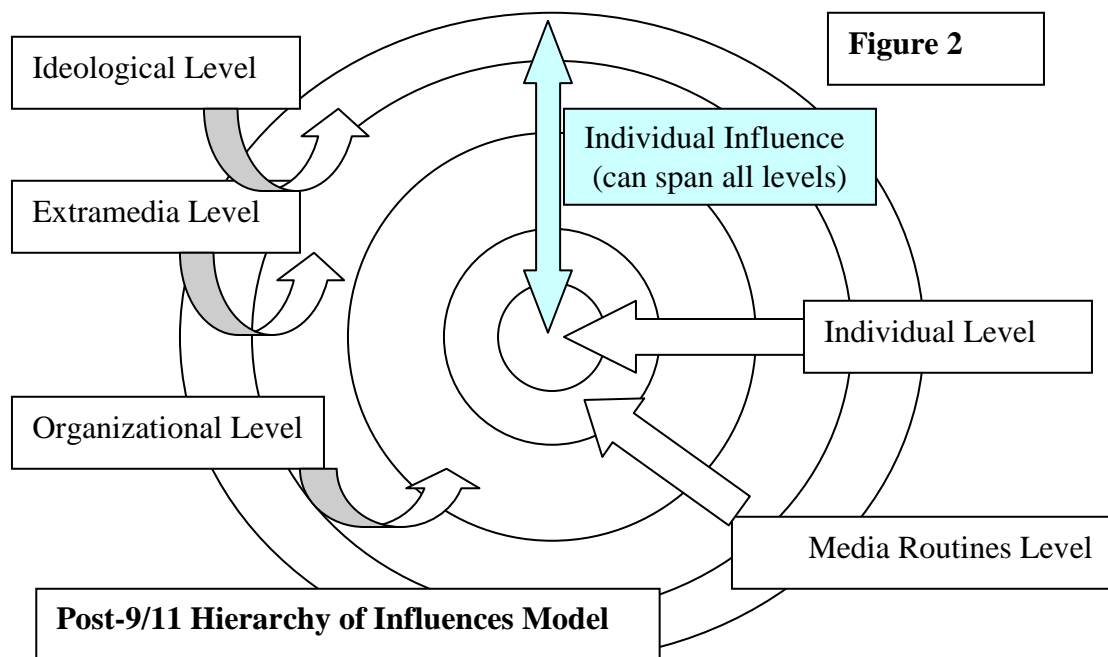
Evaluating the Hierarchy of Influences Model

The mainly unchallenged hierarchy of influences model (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996), while still useful, needs updating in a post-9/11 world (Figure 2). Shoemaker and Reese forged their model in a time when "traditional" media was discernable and organizations clearly wielded strong influence. As the model stands, there is no consideration for several new media situations that have become highly prevalent since 1996. In fact, for each of the following situations, scholarship supports that journalist influence subsumes all other levels in the hierarchy model.

First, with the emergence of a "special terror-related genre within journalism," (Mogenson, 2008), the evidence from recent scholarship that journalists as a whole have more autonomy (Beam, Weaver, & Brownlee, 2009), as well as results from this study of the perception of increased D.C.-based national security prestige press autonomy, reporters on the whole seem to be experiencing a trend toward greater influence than the hierarchy model allows. Second, scholarship has found that reporters in breaking news situations with no time to check in with anyone else (Barnett & Reynolds, 2009), including journalists participating in military embeds (Fahmy & Johnson, 2008; Kim, 2010), also experience strong levels of autonomy. These realities, too, are not addressed in the hierarchy model. Finally, this model does not consider new media technologies, specifically online citizen journalism and the emergence of bloggers and social media not beholden to a particular media organization. In this case, the importance of the organization level in this model may be diminishing or disappearing.

The hierarchy of influences model interprets the individual level of journalist as beholden to the other levels, including media routine, but fails to explain the

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journalist influence in the absence of routine, as described above. Therefore, much like the framing process itself, the model proposed below offers a more *dynamic* relationship among the levels of influence, in relation to the individual, when building news content. Moreover, this illustration allows for the modern realities of the situations described above, namely, ascribing due influence to the individual journalist in certain post-9/11 circumstances. It is in these situations that a reporter's background and experience will guide the news production process.

Figure 2

Ideological Level

Individual Influence (can span all levels)

Extramedia Level

Individual Level

Organizational Level

Media Routines Level

Post-9/11 Hierarchy of Influences Model

This model reconsiders the individual level of influence in a post-9/11 world, allowing this level to span across the concentric circles. Thus far, and in addition to recent scholarship that supports a general increase in autonomy for U.S. reporters (Beam, Weaver, & Brownlee, 2009), this model fits three situations: 1) military embed reporters (Fahmy & Johnson, 2009; Kim, 2010), 2) breaking TV news (Barnett & Reynolds, 2009) and 3) the D.C. national security journalist who can wield greater influence than originally thought, to subsume the other levels when

operating without traditional routines in place as explained herein.[2] Furthermore, this model may need to update to consider online citizen journalism with the emergence of bloggers and social media who are not beholden to a particular media organization. In this case, the importance of the organization level in this model may be diminishing or disappearing.

Journalist Socialization and Hierarchy of Influences

Journalists experience a lifetime of socialization and interaction with the other levels of the hierarchy of influences model. For example, a future reporter who first interns within a media organization as a college senior is socialized into that organization's culture from the beginning. Likewise, the influence of the ideologies a reporter is exposed to growing up helps to socialize them into society and could have a great influence upon their world view. This situation was best evidenced when reporters discussed the impact of their childhood on how they choose to frame their news stories today.

Therefore, regardless of participant perceptions, the socialization that a reporter experiences, in direct relation to all the levels of the hierarchy model, complicates the notion that these journalists are, in reality, able to supersede the hierarchy model levels. Thus, even though participants report a greater feeling of autonomy, perhaps their autonomy is still firmly rooted within the influence of the other hierarchy levels such as ideology, extra media, organization and routine.

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[2] Decreased access to terrorists and government agency officials has provided an acceptance for increased use of anonymous sources and withholding or destroying evidence of such encounters, leading to an increased perception of autonomy.

Similarly, although participants are covering a uniquely sensitive beat –

national security -- and are located within a unique geographic region – Washington,

D.C. – each carrying a unique power that comes with responsibility for such a life and

death topic as well as unique access to top government elites, these journalists may

simply be revealing what all reporters are experiencing in the current economic

downturn, namely, using the same sources repeatedly and the feeling of greater

autonomy due to now having to operate with a skeleton staff. On the other hand, it

could be the case that the hierarchy model was too simplistic to capture the complex

intricacies of reporting on national security inside the Capitol of the United States in a

post-9/11 era.

<div align="center">Implications on Theory and Practice</div>

Given the evidence in this study, there are important implications on both

theory and practice discussed below. Before beginning this discussion, however, it

should be noted that perhaps these reporter's routines and perceptions are not "new"

per se, but only new to these particular reporters, as often history will repeat itself.

Regardless, this discussion will center on the goal of this dissertation – exploring the

perceptions of this study's participants.

Framing Theory

This study found evidence for an influential factor in determining how a

reporter may choose to frame terrorism – his/her view of the current presidential

administration's "personality." Overall, participants shared that their perception and

reporting choices followed how they viewed the current administration. Specifically,

journalists attributed the Bush Administration with an "us vs. them" mentality that

encouraged reporters to frame terrorism as a *conflict of interests*, whereas the Obama

Administration was attributed with seeking similarities with others in the world and therefore terrorism was framed as a *pursuit of common interests*.

Not only can this finding help to provide better context for future studies regarding how the D.C. national security prestige press reporter frames terrorism, but perhaps this notion of perceived "personality" of a person, place, thing or group of people is an important discovery when conducting framing scholarship.

Reese and Lewis's Frame Cycle Model

Evidence for journalists using other words to describe violent groups such as rebels, insurgents, militants and so on, is not new to scholarship (Picard, 1993), however, the connection between the naturalized "War on Terror" frame, that still exists in the public psyche, and the journalist's new task of explaining this frame without explaining it (but still alluding to the original frame) has not been studied. Perhaps this is because no other case exists such as this one, or perhaps this has occurred with other frames in the past. Regardless, these journalists are now wholly in control of personally re-framing a frame ("War on Terror") that has been rejected, but in name only.

To be clear, the notion of a frame becoming *internalized* goes beyond the first three levels (transmission, reification, naturalization), whereby a journalist isn't simply using a frame to communicate with an audience already conditioned or "naturalized" into understanding and collective acceptance of a concept, nor as an umbrella to several concepts, but actually takes the frame cycle deeper to rest on another level completely whereby the agency belongs to the journalist themselves. As reported, these journalists may no longer be using the specific terminology "War on Terror" in their reporting, but there is strong evidence that this frame certainly still

exists, and is employed in their psyche. Now, reporters illustrate they are working hard to communicate their own perception of what the "War on Terror" *should* mean as salient in their audience's mind. Evidence showed reporters grapple with this "gap in national security reporting" almost daily.

This finding may only exist because the "War on Terror" frame has not yet been replaced. Moreover, the new perceived autonomy reported by these participants may possibly be what allows them to morph the "War on Terror" frame and appropriate it for their own, personal uses and phrases. Nonetheless, scholarship has a unique opportunity to explore the continuing cycle of this macro frame as a potential example of future adopted frames. Furthermore, another small change should be added to this model: *construction.* Obviously, a frame's cycle does not begin with transmission and in some cases, is actually strategized as a potentially-appealing frame by political actors. Therefore, I propose further testing of a new frame cycle of five components, construction, transmission, reification, naturalization and internalization.

Evaluating the Hierarchy of Influences Model

Another model this study addressed was the hierarchy of influences model (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). This research contributed to forward theoretical movement by addressing a unique set of reporters -- the Washington, D.C. national security prestige press -- who, even by the model founder's admission (Reese, 2001b, p. 102-103), hold greater power than most reporters in the news building process. However, their model needs to be reconsidered to account for post-9/11 media routine changes.

Not only did the hierarchy model not account for the special genre of reporter

covering the most classified beat in the business – national security in Washington,

D.C. -- the model also did not, could not, account for a post-9/11 world where the

walls of government secrecy have caused such increasing concerns for the welfare of

sources, that these journalists are now trusted with much greater autonomy than ever.

Similarly, the hierarchy model could not have foreseen the recent and severe

economic news industry cutbacks which are only exacerbating, or perhaps causing,

the increasing measures of individual journalist autonomy that, this study finds, often

supersedes and acts independently of the other hierarchy levels.

Media and Terrorism

This study has mostly discouraging implications from its use of media and

terrorism scholarship, although it did offer a rare glimpse at the insider's viewpoint to

how terrorism is framed in the media – providing a qualitative study to span this gap

in terrorism literature (Horgan, 2010).

Study results may have exacerbated well-documented fears of how the media

can legitimize terrorist messaging (Bowen, 2005; Hoffman, 2006; Nacos, 1994;

Nagar, 2007). At the same time, findings also underscore that media themselves agree

that the public understands terrorism through their reporting alone (Nacos, 2003;

Weimann & Winn, 1994). Moreover, this dissertation illustrated the reasons why

many scholars are calling for increased research on this important population of

reporters in a post-9/11 world (Liebes & Kampf, 2007; Moeller, 2004). Perhaps most

discouraging is the alignment of study participants with scholarship that is finding an

increased use of terrorists as sources (Liebes & Kampf, 2007) and the increasingly

effective terrorist use of new technologies to recruit members to their violent cause

(Sciolino & Mekhennet, 2008).

Finally, the results of this study have methodological implications as well. With the additional Internet access to reporters, via both professional and personal tools such as Facebook, scholars can proffer an intimacy with reporters never before available. This ease of online communication may also encourage additional in-depth interview scholarship. Also, studying how a journalist frames the news via content analysis may be easier than ever and although some online journalists and bloggers are not as forthcoming about their own background, many authors are forthright with their opinions and biases – if not found on their blog or website, then on their social networking pages. Finally, framing studies in general can become more efficient because scholars now have the ability to quickly read and download online articles.

National Security Studies

This research expands terrorism and national securities scholarship by directly addressing the timely topic of terrorism and the communication channels so integral to terrorist goals. Furthermore, this study fills a gap in primary research (Silke, 2004) and studies the communicator themselves (Matthes, 2009) to aid in the understanding of how the national security prestige press of Washington, D.C. report on terrorism. Likewise, this study is one of only a few communication-based studies to explore these topics qualitatively, bringing relevant communication theory to the table while bridging the disciplines of national securities, political science and mass communication.

With few qualitative terrorism studies available, this research also offers methodological advances to provide greater qualitative depth and a more holistic understanding of key national security news-building components that can only be discovered via in-depth interviews. This provides a balance of rich data sets exploring

the personal opinions, beliefs and attitudes of journalists in action as evidence of (or fodder for) the theoretical set of mechanisms that construct and determine the process of disseminating news about terrorism.

Finally, study results indicated the need for a closer look at how terrorists are using new media to achieve their goals. If terrorist Internet use is truly creating a new brand of jihad ("Jihad Lite"), what do these changes say about the mindset of the global movement, its evolving structure and priorities? Determining the recruitment process for this new trend could be low hanging fruit for those who study Internet radicalization. Moreover, as terrorist popularity has decreased, perhaps the digital age has provided the means for these groups to practice better communication skills and ready themselves for future successful outreach towards targeted groups – whether via radicalization, cyber terror or a direct threat.

Practical Implications

This research offers several implications for the applied practice of the national security journalist. These include their personal framing choices and negotiations with new, post-9/11 journalism routines, as well as their dealings with terrorists and terrorism news.

Before offering suggestions, it is important to clearly underscore the intelligence, transparency and thoughtfulness that these journalists provided during the interviews -- honestly critiquing their own work, their own profession and their own biases. Their personal reflections were largely offered as a function of their deep concern for bettering their profession. The rich insights these participants offered will go a long way in providing a better understanding of their sense making during the framing process, lending valuable fodder for future research. It is not an

overstatement to assert that these reporters have the experience necessary to prevent another U.S.-led war from being so easily accepted into the public sphere of debate.

Framing Terrorism

This study findings offer practical contributions and identify best practices to journalists as they seek, consume, interpret, and disseminate the "War on Terror" frame (whether directly or indirectly), and terrorism information in general, to the public at large. While scholars continue to explore immediate operational solutions for the journalist from both a human protection and a policy perspective – namely, focusing on discouraging terrorism and questioning frame choices, which could be argued to be one and the same -- journalists can also take action.

For example, both Epkins (2008) and Lewis and Reese (2009) found that national security journalists themselves are frustrated with the use of the "War on Terror" frame by both government and themselves, seeking always to succinctly but accurately communicate nebulous yet central terms to their audience. Even in the absence of public dialogue to counter frame the overriding rhetoric of public officials, reporters have a responsibility to avoid buzz words that side-step healthy debate. Instead of contributing to the reification of a frame by relaying *what* an official says, perhaps journalists, particularly those who have experienced the "War on Terror" framing era, should have their critical antenna poised to ask *whether* that frame is appropriate to transmit.

Moreover, as the theoretical implications explained, reporters should consider their own perceptions of the current administration when framing terrorism. Given that this population is the initial conduit through which government rhetoric flows, careful consideration should be given to how their framing of terrorism (conflict vs.

common interest) may affect their audience, including elite government officials who construct public policy. For example, if a reporter were to choose to frame terrorism as conflict alone, perhaps alternative means of addressing terrorism, such as public diplomacy might not be considered and open dialogue on another appropriate means to address terrorism might be quashed, particularly if the overwhelming audience sentiment is fear. Likewise, if a journalist were to choose to frame terrorism as a common interest, whereby other world powers need to bond together to address this issue, reporters should be cognizant that by moving the locus of the problem overseas, their audience may turn a blind eye to this important issue as well. Obviously, the answer is balance.

Finally, reporters should be aware that they are also susceptible to other media's framing choices. This group should consider where *they* are consuming their own determined news frames. Of course, there are many players (politicians, PR practitioners, terrorists) attempting to garner news coverage, but study results also indicated that the trade publications in D.C. are where most of these higher echelon reporters are choosing to draw story and framing ideas from. Likewise, those reporters working for the inside-the-beltway trade publications should be aware that they wield great power as another initial contact point with senior government officials. The D.C. trade press, who generally view themselves as lowest on the media totem pole, might need to reframe their self-perception to understand the great responsibility that comes with being watched and read by more seasoned reporters. Ironically, it seems that the small, trade press are the true prestige press of Washington, D.C. as the beginning of the media wave world-wide.

Media and Terrorism

A gap seems to exist in participant minds regarding the true impact of media coverage -- the connection of their reporting to the possibility of inciting or aiding further terrorist acts. This rationalization seems inconsistent and ironic because the journalist also argues that they serve as advocates for Americans to learn the new ways in which terrorists can attack. Thus for the reporter, their intention in revealing such information is that when an American learns the intricacies of bomb making, they would then be motivated to act as citizens that could elect politicians or enact special measures to combat these potential harms. At the same time however, this group does not consider how the same report might give similar information to a would-be terrorist, as their focus -- right or wrong -- is the attentions of their immediate American audience and not necessarily the longer term consequences.

Therefore, reporters should continue to possess a strong conviction of filling an advocacy role for their audiences to inform the citizenry with the necessary information to act. However, journalists should balance this with a more careful consideration for the impact of their reporting on legitimizing terrorist goals and potential harm to the lives of both civilians and military members. I acknowledge this is incredibly difficult in an increasingly competitive environment that often requires last minute decision-making, but simply justifying reporting on how to make a bomb upon the public has a "right to know" isn't always responsible reporting.

Moreover, this prestige press should recognize the great power they possess to frame issues and to begin or end dialogue in other media across America and around the world. Likewise, given that each participant illustrated at least one example where their reporting directly resulted in a policy change of some kind, this group should not

isolate themselves into the justification that no potential outcome, no matter how bad, could rationalize *not* reporting on terrorism. This in no way means they should not report these types of stories, rather simply that more consideration be attempted prior to their public release.

Unfortunately, given the current journalistic landscape with fewer staff, this suggestion may be a luxury and not a possibility. Also, with bloggers and online citizen journalists simultaneously breaking news, the temptation to get the story first may cause a reorganization of priorities and processes. However, as reporters grow more seasoned at terrorism coverage, perhaps this will facilitate innate decision-making ability to naturally address these matters as they come along every day. Therefore, I strongly encourage media outlets to employ and maintain highly-experienced journalists in prestige press positions, even in the face of economic cutbacks and particularly those covering terrorism, as it is clear that those journalists that have covered national security for the greatest length of time, have learned to take the time to carefully consider the impact of their reporting.

However, it is not difficult to gauge which is the greater good – informing the public so they can take action, or withholding information to: 1) prevent inciting panic and 2) preventing information being disseminated to those who would use it for harm. As a First Amendment supporter myself, I tend to agree with this sample that informing the public is by and large, the better option. In any case, I encourage balanced news content decision-making. And, after hearing many statements to the effect of "I don't care if I'm being accused of helping the terrorist," I believe reporters are correct to think many of their stories are simply under fire from

government officials as a secrecy smokescreen to provide an excuse not to share information that actually should be relayed to the public.

Beat Demarcation. Another suggestion which might help to streamline national security news and prevent gaps in terrorism coverage is for reporters and media organizations to encourage a more efficient, consistent and definitive beat demarcation across media outlets. For example, a more efficient and definitive demarcation of the national security beat versus the homeland security beat might prove helpful for both a better public understanding of this complex matter, as well as aid in better journalist organization and grasp of an issue, deeper source development and richer story context. Unknown to much of the American public, media outlets often treat national security and homeland security as separate, when many times the information coming out of the various agencies that is covered under each beat either contradicts or overlaps in meaningful ways. Recognizing that each beat is considerably large, at the very least the reporters assigned to various interrelated agencies should be paired to compare and contrast notes, with the goal of uncovering better information for their audience as well as understanding the fuller picture for the issue at hand.

Similarly, a more efficient use of reporters covering the various governmental agencies might help quell misinformation or disinformation from reporting that often leaves the public confused. For example, the Health and Human Services agency work on issues of bioterrorism, but by and large national security reporters do not cover this information in a terrorism context, rather health reporters are those assigned to such stories. This may cause a large gap in not only reporter knowledge of an entire situation in context, but also leaves the audience with the burden to piece

meal terrorism reports together, when many times they already overlap. Likewise, the opposite is true. When reporters seek the terrorism news angle for just any health story, for example to boost ratings, this can harm the audience psyche by contributing to the immunity of the public and loss of appetite for these stories. This could unintentionally create a "cry wolf" factor in the audience as many stories initially claiming terrorist ties turn out to be nothing of the sort.

Likewise, a cloud of new cynicism seems to surround prestige press perceptions about changing and evolving government rhetoric. Lessons learned from the fallout surrounding reporter use of the "War on Terror" frame seem hard-won but well-ingrained. This could mean trouble, however, in that reporters may ignore future rhetoric as another "cry wolf" factor, when there really *is* news.

New Routines. This study found evidence for new national security reporter routines in a post-9/11 culture, namely decreased access, leading to the need for a new phenomenon of increased anonymous source acceptance, leading to increased journalist autonomy. This trend is troubling and is removing the credibility that journalists maintain.

Not only does this new routine force the hand of the journalist as sources may increasingly expect not to have their name revealed, but the very process that helps to safeguard objectivity is broken. Editors are no longer on the front lines with their journalists. And, this is happening inside a crucial, national topic. Moreover, reporters have a heavy burden to bear alone.

Many participants lamented that one implication of this newly widespread anonymous source acceptance affects future reporting as well. In one account, a journalist said he heard a high-ranking government official say the exact opposite of

what he previously said "off the record" in a prior story. This lack of government source accountability could make for continued claims for unnecessary walls of secrecy that will ultimately negatively impact the public and the journalism profession as a whole. Additionally, the prestige press "trickle-down effect" (Dimitrova & Stromback, 2008) could eventually apply to this concept, too, and spawn an increasing world-wide acceptance for anonymous sourcing in mainstream reporting. Indeed, the popular emergence of Wikileaks is already suggesting this trend may continue on a larger scale.

Moreover, journalists should consider whether this phenomenon is causing repeated use of the same sources and how this might affect objective reporting. Likewise, in an age where sources are increasingly expected not to share their names with the public, reporters should take notice of this widespread phenomenon and push back on sources more frequently, even in the face of losing the story. Editors should support this decision. A collective journalist uprising may be necessary as well.

Another danger this study found was the tendency for reporters to assume, with the widespread acceptance of anonymous sourcing, that unless information is offered off the record, it is likely not worth reporting. Should this "post-9/11 anonymous source phenomenon" become contagious, or worse a newly accepted and naturalized frame in itself, this will only perpetuate little to no source accountability and increasingly compromised news quality.

Digital Disguise. The main finding from discussions regarding new technologies is that the digital age is altering the news production process for these reporters. Although these technologies are in many ways advancing the culture and offering audiences the new opportunity to connect and follow reporters and reporters

an opportunity to connect with audiences and elusive sources (such as terrorists) on new levels, the existence and use of the Internet in particular is not without problems. Obviously, the new ability of terrorists to recruit and radicalize new members online is one negative impact from their increasingly efficient use of the Web. Moreover, the temptation that reporters now have to offer a platform to the terrorist because they are more easily accessible is a slippery slope to legitimizing their cause.

Additionally, the age of already knowing the big players in D.C. personally may be coming to an end. Moreover, the large quantity of information that flows into the 24-7 format has caused reporters to feel more pressure to simply "get a story out whether thoroughly checked or not," and makes it "tougher to distinguish fact from opinion" as the online world has millions of sites to choose from when researching an issue. Unfortunately, the danger emerges such that when everyone claims to have "authority" on a subject, then no one is the authority. The evolution of the digital age, coupled with the economic downturn, has caused higher pressure on journalists to garner top ratings for their employer and has apparently caused some reporters to loathe their own reporting "in the name of sensationalism that draws a crowd."

Likewise, journalists perceive that America is headed down a path of amusing ourselves to death, but are doing their best to not only adapt, but to fight back creating their own blogs and/or online presence to save their professions as they know it. It doesn't seem that this is an issue of a stodgy group unwilling to change. Change is hard, yes. But, the overwhelming sentiments of these reporters, particularly those who grew up in a "just the facts ma'am" era, are "disheartened" at worse and "energized to preserve a press void of opinion" at best. However, with the popularity of prime time commentators, this task seems especially daunting.

Audiences. Finally, although it is clear that journalists perceive that their audiences will seek and find information that only resonates with their preconceived ideologies and beliefs (including the non-coverage of foreign news because outlets assume Americans do not care), it is critical that reporters and news management not pander to their audiences, no matter how important ratings may be. A news outlet is supposed to inform, not pander to what their audiences want to hear.

Pandering to the loudest voice can help perpetuate the oppression of a potential silent majority, undermining the democratic ideals this country was founded upon; this can also further polarize America. As evidenced lately, this separation can lead to actual violence. Moreover, Americans are no longer consuming a steady diet of open dialogue and alternative viewpoints. Ultimately, the casualty is not just shallow-minded audiences, but could also lead America to isolate itself from the rest of the world altogether.

<center>Methodological Limitations and Future Research</center>

Study Limitations

The limitations of this research include issues surrounding its data collection methods, the study's unit of analysis, personal bias and the consideration of historical context. These factors may have influenced results and are discussed below.

Telephone interviews do not allow for face-to-face interaction, therefore these interviews may have lacked depth of explanation and ability to build an intimate rapport. Likewise, the in-person interview may have impeded the collection of rich detail in that a face-to-face conversation can sometimes prove intimidating. Moreover, some interviews were conducted near to a participant's place of work in a public hotel lobby or coffee shop. In these circumstances, it is possible that a less

private location may have caused participants to hold back on disclosing experiences and opinions. During both telephone and face-to-face interviews, I tried to account for these limitations by explaining that there was no wrong answer and I was there to listen and learn from their experiences, that I would protect their confidentiality to the fullest extent, and by asking detailed follow-up questions.

This study's unit of analysis may prohibit a full understanding of the news gathering process for this particular group. Since the unit of analysis was delimited to individuals rather than at the organizational, routine, extra-media and ideological levels, results and interpretations are limited in the description of the full functions of this process.

Personal bias and background may serve as another limitation. As a former reporter and public relations practitioner often working with the media, it is possible that my personal experiences influenced interviews, data analysis and interpretation. To mitigate this potential, I adhered to literature-spawned research questions and interview protocol, and engaged in rigorous grounded theory for data analysis.

Future Research

This study lends itself to encourage several directions for future study that would integrate the fields of mass communication, journalism and terrorism. Specifically, the areas of framing, media and terrorism, prestige press and routines should be further explored.

Framing. First, I propose conducting additional research to include and test the additional pieces to Reese and Lewis's (2009) frame cycle model for potential applicability to other journalist groups, beats and news frames. However, an important development that may be required before any future testing can occur is for

scholars to provide a consistent operational definition for framing. Not only does there continue to be internal academic division on *how* terrorism frames are examined, but the very definition and parameters of framing as a concept are not yet commonly understood (Entman, 2004; Reese, 2007). Until a better framework for defining framing, is achieved both as a concept and within operational models, future framing studies may not be able to offer substantive -- or at least consistent -- theoretical progression.

Moreover, although it could be argued that post-9/11 global journalists were simply reporting the same frames as the American media at that time; in essence, the framers are themselves victims (or participants) of framing. Further research should explore this *framing the framers* process. This would also include the potential trickle down effect to other American media and take a special look at how the D.C. trade press fits into the larger framing process.

Additionally, by interviewing a primary conduit of terrorism news coverage for America, and perhaps the world, this study offered an initial understanding of what influences this specific group of reporters to choose certain terrorism-related news content angles over others. This sample can provide fodder for future quantitative media effects analysis. Other possible implications for future praxis and research on related theory and national security prestige press reporting might follow a specific terrorism-related frame's transmission from government to journalist to public. While framing research should continue -- particularly given evidence that frames can change -- scholars rightly caution that ironically, the very act of studying a frame can help reify its power altogether and the very definition of framing that scholars choose, depends on how their study is framed in the first place (Reese,

2007).

Media and Terrorism. Findings of this study supports much of media and terrorism scholarship and illustrated a crucial need to include media, and their pivotal role, in future studies seeking to understand how terrorism is framed by terrorists, the government, and/or audiences. Furthermore, in studies of public resiliency after a terrorist attack, the media should become a main unit of analysis for communicating necessary information to a large audience. Finally, qualitative studies engaging actual reporters/communicators are scarce and sorely needed to better understand, from the insider's viewpoint, how the world understands terrorism.

Prestige Press. Future research should explore evidence for the socialization process of this population. For example, most of the participants disclosed they have had formal journalism training through an accredited University. Further studies could uncover how this training may have influenced their role in building news content, their perceptions of framing terrorism and the framing outcome of their stories. Moreover, research should examine how the socialization process may affect this press as they relate to the other rungs of the hierarchy of influences model, including, for example, a study to interview the editors in charge of this prestige press.

Furthermore, evidence suggests that Washington, D.C. national security reporters, while not new to framing, are unique in other important ways. The changing nature of the news horizon has ushered in a new genre of reporter – the national security prestige press. Along with this title comes great responsibility and increasingly difficult occupational hazards. With a perceived long leash to choose story topic, angle and source, this low turn-over group should be studied multiple

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times and across academic disciplines. Given the troublesome access issues to this elite public, however, perhaps a consortium could collaborate and construct a clever interview guide for this busy population without causing persistent interruption. Moreover, further research should explore the level of influence of the D.C. trade press, under the prestige press context, on the higher echelons of media as a potential instigator of the larger news wave.

New Routines. Broaching the question of personal responsibility of a journalist to a source, future research should conduct related content analyses. For example, if journalists view their source as threatening, (legal, terrorist, whistleblower, politician) do they adapt their writing to accommodate their fears or aspirations? Similarly, if an administration has the ability to reward or deny a reporter access (i.e. Fox news example), how does that impact journalist source use or story framing? Furthermore, the sentiment of acting as a first responder or martyr for their audience should be explored more fully.

Finally, given overwhelming evidence in this study that participants perceive current journalism business models are dying, new models should be explored. For example, these reporters are intrigued by two specific and burgeoning new journalism models as begun by academic institutions across America and a private model called *Pro Publica.* In fact, participants predict these models will be the future of news for America. Both emerging models should be studied for their merit and if nothing else, their historical underpinnings. Likewise, non-profit, academic and privately-funded operations should continue to engage in the evolving news process to help fill the gap of downsizing mainstream news outlets and provide high-quality news services of their own.

Conclusion

The goals of this research were to explore current perceptions and attitudes among the Washington, D.C. prestige press covering national security and terrorism to examine evolving, post-9/11 national security reporter routines and learn more about the contemporary framing of media discourse regarding terrorism by both government officials and D.C. national security reporters themselves.

To do this, I employed 35 in-depth interviews with D.C.-based national security prestige press regarding their meaning making and use of the "war on terrorism," their understanding of the government's construction and use of the "War on Terror" frame, and their perceptions of the recently attempted rhetoric shift to "Overseas Contingency Operation" by the Obama Administration.

Generally, study results yielded a better understanding of national security reporting in a post-9/11 world, and for the first time, uncovered the insider's viewpoint from the Washington, D.C. national security prestige press themselves. Specifically, several theme patterns regarding this dissertation's four Research Questions were found that seem to confirm what much of normative scholarship asserts regarding the framing of terrorism immediately post-9/11. However, findings went beyond simple agreement that journalists largely failed in providing an open dialogue in the lead up to the War in Iraq. Data emerged to also discover how these reporters perceive their role in both the news gathering process in general as national security correspondents in particular. Results also indicated evidence for the genesis of new theoretical additions to Reese and Lewis's (2009) frame cycle model, a new factor to consider when studying journalist framing, as well as the existence of a

unique situation never before addressed for the individual level of Shoemaker and Reese's (1996) hierarchy of influences model regarding the building of news content.

Due to its unique context and combination of research streams as well as resulting findings, this study was theoretically and descriptively rich, adding to the understanding of framing, building news content and terrorism studies. Foremost, this study was the first to explore the perceptions of Washington, D.C. prestige press covering national security and terrorism and confirmed there was importance in examining the post-9/11 news gathering process for this unique group of reporters. In general, journalists are often overlooked by terrorism scholars as the initial portal and crucial conduit in the communication process among the government, terrorists, and the citizenry. Moreover, this population is often viewed as mere pawns and without human bias, nor as having the potential to function as mediators and independent political actors. Gaining greater insight into this population's perceptions of their daily jobs did provide a better understanding of their role in the dissemination of terrorism information. In turn, this should help to inform future studies, not only on journalists themselves, their processes and operating conditions, but also on a range of national security issues from terrorist communication to government communicator strategies to audience reaction.

This dissertation exposed a truly cross disciplinary study as it explored intersections of mass communication, journalism and national security issues that offer real implications for mass communication and journalism theory as well as political science and terrorism-related areas of concentration. This research also offered practical insight for praxis in the journalism, government communicator and national security-related professions.

Overall, reporters agree that when it comes to the "War on Terror," they were too focused on the term's *content* and as a result missed offering the broader *context* surrounding what eventually evolved into a macro frame. A greater understanding of how these frame shapers impact contemporary terrorism discourse and the resulting public policy regarding national security is one key to building stronger, safer infrastructures to protect human lives. Likewise, I believe the most important scholarly contribution from this dissertation is its focus on an untapped, but powerful public. In giving voice to this unique population of journalists, results have identified their perceptions as potential lynchpins in the strategic process of combating terrorism.

Finally, this group of journalists does not fully comprehend their uniqueness, wielding exclusive power to shape both domestic and world opinion. It would seem to be a positive outcome if each of them were to fully recognize this reality. As the Spider-Man credo memorializes "With great power there must come great responsibility" (Peter Parker, a.k.a. Spider Man), which we all believe down deep, even if this quote originates in the make believe realm of comic books. Without such an understanding, some in this group of individuals could easily become careless. To this end, I dedicate this work. May it be employed in this spirit of encouraging excellence in journalism, especially within similar groups wielding power such as those studied herein.

Appendix A: Reporter Recruitment Email

Dear _____:

As a former reporter myself, first allow me to thank you for your diligence and hard work to disseminate necessary information to the American public, particularly on your specific beat. My name is Heather Epkins and I am a doctorate student at the University of Maryland, College Park currently pursuing a degree in communication. I specialize in the study of how the media cover terrorism-related issues, focusing on the elite group, of which you are part, often called the "prestige press" of Washington, D.C.. This interest has grown out of my own experiences as a reporter and media relations professional for the past fifteen years.

I would like to request the opportunity to take you to dinner or meet for coffee to discuss your thoughts and opinions on your profession. Specifically, I would like to know how you view the construction, use and evolution of the concept/phrase, "war on terror" in both the media and within our government. I am also interested in how your particular beat may differ from other beats in daily routines.

ALL CONVERSATIONS ARE HIGHLY PROTECTED BY STRICT UNIVERSITY REGULATIONS OF SUPREME CONFIDENTIALITY. No names or media outlets will ever be revealed and you may decline to answer any question or end your participation at any time. Furthermore, I will not ask any questions that may compromise your position with your employer, nor your job as a journalist. Your contribution to this research would offer both you and your fellow journalists potential value in practice, as well as your personal views the chance to be heard and recognized in a major piece of research.

As a former reporter, I clearly understand time constraints and the need to remain flexible with scheduling. To that end, I am at your flexible call. I would like to begin meetings this summer (June), if possible. Our meeting would take place outside the workplace at a convenient, public location as jointly determined between you and me. Is there a time when you and I could meet for a 45 to 60 minute block? I'd like to contact you next week to set up a time for us to meet.

I welcome any questions you may have regarding my research or my identity as a graduate student at the University of Maryland before you schedule a day and time to meet. Please also feel free to contact my dissertation advisor, Dr. Linda Aldoory, at laldoory@umd.edu or 301-405-6528; or myself at heather.epkins@gmail.com or 443-871-7131. Thank you for your consideration and please consider sharing your professional insights into your crucial career field.

Sincerely,
Heather Epkins
Doctoral Student, Department of Communication
University of Maryland, College Park
heather.epkins@gmail.com
http://www.comm.umd.edu/gradstudents.html#Epkins

Appendix B – IRB Consent Form

Page 1 of 3
Initials _____ Date _____

CONSENT FORM

Project Title	Through the Eyes of America's National Security Prestige Press: An Extension of Framing Theory
Why is this research being done?	This is a research project being conducted by Dr. Linda Aldoory and Ms. Heather Epkins in the Department of Communication at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are involved in communication interactions between the U.S. government and the public on national security matters. The purpose of this research project is to investigate the role of media in disseminating terrorism information to the public.
What will I be asked to do?	The procedures involve interviewing several members of the press. Interview durations will be held in a private location outside the workplace as jointly determined by you and the researcher. They will last approximately one hour and will be audio taped. Questions will focus on how the reporter makes meaning of the terrorism information given to them by the US government and how they in turn disseminate that information to the public. The full interview protocol is attached. Examples include: What characteristics define a national security reporter? How does your editor influence your story, if at all? Do your strategies to influence or encourage those in government to share information differ due to your specific beat? Please initial: ____ I agree to be audio taped during my participation in this study ____ I do not agree to be audio taped during my participation in this study
What about confidentiality?	This research project involves making audio tapes of our interview for purposes of accuracy in data collection. We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, you and the researcher will determine together a public location outside the workplace in which your interview may be conducted. Should you choose not to participate in the study, information on your refusal to participate in the study will not be released to the organization and/or your supervisor. In addition, your name and your organization's name will not be identified or linked to the data at any time. The data you provide through your responses will not be shared with your employer except in aggregate form, grouped with data others provide for reporting and presentation. Only the principal and student investigators will have access to the names of the participants. Data will be securely stored on the investigators' computers, several hard disks, and audiotapes. Hard copies and audiotapes. Hard copies and audio tapes of the data will remain in the possession of the student investigator at her locked, home office. Informed consent forms will be stored separately from any and all data. All data including audiotapes will be destroyed (i.e., shredded or erased) when their use is no longer needed but not before minimum of five years after data collection. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.

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What are the risks of this research?	There may be some risk, in terms of identification, from participating in this research study and being audio taped. However, all information will be kept confidential as described above. Your organization's name and your name will not be identified or linked to the data you provide at any time unless you give your express consent to reveal these identities. If the organizational leader provides written permission to release the organization's name, the researcher will distribute copies of this written consent directly to all research participants prior to conducting an interview. In addition, you as an individual study participant should initial the appropriate statement below regarding your desire to remain confidential or have your name associated with your responses. _____ I agree to have my name associated with my responses in study publications and documents. _____ I do not agree to have my name associated with my responses in study publications and documents.
What are the benefits of this research?	This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about the role of national security media in disseminating important terrorism information to the public. We hope that, in the future, other people and organizations might benefit from this study through improved understanding of these factors.
Do I have to be in this research? May I stop participating at any time?	Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits for which you otherwise qualify. You also may feel free to ask questions about the research and/or to decline to answer certain questions. Following your initial interview, the researcher may determine that follow-up questions or even a second interview may help clarify points raised during the interview process. If you agree to be contacted for follow-up, you may indicate your preferred method of contact to ensure confidentiality. In addition, if in-person follow-up is necessary, you and the researcher will determine together a private location in which to meet. Please indicate your consent or decline your consent to follow-up contact by initialing the appropriate statement below: _____ I agree to be re-contacted by the researchers to obtain follow-up information on my interview responses. _____ I do not agree to be re-contacted by the researchers to obtain follow-up information on my interview responses. Please contact me using the following contact information: Phone Number (Optional): Email Address (Optional):
Is any medical treatment available if I am injured?	The University of Maryland does not provide any medical, hospitalization or other insurance for participants in this research study, nor will the University of Maryland provide any medical treatment or compensation for any injury sustained as a result of participation in this research study, except as required by law.

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What if I have questions?	This research is being conducted by Dr. Linda Aldoory in the Department of Communication at the University of Maryland, College Park. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Dr. Aldoory at 301-405-6528 or laldoory@umd.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: **Institutional Review Board Office, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 20742; (e-mail) irb@deans.umd.edu; (telephone) 301-405-0678** This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.
Statement of Age of Subject and Consent	Your signature indicates that: you are at least 18 years of age; the research has been explained to you; your questions have been fully answered; and you freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project.
Signature and Date	**NAME OF SUBJECT**
	SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT
	DATE

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Appendix C – Reporter Interview Protocol

Before we begin our conversation, may I get your permission to audio tape the

interview, just so I can ensure accuracy later and listen better now?

(If no), Okay, I understand. Let's get started with the interview. . . (take detailed notes)

(If yes), Great! Let's get started.

As you know, I'm exploring the thoughts of national security journalists on their jobs in

general and the *concept* of the "war on terrorism" more specifically. You've been a

reporter in Washington, D.C. for some time. Let's talk first about how and why you

started in this business.

(Grand Tour)

 1. Let's talk first about how you came to choose a career as a NS journalist.

 2. On what topics do you mainly report and what is your most recent national

 security article?

 Probe: Is there a story that you are most proud of? Least proud? Why?

(Related to RQ3: How does this prestige press understand their use of the "war on

terrorism" in praxis?)

 3. Briefly tell me about your 9/11 experience and how it may have impacted

  your reporting.

 4. Generally, what do you think characterizes an effective, productive reporter

  for the national security beat? Is there a special set of skills, traits,

  philosophy? Probe: Level of autonomy, transparency, efficiency, access?

 5. Is your beat different than others? How? Does D.C. location play a role?

 6. In covering what can be considered an emotional beat, is it important for

  a journalist to separate personal from professional when reporting on

terrorism? Probe: How do you do this? What about a 9/11 situation? Is

NS a more "personal" beat?

(Related to RQ2: How does this prestige press understand the U.S. government's

role in the construction and use of the "War on Terror" frame?)

Let's briefly discuss sources, social networking and the day to day decisions you are

faced with in covering national security and terrorism.

7. What is your willingness to use and quote anonymous sources? Outlet

    rules? Always followed? Is NS reporting and/or D.C. culture more

    accepting of this practice?

8. Have you ever declined to run a story on the request of a source or because

    of your own security concerns?

9. Can you tell me a story on how you may have gone to extreme measures

    to inform your public about a national security news story? (Example:

    Whistle Blower Story; Knocked against congressional wall)

10. How do you balance befriending your sources with performing a

    watchdog function?

11. Do you utilize social networking when seeking sources? How?

    Probe: Which ones? Listen to poD.C.asts? Video? Blogs? Twitter?

12. Do you have a personal FB page? Twitter? My Space? Blog?

Now, let's talk more generally about journalism's role in America.

13. Do you perceive there has been a decline of traditional journalism? How?

    Probe: How has this impacted your reporting on national security items?

    Probe: How do you define traditional journalism?

14. Do you think that people still take news media seriously or more as entertainment now? (For example, with the rise of interactive opportunities to "participate" in the discussion.)

Probe: Do you think this also happens with terrorism reporting? For example, are people are now *experiencing* the war as an interactive participant, instead of merely *watching* it on TV or reading about it in print?

15. What role do you believe that national security journalists play in helping to set the agenda for politicians and for the public?

Many labels have been provided for your particular group of reporters in D.C. such as "prestige press"….

16. What does the term "front lines prestige press" mean to you? (it means you are the beginning of a trickle down effect, a media wave, an echoing press)

Probe: Do you believe you are part of this group? Are you aware of "following suit" yourself and/or other journalists re-writing or even copying your stories into other venues?

(Related to RQ1: How does Washington, D.C. national security prestige press make meaning of the concept of the "war on terrorism?")

Let's briefly turn our conversation to your opinions on the term "war on terror."

17. Given the various definitions for "WOT," how do you define the term? How do you use the term now? (How do you define "terror?")

18. What is your outlet policy on using the terms, "terrorism" or "war on terror" and is it followed?

Probe: How do you believe reporters should use these terms and what do you do?

19. In your opinion, is using the word "terrorism" in your reporting taking a moral position?

20. Do you feel that reporting on terrorism plays into the hands of the terrorist?

21. How much do you feel the media should report on terrorist activities on the web? (Beheadings, Video Messages, etc.)

22. How would you characterize the relationship between the media and terrorism?

23. Scholars have offered potential operational solutions in the complex communication process that occurs among government, media and the citizenry including legislation, media self-restraint and public media education. Any opinions on potential solutions here?

(Related to RQ4: How does this press perceive the U.S. government rhetoric shift to "Overseas Contingency Operation" has influenced national security reporting?)

24. How do you feel about the rhetoric shift from "WOT" to "Overseas Contingency Operation?" Probe: Has this influenced your reporting? How?

To conclude, I want you to briefly look into the past and then the future.

25. How do you feel reporters fared professionally in post-9/11 reporting? For example, do you believe they blindly adopted the government's

framing of the "WOT" issue or were they simply reporting official

statements to the public?

Probe: In your opinion, what effects has this post-9/11 backlash had on your job

function?

(Ramp Down)

26. Any predictions for the future of NS journalism?

That's all the formal questions I have for our interview, but is there anything

you would like to add at this point? What should I have asked about that I didn't?

What other reporters do you know who might be willing to speak with me about

covering this event?

Thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed. May I have a phone

number or e-mail from you, just in case I need to clarify something from the interview

or ask a follow-up question? And if you would like a copy of our final report, let me

know, and I'll take your address so we can send one to you.

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