

Examining the Limits of the “Rally” Effect: Domestic Use of Force and “Rally-Round-The-Flag” Phenomenon

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Abstract

How do citizens respond to domestic uses of political force? Virtually all of the literature on “rally around the flag” effects focus on international events, yet we know surprisingly little about the degree to which conditions affecting international rally events hold when the president uses force domestically. In this article, we explore unique panel data charting opinion change from before and after the 1993 incident in Waco, Texas involving the Branch Dividians and agents of the United States Government where four federal officers and seventy-five civilians lost their lives. We find, contrasting previous work, no significant aggregate “rally” in President Clinton’s aggregate approval ratings. Yet, confirming previous work, we do find individual level turnover between time one and time two consistent with theoretical expectations and past work. Implications for presidential use of force and public opinion are discussed.

The “rally around the flag” effect, where public support increases for the president’s job approval during a foreign policy, international or military crisis, is consistently related to presidential success at elevating public opinion on presidential job approval. Mueller’s (1973) initial description of rally events listed five categories: sudden U.S. military interventions, major military developments in ongoing wars, major diplomatic actions, dramatic technological developments and U.S. summit meetings with the Soviets.¹ Brody (1991, 77) suggested that this effect occurs frequently enough to consider it a fact of presidential leadership (see also Waltz 1967). Because presidents can generally count on a “rally” effect, they have a reasonable assurance that the public will endorse aggressive foreign policy activities (Mueller 1973; Kernell 1978)—at least in the short run. The theory behind a “rally” is two fold: (1) that patriotic sentiment emerges in the public and the media (especially the media which in turn drives public sentiment), and, (2) all groups are less willing to criticize or challenge the president’s handling of the rally event, most notably the opposition party (Hetherington and Nelson 2003).

Many scholars have examined the nature, duration and effects (both macro and micro) of rally events on presidential approval. Scholars have found significant “rallies” associated with the use of force, in particular with the United States as revisionist or originator of a dispute. The extent and duration of the rally is often dependent on the nature of media coverage (Baker and Oneal 2001). Presidential action is an important key. Schubert et.al. (2002) find that President Bush’s speech after the terrorist attacks of

¹It may also be worth distinguishing between situations in which a foreign country is the aggressor (the capture of the Pueblo by North Korea, the seizure of the Mayaguez, or the attack on the USS Cole in Yemen) versus instances where the U.S. is the aggressor (the Bay of Pigs, the bombing in Bosnia and the invasion of Haiti).

9/11 was the critical factor in creating a “rally.” Presidential action and associated events have also engendered alterations in support for additional “hard-line” military policies during “rally” moments, extending the “rally” effects beyond the policy in question (Peffley, Langley and Goidel 1995). Rally effects have also been shown to create significant changes in evaluations of the president, Congress, trust in government, assessments of the economy and expectations for the economy (Parker 1995; Bishop 2005). Self-identified independents are also found to be more likely to join a “rally” (and “rally” longer) than both Republicans and Democrats (Callaghan and Virtanen 1993) and this is especially prominent when government is divided (Baum 2002).

Yet, these strong findings have been challenged by scholars who find these “rally” effects are limited. Some scholars find that the net effects of positive approval change are minimal (Lian and Oneal 1993; Oneal, Lian and Joyner 1996). Similarly, a “rally” effect can be potent for motivating opinion but will also be limited by a potential lack of agreement by opinion leaders (Brody and Shapiro 1989). Significant media coverage substantially conditions the size of a “rally” (Lian and Oneal 1993; Oneal and Bryan 1995). Divided government may also limit the effect of a “rally.” “Domestic criticism” described by Hess (2001) is more apparent when government is divided because the opposition may be more vocal and critical of the president’s strategies or tactics (see also Lian and Oneal 1993). Ostrom and Job (0000) and Lian and Oneal (1993) also find that the public is less likely to rally in the aftermath of United States use of force if the country is engaged in an ongoing war. More broadly than this, Sigelman (1979) warns that examining short-term trends in opinion change may be due to a number of methodological factors unrelated to actual rally effects, such as sampling error, survey

instrumentation and exogenous political events. Finally, while the president often sees a spike in his personal approval, public support for how he is (or has) handled the crisis is often surprising low. Thus, citizens may rally around the flag (as indicated by presidential approval), but may not really rally around the President 's specific policy.

Individual factors also strongly condition the probability of a respondent "rallying" around the flag. Partisanship limits nationwide universal "rally" effects in that scholars have found that those already predisposed to support the president were more likely to rally during the Gulf War (Norrande and Wilcox 1993; Edwards and Swenson 1997). Respondents are also more likely to "rally" if they hold a favorable view of the president and support the president's performance in office as found for President Carter's handling of the Iranian hostage situation (Sigelman and Conover 1981). "Rally" effects have also been shown to vary by the level of political knowledge possessed by a respondent, where Ladd (2007) finds those possessing low political awareness experience rally effects associated with events related to September 11. Baum (2002) similarly confirms that in the use of force in the past half century, "moderately aware individuals" (those with only a high school education) are the most likely to "rally" (288).

Although much is now known about the functional effects of international "rally" events, little at all is known about "rally" moments where the president uses force domestically. Most "rally" studies only focus on events occurring internationally, typically military interventions or invasions (Lian and Oneal 1993; Norrande and Wilcox 1993; Parker 1995; Edwards and Swenson 1997), foreign policy crises or international disputes (Brody and Shapiro 1989; Oneal and Bryan 1995; Baker and Oneal 2001), or on events that are international in origin but that effect the United States,

like the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the continuing war on terror (Schubert, et.al 2002; Hetherington and Nelson 2003; Ladd 2007). Yet, no study has focused on “rally” effects resulting from domestic use of force, such as incidents involving domestic terrorism, separatist movements, hostage situations or vigilante or militia group activity. These events are not classic examples of Mueller’s description of cases likely to result in a “rally,” but they involve use of executive military (or quasi-military in the case of the FBI, ATF and others), are an important, controversial, highly visible to the public and at least in theory should have an effect on public approval of the president, or approval of the president’s actions similar to those events Mueller describes (see also Edwards 2003). A distinction somewhat overlooked is the affect a “rally point” may have on presidential approval, and the extent to which the handling of the event by the President is approved by the public. These are not the same, and while both are often presented in literature, the analytical distinctions between them are often not drawn in any detail.

There are several reasons to focus our attention more broadly on “rally” effects resultant from domestic use of force. First, foreign policy events may be arcane or removed from public understanding, making any effects thereafter linked to misinformation or lack of knowledge. In addition, because these events often occur far away from home, the events may not rise to a level of potential criticism. Mueller (1973) argues that “indifference and uncertainty” on foreign policy matters makes citizens susceptible for influence from others. Since the public relies heavily on media coverage and the president to sort out these complex policy choices, rally effects are linked to those actors (Meernik and Ault 1998). Second, Brody (1991) claims that domestic crises are more likely to be politically divisive than international events (see also Mueller 1973,

209). Yet, this difference could be viewed as a strength since we can determine the degree of partisan convergence or non-convergence towards the president during these similarly critical times. This situation also allows us to distinguish approval effects from “rally” effects by examining a similar case in a different context. Third, because “patriotism” is not necessarily a cause of a rally effects, as suggested by some (Brody 1991), we can determine the degree to which a rally effect exists independent of the patriotic sentiments.

In this article, we explore conventional media polls and a unique panel data set charting opinion change before and after the final 1993 siege (April 19, 1993) in Waco, Texas involving the Branch Davidians (led by David Koresh) and agents of the United States Government. After a 51 day standoff, federal government agents used non-lethal force tank attacks and tear gassing the compound, whereupon person or persons inside the compound lit fires which burned the compound to the ground. Fifty adults and 25 children lost their lives. Our unique data and topic allow for an important extension of the “rally around the flag” literature, and can provide additional perspective on how the use of force by the executive affects presidential approval.

The Incident at Waco

On February 28, 1993, agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms attempted to arrest David Koresh (born Vernon Howell), leader of the Branch Davidians on federal firearms and explosives violations. The agents came under heavy gunfire; four ATF agents were killed and sixteen wounded in the firefight that ensued. The FBI arrived to engage in negotiations with those left inside the compound, but faced an unknown number of men, women, and children who had barricaded themselves in the

large compound and refused to surrender. The Branch Davidians were heavily armed with hundreds of weapons, including fully automatic machine guns and .50 caliber rifles, and with hundreds of thousands of rounds of ammunition” (Report to the Deputy Attorney General, 1). During the following 51 days, the government agents negotiated with several of the Branch Davidian members regarding an end to the standoff. The FBI’s strategy to terminate the conflict “was to attempt to negotiate with Koresh and his followers, while also employing tactics to gradually increase the pressure on those inside the compound. Those tactics included periodically tightening the perimeter around the compound, denying certain comforts such as electricity, and broadcasting loud music and irritating sounds over loudspeakers” (Report to the Deputy Attorney General, 1).

On the morning of April 19, 1993, upon order from Attorney General Janet Reno acting with President Clinton’s approval, the FBI informed the Branch Davidians that it would be releasing non-lethal CS tear gas into the compound (Tabor and Gallagher 1995). Armored vehicles (Combat Engineering Vehicles, or M-60 tanks) began creating large holes in the compound, clearing a path to insert the gas, prompting those inside to believe they were under attack (Richardson 1994). After a few hours, a member or members of the group inside the compound began to light fires (which quickly consumed the building) and “systematic” gunfire was heard, prompting the conclusion that the Branch Davidians were killing themselves, each other or both. Seventy-five individuals (54 adults and 21 children under the age of 15) died either by gunshot, fire or stabbing on before, during or after the siege (nine individuals survived the fire).

There was perception by some that the government’s use of force in this situation was too “heavy handed,” although opinion polls showed little sympathy for the Davidians

(Shupe and Hadden 1995). Government reports point to ineffective interagency cooperation in the handling of the negotiations (Report to the Deputy Attorney General, 1). Oliver (1994) argues that the government dramatically overestimated the danger of the situation, given the sheer number of federal agents it deployed. This scenario was not helped by the dramatic media presence and intense coverage in the days following the initial raid (Richardson 1994). Generally, the federal agencies involved (and those running the show in Washington, DC) may have underestimated the resolve of the Branch Dividians and the power of religion in forming their response (Shinn 1994; Tabor and Gallagher 1995). The perception of these “heavy handed” federal tactics contributed to other acts of domestic terrorism: Timothy McVeigh, who exploded a bomb in front of the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma on April 17, 1995 cited the Waco incident as the cause of his anger (Hamm 1997, 103).

“Rallies” and Domestic Use of Force

Although Mueller’s (1973) initial description of “rally” inducing events were designed to be international in origin, it makes sense to more broadly classify events which might rally the public. This classification allows us to further investigate the boundaries of the rally phenomenon and determine whether or not the base conditions hold in similar contexts. Therefore, we posit several reasons why domestic rally effects may be similar to international rally effects. First, the most pervasive type of rally effect studied results from the White House’s use of military or quasi-military force. For examples studies usually devote most attention to the short-term popularity bumps associated with the use of force (Lian and Oneal 1993; Parker 1995; Oneal and Bryan

1995; Edwards and Swenson 1997), and others have gone so far as to argue that this measure is the most prominent of all of Mueller's five rally effects (Baum 2002).

The history of the conflict at Waco shows the use of force was employed several times and in several variants, meeting Mueller's criteria for the use of force by the President. Indeed, the broader "militia movement" also sets its roots in a core of resistance and violence, commensurate with similar international incidents (Crothers 2003, 2). Beyond this, several evaluations of terrorism involve (or are related to) the events that occur domestically. Lutz and Lutz (2007) argue that terrorism is the "use of violence or the threat of violence by an organized group to attain political objective" (2). The Branch Davidian compound was linked to other separatist movements (and to a similar standoff in Ruby Ridge, Idaho) who may employ violence or domestic terrorism to enact their ends (Levin 1998). These patriot-militia activities are included together in the emergence of special-interest extremist and terrorist groups "which may include the desire for political and social change" (Vohryzek-Bolden et.al 2001; see also Applebome 1993). The initial use of violence in Waco, Texas in the service of the warrant by ATF agents certainly fits this classification.

Second, events which principally involve the United States directly and the president substantially are events which are required to be "rally" events. The White House (especially the President and domestic policy advisers) were routinely briefed thorough the process (Report to the Deputy Attorney, Chapter 10). The President did not give the order on April 19 to enter the compound with tear gas, but his delegation of authority to the Attorney General and the media widely covered his tacit approval of the methods of the federal agents (Vohryzek-Bolden et.al 2001). Indeed, in a press

conference on April 20, a day after the end to the standoff, President Clinton noted, “I take full responsibility for the implementation of the decision,” and even though he delegated the decision to Attorney General Reno, “it’s not possible for a President to distance himself from things that happen when the Federal Government is in control” (*Public Papers of President Clinton*, 1993, Volume I). Further, the President adamantly defended the position of the Administration in this press conference (Clinton 2003).

Third, Mueller (1973) articulates that rally events must be “specific, dramatic, and sharply focused to assure public attention and interest” (209). It is clear that, although the events in Waco, Texas were not international in origin, they meet these criteria. The initial ATF raid was designed to be sudden and surprising in nature in order to quickly secure Koresh and bring him into custody (Crothers 2003, 105). There were 75 deaths. The media made the event a central focus for several weeks, providing a direct view of the events as they unfolded at Mount Carmel (the name of the compound) (Shupe and Hadden 1995). In fact, the effect may be enhanced because it was possible for the public to directly view the dramatic events unfolding live from the news media, whereas events overseas are less likely to have visual images associated with them (Goodman 1993). And, similar to international events where the media may have limited access to the locations of particular events during the use of force, Reavis (1995) argues that during the Waco standoff, “the press became an amplifier for bureaucratic spinmeisters” (12).

In order to build on the themes outlined above and test the rally effects literature in a domestic use of force case, in this section we identify three hypotheses that emerge from the general consensus of the rally effects literature. If we find support for these hypotheses in the case involving the siege at Waco, then we can affirmatively claim that

the “rally” effects literature can be extended beyond international cases. If we do not find support for these hypotheses (or if we find mixed support), we can make a more definitive case that rally effects are international in origin and specification only. In either case, we are more clearly able to address the debate described in the introductory section that questions the nature and duration of rally effects and provide some perspective on the universal (or generalizable) nature of the events which might cause a rally to begin with.

Hypothesis 1: Presidential Approval Bump.

Action undertaken by the executive branch will create a condition that will cause the public’s positive assessment of the president’s “handling” of his job to increase. The most central finding of the rally-round-the-flag literature is that presidents will experience an increase in public approval. Indeed, Mueller’s (1973) primary contribution is to chart the development of a special class of events that explain public opinion during conflicts (see also Kernell 1978). Waltz (1967) claims that because the president is the single authoritative source for information during many crises, the public rallies behind the White House. For instance, Lee (1977) found that presidential increases in popularity were on average 6 percentage points following a high visible international event involving the president. Similarly, Ostrom and Simon (1985), in a study of 36 crises from 1953-1980, found that presidential popularity increased by more than 5 percentage points. Generally, the results of pre-and-post presidential rallies, the “involvement in crises and other dramatic international events increases a president’s approval rating in public opinion polls by 5 to 7 percentage points,” although the selection of cases vary by study (Oneal and Bryan 1995, 381). The president can also help his own case by “going

public” when the matter at hand. When presidents make a public statement about the action being taking, the more likely the public is to rally (Peffley, et.al. 1995; Baker and Oneal 2001). Although separate from strict job approval, rally moments have also been found to increase presidential thermometer ratings (Ladd 2007) and positive evaluations of the president (Parker 1995).

Although rally effects are generally consistent over time, others have found cumulative over time rally effects to be smaller than those noted above. For instance, Lian and Oneal (1993), in a summary of presidential use of force from 1950 to 1988, found that even well-publicized uses of force boosted a president’s standing only 2 – 3 % on average. Other scholars have found similarly modest effects. James and Rioux (1998) found between 1953 and 1994 a 3 – 4 % on average approval increase when the president responded vigorously to an international crisis. Others have found that although some actions will cause greater popularity bumps than others, the average is closer to a 1% change, even among members of the president’s own party (Lian and Oneal 1995). In general, the longer the time frame studied, the less substantial the rally effect on average. Yet, the effect is consistently present, suggesting that there should be an independent effect of a rally on presidential approval.

Hypothesis 2: Partisan (and Non-Partisan) Convergence to President.

All groups will increase their support of the President’s job approval during rally conditions. From the previous hypothesis, it is clear that there is greater mass approval of the president. This may be more pronounced for the president’s co-partisans. Norrander and Wilcox (1993) find that the Gulf War increased Republican partisanship (a 3 – 4 % increase in Republican Party identification). But, the effect is also found prevalent in

moving partisanship. Indeed, Mueller (1973) suspects that rally around the flag appeals may be more influential with partisans, even partisans from the opposition party (122). For instance, Hetherington and Nelson (2003) find that Democrats were more likely to increase their approval of President Bush after the terrorist attacks of September 11 in part because Republicans had already reached the highest levels of support possible for the Administration. Baum (2003), in an extensive study of major uses of force from 1953 to 1998, finds that “both Democrats and Republicans are most likely to rally behind a president of the opposition party” (288). However, these traditionally opposed individuals may “fall out” of the president’s coalition more rapidly than others (Sigelman and Conover 1981).

In addition, concurrent with the movement of partisans, we should also expect to find movement of “non-partisans” or self-identified political independents. In theory, these individuals, because they do not retain any strict political affiliation, are more likely to have the political flexibility to improve their evaluation of a president of either party. Others have found that the president retained larger and longer increases in popularity among political independents than among those preferring a political party, suggesting that the president serves as the central key figure during times of crisis (Callaghan and Virtanen 1993). Independents are more likely to “occupy the moderately politically aware category” and are in the aggregate more likely than Republicans to rally (Baum 2003, 290). In fact, some have interpreted this general finding as a fact that a rally effect is not a distinct phenomenon but rather an additional force that pushes potential supporters over the threshold of approval (Edwards and Swenson 1997).

Hypothesis 4: Trust in Government. *Individuals who have more trust in government will be more likely to rally.* We hypothesize those trusting in government will be most likely to rally to the President, as he is the most visible and representative symbol of the “government” in the domestic use of force. Those individuals who trust government more are therefore more likely to support the government’s actions in general, especially as that moment evokes a crisis or a challenge to the government’s policies or process. Some have argued that a rally moment can affect trust in government (Parker 1995; Hetherington and Nelson 2003), but our inclusion of the measure of trust as a predictor of a rally effect is unique.

Hypothesis 3: Positive Media Coverage. *More positive media coverage will engender conditions that foster more significant rally effects.* Public opinion on the events that generate rally-type conditions do not exist in a bubble. These events are often carefully and extensively covered by the media. Theoretically, the rally effects work because the media (and critics likely to voice their dissent through the media) remain less critical in their coverage of international events than they would otherwise be. Brody (1991) argues that crises alter the incentives for opinion leaders to speak out on an issue and “opposition elites, in other words, have substantial incentive to remain silent or to be vaguely supportive – support that can later be, and usually is, withdrawn – and almost no incentive to criticize the presidents” (64). The result, he warns, is that there is consistent bipartisan support in the media for the president’s action and a framework where opinion agreement (and the commensurate rally) can be achieved (although the same cannot be said of opinion editorials (76). The impetus for the rally effect can be directed to presidential speech (see Rosenblatt 1998) but is more often indirectly related to media

priming (Ladd 2007), or the reflection of presidential statements through the media (Jordan and Page 1992; Oneal, Lian and Joyner 1996).

This theoretical outline has been demonstrated to be accurate, as several scholars have found that the more media coverage and the more positive media coverage of an event, the larger the rally effect. Prominent headline placement in the *New York Times* has been demonstrated to be associated with rally moments (Baker and Oneal 2001; see also Edwards and Swenson 1997). Generally, more heavy coverage from major newspapers (as opposed to less coverage and not placed as prominently) is strongly associated with rally effects (Lian and Oneal 1993; Oneal and Bryan 1995). Indeed, coverage by the *New York Times* increases a president's popularity by nearly 6% if the use of force is reported on the front page headline (or by 3% if reported elsewhere in the paper) (Oneal, Lian and Joyner 1996). Brody and Shapiro (1989) also find that the actions of opinion leaders (statements and commentary) are significantly related to the differential public response to the Iran-Contra affair.

Data

The data for this paper are based on media surveys (ABC, CBS, Gallup, etc.) that ask the conventional question on presidential approval, and related items. We supplement these data with a two wave panel conducted in Texas during the incident at Waco. The survey, commissioned by the *Houston Chronicle*, was focused on the first round of the political race to replace Texas Senator Lloyd Bentsen, who had resigned his seat to become President Clinton's Secretary of the Treasury. Twenty-four candidates were on the first round ballot. No one candidate received a majority, forcing a runoff in May between the two the top vote getters—Republican Kay Bailey Hutchison and

Democratic Congressman Bob Krueger. Hutchison won the runoff with 67% of the vote. Both waves of the survey instrument included questions about the confrontation between the Branch Davidians and the federal government at Waco and the standard question for presidential approval.

The first wave of the survey was fielded between March 25th and April 2nd. A RDD sample was purchased from a commercial sampling firm, and those who said they were certain to vote or probably will vote were interviewed. The first wave sample size is 798.² The respondents were reinterviewed following the April 19th siege and destruction of the Davidian compound. Between April 24 and April 26, 658 respondents were recontacted and interviewed in the second wave of the panel (a success rate 83%). The useable sample size is 647. The fieldwork was conducted by the Center for Public Policy at the University of Houston. For contrast to the Waco event involving the use of international force by the federal government, we shall take advantage of a CBS panel conducted before and after the April 26, 1993 U.S. missile attack on Iraqi intelligence headquarters in Bagdad (see Edwards and Swenson 1997). The attack on Bagdad took place about two months after the federal seizure and destruction of the Davidian compound at Waco.

Domestic Rallies for Domestic Use of Force

Our first hypothesis is that the use of domestic force by the executive branch, in this case against the Branch Davidians, will result in a “rally”--an increase in the president’s approval. One reason to expect an increase is that 65% of the public said they approved of “the way Bill Clinton handled his role in the [April 19th] Waco (Texas)

² The cooperation rate for the first wave was 84%; the completion rate was 47%.

situation;” 26% disapproved and 9% had no opinion.³ This compares to the last presidential approval survey before the April 19th attack on the compound (conducted April 8-9), where Clinton’s approval level was 49%.⁴ We would expect this 16 percentage point difference to provide a boost to the President’s overall approval rating.

However, a simple “eyeballing” of Table 1, showing presidential approval starting after Clinton’s inauguration through early May, 1993, shows no sign of a “rally,” either following the first AFT raid on February 28th or the second on April 19th.⁵ Discounting a couple of unexplained outliers, the President’s approval level is basically stable at 50% from the beginning of his term through the first week in May.

Table 1 about Here

Of course, the aggregate data can conceal important hidden patterns. There may be a good deal of individual or group level movement, even though the aggregate frequencies remain constant (Tedin, Rottinghaus and Rodgers, forthcoming). There are two tests we can make to refine our analysis. First, NBC conducted a poll that was in the field between April 17 and April 20, which contains the date (April 19) of the final AFT raid on Waco.⁶ There were no questions about the raid in the survey, but respondents were asked to rate Bill Clinton on a five point scale ranging from very positive to very negative. They were also asked the conventional presidential approval item. If use of domestic force increases presidential approval, we should see a spike in Clinton’s

³ Survey for *Newsweek*, conducted April 22-23 by Princeton Survey Research Associates, accessed through IPOLL.

⁴ Survey for *Newsweek*, conducted April 8-9 by Princeton Survey Research Associates, accessed through IPOLL.

⁵ In all instances, we use the standard question (with minor variations) which reads: “Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handing his job” Overnight surveys were not included.

⁶Survey for NBC News conducted by Hart and Teeter Research, April 17-20, downloaded from IPOLL.

popularity for surveys conducted on April 19th and 20th compared to those conducted on earlier on April 17th and 18th. The data are shown in Table 2 and Table 3.⁷

Table 2 and Table 3 About Here

There is no evidence in these data of a rally effect either in terms of a positive rating of Clinton or for a boost in his approval. In the case of the latter, his approval actually declines from 51% on April 17th and 18th to 46% on April 19th and 20th. The data shown in Table 1 also allow us extend the analysis to April 21st and 22nd.⁸ Clinton's approval increases to 55% compared to 46% on April 19th and 20th—a nine percentage point gain. However, little stock can be put in these numbers. The drop on the 19th and 20th is counterintuitive and based on a small sample. The only explanation that fits with the data is that the extensive media coverage of the siege did not penetrate the public until several days after the siege took place. This explanation is not entirely implausible, and we shall return to it using our panel data.

A second more rigorous test can be conducted by examining the turnover in the Texas panel. The initial raid on the compound had already occurred the time of the first wave of the interview. Approval/disapproval this action by federal authorities was asked on both waves of the panel. The question is reproduced below, as we know when the issue of causalities is included in the stem of a question it can affect responses (Mueller 1973). In this instance, casualties among both federal officers and the Davidians are referenced. The question read:

A few weeks ago four federal officers were killed when they tried to serve warrants at a Branch Davidians compound near Waco. Several people inside the compound were also killed and David Koresh, their leader, was wounded. Do

⁷ For this survey, 73% of the interviews were conducted on April 17-18, before the raid on the compound.

⁸ Survey by the Tarrance Group and Mellman, Lazarus and Lake, April 21-22, accessed from IPOLL.

you approve or disapprove of the way federal authorities conducted this initial operation.

Thirty-two percent approved, 39% disapproved and 29% had no opinion. The plurality response for wave one is *disapproval*. In wave two of the panel the same question was asked following the siege and destruction of the compound. Only the deaths of the federal officers was mentioned. The wave two question read: *“In late February, four Alcohol, Firearms and Tobacco agents were killed when the AFT tried to serve warrants at the Branch Davidian compound near Waco. Do you approve or disapprove of this initial federal operation?”* The second wave data show 53% approve, 29% disapprove and 19% had no opinion. This 14% “rally” in approval of the federal action we expect should lead to an increase in the President’s level of approval

Another question asked on both waves of the survey shows a “rally” in opinion supporting the action taken by the federal government. The questions and the data for each wave are shown below.

Wave 1

Since the initial shootout federal authorities and David Koresh have been in a standoff. What do you think federal authorities should do?

- continue the present policy indefinitely to minimize further bloodshed	27%
- move back from the compound and negotiate through third parties	24
- storm the compound with enough force to take it	26
- Unsure/other	<u>23</u>
	100%

Wave 2

Looking back, which option do you think federal authorities should have adopted in dealing with the Branch Davidians?

- continued the previous policy indefinitely to minimize further bloodshed	10%
- moving back from the compound and negotiating through third parties	10
- storming the compound with enough force to take it	83
- Unsure/Other	<u>17</u>
	100%

The policy actually implemented by the federal government gains 57 percentage points in support between wave one and wave two. This is clearly a rally in support of the federal government—the FBI and AFT. But is it a rally in support of the President?

The Waco event can be contrasted to an international event about two months later when on June 26th, 1993 President Clinton ordered a missile attack on Iraqi intelligence headquarters in Bagdad. In early May, 1993, the CIA claimed that when former President George H. W. Bush visited Kuwait in late April of 1993, President Saddam Hussein of Iraq tried to have him assassinated. We see a very similar pattern to public opinion about the events in Waco. In a survey conducted May 12-13, 1993, respondents were asked:⁹ *“If an investigation indicates that Saddam Hussein tried to have George Bush assassinated when Bush visited Kuwait last month, do you think the United States should retaliate militarily against Iraq or not?”* The public evidenced little desire to engage in an military strike against Iraq—35% favored an attack, 58% opposed and attack, and 7% were not sure. When the attack actually came, the public rallied in support. According to Gallup, 66% said they favored the attack, 23% said they disapproved, and 11% have no opinion.¹⁰ Again we can ask, is this 31% increase a rally in support of the President? We can also ask, why is the increase in approval for Waco siege so much higher than an international rally (57%).

Let us start with our primary interest—evidence for a domestic rally in presidential approval in response to the president’s use of force. The aggregate frequencies for our Texas data essentially mirror those for the national data. In the first

⁹ *Time*, Cable News Network poll, conducted by Yankelovich Partners, May 12-13, 1993. Retrieved from IPOLL

¹⁰ Gallup Poll, June 27. Retrieved from IPOLL.

wave, 42% approved of how Clinton is handling his job, 41% disapproved and 17% had no opinion. In the second wave, closely following the Waco raid and subsequent deaths, 42% approved of how Clinton was doing his job, 43% disapproved, with 15% having no opinion. There is no aggregate evidence from the Texas data of a rally in Presidential approval, despite a giant rally in support of the President's actions. On the other hand, data from a CBS panel two months later show that prior to the Iraqi missile strike Clinton's approval level was 35%; following the strike it rose to 47%--a 12% increase.¹¹ These data indicate a classic international crisis rally in presidential approval.

Next we turn to the analysis of the Waco panel data. For the Texas data, 72% percent of the respondents gave the same answer at time one as at time two. Among those who disapproved at time one, 10% moved to approval following the destruction of the Waco compound. This movement was offset by 10% who approved at time one and moved to disapproval at time two. In short, there was no net increase or decrease in the aggregate numbers. Among those with no opinion at time one, 35% moved to approval at time two; on the other hand 25% of those with no opinion moved to disapprove at time two. Taken in total, there is little or no evidence of a domestic rally.

These numbers can be contrasted to the CBS panel surrounding the missile strike on Bagdad. The CBS data show that 24% of presidential nonapprovers¹² at time one changed to approve following the missile strikes, while only 11% of those who approved at time one changed to nonapprove after the missile strike (Edwards and Swenson 1997). Again, this is evidence of the type of opinion change that characterizes an international rally in presidential approval. Based on these data, there is no support for our hypothesis

¹¹ CBS Poll, Wave 1, June 21-24; Wave 2 June 27, retrieved from IPOLL.

¹² Meaning both disapprove and no opinion.

one—at least in a narrow sense. While approval of President’s policy regarding Waco increased substantially between wave one and wave two of the Texas survey, there was no change in his personal approval—either in aggregate or at the individual level. It remained unmoved at 42%. This presents a puzzle.

Solving the Puzzle: Heterogeneous Effects of Rallies

In this section, we address the puzzle of a lack of aggregate movement in total approval but with movement in “handling” of an issue. Our second and third hypotheses states that change in Presidential approval in response to the use of force will not come evenly from the all segments of society. As noted in the previous section, although 72% of the Texas panel was stable, 28% moved from their initial preference. This movement is of consequence, even if the changes mostly balance out each other. It is possible that Democrats moved to approval only to be offset by Republicans who moved to disapproval; liberals may have moved to approval only to be offset by conservatives moving to disapproval. Or perhaps the movement is purely random.

Our dependent variable is be scored “1” if the respondent approves of the President at time two and zero if not (nonapproval). Since we are interested in change in presidential approval between two points in time, we control for prior presidential approval (at time one).¹³ Party identification is treated as dummies for Democrats and Republicans with Independents as the baseline. We will also test for political ideology, again using dummies for liberals and conservatives with moderates as the baseline. Our hypothesis is that those most favorable to the President are most likely to rally, meaning

¹³ Using presidential approval at time 1 as an independent variable could result in correlated error terms yielding inconsistent estimates (Johnson, 1985: 362-366). However, preliminary tests are negative. Only one of the independent variables from Table 4 is correlated with the residuals at $p < .05$; political trust has a correlation of .14. We recognize the need for further testing.

first and foremost Democrats and liberals. Those least favorable to the president, meaning Republicans and conservatives, are likely to “anti-rally”—that is, withdraw approval. We will also include gender, as much research shows men to be more likely to approve of using force than women (Erikson and Tedin 2007). We shall also include an indirect indicator being “pro-force.”¹⁴ The final variable for our second hypothesis is trust in government. The trust variable has three categories: trust all/most of the time (20%); no opinion (5%), and trust some/none of the time (75%).

Our fourth hypothesis states the greater attention paid to the media, the greater will be the rally effect benefiting the president. The logic again is a president’s use of force will initially be embraced by the media, and least in the short run, as the patriotic thing to do in a foreign crisis. We generalize that using force domestically will also be given a positive spin by the media. Fortunately, we have a direct measure of media attention. Respondents were asked on the second wave how much attention they paid to the April 19th raid on the Davidian compound—very close attention, close attention, some attention, or little or no attention.¹⁵ The responses were skewed with 52% saying they paid “very close attention.” As a consequence the item was dummied.

Shown in Table 4 is the result of a logistic regression. The portion of the sample that is changing its approval opinion from time one to time two is clearly not doing so randomly. There are significant effects for Democrats and Republicans, with Democrats becoming more supportive after the siege and Republicans becoming less supportive.

¹⁴ The survey includes a question about the Brady Bill, and whether respondents favor or oppose the seven day waiting period and background check for persons buying handguns. Twenty percent opposed the bill, and it is dummied into “1” for those opposed (pro use of force) and “0” for all others.

¹⁵ The exact wording is: “On April 19th the FBI mounted a second operation against the Branch Davidian compound which ended in its destruction by fire. How much attention have you paid to this second federal operation—very close attention, close attention, some attention, or little or not attention?”

There is significant individual level movement, but it contributes to aggregate stability. The same is true for liberal conservative ideology. Liberals move toward approval; conservatives move away. There is no effect for gender, duplicating the findings of Edwards and Swensen for the Iraqi invasion. Support for the use of force (as indicated by opposition to the Brady bill) is non-significant. However, trust in government is highly significant. It is those who trust government that were most likely to move toward approval of the President following the raid on the Waco compound.¹⁶

Table 4 About Here

Our third hypothesis is also supported by the data. Those who paid a “great deal of attention” to the April 19th siege are significantly more likely to have rallied in support of the President. This demonstrates support for Hypothesis 2. In addition, Figure 1 tracks the number of negative stories in the print media (the New York Times, the Dallas Morning News and the Houston Chronicle) over the course of the crisis in Waco. The results demonstrate that the media coverage of the articles describing the events grew increasingly negative during the period from the initial raid to the final raid. Specifically, the tone of coverage in the end of March for the New York Times and the Houston Chronicle were significantly more negative than it was in the period after the initial raid. Such negative coverage likely colored the opinion environment for individuals who may have considered rallying behind the President.

Figure 1 About Here

¹⁶ The question was not asked on first wave, and asked on the second wave before any questions on the April 19th raid. So it unlikely there is a question order effect with opinion about the raid priming political trust.

Table 4 shows the model is a good fit to the data, with a number of statistically significant coefficients. However, to understand the strength of each variable we need to employ predicted probabilities. Shown in Table 5, the coefficients show the increase in the probability of presidential approval going from one end of a variables scale to the other. Thus going from conservative to liberal increases the probability of approving the president by .52. To compute the predicted probabilities, president approval at time 1 is held constant at zero, and the remaining variables are held constant at their modes. Democrats are most likely to rally, followed by Independents and then Republicans, very much like Edwards and Swenson (1997) demonstrated for the Iraqi missile strike. We also see a strong rally affect among liberals. Unfortunately for the President, there are not many liberals in Texas, so the .52 predicted probability of a liberal rally does not translate into much in the way of an aggregate gain.

There is also support for Hypothesis 3 and 4. The largest predicted probability of a gain in presidential approval (.71) is among those who trust government. This result fits with Hypothesis 3 above, and the data presented earlier which shows a major rally these time periods of the government's use of force against the Branch Davidians. The public likely views the government through a "crisis-induced" criteria and trusts the government more, albeit temporarily (Hetherington and Nelson 2003). This apparently rebounded to some advantage to the president, but with only 20% trusting government in Texas (and the nation), his aggregate gain is slight, and likely offset by those who do not trust government. Finally, we find modest find support for the hypothesis (Hypothesis 4) that those who pay most attention to the media are most likely to rally to the support of the president. Our interpretation is that the media support the president, which is turn

leads to an increase in support for the President. There is no support for the hypothesis that endorsing the use of the force or gender leads to greater support for the president.

Table 5 About Here

Conclusion

The use of force by the government against the Branch Davidians at Waco on April 19th, 1993 did not lead to any detectable rally in presidential approval. Of course, not every international event leads to a rally in presidential approval either. However, the internal dynamics of reaction to the Waco event tells us great deal about presidential approval in response to the government's highly visible use of domestic force, and perhaps gives as a new take on international incidents where presidential approval does not increase, or increases only slightly. Exploring the domestic use of force helps us probe the underlying dimensions of public reaction to dramatic events. Indeed, several important points emerge from this investigation.

First, the presidents partisans rallied to his support, but that rally was offset by an anti-rally of out partisans moving in the other direction. Opposing partisans feel no need to defer to the president in these instances, unlike in instances where the United States is involved in an international event. Indeed, in contrast to international rallies, these events appear to be unique to domestic rallies. Second, another important point documented in this paper and absent from much of the other literature on rallies, is the importance of trust in government. It was the single most important predictor of a move toward presidential approval. Third, the data show those who paid most attention to the event were most likely to rally. In one sense this confirms the findings of Edwards and Swenson (1997) who did not find attention to the news to have an effect, but did find an

interaction with news attention of foreign policy issues to have an effect. This is similar to other work that reveals that media tone and coverage in rally moments are important to the size and duration of the rally. Our attention to the news specifically referenced attention to the Waco incident, and perhaps a more general question would not have shown an effect.

Table 1. Presidential Approval January-June 1

<u>Date</u>	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
01/23-26/1993	51%	16%	33%
01/24-26/1993	58	20	22
01/28-29/1993	53	30	17
01/29-31/1993	54	30	16
02/09-11/1993	53	30	17
02/10-11/1993	49	32	19
02/18-19/1993	56	25	19
02/19-23/1993	63	30	07
02/20-23/1993	56	25	19
02/28/1993: ATF attempt to arrest Koresh, resulting the death of four ATF agents.			
02/18-(03)04/1993	52	23	25
02/25-28/1993	60	33	07
02/26-28/1993	59	29	12
03/05-09/1993	57	26	17
03/12-14/1993	53	34	13
03/22-27/1993	64	29	07
03/28-31/1993	55	28	17
03/29-31/1993	52	37	11
04/01-04/1993	49	29	22
04/08-09/1993	49	36	15
04/19/1993: FBI seizes Waco compound; 50 adult and 25 Davidian children die			
04/17-20/1993	52	34	14
04/21-22/1993	55	36	09
04/22-24/1993	52	32	16
04/22-24/1993	55	37	08
04/29-30/1993	46	37	17
04/23-26/1993	59	38	02
04/29-(05)02/1993	50	37	13
05/03-05/1993	50	37	13
05/04-06/1993	49	37	14

Table 2. Positive/Negative Opinion of Clinton by Date

Clinton Opinion	April 17	April 18	April 19	April 20
Very positive	24	21	25	23
Somewhat Positive	29	30	22	29
Neutral	18	19	23	16
Somewhat Negative	12	16	13	14
Very Negative	15	14	18	18
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Percent in Category	41	36	17	05
Sample size	474	417	196	56

Question: "I'm going to read you the names of several people and institutions who are active in public affairs. I'd like you to rate your feelings toward each one as either very positive, somewhat positive, neutral, somewhat negative or very negative

Table 3. Approve or Disapprove of how Clinton is Handling his Job by Date

Clinton Approval	April 17	April 18	April 19	April 20
Approve	53	50	46	46
No Opinion	34	35	40	40
Disapprove	13	15	14	18
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Percent in Category	41	36	17	05
Sample size	481	422	197	56

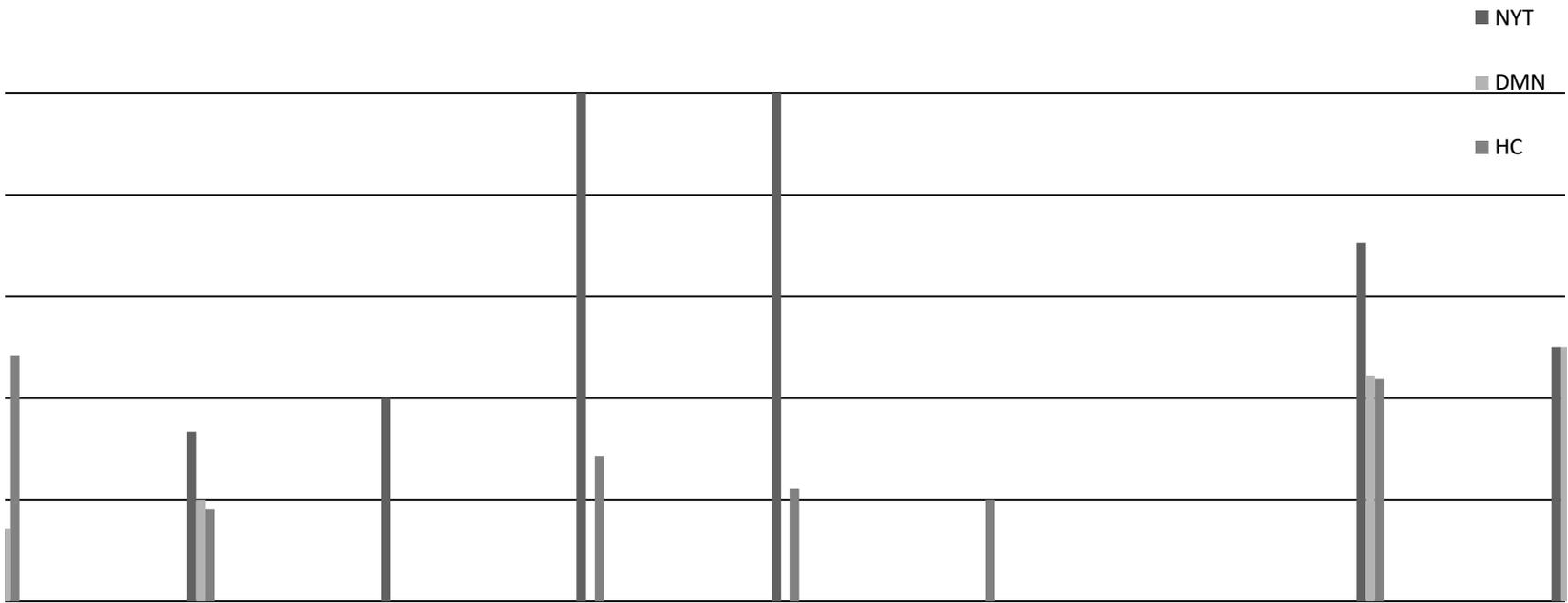
Table 4. Logistic Model of Clinton Approval at Time Two

Variable	B	S. E.
Democrat	0.583*	.231
Republican	-0.963***	.299
Gender	0.167	.220
Attention to April 19th Siege	0.466*	.223
Oppose Brady Bill	0.020	.293
Trust in Government	0.789***	.146
Liberal	0.454	.354
Conservative	-0.619***	.251
Presidential Approval Time One	2.207***	.231
<i>Constant</i>	<i>0.210</i>	<i>.551</i>
Correctly Classified	.80	
Nagelkerke Pseudo R ²	.55	
Model X ² (df)	341.08 (9)	
Significance	p. < .001	
<i>*p. < .05; **p. < .01; ***p. < .001</i>		N=647

Table 5. Predicted Probabilities of Rallying

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Predicted Probability</i>	<i>Percent in category</i>
Party Identification		
Democrat	.38	39
Independent	.22	23
Republican	.12	38
Political Ideology		
Liberal	.52	11
Moderate	.38	49
Conservative	.25	40
Oppose Brady Bill		
Oppose	.38	20
Not oppose	.38	80
Gender		
Male	.34	48
Female	.38	52
Trust in Government		
Trusting	.71	20
No Opinion	.55	05
Not Trusting	.38	75
Attention to Media		
Very close attention	.38	52
All other	.27	48
		N = 647

Figure 1 - Percentage of Negative Stories Concerning FBI



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