

# **Strangers in Your Town: How Considerations of Potential Power Influence Judgments about Civil Liberties for Disliked Groups**

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## **Abstract**

Though Americans are socialized to support extensive civil liberties, prior research has shown that even one encounter with certain types of information about a disliked group may lead to significant decreases in citizens' willingness to be politically tolerant (Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse and Wood 1995). One category of information that has been examined briefly in the literature (and, perhaps, prematurely discounted) is information suggesting that a disliked group may gain traction for its beliefs or successfully implement its ideas. Prior research hypothesizes that such information may lead to decreased tolerance because it causes individuals to revise their estimates of the actual threat posed by a group espousing upsetting or non-mainstream ideas. Results from a survey-experiment demonstrate that citizen decisions regarding the proper scope of civil liberties are influenced by this type of information, suggesting that pragmatic calculations about probability of power may be useful additions to models of political tolerance.

## **Introduction**

Since 2010, a non-trivial amount of public attention has been focused on the fight over the planned Islamic Center of Murfreesboro, Tennessee, a town approximately 30 miles outside of Nashville. The controversy was sparked in 2010 after the Islamic Center sought and received permission to build a 52,000 square foot mosque on land owned by the group (Blackburn 2010). This decision has resulted in protests, lawsuits, and even an alleged act of arson with the goal of halting the mosque's construction, despite the fact that the group has operated a smaller mosque in the town for more than two decades without incident (Berkey 2010). Further, one recent U.S. presidential candidate, Herman Cain, even went so far as to argue that the mosque is dangerous to the community during his campaign (Burns 2011). His rationale for this position was that the mosque's construction would encourage the spread of Sharia law, a system of Muslim principles and rulings from religious scholars that many view as threatening to existing American law (Burns 2011).<sup>1</sup> In fact, a number of state and local candidates have also adopted this position on the mosque's construction and, at a recent community meeting, it was reported that all public comments on the topic argued against expanding the mosque, with no comments offered in support of its construction (Blackburn 2010, Burns 2011).

For scholars, the unfolding controversy in Murfreesboro, Tennessee implicates the study of what has been termed "political tolerance" or the willingness of Americans in the majority to allow those who hold either non-mainstream or potentially offensive beliefs to exercise the same civil liberties as are guaranteed to other individuals in the United States (Stouffer 1955). Of course, in the case of the Tennessee mosque, it is certainly possible that some of the protesters hold non-religious objections to the site (such as concerns over increasing traffic and the like),

but it is also difficult to deny that many of those who oppose the mosque do so on the grounds that it is a house of worship being built by Muslims. Yet, the Tennessee mosque provides only one relevant example. Across numerous contexts, political tolerance dilemmas have been of longstanding interest to researchers because, in a heterogeneous society such as the United States, core values like equality and extensive personal freedom necessarily rest upon the willingness of citizens to “tolerate” others with conflicting beliefs, opinions, or lifestyles (Sullivan, Piereson and Marcus 1982). Over nearly six decades, researchers have conducted extensive investigations of the types of individual characteristics associated with political tolerance, the mental processes involved in tolerant decisions, and even the types of information that may influence decision making about the proper scope of rights (Davis 1975, Gibson 1987, Lawrence 1976, McClosky 1964, McClosky and Brill 1983, McClosky and Zaller 1984, Nunn, Crockett and Williams 1978, Prothro and Grigg 1963, Sniderman et al. 1989, Stouffer 1955, Sullivan, Piereson and Marcus 1979).

Though Americans are socialized to be politically tolerant, one group of researchers has shown that even a single encounter with certain types of threatening information about a disliked group may lead to significant decreases in the willingness of citizens to allow these individuals to exercise full civil liberties (Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse and Wood 1995). One category of potentially threatening group-specific information that has been examined in the literature is information suggestive of the potential for a disliked group to gain traction for its beliefs among members of the public or to successfully implement its ideas (Marcus et al. 1995, 55-98). Information of this type may take the form of suggestions that the group or its ideas are gaining popularity in public opinion polls, that individuals within the community are listening to or feel

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<sup>1</sup> Once word spread of his remarks, Cain apologized for offending Muslims, but has not retracted

sympathy for the group's message, or even that members of the group may be successful in upcoming elections. It seems logical that some members of the public might find suggestions of this sort to be threatening and decide that restrictions on the activities of such a group may be warranted.

In the case of the Murfreesboro, Tennessee mosque, for example, the operation of a mosque by the Islamic Center seems to have become controversial only after it was publicized that the group successfully won approval from the local government to build an expanded facility, that the facility is a response to steady growth in the Islamic Center's congregation, and that the proposed facility would include a school (Blackburn 2010). This information is suggestive of increased acceptance of and traction for the beliefs of the Muslim religion within the community. And, the fact that the mosque includes a school has frequently been cited as a potential vehicle for spreading the religion's ideas even further (Blackburn 2010). This is not to suggest that the association of individual Muslims with the attacks of 9/11 has not impacted this controversy; rather, this linkage has almost certainly caused large numbers of Americans to feel negatively towards and even to fear Muslims. Yet, despite the fact that this sentiment would have been strongest directly following 9/11, the operation of the Islamic Center in this town did not become controversial until approximately 9 years after the attacks (Blackburn 2010).

One explanation for the heightened controversy may be related to the frequent transmission of information suggestive of increasing political clout and support for the ideas of the Muslim religion within this community. Prior researchers have hypothesized that information of this type might influence political tolerance because it causes individuals to increase their estimates of the probability that a disliked group will gain power and, as a result,

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his concerns over the mosque nor the spread of Sharia law (Stockard 2011).

the severity of the threat posed by group members (Marcus et al. 1995). These scholars have examined what they termed “probability of power” information using survey-experiments, but found no evidence of a significant impact on political tolerance (Marcus et al. 1995). Faced with somewhat counterintuitive findings, these researchers considered at length the possibility that their experimental stimulus did not have a great enough impact on the subjects to provoke a measurable response.<sup>2</sup>

One obstacle was the complexity involved in creating an experimental stimulus that could plausibly convince Americans that members of disliked or fringe groups might actually gain substantial power within the (generally centrist) U.S. (Marcus et al. 1995, 73 n. 7). As a result, the researchers felt confined to fairly low estimates of the probability that non-mainstream groups could gain any power in the U.S. in order to maintain plausibility for research subjects (Marcus et al. 1995, 73 n. 7). Unfortunately, though, low estimates of probability of power may not be impactful enough to cause research subjects to alter their decisions regarding political tolerance. Indeed, it is clear from these authors’ longstanding model of political tolerance that an individual must find a piece of information to be substantially threatening in order for it to measurably alter decisions about political tolerance (Marcus et al. 1995).

Thus, the survey-experiment described below reformulates the experimental stimulus used in prior research with the goal of enhancing plausibility within the U.S. context, while increasing estimates of the potential for a disliked group to gain power. To do this, the experimental stimulus focuses to a greater degree on a local (as opposed to national) scenario than did previous research, where a group with views different from the majority seems to be gaining a substantial degree of power within one community. It is hypothesized here that greater

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<sup>2</sup> In fact, the authors conducted a number of manipulation checks which are described in detail in

emphasis upon a local scenario will maintain plausibility while simultaneously allowing the stimulus to contain information suggestive of a much higher probability that a disliked group will gain power.

The next section of this paper further situates this experiment within the political tolerance literature, specifically focusing on research related to the impact of information on decisions about rights. Following this, the survey-experimental instrument and methodology are discussed in greater detail. Lastly, findings are presented. In short, the experiment conducted here suggests that—at least in the case of a local scenario—probability of power considerations do seem to impact respondents’ decisions about the proper scope of rights for members of disliked groups. This result suggests that pragmatic considerations about the probability of power can be relevant to tolerance decision making and, for this reason, that further examination of the impact of this type of information may be useful to models of political tolerance. In many ways, however, this finding (though new) is consistent with prior research, in that it strengthens the case that the content of information impacts political tolerance, even above the role that long-term individual characteristics and standing decisions play (Marcus et al. 1995).

### **Political Tolerance and the Impact of Threatening Information**

The U.S. public’s support for expansive civil liberties has most often been conceptualized by researchers as a matter of “political tolerance.” Politically tolerant individuals are those who are willing to support the extension of rights to members of groups holding beliefs with which they disagree (Sullivan et al. 1982). However, despite the fact that Americans are socialized to strongly support the principle of political tolerance in the abstract, a longstanding finding of this field has been that the American public routinely exhibits some resistance to political tolerance

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the next section.

when applied to concrete situations or specific disliked groups (Stouffer 1955). In fact, the prevalence of political intolerance found by many researchers has forced the field to question the degree to which Americans actually support the free exercise of civil liberties, regardless of their socialization to be tolerant (McClosky and Brill 1983, Prothro and Grigg 1963, Sullivan et al. 1979). Since political tolerance is considered by many to be a core democratic principle and necessary to the open exchange of ideas, questions about the degree to which Americans actually manifest political tolerance became a persistent scholarly dilemma in the context of the otherwise robustness of American democracy.

Thus, over nearly six decades of work, researchers in this field examined in great detail the demographic and other individual-level characteristics that are associated with an increased likelihood of supporting robust civil liberties. For example, numerous researchers have provided evidence that better-educated, more politically-active Americans are generally more supportive of civil liberties (Davis 1975, Gibson 1987, Lawrence 1976, McClosky and Brill 1983, McClosky and Zaller 1984, Nunn et al. 1978, Prothro and Grigg 1963, Sniderman et al. 1989, Stouffer 1955, Sullivan et al. 1982). Further, those living in more urban areas, who are younger, and who are less conservative in ideology have also been more likely to support robust civil liberties in a number of studies (McClosky and Brill 1983, McClosky and Zaller 1984, Sniderman et al. 1989, Stouffer 1955, Sullivan et al. 1979). And, researchers have also shown that a number of psychological traits, such as dogmatism (Stouffer 1955), neuroticism, and extraversion (Marcus et al. 1995), seem to be associated with decreased support for civil liberties.

In addition to examining individual traits and characteristics that are associated with increased political tolerance, researchers have also focused on identifying the circumstances and

even the mental processes which seem linked with tolerant decisions (Bobo and Licari 1989, Kuklinski et al. 1991). For example, in *With Malice toward Some*, Marcus et al. (1995) propose a theoretical model of tolerance decision-making which accounts not only for long-term demographic characteristics and individual traits, but for other factors as well. A key factor examined by the authors is the impact of information encountered at or near the time of a decision about tolerance (or what they term “contemporary information”) (Marcus et al. 1995). Specifically, they question whether or not contemporary information has an effect upon political tolerance apart from the predispositions of the individual (Marcus et al. 1995, 59-65). In fact, *With Malice toward Some* argues that, within the range offered by an individual’s “standing decisions” regarding tolerance, some types of contemporary information about a group’s activities determine the actual level of political tolerance extended to members of that group. Indeed, in a series of survey-experiments, variables attached to several categories of contemporary information yielded significant results, providing evidence that the content of information can significantly alter citizen support for political tolerance (Marcus et al. 1995, 78-79).

One category of contemporary information examined by the authors related to what they termed the “probability of power” hypothesis, or the idea that information suggestive of increased political power or adherence to a disliked group’s ideas might be influential to political tolerance decisions regarding that group. This hypothesis was partially grounded in a psychological theory called “protection motivation theory,” which describes how individuals cope with fear appeals (Maddux and Rogers 1983). A fear appeal is a communication which “attempts to influence or persuade [listeners] through the threat of impending danger or harm” (Maddux and Rogers 1983). Much of the research related to fear appeals has been conducted in



a medical context, where individuals are given information about a long-term threat to good health (such as the link between obesity and developing diabetes) (Maddux and Rogers 1983, Higbee 1969, Rogers 1975). Essentially, a fear appeal consists of incoming threatening information that each individual must then assess and decide upon an appropriate reaction in order to minimize the potential for harm. Protection motivation theorists have provided evidence that probability assessments comprise a key component of how individuals decide upon an appropriate reaction when faced with such threatening information (Maddux and Rogers 1983, Marcus et al. 1995).

Based partly upon this theoretical foundation, Marcus et al. incorporated information suggestive of an increased probability that a disliked group might gain power into survey-experiments utilizing both student and adult respondents (1995, 76). Though their experiments involved both types of respondents, the authors found similar results, leading the researchers to combine their samples before reporting their findings. Ultimately, however, these experiments did not produce significant findings with respect to the role of “probability of power” information, providing no evidence that contemporary information of this type impacts tolerance decisions. As a result, the researchers were forced to conclude that pragmatic considerations about the probability that a group would gain power or find support for its ideas just did not seem to be part of the tolerance decision making calculus (Marcus et al. 1995).

Following this research, it seems that probability of power considerations have largely been ignored by the literature, with two notable exceptions. First, in reviews of this literature, researchers have repeatedly noted the “unexpected puzzle” that this finding represents (Gibson 2006, Gibson and Gouws 2001). Second, in a related finding, Gibson (2004) has demonstrated that perceptions of group power *are* actually one component of perceptions of threat. Though

not identical to the inquiry of Marcus et al., Gibson's (2004) results are particularly significant because numerous researchers have found that various types of threat are associated with decreased support for civil liberties (Davis 2007, Davis and Silver 2004, Gibson and Gouws 2003, Marcus et al. 1995, Sullivan et al. 1982). Yet, despite Gibson's (2004) evidence of a relationship between perceptions of power and threat, as well as the evidence of a corresponding relationship between threat and political tolerance, the finding that there is *no evidence* of association between perceptions of power and tolerance has remained undisturbed since 1995 (Gibson 2006, Marcus et. al 1995).

Further, on a theoretical level, it seems quite logical that a citizen's assessment of the probability that a disliked group might gain political power would influence that individual's decision making regarding whether or not members of such a group ought to be permitted to exercise full civil liberties. Moreover, this seems particularly likely when the group's ideas are viewed as outright threatening and not merely disagreeable. As an extreme example, in cases where it is feared that members of a particular group might seek to overthrow the government or to otherwise undermine established societal norms, it seems highly likely that a citizen's assessment of the probability of their success might be important to the calculus regarding the advisability of extending full participation, speech and other civil liberties to members of this group. In this situation, many citizens might simply find it too dangerous to the nation to allow this group to exercise full civil liberties, regardless of the American socialization to be tolerant.<sup>3</sup> Even in less extreme cases, if citizens can connect the extension of civil liberties to a disliked

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<sup>3</sup> There is some discussion in the literature regarding whether a "fully tolerant regime" is possible or even desirable under the most extreme circumstances, such as where violent regime change is actually possible (Sullivan et al. 1982, 2, 9-10). The author does not dispute this, but rather raises this extreme example to help demonstrate the logic of theorizing that individuals will react to probability of power information.

group to concrete adverse impacts upon their lives or upon their community, this seems likely to decrease willingness to extend these rights.

In the example of the Murfreesboro, Tennessee mosque, it is certainly conceivable that information about the expanded mosque stoked fears that its new school might be used to teach adherence to Sharia law, heightened perceptions of recent increases in Muslims in the surrounding population, and raised awareness that Islam is gaining increased traction in the community. Revised estimates that Muslims possess a higher “probability of power” within the local community than they once did might represent one explanation as to why the previous mosque in Tennessee was not viewed as a threat (even following 9/11), while the new mosque is. Thus, though the current study cannot focus strictly on the Tennessee case,<sup>4</sup> it extends prior research by adopting a local scenario where the potential for substantially increased power for members of a disliked group plausibly exists.

Previous researchers have acknowledged the potential obstacles to conducting this type of research in the U.S. when utilizing a scenario more focused on national or regional increases in the power of a hypothetical fringe group (Marcus et al. 1995). In a footnote, Marcus et al. suggest that they actually attempted to test a “higher” probability of power scenario than they eventually selected, but were ultimately forced to abandon using this scenario as an experimental stimulus because American research subjects just did not find it plausible (1995, 73 n. 7). This is because most non-mainstream or fringe groups that are viewed as a threat to the established

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<sup>4</sup> Though the Tennessee case provides a useful and timely example for discussion, a number of considerations prevented the author from focusing the current survey-experiment solely on the events in Tennessee. First, adherence to the more general research design of Marcus et al. (1995) enhances replication value. Additionally, consistency with the longstanding “content-controlled” measure of political tolerance used in this field (Sullivan et al. 1979) necessitates that respondents specify individual disliked groups (as discussed in the methods section). A focus on

political or social order have historically possessed little chance of gaining any real national political power or traction for their ideas in the United States (Marcus et al. 1995, 73 n. 7). Yet, with respect to testing the impact of group-specific information on tolerance decision making, this is a particular dilemma, as a key part of the longstanding model put forth by these authors and others necessitates that an individual must feel threatened in order for a piece of information to measurably impact tolerance (Marcus et al. 1995). It is clear, then, that the scenario must first be plausible in order for it to be personally impactful enough to invoke such a threat. Additionally, inherent in the probability of power hypothesis is the idea that the information must lead a citizen to assess a threatening group as possessing a relatively high probability of gaining power in order for the information to be impactful. A low probability assessment likely would not lead to measurable revisions in commitments to political tolerance.

Yet, because of the particular challenges mentioned above, prior researchers exposed subjects in the “high probability of power” experimental condition to a vignette containing the following statements about a disliked group:

Most people do not agree with everything [the group says], but do find some points appealing. This is evidenced by some electoral gains that the [group] has begun to register in local elections in some parts of the country, particularly Chicago, Southern California, and parts of the South. Some public opinion polls indicate that as much as 10 percent of the public feels sympathy for [the group’s] point of view, and the percentage appears to be on the rise (1995, 73).

The possibility that 10 percent of the U.S. public feels some sympathy for the group may not have translated into a grave or immediate enough probability of power assessment to provoke a reaction in respondents. Further, the local electoral gains mentioned in the scenario may not

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Tennessee Muslims would raise doubts about whether or not the experiment measured “true” tolerance, since some in the sample would not hold negative feelings towards these individuals.

have seemed personally impactful to the research subjects, who were recruited from the Lincoln, Nebraska area, rather than from the regions mentioned in the vignette.

The authors consider some of these possibilities in their appendix to the chapter, where they perform manipulation checks to examine whether or not the information actually impacted respondents. Indeed, they do show that respondents changed their assessments of the probability that a disliked group would gain power based upon the information that they read (Marcus et al. 1995, 87). However, despite the fact that this information did seem to alter subjects' assessments of the groups' probability of power, the subjects' still rated the *actual* probability of power relatively low in absolute terms (13 percent for the "low probability" stimulus and only 21 percent for the "high probability" stimulus). Thus, though the "high probability" scenario did increase participants' probability assessments, it is possible that the increase was not large enough to begin to impact tolerance decisions.

Further, in the section where the authors discuss the manipulation checks, they provide evidence that the overall threat levels experienced by both the "low" and "high" probability of power groups *were actually identical* (Marcus et al. 1995, 87). If subjects had been impacted in a threatening way by the "high probability of power" scenario, they would presumably have expressed some higher sense of threat than those reading the "low probability of power" scenario. The conclusion drawn by the authors is that this lack of difference in the threat felt by the groups must be attributable to the fact that probability of power perceptions just do not impact political tolerance; however, it also seems plausible that neither of the specific scenarios presented to respondents' were perceived to be impactful enough to yield a detectable difference between the groups. Information suggestive of higher probability of power assessments still might have an impact.

And, though Marcus et al. do show that each of the vignettes used (in their entirety) did raise subjects' overall perceptions of threat during the course of the experiment, a number of different types of potentially-threatening information were actually combined and tested within each vignette. For this reason, it also seems plausible that these individuals were threatened by the other pieces of contemporary information found in the hypotheticals (the ones that yielded statistically significant results). Interestingly, the authors make precisely this argument (that the increase in threat relates to the other types of information found in the vignettes), yet they interpret this to mean that probability of power considerations just don't seem to be impactful (Marcus et al. 1995, 87). However, as comprehensive as these manipulation checks are, none of the results seem to disprove the hypothesis that information suggestive of higher *actual* probability of power assessments may still be impactful. As a result, in order to limit as much as possible potentially confounding factors, this survey-experiment focuses solely on testing the impact of probability of power information. Thus, in the experiment presented below, the other types of contemporary information tested in previous research are not present in the vignettes.

### **Data and Measurement**

In order to test the impact of this type of information on political tolerance decision making, a survey-experiment was administered to 268 college-age students enrolled in introductory undergraduate political science courses at universities in the Washington, D.C. area (N = 268). The survey-experimental methodology was selected both because it allows for a very close replication of previous work on the topic of probability of power (Marcus et al. 1995) and also because survey-experiments are frequently utilized in political tolerance research more generally (Gibson 1987, Gibson and Gouws 2003, Marcus et al. 1995). Particularly when examining the impact of information, the methodology is useful because it allows the researcher

to directly assess its impact on political tolerance by introducing the information as an experimental stimulus.

In designing this experiment, the author has modeled the format, variables measured, and experimental stimulus closely after prior research in order to enhance this project's replication value (Marcus et al. 1995). In this experiment (as in prior research), "probability of power" information is information likely to influence assessments about the probability that a disliked group will be able to gain political power, traction for its beliefs, or successful implementation of its ideas (Marcus, et al. 1995, 55-98). Previous researchers have utilized a combination sample comprised of both students and adult community members to test probability of power considerations, but did not find significant differences between the two samples in terms of their responses in those experiments (Marcus et al. 1995). Yet, notwithstanding their findings that these samples did not differ significantly in their reactions to the relevant information, it is clear that the administration of this survey-experiment to college students will not produce a sample representative of the larger U.S. public in terms of overall sample characteristics. However, much like the original probability of power experiments, this work is primarily concerned with internal (as opposed to external) validity (Marcus et al. 1995). Indeed, since subjects have been assigned randomly to the experimental conditions discussed below, then a differing response pattern between the groups represents fairly strong evidence of causality (Gibson and Gouws 2001, 1074).

However, even were specific characteristics of this sample to systematically influence the results, the bulk of previous research suggests that the characteristics likely to be present in this sample would produce a more rigorous test of the potential impact of probability of power information on political tolerance than would a sample of the general public. This is the case

because a long line of researchers have suggested that better-educated, politically-interested, and more “elite” respondents are often more supportive of civil liberties than the average American (Marcus et al. 1995, McClosky and Brill 1983, McClosky and Zaller 1984, Nunn et al. 1978, Prothro and Grigg 1960). Previous research has also provided evidence that the opinions of the politically interested are generally more resistant to change brought about by encountering outside information because these individuals possess a greater storehouse of relevant information which can be used to assess the validity of incoming information (Zaller 1992).

To the extent that they differ from the population, then, the students in this sample are likely to fall into these categories, as they are enrolled in elite, private universities in the nation’s capital, they possess at least a partial college education, and they have expressed enough interest in politics to enroll in university-level courses in American government. Given the prior research showing that more “elite” Americans are more committed to civil liberties and also least influenced by outside information, an experimental result which suggests that these individuals may be swayed from their commitments to political tolerance by the content of one hypothetical news report containing “probability of power” information would represent fairly strong evidence of impact.

### **The Survey Instrument**

The survey-experiment was divided into two phases (a pre-test and a post-test) and was administered to all subjects in hard copy form. First, the pre-test began with a series of questions related to demographic characteristics. Following this, subjects were asked to express agreement or disagreement with a series of seven phrases meant to gauge their standing commitment to



democratic principles, a scale adopted from prior research on this topic (Marcus et al. 1995).<sup>5</sup> Within their model of political tolerance, Marcus et al. (1995) argue that tolerance decisions are comprised of three factors: long-term individual predispositions, standing decisions, and the impact of relevant information encountered at or near the time of the tolerance decision (“contemporary information”). In both the author’s previous work and also in this experiment, demographic factors are considered to represent the long-term individual predispositions in the model, while the scale of items measuring the standing commitment to democratic principles represents one of two relevant types of “standing decisions” measured for each participant. All indexes used in the model (including that measuring “standing” commitment to democratic principles) have been standardized along a 0 to 1 range in order to maintain consistency with prior literature (Marcus et al. 1995). This standardization does not impact the results presented below, but rather facilitates ease of interpretation (since all indexes are expressed along a similar range).

In accordance with the work of Sullivan et al. (1979), subjects were then asked to identify their “least-liked group.” Since 1979, the bulk of research in the field of political tolerance has opted to utilize this method in order to produce a “content-controlled” measure of political tolerance (Gibson and Gouws 2001, Marcus et al. 1995, Sullivan et al. 1979). Sullivan et al. (1979) argue that the selection of a specific group by the researcher (rather than by the research subject) would risk the choice of a group that some research subjects would not dislike and, therefore, would not have to “tolerate.” To avoid this problem, subjects were asked to

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<sup>5</sup> See Marcus et al. (1995) or the appendix for the wording of the survey items comprising the index of standing commitment to democratic principles. These items ask respondents to express support or lack thereof for general statements about rights (unlike the more specific political tolerance measures found later in the survey that reference particular groups and scenarios). To

specify their “least-liked group” and, then, to respond to political tolerance questions that refer specifically to the chosen group rather than to a group selected by the designer of the study (Sullivan et al. 1979, 785). Although research subjects were allowed this freedom in accordance with the method of Sullivan et al. (1979), it should be noted here that this is done merely to ensure that “true” tolerance is tested (not to equate the histories or other circumstances of all groups that are ultimately specified).

Most prior researchers in this field have presented subjects with the option of selecting from a list of choices or supplying their own “least-liked” group (Marcus et al. 1995, Sullivan et al. 1979). In accordance with this method, subjects participating in this experiment were also allowed these options for selecting their “least-liked” groups. As a check, each student was then asked to rate the strength of his or her disagreement with the “least-liked” group on a standard feeling thermometer, where a score of 1 registered a subject’s strong disapproval of the group’s ideas, while a score of 100 signaled strong approval.

Following this, subjects were then asked to express agreement or disagreement with a series of statements evaluating the proper scope of civil liberties for members of their personal “least-liked” group. Each individual statement involves support for a specific right, such as freedom of speech or the prohibition against unreasonable searches.<sup>6</sup> Each participant’s responses to these individual tolerance items were added together and then standardized on a 0 to 1 scale (with 1 equal to highest tolerance). This index of “standing” political tolerance provides a baseline measurement of political tolerance prior to the introduction of the experimental

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construct the index, answers to the seven items were summed and then standardized along a range of 0 to 1.

<sup>6</sup> See appendix for the wording of specific items.

stimulus (Cronbach's alpha = .73). This index was then included in the model as an independent variable (covariate) representing the second relevant "standing decision."

According to prior research, the inclusion of this measure of baseline political tolerance as a predictor allows the model to account parsimoniously for an individual's prior reasoning on the subject of political tolerance (Marcus et al. 1995, 59). Marcus et al. argue that this measure of "standing" political tolerance represents an individual's "default decision rule [when] confronted with a new situation" involving a question of political tolerance (1995, 59). Thus, to test the relative impacts of "standing" decisions as compared with contemporary information upon tolerance judgments, Marcus et al. assert that the inclusion of extensive demographic information in the experiment is not necessary. Rather, this measure of "standing" tolerance "reflects a summary decision based on various predispositions including education, gender, long-standing threat perceptions, and so on" (Marcus et al. 1995, 59). In fact, Marcus et al. argue that "it is this standing decision to be tolerant or intolerant that has been most widely studied by political scientists" conducting political tolerance research (1995, 59).

### **Experimental Stimuli**

Following the pre-test, each subject completed a post-test as described below.

#### *Cognitive and Affective Instruction Sets*

First, the sample was randomly divided and the instructions given to each group of participants were varied. In accordance with prior research, this manipulation directed subjects either to pay attention "to their thoughts" or to pay attention "to their feelings" while answering the questions.<sup>7</sup> This instruction was given to subjects prior to any information related to the probability of power experimental manipulation (described below). Respondents were randomly

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<sup>7</sup> See appendix for full wording of the instructions.

assigned either to the “cognitive” (thought-based) instruction set group or to the “affective” (emotion-based) instruction set group, but not to both. In addition to the close replication of previous research, this stimulus was included because it was thought prudent to check for possible interaction effects between the varying instruction sets and the probability of power information discussed below.

Prior research in the field of political tolerance has sometimes drawn a distinction between the impact of cognitive thought and affective response upon tolerance judgments. It has been asserted by a number of scholars that a “sober second thought” may result in an increased willingness to be tolerant (Marcus et al. 1995, 65; Stouffer 1955). Yet, one set of prior researchers has also found that an instruction set thought to encourage experimental participants to access cognitive structures actually decreased tolerance (Kuklinski et al. 1991, 14). However, in this case, the particular instruction set used directed subjects to “think about the consequences of an action or event,” an operationalization which may have resulted in a tendency to focus on the negative consequences of allowing members of a disliked group to exercise rights (Kuklinski et al. 1991, 21-22). Thus, when conducting their survey-experiments, Marcus et al. reformulated this instruction set and removed the mention of “consequences” from the cognitive version (Marcus et al. 1995, 64). The study conducted here utilizes these revised instructions to replicate and also to provide further information with respect the interaction of these instruction sets with the main experimental stimulus (discussed next).

#### *Probability of Power Information*

Following the instructions, subjects were introduced to one of two hypothetical scenarios during the post-test. The vignettes described a group conducting a political action campaign in the subject’s hometown with the purpose of helping its candidates successfully win elections for

mayor and positions on the city council.<sup>8</sup> This “local” scenario was selected in order to enhance plausibility for research subjects and to potentially heighten the degree of personal impact resulting from the scenario. This is because this local scenario permits the use of information suggestive of a higher (yet still plausible) probability of power assessment.

Each participant was randomly assigned to read either a scenario in which the group was assessed as having a high probability of taking power and spreading its ideas or a scenario in which a low probability of power was predicted, but not both. Additionally, this random assignment was conducted so as to ensure that the participants in the probability of power scenarios were also divided evenly between the instruction set conditions discussed above. After reading the vignette, subjects were again asked to express agreement or disagreement with the same items concerning their “least-liked” group that were used to measure “standing political tolerance” above.<sup>9</sup> These political tolerance statements (this time, measured by the post-test and following experimental manipulation) were then combined to form a separate scale (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .83$ ) and standardized within a 0 to 1 range. This scale was then utilized as the dependent variable in a two-way independent ANCOVA (analysis of covariance) model.<sup>10</sup> The ANCOVA model was adopted both because it makes theoretical sense and also to enhance replication value (Marcus et al. 1995).

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<sup>8</sup> The full text of the hypothetical scenarios can be found in the Appendix.

<sup>9</sup> See the appendix for the exact wording of the tolerance statements.

<sup>10</sup> Readers familiar with ANOVA modeling may wonder about the characterization of this model as an “independent” (as opposed to “repeated measures”) model. Although the research design required taking two measurements of the political tolerance scale, only the post-test measurements comprise the dependent variable in the model. The comparison explained is the difference between the group of subjects who read the high probability of power scenario and the *entirely distinct* group of subjects who read the low probability of power scenario. In accordance with prior research, the pre-test political tolerance measures are included only as a covariate in the ANCOVA model (Marcus et al. 1995). Yet, it is worth noting that the experimental stimulus

## Results

Table 1 displays the particular least-liked groups selected by research subjects in the sample and the frequency of each group's selection. The least-liked group selection process yielded a similar response pattern to that found in prior work on the topic, with the largest number of subjects choosing the Ku Klux Klan as their least-liked group (Gibson 2008, 102; Gibson 1989, 564; Marcus et al. 1995, 68). In both the survey-experiment conducted here and in prior research, comparatively few participants opted for groups that are generally considered to be more "mainstream," (such as Catholics, feminists, or members of the ACLU) though the sample list also contained groups of this sort. These sample characteristics provide some reassurance as to the internal coherence of this portion of the experiment, as well as its replication value when compared with previous work.

(Table 1 about here)

Further, when asked to "rate" members of the least-liked group on a feeling thermometer, levels of dislike expressed by these participants ranged from 1 to 18. This result seems to suggest that all subjects understood the question and actually disliked the groups selected. In accordance with the work of Sullivan et al., then, the experiment should be testing "true" tolerance, rather than attempting to measure political tolerance in some subjects who are actually neutral towards or approve of the group in question (1979). Even though there is some variation in how these individuals rated their groups, a small amount of variation in the amount of dislike respondents feel for identified groups (such as the difference that might exist between the most disliked and the second- or third-most disliked group) has not been found to substantially alter tolerance judgments (Gibson 2008, Gibson 1992, Sullivan et al. 1982).

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remains significant regardless of whether an independent or repeated measures design is

Additional investigation of the sample characteristics demonstrates that underlying assumptions about the types of individuals present in this sample seem to be reflected in the way that these subjects responded to the political tolerance items. For instance, an examination of the sample means provides evidence that, on the whole, this group of subjects reacted with a substantial overall willingness to be politically tolerant. In fact, the mean among participants in all conditions was .74 on a scale of 0 to 1, where 1 is equivalent to “perfect” tolerance. Since these participants possess a partial college education and have exhibited at least enough political interest to enroll in university-level political science courses, a high overall tolerance level is consistent with prior research and with expectations (McClosky and Brill 1983, McClosky and Zaller 1984).

Yet, for precisely this reason, given the higher-than-average levels of education and the more “elite” nature of this sample as compared with the general public, the bulk of prior research would suggest that these individuals would be less likely to alter their beliefs based upon the content of incoming information than would the average American (Marcus et al. 1995, McClosky and Brill 1983, McClosky and Zaller 1984, Zaller 1992). Despite these propensities, the data collected here suggest that the “probability of power” manipulation significantly influenced the political tolerance decisions made by these participants,  $t(263.65) = 2.539$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . On average, the subjects given the “low probability of power” scenario exhibited a significantly greater willingness to be politically tolerant ( $M = .78$ ,  $SE = .020$ ) than did subjects who read the “high probability of power” scenario ( $M = .69$ ,  $SE = .026$ ). When making decisions about the proper scope of civil liberties, these subjects appear to have been impacted by pragmatic considerations about the probability that a disliked group would actually gain power.

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adopted.

In fact, on average, those respondents encountering the “high probability of power” scenario were nine percentage points less tolerant on the scale used here than were those subjects who read the “low probability of power” scenario. This represents a substantial change because respondents encountered only one, short hypothetical news report in an experimental setting. In the real world, where concrete consequences seem to be at stake for a town (like Murfreesboro, Tennessee) or an individual encounters repeated news reports containing this type of information, the impact demonstrated here may be amplified further. Additionally, the potential impact of this type of information may also be even greater when information consumers possess a weaker existing commitment to political tolerance or a lower level of political interest or education.

(Table 2 about here)

To investigate these results further, Table 2 displays comparisons of means for the individual tolerance items that are contained within the tolerance index. As mentioned above, the tolerance index is comprised of survey items which test the willingness of subjects to allow members of their least-liked group to exercise particular rights, such as freedom of speech (Marcus et al. 1995). As Table 2 indicates, all but one of the individual items used to construct the tolerance index is impacted either significantly or very nearly significantly by the introduction of the “high probability of power” stimulus. The most impacted item in terms of magnitude is the one related to whether or not members of a disliked group should be permitted to participate in the electoral system by running for office,  $t(266.04) = 2.542, p < 0.01$ . On average, participants were significantly more willing to allow members of their least-liked groups to run for office if these groups were viewed as having a low probability of winning such an election or of spreading their ideas ( $M = .81, SE = .033$ ). Those subjects reading the high



probability scenario were 13 percentage points less likely to be willing to allow members of their least-liked group to run for office on average ( $M = .68$ ,  $SE = .040$ ).

The finding that this specific factor was most impacted should also increase confidence in the internal coherence of these results, since it is logical that if individuals fear that a group may take power then they might also think banning their ability to seek office to be an appropriate immediate solution to alleviate their concerns. Yet, since most of the items comprising the tolerance index yield decreases which are significant or near-significant, the impact of probability of power information in actual situations seems likely not confined to rights so closely and directly linked with the ability to be elected. Rather, these results suggest that probability of power concerns seem to impact an individual's overall calculus about the advisability of extending rights to these groups. For example, another clearly significant result is attached to the item related to whether or not members of the least-liked group should have their phones tapped by the government,  $t(266.04) = 2.172$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . As compared with the ability to run for office, however, the right to privacy is not as directly or causally related to the ability of a disliked group to gain political power.

Interestingly, the only item that appears not to have been impacted by the experimental stimulus is the question related to allowing members of the least-liked group to teach in public schools. Yet, notice that the overall willingness to allow members of disliked groups to teach in public schools is quite low, regardless of which "probability of power" condition a research subject was assigned to. Other researchers have also found that subjects are particularly unwilling to allow members of disliked groups to teach in public schools, often more so than some other items tested in political tolerance studies (Stouffer 1955, Sullivan, Piereson and Marcus 1982). This seems to suggest a general distaste for allowing non-mainstream individuals

to teach in public schools, regardless of the probability that the group will gain power. If many citizens have decided that allowing members of fringe groups to teach in public schools is unacceptable in nearly any scenario, incoming information potentially destructive of tolerance may only serve to reinforce a pre-existing decision. This might also make it more difficult to detect results when comparing responses to this item across the two groups of research subjects.

Additionally, the data also suggest that the type of instruction set given to subjects significantly impacted their tolerance judgments,  $t(274) = 2.38, p < 0.05$ . On average, those subjects who received the cognitive instruction set ( $M = .78, SE = .035$ ) reacted with significantly greater willingness to be politically tolerant than did subjects who received the affective instruction set ( $M = .69, SE = .022$ ). The bulk of prior research suggests that the cognitive instruction set is associated with increased tolerant decisions, so this is not unexpected. Along with the results of the probability of power manipulation reported above, the findings related to this instruction set manipulation provide further support for the general notion that contemporary information (or information encountered at or near the time of a tolerance decision) can significantly impact tolerance decision making. This is the central premise of *With Malice toward Some* and the evidence from the current survey-experiment supports the theoretical model suggested by the authors (Marcus et al. 1995). Yet, the significance of the probability of power stimulus in this experiment also suggests a new factor which appears relevant to understanding political tolerance decision making.

Table 3 displays the results from a 2-way independent ANCOVA model utilizing this data. The construction of an ANCOVA model is helpful in this instance in that it allows the researcher to incorporate covariates into the model, thereby taking account of both alterations in response patterns based upon the experimental stimuli and also simultaneously controlling for

the impact of additional variables. Thus, an ANCOVA model allows the researcher to exert even tighter controls over potentially confounding factors within an experiment. Further, since *With Malice toward Some* argues that information (represented here by the experimental stimuli) has an impact over and above the impact of long-term individual predispositions and standing decisions, the ANCOVA model is also most faithful to this theoretical design (Marcus et al. 1995).

(Table 3 about here)

Even after additional controls are added, the model reveals the presence of a significant effect related to differences in probability of power information,  $F(1, 267) = 13.078, p < 0.001$ . As the information an individual receives regarding the probability of the disliked group gaining power increases from low to high, political tolerance appears to decrease by about .075 on the standardized tolerance scale. Since this scale ranges from 0 to 1, this represents a substantial change. Additionally, even after controlling for the covariates in the model, a significant effect was produced by altering the instruction set,  $F(1, 267) = 7.966, p < 0.01$ . As the information an individual receives regarding the instruction set changes from referencing thoughts to referencing emotions, political tolerance decreased by about .078 among these participants. However, the interaction between these two factors was not found to be significant,  $F(1, 267) = .205, p > 0.05$ .

In the model, the covariate representing “standing” political tolerance was also significantly related to post-test political tolerance,  $F(1, 267) = 237.63, p < 0.001, r = .68$ . This is not surprising, since the standing tolerance index is comprised of the same questions as the dependent variable, but introduced prior to any experimental stimulus. This design was adopted directly from prior research on the topic, where the measure was also found to be significant

(Marcus et al. 1995). The inclusion of this measurement of “standing” political tolerance prior to the introduction of any experimental stimuli is in recognition of the fact that an individual’s decisions about political tolerance are powerfully influenced by a lifetime of decisions that they have previously made related to tolerance (Marcus et al. 1995). This theoretical perspective is accurately reflected by the fact that the measure of standing tolerance represents the largest effect seen in the model. Yet, information (even probability of power information) also seems to play a role.

Unlike in prior research, though, the scale representing standing support for democratic principles is not significant in the model,  $F(1, 267) = .198, p > 0.05, r = .01$ , despite the fact that the items comprising the scale are the same as those used previously (Marcus et al. 1995). This is likely because of the type of sample utilized here. In a class of college-educated students and many government majors, very little variation was detected on this scale. Rather, over 90 percent of subjects’ answers were clustered at the very top of the scale. So, this variable may have little explanatory power with respect to these respondents, but previous research suggests that it does explain alterations in tolerance among the general public (Marcus et al. 1995).

Similarly, in this sample, the covariate representing a subject’s gender also did not yield a significant coefficient,  $F(1, 267) = .136, p > 0.05, r = .009$ . Some previous researchers have provided evidence that male gender is associated with increased political tolerance (Stouffer 1955) and that the predictors of tolerance can vary significantly across gender (Gibson 1992). However, the fact that gender does not yield a significant coefficient in this model is actually consistent with the results of the model presented by Marcus et al. (1995). Despite this, this covariate is retained in the model presented here in order to replicate as closely as possible the model found in previous research.

## **Conclusion**

This experiment provides evidence that information indicative of an increased probability of power for a disliked group can negatively impact political tolerance towards its members. Theoretically speaking, probability of power information may take a number of forms, including suggestions that the disliked group or its ideas are gaining popularity in public opinion polls, that individuals within the community are listening to or feel sympathy for the group's message, or even that members of the group are winning elections. In the case of the current experiment, the information contained within the experimental stimulus was adjusted as compared with previous research, with the goal of increasing plausibility for respondents in the U.S. context. For this reason, a primarily local scenario was utilized, set in each respondent's home town. This represents a key alteration because it allowed for the presentation of information suggestive of a relatively high probability that a disliked group would gain power. It is logical that individuals must assess a disliked group's probability of power as substantial in order for probability of power information to be impactful.

The ANCOVA model presented above suggests that pragmatic considerations about probability of power are influential to the tolerance decision making calculus, even among more "elite" respondents, such as those seen in this sample. Moreover, this seems to be the case even when long-term individual predispositions and "standing" decisions regarding political tolerance are included in the model as control variables. This finding provides support for the primary hypothesis presented by Marcus et al., that citizens do not consider tolerance decisions in a vacuum (1995). Rather, the content of information is important and influences political tolerance decision making, despite the fact that Americans are socialized to be politically

tolerant and that tolerance is considered by most to be a core principle of American democracy (Marcus et al. 1995).

However, since consideration of probability of power information has largely been dismissed by the literature, this study also highlights a potentially important factor missing from many political tolerance studies. As mentioned above, Gibson (2004) has provided related evidence that perceptions of a group's power represent a component of individuals' threat perceptions. Until now, though, there existed no evidence that perceptions of power actually impact political tolerance. This lack of an association between perceptions of group power and tolerance represented a paradox within the literature (Gibson 2006, Gibson and Gouws 2003), particularly in light of the longstanding research suggesting that certain types of threat tend to be associated with increased intolerance (Davis 2007, Davis and Silver 2004, Gibson and Gouws 2003, Marcus et al. 1995, Sullivan et al. 1982). The experiment conducted here is important because it may aid researchers in attempts to reconcile all of these findings.

Yet, in addition to evidence of the overall impact of probability of power information, the results presented here are interesting because they suggest that the influence of probability of power information is not limited strictly to the exercise of rights directly or causally related to the ability of a group to win elections or to seize power. Indeed, though the subjects evidenced the greatest willingness to restrict the ability of disliked group members to run for office, the experimental stimulus resulted in significantly decreased political tolerance across many of the individual tolerance items used in the survey. For example, the high probability of power stimulus significantly increased the numbers of respondents willing to support the routine phone tapping of disliked groups by the government. These respondents also reacted with a decreased willingness to allow members of the group to hold a rally or to speak publicly. This suggests

that information of this type may have a relatively sweeping impact, beyond solely a desire to restrict members of disliked groups from participating in the electoral process.

Despite these results, though, there is much that we still don't know about the manner in which this type of information influences tolerance decision making, for example how high probability of power assessments must rise in order for widespread increases in intolerance to result or even the extent to which this effect may accelerate as probability assessments rise. Moreover, we have little information about the ways in which power considerations may interact with individual characteristics or even with other types of threatening information to produce increased intolerance. For example, it seems at least theoretically logical that this category of information might potentially heighten the impact of other influential types of information on the actual level of tolerance applied. Further, the extent to which the effect demonstrated here is confined to specific types of groups (for instance, those viewed as truly threatening as opposed to merely disagreeable) is still unknown.

Finally, more attention should be paid generally to isolating the impact of probability assessments from other types of considerations or information that are tested in political tolerance experiments. It seems that probability information has sometimes been combined with other types of information or questions presented to respondents in surveys and experiments. For example, threat perceptions have sometimes (but not always) been measured by survey items that at least partially appear to ask respondents to think about the *probability* of a threat materializing. An illustration of this can be seen in questions like those asking subjects how concerned they are that the U.S. might suffer another terrorist attack in the next three months (Davis and Silver 2004) or how concerned they are that another major terrorist attack will occur on U.S. soil in the near future (Huddy, Feldman, Capelos and Provost 2002). These are

important and worthwhile questions to be sure, but the answers given by respondents to these “threat perception” questions might be functionally similar to respondents’ assessments of the probability that a threat will materialize. Additional factors potentially relevant to threat perceptions also seem to be contained within these questions, such as assumptions about the type of threat (threat against “the United States” as a whole) or the severity of the threat (“a major attack”). Ideally, some more focused, independent consideration of each of these factors would be carried out in the research.

Notably, researchers have already distinguished between sociotropic (societal) and egocentric threat and found that these different types of threat perceptions have differing impacts on political tolerance judgments (Davis and Silver 2004, Gibson and Gouws 2003). And, the need to examine the components of threat in a more systematic manner has been suggested by prominent researchers in the field (Gibson 2006). Perhaps the probability of power considerations examined here influence political tolerance because they actually represent part of a citizen’s assessment of the seriousness of a threat (whether or not the threat is likely to materialize). The hypothesis that probability assessments are influential to political tolerance because they represent one component of a citizen’s assessment of threat seems reasonable, given Gibson’s findings that perceptions of power impact threat (2004).

It is also possible that probability of “power” information may actually be the equivalent of other types of information which prompt respondents to believe that there is a high probability that other types of threats will occur. If so, the relevance of a discussion of probability assessments to political tolerance may extend beyond probability of “power” to encompass other types of probability perceptions, such as the probability that a terrorist attack may occur or the probability that violence will result from a demonstration. When viewed in this light, it is



possible that probability information may actually represent a consideration distinct from the specific characteristics or type of threat routinely contemplated within political tolerance experiments. In this view, “probability of power” information may actually contain within it two relevant factors: 1) information influential to a probability assessment, and 2) information about a specific type of threat (in this case, “seizure of power”).

In fact, even in this experiment, one could argue that the information relevant to probability assessments supplied to research subjects contained *both* probability information and additional details about the type of threat involved (such as the specific threat of winning an election or the threat of a altered public opinion about the group). In some respects, the inclusion of this information in the experimental stimulus is desirable, since it seems likely that an actual news report about a disliked group would contain such anchoring details. Yet, these details (if examined separately from probability information) may also produce independent effects. For example, it may be possible that a remote, but grave type of threat may loom larger to citizens than a likely, but potentially much less serious type of threat. Indeed, there is substantial research in the fields of economics and psychology which suggests that individuals poorly assess these types of tradeoffs (Kahneman and Tversky 1979). Thus, though this study takes a first step at demonstrating the impact of probability information on political tolerance, there is still work to be done to more carefully isolate this impact from other types of information and to explore this effect in greater detail.

For over a decade, the American nation has been undergoing a reexamination and reevaluation process with respect to the maintenance of expansive civil liberties in the face of the terrorist threat. This reevaluation process may involve not only decisions made about the rights of terror suspects, but it may also significantly influence “everyday” civil liberties issues in

communities, such as those confronting the community of Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Research has shown that the content of information can significantly influence these decisions (Marcus et al. 1995) and, now, that probability of power information may also be influential to tolerance.

Thus, it is important for scholars to continue to update and to extend research aimed at understanding the significant role that information plays in influencing the nature of our democracy, particularly when the public feels threatened.

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**Table 1** Least Liked Groups Selected or Identified by Experimental Subjects and their Frequencies

<b>Least Liked Groups and Number of Subjects</b>	
Ku Klux Klan	119
American Nazi Party	51
Religious Fundamentalists	26
American Racists	24
American Communists	14
Pro-Life on Abortion	8
Pro-Choice on Abortion	6
Christian Right	5
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)	5
Feminists	4
The Catholic Church	3
Anti-globalizationists	1
Those who oppose prayer in public schools	1
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)	1

**Table 2** Comparison of Means for Individual Political Tolerance Items

<b>Tolerance Item</b>	<b>“Low Probability of Power” group mean</b>	<b>“High Probability of Power” group mean</b>	<b>T Statistic</b>
Members of {subject’s least-liked group} should be banned from running for public office.	.81	.68	2.542***
Members of {subject’s least-liked group} should be allowed to teach in public schools.	.45	.41	.673
Members of {subject’s least-liked group} should be allowed to make a public speech.	.92	.85	1.738*
Members of {subject’s least-liked group} should have their phones tapped by our government.	.82	.71	2.172**
Members of {subject’s least-liked group} should be allowed to hold public rallies.	.89	.81	1.786*

\*\*\* = significant at the 99% confidence level or greater

\*\* = significant at the 95% confidence level or greater

\* = significant at the 90% confidence level or greater



**Table 3** Two-Way Independent ANCOVA Model (N = 268)

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Unstandardized regression coefficient</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>P</b>
<b>Antecedent considerations (covariates)</b>			
Pretest tolerance	.784	237.621	<.001
Democratic principles	.039	.198	.657
Gender	-.010	.136	.712
<b>Contemporary influences (main effects)</b>			
Probability of power		13.078	<.001
Instruction set		7.966	<.01
<b>Interaction</b>			
Probability of power by instruction set		.205	.651

R Squared = .508

## Appendix Survey-Experiment Question Wording

### Standing Support for Democratic Principles Items

If someone is suspected of treason or other serious crimes, he should **not** be entitled to be released on bail.

Society should **not** have to put up with those who have political ideas that are extremely different from the views of the majority.

When the country is in great danger we may have to force people to testify against themselves even if it violates their rights.

Free speech ought to be allowed for all political groups even if some of the things these groups believe in are highly insulting.

No matter what a person's political beliefs are, he is entitled to the same legal rights and protections as anyone else.

It is refreshing to hear someone stand up for an unpopular view.

I believe in free speech for all no matter what their views might be.

### Experimental Stimuli

For the purposes of this question, please assume that we are talking about the activities of a hypothetical group in the near future.

**{NOTE: Respondents received either instruction set A or instruction set B.}**

*Instruction set A -*

Note: We have found that people's attitudes and opinions are reported most accurately when they do not think carefully about the statements. It is more accurate for people to simply base their judgments on the feelings, or emotional reactions, they experience when they read the statement. Therefore, in evaluating each of the propositions you will read, **try to base your responses on your feelings, or emotions, not your thoughts.**

*Instruction Set B -*

Note: We have found that people's attitudes and opinions are reported most accurately when they ignore the feelings, or emotional reactions, they experience when they read the statement. It is more accurate for people to simply think carefully and base their judgments on the thoughts they have when they read the statements. Therefore, in evaluating each of the propositions you will read, **try to base your responses on your thoughts, not your feelings.**

**{NOTE: Respondents received either version A (high probability of power) or version B (low probability of power). Question 9 refers to the respondent's selection of an individual least-liked group.}**

*Version A*

Members of the group that you selected in question #9 have founded a political action organization with a local chapter in your hometown. Recently, the group has embarked upon a sophisticated advertising campaign with the intent of spreading their message to a wider audience. This advertising campaign has been highly successful in convincing many of your neighbors that the group's ideas have merit. Indeed, many have started to contribute funds to the group, allowing for an expansion of the speaking and protest activities that it carries out.

Currently, there is a local election campaign occurring in your town. Public opinion polls conducted by news agencies interested in the novelty of this election show that more and more people are beginning to listen to the group's message. Indeed, you have just heard a news report that suggests that the group's nominees will make significant local gains on Election Day. The news report suggests that the group's nominee for Mayor should win in a landslide. Also, the group's nominees should gain election to a majority of the positions on the city council, leading to effective control over town policy until the next election. The reporter notes that these members of the group, should they be elected, would be able to make high-level appointments to the police force, the tax assessor's office, and other town organizations, leading to a lasting impact on town structures.

*Version B*

Members of the group you selected in question #9 have founded a political action organization with a local chapter in your hometown. While the group has attempted to conduct an advertising campaign to spread their message to a wider audience, this campaign has been largely unsuccessful. Public opinion polls show that few of your friends and neighbors are paying any attention to the group. In fact, most people either find their views objectionable or aren't even aware of the group's activities. Finally, in the upcoming town elections, it is unlikely that the group's nominees for either Mayor or positions on the city council will be able to gain election in the town.

**Political Tolerance Items**

Members of {the group you selected in Question 9} should be banned from running for public office in the United States.

Members of {the group you selected in Question 9} should be allowed to teach in public schools.

Members of {the group you selected in Question 9} should be allowed to make a public speech.

Members of {the group you selected in Question 9} should have their phones tapped by our government.

Members of {the group you selected in Question 9} should be allowed to hold public rallies.