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Terrorism in the news: A constructionist approach

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TERRORISM IN THE NEWS: A CONSTRUCTIONIST APPROACH

by

Lisa L. Sharp

Bachelor of Arts
University of California, Riverside
1999

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the

**Master of Arts Degree
Department of Sociology
College of Liberal Arts**

**Graduate College
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ABSTRACT

Terrorism in the News: A Constructionist Approach

by

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This thesis examines portrayals of terrorism in the *New York Times* during the 1990s. Using ethnographic content analysis, I analyze several dimensions of coverage including the emphasis given in articles to violence, the characterizations used to describe terrorists and their actions, the sources of information used in the reports, whether the cause of the terrorists are addressed, and the character of coverage for men and women terrorists. I argue that the portrayals focus on the most sensational and dramatic aspects of terrorism and authority's interpretations of the groups; they fail to provide readers an analysis of causes, contexts, and structural conditions that could enable the public to develop deeper, more nuanced, and critical understandings of terrorism and terrorists. One implication is that the portrayals may work to delegitimize terrorism. Second, the portrayals may result in very narrow and limited understandings of terrorism and terrorists. Finally, the portrayals mask the proliferation of state-sponsored terrorism.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

News media are a central part of American culture. We rely on media *content* for much of our information about the world. That information constitutes an increasingly large part of our subjective definitions of reality. However, content is only part of the picture. The entertainment orientation of media *format* also shapes what is presented. Television broadcast reports provide coverage of major events, but are frequently enhanced with the use of stimulating visuals and carefully choreographed music to entertain viewers. Newsprint stories report information, but commonly focus on the most sensational and dramatic features as those have been proven to be marketable to more readers.

This paper investigates coverage of terrorism in one elite American newsprint source during the last decade. Specifically I ask, what are the portrayals of terrorism in the *New York Times* during the 1990s? To answer this question, I look at such variables as the characterizations that are used to describe the acts of terrorism and the perpetrators of those acts, the extent to which violence is reported, how much the articles discuss the terrorist's cause, the sources of information in the news stories, and whether women terrorists are portrayed differently than men terrorists. My analysis provides insight into how

news content and *format* shape portrayals of terrorism in American print media during the premillennial decade of the 1990s.

Due in part to the violent acts they engage in, terrorists are subjected to the most extreme margins of society. However, there is much more than violent behavior to these complicated networks of radical political actors. As Melucci points out, "violence is always a 'sign of more complex social phenomena" (1996: 367). Despite the elaborate intricacies behind most terrorist groups, previous studies have shown that news media coverage of terrorism, focuses almost exclusively on the sensationalism of violence, rather than presenting the context of *why* the violence is happening (Paletz, Fozzard, and Ayanian 1982; Picard and Adams 1987). For the most part, these studies were conducted on decades prior to the 1990s. Thus, I was compelled see whether this kind of biased news coverage has continued through the last ten years and, if so, discuss the possible implications.

In Chapter 2, I review the related literature in several areas including media studies, terrorism, and social constructionism. I cover the analytical context of my study to establish the importance of understanding media portrayals in this "information age." I also discuss some of the ideas presented by Hilliard (1996) and Johnson (1989) that are critical of media coverage for offering perspectives that are "antisociological." In this chapter, I also pose my research question and discuss what I expect to find with my data.

In Chapter 3, I discuss my research methodology of ethnographic content analysis and discuss the sampling procedures I used to collect my data. I also list each of the variables that test my research question.

Chapter 4 is my summary of findings. I offer numerical summaries indicating frequencies, as well as give textual explanations, of my findings. Additionally, there are tabled findings that are attached as Appendix II to my thesis. Chapter 4 also includes in-depth discussion of what each variable assesses about portrayals of terrorism in the news. Briefly, I find that coverage of terrorism is one-sided in ways that are favorable to government and other authorities. This discovery remains consistent with previous studies that look at earlier time periods.

In Chapter 5, I suggest some of the potential implications of my study by drawing from social constructionist standpoints and work on media bias. This includes discussing that the antianalytical coverage of news reports that only offer surface-level understandings of terrorism is best understood by recognizing that media personnel need to create marketable stories. I also discuss the way that portrayals tend to present terrorists as independent and isolated groups of irrational actors, while masking the political and social complexities central to understanding terrorists and their actions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Media and the Social Construction of Reality

As a standpoint for sociological analysis, social constructionism focuses on how people assign meaning to their world (Best 1989). W.I. Thomas was one of the first to acknowledge that objective understandings of the world are not humanly possible. Instead, what we "know to be true" is indelibly shaped by the information available for us in defining situations. That information is always partial and symbolically influenced by discourse about the situation and through social interaction. For Thomas, human action was predicated in humanly-created definitions about the world. As he averred in his now famous sociological dictum: if men define situations as real, then they are real in their consequences (Thomas as cited in Berger 1963; Thomas and Znaniecki [1918] 1958). In short, our actions are based primarily on our subjective understandings of the world.

Berger and Luckmann developed the implications of Thomas' theorem in the now classic text, *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966). They argue that what we understand about the world is derived through a process by which we acquire knowledge through social interaction. Berger and Luckmann, like Herbert Blumer and others following in the symbolic interactionist tradition,

contend that face-to-face interactions are among the most important as through face-to-face interactions we learn to orient ourselves towards, and develop patterned behavior in accordance with, others (1966: 29-30). This ability of humans to define and interpret the world around us (rather than merely "responding" instinctually to stimuli), is what sets us apart as unique social beings (Blumer 1969).

Contemporary social constructionism has been extended by, among others, scholars in social problems theory. They maintain that the way we understand social issues or social problems occurs through a process of claims-making about conditions. Claims-making is done by a variety of sources and, by necessity, characterizes problems from particular, limited, perspectives, "[claims-makers] emphasize some aspects and not others; they promote specific orientations; and they focus on particular causes and advocate particular solutions" (Best 1989: xxi). Media, whether in print or broadcast form, have become one of the key sources through which claims are made about social issues. On the one hand, it is a claims-maker in itself. News articles and the journalists who write them make claims about the world. On the other, it has become a popular medium through which various sources, or claims-makers, make claims about the issues being reported. The front page of a typical morning newspaper features three or four examples of claims-making, and claims accounts for large shares of the material presented in newsmagazines and news broadcasts (Best 1989: 250). Media present news that indelibly shape

our perceptions about, and constructions of, reality on a range of such topics as child abuse (Johnson 1989) and the AIDS virus (Albert 1989).

"Social constructionism faces the challenge of naming, locating, and theorizing the relations of power and politics at work in the world" (Gray 1983: 201). My study seeks to "name" and "locate" portrayals of terrorism in the *New York Times* during the 1990s, then "theorizes" the implications of the claims and perspectives provided in the accounts.

The Construction of Social Problems in the Media Age

"Constructionism directs attention to the textual expressions and interpretive meanings of [social problems] representations and accounts" (Gray 1983: 198). My focus is on the "textual expressions" and "interpretive meanings" of terrorism in the news as these media representations are among the most prevalent ways through which we understand the world. However, media's role as a source of information that shapes our reality of social conditions is a fairly recent phenomenon. Traditionally, primary group interactions were the most important sources of information. Since the latter half of the twentieth century that brought with it a dramatic rise in the use of electronic technology, Americans have become increasingly less dependent on knowledge transmitted face-to-face, and media have taken on a much more primary role:

Changing media technologies... have led to changes in the way people receive their first information about important news

events.... Most people get most of their news directly from a medium, rather than from other people (De Fleur and Otto N. Larson [1958] 1987: xxxviii-xxxix; see also Ball-Rokeach and De Fleur 1976).

Now, in this "information age" (Melucci 1996), mass media are one of the most powerful social institutions in this society (Sage 1990: 16; see also Gitlin 1980; Lippman [1922] 1965). Electronic media have even resulted in a conflation between the public and the private,

The media bring a manufactured public world into private space. From within their private crevices, people find themselves relying on the media for concepts, for images of their heroes, for guiding information, for emotional charges, for a recognition of public values, for symbols in general, even for language (Gitlin 1980: 1).

As far as the prevalence of media, within the United States alone, there are an estimated 25,000 mass media outlets including newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations, book publishers, and movie companies (Bagdikian 1987). Americans average 92 television sets per 100 people, while each household in the United States has an average of 2.5 TV sets (<http://www.msnbc.com/news/521662.asp>). Further, Americans spend an average of seven hours per day in front of their home television set ("We're watching more TV," *USA Today*, December 13, 1988, p. 1D as quoted in Sage 1990). As far as print media, the United States is among the world leaders in

newspaper readership with one of the highest rates (Merrill 1959: 9), and the three largest newspapers in the country (*The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, and the *New York Times*, the first, second, and third largest, respectively) have a combined circulation totaling over 4.3 million (<http://www.geocities.com/newspaperstats>). These statistics indicate that media are reaching unprecedented numbers of people.

Media messages are powerful. People use the content of news information to learn about a range of events and ideas, and, in fact, most of us have come to expect to know about major events as a normal part of their day (Altheide 1976: 12). With the prevalence of media nowadays, along with our dependence on it for information, it is no wonder that it has become a primary source we use to define situations and give meaning to things. In fact, these days very little of what we know has not been mediated through the media lens:

Whether we are experiencing the world through the lens of speech or the printed word or the television camera, [media works to] classify the world for us, sequence it, frame it, enlarge it, reduce it, color it, argue a case for what the world is like (Postman 1986: 10).

Media representations and portrayals, along with events from our everyday experiences, now combine to make-up our interpretive, symbolic worlds (Cohen, Adoni, and Bantz 1990: 10; see also Lippman [1922] 1965). This is the “everyday physical and symbolic reality in which people live,” or what Altheide calls the “effective environment” (1996: 11). News media's power to shape

perceptions is especially apparent by looking at drug abuse, one of this country's most predominant fears. As Glassner argues,

... the news media, rather than personal experience, provide Americans with their predominant fears... and the vast majority report relatively little direct experience with problems related to drug abuse [yet] widespread concern about drug problems [is prevalent and] emanates, Blendon and Young determined, from scares in the news media... (1999: xxi).

In many ways, we have become “the fish” and media messages “the water,” wherein sleep and prayer are now the only places from which we are apart from media and its messages (Twitchell 2000: 2).

The Business of News

Media messages are ubiquitous and play an important role in shaping perceptions. However, their messages and claims are inevitably partial, biased representations of reality. The particular kind of coverage that results in media today is attributable, in part, to the *business* of news.

Since the emergence of communication technologies such as the telegraph, printing press, television, and most recently, the Internet, to disseminate information, a receptive audience has been vital. In the news business, the bigger the audience, the better, as larger audience shares mean

increased advertisements sales and revenue, higher profits, larger business, and increased power. Altheide explains how this formula works in regard to the content of television news programming:

[Shows] will make more money if they attract a larger audience, which explains why media managers are not always willing to put anything on the air, but prefer to show what they think people will watch. And these days people watch news; thus, news is profitable (1976: 14).

Now, with so many different media outlets from which Americans can choose, competing companies must use conventions that will attract the biggest audience possible in order to be profitable and stay in business. This means media outlets must be aware of what their consumers want to see,

... stations must be more sensitive to the interests and tastes of their audience. This explains why many local stations retain consultants to find out what the audience wants, what "grabs" them, in order to alter newscasts so that people will watch.... All of this is aimed at doing well in the ratings (Altheide 1976: 15).

This idea of satisfying the customer and keeping them tuned in helps to explain why news broadcasts are frequently enhanced with the use of stimulating visuals and carefully choreographed music to appeal to viewers (Altheide 1976).

The business of news calls for a particular form of bias in covering stories, insisting that media personnel adhere to the following "tricks of the trade":

- (1) use any means possible to sell their product,
- (2) due to time constraints, depend on the most readily available information resources, and
- (3) because of the need for concision in presenting a story, discuss only those details that are the most sellable and eye-catching.

First, journalists and other media personnel package and sell their product to consumers. One way this is done is by creating sensationalism in their news stories. Studies have shown that this popular marketing technique can be accomplished by focusing on things like violence and instilling fear among its audience, "TV news formats are oriented to visually exciting and dramatic events" (Altheide 1996: 9). The combination of violence and children is especially compelling, "... it fits the needs of news organizations" by eliciting emotion, and thus interest, in the story (Johnson 1989: 15). The media maxim, "if it bleeds, it leads," is another way to make this point as few people can resist a dramatic leading story containing violence, injury, or death. However, in addition to increasing ratings, the publication of "horror stories" also serves other purposes:

[They help] many professional and occupational groups, social science and medical researchers, and various private and nonprofit agencies. These agencies publish agendas for the child abuse movement. They are invariably tied to requests for more resources and more public funds (Johnson 1989: 15-6).

Additionally, news reports can play a large role in setting the national political agenda (McCombs and Shaw 1972).

While news personnel attempt to provide the most informative and comprehensive coverage possible, time constraints and inherent deadlines call for using expedient means in order to complete stories on time, "Newspapers and TV newscasts are put together according to a routine and a complex division of labor and deadlines" (Altheide 1996: 9). This brings me to my second point of how the business of news shapes biased representations of reality: the time pressures reporters face that make the problem of source availability an important one (Paletz, Fozzard, and Ayanian 1982: 167). This, coupled with the fact that authorities routinely hold news conferences to provide media with prepared statements on anything potentially newsworthy (Paletz, Fozzard, and Ayanian 1982: 167-8), suggests that the news media overwhelmingly, and perhaps unavoidably, rely on authorities as sources of information in their reports.

Finally, the business orientation of news media necessitates that short, eye-catching, soundbite type stories are written as there is limited space and time allowed to present each article. News broadcasts are rarely more than 90 seconds because the number of viewers that want details or have the attention span that would warrant more information is so few (Altheide 1996: 9). Newsprint stories face similar types of space constraints as they can only be a certain length and take up a certain amount of space. Other sections are reserved for news about different events and, of course, advertisements. This

need for concision can result in skewed¹ news portrayals as there is simply never enough room to report all the facts of a story.

The concentration of ownership of all media outlets is in the hands of a relative few (Schiller 1989, [1962] 1992, 2000; Melucci 1996; Sage 1990; Bagdikian 1987). For example,

In the 1890s most newspapers were owned by individuals or partnerships, and publishers were not particularly wealthy. At the end of World War II more than 80% of daily newspapers were independently owned; by 1989 only 27% were independently owned... [today] newspaper chains own over half of America's daily newspapers, which account for some 70% of daily circulation (Sage 1990: 116).

Among these newspaper chains, even a smaller number control the news stories that are published,

Behind most of the news in our hundreds of papers are but a few highly centralized organizations that feed stories to the locals — the wire services of the Associated Press (AP), United Press International (UPI), the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Washington Post* (Sage 1990: 117).

This is suggestive of a “media power elite” in which the controlling media messages and having the power of deciding which news is “All the News That’s Fit To Print”² is in the hands of a very small few (see Herman and Chomsky

1988). These few are often part of "large, profit-seeking corporations, owned and controlled by very wealthy groups, heavily dependent on advertising for revenue, and interlocked with other members of the corporate system" (Herman and O'Sullivan 1989: 192). Government bodies also play roles in controlling news as they can,

"manage" the media, by taking advantage of time schedules and deadlines, the media's inability to check out facts quickly, and their tendency to regard whatever the government asserts as newsworthy in itself, without regard to veracity (Herman and O'Sullivan 1989: 192-3).

This power to determine which stories are newsworthy extends beyond the ability to make claims and inform our ideas of people and events. Through the ability to control media messages, those that are in charge of news operate as the "manufacturer of master codes at the world scale" (Melucci 1996: 179). This is not a type of economic or political stronghold over people, rather, it entails "[the] capacity to organize the minds of people [by deciding] the language to be used, the selection of information to be organized and broadcast throughout the world [while] the vast majority of people are simply users in the audience" (Melucci 1996: 179). The ability to manipulate unsuspecting audiences is infinite for those with the power to control media's messages.

The relationship that exists between power holders and those who organize the flow and direction of the media messages consumed by millions of Americans everyday (Melucci 1996: 179) results in news reports that generally

show an ideological bias favorable to the status quo. Even the few media personnel who don't adhere to this values system are "'educated,' constrained, and channeled within narrow bounds by media organizational demands and rewards systems" (Herman and O'Sullivan 1989: 192).

To sum, the values, attitudes, and beliefs communicated through media are, at least in part, extensions of those maintained among the echelons of the upper class and the corporate elite (see Herman and Chomsky 1988). Because of its position of power and ability to make claims and define people and events, media are one of the ways in which the ideological hegemony of the dominant class is perpetuated (Sage 1990: 117). Thus, the news that's "Fit To Print" is likely to express biases reflective of these perspectives. This leaves very little, if any, room for critical dissent, particularly from groups who stand vehemently opposed to these hegemonic values.

News Media and the (Anti)Sociological Imagination

Mills wrote that having a "sociological imagination" requires the ability to understand differences in, and make distinctions between, 'personal troubles' of an individual and 'public issues' or those things that have a direct impact on oneself as well as those around us (1959). Public issues then, "transcend" the "local environment of the individual" (Mills 1959: 8). Marketable news stories are often antithetical to this notion of deep analysis and explanation. Instead, they are frequently framed using superficiality and repetition of ideas (Hilliard 1996),

report only select, decontextualized facts in such ways that are likely to "evoke an emotional response about the problem" (Johnson 1989: 7), or give portrayals that are blatantly one-sided (Paletz, Fozzard, and Ayanian 1982). As a result, American media has been criticized for offering perspectives that are "antisociological" (Hilliard 1996).

Looking specifically at televised sport coverage of the 1992 Summer Olympic Games, Hilliard found that television's "media logic", produced a highly antisociological frame of reference for viewers (1996: 116). Reporting did not focus on facts in their context, but were organized and presented in an effort for audiences to generate emotional attachments to the story. This resulted in a focus of attention on personal troubles and anecdotal coverage, rather than public issues (Hilliard 1996: 116-9). Further, coverage was "superficial" and "repetitive" as "information" was commonly compromised for "entertainment" of "sensationalism of events." In an investigation of newspaper reports covering child abuse and neglect, Johnson, like Hilliard, found that stories were similarly skewed in ways that sensationalized select details to elicit emotion paving way for action and, thus, selling the content (1989).

From a social constructionist perspective, the relevance of both Hilliard's and Johnson's studies are significant due to the prevalence of media. Millions of Americans are exposed to the claims that are made about an array of topics in popular media outlets. This not only means that our understandings of these subjects may be ill-informed, but the biased definitions provided by media may affect our behavior towards these things. Coverage that is anti-analytical flows

from the business of news. Stories have to be marketable and eye-catching, while meeting the required deadlines and the limited space available. Reports are written in ways that support the ideological values of those who own and control the content of messages and reaffirm the actions taken by and opinion offered from authority. Hence, much of the analysis and perspectives offered by mass media are likely to be, in Hilliard's terms, antisociological; that is, they fail to provide insight into context and conditions, structural factors shaping actors and events, and thus represent only a narrowed, ideologically biased image of the world.

This thesis further examines the constructed nature of media messages and discusses the implications of their biased coverage. The literature suggests that marginalized groups and individuals whose very existence can be both a physical and ideological threat to powerful institutions and the status quo may be especially subject to skewed news coverage. Terrorism is one such example. Insights on the business of news suggest that portrayals of terrorism may be limited to very surface-levels understandings that emphasize the most violent, dramatic, and sensationalistic aspects, while in-depth analysis of issues such as their goals, social context, and conditions to which these groups are responding are not addressed. This kind of antianalytical coverage is also achieved by a reliance on particular claims-makers such as government and police authorities who actively work to delegitimize terrorists and their violent behavior. Using authority sources in place of claims-makers who represent the terrorists also prevents the groups from receiving any kind of media attention that might lend a

more complete understanding about their cause. This antisociological approach to covering terrorism in the news is influenced by the business orientation of news media.

Terrorism in the News

A few have already conducted systematic studies on the coverage of terrorism in various news print sources (Alexander 1995; Steuter 1990; Simmons and Lowry 1990; Picard and Adams 1987; Paletz, Fozzard, and Ayanian 1982; Kelly and Mitchell 1981). Some found that articles focused on the most spectacular and dramatic features of a terroristic event (i.e., violence) (Paletz, Fozzard, and Ayanian 1982, Picard and Adams 1987). This focus took place in the articles themselves as well as within story headlines (Paletz, Fozzard, and Ayanian 1982). Additionally, authorities such as government officials, police, and military were relied upon as the main sources of information (Paletz, Fozzard, and Ayanian 1982; see also Sigal 1986; Gans [1979] 1980). Many of the portrayals employed descriptive terms that are loaded with meaning. Nominal labels, or those that are more neutral in tone and have little judgment or connotative meaning, were used considerably less (Picard and Adams 1987). Previous studies have reported contradictory results about whether news sources provided discussion of the cause, or goal, of the terrorists (Paletz, Fozzard, and Ayanian 1982; Podhoretz 1980).

One of the missing pieces in the literature on media and terrorism is an assessment of coverage during the decade of the 1990s. The general question I am interested in answering is: What are the portrayals of terrorism in the *New York Times* during the 1990s? This is assessed by looking at several dimensions of coverage. Did the news reports focus on violence? Who were the main sources of information in the articles? Which types of characterizations were used to describe the violence and its perpetrators? How much discussion of the terrorists' cause is featured over the decade? Each of these variables will help to determine how terrorism is portrayed in the *Times* during the 1990s. My findings will be compared with findings of previous studies to determine whether biased, antianalytical coverage is a thing of the past, just as it has been in the past, or even more prevalent.

Finally, only a small handful have researched the role women terrorists have played (De Cataldo Neuberger and Valentini [1992] 1996; MacDonald 1991; Vetter and Perlstein 1991; Morgan 1989) and even fewer have focused on the 'sex' variable in newsprint media (Handler 1990; Weinberg and Eubank 1987) or in other cultural mediums as film (Sharp 2001; Steel 1998). Given this, one might assume that female terrorists do not exist. While almost all significant terrorist operations were headed by males (at least prior to the late 1970s or early 80s) (Vetter and Perlstein 1991: 107), women have played significant part in those acts, albeit in supportive roles:

[Women] were confined to the intelligence collection, operations as carriers, duties as nurses and medical personnel, and in the

maintenance of safe houses for terrorists sought by police and for storage of weapons, propaganda materials, false documents, funds, and other supplies (Vetter and Perlstein 1991: 107-8).

Notably, in the last couple decades, the membership of women in terrorist groups has grown exponentially. In fact, in such organizations as Communists Organized for the Liberation of the Proletariat and the Walter Alasia Column of the Red Brigades, women comprise over 30% of membership (Table 1.1 in De Cataldo Neuberger and Valentini [1992] 1996: 7). Additionally, women have gained increasing roles in leadership positions (Vetter and Perlstein 1991: 106), and among second generations of terrorist groups as the Red Army Faction (RAF), a shift has occurred whereby women now outnumber their male counterparts (De Cataldo Neuberger and Valentini [1992] 1996: 9).

However, despite these increases in terrorist participation by women, they are still an understudied population:

Much is said about women, but little is known about them. The lack of interest, especially at the scientific level, in certain unexpected responses of women to certain social problems is proof of this (De Cataldo Neuberger and Valentini [1992] 1996: 2).

Because there are quite a large number of them, yet at the same time, they are so understudied, it is all the more critical to investigate the media coverage of women terrorists to determine if the claims that are made about terrorists and the

way the construction of their news media realities are significantly different for women terrorists and their male counterparts.

Research Hypotheses

I expect that the trend of biased coverage of terrorism in the news will have continued through the past decade. Specifically, I anticipate that portrayals of terrorism in the news will focus on the most spectacular and dramatic features by covering the violence rather than more analytical accounts of goals, political program, and the social conditions that set the context for the terroristic acts of violence. Further, I suspect that official authorities as interpretive claims-makers and sources of information will be over-represented compared to the terrorists themselves. I also think that a majority of pejorative and descriptive, rather than straightforward and neutral characterizations will be used by media personnel, as well as the authority sources they cite. Finally, I expect that the coverage of women terrorists will vary considerably from that of their male counterparts, indicating that the sex of the terrorist is an important consideration when it comes to reporting terrorism in the news. In the following chapter I discuss the methodology of my study, including details of each of the variables I focus on and how they are measured.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND VARIABLES

My study looks at coverage of terrorism in the *New York Times* during the 1990s. I used ethnographic content analysis to examine the factors that shape portrayals of terrorism during this time period. I coded the headlines and the content of each article in a number of ways. They include: whether descriptive or nominal characterizations were used to describe the perpetrators and the violent acts, how much violence was reported, which information sources were cited, whether any discussion of the terrorist's cause was provided, and if the sex of a terrorist contributed to varying portrayals. This chapter details my methodology, discussing the process of ethnographic content analysis, sampling procedures, and how variables were coded.

Ethnographic Content Analysis (ECA)

I only wanted to look at news articles that focused specifically on the coverage of a terrorist event or that portrayed terrorists. Therefore I needed an analytic methodology that emphasized validity, or the truthfulness between the construct and the way that construct is measured (Neuman 2000: 164). For this

reason, I chose to conduct ethnographic content analysis (ECA) on articles I collected in the *Times* during the 1990s using LEXIS-NEXIS server. According to Altheide, ECA:

is oriented to documenting and understanding the communication of meaning, as well as verifying theoretical relationships. A major difference, however, [to quantitative content analysis or QCA] is the reflexive and highly interactive nature of the investigator, concepts, data collection, and analysis. Unlike in QCA, in which the protocol is the instrument, the investigator is continually central in ECA. although protocols may be used in later phases of the research. As with all ethnographic research, the meaning of the message is assumed to be reflected in various modes of information exchange, format, rhythm, and style – for example, the aural and visual as well as the contextual nuances of the report itself (1996: 16).

Further, "... the reflexive and highly interactive nature of the investigator, concepts, data collection, and analysis" make ethnographic content analysis distinct from more quantitative methods of document analysis (Altheide 1996: 16). ECA is also unique because it involves a recursive process between concept development-sampling-data, collection-data, coding-data, and analysis-interpretation (Altheide 1986: 16).³

I chose the *New York Times* as my news source for several reasons.

First, it has been widely used in previous discourse tracking studies, many of which have focused on terrorism (Alexander 1995; Brosius and Weimann 1991; Picard and Adams 1987; Paletz, Fozzard, and Ayanian 1982; Kelly and Mitchell 1981). This allows me to assess my findings in the context of previous studies and locate shifts and constructions of reporting and portrayals.

Also, the *Times* is one of the largest media outlets. In fact, it is the biggest in total operations among all United States newspapers, leads all international papers in widespread collection and publication of news and views (Merrill 1968: 263), and is among the nation's top three in circulation rates, drawing readers in every state, and in almost every country (Merrill and Fisher 1980: 220-2).

Finally, the *Times* has been noted for its completeness in news coverage, serving as the model, or standard, against which other American papers are judged (Merrill and Fisher 1980: 230), and is ranked first in the world in terms of overall quality (Merrill 1968: 266, 268). In short, it is one of the most credible, well-read, and respected sources of information worldwide.

I chose the time period of the 1990s (1990 through 1999) because existing "discourse tracking" studies that study the coverage of terrorism in the news, look at periods prior to this decade⁴ or only consider the coverage of specific terrorist individuals or organizations. My study is significant in that it extends the research on general news coverage of terrorism through the 1990s. Also, to determine the patterns or trends of any particular subject, it is necessary to examine them through constant comparison over an extended period of time

(Altheide 1996: 10). This 10-year perspective provides a much more robust, detailed, and reliable analysis than "snap-shot" studies that look at shorter time spans.

The premillennial decade also was marked by a number of monumental events. For example, there were a number of structural changes, both political and economic, that took place throughout many countries: the 1989 collapse of the Berlin Wall unifying Eastern and Western Germany and the disillusion of the Soviet Union in 1991. The latter, according to Stern means:

the black market [would] now offer weapons [including hundreds of tons of nuclear weapons], components and knowhow... at vulnerable sites throughout the former Soviet Union... making them easier to steal and easier to detonate... [or to sell] abroad (1999: 9).

Intuitively, availability of weapons would suggest that terrorism would benefit. This time period certainly brought with it a high number of threats of terrorism and nuclear, chemical, and biological warfare from religious and other groups fearing apocalyptic prophecies. All these reasons make investigating news coverage of terrorism during the 90s particularly intriguing.

I used the LEXIS-NEXIS server to retrieve articles that were published in the *Times* from January 1, 1990 through December 31, 1999. I chose to collect the news reports using this database because it is one of the largest and most comprehensive sources of document collection available, "nearly three times the size of the [World Wide] Web" (<http://www.lexis-nexis.com/business/about.htm>).

It contains 2.8 billion searchable documents from 30,000 news, business, and legal information sources (<http://www.lexis-nexis.com/business/about.htm>) and, according to Altheide, is "the most sophisticated source [for document collection] to date" (1996: 45).

The headline of an article " supposedly encapsulates the primary subject of the article" (Paletz, Fozzard, and Ayanian 1982: 167). Thus, searching LEXIS-NEXIS for *Times* news reports that contained the appropriate keywords within the article headline is a credible way of extracting the stories that focused on terrorism. I used the search term *TERRORI** to search for articles about terrorism as it is the abbreviated way to seek keywords with variable endings such as: *terrorist*, *terrorists*, *terrorism*, and *terrorize*.⁵

Sampling

I used purposive sampling to collect the news reports, then progressive theoretical sampling to narrow down my initial sampling frame to stories that were relevant to my study. In purposive sampling, the widest variety of articles is selected to test the research question, based on the knowledge and judgment of the researcher as well as the purpose of the study (Babbie 2000: 230). By necessity, it is multistage in design and uses continuous feedback (Babbie 2000: 230). Progressive theoretical sampling requires the widest range and variety of documents at the start of the research (Altheide 1996: 3). After inspection and

reflection on the data and consideration of practical limitations as time, and availability, the researcher can choose select articles for conceptual or theoretically relevant reasons (Altheide 1996: 33-4).

I found 574 articles in the initial search. Using these two sampling methods, I excluded 486 *Times* stories from my sample that were not contextually appropriate.⁶ Examples include: book and movie reviews, summaries about recent acts of terrorism around the world, discussions of legislative measures and reforms taken to combat domestic terrorism in this country, the announcement of the President of the United States signing into law various anti-terrorism bills, and listings (rather than reports) of cases and trends of terrorism occurring in countries around the world over the last year or more. I was left with 88 articles. I read through each of these 88 articles several times conducting a number of preliminary analyses at different points to get a sense for what the data would likely indicate. In the remainder of this chapter I discuss how I coded the articles and I describe each of the variables I look at.

Protocol

It took me nearly a dozen versions of a protocol before I finally settled on a final draft. A copy of this final draft is attached in the back of this thesis as Appendix I. The protocol sheet lists the variables I coded in news reports that were published during the 1990s and in one of three news sections: Metropolitan, National, or Foreign.

'Nominal Versus Descriptive Characterizations' Variable

The characterizations, or claims, used to describe perpetrators and their acts of violence indicate a number of things about the way terrorism was portrayed in the *Times*. They indicate whether claims-makers are using objective, neutral labels or more descriptive, loaded terms that possibly connote deeper meaning. The use of certain labels also helps determine whether coverage of terrorism is sensationalized (Picard and Adams 1987).

According to Paletz, Fozzard, and Ayanian, there are two types of characterizations used to describe acts of violence and their perpetrators:

Nominal characterizations are nouns, verbal nouns

(gerunds), or other words that label or describe the acts in a manner that merely indicate what happened. They are also words that label or describe the perpetrators, but with as little connotative meaning as possible. Nominal words are straightforward descriptions with as little judgmental qualities about the acts or perpetrators as possible... nominal characterizations of acts of political violence include words such as hijacking, bombing, shooting, and attack. Nominal characterizations of perpetrators of such acts include words such as hijacker(s), bomber(s), gunman(men), and attacker(s).

Descriptive characterizations are often adjectival in form, although they may be nouns or verbal nouns, and contain judgments about the acts or perpetrators within their denotative or connotative meanings. Descriptive characterizations of acts of political violence include words such as murder, despicable, brutal, criminal, and terrorism. Descriptive characterizations of perpetrators of political violence include words such as murderer(s), criminal(s), coward(s), freedom fighter(s), and terrorist(s) (1987: 1).

I separated the characterizations of perpetrators and acts into one of these two categories, nominal or descriptive, looking first at the terms used in each headline. I recorded the first three characterizations of perpetrators, then the acts of violence, in each headline.⁷

Next I sorted characterizations in the article by source to determine whether some claims-makers were more likely than others to use descriptive terms, and thus contribute more to sensationalizing news coverage of terrorism. The different sources were: media (characterizations that were non-quoted), government officials (characterizations easily identifiable as such because they were usually direct quotes by officials), and eyewitnesses (also easily identifiable as such because they were usually direct quotes). Here again, I coded only the first three labels of the perpetrators, then of the violent acts, by different source, for each news story. A single article could have anywhere up to 24 total characterizations.

'Sources of Information' Variable

In news stories about violent events, there are two major sources of information: (1) the perpetrators, including a member of the group, a prepared group statement, or lawyer representing the group, or (2) authority sources, for instance, police, military, and government officials (Paletz, Fozzard, and Ayanian 1987: 167). I coded articles for including information sources from 'authority only,' 'perpetrators only,' 'both,' or 'neither.' Relying on only one of these two sources indicates a biased, one-sided story; done frequently, contributes to biased, one-sided news reporting.

'Violence' Variable

"The media, in this fierce competition for public attention, clearly need to create a dramatic presentation of the event" (Combs 2000: 143) and news stories about terrorism that focus on violence contribute to dramatic news coverage about it. This 'violence' variable is most meaningful if my definition is consistent with previous studies, thus my definition of the term was the same used by Paletz, Fozzard, and Ayanian's: "the exertion of physical force to injure, damage, or destroy" (1992: 166). This variable was coded several ways. First, headlines that included violence of any kind were coded 'yes violence in headline.' Those that did not were coded 'no violence in headline.'

Next I determined which articles contained violence. Each of the 88 stories were coded in one of three ways: (1) having a 'primary subject of

violence,' where violence received the most coverage within, or was the focus of, an article, (2) having a 'secondary subject of violence' where violent was used, but was not the focus/did not receive the most coverage, or (3) 'not applicable' (N/A), as the report did not have any mention of violence.

I also examined whether the violence reported in each of the *Times* news stories was a 'single act,' 'two(+) acts,' or more, a 'trend.' The importance of measuring violence this way is to further determine if terrorism in the news is portrayed dramatically by describing trends of acts. Trends of violence could be reports of numerous incidents occurring over a short period of time (a matter of a few days), or a long period of time (years or even decades). Paletz, Fozzard, and Ayanian explain the differences they found in defining single acts, two(+) acts, and trends of violence:

There were single acts of violence: shooting, bombing, kidnapping, etc. Thus, "gunmen shot and killed a member of Northern Ireland's police reserve today..." (May 21, 1979, p. 9). Then there were two or more acts of violence occurring within a short period of time and grouped together in the article. For example, "two Fiat car company executives were wounded by leftists and a night watchman was found shot dead in attacks today that followed a series of bombings" (July 1, 1979, p. 4). There were also violent trends: multiple acts of violence taking place over a longer period than one or several days. To wit: "more than thirty

business and political leaders have been shot in the legs so far this year by leftists" (November 11, 1977, p. D-8) (1987: 166).

I coded each of the articles that contained violence of any type (that is, articles that were previously coded as having either a primary or secondary subject of violence) into one of three categories: a single act, two(+) acts, or a trend of violence.

As a final measure of this variable and to assess the extent to which reports invoked past instances of violence, I noted whether there were any previous mentions of violence in the articles I had previously coded as containing violence. When a previous account of violence was mentioned, I also coded the date of the past account. Those citing a previous violent act were coded 'yes' as was the oldest date (usually by year). If an article did not mention a previous act of violence, I coded it "N/A."

'Terrorist's Cause' Variable

How terrorism is portrayed has a lot to do with whether the news source discusses the terrorist's cause, or stating the *why* quotient: "Why do these people engage in violence?" Previous studies investigating coverage of terrorism in the news have been contradictory. Podhoretz found that discussion of the "social causes" of violent organizations were extensive, leading him to charge media for "sympathiz[ing] with the terrorist cause" (1980: 112). In a later study, Paletz,

Fozzard, and Ayanian refute those findings and insist that media does the opposite, "The *Times* does not dwell upon the social causes of the groups" (1987: 167). However, neither study looked at *Times* coverage of terrorism during the 1990s, thus my study will help resolve the contrasting conclusions.

For this variable, I coded an article 'yes' when it cited the motivation, or cause, of the terrorists. I then further coded how much attention, quantitatively, the cause was given: 'a clause,' 'one sentence,' or 'more than a sentence' (Paletz, Fozzard, and Ayanian 1987: 167). I coded stories that neglected to mention the terrorist's cause as 'N/A.'

'Sex of Terrorist' Variable and Miscellaneous

While I knew my sample had a very small number of articles that featured a woman terrorist, I still wanted to investigate the role of this variable in *Times* news coverage of terrorism during the 1990s. MacDonald suggests that violent women, especially women terrorists, cause over-excitement and mass attention by the media (1991: 6). Further, this coverage is often without any consideration of her political motives and the woman's sexuality becomes the subject of discussion, as is her ugliness or beauty and details of the disastrous relationship with the man who led her to trouble in the first place (MacDonald 1991: 6-7). I coded any biographical information that was provided in each *Times* report including such details as terrorist's age, sex, race, and physical characteristics.

Also, because the research design of an ECA can include the "visual as well as the contextual nuances of the report, I felt that it was important to note 'miscellaneous' things that were featured (Altheide 1996: 16, 40), for instance, were there any photographs and/or maps attached to articles? The importance of investigating the 'sex of terrorist' variable in this way was to determine whether there were notable differences in news coverage between women terrorists and their male counterparts as this helps determine the portrayals of terrorism in the *New York Times* during the 1990s.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The data indicates that the portrayals of terrorism in the *New York Times* during the 1990s were skewed in many ways. News reports focused on the most dramatic and violent features of terrorism, rather than more analytical accounts of goals, political program, and social conditions that set the context for the acts of violence. A majority of descriptive, rather than nominal characterizations were used by media personnel and the authorities they cite when referring to acts of violence and the perpetrators of those acts, and finally, stories relied most on government, police, and military officials as interpretive claims-makers and sources for information. In sum, articles focused on *who* was engaging in *what* violence, rather than *why* the violence was occurring. This chapter details the findings of each variable.

Nominal Versus Descriptive Characterizations

There was a total of 321 characterizations, or claims, of the acts of violence in headlines and articles combined (see Appendix II, Table 1). Of these, *terrorism* was used the most frequent, 94 times (29 percent). Second-most-frequent was *bombing*, 71 times (22 percent), then *attack*, 55 times (17 percent).

Killing appeared 29 times (9 percent) and *explosion*, 13 times (4 percent). A descriptive characterization to label acts of violence was used approximately 40 percent of the time and only one of the top five labels, *terrorism*, was descriptive. Nearly 90 percent of the 233 total characterizations describing the perpetrators of violent acts were descriptive (see Appendix II, Table 2), including the three that were used the most: *terrorist*, 156 times (67 percent), *guerrilla*, 23 times (10 percent), and *militant*, 15 times (6 percent). Nominal terms used were *gunman*, 8 times (3 percent), *bomber* and *fighter* were each used 4 times (4 percent combined), *kidnapper* and *attacker* were each used twice (a combined 2 percent), and *fugitive*, *gunman*, and *shooter* were each used once (<3 percent combined).

After totaling all the characterizations of acts and perpetrators, I separated the labels by those found in article headlines. 61 total labels were used to describe violent acts appearing in a headline (see Appendix II, Table 3).

Terrorism, one of only three descriptive characterizations used appeared 36 times and accounted for nearly 60 percent of the total. One variation of the term, *ecological terrorism* was used to describe Colombian rebels attempting to sabotage the nation's largest oil pipeline (*October 29, 1990*). The next-most-used terms were *attack*, 8 times (13 percent), *bombing*, 6 times (10 percent), and *explosion* and *killing* were each used twice (a combined 6 percent). All three were nominal characterizations. *Beating*, *bomb plot*, and *factional fighting*, the other three descriptive terms, were each used once, (<6 percent combined).

Blast, hijacking, robbery, and shooting, all nominal labels, were each used once (<8 percent combined).

Similar to headline characterizations of violent acts, headline characterizations of the perpetrators of those acts were overwhelmingly descriptive (see Appendix II, Table 4). In fact, they were descriptive 100 percent of the time. Out of an N = 51, *terrorist* was used 49 times (96 percent). The only other labels used to describe the perpetrators of acts in an article headline were *freedom fighter* and *rebel*, both used once (4 percent combined).

The characterizations used within the articles varied significantly from those found within headlines. I found a total of 224 labels used to describe acts of violence and most of them were nominal (see Appendix II, Table 5). *Bombing* was used the most number of times, 61 (27 percent). *Terrorism* came in a somewhat distance second, and tied with *attack*. They were each used 40 times (36 percent combined). *Killing* and *explosion* came in third and fourth, used 25 and 11 times (11 and 5 percent), respectively. *Terrorism* was the only descriptive label among the top four terms used by media to characterize violent acts in an article. Other characterizations I found were *assassination, murder, shooting, hijacking, kidnapping, and robbery*. These combined for a frequency of 30 (12 percent). *Assault, maiming, raid, sabotage, and slaying* were used twice each (<5 percent combined), and *ambush, conspiracy, dynamiting, factional fighting, firing, shelling, and stabbing* were each used once (<7 percent combined).

Media used the term *terrorist* 89 times (57 percent), the most overall, to characterize perpetrators of violence (see Appendix II, Table 6), including several variations of the term. *International terrorist* yielded four responses, three when referring to Carlos the Jackal, responsible for a series of terrorist attacks in Europe including the 1976 hijacking of a French airliner to Uganda (*June 28, 1990; August 16, 1994, and December 24, 1997*), and one response when characterizing convicted American jetliner bomber, Ramzi Ahmed Yousef (*September 7, 1996*). Media used *domestic terrorist* to describe Timothy McVeigh of Oklahoma City bombing infamy (*May 30, 1997*). The top three characterizations of perpetrators were rounded out by two other descriptive terms, *guerrilla*, 21 times (14 percent) and *militant*, 15 times (10 percent). *Gunman*, a nominal label, appeared 7 times (5 percent), and *bomber* and *political extremist* were both used 4 times (6 percent combined). *Fighter*, *kidnapper*, and *rightist*, totaled a use of 7 (6 percent). *Attacker*, *death squad*, *political prisoner*, *rebel*, *revolutionary*, *settler*, *shooter*, and *zealot* each appeared once (<8 percent combined).

I recorded 36 claims about violent acts by government sources (see Appendix II, Table 7); a descriptive label was used 20 times. Used most often was *terrorism*, 18 times (half the total percent), with a couple variations of the term. Two Palestinian men, Lafi Khalil and Ghazi Ibrahim Abu Maizar were accused of what New York prosecutors described as "international terrorism" (*July 9, 1998*), while the United States Attorney for New Jersey, Michael Chertoff, charged seven drug gang members with practicing "narcotics terrorism" (*August*

1, 1990). *Crime* and *murder* were each used once (<6 percent combined) and were the only other descriptive labels. *Attack*, *bombing*, *shooting*, *killing*, and *robbery* were the nominal characterizations government used to describe acts of violence.

Government sources used descriptive terms to characterize the perpetrators of violent acts nearly 90 percent of the 27 times they were cited (see Appendix II, Table 8). *Terrorist*, was used the most, 18 times (67 percent). *Criminal*, *extremist*, and *guerrilla*, all descriptive labels, were used twice each (21 percent combined). Nominal labels *attacker*, *fugitive*, and *gunman*, were used once each (<12 percent combined). Government sources were used much less frequently compared to media personnel.

The data showed that during the 1990s, both the *Times* and the government sources it cited, frequently used descriptive characterizations in news reports about terrorism when making claims about the acts of violence and the perpetrators of those acts.⁸ Media personnel, as a claims-maker, used more nominal words than descriptive labels when describing acts of violence in the news stories, however they used a majority of descriptive labels in article headlines. My finding were not all that different from Picard and Adams who state that "Government spokesmen provide the bulk of descriptive, sensationalistic characterizations in... newspaper coverage... [while] print media personnel, at least, are not significantly culpable of sensationalism in coverage of terrorism" (1987: 6). However, I find that it is just as plausible that media personnel, as well as government, are culpable of sensationalism. Government

sources consistently used a high percentage of descriptive terms, however media personnel also used a fair amount, particularly when characterizing the perpetrators of violence in article headlines. This has to do with the tactical way in which headlines are written, "[They are] important because many readers treat the newspaper selectively and the headline is often the only part of the story read or remembered" (Paletz, Fozzard, and Ayanian 1982: 167). Descriptive word choices, then, are likely used as a way to draw readers to a story. I conclude that both sources contribute to sensationalized coverage of terrorism in the *New York Times* during the 1990s.

Understanding which characterizations claims-makers use to describe violent acts and their perpetrators is important because the word choices are important in labeling the people and events being portrayed (Picard and Adams 1987), as "one person's 'freedom fighter' can be another's 'terrorist'" (Paletz, Fozzard, and Ayanian 1982: 168). They also play a part in:

creating the frames of reference within which media audiences view events and participants. Such characterizations are a major component in the social construction of reality... others have clearly shown that the ideology is conveyed in media messages through a variety of devices, including the word choices with which events and participants are portrayed (Picard and Adams 1987: 1).

Though both sources are culpable of sensationalism by the use of descriptive labels in reporting, the motivations are not all the same. Media

personnel are motivated by the business of news and attracting a wide audience in order to sell their product. Providing sensationalized portrayals and dramatically presenting news is necessary in creating heightened interest in stories that will provoke the curiosity of potential readers. However, this also delegitimizes terrorism as news coverage focusing on violent acts does not allow readers to understand other features about the terrorists or empathize with their reasons for engaging in violence.

Picard and Adams found that media personnel “do not include some of the more inflammatory descriptive characterizations made by government officials,” though they were not able to provide any “readily available explanation for this difference” (1987: 8). I believe this can be explained by the perspective government has to provide when offering information about terrorism. They must be cautious about selecting the labels they use to define the perpetrators and their behavior as government plays a large role in defining who terrorists and their acts of terrorism are. They are also the ones legally accountable for the actions of terrorists and therefore tend to orient their characterizations towards the legal system. The use of such terms as *crime*, *criminal*, and *fugitive* illustrate this point. In short, government officials are eager to stress the criminal and illegal nature of terrorist acts of violence and the perpetrators of those acts as and their word choices aid in this.

Finally, government officials, along with police and military, are legally accountable for the seeking justice among violent offenders, therefore they are very careful about the perspective they give regarding terrorism. This means that

the publicity and information they give about an event should be disseminated in such a manner that will “help the public to understand the positive actions undertaken by the government to resolve the situation... without loss of innocent lives” (Combs 2000: 141). Also, like media personnel, government sources use descriptive labels as an effective way to delegitimize terrorism.

Sources of Information

This variable is important because the sources of information used in news reports are important in determining which “facts” are presented in the report and which “side” of the story is told. Many stories about terrorism during the 1990s in the *Times* used authorities as government, police, and military officials as sources of information (see Appendix II, Table 9). Of the 88 reports I analyzed, 40 of them (45 percent) cited authority officials only and often, they were cited half a dozen times or more in a single article. Authority sources include statements like the following:

Allied officials fear that a trickle of Iraqi agents entering through Saudi Arabia's long desert borders could soon become a flood (*February 1, 1991*),

In an interview with a small group of reporters, two senior Government analysts cautioned that the United States had established no link between the Iranian organizations and the World Trade Center bombing. They said they had “no

reason at this point to see that as being tied to any known group or any state sponsor" (*March 18, 1993*),

But Judge Raggi, made clear that she held Mr. Abu Maizar, 24, responsible for the incident, adding... this was "only the latest in a string of reckless actions" by Mr. Abu Maizar that included what she termed "foolhardy escape attempts" (*July 9, 1998*), and

Interior Minister Rosa Russo Jervolino said in Parliament that Mr. D'Antona had been hit by two bullets and that his killers might have used silencers – one of the elements that pointed to professionals (*May 21, 1999*).

Perpetrator sources were cited in 46 stories (52 percent of the time), however they were not ever used as the only source of information in a news report. Perpetrator sources usually provided very little evidence or information, rather they were there to make the story only appear slightly less one-sided. In fact, like Paletz, Fozzard, and Ayanian, I found that when a perpetrator source was used, it was often surrounded by a host of authority figures who served to undermine its credibility (1982: 167). Some examples of perpetrator sources are:

The sheik, through his assistant, Khalid Nasr, declined a request to be interviewed (*December 16, 1990*) and

A spokesman for the group denied all knowledge of the violence (*April 28, 1994*).

Other times, when a perpetrator source was a lawyer representing the accused, that lawyer was cited to defend themselves, the client(s) they were defending, or to call into question the credibility of a testimony, the prosecuting attorney, or others attempting to convict their client:

The prosecution claims that [the team of defense lawyers] Mr. Kunstler and Mr. Ruby have been so deeply involved with so many of the defendants... that an appeals court [might] reverse any convictions obtained in the trial... "The government is going absolutely berserk here," Mr. Kunstler said in a telephone interview on Friday. "They've given us 50,000 reasons why we should be disqualified. They don't like us because they are afraid we may be good, aggressive lawyers" (*August 21, 1994*),

Lynne Stewart, the main [defense] lawyer for Mr. Abdel Rahman, argued that he was a liar whose "dirty business" was to entrap Mr. Abdel Rahman and the other defendants (*January 31, 1995*),

"This case is about one of the biggest and most embarrassing moments in the F.B.I.'s history, said John H. Jacobs, the lawyer for Mohammed Saleh, who is accused of providing fuel oil for the manufacture of bombs in the alleged terror plot (*February 1, 1995*), and

The lawyers for Mr. Abdel Rahman and his 10 co-defendants say that the wiretapped conversations introduced so far show no involvement by the blind 56-year-old Muslim cleric in plotting violence in America (*April 23, 1995*).

Statements by the terrorists themselves were offered in four separate reports.

The few times they were provided were when they were condemning terroristic behavior or expressing repentance for their violent actions, but never to speak about conditions that prompted or justify, in their minds, the terroristic responses:

Shoko Asahara, leader of the religious cult, Aum Shinriko, is quoted by Kyodo News Service as saying his group "will never violate the law nor commit subversive activities, and I have no intention of ordering such acts. With this trial, they are trying to put me, who is blind, into a bag and give me a beating (*May 16, 1996*),

Omar Mohammed Ali Rezaq, who spoke emotionally... said he was a different man from the terrorist who took over Flight 648... said, "I cannot accept my own self what I did. I feel guilty for what's happened" (*October 8, 1996*), and

[Susan L. Rosenberg, a former member of the Weather Underground] admitted her guilt to the commission and apologized for the New Jersey explosives case, saying, "the criminal activities I was involved in, I think that they were wrong and that they were dangerous" (*November 5, 1999*).

The disproportionate reliance on authorities as information sources also indicates that *Times* coverage of terrorism during the 1990s is skewed as the news reports offer limited perspectives that do not include "telling the terrorist's story." This reliance on authority sources is an issue of availability as,

time pressures under which reporters work make the problem of source availability an important one. Authorities routinely hold news conferences to provide the media with prepared statement on anything considered potentially newsworthy (Paletz, Fozzard, and Ayanian 1982: 167-8).

It also affects the tone of an article. Using official sources for information:

giv[es] news coverage... a reassuring tone, implying that the government is handling the situation. To some extent, it defeats an objective of violent group activity: to instill fear in members of the public and undermine their confidence in the ruling authority (Paletz, Fozzard, and Ayanian 1982: 168).

The reliance on authority sources also has the effect of denying terrorists the use of the *Times* as a platform for communicating their message that, potentially, could generate understanding for them and perhaps sympathy or support for their cause (Combs 2000: 142). Using terrorists and their supporters as main sources of information results in the opposite effect. Also, according to Combs, could mean journalists would be putting themselves at risk as failing to satisfy the terrorists' goals of favorable understanding and publicity could put them in a

vulnerable situation where the potential to be attacked by the terrorists or their sympathizers is great (2000: 144).

Violence

I measured the extent to which violence was found in *Times* news stories about terrorism in several ways (see Appendix II, Table 10). First, I determined that 36 of the articles (41 percent) had a headline that contained violence. Some examples of headlines that had a clear and distinct violent reference include:

Israeli Jets Destroy Lebanon Base Linked to Party of God

Terrorism (*July 9, 1990*),

Factional Fighting in Somalia Terrorizes and Ruins Capital

(*December 8, 1991*),

Serbs Intensify Sarajevo Attacks; 'Pure Terrorism,' Bosnia

Charges (*April 22, 1992*),

Attack in Israel: The Overview; 20 Killed in Terrorist

Bombing of Bus in Tel Aviv; 48 are Hurt (*October 20, 1994*),

2 Die as Terrorist Bomb Rips Train at a Paris Station

(*December 4, 1996*), and

2 Cars Packed With Explosives Blow Up in Israel, Killing 3

Suspected Terrorists (*September 6, 1999*).

Next, I found that violence was the primary subject in more than half the articles.

I coded violence as the secondary subject of 34 articles of the remaining articles

(39 percent). Articles featured violence, either as the primary or secondary subject, all but 3 percent of the time.

Though my definition of violence was the same used by Paletz, Fozzard, and Ayanian, our findings were not similar: 41 percent of my headlines contained violence, while 62 percent of their headlines were violent; 58 percent of my articles included violence, 40 percent of their news stories were violent. They concluded that the sensationalism of violence in the headline was a method used by reporters as an eye-catching means to market stories to more people (1982: 167). My findings, though not identical to theirs are still indicative of violence being used as a type of "selling" or "marketing" tool.

The other ways I measured the use of violence in *Times* articles were also significant. An overwhelming 74 percent of the news reports mentioned at least one previous account of violence by the group or individual being featured. For example,

The group was described by the State Department in 1989 as the world's most dangerous terrorist organization and is blamed for more than 90 attacks in 20 countries, killing or injuring nearly 900 people (*April 2, 1993*) and

A warrant was also issued for his involvement in a car bombing in Paris in April 1982 in which one person was killed and 70 wounded. He has been blamed for other attacks in France at that time, including the bombing of a train in March 1982 that killed five people and the bombing

of Saint-Charles railroad station in Marseilles in December 1983 in which 6 people were killed and 80 wounded (*August 16, 1994*).

Sometimes the previous accounts of violence dated as far back as several decades:

This is a country familiar with terrorism. But rarely has there been a death toll as high as the one today, and certainly none since 37 Israelis were killed and 82 others wounded in 1978 when Arab gunmen infiltrated from the Mediterranean, attacking a coastal highway north of Tel Aviv (*October 20, 1994*),

During the 1970's and 1980's, the Red Army Faction waged a campaign of bombing and assassination that brought a sweeping Government response, including highway blockades, spot-searches and intensified security at hundreds of public installations (*November 18, 1994*), and The Red Brigades were responsible for a number of attacks in the 1970's and 1980's, including the 1978 kidnapping and killing of former Prime Minister Aldo Moro (*May 21, 1999*).

As my last measure of this variable, I coded articles as reporting a *single act of violence*, *two(+) acts of violence*, or more than that, a *trend of violence*. Stories reporting a *single act* referred to a single incident only. Examples include reports centering around the Oklahoma City bombing (*April 21, 1995*), the World

Trade Center bombing (*August 17, 1995*), or the Olympic bombing at Centennial Park (*July 28, 1996*). 15 articles (17 percent), reported a *single act of violence* only.

Articles coded two(+) acts of violence discussed two (sometimes three) events:

In the eyes of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Hany Kiareldeen is a Palestinian terrorist who helped plot the World Trade Center bombing and planned to kill Attorney General Janet Reno (*June 27, 1998*).

Two articles were coded this way. The rest of the articles (77 percent of them) that contained violence, were coded as reporting a *trend of violent acts* as they discussed successive acts of ongoing violence:

Over the last three weeks this seaside eastern African capital has descended into a frenzy of violence, foreign medical relief workers say. Rival tribal factions are killing and maiming men, women and children indiscriminately in a civil war that has brought the country to a state of virtual anarchy since the ouster of the country's long-ruling President in January (*December 8, 1991*),

A wave of letter bombings continued to shake Austria today, shattering the calm of life in the capital and setting off fears that the country may be facing an outbreak of neo-Nazi terrorism (*December 7, 1993*), and

The international terrorist known as Carlos, an almost-mythical figure blamed for a string of bombings and killings across Western Europe in the 1970's and 1980's, was arrested in Sudan on Sunday and flown secretly to France today (*August 16, 1994*).

Regardless of the way this 'violence' variable was measured, I found that it was very frequently used. This was especially evident in news reports that mentioned previous accounts of violence that, in some cases, dated as far back as 20 or more years. Previous studies have indicated that violence is meaningful to audiences because it creates a "dramatic presentation" (Combs 2000: 143), and, ultimately, sells – this, of course, being one of the main goals of the media in covering such stories as terrorism.

In addition to selling dramatic a story, the use of violence also works to "evoke negative emotionality," or emotional reaction, from readers (Johnson 1989: 8). This technique works, as Johnson describes, "At a commonsense level" as "we impute moral responsibility or culpability for intentional or willful injuries" (1989: 9). Violence is simply one other tactic used by *Times* personnel to delegitimize terrorism. My study shows this was done by bombarding readers with reports containing violent headlines, publishing articles that primarily featured violence, reporting trends of violent acts, and reminding readers about violent events that took place as far back as several decades.

Terrorist's Cause

This brings me to my final table, discussion of terrorists' cause (see Appendix II, Table 11). The percentages in this table indicate that during the 1990s, the *Times* did very little as far as reporting the cause of terrorists. Only 20 articles (23 percent) featured anything about their goal, or stated the cause for which they were fighting (ideological or otherwise). In 9 of the 20 articles, a clause was all the space designated for addressing the perpetrator's cause. For example,

what is described as "Colombia's most hard-line guerrilla group, the National Liberation Army," stands "opposed to talks with Colombia's new Government" (*October 29, 1990*), the left-wing group, Dev-Sol claimed responsibility for the bombing of a United States military warehouse stating they were looking to "protect against the imperialist force in the gulf" (*January 23, 1991*),

a man convicted of espionage and conspiracy to murder pleaded guilty to charges of, among other things, killing a member of the Irish Republican Army, a political group "fighting to end British rule over Northern Ireland" (*January 23, 1992*),

Israeli officials believe that Palestinian Islamic extremists, who are interested in "isolating Hamas and in reinforcing Palestinian self-rule in Gaza" are responsible for a recent

bombing that was "one of the deadliest terrorist attacks in Israeli history (*October 20, 1994*), and the purpose of a recent missile attack in Pakistan resulting in the death of 21 people was to "break what the United States says is a terrorist network led by Osama bin Laden" (*August 24, 1998*).

In 7 of the remaining 11 articles, a single sentence in each report was all that was given to address the perpetrator's cause. Some examples include,

"...white extremists contend that Barend Strydom is a political prisoner because he acted out of support for apartheid, bolstered by a hatred of blacks" (*June 3, 1990*),

"Sheik Abdel-Rahman is a widely regarded extremist in Egypt as a spiritual leader of several radical underground Islamic extremist groups... which favor a violent revolution against the government and the establishment of a state based on Islamic law" (*December 16, 1990*),

"Like the Muslim fundamentalists in Teheran, the Party of God says not only southern Lebanon but also Jerusalem, where Muslim shrines are situated, must be recovered from Israel" (*February 17, 1992*),

"The Red Army Faction carried out a campaign of bombing and killing in Germany as part of "the struggle against imperialism and monopoly capitalism"" (*April 18, 1992*), and

"Abu Nidal... is the founder of the Palestinian opposition Fatah Revolutionary Council which has claimed lethal attacks around the world, mostly against Israelis and P.L.O. partisans, but also against Jews in Western Europe and moderate Arab states" (*August 26, 1998*).

In the remaining four articles, more than a sentence described what the perpetrators believed. Here is an example from a bomb attack by the West German terrorist group, the Red Army Faction,

The letter [that had been found at the scene of the attack] reportedly said a group named for a Spanish terrorist who died in May had carried out the attack, and demanded among other things that all "revolutionary prisoners" be allowed to serve their sentences together" and "Jose Manuel Sevillano, the Spanish terrorist in whose name the letter said the Red Army Faction had carried out the attack, was a member of the Spanish left-wing guerrilla group Grapo... died in a Spanish jail... demanding that 66 66 jailed Spanish terrorists serve their sentences together" (*July 28, 1990*).

The lack of discussion about why terrorists engage in violence is important in showing that news coverage of terrorism in the *Times* during the 1990s is biased in ways favorable to government and other authority officials. It also begins to resolve the contrasting conclusions about media coverage of terrorism asserted

by Podhoretz (1980) and Paletz, Fozzard, and Ayanian (1982). Further, it is more evidence that cultural mediums as newsprint papers can delegitimize the existence of terrorism by neglecting to state their cause.

Women Terrorists and Miscellaneous

My sample contained limited news media coverage of women terrorists. Out of 88 articles sampled, only five of them (<6 percent) featured a woman terrorist. From those five, I was not able to make any conclusive decisions about this 'sex of terrorist' variable. Even after accounting for such descriptive and biographical information as age, physical appearance, and religion, and miscellaneous things such as photographs attached to articles, there was not enough data to state anything as being meaningful about this variable.

There was minimal variation of the length and type of coverage of women terrorists. One article simply listed the names and ages of the women who were all "purported members of the Red Army Faction" (*June 22, 1990*), while in another, a lawyer representing Dr. Flora Brovina (who was found guilty of charges of terrorism) is cited for reading part of Brovina's closing argument:

I regret the prosecution has so minimized the role of women
in the world. I have been accused of wanting to change
borders and unite Kosovo and Albania. My poems have
been translated into Serbian, and Many other languages

and for me my homeland is where my poetry is read

(*December 10, 1999*).

In another instance, Susan L. Rosenberg, a woman just convicted of terrorism charges, was quoted for her admittance of guilt to the criminal activities in which she was involved during her stint as a terrorist (*November 5, 1999*).

The inconclusiveness of this variable is likely due to the fact that this decade did not feature any "prolific" women terrorists. There were no Susanna Ronconi's, Leila Khaled's, Ulrike Meinhof's, or Kim Hyon Hui's.⁹ It is apparent that further investigation of the news coverage of terrorism is necessary to extract whether this 'sex' variable is at all meaningful.

Summary of Findings

The data suggest that *New York Times* portrayals of terrorism during the 1990s is slanted away from deep analytical presentations that could provide a nuanced understanding of terrorist's cause and the structural conditions and social context in which terroristic actions arise. Media personnel and government officials used mainly descriptive characterizations, rather than nominal labels, to describe the perpetrators of violence as well as the violent acts, authorities were overwhelmingly relied upon as sources of information in the news reports, articles focused on violence, and there was minimal discussion of the terrorist's cause. These portrayals of terrorism suggest a number of potential implications. The next section discusses these potential implications.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS OF STUDY AND CONCLUSION

This thesis began with a set of questions to analyze portrayals of terrorism during the 1990s in one elite American newsprint source, the *New York Times*. Did the articles focus on violence? What types of characterizations were used to describe the violence and its perpetrators? Who were the sources of information in the articles? Was there any discussion of the terrorist's cause? Are there differences in news coverage between women terrorists and men terrorists? My findings indicate that in nearly every way measured, news coverage of terrorism was one-sided and focused on its most spectacular and sensational aspect – violence. Further, authorities were the used as the main sources of information, while stories provided minimal explanations for, and lacked detailed discussion about, the social context and conditions of the violent acts. There are several implications for this type of biased news reporting. In this last chapter, I discuss some of these implications and conclude my study.

Implications of Study

As I mentioned earlier, news reporting is inherently biased. However, the degree and extent to which it is biased can vary tremendously. My findings

indicate that media portrayals of terrorism during the 1990s reported very select aspects of terrorism that focused on violence and the casualties that result from that violence. I do not critique the reporting of violence in and of itself as its worthiness as a legitimate news topic is fairly certain due to its ethically problematic nature. However, I am quite critical of news coverage that reports this destructive feature of terrorism *while neglecting* to portray additional aspects that are equally newsworthy. For example, the social conditions that set the context for the violence, the background information and ideological beliefs of the individuals engaging in the violence, and the various structural factors behind the violent events. News portrayals that cover terrorism without mention of these broader, more complete contextual understandings is a far too common practice.

News media perspectives about terrorism are antianalytical because they focus on its most dramatic and spectacular feature – violence. As a result, media personnel can be criticized for trying to *entertain* and/or create drama and spectacle, rather than *inform* audiences. According to Hilliard (1996), this kind of news coverage that lacks "critical social analysis" discourages the development of what Mills' termed the "sociological imagination" (1959). A key feature of the sociological imagination is the ability "to understand the larger historical scene.... [and] to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society" (Mills 1959: 5-6). These combined will create a "quality of mind" with which we can use information and develop reason in order to better understand both ourselves and the world and strive towards the ultimate goal of a humanistic society (Mills 1959). News media coverage is often antithetical to this idea

because from its stories, audiences are left to ask not, "What social forces contributed to such an extreme act?" but rather "What could have been done differently to save innocent lives?" (Hilliard 1996: 124) or to address the conditions that spawn politically marginalized groups who find few other outlets of expression for their views other than violence and terror that bring notoriety to media (albeit, as this study suggests, perhaps not the type of notoriety that would compel popular sympathy and political response). The decontextualization of violence from the social conditions and ideological controversies and issues that led up to it (operationalized in my study as reporting violence but neglecting to state the terrorist's cause), the reliance on authorities as sources of information, and the abundance of descriptive characterizations by both media personnel and the authorities they cite, all contribute to skewed reporting. In short, news media often portray people and events in ways that can be considered antisociological. Further, skewed news portrayals are also evident in previous "discourse tracking" studies of terrorism that look at coverage during the 1980s and earlier. Thus, it is evident that there is a consistent trend of antianalytical news reporting about terrorism that has continued through the last decade.

It is important to recognize these facets of news coverage because, as I mentioned earlier, the information that is provided in media representations are used not only to define our understandings of the people and events that are portrayed, but also our actions towards those people and events. Antianalytical and antisociological portrayals of terrorism that focus on violence, rather than the social conditions that set the context for the violence, suggest that the public may

not have the chance to respond knowledgeably to terrorist claims. This is because it does not allow terrorists to be perceived as anything other than irrational, deviant, malicious criminals engaging in violent acts of behavior.

Because they are such an important source of information for so many, limited media portrayals of terrorism can be detrimental to society. They are largely responsible for a public that is ill-informed, and, as a result, this ill-informed public is forced to respond to situations based on very thin and narrow understandings. In democratic societies such as the United States, an informed public is essential. Otherwise, the attitudes and actions that people take will, perhaps, not be the most effective or efficient as they will reflect their limited understandings of the world. For instance, because terrorists' claims are not allowed to be heard and more objectively and critically assessed, resolving matters through legitimate means (for example negotiation, conciliation, pacification) seems rather unlikely. Ultimately, this may even lead to increased rates of terrorism in the future.

Though unfavorable to terrorists, news media perspectives are quite favorable to police, government, military, and other authority officials. This is particularly evident by the numerous times authority sources were cited in articles as the claims-makers about acts of violence and the perpetrators of those acts. One effect of this type of coverage is that delegitimizes terrorism (Paletz, Fozzard, and Ayanian 1982). However, another outcome is that the one-sided portrayals distance the government of the United States as well as the government of its allies from any involvement in terrorist activity. As Herman and

O'Sullivan (1989) and Herman and Chomsky (1988) indicate, several of the major Western Powers, including the United States, Great Britain, and France have been known to use force, especially to subjugate restive populations (Herman and O'Sullivan 1989: 13). Such processes have taken place in such countries as Indochina 1946-75, Iran 1953-78, Guatemala 1954-present, Indonesia 1965-66 and thereafter, Chile from 1970, the Phillipines 1972-88, El Salvador 1972, 1979-80 and thereafter, and Argentina 1976-83 (Herman and O'Sullivan 1989: 13-4). The United States has also invested in, and provided aid to, regimes that favored terrorism and they have encouraged and stimulated an institutionalization of state terrorism as an ongoing and sometimes permanent policy in regions where it was in their interests to do so (Herman and O'Sullivan 1989: 18-9). News media coverage that portrays terrorists working as isolated individuals, rather than as integrated actors working in conjunction with larger, more elaborate political networks, works to significantly shade attention away from acts of terrorism that are United States- and ally-sponsored. Future studies need to examine these aspects of terrorism and news coverage of terrorism more closely. An investigation into perspectives from international news media sources would also shed light on these issues.

Conclusion

According to Fallows, "Year by year, a smaller proportion of Americans goes to the trouble of reading newspapers or watching news broadcasts on TV,"

a loss that, he continues, "leaves people... no tools with which to make decisions about public leaders or policies" (1996: 3). This indicates that in order to stay in business, news media personnel, now more than ever before, need to use journalistic conventions that are most likely to attract consumers. However, social scientists need to continue to "pay attention to the symbolic content of media messages" (Gitlin 1980: 3) and remain critical of the stories news media sell as its business orientation towards marketing stories significantly affects the content of reports. As my study indicates, news reports that focus on surface-level understandings, rather than in-depth analysis and critical commentary are the result, from which audiences cannot fully assess the situations and the actions of individuals in their broader context and understand the differences between "personal troubles" and "public issues" (Mills 1959: 8). This is, according to Mills, [p]erhaps the most fruitful distinction with which the sociological imagination works" (1959: 8). As our primary source for information about our world, media are a key site where the foundations for critical "sociological" sensibilities that Mills envisioned can and should be built.

ENDNOTES

¹ When I talk about skewed (or biased) coverage, I am referring to the ways in which the variables I use to assess the portrayals of terrorism in the news (as well as the variables previous studies have used) indicate that coverage is one-sided. For example, news reports focus on violence, and provide minimal discussion of the conditions that set the context for the violence, authorities are over-represented as sources of information, and descriptive characterizations, rather than nominal terms that are more neutral are used a majority of the time by media and the sources it cites to label acts of violence and the perpetrators of those acts.

² "All The News That's Fit To Print" is the slogan of the *New York Times*.

³ For an extended discussion on ethnographic content analysis, refer to Altheide's *Qualitative Media Analysis* (1996) or his article, "Ethnographic Content Analysis" in *Qualitative Sociology* (1987).

⁴ Alexander's study looks at newspaper coverage of a terrorist bombing incident that occurred during the 1990s, however unlike my study, his does not consider trends of news coverage during the entire decade.

⁵ One potential shortcoming of this method is that the *Times* could have published stories during this decade that focused on terrorism, but were overlooked by this data collection procedure because they did not contain a headline with this term.

⁶ I also kept track of a number of other variables such as the name of the terrorist or terrorist group featured and, when applicable, their organization affiliation. I also coded the section, part, and page of the each news story (Altheide 1996: 39) and the column number and desk). Finally, I recorded the length of each article, first in number of words, then into the following 4 subcategories: under 500 words, 501 to 1,500 words, 1,501 to 3,000 words, or more than 3000 words (Altheide 1996: 39). None of these features of the news articles were used in this study, however future studies examining, for example, the prevalence of an article within a news source, would do well to consider some of these variables more closely.

⁷ In this study I only determine whether descriptive or nominal characterizations are used by each source. A future study might want to consider the context of the characterizations that are used, for instance how are the words used within

the paragraph or within the context of the sentence. However, to maintain consistency with earlier studies, I did not consider the context of the characterizations and looked only at the terms used by media personnel, authority sources, and eyewitnesses.

⁸ The characterizations of violent acts and perpetrators of those violent acts given by eyewitnesses were also recorded, however, both Ns were so low (<5) that nothing could be determined from those results.

⁹ Ronconi was a member of the most infamous of all the revolutionary groups, the Red Brigades. Khaled is credited with being the first woman hijacker (MacDonald 1990) and participated in several Palestinian hijackings during the late 60s and early 70s. Meinhof was a leader of the Red Army Faction (or Baader-Meinhof Gang) and participated in numerous terrorist bombings, attacks, and robberies. Hui is responsible for the 1987 bombing of Korean Air Flight 858.

Table 1. COMBINED CHARACTERIZATIONS OF ACTS

Rank		Frequency	Percent of Total
1	TERRORISM*	94	29
	ECOLOGICAL TERRORISM		
	INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM		
	NARCOTICS TERRORISM		
2	BOMBING(S)	71	22
3	ATTACK(S)	55	17
4	KILLING(S)	29	9
5	EXPLOSION(S)	13	4
6	ASSASSINATION(S)*	10	3
7	SHOOTING(S)	8	2
8	MURDER(S)*	6	2
9	HIJACKING(S)	5	2
	ROBBERY(S)	5	2
10	KIDNAPPING(S)	3	1
11	ASSAULT(S)	2	1
	FIGHTING	2	1
	MAIMING(S)*	2	1
	RAID(S)*	2	1
	SABOTAGE*	2	1
	SLAYING(S)*	2	1
12	AMBUSH(ES)*	1	<1
	BEATING(S)*	1	<1
	BLAST(S)	1	<1
	BOMB PLOT(S)*	1	<1
	CONSPIRACY(S)*	1	<1
	CRIME(S)*	1	<1
	DYNAMITING(S)*	1	<1
	FIRING	1	<1
	SHELLING	1	<1
	STABBING	1	<1

n = 321

**Denotes a descriptive characterization*

Table 2. COMBINED CHARACTERIZATIONS OF PERPETRATORS

Rank		Frequency	Percent of Total
1	TERRORIST(S)*	156	67
	INTERNATIONAL TERRORIST		
	DOMESTIC TERRORIST		
2	GUERRILLA(S)*	23	10
3	MILITANT(S)*	15	6
4	GUNMAN(MEN)	7	3
5	EXTREMIST(S)*	6	3
6	BOMBER(S)	4	2
	FIGHTER(S)	4	2
7	CRIMINAL(S)*	2	1
	KIDNAPPER(S)	2	1
	RIGHTIST(S)*	2	1
	ATTACKER(S)	2	1
	REBEL(S)*	2	1
8	DEATH SQUAD*	1	<1
	FUGITIVE(S)	1	<1
	GUNMAN(MEN)	1	<1
	POLITICAL PRISONER(S)*	1	<1
	REVOLUTIONARY(S)*	1	<1
	SETTLER(S)*	1	<1
	SHOOTER(S)	1	<1
	ZEALOT(S)*	1	<1

n = 233

**Denotes a descriptive characterization*

Table 3. HEADLINE CHARACTERIZATIONS OF ACTS

Rank		Frequency	Percent of Total
1	TERRORISM* ECOLOGICAL TERRORISM	36	59
2	ATTACK(S)	8	13
3	BOMBING(S)	6	10
4	EXPLOSION(S)	2	3
	KILLING(S)	2	3
5	BEATING(S)*	1	<2
	BLAST(S)	1	<2
	BOMB PLOT(S)*	1	<2
	FACTIONAL FIGHTING*	1	<2
	HIJACKING(S)	1	<2
	ROBBERY(S)	1	<2
	SHOOTING(S)	1	<2

n = 61

**Denotes a descriptive characterization*

Table 4. HEADLINE CHARACTERIZATIONS OF PERPETRATORS

Rank		Frequency	Percent of Total
1	TERRORIST(S)*	49	96
2	FREEDOM FIGHTER(S)*	1	2
	REBEL(S)*	1	2

n = 51

**Denotes a descriptive characterization*

Table 5. MEDIA CHARACTERIZATIONS OF ACTS

Rank		Frequency	Percent of Total
1	BOMBING(S)	61	27
2	TERRORISM*	40	18
	ATTACK(S)	40	18
3	KILLING(S)	25	11
4	EXPLOSION(S)	11	5
5	ASSASSINATION(S)*	10	4
6	MURDER(S)*	5	2
	SHOOTING(S)	5	2
7	HIJACKING(S)	4	2
8	KIDNAPPING(S)	3	1
	ROBBERY(S)	3	1
9	ASSAULT(S)	2	<1
	MAIMING(S)*	2	<1
	RAID(S)*	2	<1
	SABOTAGE*	2	<1
	SLAYING(S)*	2	<1
10	AMBUSH(ES)*	1	<1
	CONSPIRACY(S)*	1	<1
	DYNAMITING(S)*	1	<1
	FACTIONAL FIGHTING*	1	<1
	FIRING	1	<1
	SHELLING	1	<1
	STABBING	1	<1

n = 224

**Denotes a descriptive characterization*

Table 6. MEDIA CHARACTERIZATIONS OF PERPETRATORS

Rank		Frequency	Percent of Total
1	TERRORIST(S)*	89	57
	DOMESTIC TERRORIST		
	INTERNATIONAL TERRORIST		
2	GUERRILLA(S)*	21	14
3	MILITANT(S)*	15	10
4	GUNMAN(MEN)	7	5
5	BOMBER(S)	4	3
	POLITICAL EXTREMIST(S)*	4	3
6	FIGHTER(S)	3	2
7	KIDNAPPER(S)	2	2
	RIGHTIST(S)*	2	2
8	ATTACKER(S)	1	<1
	DEATH SQUAD*	1	<1
	POLITICAL PRISONER(S)*	1	<1
	REBEL(S)*	1	<1
	REVOLUTIONARY(S)*	1	<1
	SETTLER(S)*	1	<1
	SHOOTER(S)	1	<1
	ZEALOT(S)*	1	<1

n = 155

**Denotes a descriptive characterization*

Table 7. GOVERNMENT CHARACTERIZATIONS OF ACTS

Rank		Frequency	Percent of Total
1	TERRORISM* INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM NARCOTICS TERRORISM	18	50
2	ATTACK(S)	7	19
3	BOMBING(S)	4	11
4	SHOOTING(S)	2	6
	KILLING(S)	2	6
5	CRIME(S)*	1	<3
	MURDER(S)*	1	<3
	ROBBERY(S)	1	<3

n = 36

**Denotes a descriptive characterization*

Table 8. GOVERNMENT CHARACTERIZATIONS OF PERPETRATORS

Rank		Frequency	Percent of Total
1	TERRORIST(S)*	18	67
2	CRIMINAL(S)*	2	7
	EXTREMIST(S)*	2	7
	GUERRILLA(S)*	2	7
3	ATTACKER(S)	1	<4
	FUGITIVE(S)	1	<4
	GUNMAN(MEN)	1	<4

n = 27

**Denotes a descriptive characterization*

Table 9. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

	Frequency	Percent of Total
AUTHORITIES ONLY	40	45%
GROUP MEMBER / SUPPORTER ONLY	0	0
BOTH	46	52

n = 88

Table 10. USE OF VIOLENCE

	Frequency	Percent of Total
IN HEADLINE	36	41%
AS <i>PRIMARY</i> SUBJECT	51	58%
AS <i>SECONDARY</i> SUBJECT	34	39
<i>SINGLE ACT</i> REPORTED	15	17%
<i>TWO+ ACTS</i> REPORTED	2	2
<i>TREND</i> REPORTED	68	77
HISTORY	65	74%

Table 11. DISCUSSION OF TERRORIST'S CAUSE

	Frequency	Percent of Total
YES	20	23%
NO	68	77

n = 88

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