

***Patterns in the American News Coverage of the September 11
Attacks and Their Consequences***

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This paper was prepared for the Harvard Symposium “Restless Searchlight: Terrorism, the Media & Public Life,” co-sponsored by the APSA Political Communication Section and the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics, and Public Policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, held on August 28, 2002. The analysis is based upon data collected with support from the Institute for Social Research, the Russell Sage Foundation, and the Howard R. Marsh Center for the Study of Journalistic Performance in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Michigan. The analyses are the sole responsibility of the authors. We gratefully acknowledge the research assistance of Eric W. Groenendyk and Heather Colleen Schaar.

The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 were historic events that tested the ability of the American media to cover and explain to their audience what had happened and why. The number of dead in these attacks equaled the total number of deaths in all international incidents since 1988 (U.S. Department of State, 1989-2001). The attacks are certain to become the kind of event that is a historical marker for a generation of Americans, who will remember where they were and what they were doing when the attacks occurred (Mannheim, 1952; Schuman and Scott, 1989; Schuman, Belli, and Bischooping, 1997).

On the afternoon of September 11, an interdisciplinary team of researchers at the University of Michigan convened to decide whether and how they might contribute to an understanding of the impact of these events on American society. From this meeting, a longitudinal survey project, "How Americans Respond" (HAR), was started. To date, two waves of interviews with a national probability sample of Americans have been completed, and a third is underway. Over the summer, we initiated a set of complementary data collections, and this is the first report from a content analysis of the attacks looking at how media coverage of the events may have framed and structured citizens' reactions to and interpretation of these events.

Introduction

International relations specialists have studied the role of terrorism as a "challenge to sovereignty."¹ It involves violence by definition, but it may be caused by a number of factors including "structural conditions at the societal level, strategic calculations of groups as collective actors, and psychological causes at the level of the individual or group" (Crenshaw, 2000: 7). On the one hand, research suggests that terrorist events reflect cyclical behavior, and the number of terrorist events has been declining since 1994 (Enders and Sandler, 1999). At the same time, there has been a shift from ideological terrorism to fundamentalist terrorism that has resulted in an increased likelihood of fatalities (measured as whether a death occurs) and the suggestion that the number of fatalities would increase as well (Enders and Sadler, 2000 and 2002). The number of deaths in the World Trade Center attacks certainly bears out that trend.

Acts of terrorism do not require extensive media coverage to satisfy all of the goals and objectives of those who perpetrate them, but the media and media coverage can be "considered modern tools of terrorists" in that they can magnify the size of the audience for a terrorist act, and exposure to the result of terrorist activities can increase social and political concerns and anxiety about government members and institutions, often a goal of the group perpetrating the act (Picard, 1993:6).² A review of the media coverage of terrorism suggests that overseas activity (from the perspective of the American media) goes largely unreported, even in papers of record like the *New York Times* (Kelly and Mitchell, 1981). The coverage of terrorism during the 1970's and 80's in the *New York Times* and the *Times* of London occupied less than .5% the available space (Crelisten, 1987).

When coverage does occur, conventional media models of selection and prominence tend to explain the form it takes. The standard criteria of newsworthiness apply to the attractiveness of a news story about terrorism: timeliness, proximity, impact, conflict, sensationalism, and novelty. Because of this, studies have found few differences between news organizations covering the same events, even by format (Altheide, 1982; Atwater, 1987). But technological shifts in news production and the advent of cable television present opportunities for "real" coverage that have not been present in the past (Picard, 1993:93-94). Given the violent nature of terrorist actions, "deviance" has often been used as the term to describe the confluence of impact, conflict, sensationalism and novelty that makes them newsworthy (Shoemaker, Chang, and Brendlinger, 1987). The prominence of the coverage and its extensiveness and duration are related to the number of fatalities or injuries involved in an incident, especially of a proximate population.

Analyses of media coverage of foreign terrorist acts in the United States are virtually nonexistent because the number of acts has been very low. There have been more general analyses of the coverage of terrorism and terrorist acts in a comparative vein, employing different

data sources but most typically focusing on whether and how events get covered (Weiman and Brosius, 1991; Enders and Sandler, 2002). Again conforming to standard models of news making, coverage tends to focus on events and details, often from the perspective of the government under attack (Paletz, 1985). Picard (1988) describes a three-stage process of coverage of extended terrorist actions that begins with an initial emphasis on the details of the incident, lasting about two days, followed by an emphasis on government-initiated reports of how they are responding, with an eventual third phase in which background reporting may focus on "explaining" the event. In general, the coverage of motives, goals, or explanations gets short shrift. Paletz (1985) found that less than 6% of newspaper coverage was devoted to such explanations, and the vast majority of coverage (almost 75%) ignored causes or objectives. Atwater (1987) found that less than 3% of network television coverage was devoted to these kinds of explanations. Studies of the labeling of perpetrators with such terms as "guerillas," "terrorists," or "insurgents" suggests the selective use of such terms by journalists in ways that correspond to the interest of the government (Epstein, 1977).

All of these concerns about characteristic patterns of coverage are important because of assumptions about the impact of exposure to such news content. These effects could range from the formations of attitudes and opinion about those who perpetrated such acts and their cause, support for government policies in response to the acts, and personal reactions like anxiety and perceived threats to personal safety. In the typical instance of terrorism, the vast majority of individuals would not be exposed directly to events as they unfold but would receive their information through the media. A number of factors can explain how such information will be processed, including a person's level of education as a generalized ability to process and integrate it with currently stored information (Converse, 1964) and their level of political knowledge that can serve a similar function in helping to organize the new content (Price and Zaller, 1999). While a number of correlation studies suggest that exposure to violence in the media can induce anxiety, there is a growing set of experimental studies that indicate anxiety can be induced by exposure to terrorism (e.g., Slone, 2000).

Our own surveys show that those who are paying the most attention to media coverage are most likely to feel that their personal safety and security has been threatened by the September 11 attacks, and the panel nature of our study suggests that the direction of causality is from exposure to perception. What we do not know is how specific elements of coverage might affect related attitudes and behavior. One problem has been that there have been few systematic content analyses of the coverage, and the other is the need for appropriate survey data that measure relevant dependent variables.

In particular, we are interested in whether or not elements of the media coverage of September 11 are related to the ability of citizens to explain what happened on September 11. We had two interests: to what extent did the coverage provide information about explanations for the attacks? And would exposure to media content produce more complex answers to survey questions about why they occurred? Few Americans had any personal acquaintance with Muslim fundamentalists or had heard of Osama bin Laden, Al Qaeda, or even the Taliban before September 11. Yet the novelty and enormity of the event and the level of fatalities must have forced most citizens to try to explain why this happened. Past research suggests that there would be little in the content of the media coverage that would deal with explanations in depth, but would those who had higher levels of exposure be better able to use such information to construct a story to explain why the attacks took place? The utility of such information would have to be in addition to the value of such personal resources as education and political knowledge.

There has been limited systematic coding of the post-9/11 media content, although there have been some significant discussions of various aspects of it. These tended to come within a few weeks or months of the event and include a lengthy treatment in the *Nieman Reports* (2001) as well as commentary in the *Columbia Journalism Review* (2002) and the *American Journalism Review*. The coverage included commentary on the importance of a "watchdog" press (Giles, 2002) and the need to counter government's tendency toward secrecy (Bamford, 2002; Gup, 2002), the Americentric aspects of the coverage (Krimsky, 2002; Scherer, 2002), the potential for

a return to serious journalism after a period of increased attention to profit margins (Reider, 2002), and the role of regional papers (Lipton and Giuffo, 2002). There was even an article in the *New York Times* about the efforts of the news magazines to produce a quality project that summarized a week's events as their sales after September 11 increased initially by a factor of 10 (Kirkpatrick, 2001). What is missing from this is a look at the content of this coverage that explores its patterns and focus, with an eye toward how it affected audience measures. That is the focus of the analysis reported here.

Research Design

The analysis presented here is based upon two data collections – a national telephone survey about people's reactions to the events of September 11, 2001 and a content analysis of the national news stream coverage of the events. The survey, carried out as a project entitled "How Americans Respond" (HAR), was conducted in two waves. Data from the initial survey were collected first, from a national probability sample of the adult population of the United States residing in telephone households that was interviewed between September 17 and October 13, with the vast majority of the interviews completed by October 8.³ The interviews averaged 30 minutes in length, and they covered a number of topics, including economic attitudes and behavior, personal health, evaluations of groups in American society and overseas, reactions to the attacks, and support for a number of likely and possible government policies and responses. A total of 752 interviews were completed with a response for the survey of 59%.

A second wave of HAR was conducted between March 11 and April 16, based upon a recontact with all of the respondents from Wave 1 and including a small fresh cross-section sample. A total of 764 interviews were conducted, including 613 recontact interviews and 151 new RDD interviews, for a total sample size of 764. This was again a 30-minute interview, with about two-thirds of the content repeated from Wave 1 and about 10 minutes of new content added to the questionnaire.

Approximately half way through the Wave 1 questionnaire, respondents were asked about how they heard about the attacks, and then they were asked the following open-end question:

B16. People have different explanations for the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, DC. What do you think are the reasons for it?

The staff of DST coded a total of up to eight mentions. A complete listing of all of the code categories is contained in Appendix A. Three variables were derived from this measure: the total number of explanations offered, the number of explanations that could be classified as "means," and the number of explanations that could be classified as "motives," based upon a recoding of the original categories.

A second measure was the respondent's attention to news about the attacks, measured with the following question asked just before the one inquiring about their explanations:⁴

Q. B15. How closely have you been following the news about the recent terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C.? (Very closely, Somewhat closely, A little, Not closely at all)

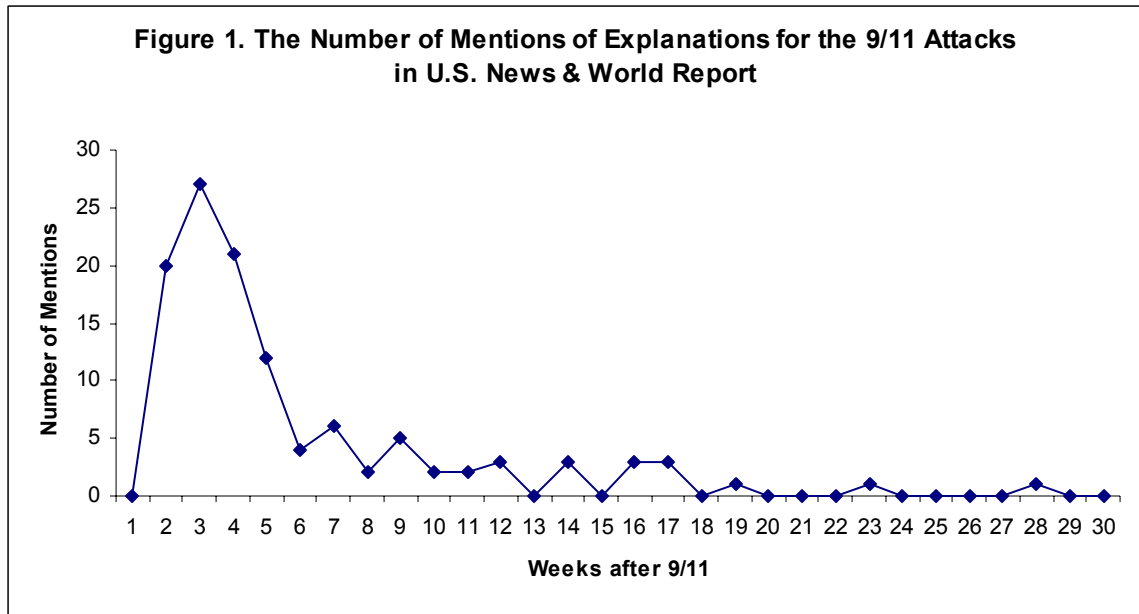
This question was repeated in Wave 2 of the study, approximately six months later. Other measures from the survey included a four-point Index of Political Knowledge, computed as the sum of the number of correct answers to three questions asking about the positions held by three relatively visible political figures.⁵ There was also a measure of each respondent's level of age, education, race, and gender.

The content analysis was conducted in June and July, 2002. The purpose was to construct a national time series of coverage of the attacks and their aftermath in a way that would correspond to the coding of the open-end question in each survey. Background information on two surrogates for the national news stream was collected. The first was all articles about the attacks on September 11 appearing on the front page of the *New York Times* between September 12 and April 17, covering the full period of the two waves of the survey. A total of 859

articles satisfying these criteria were identified through a microfilm search of the paper; they will eventually form the basis for an extended content analysis covering a number of themes, including the explanations for the attacks. As a start on this project, we also used all issues of *U.S. News & World Report* that appeared in this same time period. This involved 28 regular weekly issues as well as 2 special issues devoted to the attacks, for a total of 30 issues across this time period.⁶ Every article appearing in each issue was reviewed, although not every one of them contained a reason for the September 11 attacks. Each article was coded using the same coding scheme for “reasons for the attacks” that was applied to the survey data.⁷

Results

As expected based upon previous studies, across the entire period there was an initial surge in coverage that then tapered off. This included a significant amount of coverage in a special issue one month after the event. The same was true for coverage that contained references to possible explanations for the attacks. Many of the early articles contained some references to reasons for the attacks, but the number was not very great. And the number of reasons described dropped off rapidly, as shown in Figure 1; by the end of the first wave of HAR, the number of reasons was essentially zero. For the remainder of the analysis, we focus on the coverage in this early period.



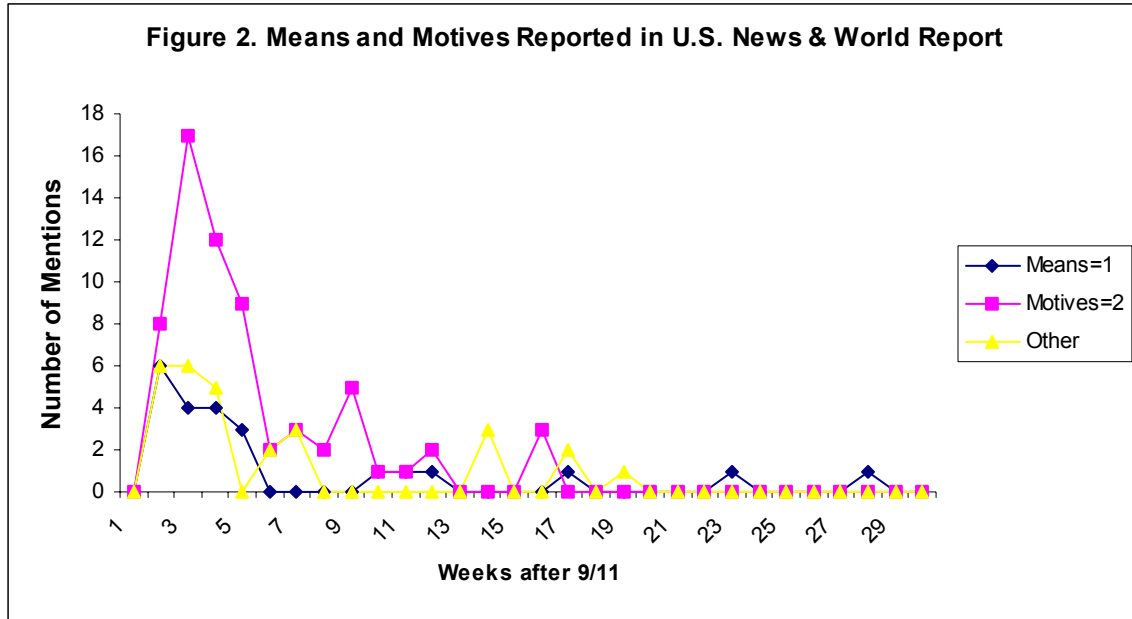
All told there were 47 articles that contained 94 different explanations.⁸ The most commonly cited explanation was “Osama bin laden,” representing 11% of all reasons and appearing in 21% of all articles. This was followed by descriptions of “U.S. intelligence failures” and “lack of security” (each with 7% of all mentions and appearing in 15% of the articles) and references to “terrorist groups” and the fact that “terrorists are sheltered in some places” (each with 6% of all mentions and appearing in 13% of all articles). No other explanation received more than 4% of the mentions, and as a result the explanations were combined into the major categories used in the coding scheme. Data are presented in Table 1 that reflect the distribution of reasons given in the coverage in this period.

Table 1. The Occurrence of Explanations in the First Month's Coverage of September 11 in U.S. News and World Report

<u>Category</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Mentions</u> % of	<u>Articles</u> % of
U.S. International Policies	4	4.4	8.4
Policies of Other Countries	8	8.6	17.0
Religious Issues	11	11.8	23.4
Differences between "Us" and "Them"	1	1.1	2.1
Perceived Problems with the U.S.	4	4.2	8.6
Aspects of Human Nature	1	1.1	2.1
Aspects of Terrorists	12	12.8	25.5
Terrorist Individuals or Groups (Osama bin Laden)	18	19.1	38.4
Hatred, Enmity, Interest in Inflicting damage	15	16.1	34.0
National Security Threats	19	20.2	40.4
Other	1	1.1	2.1
Total responses	94	100.0	200.0

These data present only a slightly different picture of the explanations, but they do reflect the tendency of the media to focus on groups and individual leaders rather than root causes, including failures of the government. The largest set of responses had to do with security failures and inadequacy (appearing in 40% of the articles and 20% of the mentions). This was followed by a focus on Osama bin Laden and terrorist groups (38% and 19% respectively) and the motivational basis for the attacks involving hatred and enmity (34% and 16% respectively).

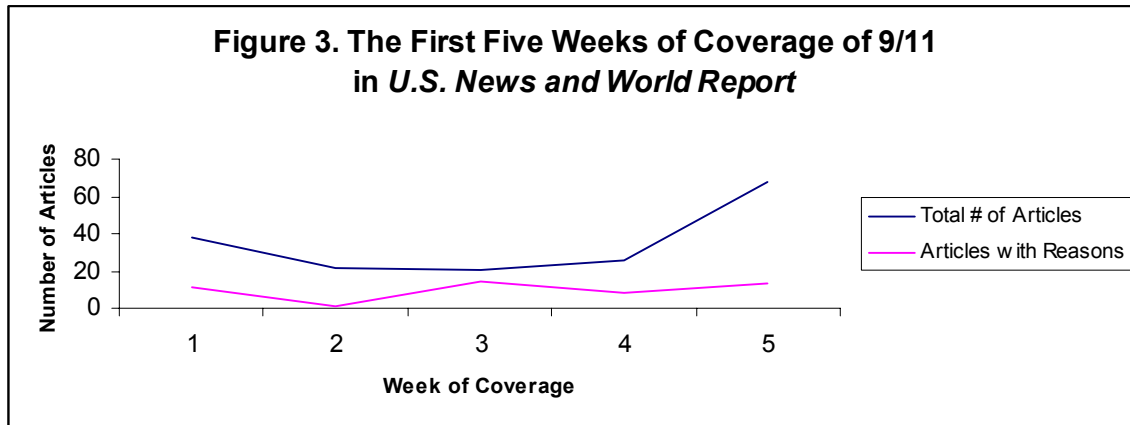
In an attempt to reflect broader categories of explanations, the codes were collapsed into two groups to reflect "means" of perpetrating the attacks, including U.S. intelligence failures, and "motives" for the attacks, as well as a residual group of "other" explanations. The distribution of these explanation categories across the full set of articles (28 weeks) is presented in Figure 2. This shows quite clearly the number of explanations was focused on the early period and the emphasis was consistently on motives more than means. Both series reflect the same pattern of decay over time.



Based upon these observations about the content of the coverage overall and in the early period, we decided to test two hypotheses about the impact of coverage on citizens' explanations for the attacks. In the panel portion of our study, there were 613 respondents who were interviewed right after the September attacks, during the period when the majority of coverage and explanations in the coverage were present, and then again six months later. We were interested in the contribution that attention to the media would make to the total number of explanations that the survey respondents offered in Wave 1 and Wave 2, used as a measure of the complexity of their views of the event. The ability of citizens to produce these assessments should be a function of their education and political knowledge, reflecting their general ability to process this kind of information and in the context of their stored information about politics. However, in addition to this, we expected that their attention to news about the attacks would be an additional explanatory factor. Furthermore, the date of their interview should also contribute to such an explanation because the further the interview occurred from the event, the more coverage they would have been exposed to.⁹ Since the amount of coverage tapered off significantly by the time of the second interview, the personal characteristics should still have some explanatory power but attention to the media and time of the first interview should no longer be important.

During the field period for Wave1 of HAR, there were six issues of *U.S. News & World Report* that were published that contained a total of 175 articles that included a reference to September 11, for an average of 29.1 articles per issue. The distribution of articles referring to September 11 and those that contained explanations for the attacks is shown in Figure 3. In the one-month anniversary issue, however, there were 68 articles or 39% of the total. The number of articles that contained information about the reasons for the attacks ranged from 1 to 14, and the proportion of articles that contained a reason ranged from 5% to 67%.

As expected, there was a relationship between the number of explanations offered in the first interview and the second ($r = .372$), but it was not extremely strong. On average, respondents offered about the same number of reasons in their first interview (1.86, s.d. = 1.17) as they did in their second (1.67, s.d. = 1.49). The key question is what variables explain the number of explanations offered and whether they differ at Wave 2 from Wave 1 in predicted ways.



Data are presented in Table 2 that contain the results from a regression on the total number of explanations for the attacks offered by the respondents in HAR Wave 1. This model has an R of .272 and an adjusted R² of .061. In this model, the significant predictors among the respondents' personal characteristics are education (B = .066, s.e. = .022) and political knowledge (B = .041, s.e. = .055). The date of interview (PERIOD) is also statistically significant (B = .205, s.e. = .051). Attention to the news about the attacks almost reaches the standard level of statistical significance (B = .152 corrected for sign, s.e. = .081). Individuals who are well educated and attuned to politics produce more explanations for the attacks. Taking that into account, those who were interviewed later in the field period also provide more explanations, as well as those who followed the news more closely.

Table 2. The Regression of Personal Characteristics, Attention to the News, and Date of Interview on the Number of Explanations Offered for the September 11 Attacks in the Next Month.

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.509	.445		1.143	.254
	B15. HOW CLOSELY FOLLOW NEWS	-.152	.081	-.079	-1.878	.061
	C47.RACE ORIGIN	-6.20E-02	.055	-.047	-1.126	.261
	EDUCATION: HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED	6.602E-02	.022	.130	3.019	.003
	AGE OF RESPONDENT	2.192E-03	.003	.028	.637	.524
	KNOW	.141	.055	.119	2.545	.011
	PERIOD	.205	.051	.167	4.053	.000
	SEX OF RESPONDENT	-2.25E-03	.108	-.001	-.021	.983
	INCOME SUMMARY	5.305E-04	.002	.012	.281	.779

a. Dependent Variable: TOTALS

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.272 ^a	.074	.061	1.2713

a. Predictors: (Constant), INCOME SUMMARY, KNOW, C47.RACE ORIGIN, PERIOD, SEX OF RESPONDENT, B15. HOW CLOSELY FOLLOW NEWS, EDUCATION: HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED, AGE OF RESPONDENT

Follow news about terrorist attacks: 1=Very closely, 2=Somewhat closely, 3=A little, 4=Not closely at all

Race: 1=White, not Hispanic, 2=Black or African American, not Hispanic, 3=Hispanic, 4=American Indian, 5=Asian or Pacific Islander

Education: A nominal variable indicating years of schooling with 17 the highest value, indicating graduate study

Age: An interval variable measured in years

Political Knowledge: A four-point scale ranging from 0 to 3, indicating the number of correct answers to three identification questions

Period: An indicator of the week in which the interview took place, measured from the start of the field period

Sex of Respondent: 1=Male, 2=Female

Income Summary: An ordinal variable with 22 categories.

When this same group of individuals was interviewed approximately six months later, the overall predictive power of the model increased slightly ($R = .354$, adjusted $R^2 = .113$). Education remained the most important personal characteristic related to the number of explanations offered ($B = .120$, $s.e. = .022$). In this model, race (being white) was also a significant predictor ($B = -.237$, $s.e. = .057$). Political knowledge did not achieve the standard level of significance in this model, nor did attention to the news about the attacks six months earlier or the date of the first interview. The effects of media exposure at the time of the first interview no longer contributed to the explanation of the number of explanations offered, as expected.

Table 3. The Regression of Personal Characteristics, Attention to the News, and Date of Interview on the Number of Explanations Offered for the September 11 Attacks Six Months Later.

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.693	.458		1.514	.131
	B15. HOW CLOSELY FOLLOW NEWS	-.140	.083	-.069	-1.683	.093
	C47.RACE ORIGIN	-.237	.057	-.169	-4.181	.000
	EDUCATION: HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED	.120	.022	.223	5.328	.000
	AGE OF RESPONDENT	2.665E-03	.004	.032	.754	.451
	KNOW	9.902E-02	.057	.079	1.744	.082
	PERIOD	6.284E-02	.052	.049	1.209	.227
	SEX OF RESPONDENT	-.124	.112	-.045	-1.112	.266
	INCOME SUMMARY	1.305E-03	.002	.027	.673	.501

a. Dependent Variable: REASONS

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.354 ^a	.125	.113	1.3069

a. Predictors: (Constant), INCOME SUMMARY, KNOW, C47.RACE ORIGIN, PERIOD, SEX OF RESPONDENT, B15. HOW CLOSELY FOLLOW NEWS, EDUCATION: HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED, AGE OF RESPONDENT

Conclusions

The analysis presented here took two forms. First, a review of the coverage of the attacks on September 11 suggests that it generally conforms to expectations about its volume, as well as its focus. Elements of the coverage resemble Picard's developmental sequence, but generally the explanatory element of the coverage disappeared quickly. This conforms to Paletz's and Atwater's observations about the general behavior of the press in covering terrorism overseas, with an emphasis on government perspectives and points of view. In general, the deviance model and elements of selection explain these patterns well.

The analysis also looked at the impact of attention to the news on explanations for the attacks. While individual factors like education can explain the ability of individuals to form complex views of the world, as indicated by the number of explanations offered in response to a survey question, attention to the news and perhaps the volume of coverage a person is exposed to also play a role.

The relationship between these two findings lies in an investigation of the details of the content and the explanations, an analysis that needs to be conducted. If one of the roles of the press is to create a more informed citizenry but news organizations do not produce content that informs citizens about the underlying causes of events, then citizens are not being well served. At a time when Americans feel threatened and less safe and secure, understanding more about the causes of terrorism might influence their support for a variety of new government policies to combat it.

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APPENDIX A: Coding Scheme for Reasons for the September 11 Attacks

B16. REASONS FOR ATTACK

People have different explanations for the terrorist attacks on New York Washington, DC. What do you think are the reasons for it?

U.S. INTERNATIONAL POLICIES

101. **U.S. support for Israel**
102. **U.S. does not support Palestinians**
103. U.S. intervention in the Persian Gulf; Gulf War; Liberation of Kuwait; Desert Storm
104. Interference by U.S.; “stuck our nose in their business”
105. Iran; our support of the Shah; our actions in Iran
106. Libya; the bombing of Libya
107. Presence of U.S. in Middle East – n.e.c.
108. U.S. doesn’t support them / opposes them / supports their enemies
109. U.S. foreign policy – NFS
110. U. S. involvement in Middle East conflicts (Nothing further specified - n. f. s.)
111. We didn’t do anything when terrorism happened in other countries
112. Afghanistan; what we did in Afghanistan; the plight of the Afghanis
113. Arab countries (in general); our trade restrictions / treatment of Arab countries
114. Iraq; starvation due to U.S. sanctions against Iraq
115. Israel (exc. 101); dislike or hatred of Israel or the Israelis; “Israeli conflict”
116. Palestine (exc. 102); the Palestinians / West Bank; “Palestinian conflict”
117. Saudi Arabia; our troops in Saudi Arabia; infidels in Mecca or other holy places
118. U.S. support of anti-Islamic causes – n.f.s.
119. President Bush’s policies – n.f.s.
120. Camp David accords; Middle East peace efforts
121. Oil: big business; economic exploitation (overseas activities)
122. U.S. is too nice; sacrifice our self-interest for other countries
123. Indecision; inability of U.S. to carry policies to conclusion

CODE UP TO 8
MENTIONS, IN
ORDER OF
MENTION

POLICIES OF OTHER COUNTRIES

151. **Terrorists are sheltered in some countries**
152. They blame the U.S. for their problems / lack of power / bad governments; U.S. is a scapegoat for problems in terrorists’ own countries
153. Oppression; oppressive states / governments / regimes

RELIGIOUS ISSUES

201. **Conflict between Islam or Muslims and Christianity**
202. **God’s will; biblical prophecy; Bible fulfilling itself;** sign or warning from God
203. Religious war – specific mention; Jihad
204. Religious zealotry; religious fanatics
205. They are against Christians / Christian nations
206. They are against the Jews; dislike / hatred of Jews; our helping the Jews
208. They don’t know Jesus; have not been saved / are not Christians
209. Muslim beliefs; “Islam” – n.f.s.
210. They are spiritually blinded; misinterpret scripture / the Koran
211. They use religion as a mask; use Islam to achieve their goals
219. “Religion” or “religious” n.f.s; religious beliefs / religious reasons – n.f.s

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN U.S. AND “THEM” (no mention of religion)

251. Beliefs; views; they don’t believe in what we believe in
252. Cultural differences; “culture” – n.f.s.

- 253. Economic differences or “economics” – n.f.s.
- 254. Inequality; inequities; poverty; they don’t have anything; “the haves and the have nots”
- 255. They are against freedom / our freedoms

PERCEIVED PROBLEMS WITH THE U.S.

- 301. Belief that the U.S. is bad; Americans are harmful
- 302. Capitalism; hostility towards (U.S.) capitalism; the World Trade Center as a symbol of capitalism; want to destroy banks / stocks / big business / economy; create economic instability in U.S.; want to destroy U.S. financial system
- 303. U.S. seen as decadent / immoral; want to protect themselves from our immorality
- 304. U.S. seen as arrogant, pushy; U.S. wants its own way
- 305. We gave them reasons to do things to us / incentives to attack us – n.f.s

LACK OF UNDERSTANDING

- 351. Cultural ignorance; ignorance of other cultures / ways of life
- 352. Our leaders are naïve / don’t understand the world / don’t know what to do
- 353. They have misguided views of our government, our country, or Americans; they are brainwashed, deluded; they need to grow up/act like civilized human beings
- 354. Need (to pray) for love / peace / understanding
- 355. Intolerance; intolerance of other cultures / ways of life; hatred of diversity
- 356. Culture of violence; been fighting for 2000 years; feuding for centuries

CONTROL / POWER

- 401. Our leaders can’t do anything / have no control over it
- 402. They wanted to make a statement against America / the U.S.; they wanted to prove that they could do it; wanted to show they were equal to or stronger than America

ASPECTS OF HUMAN NATURE

- 451. **It’s human nature**
- 452. Greed – n.f.s
- 453. Nationalism – n.f.s
- 454. Prejudice – n.f.s
- 455. Racism – n.f.s
- 456. Politics, politicians; socio-political reasons, n.f.s.
- 457. Sin / evil in the world; homosexuality; atheism; abortion; “man is evil”

ASPECTS OF TERRORISTS

- 501. **It’s a few crazy people; they’re lunatics / mentally ill**
- 502. Terrorists are evil or satanic
- 503. Fanaticism; a bunch of fanatics; they are radicals; place no value on human life; willing to die for their beliefs; will become martyrs for their cause
- 504. They are just murderers / killers
- 505. “ “ bad; like to create trouble
- 506. “ “ cowards
- 507. “ “ ignorant, stupid, ”bunch of dummies”
- 508. “ “ unreasonable
- 509. They weren’t raised right / bad upbringing / bad family background
- 510. They are unhappy / miserable people; can’t stand anyone being happy
- 511. Self-righteous; feel favored by God; see themselves doing His will

TERRORIST INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS

- 551. **Osama bin Laden**
- 552. Taliban; the Taliban faction
- 553. Terrorist groups; terrorist organizations or networks; extremists, extremist groups, or hate groups

554. Saddam Hussein

REVENGE

601. They want revenge

602. The trial / sentencing of the bomber

HATRED; TERRORISM; INFLICTION OF DAMAGE; ENEMIES

651. Dislike / hatred / jealousy / anger towards the U.S. or Americans (non-economic reasons); jealous or envious of our power / way of life / freedoms; “they are our enemy”; dislike Western culture or civilization

652. Terrorism; general mention of terrorism or acts of terrorism; “to create terror” – n.f.s; they want to scare us, make us afraid, destroy our confidence

653. Want to create political instability in U.S.; cripple our government; “they want to damage our country”

655. They think we are their enemy

656. They want to get rid of us / destroy us / kill us

657. They think we want to get rid of them / destroy them / kill them

658. They want to destroy our way of life – n.f.s.

659. They think we want to destroy their way of life – n.f.s

660. They wanted to start a war; wanted to declare war on U.S.

661. Want to destroy world trade / international economy;

662. Want to take over the world / become the superpower

663. Want to end the world / destroy everything

NATIONAL SECURITY THREATS

701. U.S. intelligence failure; ignored threats; didn’t take warnings seriously; complacency; too comfortable; “asleep at the wheel”

702. U.S. has an open society; have open borders; “we’re vulnerable”

703. Lack of security; have loose airport security; poor or no security

704. Immigration problems; don’t investigate, regulate, or keep track of immigrants

705. Drug problems; heroin / opium issues; “the Golden Triangle”

706. Technology; technological threats from terrorism; nuclear proliferation; nuclear, chemical or biological weapons; Internet virus / attack

OTHER

996. None/nothing/not any/no

997. Other

998. DK; can’t say; “no one knows”

999. NA; refused

000. Inap, no further mention; no answer in B16

Endnotes:

¹ See Crenshaw (2000) for a review of these approaches.

² The intended effects of such actions may vary for different audiences, as well. Action against a regime or government may be designed to strike fear at the same time that widespread publicity elsewhere may build support for a terrorist group and its followers. The focus here is on the coverage of events in the United States and how they affected U.S. citizens; a study of the coverage in outlets like Al Jazeera would have a very different focus.

³ These data were collected with the support from internal funds at the Institute for Social Research. The study was designed by a group of 11 principal investigators from the Center for Political Studies, the Survey Research Center, and the Research Center for Group Dynamics. The Division of Surveys and Technology at the Survey Research Center supervised the data collection.

⁴ In this form, the variable produces a negative sign when more attention is related to another variable.

⁵ The exact question wording was:

Now we have a set of questions concerning various public figures. We want to see how information about them gets out to the public from television, newspapers, and the like. The first name is Trent Lott. What job or political office does he hold?

The other individuals were William Rehnquist and Tony Blair. The number of correct answers was summed to form a four-point index with values ranging from 0 to 3.

⁶ This includes special issues on September 14 and October 12. The issue of October 15 was their long-planned "college guide" issue and contained almost no news content; as a result, it was dropped from the analysis since there was a special issue produced three days earlier on the one-month anniversary of the event.

⁷ Heather Schaar and Eric Groenendyk completed this coding. A comparison of their coding of a sample of the articles produced a 91% agreement in categories.

⁸ The coding does not account for how lengthy an explanation was or how much prominence it received; it only recorded whether a particular explanation was offered. This is a gross measure of topical coverage (any mention at all) rather than a more proportionate measure (% of the article in column-inches devoted to explanations).

⁹ This variable was an ordinal coding of the week in which the interview took place after the starting date of the fieldwork. Its values ranged from 1 to 5.