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Socially Constructed Journalism and Lone Wolf Terrorists - A New York City Experience

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Abstract

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Experience

by

Adrienne Pascal

MS, John Jay College, 2010

BS, Long Island University, 1992

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Journalistic reporting normalized radical lone wolf terrorist activities compromising

public and national safety. The purpose of this research was to explore news reports of

four radical lone wolf events that occurred in New York City (NYC) between 2010 and

2017 to identify political slant toward societal normalization of radical lone wolf

behavior. The framework of this phenomenological study was Borum's four-stage

pathway mindset model of terrorism combined with Berger and Luckmann's social

construction theory. The central research question addressed how socially constructed

journalism stories of lone wolf terrorist events in NYC aligned with liberal to

conservative political newsprint continuums. Data were extrapolated from four liberal to

conservative NYC news outlets. Using NVivo v.12 Plus data analysis software to conduct

a thematic content analysis, the journalistic life of the associated event and isolated

normalizing patterns led to a determination that all four news outlets contributed to

societal construction using sensationalizing terror tactics swayed toward the outlet's

established political slant. Public policy addressing journalistic accountability

considering neutrally aligned fact-based holistic reporting of terroristic events would

critically support emergency first responders and the public to develop informed

decisions, preparations, and actions. The resulting positive social change could improve

communication between the public and enforcement personnel, enhance social awareness

about lone wolf activity, enhance counter terrorism operations, and illuminate news

reporting's political nature.

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Dedication

I would like to thank my Lord and Savior for carrying me through this process when I thought I could not take another step towards completing this goal. Also, to my family and friends for their undying support through this challenging process. I do not think I could have made it without your support and encouragement. I would also like to thank my dear friend, Dr. Angela Mai, for her kind words and help throughout this doctoral process.

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I would like to acknowledge my committee. I could not have made it this far without the guidance and support of my chair Dr. Donald R. McLellan. Thank you so much for encouraging me to move "onward" and stay on track to pursue this endeavor. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Steven A. Matarelli, my methodologist; I am deeply grateful and indebted for his patience and enlightenment when I had feelings of despair. A big thank you to both of you for helping me through this process.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Sensational or slanted, journalism may be normalizing lone wolf terrorism through the social construction of radical lone wolf events resulting in societal normalization of preemptive warning signals. A lone wolf is indicative of a single self-radicalized individual acting on their own volition (further explained in Chapter 2). Through this study, I created greater insight into whether social construction was present when journalists reported four specific radical lone wolf terrorist events (further explained in Chapter 2). Lone wolf terrorist threats included events such as suicide bombings and mass shootings. Understanding the part that journalism played in normalizing lone wolf terrorist markings is vital to public policy addressing the threats that lone wolf terrorists pose against society. Thus, society and policymakers must understand the fundamental ideas defining and understanding radical lone wolf terrorist activity to prevent the normalization of that activity.

Through this study, I delved into current journalistic reports disseminated to the public and analyzed the ideology, behavior patterns, and socially developed constructs to understand better normalized social beliefs about radical lone wolf terrorist behavior. My findings may help recognize and thwart lone wolf terrorist behavior and facilitate accurate reporting of suspicious behaviors to the proper authorities. By studying the social constructs in journalistic reporting of lone wolf terrorism, improvement in active awareness may foster a society-driven system towards deterrence. United States citizens rely on the government and its law enforcement personnel for protection. Providing education and accurate information about lone wolf terrorists helps society and local

communities develop a comprehensive understanding of how and why lone wolves operate.

Understanding lone wolf behaviors and the normalization of such supports a structured, organized plan to eradicate lone wolves from society. According to Sun Tzu (ca. 512 BCE/2003) in *The Art of War*, "to defeat our enemy, we must understand our enemy" (p. 11). Therefore, I dissected behavioral-related social norms and applied social constructions within publicly reported news stories to identify normalizing political slants about radical lone wolf terrorist attacks through my in-depth topic-related literature review. Thus, I evaluated social journalism reporting founding for a community's response to and normalization of radical lone wolf terrorist events.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the research study. The chapter explains the study's importance, the ontology of the study, and a summary of the research epistemology. Chapter 1 includes: (a) the background, (b) problem statement, (c) purpose of the study, (d) research question, (e) theoretical framework, (f) nature of the study, (g) definitions, (h) scope and delimitations, (i) limitations, (j) significance of the study, and (k) summary.

Background

A representative summary of the literature that I obtained regarding lone wolf terrorism supported and clarified the importance of conducting this study. Brooks (2011) provided a deeper understanding of the development of radical lone wolf terrorist behavior by analyzing prior case studies and historical literature. Brooks identified that only a tiny minority of Muslim American people became terrorists and stressed that the

problem lies with foreseeing when people turn to violence. Brooks's findings supported

the importance of conducting my study. Ferguson and Binks (2015) analyzed staircase

models showing links between the religious conversion process and the radicalization

process, thus offering insight into radicalization. Ferguson and Binks's findings provided

an additional foundation for understanding radicalization and communication in the lone

wolf developmental processes.

Logically, insight gleaned from dissecting communication activities, and

radicalization strategies enhance U.S. counter terrorism goals. Hanle (2007) advocated

the process, echoing the importance of understanding Al-Qaeda as an enemy and

associated lone wolf terrorists. Hanle reiterated Sun Tzu's (ca. 512 BCE/2003)

admonition, "to defeat an enemy; we must know our enemy as well as he knows himself"

(p. 11). Hanle stated that the U.S. Department of Defense and Homeland Security

continue struggling to understand enemies and prepare effective strategies to defeat them.

Hanle's comments and findings fueled the importance of defining who and what

composes the enemy. Hanle emphasized the importance of recognizing a radical lone

wolf terrorist for U.S. National Security agencies. Additionally, Hanle's analysis,

definition, and validity reinforced the importance of defining the enemy (radical lone

wolf terrorists) and, thus, the significance of my study. Hanle's findings also provided

direction and definition for a lone wolf community preparedness strategy. McCauley and

Moskalenko (2014) found that Al-Qaeda and other major terrorist networks worldwide

provided a new concern about lone wolf terrorism. McCauley and Moskalenko found that

a relevant problem existed, which aligned with Simon's (2001) results. Simon posited

that lone wolf terrorism could not wholly be eradicated or defeated. Simon mentioned "a myth of invulnerability" within the United States, which is detrimental to developing a strategic response towards lone wolf terrorist attackers (p. 13). Based on these scholarly findings, cause for concern exists.

The findings of Brooks (2011), Ferguson and Binks (2015), Hanle (2018), and McCauley and Moskalenko (2014) established that a radical lone wolf terrorist problem exists in the United States. Jenkins (2003) offered that the concept of terrorist attacks was due, in part, to social and political-based bureaucratic necessities and media structures. Therefore, through my study, I explored information reported in four popularly read New York City (NYC) news outlets to examine journalistic reporting and content influencing a societal construct of lone wolf terrorism normalization.

The Gap in the Literature

The gap in knowledge lies in explaining how the liberal to conservative political slant impacts the newsprint journalistic reporting of radical lone wolf events leading to the normalization of those terrorist activities. Journalists tend to provide their opinions and views about events but often slant or omit details, which is a commonly accepted phenomenon. Thus, the essential data critical to communicating valid societal issues about lone wolf terrorism become obscured by normalizing journalism; however, there was no existing literature exploring this phenomenon.

Why the Study is Needed

This study was needed to understand how journalists report radical lone wolf events leading to the normalization of terrorist activities. Additionally, the study was

necessary to probe how journalistic political slants might be impacting the communication of terrorist events to the NYC populace. By exposing the normalizing trends of associated journalistic reporting, insight from my findings can improve public communication and safety. Through this research, I explored whether journalists reported stories that drive a societal construct leading to lone wolf terrorism normalization and a discrepancy in communication. In addition, I probed through digital newsprint papers in NYC to review reports about four specific events and whether those papers were politically slanting their reports about lone wolf events, leading to the normalization of terrorist activities.

Problem Statement

There is a problem wherein journalistic normalizing of terrorist behavior allows terrorism to continue and become worse. Journalistic reporting affects policy and enforcement strategies, which impact how lone wolf terrorist events are communicated to address terrorism through public identification of terrorist activities. If reports are slanted or missing data, community safety is threatened. This problem affects society and the way that lone wolf terrorists attack communities. Despite law enforcement efforts, officers throughout the United States are criticized by media reports related to the identification and actions of lone wolf activity before attacks occur. However, if investigative clues are misreported, obfuscated, or misinterpreted, enforcement officers cannot be adequately trained to recognize and deal with a self-radicalizing individual brought to their attention by citizens. Journalistic reporting may be painting an image of lone wolf persons that influences the normalization of the terrorists' negative social

constructions of reality. I closely investigated these social constructions and journalistic influences on the public's normalization of selected radicalized lone wolf terrorist events reported across four popular NYC news outlets with a different yet overlapping political readership base.

Evidence of Consensus Considering Current Literature

The key points regarding gender and rhetoric discussed by Gonzalez et al. (2014), Hewitt (2014), Michael (2012), Miller (2013), and Neumann (2013) inferred that the format of lone wolf attacks is distinguishable by gender, race, and ideology. Pearson (2015) estimated that 60 British women and girls left the United Kingdom to join the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) by March 2015. According to Gonzalez et al., there were fewer women involved in terrorism than men. However, that statement did not mean that women were not involved. For example, Pearson demonstrated that Roshonara Choudhry's indoctrination took place via the internet. Pearson noted that Choudhry stabbed a member of Parliament in Britain after watching YouTube videos of Anwar Al Awlaki (the radical Muslim cleric). Pearson discussed the rise of female radicalization and noted rising concerns regarding female radicalization on the internet. Although Pearson's study identified female radicalization and activity in the U.K., other scholars reported similar radicalization in the United States. Gonzalez et al.'s research involving homegrown terrorism demonstrated that women's involvement differs by ideology and crime type. However, Gonzalez et al. also did not find any lone wolf terrorist women.

I found evidence that media reports significantly influence radicalization. Gonzalez et al. (2014) theorized that the radicalization of lone wolf terrorists takes place

through radical rhetoric and communication. I share Bamford's (2015) inference that using technological methods (i.e., the internet) increased self-radicalization potential. According to Bamford (2015), publications, such as *Inspire Magazine*, available on the internet, guide building crude bombs in kitchens using common chemicals and cooking items. However, Neumann (2013) noted that the technological phenomenon altered both sides of the counterterrorism equation in recent years. Neumann indicated that technical communication was a growing problem for law enforcement agencies to counter the radicalization of lone wolf terrorists. Looking at how the developmental phases of radical lone wolf terrorism correlate with the social construction of terrorism supports developing more effective deterrence strategies.

While deterrence is helpful if the terrorist network is part of a unified group, this application may not apply to lone wolf terrorists (Miller, 2013). However, Michael (2012) argued that comprehensive strategies must be developed as an increasing number of soft targets (see the Definitions Section in Chapter 1) augment the likelihood of a probable attack. Michael's findings were critical to maintaining a sound strategic approach to countering lone wolf terrorists. Hewitt (2014) reported that, in both the United States and Europe, there was a large and growing number of angry Jihadists and White Nationalists using various media to reach individuals and groups vulnerable to radicalization influence. Furthermore, Hewitt anticipated a future increase in lone wolf terrorism.

The Gap in Current Literature

Throughout my literature review, I found no data relating to journalism and the normalization of terrorism in social construction; thus, current law enforcement personnel training lacks a critical component. This gap in current literature indicated that further research needed to be conducted to understand better the different variables surrounding the rhetoric used and the development of radical lone wolf attackers. This study, investigating key points involving literary reporting and communication, can improve community preparedness resulting in minimizing the collateral damage that radical lone wolf terrorist attackers pose to society. Based on that lack of current literature, there was a gap in understanding and little information present. Thus, I examined the social construction of radical lone wolf terrorism and began closing that information gap by probing these areas and examining ways to expose some of these issues.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my study was to qualitatively identify and analyze how social construction in journalistic reporting was normalizing radical lone wolf terrorism with potential variations in reporting content based on journalistic styles. I accomplished this by coding themes and patterns in journalistic reporting associated with four popular NYC-based daily news outlets. According to Hewitt (2014), the United States anticipated an increased number of lone wolf terrorist attacks, indicating that radical lone wolf terrorism was a growing problem. I analyzed and identified how the social construction of radical lone wolf terrorism was presented in one major U.S. metropolitan city along a continuum of journalistic reporting in liberal to conservative label news outlets. These

data were necessary to policymakers and enforcement trainers to evaluate approaches needed to inform the populace and training personnel about radical lone wolf terrorism. This understanding aids in evaluating positive and negative societal impacts to create practical social change tools to identify a self-radicalizing person.

Research Question

I phrased the central research question to gain further knowledge about radical lone wolf terrorism reporting. The question was exploratory and developed to generate a supposition for exploration through qualitative methods like methods discussed by Simon (2013). My objective was to dissect published and printed local NYC digital news outlets and assess the methods used to report radical lone wolf attacks. Patton (2002) believed that experience understanding includes attention to perceptions and meanings awakening conscious awareness. These components impact societies' social construction.

Central Research Question: How are socially constructed journalism stories of lone wolf terrorist events in NYC aligning with liberal to conservative political newsprint continuums?

Theoretical Framework

I based the framework for this study on Borum's (2012a) four-stage pathway mindset model of terrorism. I used Borum's model to understand better the radicalization process in conjunction with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of social construction. To help understand the radicalization process, I analyzed data on individual self-radicalization as a foundation of ideas concerning the radicalization process and its impact, specifically on radical lone wolf activity. Borum's four-stage radicalization

model was previously used in content analysis about lone wolf terroristic attacks. My research followed a similar content analysis about four NYC news outlets portraying lone wolf terroristic attacks and terrorists.

Borum's Four-Stage Pathway Mindset Model of Terrorism

Prior research illustrated that some form of radicalization takes place within lone wolves before an enacted terroristic behavior (Borum, 2012a; Brooks, 2011; Ferguson & Binks, 2015; Gonzalez et al., 2014; Hanle, 20018; Hewitt, 2014; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2014; Michael, 2012; Miller, 2013; Neumann, 2013). However, as Borum emphasized, it is essential to remember that an individual's self-radicalization does not necessarily mean that a lone wolf attack is imminent. Borum discussed and developed the four-stage pathway mindset model of terrorism from several fundamental theories to the lone wolf radicalization process. Thus, Borum's pathway model served as a qualifying definition for lone wolf radicalization, a thematic analysis framework, and an interpretive lens for this study. Hafez (2015) stated, "Porter and Kebbell define radicalization as the process by which individuals or groups change their beliefs, adopt an extremist viewpoint, and advocate or practice violence to achieve their goals" (p. 961). This theory was critical to my study because it provided a better interpretive outlook on how individuals move from pre-radicalization to radicalization.

Major Theoretical Assumptions of Borum's Model

Borum's (2012a) model consists of four stages and justifies the order in which each stage functions and eventually leads to the effects of radicalization (King & Taylor, 2011). Borum based the model on the premise that individuals rationalize and justify their

terrorist acts after radicalization. King and Taylor offered a clear presentation of Borum's model:

- Stage 1 – The grievance stage is when the individual criticizes their social condition and environment as uninviting.

- Stage 2 – During the injustice stage, the individual equates their social condition to more necessary and specific unjust environments and determines their disparity as dishonest and undeserved.

- Stage 3 – The target attribution stage occurs once a group, or individual in the case of lone wolf radicalization, has been under fire as socially accountable and responsible for a given situation, and they are maligned and dehumanized. Labeling as anti-social, an outcast, or undesirable begins to be normalized in societies' perceptions of these individuals or groups.

- Stage 4 – The distancing/devaluation stage occurs when negative stereotypes are created about the group or individual in the case of lone wolves, and these stereotypes are applied and socialized to and about these outgroup members.

Borum posited that some reasons for conversion, in the form of self or group radicalization, were connected to forms of religious influence or conversion or had a psychopathological basis for a conversion manifestation. Borum believed that participation was often tied to individual defects or trauma and was a leading cause of an individual's conversion. Borum also highlighted the strain theory (AKA, the social movement theory) as an interpretive lens advancing lone wolf conversion by implying a connection to society's failures. Some examples include being unable to advance one's

life position, being unsuccessful, being unable to operate within society norms, or having adverse life events.

How Borum's Model Relates to This Study

With this study, I identified areas of feature story reporting across liberal and conservative journalism, which may have directly or indirectly shaped social constructs and normalization of radical lone wolf persons and attacks. I further investigated areas of implicit bias by examining how the information on lone wolf terrorists was presented and disseminated. I built upon what was already known about radical lone wolf terrorists, and I investigated how individual journalistic efforts may have normalized media reporting of radical lone wolf terrorists. Borum's (2012a) model enabled a more in-depth insight into the stages of radicalization from pre-radicalization through radicalization.

Each stage describes how its development takes place. An in-depth look at each stage is presented in Chapter 2. Borum (2012a) inferred that communication plays a part in the radicalization process. Therefore, to analyze communication usage in one specific social setting, I recognized NYC as an integral part of its citizens' social construction. Logically, the way society receives information daily can impact how society processes the information given. Borum's model provided a foundation for insight into societal opinions concerning radical lone wolf terrorists. Reynolds (2007) emphasized that a scientific statement must contain empirical relevance with a measurable comparison statement to the phenomenon studied within a specified theoretical setting. I tested Borum's model using purposeful samples, which I describe in the nature of the study section, where a description of the reports and the research components are detailed.

Some relevant components to understanding the methodology behind how terrorist organizations materialize involve communicating rhetoric through narrative forms of persuasion leading to conversion. One example of this was evident on Thursday, October 23, 2014, when Zale Thomson, age 32, used a hatchet to attack an NYC Police Officer in Jamaica, NY (Prokupecz & Conlon, 2014). NY Police Department (NYPD) Deputy Commissioner John Miller stated that after the attack occurred, the perpetrator had surfed radical extremist websites with ties to the radical terrorist groups Al-Shabab and ISIS (Prokupecz & Conlon, 2014). I used this information to infer that some form of narrative persuasion played a part in the conversion process. It was equally important to understand how the narratives and ideology expressed by these groups intertwined in the radicalization process and social construction.

Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction Theory

It was also essential to analyze how idea communication and societal norms were considered acceptable. With their theory of the social construction of reality, Berger and Luckmann (1966) emphasized that people combined produce environment emergent from the totality of the environment's socio-cultural and psychological formation. Social construction theory provides that there are individual formulations and experiences that people form and incorporate as an acceptable way of life, thus creating normalization. Berger and Luckmann postulated that people produce social norms and values based on their socio-cultural and psychological experiences. Thus, social construction theory served as a nexus to supplement Borum's (2012a) model in that it postulated social and

behavioral connections that led people to develop beliefs and ideas about radicalization and the execution of radical lone wolf events.

Basic Tenants of Social Construction Theory

The basic tenants of social construction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) center around the social development of ideas and values based on an individual's experiences. Those ideas and values develop through ongoing social interaction and communication (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Thus, social development, ideas, and values lead to social construction. Social construction dictates what is considered normal within society.

How Social Construction Theory Relates to This Study

Social construction theory (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) helped illustrate a rational interpretation for journalistic reporting of radical lone wolf events, particularly when those stories began to normalize the events as a current state of society. Berger and Luckmann emphasized that language understanding is essential to comprehend everyday life. This finding highlighted the importance of communication and the impact that it had on creating ideas and opinions. Berger and Luckmann's theory provided an interpretive lens for my study by demonstrating through hypothesized constructs how people formulate social norms and views based on their lived or perceived experiences.

Social construction theory (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) worked in tandem with Borum's (2012a) pathway model to illustrate steps that led from pre-radicalization to radicalization. These components addressed the basic tenets of how individuals and groups radicalize and how an internal conflict occurs. These causal mechanisms provided a more in-depth look at the causes and roots of the conversion behind the radicalization

process, including recruiting, indoctrinating, and radicalizing lone wolf attackers. Many

terrorist groups use websites to post news and information which tell stories of soldiers

and martyrs and the bounty that awaits them (Neumann, 2013). Neumann offered that

these stories could lead to grooming behaviors centered on inciting hate and story

rhetoric as a vehicle that resonates these critical messages in recruitment efforts. Social

construct theory provided a foundation for linking journalistic media to social construct

and, thus, radicalization. Examining journalistic storytelling as a tool to position and

understand lone wolf radicalization was a necessary component of individual and societal

construction. With this study, I delved further into these points by looking at four lone

wolf terrorist events that occurred in NYC and were reported by four NYC news outlets

between 2010 and 2017.

Nature of the Study

I grounded this research in a qualitative phenomenological approach using

thematic content analyses of newspaper journalism in four NYC news outlets with a

history of reporting lone wolf terroristic activities. Phenomenology centers on the lived

experiences of individuals or groups who experience events (phenomena) bounded within

a time and space continuum (Moustakas, 1994). Since this study centered on journalists'

reports of lived experiences, phenomenology was the best methodology.

As commonly understood, journalists subjectively investigate and report their

interpretations of the lived experiences of those involved in the reported event. With this

study, I explored the reports of the journalists who responded to and reported about the

four lone wolf terrorist events in NYC between 2010 and 2017. A phenomenological

research design was doubly appropriate for this study because phenomenological inquiry described and detailed the journalists' perceptions (lived experiences) of the individuals experiencing the same phenomena: radical lone wolf terrorist events. I evaluated the journalists' articles related to four lone wolf terrorist events to discover any political slants or societal normalization of those events. O'Sullivan et al. (2008) stated: "a qualitative study describes specific features of each individual, organization, jurisdiction or program" (p. 39). Given these descriptive parameters, I selected this method as the best explanative lens for my thematic inquiry. O'Sullivan et al. explained that researchers often conducted qualitative studies in the field, observing the phenomenon while using their experiences and insights to construct a study and interpret their meaning.

I conducted my content analyses across a sample of four radical lone wolf events in NYC between 2010 and 2017. Using each of the four cases individually, I examined journalism content within four NYC based news outlets (*NY Times, Daily News, NY Post,* and *Wall Street Journal*) ranging across a political continuum: left-leaning *NY Times*, left of center *Daily News*, right of center *NY Post*, and right-leaning *Wall Street Journal*. I examined the thematic content analyses of the selected lone wolf events using NVivo v.12 Plus across the reported stories' lives.

Definitions

This section provides an understanding of the ideas and terminology used throughout the study. The selected terminology and concepts include:

Borum's fourth stage: According to Borum's (2012a) four-stage model of the terrorist mindset, the fourth stage

begins by framing some unsatisfying event, condition, or grievance (it's not right)
as being unjust (it's not fair). The injustice is blamed on a target policy, person, or
nation (it's your fault). The responsible party is then vilified—often demonized—
(you're evil), which facilitates justification or impetus for aggression. (p. 39)

According to Borum, the "you're evil" phase is the fourth and final stage of the model.

Counterterrorism: The Defense Technical Information Center and the Joint
Chiefs of Staff (2014) defined counterterrorism as "actions and activities to neutralize
terrorists, their organizations, and networks; removes countering root causes and desired
regional end states from the definition" (p. GL-3).

Lone wolves: Lone wolves are individuals that act alone and independently of a
group or organization. According to Michael (2012), "although they may agree with a
group's ideology, they usually are able to plan and carry out their attacks without any
assistance from a group or network" (p. 44).

Political slant: According to Dictionary.com (2019), a slant means "to distort
(information) by rendering it unfaithfully or incompletely, especially to reflect a
particular viewpoint." For example, the reporter's slanted news story discredited the
Administration. Therefore, a *political slant* is a journalistic style of reporting that is
published and written toward having the news fit the political ideas of the readers.

Radicalization: Khosrokhavar (2016) posited that radicalization "refers to the
process by which an individual or group adopts a violent form of action directly linked to
an extremist ideology with political, social, or religious content that contests the
established order at a political, social, or cultural level" (p. 1).

Sharia (Sharīʿah): Sharia refers to Islamic or Syariah law. According to Shamsy and Coulson (2019) of Encyclopedia Britannica, Sharia is

> the religious law of Islam is seen as the expression of God's command for
>
> Muslims and, in application, constitutes a system of duties that are incumbent
>
> upon all Muslims by virtue of their religious belief. (para. 1)

Social construction: According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), social construction refers to the process of people creating the totality of their socio-cultural and psychological environment.

Soft target: Merriam-Webster.com (2019) defined a soft target as an easily attackable target because it does not have military defenses. Examples include hospitals, schools, etc.

Terrorism: According to the Counterterrorism Threat Assessment and Warning Unit, National Security Division, Federal Bureau of Investigation (1999), terrorism is "the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives" (p. i).

Assumptions

An assumption is an aspect of the study assumed to be accurate and not tested in the study's parameters. For example, one part of this study was the belief that radical lone wolves are violent. Subsequently, I did not provide extensive details of lone wolf activity, how lone wolves assemble explosions, or how they obtained their weapons; instead, those assumptions were inherent to the study. Furthermore, I assumed that the violent events

occurred. Additionally, I assumed that radical lone wolves are trained to carry out their missions and kill. I also assumed that the dates the events were reported were accurate and the information was vetted. Therefore, I specifically looked at the lone wolf events reported within the parameters of this study.

Scope and Delimitations

In this study, I focused on the phenomenon of journalistic reporting on radical lone wolf terrorist attacks in the NYC Metropolitan area using four politically varied digital news outlets. I selected this specific focus because of the various journalistic reports generated at the time of these attacks. In this study, I excluded digital news outlets reporting outside the NYC area. I limited my analyses to reporting methods and story life across each of the four selected radical lone wolf attacks within NYC between 2010 and 2017, as reported in four of the city's most popular news outlets. The NYC District Attorney's Office identified and labled all four cases as terrorism and apprehended all perpetrators.

Limitations

As a World Trade Center first responder, I have personal views about terrorism. However, I addressed these biases by articulating them and following the research requirement criteria. Other limitations for this study stemmed from my possible improper coding of content, misclassifying themes, and misinterpreting thematic data. Although several news agencies report the news throughout NYC, the four chosen news outlets were the most popular in the market; however, they may not wholly represent the entire city's thoughts. The group of radical lone wolf cases and the number of attacks that I

studied represented a small size and were limited to NYC alone. I do not know how many different reports have been published nationally regarding the same incidents. Other sources also published narratives about the same events I selected for this study.

When I began this study, I was unaware of what I would uncover and the various narratives published about the same events. To address the issue of potential narrative discrepancies, I used thematic analyses. Braun and Clarke (2006) defined thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data" (p. 79). This process helped me address some of the limitations.

Significance of the Study

My study helps fill information gaps by providing greater insight into journalistic narratives presented to readers regarding radical lone wolf terrorists. Normalizing these events is contrary to American society's construction of reality around lone wolf terroristic events. Knowledge in the discipline is advanced by providing further insight into the importance of accurate and non-slanted reporting. Through education and awareness regarding the influence of news agencies and their journalistic reporting, I contributed to these ongoing conversations, creating more vital community awareness, training, and preparedness for law enforcement and citizens alike.

Significance to Social Change

It is a given that social change begins with local change. By examining the patterns and themes of journalistic reporting on these selected radical lone wolf events, I provided information that can enhance the societal understanding that the normalization of terrorism is incongruent with American values. Additionally, I narrowed law

enforcement education gaps by providing themes that will be beneficial for police officer training and interrogation techniques to improve their risk evaluation of persons of interest. Overall, these components can assist in creating enhanced communication with communities throughout NYC and forge bonds with law enforcement agencies, which can help improve awareness and training.

Significance to Public Policy

Logically, public policy shapes law and regulation, which, in turn, impacts law enforcement training and other education. My findings bring attention to stakeholders about improving how events are reported and communicated through the chain of command or supervisory structure. Results can impact how policy is written to enhance training and awareness about contingency plans related to lone wolf events.

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Summary

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Four lone wolf terrorist attacks occurred from 2010 to 2017 in NYC: The Times Square Bombing on May 1, 2010; the Chelsea bomber on September 17, 2016; the Manhattan Bike Path terrorism on October 31, 2017; and the Port Authority bombing on December 11, 2017. Literature review revealed a growing problem reflected by the number of radical lone wolf attacks occurring in the United States. In this study, I explored how journalistic reporting of radical lone wolf events in NYC impacted the social construction of reality, remarkably how these stories varied across politically diverse news media outlets. I acquired data from four NYC digital news outlets and conducted content analyses for themes aligned with politically slanted stories and readerships' norms and values.

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the research study. The chapter presented an explanation of the study's importance, the ontology of the study, and a summary of the research epistemology. Chapter 1 included: (a) the background, (b) problem statement, (c) purpose of the study, (d) research question, (e) theoretical framework, (f) nature of the study, (g) definitions, (h) scope and delimitations, (i) limitations, (j) significance of the study, and (k) summary. Chapter 2, the literature review, includes the search parameters and literature review on (a) the proposed study framework, (b) explanation of a lone wolf, (c) research review, (d) patterns of behavior, (e) ideology, (f) policy, (g) psychology, (h) social construction, (i) communication, (j) social change, and (k) summary. Chapter 3 presents the research methodology in detail, Chapter 4 the results, and Chapter 5 a detailed discussion of findings and recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Law enforcement efforts throughout the United States face continual media criticism of their lone wolf identification efforts and deterrent actions. However, if investigative reports are slanted, enforcement officers cannot recognize and deal with self-radicalizing individuals. Furthermore, if journalistic reporting influences a normalization of terrorists' activities, a contrary, social construction of reality occurs. Through this research, I investigated these social constructions and journalistic influences on the normalization of selected radicalized lone wolf terrorist events. In this literature review, I probed literature related to radical lone wolf terrorist actions before, during, and after attacks, examining the editorial political slant about lone wolf terrorist acts and the individuals who commit them.

In this literature review, I explored and exposed gaps in current literature about how social construction impacts communication and how information is filtered. This research furthered scientific understanding by adding context and analysis to radical lone wolf terrorist events, thereby providing deeper awareness about radical lone wolf terrorist phenomenology. Accordingly, I incorporated a social construction lens of relevant literature and journalistic reporting. A social construction lens provided a better benchmark of the importance of communication and how it impacted practices and policies.

I centered this literature review on lone wolf attacks and associated news reports. I analyzed patterns, trends, ideology, psychology, policy, financing, and social constructs manifested in societal views of the lone wolf terrorist phenomena. I expanded on existing

scholarly literature, media practices, public policies, and social communication methods that did not address the radical lone wolf phenomenon and how journalistic reporting affects its societal normalization. Additionally, this literature review included research related to the topic, current information, and current issues facing law enforcement in the field. My objectives were to identify the literature gaps related to the topic and add to the related body of knowledge. Chapter 2, the literature review, includes the search parameters and literature review on (a) the proposed study framework, (b) explanation of a lone wolf, (c) research review, (d) patterns of behavior, (e) ideology, (f) policy, (g) psychology, (h) social construction, (i) communication, (j) social change, and (k) summary.

Literature Search Strategy

I acquired literature via internet searches using Google, Google Scholar, the Homeland Security Digital Library (HSDL), the YouTube database, and the Walden University Library databases. Walden Library databases included Academic Search Complete, Communications and Mass Media Complete, Criminal Justice Database, CQ Researcher, Directory of Open Access Journals, EBSCO Host and Books, Gate Academic One File Select, govinfo, HSDL, LexisNexis, Academic Homeland Security Digital Library, Military and Government Collections, Political Science Complete, ProQuest Central, ProQuest Dissertations and Thesis, SAGE Publications and Journals, Thoreau Multi-database Search, and Walden Research Library, among others. Newspaper literature searches included the *NY Times, NY Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *NY Daily News* digital databases.

Keywords, phrases, and boolean combinations included *terrorism, lone wolf, lone attackers, homeland security, domestic terrorism, behavior normalization, terrorist behavior, terrorist psychology, terrorism in the United States, political slant, journalist reports, NYC Terrorist Attacks,* and *social construction*, which I defined in search engines to procure information. The resulting materials consisted of textbooks, peer-reviewed articles, dissertations, media articles and reviews, and audio/video segments. I obtained the audio/video segments by typing in the names of subject matter experts that had conducted speaking engagements in past governmental committee core private security conferences on the topic into the YouTube database.

While the focus of my literature review was primarily to find current literature (within the last 5 years), due to the event range of this study (2010 to 2017), my literature search parameters ranged from 2008 to 2019. Additionally, I performed searches by authors to provide further insight into other documents cited in articles and texts related to the topic, which frequently resulted in researching literature before 2008. I then analyzed and filtered results relative to the research topic.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical frameworks support a study and focus on results interpretation (Gabriel, 2008; Swanson & Chermack, 2013). Both Gabriel and Swanson and Chermack explained that theoretical frameworks define and support the foundations of a research study. Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social construction theory, in tandem with Borum's (2012a) four-stage pathway mindset model of terrorism, fit well within the construct of this research primarily because they informed reasoning behind the steps to

radicalization. According to Berger and Luckmann, social construction theory frames human experiences and environments with social, cultural, and psychological functions to form acceptable ways of life. Borum's pathway model details the steps from pre-radicalization to radicalization.

Both frameworks were essential to this research because they provided insight leading to further understanding. I also applied them to my result analyses to expand societal understanding and recognition of terrorist activity. These insights can assist in developing preparedness plans and cooperation throughout communities regarding radical lone wolf attackers. Throughout my professional experience as a first responder, I witnessed community recognition and preparedness used to aid decision-making processes in situations involving police officers daily. Thus, understanding these social constructions allowed increased comprehension of why certain behaviors elicit individual responses critical to discerning reactions to specific events.

Borum's Four-Stage Pathway Mindset Model of Terrorism

Theoretical foundational information, such as Borum's (2012a) four-stage model, was imperative to understand how components intertwined and played a critical role in lone wolf phenomenology. In a four-stage model, Borum outlined the emergence of a terrorist mindset. Published in the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Law Enforcement bulletin, Borum's model defined the steps and stages that lead to the terrorist radicalization process. Borum described how complaints and weaknesses morph into hatred and lead to a justification for violence. Borum's Stage 1 begins with some complaint or grievance. The Injustice Stage of Borum's model, Stage 2, follows the

terrorist mindset through the fundamental idea of unfair practice at the fault of policy or government. Borum's third stage, the Target Stage, encompasses the terrorist's focus on blaming that policy or government for society's vilification of the terrorist. According to Borum, the final stage is the Distancing/Devaluation Stage, wherein the terrorists demonize the parties that they believe are responsible for their unjust situation. Borum noted that it is in this fourth stage that the terrorist justifies the use of violence. Thus, as the terrorist progresses through each stage, the terrorist gets one step closer to radicalization.

Prior Use of Borum's Model.

The four-stage pathway mindset model of terrorism has been used in related qualitative studies demonstrating strong credibility (Borum & Fein, 2017; Klausen et al., 2015; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017). Borum and Fien used the model to analyze and discuss the psychology of foreign fighters going into Syria. Borum and Fein dissected the motivations behind the violent conflict in Syria, and they delved into the recruitment strategies used in the transnational insurgency. While Borum and Fein demonstrated the pathways toward radicalization and armed conflict, Klausen et al. used Borum's (2012a) model of radicalization to frame violent extremism as an enactment of a role scripted by others but openly interpreted and varied by the actors. Klausen et al. analyzed 68 cases and conducted over 272 observations aligning the radicalization process to demonstrated behaviors. McCauley and Moskalenko provided an overview of political radicalization in conjunction with a two pyramids model, creating an understanding of the relationship between radicalization and opinion to action radicalization. McCauley and Moskalenko

posited that radicalization is "the process of developing extremist ideologies and beliefs needs to be distinguished from action pathways the process of engaging in terrorism or violent extremist actions" (p. 19). McCauley and Moskalenko analyzed two types of lone wolf terrorists: disconnected/disordered and caring/compelling. According to McCauley and Moskalenko, Kaczynski was disconnect/disordered because of mental issues, depression, and loneliness. Conversely, caring/compelling lone wolves, like Clayton Wagner, were socially connected and demonstrated sympathy for unjustly treated people, thus driving them toward a moral duty to carry out justice.

How Borum's Model Relates to This Study

The four-stage model paths how hatred develops and can lead to violence (Borum, 2012a). Borum's pathway model aids comprehension of the behavioral progression that leads to radicalization. Although Borum originally developed the model for law enforcement training, the framework provided details about the steps that lead to aggression. Borum's model also contextually provided relevance to the study by indicating how to recognize the radicalization process. Borum's model defines the fundamental principles behind radicalization and assists in identifying why lone wolves behave the way they do. Since the purpose of my study was to qualitatively identify and analyze how social construction in journalistic reporting may be normalizing radical lone wolf terrorism, Borum's model provided a sound theoretical focusing tool.

Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction Theory

The premise of Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social construction theory was grounded in the concept that knowledge builds on social interactions. Berger and

Luckmann believed that people's ideas about reality centered on social norms and values, eventually becoming part of society, thereby demonstrating social construction. Society creates opinions about certain people and things every day (Berger & Luckmann, 1966); thus, social construction is a way of grouping and identifying. One example of social construction included characteristics used to describe men and women's societal expectations. According to a Reference (2020) staff writer, society defines male and female characteristics, shaping behavior from birth in an iterative fashion. Thus, social constructs and norms are developed and promoted throughout society to create normalization throughout society. Social construction theory has been used abundantly to frame, analyze, and support social science research.

Prior Use of Social Construction Theory

Gaines and Kappeler (2012) posited that society was regularly exposed to the term "terrorism" by the media, politicians, and entertainment venues. Gaines and Kappeler noted how terrorism applied to various actors, conditions, activities, and situations. The label terrorism demonizes people, societies, and actions (Gaines & Kappeler, 2012). Gaines and Kappeler discussed how perspectives change through time and how labeling an act or a person as a terrorist has a partisan dimension. Gaines and Kappeler exampled how Israeli labeled Palestinian suicide bombers as terrorists, whereas Palestinians viewed their behavior as just defiance or retribution. Thus, these two different labels for the same actions help identify how components group social behavior and actions. Dowling (1989) noted that terrorists occasionally seem conscious of their participation in a new social order and listed Menahem Begin's [former Prime Minister

of Israel (1913-1992)] writings about Irgun victimization to remove the negative labels and allow rebirth. Dowling also referenced the prideful manner in which enemies and opponents try to belittle others through humiliation and degradation. Dowling's exhibit characterized an existing system of social order that helped me further understand the way social construction operated within a terrorist society.

How Social Construction Theory Relates to This Study

Social construction connected the normalization practices from journalistic reporting to the community considering lone wolf terroristic events. Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social construction theory articulated how society creates normalization practices through social construction. This study analyzed how politically slanted journalistic reporting impacted how society viewed lone wolf terrorist events; thus, social construction theory provided a solid framework for building those analyses.

Review of the Current Literature

This literature review identified themes related to the lone wolf phenomenon, including how ideology, radicalization, policy, financing, social construction, communication, and the internet play an integral role in radical lone wolf behavior. The information I attained indicated that signs and behaviors identify lone wolf terrorist attacker development, which aligned with stage four of Borum's (2012a) model. The literature, however, also highlighted the challenges and barriers that law enforcement agencies consistently face against radical lone wolves who continually circumvent law enforcement and legal system efforts at identification and deterrence. Although some law enforcement capabilities have improved, those barriers indicated the need to strengthen

communication lines allowing the free flow of information between local communities and law enforcement agencies. Applying Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of social construction, when lone wolf terrorist activity normalization occurred, normalization inhibited communication flow between society and enforcement officials. The statistics and findings discussed in this literature review indicated that radical lone wolf terrorists were problematic and posed a challenge for society; therefore, the literature review validated the necessity for increased research about the radical lone wolf terrorist phenomenon. The literature review provided further context about radicalization, issues regarding communication, and how communication affects preparedness for extreme lone wolf events.

Definition of Lone Wolf

The term lone wolf is not new. Spaaij (2010) traced the term as far back as the nineteenth century, demonstrating the term's connection with anarchism. Applying Berger and Luckman's (1966) social construction theory, the societal connection of the term "lone wolf" to the broader category of anarchy was the beginning of the societal normalization of the lone wolf. Based on Spaaij's findings, the term leaderless resistance evolved as a term used by the White supremacist known as Louis Beam. Spaaij used a normalizing pattern linking the term "leaderless resistance." According to the *Seditionist* (1992), Beam was a White supremacist and Grand Dragon of the Klu Klux Klan (KKK) who perpetrated the leaderless resistance theory from a concept of Colonel Ulius Louis Amoss. Amoss was an intelligence officer and founder of the International Service of Information Incorporated (ISII; Seditionist, 1992). The *Seditionist* attributed the

origination of the term 'leaderless resistance' to Amoss in 1962 and the 1983

proliferation of the leaderless resistance social theory to Beam. Per the *Seditionist*, Beam

avidly promoted a leaderless resistance approach as an effective attack strategy to further

the cause of an organization. Thus, the normalization of a leaderless resistance dated to

1962.

Beam believed that a leaderless resistance strategy could counter law enforcement

and U.S. militias (Spaaij, 2010). Beam's idea was independent action without reporting to

a group (Seditionist, 1992; Spaaij, 2010). Thus, Beam promoted the normalization of a

leaderless rebellion by employing social construction. Spaaij also reported that the term

"lone wolf" was likely emphasized in the 1990s by two known White Supremacists, Tom

Metzger, KKK Grand Wizard, and founder of the White Aryan Resistance; (WAR); and

Alex Curtis, founder of the *National Observer* newsletter. Organizations like ISII, KKK,

WAR, and the *National Observer* further perpetuated the normalization of leaderless

rebellion and lone wolf identities through their societal construction aspects (Spaaij,

2010). Spaaij noted Metzger and Curtis' strategy that lone wolf and small cell approaches

were more challenging to detect due to their normal appearance and incorporated more

successful tactics to carry out their objectives.

This type of approach, a lone wolf approach, was a tactic that permitted and

inspired individuals, or small groups, to convey acts of violence or sabotage free of any

leadership or group support (Joose, 2017). The point at which the terrorist plans and

perpetrates associates with stage four of Borum's (2012a) model. According to Joose,

leaderless resistances frequently employed struggling, weaker individuals who carried out

lone attacks to signify desperation and failure. These struggling, outcast individuals fell

within Borum's third stage and, if no intervention occurred, advanced to the fourth stage,

wherein they planned and carried out their terroristic behaviors. Thus, the lone wolf may

possess an ideological mindset or shared belief, like a terrorist group, but operates

independently of that group and reports to no one.

The findings of Joose (2017) and Spaaij (2010) provided a historical pretext about

the background and definition of a lone wolf wherein both Berger and Luckmann's

(1966) social construction and Borum's (2012a) four-stage model helped explain the lone

wolf evolution. Both Joose and Spaaij conducted a qualitative case study analysis of the

lone wolf phenomenon. Joose examined cases of lone wolf terrorists that operated

independently but were still part of a common cause to minimize industrial capital

groups' impact on society. Joose and Spaaij presented a basic definition of a lone wolf

terrorist. Those definitions were critical to this study because, without understanding

what a lone wolf was, it is challenging to create effective strategies addressing lone wolf

actions. Additionally, to carry out this research study, a concise definition provided a

clear perspective of the research problem, purpose, and study nature.

Lone Wolves

Identifying the steps that lead to radicalization and radical lone wolf behavior help

understand the terrorist mindset (Borum, 2012a). Borum developed the four-stage

pathway mindset model of terrorism, outlining each stage's behaviors leading up to stage

four, the distance/devaluation stage. According to Borum, during the

"distancing/devaluation fourth-stage, negative stereotypes are created about the group or

individual in the case of lone wolfs, and these stereotypes are applied and socialized to and about these outgroup members" (p. 604). Understanding how the normalization of lone wolf terrorist activities aligned with social construction theory tenants was essential to analyzing potential journalistic reporting leading to that normalization. Although the primary purpose of this study was to explore how journalistic reporting may have played a part in the social construction and the normalization of terrorist activities, foundational understandings of lone wolves were essential to data analysis.

Types of Terrorists

There are four distinctive terrorist types in the United States, each with a unique behavior pattern (Smith, 2008). Smith classified terrorist groups into four types: "left-wing, right-wing, single issue, and international" (p. 3). Thus, a lone wolf terrorist falls within the "single-issue" category. Terrorist groups demonstrate stark behavior differences from lone wolf terrorists (Smith, 2008), which means their social construction follows a different path; however, all terrorist types evolved through social constructs and fit within Borum's (2012a) four-stage model. Smith claimed that terrorists pondered from a universal perspective but acted from a local perspective that spoke to their social construction. Smith established that, among single-issue terrorist groups, 71% of their pre-attack actions transpired within 12 miles of their residence, and 92% occurred within 28 miles of their intended mark. Contrarily, Smith et al. (2014) analyzed the geospatial patterns of lone wolf terrorist attacks throughout the United States and found that lone-actor terrorists were willing to travel long distances from where they live to commit lone wolf attacks. Smith et al. reported that "lone actor terrorists live significantly greater

distances from where they engage in precursor preparation activities than terrorist group participants. A median distance of 170 miles to 79 miles, respectively is traveled" (p. 2). Regardless of the distance traveled to perpetrate their terrorist acts, according to Borum, the terrorist mindset began with the grievance stage wherein the individual criticized their social condition and environment.

Alarmingly, Smith (2008) noted data collection from sources with a high propensity towards inadept violent practices such as environmental/anti-abortion extremists that regularly colluded in targeting lone wolves that agreed with their cause. Therefore, Smith's sample may have involved differing participant types separated by their stage within Borum's (2012a) four-stage model, but terrorists, nonetheless. On the other hand, Smith et al. (2014) analyzed ''476 inductees charged with more than 3,000 federal criminal charges" (p. 1), effectively isolating fourth-stage lone wolf terrorists. Understanding the distance that lone wolves (in contrast to other terrorists) are willing to travel provides increased support enforcement effectiveness by comprehending their social construction differences. This information was relevant to my study to analyze whether journalistic reporting took those distances into account, and any applicable, resulting normalization was subsequently socially constructed.

Terrorist Attacks Conducted by Lone Wolves

In a research brief that the National Consortium published for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), Smith et al. (2014) reported that "264 terrorist incidents were researched from 1980 - present" (p. 1). According to Smith et al., "out of the 264 incidents, only 65 were deemed to have been conducted by lone wolf

actors" (p. 1), which equated to a 25% ratio. These statistics indicated that lone wolf

actors were responsible for approximately ¼ of all terrorist attacks. Smith et al. reported

that individuals charged with terrorism "were responsible for 1,788 recorded precursor

activities that occurred at over 1,100 geo-coded addresses" (p. 1). The demographics of

Smith et al.'s study spanned the United States and provided statistics about gender, age,

marital status, and education. Smith et al. indicated that 27% of lone-actor terrorists were

female, and the average age of perpetrators was 34 years. Most lone actor terrorists

discussed in Smith et al.'s brief were educated, with 89% having completed some college

and 19% married. These statistics provided data about lone wolf terrorist event behavior

and the way they selected attack targets. Statistical analysis revealed patterns of behavior

and actions taken by lone wolves. Relating research with Borum's (2012a) model

indicated the stage of the lone wolf behavior and how it connected to lone wolf activity

and attacks. Understanding how news outlets reported these events and how their lone

wolf normalization impacted society indicated how social construction occurred.

Understanding Lone Wolf Concepts

These statistics were meaningful because, when combined with Borum's (2012a)

model, the demographic statistics helped gauge how lone wolves plot their attacks. Smith

et al. (2014) provided a perspective about the precursor activities before lone wolf attacks

and furnished an opinion about the extent that lone wolf terrorists were willing to

undertake to commit their attacks. Subsequently, Borum categorized precursor activities

into various stages of the model. Borum emphasized that those activities aid in

identifying lone wolves before they attack when noticed by those outside the terrorist's

social construct. Additionally, Smith et al. demonstrated that lone wolves were more clandestine than terror cell network groups, which indicated that societal normalization of their activities prevented preemptive identification.

This obfuscation made lone wolves more difficult to track and apprehend; however, if identification occurred in a dehumanizing manner, then such maligning actions pushed the would-be terrorist into Borum's (2012a) third or fourth stage, causing accelerated terrorism. While Smith (2008) provided clear information about the study, Smith did not discuss a theory, hypothesis, or the data retrieval environment. In contrast, Smith et al. (2014) offered a description through their statistical analysis about the types of behaviors indicative of lone wolves. Smith et al.'s statistical reflection provided a fundamental idea about what lone wolf terrorists undertook to execute their plots and what precursors needed to be analyzed to minimize lone wolf capabilities. Associating these studies with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of social construction and Borum's four-stage model allowed increased identification of lone wolf behavior patterns.

Lone Wolf Behavior Patterns

While Meloy (2016) and Hoffman (2012) did not employ Borum's (2012a) model, I dissected their findings using Borum's model. Meloy stated that the substantial behavioral signs exhibited by individual terrorists included "pathways, fixation, identification, novel aggression, energy burst, leakage, last resort, directly communicated threat, and investigative usefulness" (p. 3). Pathways and fixation equated to the first stage, and identification and novel aggression transitioned from the first to the second

stage of Borum's model. However, energy burst, leakage, and investigative usefulness aligned to Borum's third stage, whereas last resorts and directly communicated threats were Borum's fourth stage. Hoffman reported that terrorists committed crimes and then retreated to their suburban sanctuaries and eluded law enforcement without capture. Thus, the perpetrators in Hoffman's study used the normalizing component of Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social construction theory to escape detection. According to Hoffman, most terrorist acts were well planned, well-financed, and well detailed, indicating that the terrorists planned to normalize social constructs like the Seditionist (1992) reported in Beam's leaderless resistance theory. Former U.S. Secretary of Defense Gaffney (2012) claimed that the environment that terrorist networks established was more tolerant of their behavior despite the violence and mayhem attached to it, which indicated a normalizing element. Two examples included the Olympic Bomber, Eric Rudolph, and the Unabomber, Ted Kaczynski. These reports inferred socially constructed social acceptance for specific practices normalized the radical lone wolf terrorist threat.

Recently, Meloy (2016) identified some critical identifiers for flagging and monitoring threat management; specific policy measures or training remained undescribed. However, Meloy also failed to note the dissemination of these patterns or how their training injection improved awareness and preparedness. In comparison, Hoffman (2012) emphasized the need for enforcement agencies to create a horizontal relationship between local law enforcement agencies and have a vertical relationship between Federal, State, and Local agencies. For example, Poole (2010a, 2010b, 2012) noted that Keefah Mustafah, a Hamas terrorist operator, was given a tour of the top-secret

national counterterrorism center in Washington, D.C. after the U.S. Department of Justice had deemed Mustafah a Hammas Operative. This revelation illustrated an apparent disconnect between U.S. federal agencies and the dilemmas that needed to be addressed within these agencies when dealing with counterterrorism strategies. This example also indicated that a communication problem existed, and a normalizing social construction took place. Hoffman admonished that the lack of communication between law enforcement agencies is what obstructed the capture of terrorists, noting that immediate apprehension after committing the crime minimizes a terrorists' ability to evade capture and prosecution. Such a lack, or slant, in communicative reporting indicated what Berger and Luckmann (1966) referred to as social construction because it dis- or mis-associated communication; thereby, building a new social construct different from the society that existed. These accountings indicated a shift in society's social paradigm and within the social construct of the U.S. government that was normalizing terrorist behavior.

Terrorists Within the U.S. Government

Connecting underlying constructs and Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social construction theory helps identify the normalizing terrorist behavior within any social entity. While Gaffney (2012) also promoted the necessity of making connections, Gaffney also offered a position that terrorist organizations deeply embedded within the U.S. government produced an environment permissive of terrorist ideology and lone wolf terrorist behavior. Gaffney noted several U.S. governmental operatives with ties to terrorist networks and attributed a degree of law enforcements' inability to identify, apprehend, and convict terrorists to those ties. Normalizing terrorist ties builds a new

social construct and hinders the ability to recognize terrorists in all but the fourth stage of

Borum's (2012a) model. For example, Poole (2012) reported that Anwar Al Wilaki (a

known ISIS terrorist; Sperry, 2005) trained most Muslim Chaplains assigned to the

Pentagon. Such infiltration exposed military personnel to harm and created access for

terrorists to attempt military radicalization and normalize their behavior. While neither

Gaffney nor Poole shared their sources, both conveyed that the situation creates a

breeding ground for lone wolf radical behavior; however, the normalizing social

construct continues. Gaffney's and Poole's reports indicated that then-current anti-

terrorism strategies failed within the government. Subsequently, communication

breakdown led to increased lone wolf behavior as the social construction within the U.S.

government normalized such behavior.

According to testimony given during the Terrorist Diaspora hearing before the

Task Force on Denying Terrorists Entry to the United States, Committee of Homeland

Security House of Representatives, 115 Cong. 1 (2017), Al-Qaeda remained an active

terrorist organization. However, social construct normalization obfuscated that

information from enforcement officials that needed it and the society that fell victim to it.

Clarke testified that operational fighters tried to resuscitate dormant networks, create new

cells, recruit members, and instigate lone wolf attacks (Terrorist Diaspora, 2017).

Clarke's testimony indicated that terrorists at all four stages of Borum's (2012a) model

were in play; however, normalization related to communication obfuscating all but the

fourth stage wherein preemptive action was impossible. Additionally, Clarke reported

that improvements to the terrorist monitoring system were needed within law

enforcement by syncing enforcement personnel at the local level with the national level entities (Terrorist Diaspora, 2017). Such communication links would decrease terrorist normalization by allowing law enforcement social constructs to build from reality rather than misinformation. Clarke's recommendations aligned strongly with Hoffman's (2012) and Poole's (2012) recommendations for the same. According to Clarke, a growing number of jihadis have a criminal history and are better known to local beat cops than higher-level enforcement officers, so connecting these two components from the bottom up is critical (Terrorist Diaspora, 2017). While Clarke provided suggestions and responses to create a fundamental strategy, the statements provided by other witnesses suggested a more significant problem with normalized terrorist behavior.

Joscelyn testified that, as recently as 2015, support enforcement thwarted a plot in the state of Ohio involving a Syrian that returned to the United States to launch a terrorist attack (Terrorist Diaspora, 2017). Wilcox testified that families had relocated to Syria to be a part of the caliphate and that there were children born to U.S. parents (Terrorist Diaspora, 2017). According to Wilcox, the children would have ISIS's ideology and indoctrination. Wilcox shared that a good portion of these children had a nexus to France and that the United Kingdom had forwarded alerts that it was probable that ISIS may exercise these minors to become terrorists. In all these instances, social construction was normalizing terrorist behavior through family networks and connections. Case in point: In 2016, children in seven different countries throughout the West conducted 34 ISIS attacks (The Terrorist Diaspora, 2017). The Terrorist Diaspora hearing highlighted the many causes and the nature that terrorists operate to carry out their plots domestically

once they have returned from overseas; however, information from that hearing generally went unpublicized. Thus, communication obfuscation continues to normalize terrorist behavior.

During the Persistent Threat hearing, before the Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, Committee on Homeland Security (CHS) House of Representatives, Cafarella stated that America continued having problems understanding the enemy (The Persistent Threat, 2017). Cafarella reported negligence to comprehend the essence of the terrorist enemy and that the United States would continue to fail unless they addressed the grievances that the enemy posed (The Persistent Threat, 2017). Not only did this expose the normalizing social construction of the nation, but it also indicated the need to apply theories like Borum's (2012a) four-stage model to aid terrorist understanding. For instance, in Borum's stage three, the terrorist is dehumanized and maligned by society, which pushes the terrorist into stage four. With a better understanding of the terrorist mindset, increased counterterrorism would result. U.S. Representative Jackson-Lee added that any associated policy creation must be proceeded by understanding that several terrorist groups were fluid and using cyberspace to radicalize and weaponize (The Persistent Threat, 2017). Considering testimony given during the Terrorist Diaspora (2017) hearing, in conjunction with Gaffney's (2012) and Poole's (2012) findings, the statements given during the Persistent Threat hearing warranted a multi-layered approach using social construction as the cornerstone.

Until the government and law enforcement can better realize the lone wolf enemy, they cannot create policies meeting the lone wolf phenomenon's challenges. This

information would be equally helpful to the populace to assist with safety plans and measures; however, there is no standard method for transmitting that information to the public from a politically neutral perspective. Berger and Luckmann (1966) posited that individuals construct their societies from experiences and encounters. Therefore, these constructs build from the encounters and experiencing, reading, or listening to journalistic reporting. Subsequently, since journalistic reporting is typically slanted along a political line and frequently omits data or applies opinionated viewpoints, the worldviews of those media build and normalize their reader's social constructs preventing many individuals from recognizing lone wolf behavior or ideology.

Lone Wolf Ideology

Understanding lone wolf ideology was critical to recognizing lone wolf activities, especially since, according to Simon (2013), approximately two-thirds of home-grown attacks in the United States proceeding 9/11 came from single individuals. Simon posited that lone wolf communication and radicalization contributed to developing the ideological mindset that led to lone wolf behavior. Simon's findings supplemented and aligned with the methodology for radicalization and communication between terrorist networks reported by congressional hearings (A Ticking Time Bomb, 2011), lone wolf terrorists (Kaczynski, 2009), and scholars (Bergen, 2017; Heymann, 2000; Sorensen, 2016; Stakelbeck, 2015), among others. Simon demonstrated that the lone wolf phenomenon was problematic for law enforcement as well as society. In an interview with CNN Wire Staff, President Obama (2011) reported that "the greatest threat at the moment is a potential 'lone wolf' terror attack from a single individual" (Silverleib,

2011). Simon demonstrated how lone wolf ideological beliefs could add insight into situational awareness and help address related questions and undermine typical stereotypes.

Many terrorist satirists portray lone wolf terrorists as religious zealots; however, Kaczynski (2009) presented an example deviating from that notion. Convicted lone wolf terrorist, Kaczynski, discussed ideological beliefs that inferred behavioral justification associated with lone wolf ideological mindsets; thus, aligning with stage two of Borum's (2012a) model. Kaczynski also substantiated that lone wolf ideologies were not solely religious-based as Kaczynski's ideologies stemmed from opposition to industrialization. According to Kaczynski, there was a striking similarity between the ideological-based driven violence performed by the religiously driven lone wolf terrorists and those opposed to industrialization and globalization. For example, terrorist David Headley was a Salafist Muslim that held strong opinions about the purity of Islam and held a resulting deep hatred for India (Sorensen, 2016). According to Sorensen, Headley believed that "in the time of the prophet Mohammed, nothing should be added, nothing removed" (p. 108). Sorensen highlighted the religious conflict that Headley faced throughout life; thus, associating Headley's life from stage one through stage four of Borum's model. Headley's example also highlighted the passionate yet vulnerable nature of youthful ideologies that influence their social constructions.

Many terrorist groups began by appealing to the younger generations and attempted to disseminate their ideologies from the early stages of life to cultivate the passions of youth toward the terrorist group's ideals (Bergen, 2017; Simon, 2013;

Stakelbeck, 2015). Stakelbeck indicated younger U.S. recruits increasingly identified with the ISIS propaganda, radicalized, and traveled overseas to advance the ISIS cause. Bergen posited that Americans with ties to Al-Shabaab and Al-Qaeda frequently traveled to Somalia to further the networks' cause, albeit Bergen also reported ample terrorist support throughout the United States. According to Bergen, the terror group Al-Shabaab had ties to Al-Qaeda, and supporters were prolific in cities like Seattle, St. Louis, San Diego, and the states of Minnesota, Maryland, and Ohio. Bergen's reports of terrorist support within the United States aligned with Simon's insistence that only a handful of individuals interacted with Al Qaeda overseas. Albeit, Sorenson (2016) pointed out the ease with which Headley traveled and conducted covert, clandestine recon for cell networks utilizing various mediums for communication. On the other hand, Vadum (2017) posited that Al Qaeda, Hamas, and the Muslim Brotherhood traveled freely and independently throughout America and abroad, promoting terrorist propaganda, recruiting, and moving people across borders. Simon posited that influential supporters typically gained instruction abroad and then traveled back to the United States to deploy terrorist attacks. In line with that inference, Simon demonstrated that many lone wolf terrorists became inspired by Al Qaeda webpages and online interaction with Al Qaeda handlers/representatives rather than in-person communication. Thus, the internet connection became a critical component driving lone wolf ideologies.

Internet Connection

A significant connection between the internet and Al Qaeda terrorist networks' capabilities within their organization was critical in allowing lone wolves to operate

anonymously (Simon, 2013). Headley used the internet avidly and moved freely throughout the United States and Europe (Sorensen, 2016). The Boston Marathon Bomber, Tsarnaev, used the internet to post jihadist propaganda videos (CHS, 2014); Thompson self-radicalized via the internet, thereby supporting Stakelbeck's (2015) insistence that the internet was the "primary medium [that ISIS used] to get kids hooked" (p. 5) and radicalized.

According to CHS (2014), ideological transformation to lone wolf occurred within three months on the internet. Zale Thompson was one example of internet radicalization. Per CHS, on October 11, 2014, the FBI issued a warning that ISIS supporters could target law enforcement personnel. Twelve days later, thirty-two-year-old Zale Thompson, a Muslim convert, critically wounded four rookie NYC Police Officers on a Queens Street in broad daylight with a hatchet (Esposito & Dienst, 2014). CHS reported that Thompson's Facebook page featured radical Islamic imagery aiding NYPD's determination that Thompson's explosion was an act of terrorism and that Thompson was "self-radicalized" via the internet (p. 75). CHS demonstrated that an individual could get in touch with leaders of terrorist organizations and auto radicalize at night via the internet. Thus, the internet played a crucial role in Thompson's social construction. Stakelbeck reported Twitter as the primary vehicle that ISIS used to communicate to English-speaking Americans through propaganda-based videos promoting values like a Hollywood movie revolutionizing jihadi media to plead their cause to Western Muslims. The internet presented an avenue to social construction

conducive to lone wolf ideologies throughout any of the four stages of Borum's (2012a) model. Furthermore, the internet provided a perfect medium for leaderless resistance.

Leaderless Resistance

There was a direct correlation between the internet and the strategies used to promote the leaderless resistance mindset advocating violence and motivating lone wolf terrorists to carry out attack plots (Stakelbeck, 2015). According to Simon (2013), a coordinated, organized system assisted with training, preparing terrorist objectives, and promoting a leaderless resistance. Such a system aligned with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social construction theory in that the leaderless resistance depended on social construction to disseminate their ideologies. The terrorist and scholar Marc Sageman called this movement a leaderless Jihad (Simon, 2013). Thus, as a leaderless Jihad, a lone wolf acted alone, carrying out their terror plot without direction from a terrorist organization. Kaczynski (2009) stated, before the last struggle (indicative of Borum's [2012a] fourth stage), revolutionaries should not anticipate an excess of people to support them. Simon asserted that an individual with little support from others could significantly impact a political, social, religious, or financial event impacting a government or community.

History evolves from active, dedicated minority groups, not majorities, which rarely have clear and consistent ideas (Kaczynski, 2009). Albeit, Kaczynski alluded to a nexus indicating the internet as a form of communication used by lone wolves to relay their ideas about their personal ideological views and opinions, which also aligned with Berger and Luckman's (1966) social construction theory. According to Simon (2013) and

Kaczynski, this knowledge demonstrated that lone wolves want their ideas and messages

communicated to the populace and associated impacts imposed through fear or

disruption, resulting in a government reacting by heightened security. Thus, terrorists'

rhetoric and ideological opinions were valuable to their way of life. That type of

terrorism was indicative of Borum's (2012a) pathway, particularly the third and fourth

stages. This understanding demonstrated the correlation between the form of

communication (social construction) that terrorist organizations embrace to recruit lone

wolf jihadists (Borum's pathway): a leaderless resistance.

In my experience, while internet communication is elusive, literature confirmed

the ability to identify similarities and isolate and track internet exchanges, mainly when

aggressively pursuing mutual communication. However, if normalization occurred within

the associated social constructions, pertinent information could appear routine or non-

critical and not shared as needed. For example, Bergen (2017) referenced the

commonalities that Omar Mateen, the Orlando Massacre shooter, had in common with

Major Nadal Hassan, the Fort Hood attacker; and Sorensen (2016) connected Headley

and Hassan. The commonalities in all three lone wolf terrorists included the leaderless

resistance concept, the self-radicalization process, and the internet. Russian counterparts

also provided intelligence suggesting that Tsarnaev had been to Dagestan, demonstrating

a connection to Chechen terrorists (CHS, 2014). However, according to CHS, border

enforcement and intelligence communities did not connect the dots due to normalized

social constructions; therefore, associated enforcement personnel also did not make the

connection. The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) had information that Hassan had

radical views (indicative of Borum's [2012a] third and fourth stages) before the 2009

Fort Hood attack (the fourth stage finale; A Ticking Time Bomb, 2011). However, DoD

failed to properly discharge Hassan from service (A Ticking Time Bomb, 2011).

Additionally, the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) had information that

Hassan was communicating with Anwar Al Wilahi (a known terrorist) and failed to

report it to DoD and the military chain of command (normalized social construction; A

Ticking Time Bomb, 2011). Sorensen (2016) said that Headley contacted a terrorist

network looking to assassinate the CEO of Lockheed Martin and destroy the company

because they produced drones for the United States. Bergen (2017) revealed that

Mateen's ties to ISIS were primarily aspirational because Mateen was not ordered or paid

by any organization. Bergen also noted that Mateen acted like other jihadists operating in

the United States by acting as a self-radicalized lone wolf. Thus, both social construction

theory and Borum's (2012a) pathway model shed light that could have aided in

apprehending those lone wolf terrorists before their criminal attacks.

Criminology

This growing existential threat was challenging because lone wolves often do not

have a criminal history and do not act in concert with others (Simon, 2013). Bergen

(2017) claimed that Hassan, Tsarnaev, Bledsoe, and Mateen were all on the FBI's radar,

but none had any criminal record. Thus, evidence that lone wolves lived silently within

society due to the normalization of their non-criminal activities. Kaczynski (2009) wrote

that societies' problems were intractable due to the failure of the government to stop

political corruption, the influx of drugs into the country, environmental pollution, and

domestic abuse. This ideal intertwines Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social construction theory with Borum's (2012a) terrorist pathway model in that society could function due to dysfunctional government power; thus, the individuals within society acted (Borum's fourth stage). Kaczynski posited that "it is clear that the human race at best has limited capacity for solving even relatively straightforward social problems" (p. 52). Simon indicated that law enforcement throughout the United States continued to face radical lone wolf terrorist issues compounded by the lack of a criminal record related to the terrorists. According to Sorensen (2016), while Headley did serve time in prison, Headley acted as a U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) informant before the arrest, provided information leading to arrests, and intelligence information about numerous other plots. Aaronson (2015) also reported a case wherein both the terrorist and the informant had a criminal history. The informant had a heroic self-concept for helping capture and thwart a terrorist attack on a military facility but was instead considered a criminal (Aaronson, 2015); which, aligned with Borum's first and second stages, indicating the continued terrorist mindset. Even with those two reports of criminal records, most lone wolf terrorists lacked such criminal identifiers. Thus, it was not only their lack of criminal record that inhibited the identification of lone wolf terrorists but also their disassociation with any specific location.

Location

According to Simon (2013), "they [lone wolf terrorists] have no physical headquarters or sanctuary, but the tolerant virtual environment of the internet offers them a semblance of unity and purpose. There is a scattered, decentralized, social structure; a

leaderless resistance jihad" (p. 35). Thus, their social construction was not bound to a

single location. For example, Stakelbeck (2015) demonstrated that ISIS's ability to

influence terrorist mindsets was equally effective within Somali communities and in

areas such as Oklahoma, NYC, and within radical young Muslims in the United States

through social media. Contrarily, third and fourth stage behavior could be recognizable

within a community (Borum, 2012a) should those within the social construct of that

community be attentive to such deviation rather than normalization. Tsarnaev presented a

prime example of a social community recognizing third and fourth stage behavior.

According to CHS (2014), Tsarnaev became a threat to the Muslim community, and the

community Mosque reported confrontational situations between Tsarnaev and others

about Muslim beliefs. Had enforcement authorities been able to act on those reports, they

may have averted the bombings. Unusual financial activity may also signal lone wolf

terrorists.

Financing

Terrorist leaders of groups such as Al Qaeda, Hamas, and the Muslim

Brotherhood pooled finances and moved funds across borders quickly due to the

American legal system (Vadum, 2017). However, according to Simon (2013), lone wolf

terrorists were self-financed and -organized (Simon, 2013). Simon posited that

independence prevented connecting the lone wolf to a larger organization. However, it

could alert a community if the citizens did not view the lone wolf's actions normal within

that community (Berger and Luckmann's [1966] social construction theory). In many

cases, lone wolf terrorists dwell in poverty-stricken communities (Bergen, 2017). Bergen

demonstrated that Cedar-Riverside, Minnesota provided the most significant source of assistance for Al-Shabaab, specifically the impoverished community known as "Little Mogadishu" (p. 175). The median annual income in Little Mogadishu averaged about $15,000 (Bergen, 2017). Bergen also posited that Al-Shabaab might appeal to the younger population because association with Al-Shabaab may be better than working a job that does not pay well, which fits into Borum's (2012a) model. The notion of societal injustice plays to varying degrees throughout the stages of Borum's model, up to, and including, the violent end justifying the means.

The Ends Justify the Means

Lone wolves often use their ideology to justify their behavior, which the larger terrorist group with which the lone wolf identifies views as too extreme (Simon, 2013). According to Simon, the sole explanation terrorists embrace throughout history has been that the result justifies the means. Therefore, should casualties occur, the cost is acceptable to further the terrorists' cause. According to Kaczynski (2009), the idea that the ends justify the means implies a nexus between ideological beliefs and violence in the mind of terrorists. Kaczynski demonstrated a strong sentiment towards opposition to the evolution of society toward industrialization. Alternatively, many terrorists need to justify their hatred of anyone that does not believe the way they do (Bergen, 2017; Sorensen, 2016). According to Sorensen, Headley justified the Israelis' beheadings conducted by ISIS and Al Qaeda relative to the hatred of Israel. Sorensen reported that Headley felt "no sorrow for their [Israeli's] kids or their [Israeli's] old and feeble. They [Israelis] are all

the same" (p. 172). Thus, Borum's (2012a) fourth stage was evident in the final actions of such terrorists.

Furthermore, Sorensen (2016) demonstrated that Al Qaeda relied on how Western media reported their terrorist activity and analyzed their violent attacks, which inferred a strategic manipulation of social construction. Sorensen posited that Al Qaeda believed Americans were weak and intolerant of long periods of violence. Thus, by continually conducting beheadings and burning bodies, Al-Qaeda believed Americans would back down. Following Berger and Luckman's (1966) theory of social construction and Borum's (2012a) four-stage pathway mindset model of terrorism, terrorists have socially constructed reality through media reports for an exceptionally long time. It was also apparent that public policy on terrorism remained insufficient.

Public Policy on Terrorism

Even when credible proof was available that radicalization occurred involving a U.S. citizen, the U.S. Constitution limited how the government could respond (A Ticking Time Bomb, 2011). Heymann (2000) discussed several laws relevant to apprehension and surveillance of terrorists operating overseas, which could minimize how law enforcement operates abroad. However, there were also gaps within U.S. guidelines in determining what agency receives information reports regarding terrorism (Cain & DoD, 2010). The gaps in these laws and policies indicated that the apprehension of terrorists domestic or abroad could be problematic. For example, Heyman reported no boundaries limiting terrorists from being tipped off that they were wanted or that those entities would act as sponsors for their actions. Such was the case in Pakistan before the operation that killed

Osama Bin Laden (Heyman, 2000). Thus, the social construction from country to country, state to state, community to community, agency to agency, or even person to person held varying degrees of, if any, accountability policy.

From officers disobeying existing policies regarding Hassan (Cain & DoD, 2010) to the FBI and DEA's failures to arrest Headley despite reports by his wife and community members about his behavior (Sorensen, 2016), policy enforcing accountability was lacking. Additionally, CHS (2014) was adamant about holding the FBI and Homeland Security accountable for failing to share and communicate terrorist operations information to state and local agencies. Cain and DoD also acknowledged that leadership and accountability measures needed implementation. However, such accountability requires a new social construction between agencies and an understanding of what constitutes a radicalized terrorist.

Identification of the terrorist mindset begins with understanding the mindset pathway (Borum, 2012a). Once the various stages of radicalization are understood, identifying factors categorize quickly into a social construction model. For example, the information provided by CHS (2014) redundantly indicated similarities in the patterns of behavior of Bledsoe, Hassan, Mateen, and others. According to CHS, Tsarnaev, Haasan, and Bledsoe were subjects of interest to Homeland Security. The FBI and DEA had numerous opportunities to arrest Headley; however, Headley had provided valid information to the DEA, leading to arrests, which resulted in Headley's statement falling to the wayside (Sorensen, 2016). Likewise, Hassan's dissertation and PowerPoint presentation raised red flags (CHS, 2014). Nonetheless, with some interagency

communication, local and state authorities could have assisted in apprehending those lone wolf extremists and others with violent agendas.

Interagency Communication

Thus, the importance of communication between enforcement organizations, departments, and personnel was critical; however, a systemic failure between the FBI & DoD occurred, allowing a radicalized lone wolf terrorist to attack (A Ticking Time Bomb, 2011). Both agencies had enough information indicating Hassan's radicalization, and both agencies failed to act (A Ticking Time Bomb, 2011). That communication failure raised concerns about the governments' ability to handle a terrorist attack (A Ticking Time Bomb, 2011). CHS (2014) found errors and failures connecting the dots to Tsarnaev as well. According to CHS, there was a lack of communication between agencies regarding signs of Tsarnaev's radicalization.

Such information was critical because it supplemented intelligence and communication sharing (Sorensen, 2016); thereby, de-normalizing terrorist social construction rather than normalizing it. However, personal experience and literature review demonstrated that domestic agencies frequently demonstrated the same exclusive authority and sharing practices as foreign agencies. For example, Heymann (2000) reported that U.S. surveillance in a country, even one with a close partnership, would be uncommon and conducted exclusively with the authorization and collaboration of local authorities due to international law and diplomacy. This social construct association was relevant because it described the complexity of the surveillance of terrorists domestically and abroad. According to Heymann, terrorists abroad used their successful overseas

operations to motivate lone wolf activity and radicalize and recruit followers; thus, domestic terrorism often had international correlations. CHS recommended interagency training and drilling as imperative strategies to maintaining an effective response to terrorist incidents; albeit, differing agency institutional cultures provide challenges.

Institutional Culture

At the time of the Fort Hood attack, DoD and the FBI had inept institutional cultures that did not provide adequate policies and training (A Ticking Time Bomb, 2011). DoD service members did not recognize violent radicalization nor differentiate terrorist ideology from the practice of peaceful Islam (A Ticking Time Bomb, 2011). Understanding social construction and recognizing the various stages of Borum's (2012a) model could significantly aid training. For example, during the Boston Marathon, Tsarnaev launched an attack against the Watertown Police Department using improvised explosive devices and high-powered weapons (CHS, 2014). Had preparedness policy and associated training been developed from Borum's model in conjunction with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social construction theory, enforcement personnel could have been better able to circumvent the attack. On a positive note, according to CHS, the Boston Commissioner and the Watertown Police Department Chief discussed maintaining the National Incident Management System (NIMS) training with other agencies and continuing to maintain an open line of communication with other departments.

The Commissioner and Police Chief strategized the importance of understanding other agencies' command and control operations to equip law enforcement with appropriate training to counter lone wolf terrorist activity and involve local communities

(CHS, 2014). In other words, agencies needed to be aware of each other's social construction because they serve communities. Cain and DoD (2010) posited that commanders need to be more aware of the behavioral indicators displayed when people were probable to commit violent acts or were becoming radicalized; thus, Borum's (2012a) terrorist mindset model. While policies mandating interagency participation and sharing remained inadequate, CHS did indicate the need to foster relationships with other agencies by providing the proper resources to carry out their duties.

Resources

Alone, existing agencies were ill-equipped to counter radicalized lone wolf terrorists (A Ticking Time Bomb, 2011; Cain & DoD, 2010; CHS, 2014). According to CHS, during the Boston Marathon bombings, NIMS, and the Urban Areas Security Initiatives Funding (UASIF) provided resources to equip responding Police Departments with personnel and equipment addressing the incident. NIMS, UASIF, the DoD's Threat Management Unit, the Navy's Fusion Center, and the U.S. Postal Service's (USPS) Threat Assessment Management Teams were valuable resources; however, their isolated use was counterproductive. Both Cain and DoD and CHS demonstrated the importance of maintaining funding and the necessary systems to address future attacks and incidents. Both Cain and DoD and CHS presented supporting discussion for combining resources; however, such interagency collaboration did not adopt such into policy and practice.

Policy Extension

Public policy related to lone wolf terrorist attacks needed further development. Albeit laws like the Patriot Act (United States, 2001) passed after 9/11 directly targeting

financial institutions and the methods used for surveillance. However, those laws did not address existing policy and intelligence methods (Vadum, 2017). CHS (2014) demonstrated that the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act of 2002 (TRIA) and Terrorism Risk Insurance Extension Act of 2005 (TRIEA; 2005) could extend to sustain local communities and businesses suffering financial losses due to terrorist activity. However, according to the Insurance Information Institute (2019), "by early 2002, 45 states had approved [terrorism] exclusion for standard commercial policies" (para. 21). Both the TRIA and TRIEA were limited to terroristic attacks by foreign perpetrators. Consequently, the Terrorism Risk Insurance Program (TRIPRA; 2007) created a loss-sharing program, and TRIPRA (2015) expanded the definition of terrorism to include anyone acting in association with foreign people or interests, including domestic terrorism. Despite the associated risk-sharing reliefs provided by these policies, public policy related to identifying and apprehending lone wolf terrorists remained insufficient.

The United States is a Democratic Republic, otherwise referred to as a representative democracy, wherein the citizens vote for politicians and policies (Madison, 1787; Volokh, 2015). Therefore, the information communicated to the populace impacted and swayed public opinion. Cain and DoD (2010) recommended that enforcement agencies reevaluate their background policies and consider making the necessary changes by re-examining the necessity of their national and local agency and credit checks. According to Cain and DoD, such background checks should include DOD clearances, training commanders, supervisors, and legal advisors regarding identification and reaction to potentially adverse characteristics. Characteristics could include internal

threats and inspections related to citizenship and clearances ensuring appropriate threat mitigation.

Subsequently, such policy and practice evaluation and reevaluation are essential to identifying potential terrorists and lone wolf terrorists embedded within existing infrastructures. Vadum (2017) demonstrated examples of terrorist ideology successfully embedded into existing policy and how policy was molded and structured to promote these ideas. Vadum identified specific political kickbacks and racial hostilities. Vadum identified policies and positions that embraced the fundamental tenets of terrorist ideology and, subsequently, aligned with Borum's (2012a) terrorist mindset in conjunction with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social construction theory. However, Netanyahu (2001) emphasized the terrorist's intentional use of violence, which aligned with Borum's fourth stage; rarely do terrorists attempt intimidation. Netanyahu effectively connected social construction to counter terrorism strategies by presenting principles and components critical for lawmakers to incorporate into existing policies to thwart terrorist activity. Netanyahu recommended ten keys to curb terrorism:

- Impose sanctions on suppliers of nuclear technology to terrorist states.
- Impose diplomatic, economic, and military sanctions on the terrorist states themselves.
- Neutralize terrorist enclaves.
- Freeze financial assets in the West of terrorist regimes and organizations.
- Share intelligence.

- Revise legislation to enable greater surveillance and action against organizations inciting violence, subject to periodic renewal.

- Actively pursue terrorists.

- Do not release jailed terrorists.

- Train special forces to fight terrorism.

- Educate the public. (p. 132)

Even though the United States mirrored many of these principles, lone wolf terrorists (i.e., Bledsoe, Hassan, Tsarnaev) circumvented these principles to carry out their plots (Cain &DoD, 2010). According to Cain and DoD, both government and law enforcement failed to uphold established principles.

While it is simple to state that more stringent policy and policy enforcement might solve the problem, other scholars debated that too much public oversight could push lone wolves further up Borum's (2012a) terrorist pathway. Leone and Anrig (2003) discussed the way policies and laws affected citizens' liberties as Americans after 9-11. Discussing the Pentagon's Total Information Awareness Initiative (TIA), Leone and Anrig posited concern for Americans' freedoms. Using TIA, Leone and Anrig gathered data about citizens, including credit information, internet service provider details and usage, airline information, and more. The objective of TIA was to gain intelligence about individuals for suspicious terrorist activity (Stevens, 2003). The Supreme Court upheld several cases wherein, by a citizen's use of associated technologies, those citizens accepted the liability that government eavesdroppers might use it as well (Leone & Anrig, 2003). This assumption inferred that U.S. citizens were culpable and, thus, not

able to appeal any decision rendered because those citizens freely provided their information for a service. However, due to the nature of U.S. society (i.e., Berger and Luckmann's [1966] social construction theory), Americans were forced to assimilate to technology (i.e., banking statements online, billing statements online). Therefore, Leone and Anrig questioned whether TIA was a deterrent or an infringement. According to Leone and Anrig, an operation like TIA posed extreme peril and served as an avenue for spying and intimidation without limits and supervision.

TIA and its predecessor, the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), allowed the government to surveil citizens and were later enhanced to include searches (Leone & Anrig, 2003). According to Leone and Anrig, FISA allowed wiretap approvals more easily than official criminal investigations' laws. Much like Stevens (2003) reported of TIA, FISA did not mandate a need for probable cause of criminal activity. Neither policy required notification of the surveillance to the target unless they needed the information in a criminal proceeding (Leone & Anrig, 2003; Stevens, 2003). The Patriot Act (United States, 2001) recently created enhanced access and gave more power to the government to obtain information by decreasing barriers for law enforcement and foreign counterintelligence. The consequences of these policies and associated slant journalistic reporting could drive citizens to withhold data crucial to identifying radicalizing lone wolf terrorists due to social construction. With this research, I explored how social construction presented in journalistic reporting influenced the normalization of radical lone wolf behavior. Since policy affects communication and fewer than 10 percent of U.S. citizens refrain from communicating via the internet (Anderson et al., 2019;

Newport, 2014), internet communication, the technology in which citizens communicate, is not infringed. Based on my literature search, I found no indication of a terrorist event as big as 9-11 since 2011. However, the lone wolf threat and attacks persisted. Existing policy

- Lacked accountability and measures (Cain & DoD, 2010)

- Lacked adequate interagency communication (A Ticking Time Bomb, 2011; CHS, 2014)

- Lacked avenues to pursue appropriate action addressing radicalization and violent extremism (A Ticking Time Bomb, 2011)

- Must address the four phases that need further attention by law enforcement directly tied to radicalization: "One-Pre-Radicalization, Two-Self-Identification, Three-Indoctrination, and Four-Violence" (A Ticking Time Bomb, 2011, p. 72)

- Must address Netanyahu's (2001) list of ten factors

- Journalistic reports should warn or advise the public about issues before radical lone wolf events taking place (Bergen, 2017), not normalize them

Islamophobia and Historical Repetition

Values, attitudes, beliefs, and expectations (VABEs; Clawson, 2012) associated with racial phobia versus human rights further influenced the U.S. social construct. For example, Vadum (2017) claimed that civil rights activists purposefully infiltrated the U.S. government and society to normalize Sharia and related terrorist concepts. At the same time, Cole and Dempsey (2006) warned about the dangers of repeating past U.S. transgressions against entire cultures, like the U.S. injustices against Japanese immigrants

and citizens during World War II (WWII). In either case, those in power influenced

social construct using situational public reporting. Vadum posited that the Center for

Constitutional Rights (CCR) was a radical activist group that diverted the purpose of U.S.

tax laws toward terroristic goals. According to Vadum, CCR and similar non-profit

groups created an area of legality within which terrorist recruiting and organization

happen. Vadum also emphasized the danger of the politically correct (PC) social

construct spreading throughout American culture to counter Islamophobia. According to

Vadum, such PC activism promoting an expectation that no one speaks negatively or

stigmatize Islam (i.e., respect for civil rights). Vadum noted that U.S. Islamic enemies

were using PC in the same manner as U.S. Soviet Communist enemies: To prevent any

contrary social construction about Islam, Muslims, or Sharia. Vadum extensively referred

to the hostilities that politicians and policymakers were subjected to when presenting

policy addressing the terrorist ideology problem, noting that some policymakers

acquiesced and provided policy favoring terrorist ideology.

While civil rights policies may appease the Islamic Extremist and other Domestic

Terrorist groups within the United States (i.e., WAR, Army of God, KKK; Vadum,

2017), Cole and Dempsey (2006) demonstrated that civil rights policies are necessary.

For example, in 1919, the U.S. government reacted to terrorist bombings by forcefully

rounding up immigrants numbering in the thousands from close to 39 cities throughout

the country (Cole & Dempsey, 2006). Those individuals were undetained because of

connections to terrorist organizations and their political affiliations (Cole & Dempsey,

2006). Furthermore, during WWII, close to one hundred and ten thousand people, two-

thirds of whom were U.S. citizens, were put in internment camps because they were of Japanese descent unassociated with any national security threat (Cole & Dempsey, 2006). In these examples, a social construct of fear permeated the Nation's leaders resulting in tragic civil and human rights injustices. Vadum posited that societal fear also caused the opposite reaction; rather than detaining innocent civilians, terrorists go free. For example, because they did not want to be altercasted as Islamophobic, neighbors in San Bernardino, CA, failed to report suspicious behavior that ultimately resulted in a mass killing of innocent people and employees at a community-based social service clinic (Vadum, 2017). Islamic states continued attempting to persuade the United Nations (UN) to criminalize Islamophobia; thus, Vadum emphasized the importance of controlling U.S. borders and immigration in countering the war on terror.

While constructing society to believe that all Muslims were terrorists was inhumane, so was a social construction that normalized terrorist activities; thus, policymakers must develop policy that supports the rights and safety of all people. However, instituted and enforced new policies must be measured and critiqued for intended effectiveness. Policymakers cannot create public policy associated with radicalized lone wolf terrorists if those policymakers do not understand societal construct normalization. Thus, lone wolf psychology must be comprehended.

Lone Wolf Psychology

Understanding how lone wolf terrorists think or what drives them to the violent acts they pursue is crucial to developing effective policy, strategies, and training designed to identify and apprehend lone wolves before their acts of mass terror. While numerous

scholars researched terrorist psychology using various theoretical frameworks, all

associations fit well within Borum's (2012a) pathway and related to Berger and

Luckmann's (1966) social construction theory. Kaczynski (2009) was a loner diagnosed

with psychological problems and, according to Simon (2013), displayed behavior like

other lone wolves. Crenshaw (2000) inferred that current terrorists were not different

from past terrorists because they were pragmatic and had comprehensible aims, which

aligned with Dass-Brailsford's (2008) report that some terrorists adopted past and current

terroristic rhetoric for their cause. While Dass-Brailsford identified common factors

within the psychology of terrorists, Vaisman (2006) inferred that there was no set profile

of a terrorist. However, Vaisman also noted that socio-economic causation factors were a

part of the fundamental structure of terrorism, and terrorists' emotional needs were

satisfied through associated terrorist network organizations. Victoroff (2005) used several

theories to explain the mindset of a terrorist, and Volpato et al. (2010) demonstrated the

shared beliefs of terrorists using Sprinzak's (2007) delegitimization theory. Steiner

(2012) posited that culture, religion, social, and economic factors were precursors of

terrorist ideology; Townsend (2007) demonstrated a mindset pattern in suicidal terrorists,

and Rominek (2012) related the terrorist psychology of group belonging. DeAngelis

(2009) demonstrated that people opened to radicalization were angry, alienated, or

disenfranchised from society. Staub (1999) posited that terrorism began when the needs

of a minority group went unaddressed, and those feelings of injustice served as precursors

to terrorism and violence. For example, Stack described slamming a small plane into the

Internal Revenue Service (IRS) building in Texas as justified (Huffington Post, 2010;

Katz, 2010; Kennedy, 2010; Smoking Gun, 2010; Weisenthal, 2010). All these

explanations revolved around the construct of society, the minority group, the terrorist

network, and the social construction of the terrorist; and all can be associated with

various stages of Borum's (2003) four-stage process of terrorist, ideological

development:

- One - Social and Economic Deprivation;

- Two - Inequality and Resentment;

- Three - Blame/Attribution; and

- Four - Generalizing/Stereotyping/Dehumanizing/Demonizing the enemy cause.

  (p. 9)

Stage One - Social and Economic Deprivation

Understanding the roots of terrorism and the profiles of terrorists helped me

comprehend the psychological makeup of a radical lone wolf terrorist. Using inductive

theory, Vaisman (2006) qualitatively observed some fundamental components that lead

to terrorism. According to Vaisman, many social psychology models developed to

understand the social organization, group structures, and criminal and drug smuggling

behaviors parallel the developments in terrorist social communities. Both Vaisman and

Dass-Brailsford (2008) discussed the terrorist's emotional needs using Maslow's (1943)

theory of motivation hierarchy, which also aligned with Berger and Luckmann's (1966)

theory of social construction. Borum (2003, 2012a), Townsend (2007), Dass-Brailsford,

and Vaisman, among others, posited that a lack of emotional fulfillment, support, and

deprivation frequently began the radicalization process, not the terrorist's intellectual

levels. For example, Kaczynski (2009) was a highly intellectual person, a Harvard

graduate with a doctorate in mathematics, and a radicalized lone wolf terrorist.

The social construction of the terrorist's environment catalyzed the terrorist

mindset into stage one of Borum's (2012a) model. In discussing the role psychology and

psychiatry play in developing groups and individual terrorists, Townsend (2007)

connected terrorists' social interactions, or lack thereof, to terrorists' attacks and future

attacks. According to Townsend, despite inter-group conflicts, outcasts in society

(terrorists) needed to be accepted to a cause, group, group's identity, or group objective

to become radicalized. Townsend interviewed 35 incarcerated Middle Eastern terrorists

who stated that they joined their terrorist groups due to peer pressure. After they joined,

loyalty to the group was critical to comprehend the reason behind suicide terrorism

(Townsend, 2007). Townsend posited that, within the mindsets of suicidal lone wolf

terrorists, each terrorist was willing to die for the cause. Granted, Townsend focused on

the psychology of terrorist organizations and their ability to motivate lone wolf suicide

attacks. However, Townsend's findings aligned with Berger and Luckmann's (1966)

theory of social construction, Dass-Brailsford's emotional correlations, Maslow's (1943)

motivational hierarchy, and Vaisman's (2006) and Borum's connection of the terrorist's

VABEs to social and economic deprivation. According to Maslow, feelings of

deprivation evolved into beliefs of inequality and resentment.

Stage Two - Inequality and Resentment

Violence comes from the frustration of basic human needs not being met, and

their subsequent fulfillment is the key to gaining better insight into the roots of terrorism

(Staub, 1999; Victoroff, 2005). Several sources (Huffington Post, 2010; Katz, 2010; Kennedy, 2010; Smoking Gun, 2010; Weisenthal, 2010) printed Stack's final statement wherein the radicalized lone wolf terrorist poignantly exampled this theory:

> While very few working people would say they haven't had their fair share of taxes, in my lifetime, I can say with a great degree of certainty that there has never been a politician cast a vote on any matter with the likes of me or my interests in mind. Nor, for that matter, are they the least bit interested in me or anything I have to say. (p. 1)

Stack entered Borum's (2012a) stage two due to feelings of unjust taxing by the IRS and the government upon the populace. According to Stack, the U.S. government was corruptly taking advantage of the tax system to brainwash or gain the advantage over the populace to forcefully comply with their legal system (Huffington Post, 2010; Katz, 2010; Kennedy, 2010; Smoking Gun, 2010; Weisenthal, 2010). Stack thought that the American system was full of corruption and disillusion.

Consequently, concepts of inequality and resentment were often responsible for the violence. Robins and Post (1997) argued that political paranoia was responsible for every social disaster in history and was an underlying root cause for the decline of the West. Steiner (2012) used Fukuyama's (1992) end of history theory and Hare's (1993) psychopath checklist to dissect Bin Laden's terroristic reasonings and demonstrated how Al Qaeda used propaganda and rationale to justify their actions. For example, Al Qaeda drew its strategies extensively from tactics used by the Jews, Russians, Romans, and World Wars I and II as models for their military organization (Steiner, 2012). Steiner

noted the membership prerequisites required by Al Qaeda, both qualifications and characteristics, albeit the entirety of those prerequisites did not correlate entirely with Borum's (2012a) model. According to Steiner, Al Qaeda members must:

- Be Muslim.

- Be committed.

- Be mature.

- Be willing to sacrifice their lives.

- Be good listeners and be obedient.

- Keep secrets and conceal information.

- Be free of illness.

- Possess patience.

- Possess tranquility and unflappability.

- I possess intelligence and insight.

- Be cautious and prudent.

- Possess the ability to observe and analyze.

- Positions and conceal oneself. (p. 72)

However, Steiner's requirements did correlate with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of social construction in that Al Qaeda purposefully constructed the society of its members. Additionally, Steiner's findings provided insight into how lone wolf terrorists possessing Al Qaeda ideology and affiliation carried out lone wolf-style attacks under the auspices of Al Qaeda to advance the lone wolf's own "leaderless" beliefs. From the leaderless belief perspective, Borum's stages to lone wolf radicalization can be seen

within the Al Qaeda member prerequisites in the same manner that Straub (1999) posited that violence begets violence if group needs remain unaddressed.

Violence will continue to exist and escalate if basic needs remain unmet (Fukuyama, 1992; Maslow, 1943; Straub, 1999). According to Straub, socioeconomic conditions and individuals' must be part of the clique because they are fundamental factors that perpetuate violence and terror. Applying Straub's ideology, individuals not meeting all prerequisites to Al Qaeda membership would feel socially disadvantaged and resent ostracization, subsequently feeling unequal to actual members. Given those feelings of inequality and resentfulness, Steiner's (2012) list of Al Qaeda membership prerequisites does correlate with Borum's (2012a) model. Socioeconomic disadvantage, inequality, social exclusion, and resentment beget fear and insecurity within society (Straub, 1999). Straub inferred that those fears and insecurities allowed terrorist groups to control the actions of the populace so that the minority group could gain control; thus, meeting the needs of the minority group over the needs of the broader population. Staub developed those associations based on observations of people living in Rwanda, East Africa, by examining the socialization of youth leading to aggression and violence. Many scholars posited that left unaddressed, feelings of inequality and resentment naturally escalate to blame and attribution (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Borum, 2003, 2012a, 2012b; Dass-Brailsford, 2008; Fukuyama, 1992; Hare, 1993; Maslow, 1943; Straub, 1999; Townsend, 2007; Vaisman, 2006), Borum's (2012a) third stage in the terrorist mindset pathway.

Stage Three - Blame/attribution

Radicalizing lone wolf terrorists possessed strikingly similar psychological mindsets wherein they became consumed with a need to blame or attribute their (or their group's) disadvantaged situations on a more powerful entity such as a government power (Borum, 2003, 2012a, 2012b; Straub, 1999). For example, Stack claimed that anyone who stood up against the government imposed upon U.S. citizens would be punished and labeled a crackpot (Huffington Post, 2010; Katz, 2010; Kennedy, 2010; Smoking Gun, 2010; Weisenthal, 2010). This blame stage was critical in the radicalization process as it supplied the justification prevalent within the lone wolf's VABEs (Borum, 2003, 2012a, 2012b; Dass-Brailsford, 2008; Vaisman, 2006). Vaisman attributed socioeconomic causation for the terrorist's blame as a fundamental part of their mental and emotional structure. Dass-Brailsford related the need for the terrorist to attribute their emotions to their needs not being met. Victoroff (2005) and Volpato et al. inferred that terrorists shared beliefs associated with blaming those they felt caused the unjust situation. Sprinzak (2007) and Steiner (2012) demonstrated that culture, religion, social, and economic factors all gave cause to terrorists' blame and justification of their actions. Following Maslow's (1943) hierarchy, feelings of disservice or injustice motivated negative behaviors.

Alienation, disenfranchisement, anger, fear, isolation, and similar feelings led to varying degrees of violence, from vandalism to suicide bombings (DeAngelis, 2009; Rominek, 2012; Staub, 1999; Townsend, 2007). The radicalized lone wolf terrorist felt their needs and voices about issues were inconsequential to those in power; thus, they

adopted increasingly aggressive means to be heard (Borum, 2003). In the terrorists'

minds, society delegitimized their concerns. That delegitimization resulted in the terrorist

instigating violent inter-group conflict (Volpato et al., 2010). Volpato et al. reported that

delegitimization began with a yearning to raise or distinguish the delegitimized faction to

a legitimized level within the more extensive societal notice. Many terrorists feel they

must make those responsible pay for their inflicted injustices (Borum, 2003, 2012a,

2012b; DeAngelis, 2009; Dass-Brailsford, 2008; Rominek, 2012; Staub, 1999;

Townsend, 2007; Volpato et al., 2010; Vaisman, 2006). According to Borum (2012a),

once the radicalized lone wolf terrorist targeted the entity, they believed responsible for

the perceived injustice, that terrorist typically moves into planning and executing violent

demonstrations.

Stage Four - Generalizing/stereotyping/dehumanizing/demonizing

Terrorism is deliberate and systematic violence performed by a small number of

people (Crenshaw, 2000). According to Crenshaw, the purpose of terrorism was to

exploit the lack of security within a community by using violence to control a populace

through fear or intimidation. However, Dass-Brailsford (2008) and Crenshaw posited that

terrorism was not a personality disorder or irrational thinking; instead, terrorism was a

way of causing fear to assert power over a populace. In other words, terrorists were not

daft individuals but human beings with a set agenda dedicated to creating a society

formatted to fit their needs. Albeit Kaczynski (2009) was diagnosed with psychiatric

disorders; however, Rominek (2012), Victoroff (2005), and Dass-Brailsford noted that

psychiatric disorders do not predilect terrorism. Thus, terrorists use fear and violence to

achieve the desired result deliberately and methodically. Crenshaw said that historically terrorists generally sought short-term political power through revolution, national liberation, or secession. Crenshaw posited that modern terrorists, often motivated by religious imperatives, seek to transform the world. Thus, the terrorist dehumanizes or demonizes those they seek to terrorize.

As the targets of the terrorist became less human, planning and perpetrating violence against them became more straightforward and necessary to protect the innocent (Borum, 2003). The frustrations of the terrorist then move quickly into aggressive, violent execution (Borum, 2003; Staub, 1999; Victoroff, 2005). Victoroff demonstrated that numerous components make up a terrorist; thus, a terrorist's mind remains unexplained using one term. However, Borum's (2012a) model does not utilize a single term to explain a terrorist. Instead, Borum (2003, 2012a, 2012b) provides a mindset pathway to terroristic radicalization applicable to a wide variety of terrorist personalities. Regardless of which psychological model one employs, Dass-Brailsford's (2008), Rominek's (2012), Staub's, Victoroff's, or others; the sociological nature of Borum's (2012a) pathway provides a sound foundation for understanding the terrorist radicalization process. Thus, combining Borum's (2012a) model with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of social construction provided insight into the lone wolf terrorist's social construction.

Social Construction and The Lone Wolf Terrorist

Understanding lone wolf social construction was critical to identifying lone wolves before their violent terroristic acts. Merriam Webster (2019) defined social

construction as "an idea that has been created and accepted by the people in a society" (para. 1). However, Boghossian (2001) posited that social construction was not contingent on aspects of a society's citizens' social selves. Even though Boghossian believed that people could not shape society, many noted scholars demonstrated otherwise. Leeds-Huwitz (2016) reported that "social construction assumes that people construct (i.e., create, make, invent) their understandings of the world and the meanings they give to encounters with others, or various products they or others create" (para. 1). Thus, as Berger and Luckmann (1966) demonstrated, social construction was a process wherein people create ideas and perceive their experiences, encounters, and beliefs as a societal reality.

Whether in groups or instances of lone wolves, indoctrination was part of the terrorist social construct (Rominek, 2012; Steiner, 2012). While both Rominek and Steiner discussed the ideology behind the recruitment of terrorist cell networks, Rominek focused on the practices used to brainwash cell prospects and members into believing that suicide bombing gives purpose to the terrorist's existence in life. Albeit Rominek utilized the cultural r/k theory to provide classification to cultural processes, Rominek's findings still aligned with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of social construction.

Using the Al Qaeda membership prerequisite list documented by Steiner, the correlation becomes clear. Al Qaeda's membership requirements included cultural, physical, and mental aspects designed to shape and build their society; thus, their social construction mimics cultural r/k theory's balance of internal and external selection. According to Rominek, indoctrination occurred because of prospective members' desire

to be part of the "in-group," the click or faction the terrorist saw as noble or worthy. This societal construct worked for the lone wolf effectively as the group collective (Bergen, 2017; Rominek, 2012; Simon, 2013; Stakelbeck, 2015; Steiner, 2012). DeAngelis (2009) and Rominek inferred that understanding these correlations provided the means of early identification, and potentially subsequent reform, of the identified would-be terrorists. However, Rominek also posited that these characteristics minimized the effectiveness of the indoctrination process vital to the development of a terrorist cell network or the creation of leaderless resistance.

Despite potential indoctrination and communication failures, a growing lone wolf society exists in the United States (Bergen, 2017). According to Bergen, several areas in the US had links to terrorist organizations; thus, the associated communities had become normalized to the terrorist presence and activities. McQueeney (2014) demonstrated a link between the media's use of social construction to elaborate on justice issues and the inability of twenty-first-century students to evaluate the information and stereotypes discussed by those media. According to McQueeney,

> From a social constructionist perspective, social problems should not be taken for granted as objective conditions that afflict society…terrorism is constructed through the interpretation of events, the use of claims made up of language symbols, and work of claims-makers to attract the public's attention and sway public opinion in support of some interests over others. (p. 298)

McQueeney used media to further students' understanding of social construction about their socialization and challenges learners to identify instances wherein media influenced

their opinions and ideas about real-life situations. Spencer (2012) identified four metaphors that media sources used to create the idea of terrorism: war, crime, uncivilized evil, and disease. Spencer posited that the use of metaphors created the desired government response and influenced counterterrorism policies. According to Spencer, "a metaphorical understanding of political phenomena such as terrorism can give international relations insights into how certain policies become possible while others remain outside of the range of options thought to be appropriate" (p. 1). As reported by the media, social construction could also communicate terroristic ideas and policies.

While an everyday media norm was to depict terrorists as pathological, quickly identified, outcasts (Cole, 1996; Ferran & Meek, 2018), that normalized view obfuscated terrorists amid society (Graham, 2016). On the contrary, lone wolves were often intelligent, as was apparent in the Fort Hood Shooting by U.S. Army Major Hassan and Mathematics Professor Kaczynski. According to Kaczynski (2009), the lone wolf desired their causes be publicized and was intelligent enough to use society's media sources to that end. Turk (2004) also demonstrated how a terrorist used social construction to construct their reality. According to Turk,

> The most significant contribution of sociological thinking to our understanding of terrorism is the realization that it is a social construction. Contrary to the impression fostered by official incidence courts and media reports, terrorism is not a given in the real world but instead is an interpretation of events and their presumed causes. (p. 1)

Thus, Turk established that terrorism was interpreted by individuals differently. Turk also stated that,

> The construction and selective application of definitions of terrorism are embodied in the dynamics of political conflicts, where individual warfare to political conflicts, where ideological warfare to cast the enemy as an evildoer, is a dimension of the struggle to win support for one's own cause." (p. 1)

This information aligned with Spencer's (2012) inference that metaphors strategically communicate ideas and influence policies.

However, when intelligence information is crucial to the safety of a populace and national security, reliable information is critical to creating an adequate response, which means that social construction impacts society. Whatever society constructs becomes normalized by individuals within that society, and society's citizens see those normalizations as acceptable (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Thus, the method by which normalization occurred within a society was an integral part of that normalization process because it communicated what was acceptable and unacceptable within a society. According to Jenkins (2003), "as so often in terrorism, it is not so much the violent act that carries lasting historical weight, but rather the official response and the construction of memory" (p. 75). Jenkins effectively conveyed that social construction played a part in communication/reporting, which impacted radical lone wolf counterterrorism preparedness.

Political Slant: Communication that Normalizes Terrorism

Journalists provided the meaning of events by deciphering them with pictures and words, which influenced what is relevant to the journalist's audience (Ruigrok & van Atteveldt, 2007). Ruigrok and van Atteveldt studied the journalistic framing of terrorist attacks in American, British, and Dutch news outlets. According to Wolfsfeld (1997), current events influence what media covers; thus, journalists impacted the populace's attitudes. Ruigrok and van Atteveldt connected "mass communication and public attitudes preferences when he [Wolfsfeld] stated the way in which the world imagined what men will do" (p. 68). Druckman and Parkin (2005) demonstrated how editorial slant affected voters' social construction. According to Druckman and Parkin, "voters often base their candidate evaluations on the issues emphasized in the news, and they form their opinions about events in ways that correspond with how the news frames those events" (p. 1030). Therefore, journalists used framing to report what they think their audience will find valuable and how they believed that the audience should perceive what the journalist was reporting to influence social construction. Ruigrok and van Atteveldt defined journalistic framing as,

> Selecting aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in communicating text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. (p. 69)

Ruigrok and van Atteveldt demonstrated how several events reported in American, British, and Dutch papers were framed differently by news agencies throughout several

countries, thus, creating different social constructs. The framing was considered standard practice by journalists (Ruigrok & van Atteveldt, 2007).

Journalistic reporting, editorial columns, and critic reviews all contained elements of framing (Druckman & Parkin, 2005). Druckman and Parkin conducted an exit poll assessing the slant of the 1988 and 1992 Senate campaign coverage. Peake (2007) examined media coverage of the 2006 U.S. Presidential campaign from June to October. In both studies, the researchers found significant voter influence resulting from the media coverage's political slant directed toward shaping society. Druckman and Parkin found that editorial endorsements affected the tone of and criticisms printed regarding the incumbents. Peake reported that local journalists usually re-wrote newswire reports because of the editor's requirements.

Society's construct also influenced the slant of journalistic reporting. For example, Peake (2007) determined that market pressures and political atmosphere impacted the reports' coverage, tone, and space within news outlets. Additionally, Peake found that local press covered the presidential election less frequently than the prestige press. However, Peake reported that local news reports sometimes lack experience in public policy compared to prestige press journalists. Like Ruigrok and van Atteveldt's (2007) and Song's (2004) findings, Peake determined that the journalists' ontology shaped how they socially construct the readers' realities. These findings aligned strongly with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of social construction. Furthermore, Peake noted that "the one area most careful studies of news bias appear to agree on is that political news tend to have an overriding negative bias" (p. 55); adding that,

> Bias might stem from editors, owners, and journalists as suggested by the
> sociological model or bias might arise from the newspaper's audience and its
> advertisers as suggested by the economic model. Media firms may slant their
> news reports toward the beliefs of their community to satisfy their audience and
> maximize profit. (p. 56)

Peake used a least-squares regression to sample 98 news outlets, then repeated that regression excluding news outlets that did not cover the election or were considered a prestige press. While Peake and Ruigrok and van Atteveldt focused on journalism in general, Song categorized the political slant of freelance journalists. Among Song's 15 categories of slant were topic, affiliation, and ideological perspective, which provided correlative insight between the four studies. Song noted that,

> Op-Ed page editors tend to select freelancer authors whose articles were
> compatible with the ideological orientation of each newspaper. These findings are
> consistent with Ciofalo's and Traverso's study of the Op-Ed Editors, which
> concluded that a paper's editorial policies and stands influenced the choice of
> free-lancer authored Op-Ed pieces. (p. 49)

All four scholars, Druckman and Parkin, Peake, Ruigrok and van Atteveldt, and Song found that the organizational culture of news outlets, regardless of freelance, local, or prestige, promoted slanted reporting practices.

Considering the threat of the radicalizing lone wolf terrorist hidden within a society wherein the terrorist's activities were normalized could hinder identification of the terrorist mindset and stage on Borum's (2012a) pathway model, slanted social

construction represents a significant problem. Political slant may be jeopardizing objective and fair reporting, but more importantly, preventing timely identification of radicalizing lone wolf terrorists. Recognizing the normalization of terrorist actions resulting from journalistic reporting would help policymakers, and enforcement officials curb those terrorist activities resulting in positive social change.

Implications for Positive Social Change

Implications for social change include improved enforcement training and procedures, increased public safety, and potential perpetrator reformation. These positive changes represent a piece of the overall positive change to the social construct of U.S. society. By furthering social scientific understanding of how politically slanted journalistic reporting normalizes radicalizing lone wolf activity, policymakers can improve public policy and associated results.

Public Policy Implications

Public policy development and enforcement operations related to protecting society from lone wolf terrorists depend on the intelligence gathered and shared (A Ticking Time Bomb, 2011; Cain & DoD, 2010; CHS, 2014; Sorensen, 2016). Existing public policy related to lone wolf terrorism was insufficient to support enforcement operations and public safety; however, literature indicated a lack of understanding and communication were critical attributable factors (A Ticking Time Bomb, 2011; Bergen, 2017; Cain & DoD, 2010; CHS, 2014; Cole & Dempsey, 2006; Leone & Anrig, 2003; Sorensen, 2016; Stevens, 2003; Vadum, 2017). As Bergen demonstrated, journalistic reporting influences what society perceives as acceptable (normalized); thus, those

perceptions influenced intelligence communicated to enforcement agencies. Accordingly, public policy must include an understanding of lone wolf terrorists, consider influences of journalistic normalizing, and address communication issues between agencies, the media, and the public.

Through my study, I furthered scientific understanding of how journalistic, political slant influenced the normalization of four lone wolf terrorist attacks in NYC. That increased understanding can help policymakers develop improved public policy in consideration of associated journalistic social construction. Improved public policy is essential to developing an improved response in communication and information sharing with the populace, which can aid Federal, State, and Local law enforcement agencies with terrorism preparedness and response; thus, improving societal safety.

Social Change Implications

In my professional policing experience, when enforcement agencies thwarted lone wolf attacks within communities, communities were more forthcoming and helpful by providing enforcement personnel with credible intelligence information, which, in turn, positively changed society. Positive social changes from my findings could include increased public safety, enhanced public awareness, improved communication, and potential reformation of radicalizing lone wolf terrorists (A Ticking Time Bomb, 2011; Bergen, 2017; Cain & DoD, 2010; CHS, 2014; Cole & Dempsey, 2006; Dass-Brailsford, 2008; DeAngelis, 2009; Leone & Anrig, 2003; Sorensen, 2016; Stevens, 2003; Vadum, 2017). Dass-Brailsford articulated the effect that terrorism had on society and the cycle of violence that perpetrates with society. However, Dass-Brailsford also demonstrated the

psychological effects on the human body and how the population recovers from terrorist attacks. Dass-Brailsford used Maslow's (1943) hierarchy as a foundation for survival techniques within the general populace and aligned with the importance of communication after an incident.

According to Dass-Brailsford (2008), those techniques were effective strategies to overcome emotional trials and mental pictures embedded after a terrorist attack and help individuals assimilate back into society. Similarly, DeAngelis (2009) associated communication with terrorist reformation. DeAngelis discovered how to talk terrorists out of committing violence using peaceful dialogue and assistance. According to DeAngelis, a growing number of de-radicalization programs worldwide are dedicated to providing support and successfully demonstrating that intervention leads to prevention. DeAngelis explained how terrorism develops when sociological needs remain unmet. In Borum's (2012a) stages two and three, radicalizing terrorists attributed their unjust environment (unmet sociological needs) to a target they held responsible. Thus, applying DeAngelis' findings, intervention any time before Borum's stage four could result in the reformation of that terrorist into a productive member of society. My findings further scientific understanding of how journalism influences how society sees and interacts with radicalizing terrorists. Positive social change resulting from this study could extend from overall societal safety to every member of society's individual mental and social well-being, including the would-be terrorist. The implications for positive change could come full circle as improved societal well-being could enhance communication between society and enforcement personnel, which would then help improve public policy.

Summary

The members of society construct their society, and those with increased influence play a more significant role in constructing that society; thus, journalists play a critical role in the social construct of society. If journalists slant or omit information, those journalists construct a reality wherein behavior within that society normalizes according to what the journalists conveyed was acceptable. If radicalizing lone wolf terrorist behavior or activities are normalized within society, then members of society will not see the threat hidden among them. By exploring the journalistic normalization of four lone wolf terrorist attacks in NYC, I added to scientific understandings, resulting in positive social change and improved public policy. Through associating findings with Borum's (2012a) four-stage pathway mindset of terrorism in conjunction with a framework of Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of social construction, I exposed how journalistic reporting has normalized radicalizing lone wolves.

Chapter 2, the literature review, included the search parameters and literature review on (a) the proposed study framework, (b) explanation of a lone wolf, (c) research review, (d) patterns of behavior, (e) ideology, (f) policy, (g) psychology, (h) social construction, (i) communication, (j) social change, and (k) summary. Chapter 3, the Research Method, includes: (a) the research design and rationale, (b) role of the researcher, (c) methodology, (d) participant selection, (e) instrumentation, (f) data collection plan, (g) data analysis plan, (h) issues of trustworthiness, and (i) ethical procedures. Chapter 4 includes the results, and Chapter 5 further discussion and recommendations.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to qualitatively identify and analyze how social construction in journalistic reporting was normalizing radical lone wolf terrorism with potential variations in reporting content based on journalistic styles within the NYC Metropolitan area. I analyzed the online reporting of four NYC news outlets, each with varying positions on the political continuum from left-leaning liberal to right-leaning conservative. Moustakas (1994) stated that the manifestations of consciousness are absolute reality while world ontologies are a product of learning. By analyzing the patterns, communication deficiencies, and social construction relative to radical lone wolf terrorism events, I better understand the lone wolf terrorist phenomenon. In addition, findings can help analyze whether current communication and journalism strategies implemented regarding radical lone wolf terrorists need re-evaluation.

This chapter identifies the methodology and foundations of the study. Chapter 3, the research method, includes: (a) the research design and rationale, (b) role of the researcher, (c) methodology, (d) participant selection, (e) instrumentation, (f) data collection plan, (g) data analyses plan, (h) issues of trustworthiness, and (i) ethical procedures. Chapter 3 begins with the rationale and justification for the proposed research methodology.

Research Design and Rationale

I designed this phenomenological study to answer the central question: *How are socially constructed journalism stories of lone wolf terrorist events in NYC aligning with liberal to conservative political newsprint continuums?* My primary objective was to

discover how journalistic reporting impacted the social construction of content and readership normalization of lone wolf terrorism behaviors. Creswell (2009) stated that the qualitative process provides an overall orienting study lens to address questions of gender, class, and race (or other issues of marginalized groups). Creswell noted how this lens focuses on advocacy, which shapes question types, informs data collection and analysis, and provides a call for action. To that end, I conducted thematic analyses from various journalistic reports of lone wolf terrorist activities across a political spectrum of online news outlets. Braun and Clarke (2006) found that "thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data" (p. 79). I conducted this research from a phenomenological approach.

Phenomenology, unlike other qualitative methodologies, centers on the search for meaning (Moustakas, 1994). In contrast, a case study revolves around a single event, group, or clustered phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). Since my research involved four different events and three different political slants, a case study was inappropriate. An ethnography is a time-consuming emersion into an entire group of people over a prolonged period (Creswell, 2009); thus, an ethnographic study was also not appropriate for my research. Grounded theory studies focus on the development of theories (Moustakas, 1994). Since I built this study on existing theory, a grounded theory approach was not conducive. A narrative study centers on the lives and stories of individuals and their narrations about their experiences (Creswell, 2009). Although narrations and ideas bound this study, those narrations were journalistic accountings of specific events. Since I analyzed those reports to reveal slants building social

construction and normalization, a narrative approach was inappropriate. Historical studies base analysis on historical events to make predictions and hypothesize about the future using analytical data (Rutgers, 2021). While I analyzed prior events, I did not predict future events; instead, I explored reports of those events that socially construct normalization. Thus, a historical approach was not appropriate for this study. Moustakas (1994) reported that "phenomenology seeks meanings from appearances and arrives at essences through intuition and reflection on conscious acts of experience, leading to ideas, concepts, judgments, and understandings" (p. 58). With this study, I use a phenomenological tradition to seek the meaning behind journalistic content and social normalization of the lone wolf phenomena.

I derived the data from four online local news outlets in the NYC Metropolitan Area (*NY Times, Daily News, NY Post,* and *Wall Street Journal*), each with an editorial slant along a political continuum from liberal to conservative. I phrased the central question towards querying, identifying, and investigating journalistic content to expose thematic discrepancies related to the social construction of normalization of the lone wolf phenomena. Thus, phenomenology provided the best approach to complete this objective. In this tradition, my role as the researcher was critical.

Role of the Researcher

As the sole researcher, I impartially recorded the study information and analyzed the data from a neutral perspective to create a picture employing ideas and theories using journalistic resources. I let the research guide me in whatever direction it took me. As a civilian member of the NYC, NY metropolitan area, I do not have, nor did I have any

relationship with the chosen news outlets or the local press. I also do not, and did not, have a preferred newspaper outlet that I follow(ed). I am leery about terrorist reports, but I did not allow my feelings to impede the study.

As a retired law enforcement officer and a 9/11 first responder, I am, and was throughout the study, aware of my views and opinions about terrorism. Since it was critical to the study that I remained transparent while conducting research, I documented biases throughout the investigation. I accomplished this documentation by maintaining a reflexive journal. I also maintained a checklist with the required standards that I needed to meet to keep me from deviating from the study parameters and neutrality. Thus, through meticulous content analyses of published journalism, I investigated and explained whether reported stories about radical lone wolf events aligned with the political slant of the publication source and contributed to lone wolf terrorist normalization. I used several strategies of validity to produce and enhance confidence in the study's outcome. Some of these strategies included an audit trail, triangulation, analyses, and data interpretation.

Methodology

In this section, I present the details of the study methodology. This section includes participants, instrumentation, data type, data collection, data coding, and data analyses. Since this study explored journalistic reports surrounding specific events in NYC, my participant pool consisted of NYC news outlets, not human beings.

Participant Selection Logic

Not including magazines, I counted more than 50 daily and weekly NYC news outlets in several languages. I studied social construction and normalization about four selected radical lone wolf terrorist events in NYC between 2010 and 2017. Therefore, I limited my purposive sampling strategy to news outlets meeting four criteria: (a) daily reporting, (b) English reporting, (c) large circulation, and (d) established political slant. Accordingly, I selected four NYC news outlets (*NY Daily News, NY Times, NY Post, Wall Street Journal*) that had available online content and archival data.

My rationale for choosing these four news outlets was their circulation and diverse political spectrum from liberal to conservative readership. Creswell (2009) believed that researchers should use inductive data analyses to build patterns, categories, and themes. Creswell advocated that bottom-up data organization moves more abstract units of information increasingly, illustrating back and forth between the themes until the researchers establish a comprehensive set of themes. Creswell also recommended interactive participant collaboration so that participants can shape the themes or abstractions. Due to their large circulation and wide political slant (discussed in the next section), these news outlets accurately provided the measures necessary to answer the central question of this study.

I accessed these digital news outlets' stories reflecting the four selected radical lone wolf events via their online services. I dissected and analyzed journalistic reports evaluating their political alignment and normalization with the assumed readership's social construction of their body politic. The *Wall Street Journal, NY Times, Daily News,*

and *NY Post* were the top four NYC news outlets (Agility PR Solutions, 2021; Cision, 2010; Infoplease, 2007). Only two sources listed circulation, Muck Rack (2018) and Infoplease; however, only Infoplease detailed circulation for all four publishers (see Figure 1). These findings provided evidence that these news outlets had significantly large readership bases. Braun and Clarke (2013) posited that "the most basic definition of qualitative research is that it uses words as data collected and analyzed in all sorts of ways" (p. 1). I achieved content saturation using my time-bounded parameters, wherein authorities apprehended the perpetrators of the four lone wolf terrorist events and associated cases concluded.

Figure 1

News Outlet Circulation
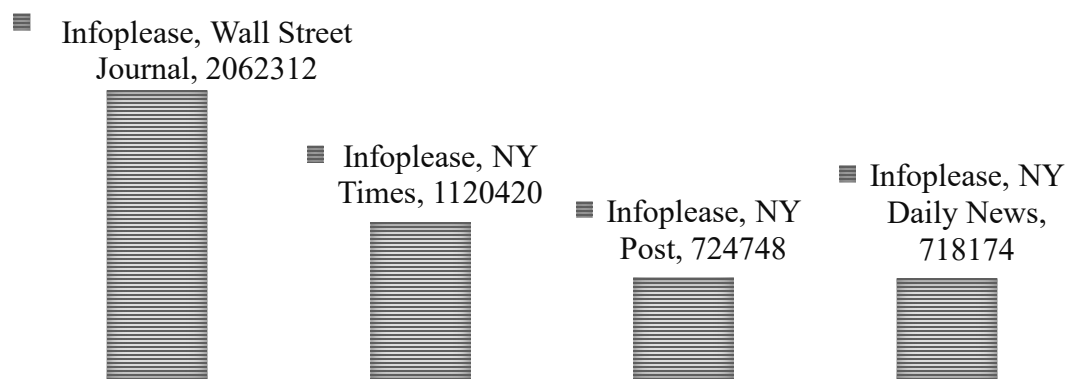
Note. Newspaper circulation adapted from public data (Infoplease, 2007). No permission to reprint is needed.

Substantiating News Outlets' Political Slant

Even though the political slant of the four news outlets is commonly accepted, I performed a random search through Google for any substantiation of the political alignment of the four news outlets: *Wall Street Journal*, *NY Times*, *NY Post*, and *NY*

Daily News. My goal was to affirm or disaffirm the political slant of each new outlet via articles, discussions, or other easily and quickly found internet communication. Search results confirmed the political slant of each news outlet.

NY Times: Liberal

Five sources listed the *NY Times* as a liberal NYC newspaper (Allsides, 2020; Frost, 2019; Mulshine, 2020; Okrent, 2004; Puglisi, 2006). In two blind bias surveys, Allsides found the *NY Times* consistently reported with a significant left bias. Okrent detailed examples of the liberal bias from conservative and liberal perspectives throughout 2004. Mulshine pointed out the still-dominant liberal trend in 2020 by highlighting the editor's resignation due to that liberal bias. Thus, between 2004 and 2020, the *NY Times* was considered a liberally biased news outlet. Furthermore, Puglisi quantitively analyzed *NY Times* reports between 1946 to 1947 and, controlling for Gallup data, found the news outlet was consistently liberally biased. Frost additionally explained that the liberal reporting of the *NY Times* offered coverage of the social justice issues that other news outlets did not, which Frost noted were critically important to many citizens.

NY Daily News: Democratic

Several sources rated the *NY Daily News* as a left-leaning newspaper (Allsides, 2020; Media Bias Fact Check, 2021; Kilinski, 2018; Pressman, 2019). Allsides reported that the *Daily News* had a left media bias. Media Bias Fact Check identified the *Daily News* editorial opinion as highly credible based on its fact-checking history with a left learning focus. Five different members of Kilinski noted that the *Daily News* had left-leaning perspectives. However, Pressman pointed out that although the paper is currently

left-leaning, the newspaper sounded like Trump 70 years ago, suggesting that the news outlet was more right-leaning 2 decades ago than between 2010 and 2017.

NY Post: Republican

Multiple sources confirmed that the *NY Post* was a right-leaning paper (Allsides, 2020; Caralle, 2020; Concha, 2020; Media Bias Fact Check, 2021; Murphy, 2019). Allsides detailed the newspaper's right-leaning agenda using multi-partisan, scientific analysis. Murphy also established the *NY Post* as a right-leaning bias opinion source based on political bias survey questions. Media Bias Fact Check noted the *NY Post*'s targeted right-leaning reading audience. Concha and Caralle's reports, among others, also emphasized the *NY Post*'s right-leaning political standing and associated endorsements.

Wall Street Journal: Conservative

I found numerous sources supporting the *Wall Street Journal*'s conservative slant (Allsides, 2020; Lesemann, 2020; McGee, 2019, Media Bias Fact Check, 2021; Weinberg, 2010). Lesemann discussed *Wall Street Journal* owner Rupert Murdoch's conservative background and associated slant for the business-oriented paper and outspoken conservative editorial page. Allsides and Media Bias Fact Check ranked the *Wall Street Journal* as a politically conservative outlet that pushes conservative causes. While McGee also posited that the paper was conservative, McGee noted that the *Wall Street Journal* provided fair news clarification. However, Weinberg mentioned that the *Wall Street Journal*'s conservative news spin often conflicted with the liberal reports published in the *NY Times*.

Instrumentation

Instrumentation included all aids used in gathering or analyzing data. I used software and tools that I own, including NVivo v.12 Plus, Excel, Word, and journals. Additionally, I used each news publisher's website to search for data relating to the four lone wolf terrorist events reported between 2010 and 2017. The combination of these instruments was adequate to answer the study question.

- I uploaded and analyzed all data sources using NVivo v.12 Plus, published by QSR International. I used an assortment of NVivo's functionality, including coding tools, thematic graphing, and other qualitative analysis tools.

- I used Office 2019, published by Microsoft (MS), for limited sorting and calculation functionality, digital journaling, observations, and analyses.

- I used a physical notebook for journaling and observations and scanned and uploaded data into NVivo v.12 Plus for coding and analyses.

- Newspaper databases:

  o I accessed the *NY Times* database via the internet at *nytimes.com* with a student membership.

  o I accessed the *NY Daily News* database via the internet at *newyorkdailynews.com* with a subscription for unlimited access.

  o I accessed the *NY Post* database via the internet by uploading the NY Post App via Google Play and obtaining a daily/weekly or weekend subscription.

  o I accessed the *Wall Street Journal* database via the internet at *wsj.com* with a student digital subscription that provided unlimited access.

I began the research after obtaining Walden IRB approval (#03-27-0308101).

After I obtained access to each database, I entered search parameters into the sites' search

bars relevant to articles and dates associated with the four radical lone wolf terrorist

attacks in NYC between 2010 and 2017.

Secondary Data

The data for this study consisted of digitally published newspaper articles

covering the radical lone wolf terrorist attacks in NYC and associated secondary data.

Secondary data are usually information collected by someone other than the researcher

(O'Sullivan et al., 2008). According to O'Sullivan et al., secondary data includes data or

information obtained for other research purposes. The secondary data that I obtained for

this study informed the comparison of radical lone wolf attacks reported by journalists,

which provided further meaning behind the variances leading to the normalization of lone

wolf terrorist activities. That secondary data consisted of journalism commentary,

opinion pages, and editorial reviews. O'Sullivan et al. posited that "secondary data

analysis may be necessary if investigators want comparative or longitudinal data" (p.

271). Since this study covered seven years, this type of secondary data analysis was

beneficial for the study.

Due to the time frame of events (between 2010 to 2017), I collected enough data

to analyze these four cases and meet saturation expectations. Using these data types

allowed me to view the language and text used, which informed the direction of the news

report and the political ideology that the author/reporter was trying to convey. In

addition, I accessed the information at random, convenient times, which allowed me to

use my time more effectively. However, it is possible that sources did not report all the information.

Data Collection Plan

I collected data using digital newspaper databases to research four radical lone wolf terrorist events in NYC. I studied each event on the dates they took place and the associated reports published before and after that date in each of the four news outlets. I collected all data for this proposed study; no other person assisted me with data collection. I repeated searches of the four participant news outlets' databases as needed, and data collection took approximately 3-months (details discussed in Chapter 4). Due to the historical nature of this study, I conducted no follow-up data collection.

I uploaded all data into the qualitative analysis software program, NVivo v.12 Plus. Maxwell (2013) believed "the basic qualitative analysis methods are memo writing, categorizing by themes (coding), and connecting strategies" (p. 105). After uploading the articles into NVivo v.12 Plus, I used the program to aid my data extraction from the more extensive articles through a system of highlights, marking, tagging, coding, and randomization from within the software (details discussed in Chapter 4). The data retrieved included data related to the four radical lone wolf attack events in NYC from 2010 to 2017. To assist in the data collection phase, I utilized a journal detailing the strategies and approaches that I implemented to analyze the recorded data. I stored the data collected on an encrypted external hard drive to maximize security. After I was approved to conduct research, I used the digital newspaper databases to obtain the published information for my research study.

Data Coding

Data analyses included chronological and categorical coding associated with political slants in journalistic reporting relating to lone wolf terrorist events. The procedure included open coding by looking at those categories that were relevant to the central question. Maxwell (2013) deferred to the coding system of Bogden and Bilken (2003). Bogden and Bilken posited that "coding strategies are a means of sorting the descriptive data you have collected so that the material bearing on a given topic can be physically separated from other data" (p. 107). I used these strategies to code the data using NVivo v.12 Plus software for analysis assistance. While coding was primarily emergent, I began with base codes already established and supported throughout Chapters 1 and 2 (see Figure 2). The only base codes I used were pre- and post-event, normalizing journalism, and politically slanted opinion; the remaining base codes remained empty throughout data collection and analyses. Throughout the data analysis process, I organized the data by category and chronology to focus on the themes and patterns that developed.

Figure 2

Base Starting Codes

Political	Pre-event	Post-event
• Right • Left • Center Left • Center Right	• Predictory • Normalizing Journalism	• Reflective • Critical • Politically Slanted Opnion • Unreported

Note. Researcher created based on reviewed literature.

Data Analysis Plan

I analyzed data for themes and patterns after coding them. Then, I used data codes in groups (i.e., political, pre-event, post-event, unreported) and in their entirety (all codes without exclusion or separation) to generate reports, charts, and graphs using NVivo v.12 Plus. Next, I used those reports, charts, and graphs for theme identification and pattern analyses. Finally, I analyzed the nodes/codes for irregularities, discrepancies, unreported, and isolated occurrences using MS Word and Excel. I report all findings, including irregularities, discrepancies, unreported, and isolated occurrences in Chapter 4.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is critical to support findings as it establishes the reliability and confidence in the study based on the data and methods used to create the study (Connelly, 2016; Polit & Beck, 2014). Connelly stated that "trustworthiness or rigor of a study refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of the study" (p. 435). Trustworthiness is vital for the study because it demonstrates the effectiveness of the study. I dissected the themes, patterns, and coding system used to explain their meaning and ensure that the entirety of the study remained trustworthy. Four key areas that established the trustworthiness of this research included the study's credibility, transferability, and dependability of findings, and the confirmability of the entire project from start to results interpretation.

Credibility

I ensured the credibility (internal validity) of my study in several ways. O'Sullivan et al. (2008) stated that "internal validity refers to the evidence that a specific independent variable such as a program, policy, or action, caused by change in an observed dependent variable" (p. 58). However, since this was a qualitative study, I was not looking at variables but the phenomenon and meaning behind journalistic reporting, political slant, and normalization of radical lone wolf events. Thus, I maintained credibility by (a) reviewing the information (journalistic reports and secondary data) for any distortions/discrepancies that may be relevant to the study, (b) taking copious notes to compare with the digital data using a journaling process, and (c) reviewing/updating the information as it is made available. In addition, I identified distortions by comparing the reported information to the facts of the events.

Transferability

Generalizability (the degree to which findings transfer beyond the study participants) can be an issue in qualitative research (Maxwell, 2013). Maxwell stated, "a key issue for internal generalizability is to adequately understand the variation in the phenomenon of interest in the setting or group of people studied" (p. 137). Generalizability does not extend beyond NYC, the four news publishers, and the four events of this study. Even so, I maintained the study's transferability (external validity) by determining whether other scholars and journalists could replicate the study. In qualitative research, transferability is accomplished by listening to and detailing the

individual stories of the participants (Amankwaa, 2016; Connelly, 2016). Connelly stated that

> qualitative researchers focus on the informants and their stories without saying this is everyone's story. Researchers support the study's transferability with a rich, detailed description of the context, location, and the people studied and by being transparent about analysis and trustworthiness. (p. 436)

I maintained transferability by detailing the journalists' stories and being transparent about the analyses and trustworthiness.

Dependability

The validity/dependability of conclusions depends on their internal generalizability (Maxwell, 2013). I maintained validity by considering discrepant evidence (negative cases), using triangulation, and incorporating comparison. I established dependability by maintaining an audit trail and reviewing my research observations throughout the study.

Confirmability

I addressed confirmability by conducting an audit trail of the data collection, analyses, and data interpretation, as recommended by Connelly (2016) and Polit and Beck (2014). Connelly (2016) reported that "confirmability is the neutrality or the degree findings are consistent and could be repeated" (p. 435). Thus, I achieved confirmability by conducting an audit trail of the data collection, analyses, and data interpretation. Additionally, I conformed to the standards required by Walden University by maintaining integrity, ethical principles, and transparency.

Ethical Procedures

Before conducting my study, I gained approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). I did not include human participants in this research. The research required access to journalistic reports published by journalists that responded to the four lone wolf attacks in NYC from 2010 to 2017; however, such public information did not require permission to use. I adhered to the guidelines provided by Walden University regarding ethical standards for dissertations so that I minimized unethical practices regarding data collection. In the analysis phase, I maintained objectivity by presenting all the data, including discrepant data (reported in Chapter 4). In the reporting phase, I refrained from deception and concealment. The IRB approval number (#03-27-0308101) validates that Walden University approved the study.

The primary ethical concerns related to this study pertained to data treatment, storage, and researcher bias. My research concerns were deciphering the research neutrally without impropriety, bias, or influence. To minimize these concerns, I reviewed the information daily and recorded the information in my journal to track my research.

Data Treatment and Storage

The digital newspaper articles that I used for this study were open-source journalistic printed reports. They were not confidential or anonymous. Nonetheless, I stored data extracted from those reports in an encrypted, password-protected, stand-alone external drive that only I had access to throughout the research process. Upon request by Walden University, I can furnish the information to dissertation committee members, IRB, or other university authorities. At the end of the study, I saved all associated data on

that external hard drive. I stored the hard drive and my reflexivity journal in a fire-proof bolt-locked safe in my private office, where it will remain for 5-years as required by Walden University. After those five years, I will shred the journal, erase all data from the hard drive, and reimage the hard drive ensuring the data is unrecoverable.

Research Dissemination

I will disseminate research findings to journalists, newspaper publishers, politicians, government policymakers, academic scholars, law enforcement organizations, and associated publication groups and organizations. Dissemination will be in the form of journal articles, informative briefs, and generalized summaries. Since all data sources were from publicized journalistic reporting and secondary data, I can provide data sets upon request; however, I will maintain data source confidentiality as noted in the data treatment and storage section.

Researcher Bias

As a retired member of the NYC Police Department and a 9/11 first responder, I experienced the impact that terrorism has had on NYC. Subsequently, I possess personal views and opinions regarding terrorism and the threat that terrorism poses to U.S. National Security. The number of lone wolf and terrorist attacks throughout the United States influenced how I view lone wolf terrorists. One of the reasons I chose this topic was because of my past experiences. However, I understood how critical it was to remain objective throughout the study. Subsequently, I addressed this issue by remaining neutral and transparent for future study replication. I maintained my impartiality and neutrality by recording my biases. This process was helpful because it allowed me to see the

direction I needed to take to stay on track with the study and remain focused on the central research question.

Summary

This phenomenological study provided a more in-depth understanding of how socially constructed journalism reports of lone wolf terrorist events in NYC align with liberal to conservative political newsprint continuums resulting in the normalization of lone wolf activities. A phenomenological study built from social construction theory provided the best insight into political journalism reporting and the normalization of lone wolf activities. This chapter presented a detailed plan for conducting the proposed research study and included an explanation, rationale, and justification for that design. Specifically, Chapter 3 included the rationale and justification for the proposed research methodology, including (a) the research design and rationale, (b) role of the researcher, (c) methodology, (d) participant selection, (e) instrumentation, (f) data collection plan, (g) data analysis plan, (h) issues of trustworthiness, and (i) ethical procedures. Chapter 4, the results, includes (a) setting, (b) demographics, (c) data collection, (d) data analysis, (e) evidence of trustworthiness, and (f) the results. Chapter 5 includes discussion, conclusions, and recommendations.

Chapter 4: Results

I explored news reports of four radical lone wolf events occurring in NYC

between 2010 and 2017 to determine whether a journalistic, political slant existed

towards a societal normalization of radical lone wolf behavior aligned with the

publication source. The central research question was, how are socially constructed

journalism stories of lone wolf terrorist events in NYC aligning with liberal to

conservative political newsprint continuums? Chapter 4 includes the (a) setting, (b)

demographics, (c) data collection, (d) data analysis, (e) evidence of trustworthiness, and

(f) results of this research study.

Study Settings

Due to the 7-year time frame of this study, there were five distinctly different

settings considering the applicable year; one for each event (four events) and the setting

during data collection and analyses. I analyzed news outlets' (*Wall Street Journal, NY

Times, NY Post, NY Daily News*) reports about a specific lone wolf terrorist event (Times

Square Bombing, Port Authority Bombing, Manhattan Bike Path Terrorist, Chelsea

Bomber). Each event occurred in NYC, and the four data sources (news outlets) ranged

on the political continuum (left/liberal, center left, center right, right/conservative). The

varying length of the articles among different media varied as they related to the incidents

and events. Overall, the *NY Post* and *Daily News* articles were shorter and therefore did

not have as much content as the *NY Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*, which resulted in

less coding, and potentially impacted my thematical analyses. Beyond that similarity,

each setting influenced findings depending on the period wherein the event took place:

(a) the Times Square Bombing, (b) the Port Authority Bombing, (c) the Manhattan Bike Path Terrorist, (d) the Chelsea Bomber, and (e) data collection and analysis timeframe.

Times Square Bombing

According to the combined reviews of the four news outlets: On May 1, 2010, Faisal Shazad, also known as the Times Square Bomber, attempted to detonate a car bomb secreted in a Nissan Pathfinder in the middle of NYC's Times Square. Although Shazad left the scene before the attempted detonation, all reports at the time indicated Shazad left the vehicle unattended and idling at the location. Amid the smoke emanating from the vehicle and the subsequent pedestrian chaos, Shazad's identity was unknown. A street vendor advised the police that the vehicle was smoking and was left unattended. A Mounted Unit Police Officer assisted in evacuating the area and advising other units about the vehicle. At the time of the event, the media reported Shazad as a suspected lone wolf. However, further investigation revealed that Shazad had ties to a faction of the Taliban in Pakistan. Authorities apprehended Shazad on a plane at JFK International Airport in Queens. There were zero injuries.

Port Authority Bombing

According to the combined reviews of the four news outlets: On December 11, 2017, Akyad Ullah detonated a pipe bomb at approximately 07:20 ET hours in NYC's Port Authority Terminal, injuring four people. Ullah was motivated to detonate the bomb after seeing a Christmas poster. Ullah planned to detonate the bomb strategically in a high foot traffic area for maximum effect. Before carrying out the event, Ullah rode the NY Transit "1" train for several minutes and switched trains to detonate the bomb at a

walkway between two transit hubs. Ullah was apprehended by police immediately at the detonation scene and treated at a local hospital for injuries.

Manhattan Bike Path Terrorist

According to the combined reviews of the four news outlets: At 15:04 ET, Sayfallo Saipov, also known as the Manhattan Bike Path Terrorist, vehicularly struck bicyclists on the West Side Highway bike path in NYC, killing eight people. Saipov was an Uber driver from Uzbekistan. Saipov lived in New Jersey, rented a truck from a Home Depot in Passaic, NJ, and attacked NYC. Saipov drove over a curb on the West Side Highway on Halloween Day, intentionally striking the bicyclists, killing eight, and injuring 11 people. Shortly after that, Saipov exited the vehicle with two weapons resembling authentic firearms: a pellet gun and a paint gun. Saipov was shot by a police officer on the scene, apprehended, and taken to an area hospital for gunshot wounds. Saipov requested an ISIS flag display outside their hospital room. Additionally, the FBI found ISIS rhetoric and videos on Saipov's cell phone.

Chelsea Bomber

According to the combined reviews of the four news outlets: Ahmad Khan Rahami, also known as the Chelsea Bomber, detonated one pressure cooker bomb in Chelsea on 23rd Street, a pipe bomb in New Jersey at the Marine Corp Charity Run, and set a second pressure cooker bomb on 27th Street. The 23rd Street bomb injured 30 people, the Marine Corp Charity Run bomb resulted in no injuries, and the 27th Street bomb was recovered undetonated and moved to the NYPD Firing Range. Initially, Rahami remained

unidentified; however, authorities apprehended Rahami in New Jersey after exchanging gunfire with local police and taken to an area hospital for injuries.

Data Collection and Analysis

I collected data from four digital news outlets (*NY Times, The Wall Street Journal, The NY Post*, and the *NY Daily News*). I analyzed data using NVivo v.12 Plus software, creating nodes to probe through journalistic articles about lone wolf terrorist events throughout NYC between 2010 and 2017. However, I expanded my search from 2009 to 2018 to verify that these news outlets had not printed related articles before or after that period. Data collection proceeded as planned in Chapter 3, requiring minimal deviation considering subscriber comments in the *Wall Street Journal*. Subsequently, I used a random numbers generator to reduce the data to a manageable size, limiting subscriber comment data to 100 total comments for the Wall Street Journal. Finally, I uploaded the limited subscriber commentary data with the article data and collected and analyzed the data as I described in Chapter 3. I made no other deviations in data collection.

While 2020 was a traumatic year, my data analysis plan remained unchanged. Data analysis required no deviations; thus, I analyzed data as planned in Chapter 3. I remained neutral during the entirety of data collection and analyses. I focused on the study and maintained impartiality, thus allowing the research to guide me. I relied on the organization and self-discipline strategies presented in Chapter 3 to minimize deviation throughout the data collection and analysis process.

Other Simultaneous Setting-Related Events

At the same time as the four terrorist events, other news and events were happening locally, regionally, nationally, and globally that the news outlets would have all had an equal interest in reporting. Thus, given the simultaneous nature of the drive to report newsworthy events, the lone wolf events in one or more of the published sources may have taken up more column inches than other events. That deviation may have fluctuated over time based on the sequencing of capture, trial, and conviction. Thus, I include a synopsis of simultaneous events occurring in tandem with the four terrorist events noted in this section.

Times Square Bombing

It is my experience that, during the holiday month of December, the NYPD has extra officers seasonally posted for omnipresence and to deter crimes due to holiday shopping. Additionally, NYC has tourists filling the streets for the holiday Christmas shows (like the *Radio City Music Hall Rockettes*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *Home for the Holidays*; Mandell, 2017). These types of shows bring population surge into the city (The Broadway League, n.d.). Although this terrorist event occurred in the morning, there was a substantial holiday rush and energy throughout the city (Mandell, 2017). This seasonal populace increase resulted in an expanded police presence and the volume of people using the subways during morning rush hour. Reporters may have been influenced by wanting to quickly report the event and the quick work of the officers. The holiday affected all news outlets; therefore, any data taint would have tainted all data uniformly, so I did not feel this event rendered the data unusable.

Port Authority Bombing

In the spring of 2010, the U.S. economy improved after the great recession of 2008 (Cox, 2010). The NY unemployment rate was 10.6%, and the employment-population ratio was 57.1 (U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2011). Hungary came out of recession, and Finland fell back into recession (OnThisDay, n.d.). Notable events included the Gaza Flotilla raid; various sports events; the Kentucky Derby; the Indianapolis 500; the demolition of the Yankee Stadium; a train derailing in Merano, Italy; the eruption of the Icelandic volcano, Eyjafjallajökull; the Country Music and Tony Awards; the 114th Boston Marathon; and the release of *Iron Man II* and *Toy Story III* (OnThisDay, n.d.). Despite these other world events generating news-worthy journalism, the NYC local and U.S. national news media tone centered on the hunt for who was responsible and why it happened.

Manhattan Bike Path Terrorist

On Tuesday, October 31, 2017, the weather was cold, with a high of 52 and a low of 46 degrees Fahrenheit (Timeanddate.com, n.d.). The annual *Halloween Village Parade* was scheduled that evening on Sixth Avenue from Broome Street to 16th Street (NYC Insider Guide, n.d.), and NYC's Pay History Ban Bill took effect that day (Ayala, 2017). Due to Halloween activities, reporters typically continuously report activities throughout the city to advise people on events or travel safety. Media attention focused on the new bill immediately before the attack. However, all news outlets were likely affected similarly. Thus, I decided that these activities would have an equal influence on all news outlets leaving the data collected for this study balanced and acceptable.

Chelsea Bomber

Saturday, September 17, 2016, was the beginning of Oktoberfest in NYC on Pier 15 (Bottles, 2016). NY University (2016) was also hosting its Health Sciences Symposium in lower Manhattan. Although the bombing in Chelsea took place at 20:30 ET, a similar bomb detonated earlier that morning in Seaside Park, NJ (U.S. Department of Justice [DOJ], 2017). Since the unidentified perpetrator was at large and connections between the bombings were unknown, citizens may have been anxious and reporters over-zealous in their reporting. However, like the Port Authority Bombing and Bike Path Terrorist, all media outlets would have likely been equally affected. Thus, while the events probably influenced the data, that influence would have been uniform; therefore, I deemed the data acceptable.

During Data Collection and Analyses

Several events and issues impacted 2020, such as the presidential election, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the George Floyd and Black Lives Matter protests, which significantly aggravated local, national, and world tensions. Nevertheless, throughout data collection and analyses, I strictly adhered to my data collection and analysis plan, thereby remaining focused and well-organized despite the high stress and uncertainty of the environment. Therefore, I deemed that the stressful environment did not affect data collection or analyses during this study.

Demographics

Four prominent publications reported the news in NYC and the surrounding counties: the *NY Times*, the *NY Daily News*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *NY Post*

served as my archival data sources. These four publications range in their journalistic, political spectrum from liberal to conservative (see Table 1). In addition, the number of subscribers and average article length were significant demographic factors contributing to potential publication deviations.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Political slant	Subscribers	Avg. lone wolf article length
NY Times	Left-leaning - liberal	1,120,420	860 words
NY Daily News	Left-leaning - Democrat	718,174	270 words
Wall Street Journal	Right-leaning - conservative	2,062,312	900 words
NY Post	Right-leaning - Republican	724,748	350 words

Note. Newspaper circulation adapted from public data (Infoplease, 2007).

Data Collection

I began data collection on April 10, 2020, after receiving IRB approval (#03-27-0308101) on March 27, 2020, and continued through October 30, 2020, when I completed coding the data material. The data collected included all digital print published by each newspaper relating to each of four reported lone wolf terrorist events between 2010 and 2017 in NYC. The events occurred within the confines of NYC, with one of the events extending into New Jersey and ending in gunfire exchange between the perpetrator and the police. I conducted a digital search for journalistic stories, editorials, commentaries, opinions, and subscriber responses printed surrounding the four events for each event. I also extended my search parameter using Firefox and Google from 2009 to 2018 in each publication to see if prior and post stories, editorials, commentaries, opinions, and subscriber responses were published possibly relating to these four events.

Search terms included *comments*, *opinions*, *editorials*, variations of each lone wolves'

name - *Ahmad Khan Rahami*, *Sayfallo Saipov*, *Faisal Shazad*, *Akyad Ullah*, *event dates*,

locations, *terro*r, *terrorist*, *attack*, *lone wolf*, *radical*, *hate*, *violence*, and *kill*. Boolean

combinations connected the keywords in the search engine fields. I then uploaded those

data using NVivo v.12 Plus software in PDF and MS Word formats with one variation:

The Wall Street Journal.

Due to the extensive article comments and quantity published by the Wall Street

Journal (+ 1,000 comments), I used a random numbers table (numbergenerator.org) to

reduce the data quantity to a manageable size. Using the random numbers table, I selected

100 random data file comments, from the original 1,000+ comments, for coding outside

of the 182 published articles. I then uploaded these 100 comment files into NVivo v.12

Plus with the 182 articles in the same manner as the data from the other three newspapers

and proceeded uniformly from there. I stored all data digitally on a password-protected

hard drive. I will keep the hard drive and my reflexive journal secured in a fire-proof

bolt-locked safe in my office for the required 5-year retention period before data

destruction.

Next, I analyzed and dissected the data assigning nodes/codes beginning with the

pre-established codes (see Figure 2) and developed additional nodes/codes as needed.

Because the NY Post and the Daily News articles contained more graphic than literary

content, I coded the associated captions in the same manner that I coded the written data

for the NY Times and the Wall Street Journal, sentence by sentence, paragraph by

paragraph, graphic by graphic. See Figure 3 for the final primary and subordinate

node/codes list. I then used Axial coding to pinpoint links and likenesses between the nodes and printed articles. After dissecting all data, I analyzed the nodes/codes for the themes, patterns, and trends considering possible journalistic normalization of lone wolf terrorist behavior.

Figure 3

Final Data Node-sets
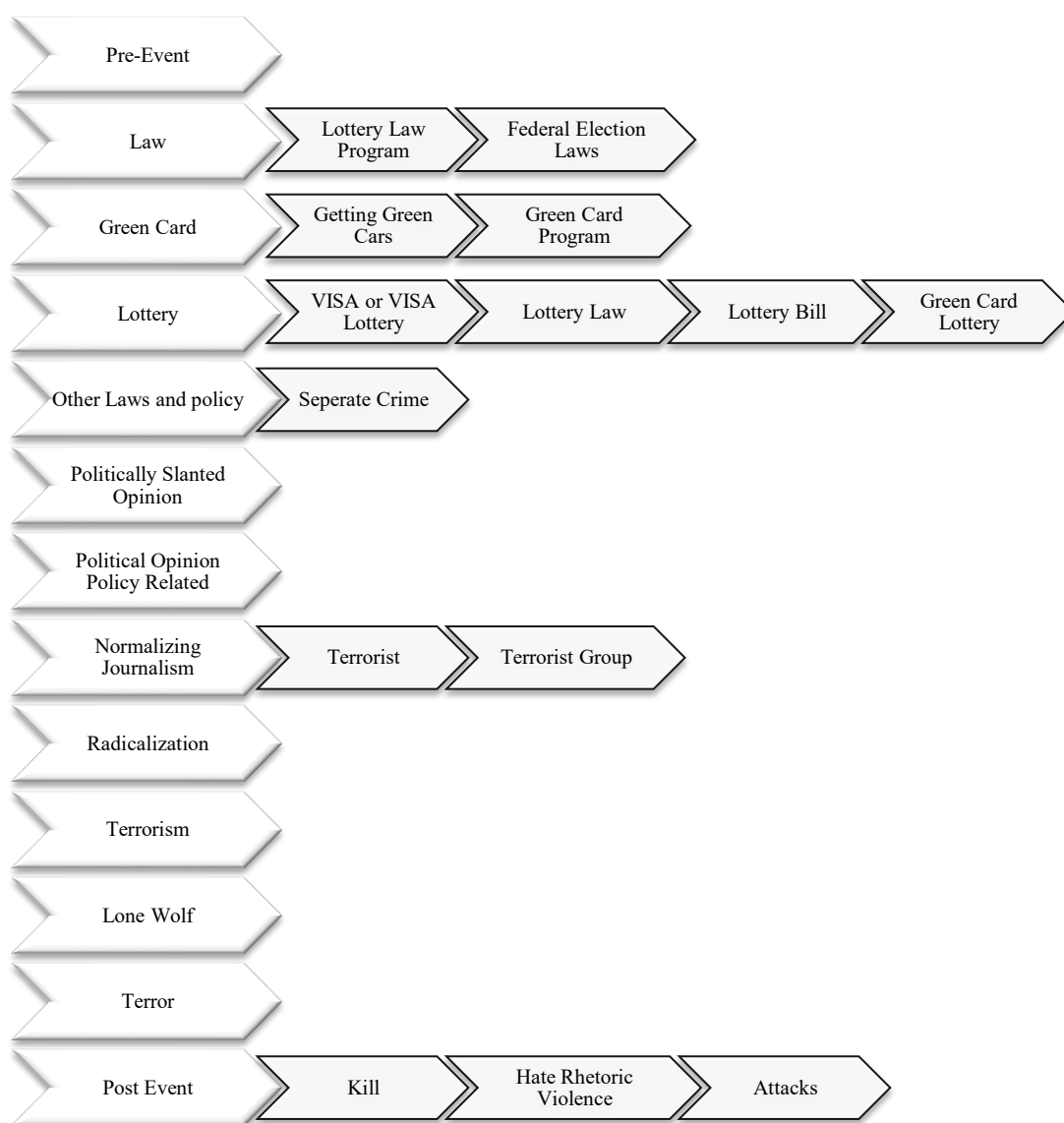
Data Analysis

After I coded and analyzed each digital newspaper separately to extrapolate the data inductively, I scrutinized the data for consistency, repetition, and quantity to progress from nodes/coded units to more prominent representations to identify themes, patterns, and trends. I reviewed the coded data several times, analyzing for consistency, repetition, and word severity to increase trustworthiness. After ensuring data trustworthiness, I analyzed the data for themes and trends.

I used the base codes as category groupings to help identify themes and patterns (see Figure 4). I used the political alignment group to identify and support the political slant of each news outlet, which aligned and supported my demographic findings (see Table 1). I used the pre-event grouping to code data reported before the event occurred but still related to the event. Albeit, because of the significance of the node to the study question, I separated the normalizing journalism node into a separate category, which subsequently developed codes within that node (see Figure 3). I used the post-event grouping similarly; however, the amount and types of data in the node substantiated subcodes and separate categories supporting further theme analyses. I removed the four base codes that contained no data: predictor, reflective, critical, and unreported. After in-depth node group organization, 13 distinct groupings emerged (see Figure 4). Due to the minimal data in pre-event, law, and green card, I removed those nodes from analyses. Upon reviewing each remaining node, I also removed green card, lottery, and other laws/policies because I deemed those nodes irrelevant to my research question. Thus, I focused my remaining analyses on the eight-node groupings consisting of political

opinion policy-related, politically slanted opinion, post-event, normalizing journalism,

radicalization, terrorism, lone wolf, and terror. Even though lone wolf contained minimal

data, I felt the node was significant to the research question due to the nature of the

node's contents.

Figure 4

Total Data Coded per Node-set
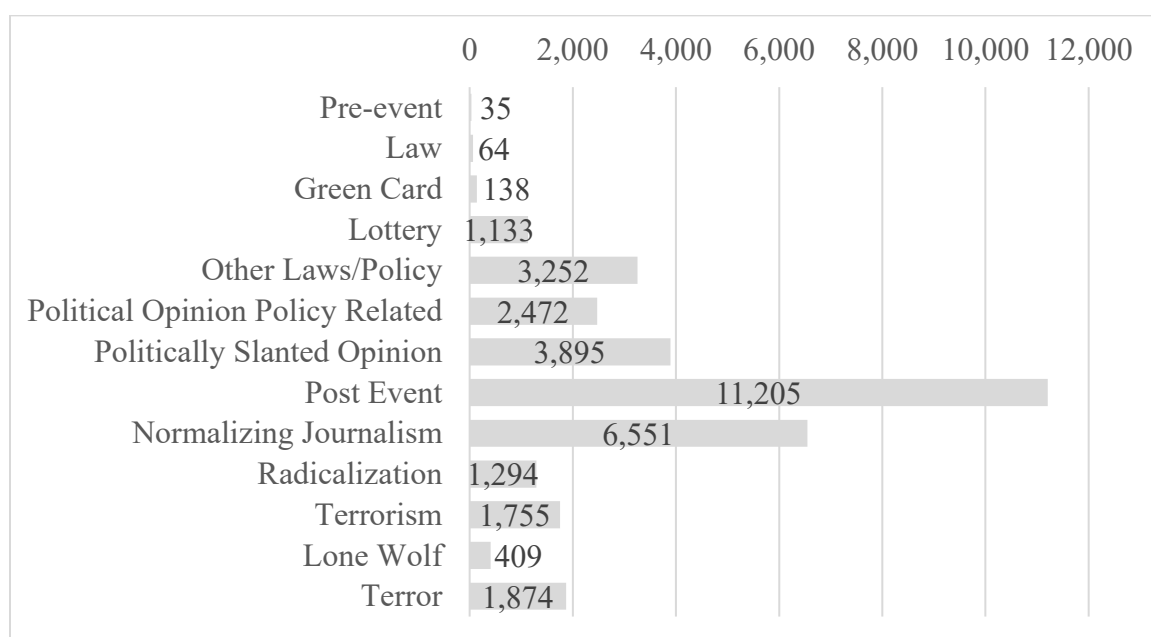
Node Descriptions

This section describes the data type within the correlating node and lists any sub-

nodes or offspring of correlating nodes. I included these descriptions to (a) delineate the

node content, (b) differentiate the difference between similarly titled nodes, and (c)

establish the nature of each node and node family.

Lone wolf: Any content mentioned or using the term lone wolf or inference that

lone wolf involvement occurred.

Normalizing journalism: Data that demonstrated normalizing language that, according to Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social construction theory, influenced social construction and one's response to the same. Organizational subcodes in this node included terrorist and terrorist groups.

Political opinion policy-related: Word groupings within a sentence or paragraph that described policy-orientated political opinions.

Politically slanted opinion: Event-oriented, politically slanted opinion.

Post-event: Content reported after the attacks occurred, during crime scene investigation, and any relevant information reported after the time of the attacks (i.e., court arraignment, court indictment, and other event references). Organizational subcodes developed due to the frequency-specific words and included kill, hate, rhetoric, violence, and attacks.

Radicalization: Data related to radicalization before and after attacks aligned with Borum's (2012a) four stage pathway mindset model of terrorism constructs.

Terror: Data characterizing, emphasizing, or resembling journalistic sensationalism directed at heightening subscribers' emotions of fear, panic, or terror.

Terrorism: Content aligned with the definition of an act of terror in which force was used without permission or authority against a person or things.

Emerging Themes and Patterns

This section presents details, descriptions, and rationale of the patterns and themes that emerged during data analyses. After organizing nodes and node families, I identified one pattern with three overarching themes supporting the premise that news

reporting practices influence social construction. By analyzing these data relative to their events, I found that this influence aligned to each event in all four news outlets. These patterns and themes delineated distinct differences, denoting a consistent political continuum slant aligned with corresponding newspaper readership. Due to the significant amount of data in the associated nodes, the three themes became a focal point of my trustworthiness analyses. By further reviewing the coded data visually via a combination of text content and graphic configurations generated via NVivo v.12 Plus functionality, I established that one node-set (post event) and three distinct themes were universally associated with all four new outlets: normalizing journalism, political slant, and terror tactics (see Figure 5).
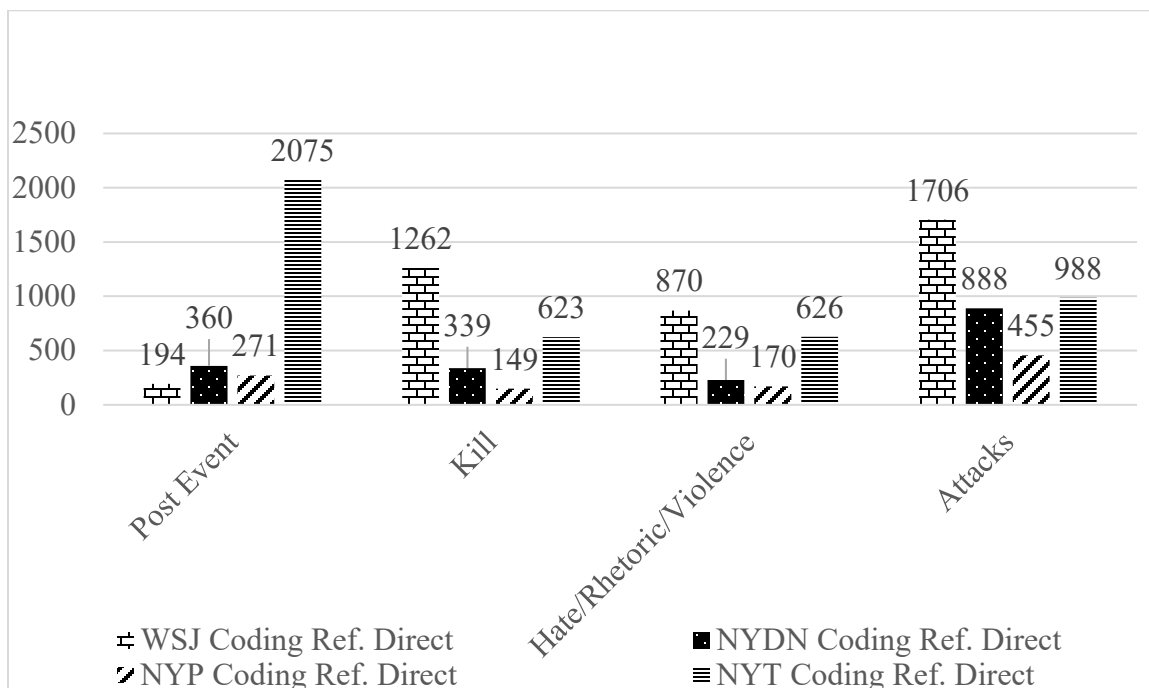
Figure 5

Patterns and Themes
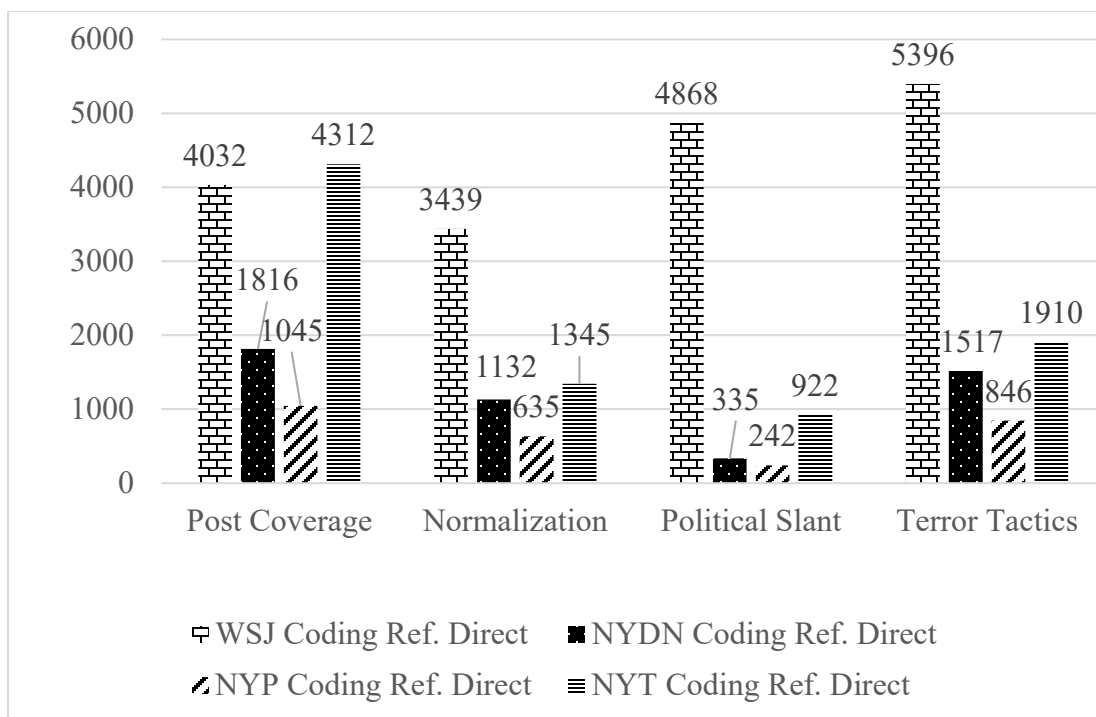
Pattern: Post Coverage

The substantial amount of data in the post-event grouping immediately drew my attention. Even after separating and organizing the data, the pattern depicted by that node was significant throughout data analyses. With 11,205 combined data coded to post-event, I was unsurprised that the post-event node permeated all four news outlets. The subordinate nodes in this node-set included kill, hate, rhetoric, violence, and attacks due to their excessive frequency (see Figure 6). The quantity of data in this node-set indicated that terrorist events received significant post-event news coverage and minimal pre-event notice.

Figure 6

Post Event Node-set

Theme: Normalization

The normalization theme emerged from the normalizing journalism node family, including the terrorist and terrorist group nodes (see Figure 7). With 6,551 data coded to normalization, I was also not surprised to find this node throughout the news outlets. For example, in the NY Times, Byman (2018) stated that:

> … in terrorism, we may remember 2018 for what didn't happen: The jihadists threat to the United States has dissipated. We only had one death for jihadist linked terrorism in this country, and while disturbing, it was hardly an Islamic State spectacular. (In Florida, a teenage boy, inspired by jihadist videos, stabbed a thirteen-year-old friend to death during a sleepover). (p. 1)

Byman's statement demonstrated how this news outlet attempted to minimize terrorist acts; thus, normalizing terrorism to construct society described by Berger and Luckmann (1966). Although Byman only discussed one lone wolf event death, that report seemed to ignore the overall total terrorist events that occurred. For example, Quinn (2016) found that,

> Since 1975, there have been 236 terror-related events within the 5 boroughs of New York City. These events include overt attacks (both executed and attempted), foiled plots, and activity found to be providing direct support to terrorist groups. Of these events, 189 were successful attacks (or action related to a successful attack), 35 were attacks that did not succeed (bomb failed to detonate, device discovered and disarmed, etc.), and 12 were plots effectively foiled by law enforcement. 19 of these attacks lead to fatalities. (p.3)

Quinn's analysis provided insight from 1975 to 2016 about NYC as a terrorist target and terrorism normalization framing in contrast to Byman's isolated report. Thus, I determined that Byman purposefully slanted the article to minimize the terrorist terroristic nature of the event. The substantial amount of data coded to normalizing journalism indicated that news outlets do significantly socially construct society.

Figure 7

*Normalizing Journalism Node-set*
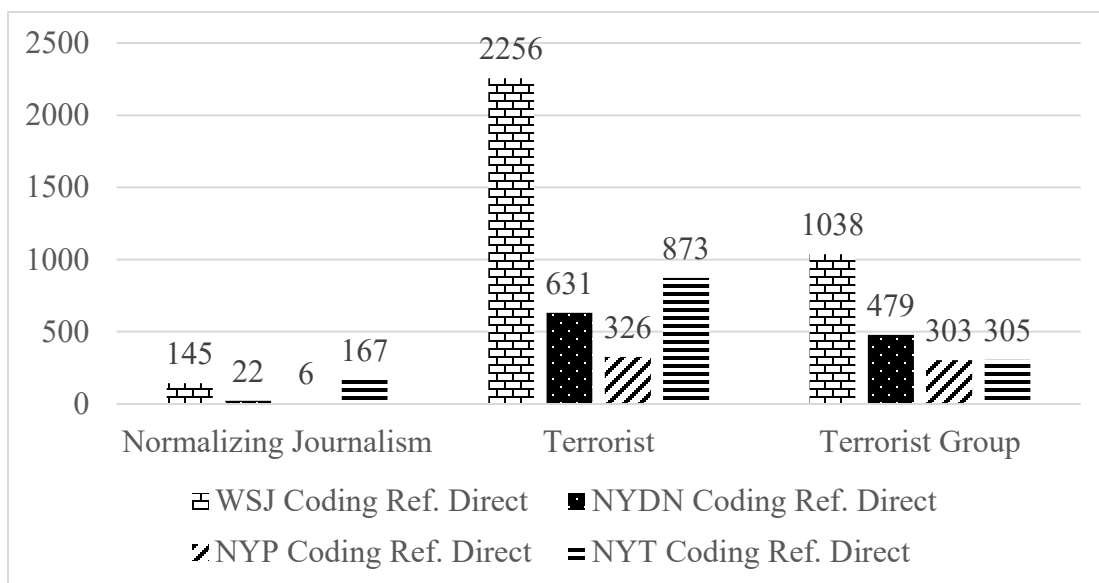
Theme: Political Slant

The political slant theme emerged from the two nodes: political opinion policy-related and politically slanted opinion (see Figure 8). Political slant was apparent throughout every newspaper outlet, as demonstrated by the two political slant nodes. For example, an article coded to both political slant nodes (policy-oriented and event-oriented) used abundant political slant. In the Daily News, Thrall (2016) commented on

Presidential reactions to the terrorist attack in NY City and how the President would approach the immigration ties to Muslim Nations. Thrall (2016) cited:

> Trump's tough talk feels good when emotions are running high, and in the aftermath of a terrorist attack, Trump's calls to use profiling, to halt immigration from Muslim-dominated nations, and to increase police surveillance on Muslim neighborhoods sound reasonable to many people. Trump's son, Donald Trump, Jr., probably summed up how many people feel about the threat posed by refugees and immigrants when he compared it to a bowl of Skittles. If he had a bowl of Skittles and three of them were deadly, he asked on Twitter, would you take a handful? (p. 2)

The political slant in Thrall's article used the terrorist attack to tie in immigration law, thereby slanting the fear generated by the attack to connect immigration as a presumptive cause and avenue to allowing terrorists into the United States. Following Berger and Luckmann (1966), this type of persuasion creates a societal normalization. In this case, reports correlated terrorism with immigration to further the news outlet's political stance, thereby constructing society according to that political slant.

Figure 8

Political Slant Grouping
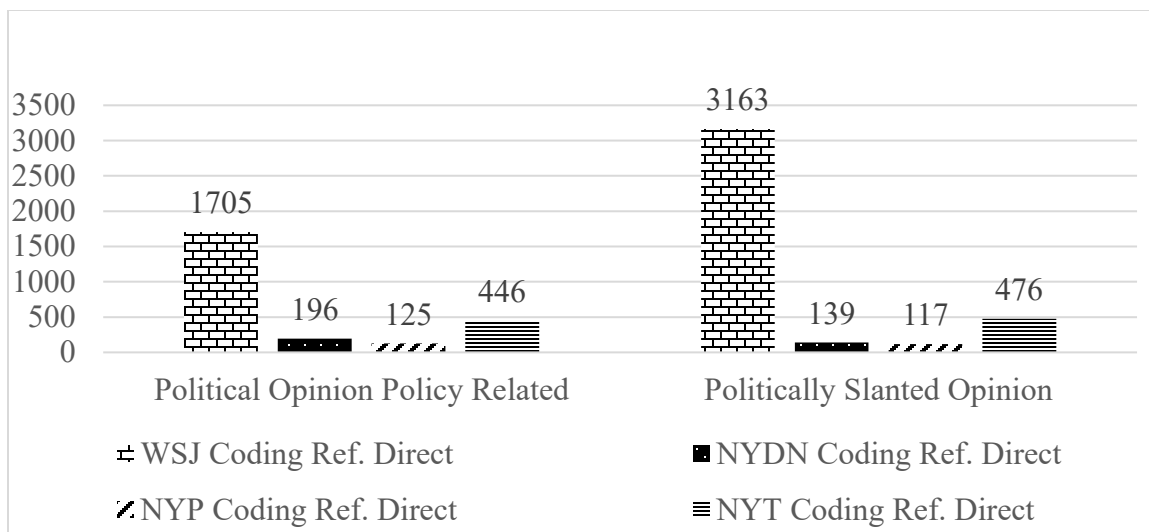
Terror Tactics

The terror tactics theme emerged in several sensationalizing nodes, including terrorist, terrorist groups, radicalization, terrorism, lone wolf, and terror (see Figure 9). Beckett (2008), Bilgen (2012), Doward (2015), Malia (2013), Nieto (2016), Picard (1989), and White (2020), among others, demonstrated the part that terrorizing sensationalism plays in the tactics of terrorism. Thus, I decided to call this theme *terror tactics* because the articles were written and publicized tactically by the news outlets to disseminate their stories about the terrorist events. This theme included all codes related to terror and indicated a robust social construct based on manipulating societal terror through sensationalizing, capitalizing, or otherwise overly exaggerating or manipulating readers' fears.

Figure 9

Terror Tactics Grouping
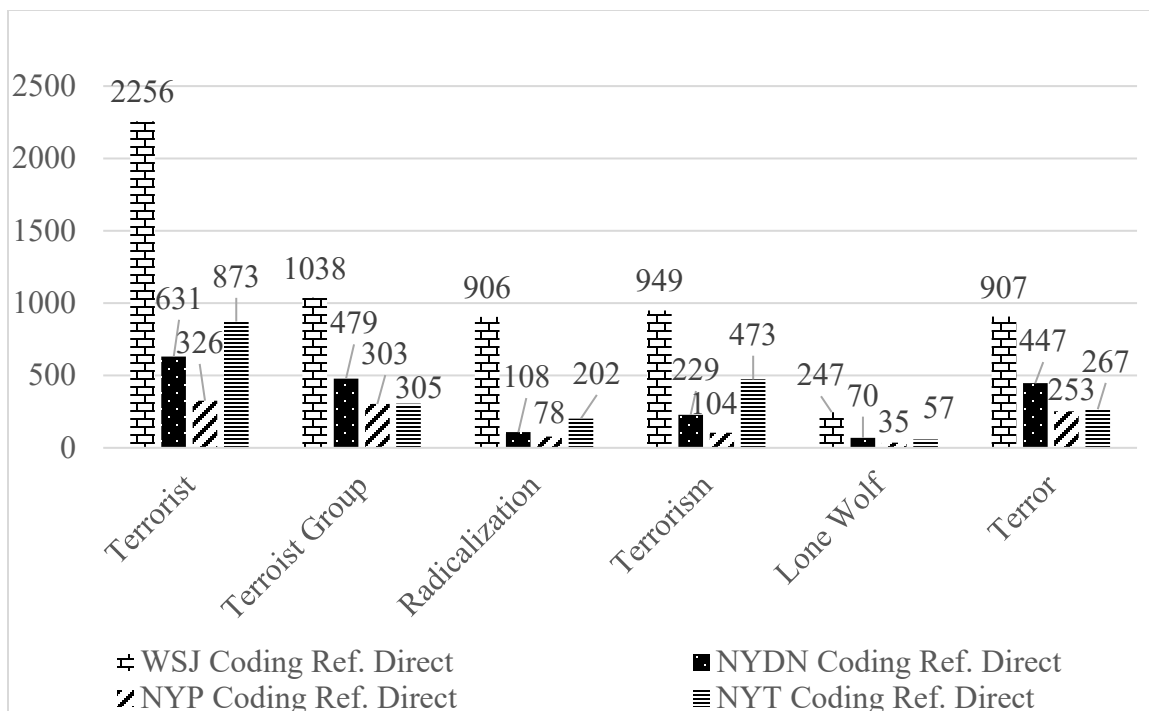
The terror tactic theme was surprisingly as significant as political slant (see

Figures 8 and 9), and all news outlets employed terror tactics. Interestingly, examples of

both extremes were evident. The NY Times (Byman, 2018) downplayed terrorism while

other news outlets capitalized on terrorism to slant their agendas. This theme

demonstrated developing societal constructs by depicting and slanting terrorism to sway

and normalize patrons to the journalist's or publication's political continuum viewpoint.

Berger and Luckmann (1996) posited that "knowledge is socially distributed, and the

mechanism of this distribution can be made the subject matter of a sociological

discipline" (p. 28). For example, Schram et al. (2016) sensationalized terrifying opinions

to capture the reader's attention, directing and normalizing the reader's societal

constructs. Schram et al. wrote that "a 28-year-old man hunted in connection with bomb blasts in Manhattan and New Jersey … after shooting two cops … found snoozing in a bar vestibule" (p. 1). Schram et al. used descriptive words such as hunted, bomb blasts, shooting cops, and snoozing excessively throughout their article. These words helped create a readers' visualization concerning a lone wolf's character type and the types of behaviors they likely display, such as *hunter, bomber, snoozer* (lazy). In the same article, Schram et al. also emphasized peoples' fears of terror cells, their multiple locations, terrorist ideology, and linkages to other shootings, which may or may not have been terror-related. Schram et al. capitalized on the New Jersey Mayor's statement that:

> I am extremely concerned for the residents of the community, but more importantly extremely concerned for everyone in the state and country where someone can just go and drop a backpack into a garage can that has explosives in it. (p. 6)

Schram et al.'s excessive use of fear and terror-inspiring words paired with similar, and sometimes unrelated, details from other events created and normalized the Chelsea bombing. Schram et al. used terroristic sensationalism and reporting according to their desired social construct and that of their right-leaning publication source. Schram et al.'s article was one of many I found providing an example wherein journalists employed terror tactics to strike fear into an audience of readers about the events related to terrorism.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

My trustworthiness check encompassed all strategies listed in Chapter 3, which addressed trustworthiness through triangulation, comparison, consistency, and duplication. In addition to validating the three major emergent themes, I used the processes outlined in Chapter 3 to establish trustworthiness and conducted an article comparison for clarification. I read articles individually for conciseness and interpretation, finding no apparent irregularities. I also included a thorough description of all my research findings. I encountered no instances wherein trustworthiness verification required deviation from the processes described in Chapter 3. Thus, I established the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of my results by verifying the evidence of each news outlet's trustworthiness.

Wall Street Journal Trustworthiness

According to their website (https://www.wsj.com/about-us?mod=wsjfooter), the Wall Street Journal adheres to a set of newsroom standards and ethical guidelines to accredit the news stories they publish. Those posted standards included:

- The Wall Street Journal is trusted by readers because

- Readers view the stories as accurate and impartial.

- Wall Street Journal reporters abide by the Dow Jones Code of Conduct.

However, the Wall Street Journal did not post any measures for oversight, vetting, or fact-checking. Nor did the Wall Street Journal note the process by which stories get vetted, or sources validated.

NY Times Trustworthiness

The New York Times reported that it holds its reporters accountable and maintains transparency about the standards that its reporters must adhere to (https://www.wsj.com/about-us?mod=wsjfooter; nytco.com/journalism/). In addition, the NY Times listed several guides for its personnel:

- Ethical Journalism Guidebook,

- Guidelines for Reader Comments,

- Guidelines on Our Integrity,

- Editorial Standards for NYT Live,

- Social Media Guidelines for the Newsroom, and

- Advertising Acceptability Guidelines.

The New York Times also mentioned that their journalism opinion department consisted of experts in their field. However, like the Wall Street Journal, the NY Times did not include how their stories were accredited, sources validated, oversight management, and the vetting process.

NY Daily News Trustworthiness

Tribune Publishing owns the New York Daily News and a conglomerate of news outlets throughout the United States (Chicago Tribune, New York Daily News, The Baltimore Sun, Orlando Sentinel, South Florida Sun-Sentinel, Daily Press, Hartford Courant, The Morning Call, & The Virginia Pilot; Investor.tribpub.com/static-files/e0227e90-9f9d-46f0-b264-d00412a37919). The Tribune Publishing Company does not specify if all news outlets operate under the same ethical standards. However,

Tribune Publishing did list a code of ethics and business conduct guidebook for its personnel (Tribpub.com/#whoare we). While the NY Daily News journalism department is not explicitly listed in that guidebook (nor are the other news outlets), the ethical practices and integrity policies applicable to all their news outlet holdings address:

- Conflicts of interest,

- Gifts & entertainment,

- Respecting employee privacy.

I also found an outside source validating the trustworthiness of the NY Daily News: iMediaEthics (Imediaethics.org/who-are-anonymous-sources-that-used-ny-daily-news-to-attack-fdny-chief-leonard). Smith (2018) wrote about the New York Daily News editor's statement that:

The NYDN policy in anonymous sources calls for two or more people with direct knowledge of the subject or first-person observations of actions or events who can't speak publicly without risk to their personal safety or continued employment. We also evaluate the source's motivations and any potential benefit possible derived from publication. The New York Daily News does not discuss its sources." (n/a)

Like the Wall Street Journal and NY Times, the NY Daily News website did not identify the story, source, oversight, or vetting credibility or validation.

NY Post Trustworthiness

An extensive internet search using Google Chrome and Firefox revealed no results relating to standards or guideline practices of the NY Post. Likewise, a thorough

investigation of the NY Post's website provided no information about the NY Post's story accreditation, source validation, oversight, or vetting practices. Boolean combinations used on all three search sources (Google, Firefox, NY Post) included *NY Post*, *ethical standards*, *guidelines*, *Ethics*, *fact check,* and other variations of *How does the New York Post validate their stories?*

Overall News Outlet Trustworthiness

The search for news outlet trustworthiness for all four news outlets was long, tedious, and resulted in zero verifiable trustworthiness verification. Only Tribune Publishing, which owns NY Daily News, had any documented trustworthiness processes, and those documents (a) did not specify the NY Daily News or (b) include anything about story credibility, source validation, oversight, or vetting. Thus, I cannot verify the trustworthiness of any of the four news outlets. While this lack of data does not support the news outlets' trustworthiness, it does confirm that there was ample opportunity for each news outlet to construct reality according to their whims without risk of repercussion.

Credibility of Results

My journalism reports and secondary data evaluations revealed no data misrepresentations pertinent to the study as all journaling notes, digital data, and analyses aligned. Triangulation with the printed stories (newspaper checking) aligned with each other and the themes that emerged. For example, I cross-referenced the four news outlets' published stories to validate pedigree information, including when, where, who, what,

and why the events occurred. This process helped to create an idea about the sequence events and cross-reference the reporting.

Transferability of Results

I corroborated the printed stories with triangulation and news outlet checking to support transferability through transparency. Transparency was evident through my finding's description and inclusion of discrepancies and variations reported. One of those variations included the excessive data reported by the Wall Street Journal, wherein I noted my use of the random numbers generator to reduce the amount of data I analyzed from that source due to excessive subscriber commentary. In addition, I reported the graphical and text variances between the news outlets and how I handled deviations.

Dependability of Results

To maintain dependability, I reviewed the data promulgated by NVivo v.12 Plus for accuracy. My audit trail aligned with my journal observations and accuracy check, which provided evidence of dependability. This dependability became apparent as I reviewed each printed news article and cross-referenced the news reports of the four news outlets. Therefore, I cross-referenced each of the cases reported, the Times Square Bombing, the Port Authority Bombing, the Manhattan Bike Path Terrorist, and the Chelsea Bomber.

Confirmability of Results

I established confirmability using my data collection audit trail in conjunction with analyses and interpretation to ensure my neutrality and consistency. I continually upheld my data collection, analyses, and interpretation to Walden University standards

and strove for the highest standards of integrity, ethical principles, and transparency. I randomly and periodically confirmed my results against the source data's actual articles to confirm alignment.

Study Results

These results address the research question of how journalism stories relating to lone wolf terrorist events in NYC socially constructed society in alignment with liberal to conservative political newsprint continuums. In all four events, the perpetrators were captured and sentenced. Additionally, all newspaper outlets confirmed and reported similar event execution methods of these terrorist attacks. However, the longevity and slant used to report the events were different. These differences were visible through the content, style, and analyses of each news outlet's reports.

I noted some interesting reporting inconsistencies between the news outlets (see Figure 10). For example, in all but one area (post-event), the Wall Street Journal reported the most data. The NY Post consistently reported the least data quantity. Of all their reports, the NY Post was the only news outlet that included more normalizing journalism than post-event data.

Figure 10

Data Quantity Comparison Between Media Sources
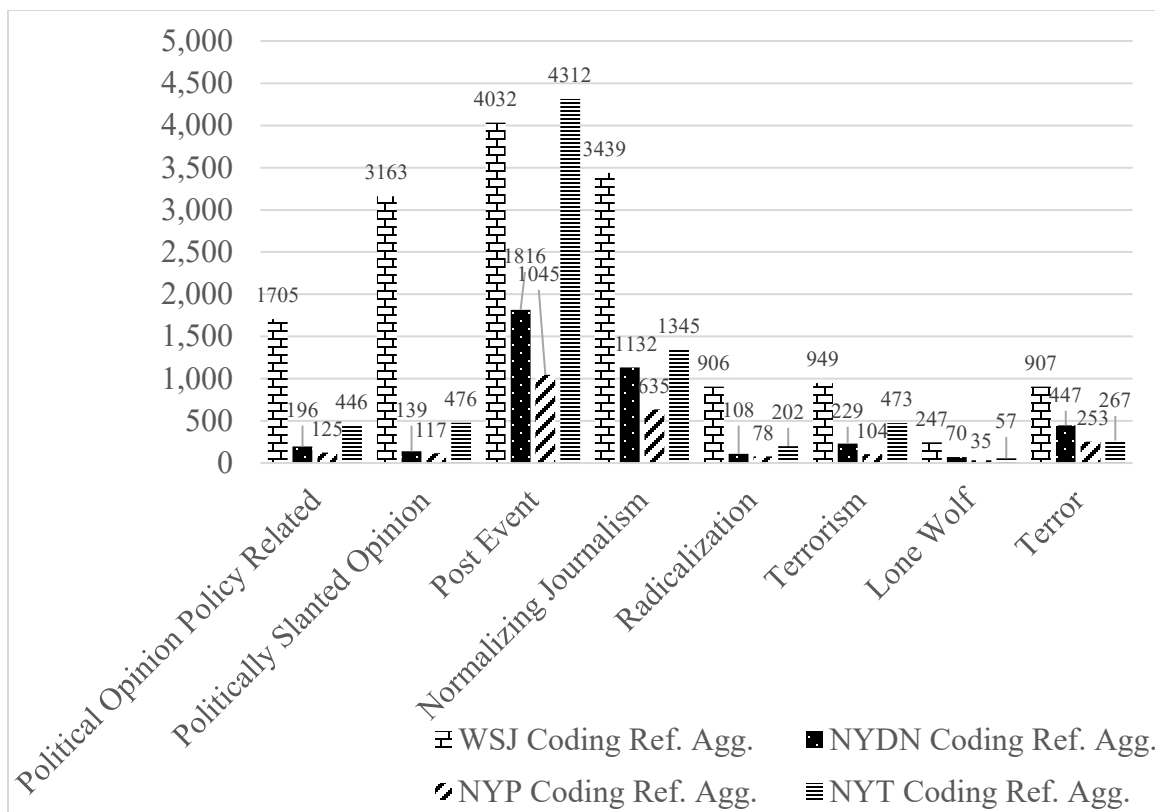
While post-event reporting and normalizing commentary were the two most prevalent reporting trends, only the Wall Street Journal and the NY Times reported politically slanted opinion as their third most heavily engaged social construction reporting. The NY Post and the NY Daily News used terror as their third most social construction influencer. Thus, the Republican (NY Post) and Democrat (NY Daily News) outlets used more terror to influence social construction. In contrast, the liberal (NY Times) and conservative (Wall Street Journal) outlets used more political opinion to influence social construction. News outlets' trends deviate more drastically upon individual reviews.

Wall Street Journal: Conservative

I uploaded and coded 182 articles (in addition to 100 subscriber comments) from the Wall Street Journal; albeit, the Wall Street Journal had more content in their articles, commentary from subscribers, and opinions than the other news outlets. The overall tone and reporting style of the Wall Street Journal emphasized and accentuated the terrorist theme, as Figure 11 demonstrates with a large amount of data in the terrorist, terrorist group, radicalization, terrorism, lone wolf, and terror codes (6,303) indicating terror tactics.

Figure 11

Wall Street Journal Directly Coded References
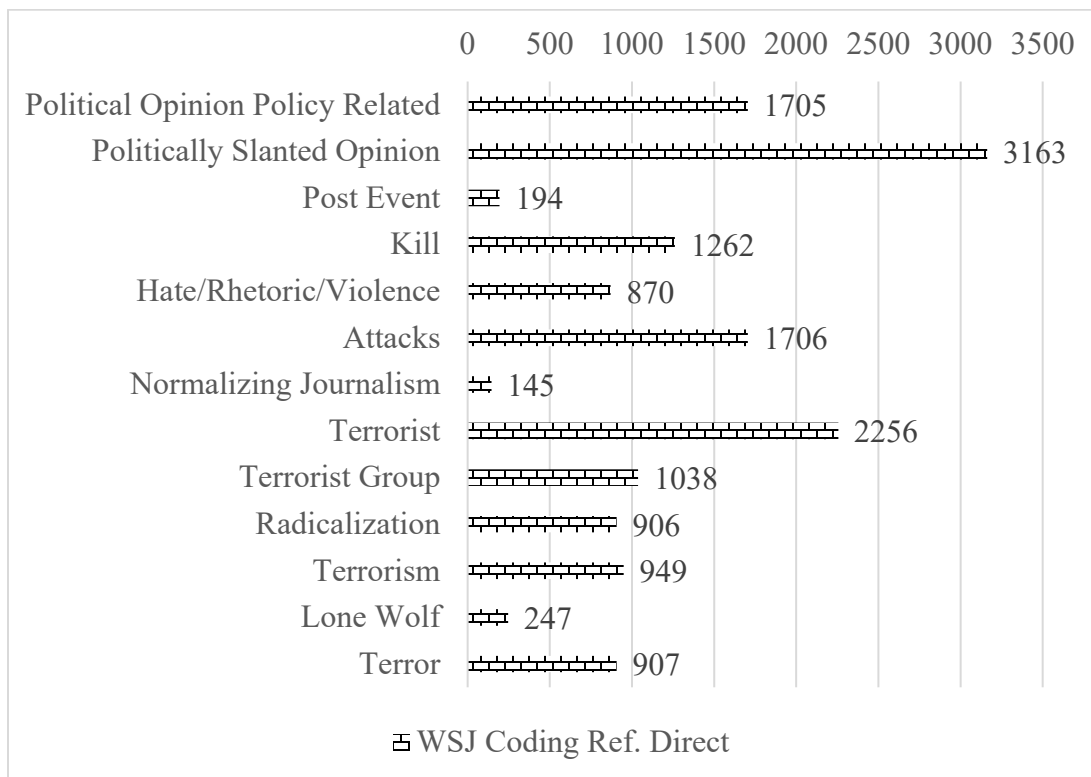
Since the number of articles coded was consistent with the other news outlets, I attributed the increased amount of Wall Street Journal data to the length of their articles, the reporters' writing styles, and detailed event descriptions. The Wall Street Journal includes their 38 Pulitzer Prizes awards for having a 2.5 million readership base (wsj.com); that substantial patronage could be why the Wall Street Journal had excessive commentary sections. However, these data trends were abundant in most Wall Street Journal articles coded, including those with minimal subscriber commentary. For example, Shallwani et al.'s (2016) summary of the attack by Rahami included words and phrases like terror, lone wolves, and terror groups at the beginning of the story and repeatedly continued through the end. By mentioning the Rahami case and other attacks in the story, the writers sensationalized fear creating a social construct that terrorism is an overwhelming issue in the U.S. Shallwani et al. wrote that:

> … three violent attacks over the weekend that left almost 40 people injured remained shrouded in questions, but together they fueled growing fears among authorities about terror assaults by small groups, lone wolves, or simply deranged individuals. And even as those were under investigation, a suspicious device found in a trash can near a train station in Elizabeth, N.J., exploded early Monday as a bomb squad was attempting to disarm it with a robot, officials said, according to the Associated Press. (p. 1)

I found this same longevity and style throughout the Wall Street Journal's reporting of all four terrorist events.

The Wall Street Journal also had a higher rate of stories involving political slant (4,868), demonstrating the publication's significant propensity to normalize social constructs politically and alongside a conservative base. Normalizing journalism codes were also substantial (3,439), indicating that the Wall Street Journal incorporated social constructs to the news outlets' desired view, further driving the normalization of those social constructs. Considering the terror tactics, political slant, and normalization practices (see Figures 10 & 11), the Wall Street Journal substantially constructed society and normalized those constructs. The Wall Street Journal used terror to frame scenarios by consistently using terrorizing sensationalism surrounding terror, terrorism, terrorist group, radicalization, lone wolf, and terrorist.

Overall, based on that article, the Wall Street Journal's content and the descriptive terminology accentuated the severity of the terrorist attacks and appealed to conservative readers' emotions to highlight and strengthen political rhetoric. However, considering Berger and Luckman's (1966) statement that "an understanding of language is thus essential for understanding of everyday life" (p. 52), the Wall Street Journal significantly constructed social norms around terror during the events I investigated. According to Berger and Luckman, such language impacts the ideas and perceptions of the populace, which, in this case, led to heightened terrorism fear aimed at forwarding a political agenda. Thus, I found that the Wall Street Journal contained significant terror tactics, political slant, and social construct normalization.

NY Times: Liberal

Even though I coded more articles from the NY Times than the Wall Street

Journal, the content and writing style of the NY Times was not as elaborate. Additionally,

while subscribers contributed comments more frequently in the Wall Street Journal, the

NY Times included substantially more editorial comments on the terrorist events.

Subsequently, the replication of redundant data reported was far less in the NY Times,

and the data I extracted pertained to a broader range of nodes (see Figure 12).

Figure 12

New York Times Directly Coded References
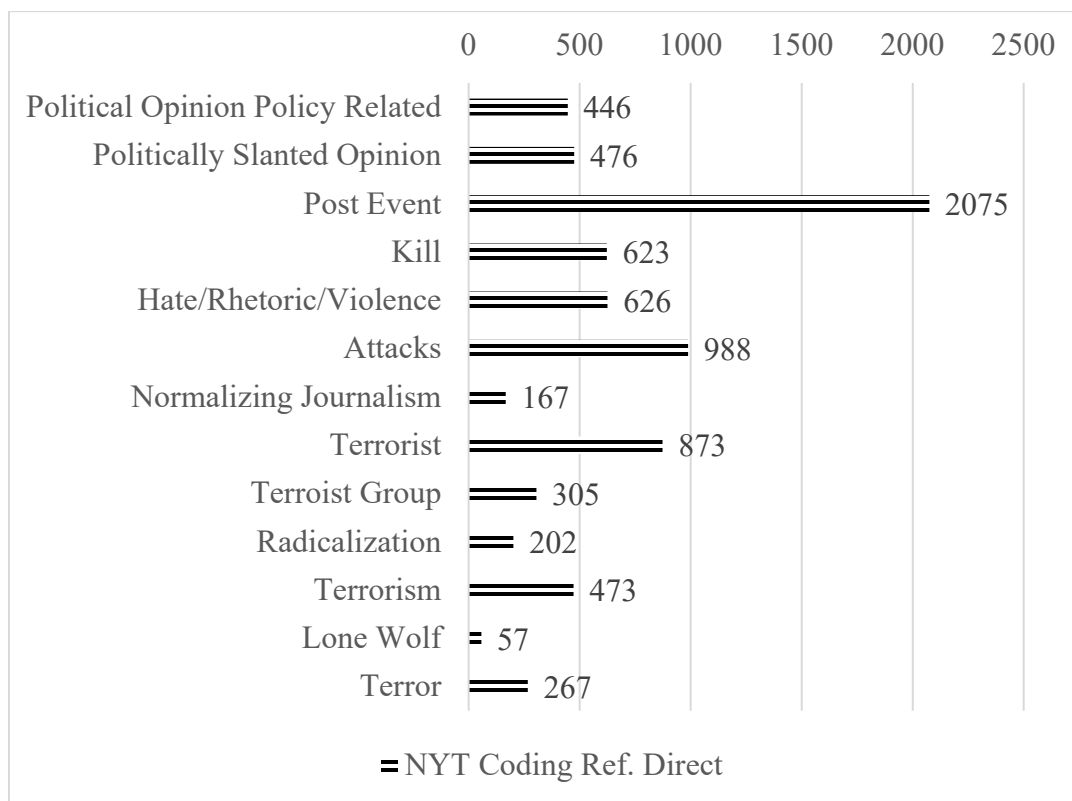
For example, similar stories in the Wall Street Journal and NY Times about

Shazad referenced three nodes in the Wall Street Journal and seven nodes in the NY

Times. The stark data content difference indicated reporting differences; Specifically, the NY Times content contained minimal slant or opinion. Furthermore, when analyzing similar stories like I did the Shazad case, I realized the NY Times highlighted extensive data such as Shazad's connections to the militant group Tehrik-i-Taliban. The NY Times also detailed Shazad's meeting with the Pakistani Taliban leader, Hakimullah Mehsud, and ongoing contact with Mehsud upon Shazad's return to the United States.

Most NY Times articles included extensive data providing more information with significantly less political slant than the Wall Street Journal. For example, Elliot (2010) provided an in-depth look at the event sequence leading to Shazad's radicalization attack and clarified where Shazad learned about explosives. These details were essential because they pointed out and identified Shazad's ties to the Tehrik-e-Taliban, thus debunking prior reports that Shazad was a lone wolf. Based on Elliot's report, Shazad also gained training and support from the Tehrik-e-Taliban. Aligning Elliot's detail and writing style with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of social construction, I found far less inflammatory normalization than other news outlets.

Furthermore, Elliot (2010) depicted a militant group with ties to Shazad. Shazad's radicalization and subsequent attack aligned with Borum's (2012a) model. Considering Berger and Luckman's (1966) social construct theory, Elliot's straightforward, non-inflammatory language furthered a social construction depicting what terrorists go through before an attack. Elliot implied that other terrorists and U.S. residents could have the same terroristic dedication and training but did not confirm such. Thus, I found that journalists from the NY Times were not as prone to discuss policy and other laws related

to or connected to the terrorist as did the Wall Street Journal. In addition, NY Times'

political slant usage was significantly less frequent than the Wall Street Journal. The NY

Times used normalizing terminology slightly more than the Wall Street Journal.

However, that normalization did not involve terror tactics or political slant as profoundly

as the Wall Street Journal. Thus, I found that the NY Times used some terror tactics,

political slant, and normalization to construct society.

The NY Post: Republican

I uploaded and coded 188 articles for the NY Post. The NY Post had more

sensational stories with photos and less subscriber commentary than the NY Times and

the Wall Street Journal. The NY Post contained short, poignant stories with minimal data

per article, reflected by the small data amount in the various nodes (see Figures 5 – 10, &

13). Considering Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory, the NY Post rarely normalized

social constructs. Like the Wall Street Journal, the NY Post used sensationalizing terror

tactics and political slant. The NY Post employed the same themes as the other three

news outlets but used these themes less frequently (see Figure 5). Even so, the NY Post

used terror tactics (see Figure 13).

Figure 13

New York Post Directly Coded References
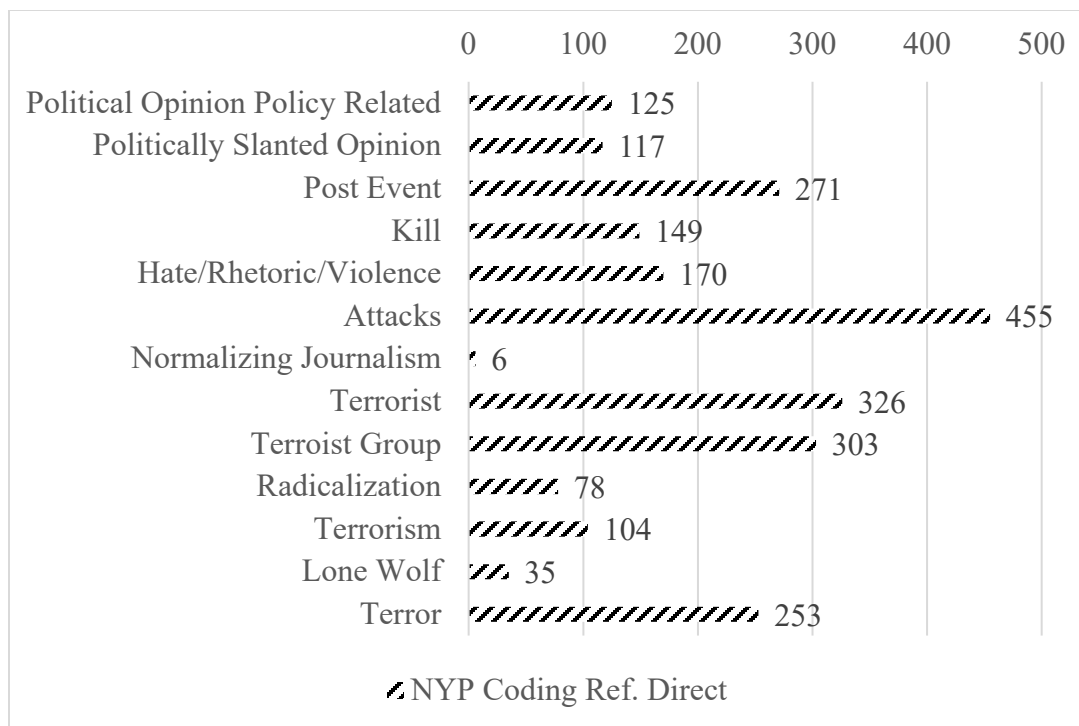
As demonstrated by the significant data in the terror code, the NY Post tactically capitalized on the readers' terror, using sensational language to capture readers' attention. For example, Celona et al. (2016) used phrases like "deafening explosion," "blew out scores of windows," "high powered explosive," and "sudden flash of white light" to sensationalize the news article by offering descriptive phrases meant to appeal to the senses and offer event imagery. The article had five photos, including one showing a mangled dumpster at the site of the explosion. In addition, Celona et al. wrote, "hundreds of people, including neighbors trying to get to their cars or apartments, milled around outside of barricades" (p. 4). Applying Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory, this terror

tactic sensationalism creates social constructs about terrorism. Even so, Celona et al.'s terror tactics did not normalize those social constructs.

Many NY Post stories were socially constructive, depicting terrorist traits, including familial extremism. For example, Sperry (2016) briefly discussed the hatred that Rahami held for America, the planning Rahami exhibited before detonating the explosives, and details of other terrorist events wherein the family contributed in some way to the attack. While not a normalizing social construct, Sperry (2016) reported about the family and the attacker's actions before the attack. In doing so, Sperry incorporated Rahami's family within the social construct, raising questions about the attacker's actions before the attack and whether there was a nexus in behavior to other lone wolf attackers or prior attacks. The anger and hatred for America, as espoused by Rahami and potentially his family, aligned with Stage 1 of Borum's (2012a) four-stage pathway mindset model of terrorism in that "the grievance stage is where the individual criticizes their social condition and environment as being uninviting" (p. 604).

Overall, I found that the NY Post reported the four events in a short, concise manner with limited slant and normalizing language but did use sensationalizing terror tactics to construct the events socially. The NY Post accentuated the severity of the events by using sensational language that aligned with the terror tactics theme. The NY Post followed the events through the judicial process as well. It included information not found in the other news outlets, like Sperry's (2016) report on the Rahami family social construct, which aligned well with Borum's (2012a) model.

The NY Daily News: Democratic

I uploaded and coded 239 articles from the NY Daily News: More content than the other news outlets but with the shortest average word count (*n* = 270 words). Thus, the NY Daily News' coded references were equivalent to the NY Post, contained similar sensationalism, and included opinion and commentary columns. However, the NY Daily News' content contained more political slant, sensationalizing terror tactics, and normalization than the NY Post (see Figures 5, 10, 13, & 14).

Figure 14

New York Daily News Directly Coded References
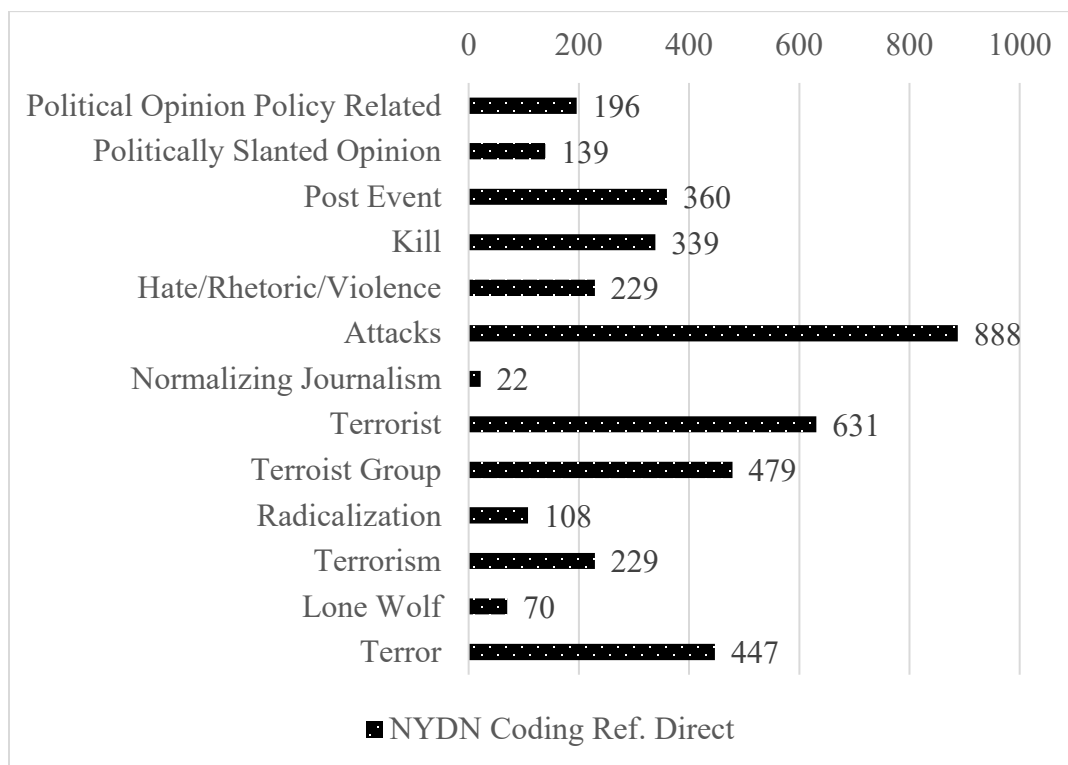
The NY Daily News' terrorist event-related sensational stories created constructs indicative of normalization and heightened the populace's terror fears as reality.

Combining the political slant and normalization with the terror tactics, the NY Daily News also socially constructed and normalized society. For example, Silverstein (2016) wrote a story about how Rahami learned bomb-making and acquired skills from an Al Qaeda magazine and detailed Rahami's apparent ties to an Afghan Taliban seminary. Silverstein explained the pending charges and crimes leading to Rahami's arrest using policy and politically slanted verbiage:

> The Department of Homeland Security memo shows that the bombs Rahami allegedly left in four locations — two in New York's Chelsea neighborhood, and two in his home state of New Jersey — were all made differently from each other. But all of the bombs followed guidelines spelled out in issues of Inspire, the terror group's in-house magazine… The memo shows yet another instance of Rahami apparently taking tips from terrorists abroad. He praised Osama Bin Laden, Al Qaeda and ISIS in a blood-soaked journal that was found after his arrest. The Guardian reported that, during a 2011 trip to Pakistan, he spent three weeks at a religious seminary tied to the Afghan Taliban. Authorities have not found evidence of Rahami having direct ties to any terror groups... He faces state charges for the gunfight, and a criminal complaint showed he will also face several federal charges, including using weapons of mass destruction and bombing a place of public use.

These examples present a tie to policy and politics present in Silverstein's story, thereby demonstrating how slanted verbiage and literary content drew attention to policy while covering the crimes of the event.

The significant amount of data in the NY Daily News' hate/rhetoric/violence, attacks, and kill codes demonstrate considerable normalizing social construction (see Figure 14). The verbiage revealed an alignment between the language and the social constructs developed, bringing attention to the terrorist event and normalizing fear perceptions related to terrorist events. According to Berger and Luckmann (1966):

> The sociology of knowledge must concern itself with whatever passes for knowledge in a society, regardless of the ultimate validity or invalidity of such knowledge. And in so far as all human knowledge is developed, transmitted, and maintained in social situations, the sociology of knowledge must seek to understand the processes by which this is done in such a way that a taken for granted reality congeals for the man in the street. In other words, we contend that sociology of knowledge is concerned with the analysis of the social construction of reality. (p. 15)

Berger and Luckmann's analysis pertained to this normalizing construct because it demonstrated how individuals process knowledge and validate the information. The social constructs presented in the NY Daily News stories consist of communication and language that set the tone for what individuals perceived as reality; thus, normalizing that social construct. Overall, I found that the NY Daily News reported politically slanted stories to enhance political policy and opinion and had a consistent pattern of normalizing their terrorist event-related stories.

Summary

Throughout this study, I found that news outlets normalized social constructs alongside the political continuum of the newspaper's reading audience across these four lone wolf terrorist events in NYC. All four news outlets possessed a unique reporting style, including commentary and opinion, about the four terrorist events. Equally notable was that each news outlet had a diverse way of reporting terrorist events accentuating different views, which aligned with the context of the research question. While all four news outlets' content was primarily post-event, three distinct themes emerged: Terror tactics (9,669 direct references coded), normalization (6,551 direct references coded), and political slant (6,367 direct references coded).

Subsequently, I found the Wall Street Journal used such sensationalizing terror tactics more than two times that of the other three news outlets put together, albeit the Wall Street Journal contained substantially more subscriber commentary. The Wall Street Journal and the NY Times used sensationalizing terror tactics to draw attention to specific political points. Additionally, the Wall Street Journal contained significantly more political slant than the other news outlets. While the NY Post and the NY Daily News employed more terror tactics, the NY Daily News used them nearly twice as much as the NY Post. These findings indicated that all four news outlets included normalizing language to socially constructed stories of lone wolf terrorist events aligned with their political continuums.

Chapter 4 included (a) the setting, (b) demographics, (c) data collection, (d) data analysis, (e) evidence of trustworthiness, and (f) results. Chapter 5 presents discussion

including (a) interpretation of findings, (b) recommendations, (c) implications, and (d)

conclusions. Chapter 5 includes (a) interpretation of findings, (b) recommendations, and

(c) implications.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

My purpose with this phenomenological study was to identify whether social construction in journalistic reporting normalized radical lone wolf terrorism considering journalistic content and political slant. This research was vital because social normalization of radical lone wolf terrorism could influence societal changes legitimizing lone wolf terrorist activities, thus, increasing terrorist attacks and endangering countless lives. My findings, founded on Borum's (2012a) four-stage pathway mindset model of terrorism and Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social construction theory, confirmed that the publications' slanted reporting practices created altered social constructions, thereby normalizing terroristic activities.

Interpretation of Findings

My findings confirmed substantial terrorist normalization considering journalistic, political slant within the four major NYC newspaper publications reporting the four NYC terrorist events from 2010 to 2017. I found that political policy and political opinion were often injected into journalistic reports when highlighting terrorist events and that reports sensationalized to further political ideologies. This concept aligned succinctly with Borum's (2012a) four-stage pathway mindset model of terrorism and Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social construction theory. Thus, a socially constructed messaging platform based on the norms and values integrated into society by that journalistic normalization was present. Thematic analyses demonstrated notable journalistic trends of terror tactics combined with political slant emphasized with words like terrorist, terror group, terrorism, terror, radicalization, and lone wolf.

Prior literature demonstrated similar terroristic manipulation using fear to assert power over a populace (Crenshaw, 2000). In my personal and professional experience, society relied on news reports for critical health and safety-related data, altercasting journalists with responsibility for accurate and complete news coverage. However, during the four terrorist events analyzed, all four news outlets sensationalized those events to create fear, exacerbated the facts, and normalized society according to each outlet's political slant. Aligning my findings with prior work, like Ruigrok and van Atteveldt (2007), such journalistic normalization is not uncommon. Ruigrok and Atteveldt found that journalists presented news by selectively framing events, thus influencing event relevance into contexts more salient to a particular interpretation or evaluation. Applying Borum's (2012a) model, this type of societal manipulation serves to further terroristic mindsets.

Interpretations Associated With Borum's Model

My findings demonstrated that journalistic reporting normalized lone wolf terrorist behavior, which, according to the attribution stage of Borum's (2012a) four-stage pathway mindset model, maligns and dehumanizes a group or individual. According to Borum, once a group or individual feels held socially accountable or blamed for a given situation, they are altercasted as an undesirable, anti-social outcast. Borum noted that once the group or individual perceives this malignment or dehumanization, they extend that perception to all people, thereby extending their hostilities to all society. Therefore, by applying Borum's model, journalistic terror tactics and political slant furthers terrorism, demonstrating the destructive nature of such

journalistic normalization. Following Borum's pathway, sensational, terrorizing, and politically slanted news reports lead to further terrorism if left unchecked. Such journalistic trends are not just detrimental to the would-be terrorist; in line with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory, those journalistic trends additionally adversely socially construct society.

Interpretations Associated With Berger and Luckmann's Theory

Societal reality centers on social norms and values, which Berger and Luckmann (1966) explained are socially constructed and become a normal part of society. Berger and Luckmann posited that society creates opinions about things and ideas, thereby constructing normal society by those opinions. According to Berger and Luckmann, people develop these normalizing opinions by listening to and reading the opinions of others, thus, through news outlets.

I found that all four news outlets used terror tactics to politically slant reports of the terroristic events detailed in this study, thereby constructing and normalizing their readers' societies accordingly. Moreover, I found this normalizing social construction reflected through the thematic trends of terror tactics and political slant exposed in the results via word content, journalistic framing, and social construction when describing the terrorist events. Thus, my findings confirmed that each newspaper was culpable of socially constructing societal norms through politically slanting reports, commentary, and opinions to their readers regardless of anticipated limitations.

Limitations Found

As anticipated, I encountered personal bias, coding and interpretation, and limited citizen representation considering the NYC confines and four news outlet narratives of the four terrorist events. Subsequently, I recorded my thoughts, opinions, and considerations throughout data collection, coding, and analyses to identify biases, interpretation variations, and representation ranges. Furthermore, I frequently and repeatedly reviewed and compared these notations with coding and interpretation to minimalize those limitations. As a native New Yorker and a 9/11 first responder, I sometimes felt personally connected to the stories and events. However, I limited my personal bias using my journal notes, as I anticipated in Chapter 3.

I countered journalistic inconsistencies by using thematic analyses to analyze the data and identify themes and patterns, thus improving consistencies throughout the study. For example, the excessive amount of commentary in the *Wall Street Journal* was inconsistent with the other news outlets. However, my strict analysis processes enabled individual dissection, adding consistency to coding, theme, and pattern identification. Additionally, I detailed all such inconsistencies and my approaches to them in my journal for further analysis.

I included a wide-range political continuum, subscriber commentary, and circulation to counter representation limitations, representing the broadest NYC representation possible for this qualitative study. The four news outlets represented the entire political spectrum, from conservative to liberal. I coded and analyzed subscriber commentary, as well as journalistic reports and editorials. The four news outlets that I

selected represented the most popular, most circulated new outlets in NYC. Admittedly, those four news outlets were not the only news outlets covering events in NYC. Thus, I remain confident that my findings represent a substantial portion of the population along every political spectrum. Therefore, even though I may not have considered all opinions in NYC, my results still revealed journalistic societal normalization; subsequently, I highly recommend further action.

The main limitation challenging transferability was my delimitations to the four specific events and the four specific news outlets. Even so, I feel that transferability is plausible to similar-sized major metropolitan areas in the United States, given the broad political representation I used. Moving forward, I recommend further similar research centered on different geographic regions and using different news outlets to expand on scientific understandings of journalistic influences on normalizing social constructs.

Recommendations

While my findings begin building the body of knowledge concerning normalizing journalistic social construction, further research will expand the scientific understanding of journalism's role in constructing and normalizing society. Throughout my research, I found minimal literature on terrorism considering social construction, which considerably hinders disseminating terroristic data types. Therefore, I highly recommend further research on topics including (a) the relationship between news outlets and terrorist actions, (b) the relationship between social construction and terrorist behavior, and (c) the effects of journalistic societal normalization and social construction on terrorism. In addition, an opportunity to speak to the reporting journalists inquiring why they did not

report data and their feelings about un- or misreported data could provide additional

insight to this study. Further research in these areas may help expand scientific

knowledge by explaining how terrorist behavior ties to social construction and media

bias, leading to public policy strategies to minimalize normalizing terrorist behavior into

normal social constructs.

Based on my findings, my current recommendations for public policy include

developing policy that:

a) Establishes fundamental procedure sets for journalists covering stories dealing
with terrorist issues

b) Requires journalists to inform the public when not all the facts are included or
confirmed

c) Mandates that the journalist note when an investigation is incomplete; thus,
the report is incomplete

d) Obliges the journalist to differentiate their opinion from established fact

e) Demands the journalist vet and confirm reports with an appointed, reputable
data source such as an official event liaison.

Implications

The implications of my findings include furthering social science understanding

of the normalizing social construction of the media, which influences public policy and

drives social change. Because social norms impact how society thinks and feels about

terrorism, implications apply to individuals, families, organizations, and society. The

potential impact of positive social change at the individual level can increase

understanding of terrorism and terrorist events. On the family level, implications included improving awareness about how terrorist events impact family life and the importance of family readiness and social awareness. From an organizational standpoint, the implications include improving social and societal policies designed to address terrorism in the workplace. Finally, at a societal level, implications from my findings could further public policy development leading to a safer society minimizing terrorism.

Implications to Public Policy

In my opinion, public policy addresses outstanding issues by working cohesively with local political leaders, the news media, enforcement officials, and the public. Therefore, public and safety officials rely on news reports for crucial information that differentiates fact from fiction regardless of varying political propaganda. Thus, news agencies have a public responsibility to report the facts without inserting their slant and opinion. Such legitimate reporting would improve community awareness and policy development about terrorism, communication, safety, health, and much more. For example, law enforcement could enhance community relationships and foster productive responses to terrorist events with reliable information. Furthermore, forging trustworthy, honest relationships built from public policy based on accurate data naturally drives positive social change.

Implications to Social Change

The potential impact for positive social change lies in the message communicated through journalistic reporting and includes improved health, safety, communication, and societal constructs. The stories printed by these news agencies impact the way people

think and behave by developing and normalizing social constructs. Thus, if social constructs extend from reliable data rather than terroristic political sensationalism, the resulting societal normalization will build from knowledge rather than opinion and speculation.

Such reliable data could provide the community with tangible credible information to create preparedness plans and strategies for terrorist events. For example, private and public organizations could implement drills and safe practice responses to terrorist events. In addition, local fire departments, emergency medical technicians, hospitals, police departments, sanitation, environmental protection, parks department, and more could benefit from reliable information. Thus, the entire community and municipal agencies could work together to create an effective prepared response that would assist all citizens.

Practice Recommendations

Connecting recommendations with implications requires putting practical strategies in routine practice. Such recommended practice would limit slanted opinions, provide facts, and allow the readers to decipher critical data while improving content and reliable journalistic reporting. Thus, problem-solving considerations must go beyond policy verbiage to implanted practice. Some potential problem-solving practices include:

a) Incorporating more newspaper data from other news outlets throughout the United States thereby providing a comprehensive perspective about how other states report the same event

b) Creating a newspaper database so that outlets can share information with the public on local emergency response and relay questions to appropriate response agencies

c) Create training networks for journalists on the importance of limiting slanted opinions and reporting facts as they occur in real-time

Conclusion

A word can associate fear, meaning, and 'rally the troops,' so to speak. This tactic is evidence that often, a writer will write to that "base." This instigation occurred with the Capital siege on January 6, 2021, related to the words used to report that news. Think about the word I just used: siege rather than criminal trespassing. Siege conjures up an image, an image with passionate meaning. A pirate conducts a 'siege' as we see in the movies. Your annoying neighbor may trespass on your front lawn—both stories reported with different words, feelings, and social construction. Nevertheless, both words are interchangeable depending on the emphasis that the user desires to communicate.

In my experience, words conjure images and feelings associated with those words, and the English language contains a plethora of words with the same or similar meanings. For example, my neighbor could say I walked or trespassed on their lawn or could claim I laid siege to their lawn. The different descriptions of the same act lead the listener (or reader) to very different conclusions resulting in drastically different events. One is a minor infraction, and the other a severe crime. I found this type of distortion among the news reported by the Wall Street Journal, NY Times, NY Post, and NY Daily News.

Citizens; private, public, and governmental organizations; and emergency responders of all types rely on news outlets for immediate updates on terroristic events to keep communities safe. However, my findings demonstrate that news agencies in NYC used terror tactics to politically slant their reports, resulting in the normalization of terroristic social constructs that further preset political agendas. For the populace to be accurately informed and prepared, regardless of political party affiliation, news agencies must report accurate unmanipulated facts rather than the slanted, socially constructed framing I found during all four events I researched. Instead, the four news outlets I investigated spun narratives, thereby translating events to infer political ideologies that suited the news outlets' end political goals. I found that this manipulative practice was prevalent among all four major NYC news agencies.

Such unreliable information indicated a disconnect between facts and opinion, which significantly impacts community safety. For policymakers, this disconnect means that effective policies do not exist to help mitigate terrorist events and, thus, do not make the community safer. Therefore, public doubt about policymaker competence becomes questionable. In addition, when real-time events do not get reported accurately, the emergency response becomes hindered, affecting operational response and community safety.

When journalists report terrorist events by socially constructing and normalizing actions according to biased or slanted conceptions, they place the entire populace in danger. Therefore, it is incumbent for journalists to report the facts credibly as they occur; otherwise, journalists do citizens a great disservice and violate the trust that the

people instilled in them. Willful blindness is unacceptable to the people, the emergency

responders, the policymakers, and the communities entrusting journalists to report and

provide vital information. Crucial, life-saving decisions use critical information;

information journalists from the four news agencies I analyzed manipulated to construct

and normalize society as they desired instead of reality.

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