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An act of terror and an act of hate: national elite and populace newspaper framing of pulse nightclub shooting

Jace L. Valcore and Kevin Buckler

Department of Criminal Justice & Social Work, University of Houston Downtown, Houston, TX, USA

ABSTRACT

The Pulse nightclub mass shooting is a defining event for the LGBTQ and Latinx communities. It signified that much remains to be done to achieve true equality and equitable treatment over and above the symbolic mentions of it in law and public policy. The news media is an important mechanism for communication of meaning following tragic and painful events such as the Pulse shooting. This study examined how the Pulse nightclub shooting that occurred on 12 June 2016, was covered by influential national newspapers in the United States, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *USA Today*, to determine how the event was framed, what types of sources were relied upon, and what types of social and legal solutions were emphasized. The unit of analysis was direct and indirect quotes in each news article. Content analysis revealed that the dominant framing of the attack was that of a terrorist act committed by a pathological, ideologically motivated offender. The most common control mechanism discussed were soft measures, particularly gun control. Little attention was given to the victims or the anti-LGBTQ nature of the shooting.

KEYWORDS

Media and crime; hate crime; terrorism; LGBTQ

In the middle of Pride month, on 12 June 2016, a 29-year-old Afghani-American man shot 102 patrons of a popular LGBTQ nightclub, Pulse, in Orlando, Florida with a legally purchased semi-automatic rifle and handgun. Forty-nine victims died in the attack; 22 were Puerto Rican, and nearly all were Latinx and LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer). Police shot and killed the offender, Omar Mateen, following a three-hour standoff. During the attack, Mateen placed three calls to 911 in which he expressed anger directed at the United States for military bombings and interference in the Middle East, and he claimed allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a jihadist militant group also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (see Mabon & Royle, 2016). At the time of the attack it was the deadliest mass shooting in United States history, but was surpassed one year later by a more lethal mass shooting that occurred at a concert in Las Vegas (Montero, 2019). The Pulse shooting in Orlando remains as the deadliest incident of violence against LGBTQ and Latinx people in United States history (Dastiger, 2017).

It appeared to many observers that news coverage of the Pulse shooting was focused primarily on the offender and his extremist, Islamist motivations, and gave considerably less attention to the victims and to perceptions of the attack as one of homophobic aggression

CONTACT Jace L. Valcore valcorej@uhd.edu University of Houston Downtown, Houston, TX 77002, USA

that extended beyond religious or nationalistic ideology (see Ferguson, 2018). There was considerable discussion and debate about how to define the incident and the offender, and how policy makers should respond, but little focus on the consequences of the shooting for the victims and their communities. The significance of the attack for LGBTQ people around the world, the Puerto Rican community, and the wider Latinx community, was overshadowed by the offender's self-professed Muslim background and allegiance to the Islamic State (La Fountain-Stokes, 2018). While there has been narrative, there has been little empirical research exploring or analyzing news coverage of the Pulse shooting.

Terror, hate, or both: why it matters

Mass shootings, acts of terrorism, and hate crime incidents have all increased in frequency and severity in the United States over the past few years. Reported hate crimes, as tallied in the FBI's Uniform Crime Report (2018), have steadily increased each year since 2015; including a 17% increase from 2016 to 2017. Mass shootings, defined as incidents in which four or more people are shot at a single time and space, have also steadily increased each decade since the 1970s (Krouse & Richardson, 2015). Similarly, incidents of domestic terrorism, particularly far-right extremist violence, have been on the rise. The number of far-right terrorist attacks in the United States more than quadrupled from 2016 to 2017 (Jones, 2018). These reports and statistics are complicated, though, by the fact and/or perception that many incidents of mass shooting, domestic terrorism, or hate crime, may be one and the same, but distinctions made by the media and the legal system have important ramifications.

Defining terrorism and hate crime

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defines domestic terrorism as 'acts of violence that [violate] the criminal laws of the United States or any state, committed by individuals or groups without any foreign direction, and appear to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, or influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion, and occur primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States' (Bjelopera, 2016, para.1). A domestic terrorist is motivated by a U.S. based political or religious ideology, such as anti-abortion extremism or white supremacy (Bjelopera, 2016; FBI, 2019), and is typically a minority-group member targeting the majority or dominant group in an 'upward crime' (Black, 2004). Recently, federal agencies have focused on the 'lone wolf' terrorist, or 'homegrown violent extremist.' According to the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI, a homegrown violent extremist (HVE) is a person who lives or operates primarily in the United States, but is motivated by ideologies and objectives of foreign terrorist organizations (Bjelopera, 2016). The distinction is simply that a homegrown extremist is influenced in some manner by a foreign terrorist ideology rather than a domestic ideology.

Hate crimes and domestic terrorism both fall under the purview of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, though most hate crime prosecutions are initiated at the state level. The Hate Crime Statistics Act[1] defines hate crimes as 'crimes that manifest evidence of prejudice based on race, gender and gender identity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnicity, including where appropriate the crimes of murder, non-negligent

manslaughter; forcible rape; aggravated assault; simple assault; intimidation; arson; and destruction, damage or vandalism of property.' Hate crime is a social construct, which lends itself to imprecise definitions. Two key components of hate crime that have broad consensus include the bias or prejudice of the offender and the social identity of the victim (Jacobs & Potter, 1998).

The prevailing assumption is that hate crime offenders are motivated by personal malice and prejudice. The offenses, described as 'downward crimes,' are frequently committed by majority group members against minority group members as a way of asserting social control and dominance (Deloughery, King, & Asal, 2012). According to extant research and statistics, a 'typical' hate crime involves an unplanned assault upon a racial, religious, or sexual/gender minority by a group of young, white, males without connections to an organized hate group or specific ideological motivation (Deloughery et al., 2012; McDevitt, Levin, & Bennett, 2002); they are often first time offenders, and there is often alcohol involved (Gerstenfeld, 2018).

Hate crimes and the LGBTQ community

Members of the LGBTQ community are disproportionately targeted for violence, harassment, and discrimination based upon their real or perceived gender and sexual minority status, as well as intersecting racial and economic statuses (Buist & Lenning, 2016; Meyer, 2015). Gay males and transgender women of color, in particular, face consistently high rates of violent hate crime victimization, including homicide and police abuse (Meyer, 2015; Mogul, Ritchie, & Whitlock, 2011; Tillery, Ray, Cruz, & Waters, 2018). While most hate crimes are violent and tend to be more violent than non-hate motivated assaults, anti-LGBTQ hate crimes are the most severe, even when committed by a single offender rather than a group, which is more common for hate crimes and increases the level of physical injury to victims (Lantz & Kim, 2019).

Hate crime laws were originally a bipartisan policy issue that allowed for both 'tough on crime' politicians and those concerned with the civil rights of minority groups to feel that they were addressing the social problem of bias and prejudice-motivated violence (Jacobs & Potter, 1998). But, they have been criticized as a form of identity politics that inflames inter-group conflict (Jacobs & Potter, 1998), and critiqued for failing to address or solve the root causes of hate crime (Gerstenfeld, 2018; Valcore & Dodge, 2019). Scholars have also specifically argued that hate crime laws may actually be harmful to the LGBTQ community because they only serve to strengthen a punitive criminal legal system that historically and continually mistreats and abuses minorities, particularly those with intersecting racial/ethnic and LGBTQ identities (Mogul, Ritchie & Whitlock, 2011; Meyer, 2014). Meyer (2015) further noted that the typical conception of an anti-LGBTQ hate crime is one in which a privileged, white, gay, male is randomly attacked simply because of his sexuality (i.e. Matthew Shepard) and that this 'stranger danger' stereotype fails to consider that victims and offenders of hate crime cross multiple lines of group identity, including class, race, and gender. It is extremely difficult for a Hispanic gay man or a black transgender woman to clearly define a violent attack against them as one based solely upon race, or sexuality, or gender, which prevents recognition and support from the criminal justice system.

Distinguishing between domestic terrorism and hate crime

While the typical hate crime is opportunistic and lacks connection to a hate group or specific ideology (Deloughery et al., 2012; McDevitt et al., 2002), it is notable that hate crime and domestic terror have commonalities. Both are intended to intimidate and wreak terror on an entire group, and both include targets selected because of their identity. A research brief from The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism concluded 'that hate crime and terrorism are more alike than different,' and that increases in one often results in increases in the other, particularly when far-right extremism is the cause (2016, p. 2). Gerstenfeld (2018) similarly noted that hate crime offenders and domestic terrorists share demographic and social characteristics in that they are almost all young men with access to guns who have been socially isolated and influenced by extremist ideology. For investigators, distinguishing between personal malice and ideologically motivated actions may be difficult, because they must rely on what can be proven in court (i.e. the suspect's expressed motivation): did the suspect articulate a foreign ideology, use racist slurs, belong to a hate group, or express extremist ideology on social media?

To further illustrate, consider that the majority of mass public shooters in the United States are white, male, American citizens (Duwe, 2007), yet there has been inconsistent and politicized use of the term 'terrorism.' The 'terrorist' label is one that appears to be reserved for non-white offenders (Beydoun, 2018; Norris, 2017). Dylann Roof, a young white supremacist, motivated by a desire to provoke a 'race war', killed 9 Black/African American people who were attending a church bible study (qtd. in Norris, 2017, p. 503). Legal analysis by Norris (2017) indicates that the crime was clearly domestic terrorism under federal law. Roof was motivated by a U.S. based, racist ideology (FBI, 2019). Yet, he was tried and convicted on federal hate crime charges (possibly because domestic terrorism is a category and not a prosecutable offense). The FBI investigated Mateen, however, as a 'homegrown violent extremist' who committed an act of terrorism (Hauslohner, Achenbach, & Nakashima, 2016).

The grey area between domestic terrorism and hate crime allows for suspects with links to domestic terrorist ideologies to be charged with hate crimes. It is unclear to what extent this influences how the government understands the threat posed by domestic extremism, but recent reports indicate that the Trump administration is failing to seriously address it (Clark, 2019). Forty-two law enforcement officers have been murdered by domestic extremists since 2005 (Hodges & Sommerstein, 2018) and the majority of current FBI domestic terrorism investigations involve white supremacist motivations. Following the federal arrest of 57 members of a white supremacist group in April 2018, Attorney General Jeff Sessions stated that 'Not only do white supremacist gangs subscribe to a repugnant, hateful ideology, they also engage in significant, organized and violent criminal activity' (qtd, in Jones, 2018, p. 6). And yet, news media spend considerably more time covering foreign terrorist groups, fueling Islamophobia and xenophobia. Kearns, Betus, and Lemieux (2019) found that terrorist attacks with Muslim perpetrators received, on average, 357% more news coverage than attacks with non-Muslim offenders. Like 9/11, the Pulse shooting was followed by attacks on mosques and an increase in harassment and violence against people across the country who were or were perceived to be Muslim (Hauser & Blinder, 2016; St. George, 2016), but news reports indicated that heightened

security concerns following the attack were centered on gay bars and Pride parades, not on mosques or the Muslim community (e.g. Halzak, Hui, O'Connell, 2016).

A significant distinction between an event labeled a hate crime and one perceived to be an act of terrorism is the resulting recognition of the victims (or lack thereof) and the response from community members, officials, and elected representatives. Hate crimes are committed against a specifically identifiable social group, such as the LGBTQ community, while acts of terrorism are committed against 'all of us.' LGBTQ victims of violence are frequently blamed and shamed for their victimization, and are frequently mistreated by police and other authorities (Buist & Lenning, 2016; Meyer, 2015). Many politicians and commentators tried to claim that the Pulse attack was an attack on America, on all its citizens, effectively ignoring the obvious fact that the target was a gay nightclub, not a generic public space, and that the victims were Latinx and LGBTQ, not privileged majority group members. A society's failure to properly recognize the harm done to the members of an oppressed community by failing to accurately label a crime against them prevents legal recognition, negates their experience, and reinforces the offender's message that they should be erased (Lawrence, 2016).

Framing terror and hate: the role of the news media

Scholars have long studied and oft lamented the influence of the news media upon individual and societal perceptions of crime and social deviance as well as the justice system that responds to it (Potter & Kappeler, 2006). News media give disproportionate attention to crime and violence. While terrorism is responsible for less than 0.01% of deaths in the United States, it constituted 35.6% of *The New York Times*' coverage (based on article mentions) in 2016 (Ritchie, 2019). Similarly, homicide is the cause of less than 1% of deaths in the United States, but received nearly 23% of the coverage in the *Times* (Ritchie, 2019). Previous studies have determined that news media rely heavily on official sources of information on crime, such as law enforcement, rather than academics or expert scholars (Buckler, Griffin, & Travis, 2008). Furthermore, those official sources emphasize individual pathology as the cause of crime, rather than examining social factors, and point to hard control measures, such as retribution and deterrence, rather than soft control measures like rehabilitation or treatment (Welch, Fenwick, & Roberts, 1998).

The news media often frame crime, social deviance, and terrorism stories through political and ideological lenses that emphasize the views of political leaders, blame individuals, scapegoat minorities, and fail to acknowledge systemic issues or social influences on criminal behavior (Brinson, & Stohl, 2009; Chagnon, 2015). Brinson and Stohl's (2009) study of how terrorism is presented in the press of the United States and the United Kingdom showed that the differential direction of the coverage corresponded to how political leaders discussed terrorism. Notably, Powell's (2011) analysis found that since 9/11, United States media have framed international terrorists as members of Muslim/Arab/Islam organized terror cells working against 'Christian America,' while domestic terrorists are portrayed as a minor threat and as 'troubled individuals' (p. 91).

Exceptionally violent hate crimes tend to gain substantial media and political attention, such as the brutal murders of Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. in 1998. Ott and Aoki (2002) analyzed coverage of the Shepard murder in Wyoming in three nationally influential newspapers (*New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Washington Post), Time* magazine, and *The*

Advocate. They identified four distinct themes: naming the event, making the event a political symbol, expunging the evil within, and restoring the social order. Generally, the media first attempted to define and label the event, used the victim's status to fuel emotion and gain attention, identified and named an individual culprit, and finally, suggested a path to restore peace and order to the affected communities. Husselbee and Elliott (2002) conducted a more expansive analysis of both national and regional news media framing of hate crime, including both Shepard and the James Byrd, Jr. homicide that occurred in Jasper, Texas. News media coverage of both homicides centered on the community in which it occurred and its citizens, the image and the attention that the town received due to the murder, as well as community attitudes about race or sexuality.

The dominant framing of these two crimes was that they were anomalies committed by lone offenders temporarily disrupting the social order in otherwise peaceful and tolerant communities (Husselbee & Elliott, 2002). As noted by Lewis (2014), this emphasis on extreme crimes obscures the more ordinary hate crimes and instances of discrimination which occur daily. Lewis (2014) also observed that press coverage in the 21st century has moved from reporting on hate crimes to offering commentary and debating whether or not certain crimes warrant the hate crime label. Even the excessively violent murders of transgender women of color which occur with alarming frequency receive little national media attention today, and newspaper coverage frequently misgenders and misrepresents the victims (Waters, Jindasurat, & Wolfe, 2016).

Public discourse and media coverage of hate crimes, like that concerning mass shooters and domestic terrorists, frequently blames the hatred and prejudice of the individual offender, effectively absolving the rest of the community and society, which produced that offender, from any sense of guilt or responsibility (Husselbee & Elliott, 2002; Meyer, 2015). This focus on pathology and personal hatred rather than on social structures and systems that uphold and maintain anti-LGBTQ laws and policies, prevents meaningful analysis and change (Gerstenfeld, 2018; Meyer, 2014, 2015). Reliance on official sources, emphasis on the offender pathology, and the focus on extreme crime events also drives public support for punitive control responses, such as sentence enhancements for hate crimes, rather than rehabilitation or treatment. Given the increasing frequency and severity of hate crimes and domestic terror incidents, it is imperative for the public to be properly informed of their causes and potential prevention. The mass shooting which occurred at the Pulse nightclub was not easily defined and was a source of national debates on terrorism, immigration, and gun control. It also spurred public discourse regarding hate crimes and the LGBTQ community.

We aimed to analyze newspaper coverage to determine how a significant mass shooting was framed and labeled, which sources were utilized to provide information, and what types of social and legal responses were offered.

Research questions

(1) What types of sources were quoted or interviewed regarding the cause of the Pulse shooting and the socio-legal response? In other words, were queer scholars, experts on hate crime, or members of the LGBTQ community relied upon, or did official criminal justice sources dominate coverage?

(a) Were official sources more or less likely than other sources to describe the shooting as a hate crime, terrorist act, or both?

(2) Which ideological frames did quoted/interviewed sources present? More specifically, was the incident discussed in regards to anti- LGBTQ discrimination, racial/ethnic prejudice, and other societal influences, or was the personal pathology of the offender emphasized?

(a) Did the ideology presented differ based upon the source's definition of the shooting as a hate crime, terrorist act, neither, or both?

Methods

We conducted content analysis of three newspapers[2] that have national scope and high readership, *The New York Times, The Washington Post*, and *USA Today*. Two of these news outlets (*The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*) are among those that serve as the 'standard bearer' or as the newspaper of record for the U.S. (see Everback, 2011; King, 1990). *USA Today* is a daily newspaper described as a populist and centrist media outlet 'aimed at a broadly based, general readership' (King, 1990, p. 84). Our focus was on the entirety of the coverage of the Pulse shooting in these nationally influential newspapers. The mass shooting was instantly a national news topic, and this study centers on the societal-level perceptions and framing of the event, thus we exclude regional and local newspapers.

Sampling

Articles were selected for analysis based on timing and content. The sample was collected by searching Lexis-Nexis with the subject term '2016 Orlando nightclub shooting' for each of the newspapers, *The New York Times, Washington Post*, and *USA Today*. Relevant news coverage of the Pulse nightclub shooting dropped substantially by the end of August, so articles were collected from the date of the shooting, 12 June 2016 through 30 August 2016. Following other studies of news media framing, we included news articles, editorials, and opinion columns (e.g. Donaldson et al., 2015). We excluded letters to the editor, obituaries, advertisements, and articles only tangentially related to the actual incident, such as entertainment articles about concerts or award ceremonies. We also eliminated duplicate articles (which was common as articles were frequently first published online and then in print edition).

Operational definitions and coding

Following Buckler, Griffin, and Travis (2008) we coded both direct (contained within quotation marks) and indirect quotes ('officials said'), for source, and crime control and crime causation ideology. Sources were coded as either Academic/Researcher, Interest Group (e.g. National Rifle Association, Human Rights Campaign), Policymaker/Politician, Official Criminal Justice Source (e.g. police, Attorney General, former FBI official), and Other (victims, bystanders, friends, family, coworkers, etc.).

We utilized the framework for evaluating news media coverage of crime causation and control ideology previously developed by Welch et al. (1998). Crime causation ideology

categories include pathology, social factors, or utilitarianism. Pathology was coded as any statements attributing the cause of the shooting to the offender's mental state, personality, or perceived defect (claims regarding mental illness or impulsivity). Social factors included any statements attributing the cause of the shooting to micro- or macro-social forces, social conflicts, or social influences (for instance, anti-LGBTQ culture, anti-Muslim rhetoric, or weak gun laws). Utilitarianism was coded for statements where financial gain was described as the cause. Crime control ideology, according to Welch et al. (1998), involves support for either hard or soft control measures. Hard control includes punishment, incarceration, deterrence, and increased police powers. Soft control includes treatment, rehabilitation, criminal and social justice reform, and gun control.

While Welch, Fenwick, and Roberts (1997; 1998) established a basic structure to understand crime causation and crime control ideologies, the categories that they devised are in no way exhaustive. Situational crime prevention was popularized in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Clarke, 1980; Cohen & Felson, 1979), and serves as a viable strategy to control crime. Therefore, a third category was added as a crime control ideology, entitled 'harm mitigation,' which included preventative measures such as target-hardening, self-protection, and increased private security (Cook & Ludwig, 2011).

Both authors engaged in refining the coding framework. Only one author coded the direct and indirect quotations for the entire sample, the second analyzed a random sample of articles. Both noted any difficult or questionable quotations, discussed them, and arrived at a mutually agreeable code. It was during these meetings that the need for the third category of crime control ('harm mitigation') emerged when it became apparent that the binary option of hard versus soft control measures did not apply to some quoted statements.

Analysis

Articles were coded and analyzed by running queries in NVivo 10 for word frequency and matrix coding. Matrix coding is a cross tabulation of the coding intersections between two or more variables.

Results

A total of 232 articles were collected for analysis, nearly half (49.1%) of which were published by *The New York Times* (see Table 1). *The Washington Post* accounted for 32.3%, and 18.5% were from *USA Today*. The large difference in coverage among the papers is most likely attributable to editorial decisions about readership and newsworthiness. To provide a general overview of the focus and emphasis of the articles in the sample, a word frequency query was run to identify the top 20 most common words; the query included stemmed words and excluded words with less than four letters. After removing words that were not from the body of the articles (specifically 2016, York, Times, June, and Section), the top 20 words notably included 'Mateen,' 'Islam,' 'Terror,' and 'Muslim.' These top words strongly indicate that the dominant frame of the shooting was that of a terrorist act related to the offender's religious beliefs or influences (See Table 2).

Table 1. Sampling frame.

Newspaper	# of Articles	Word Count
The New York Times	114	113,525
The Washington Post	75	84,670
USA Today	43	22,908
Total	232	221,103

RQ 1 – Sources and descriptions

Table 3 shows the types of sources quoted in the articles and editorials about the Pulse Orlando shooting and the description or definition of the incident that they provided. We were coding for hate crime or terrorist act, but it is notable that two statements describing the incident as an act of conspiracy were also identified. Policymakers/politicians were quoted most frequently, at a rate eight times higher than that of academics/researchers and three times that of official criminal justice sources. Overall, the incident was described as a terrorist act more often than a hate crime. Policymakers/politicians and official CJ sources were more likely to call it a terrorist act than a hate crime, frequently emphasizing the role of the Islamic State or 'radical Islam':

> House Homeland Security Chairman Michael McCaul, R-Texas, said "this appears to be the worst terrorist attack on American soil since 9/11. And it is a sobering reminder that radical

Table 2. Top 20 Words.

Word	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)	Similar Words
Orlando	1273	0.91	#orlando, orlando, orlandos
People	1136	0.81	People, peoples
Mateen	1101	0.79	Mateen, mateens
Shooting	773	0.55	Shoot, shooting, shootings, shoots
Attacks	698	0.50	Attack, attacked, attacker, attackers, attacking, attacks
Islam	524	0.38	Islam, islamic, islamism
Calls	472	0.34	CALL, called, calling, calls
Kills	463	0.33	Kill, killed, killing, killings, kills
Years	459	0.33	Year, years
Trump	456	0.33	Trump, trumps
Likeness	418	0.30	Like, liked, likely, likenesses, likes
Police	414	0.30	Police, polices, policing
American	412	0.30	American, americanized, americans
Right	394	0.28	Right, rightful, rightly, rights
Nightclub	393	0.28	Nightclub, nightclubs
Communicate/ community	390	0.28	Communal, communicate, communicated, communicating, communication, communications, communicative, communities, community
Obama	389	0.28	Obama
Terror	387	0.28	Terror, terrorism, terrorize, terrorized, terrorizes
Just	384	0.28	Just, justly
Muslim	383	0.27	Muslim, muslims

Table 3. Description by source.

Description	Academic/ Researcher	Interest group	Official CJ	Others	Policymaker/ Politician	Total
Hate crime	10	11	11	25	32	89
Terrorist act	5	5	25	14	87	136
Total	15	16	36	39	119	225

> Islamists are targeting our country and our way of life," McCaul said. "But Americans will not be intimidated by these fanatics. Instead, tragedies like we saw in Orlando only strengthen our resolve to fight back against terror and prevail over extremism wherever it emerges." (*USA Today*, 13 June 2016, A3)[3]

Academics/researchers were more likely to emphasize the anti-LGBTQ nature of the attack:

> Jonathan Katz, professor of queer history at the University of Buffalo, said he noticed comments from hatemongers as well as remarks from pundits dismissing that the shooting targeted the LGBT community. "What's interesting is I often find those most interested in saying this is a crime against humanity are the same ones who are against the queer community in other contexts," he said. "If we genuinely believe that queers are part of the human community, then we can and should say this is a crime against all of us. But that entails naming, recognizing and affiliating politically and emotionally with the queer community." (*USA Today*, 20 June 2016, A8)

Leaders such as President Obama, Attorney General Loretta Lynch, and presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, labeled the attack as both a hate crime and a terrorist act. Those three individuals were quoted, in combination, a minimum of 15 times saying the exact phrase underlined here:

> "People often act out of more than one motivation," Attorney General Loretta Lynch told reporters during a visit here on Tuesday. "This was clearly an act of terror and an act of hate." (*The New York Times*, 25 June 2016, A13)

Policymakers and politicians frequently relied upon law enforcement when describing the attack, so even when recognizing that the incident targeted LGBT victims, they also clearly stated that it was being investigated as a terrorist attack. For example:

> Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., the senior Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said he was told by police that the shooter "declared his allegiance to ISIS (the Islamic State)." "The fact that this shooting took place during Ramadan and that ISIS leadership in Raqqa has been urging attacks during this time, that the target was an LGBT night club during (LGBT) Pride (month) and, if accurate, that according to local law enforcement the shooter declared his allegiance to ISIS, indicates an ISIS-inspired act of terrorism," Schiff said. (*USA Today*, 13 June 2016, A3)

RQ 2- Ideological frames

Tables 4 and 5 provide a quantitative snapshot of causation and control ideologies by type and source. Again, policy makers/politicians were quoted more frequently than either academics/researchers or official CJ sources, but Other sources were quoted most often for causation.

Causation. Under causation there was a near even split between pathology and social factors, and no mention of utilitarianism. Official CJ sources and Other sources were most likely to attribute the cause of the shooting to the offender's pathology, while Policymakers/politicians were more likely to discuss social factors. Notably, Academics/researchers discussed both of the dominant ideologies with similar frequency. Other sources were frequently interviewed about the offender, including his father, his ex-wife, and his former coworkers and classmates. They overwhelming described him as violent, unstable, or homophobic, implying that pathology was the cause of the shooting:

Table 4. Causation by source.

Causation Ideology	Academic/ Researcher	Official CJ	Other	Policymaker/ Politician	Interest group	Total
Pathology	17	4	63	15	2	101
Social factors	17	1	29	42	9	98
Utilitarianism	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	34	5	92	57	11	199

Table 5. Control by source.

Control Ideology	Academic/ Researcher	Official CJ	Other	Policymaker/ Politician	Interest group	Total
Hard control	3	2	2	41	2	50
Harm mitigation	0	0	2	10	7	19
Soft control	6	5	12	71	19	113
Total	9	7	16	122	28	182

> But there also were early signs of emotional trouble and a volatile temper, according to Sitora Yusifiy, who was briefly married to Mateen. Yusifiy described Mateen as an abusive husband who beat her repeatedly while they were married. "He was not a stable person," … "He beat me. He would just come home and start beating me up because the laundry wasn't finished or something like that." (*The Washington Post*, 13 June 2016, A1)

> Daniel Gilroy … said Mateen frequently made homophobic and racial comments. Gilroy said he complained to G4S several times, but said the employer did nothing. Gilroy quit after he said Mateen began stalking him via text messages – 20 or 30 a day, he said. Mateen also sent Gilroy 13 to 15 phone messages daily. "This guy was unhinged and unstable," said Gilroy. "He talked of killing people." (*USA Today*, 13 June 2016, A1)

Much of the discussion involved questions or assumptions about the offender's sexual orientation and his homophobic attitudes:

> Seddique Mateen said he didn't believe his son was gay, telling reporters, "I don't believe he was a whatever-you-call-it." He said his son Mateen had become enraged a few months earlier at the sight of a pair of gay men being affectionate with each other. "We were in downtown Miami, Bayside, people were playing music. And he saw two men kissing each other in front of his wife and kid and he got very angry," he told reporters. "They were kissing each other and touching each other and he said: 'Look at that. In front of my son they are doing that." (*The Washington Post*, 13 June 2016, A1)

Policy makers and politicians frequently discussed social and political issues such as immigration, religion, anti-LGBTQ policies, and lax gun control laws, as causes of the shooting. Here are examples:

> He blamed the Orlando attack – which authorities say was carried out by a man born in America to Afghan parents – in part on a system that "allowed his family to come here." "Once again we've seen that political correctness is deadly," Trump said. "And just so you understand: I have many Muslim friends," he added at one point. "There doesn't seem to be assimilation. We don't know what's going on." (*The Washington Post*, 15 June 2016, A1)

> "If one more Republican tells me they have gay friends, I'm gonna scream," said Representative Sean Patrick Maloney, Democrat of New York and one of just a few openly gay, lesbian or bisexual members of Congress. "I don't care that they have gay friends. I care that they're voting against equality." (*The New York Times*, 16 June 2016, A17)

> I freely admit that I identified entirely with Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) when he declared: "This phenomenon of near constant mass shootings happens only in America – nowhere else. Congress has become complicit in these murders by its total, unconscionable deafening silence." (*The Washington Post*, 13 June 2016, A21)

Control. Across the board, all source types advocated for soft control measures and/or criticized hard control measures as the appropriate socio-legal response to the Pulse Orlando shooting. Politicians/policymakers, who also discussed harm mitigation and hard control measures, were quoted the most on the subject. Gun control laws were a major topic of discussion in the aftermath of the shooting and account for most of the discussion of soft control measures:

> The president said he hoped lawmakers who blocked his 2013 gun-control push after the shooting deaths of 20 first-graders in Newtown, Conn., would have a change of heart. And he declared that "the notion that the answer to this tragedy would be to make sure that more people in a nightclub are similarly armed to the killer defies common sense." (*The Washington Post*, 17 June 2016, A6)

> ''We passed gun control in this state,'' said Mr. Cuomo, a Democrat, standing before a lectern festooned with a sign declaring ''We Are Orlando,'' and flanked by an American flag and a gay pride flag. ''We outlawed assault weapons in this state. We know it can be done.'' He added, ''Until we have a national policy, none of us are safe.'' (*The New York Times*, 14 June 2016, A14)

Policymakers and politicians across the political spectrum criticized (then presidential candidate) Trump's calls for a ban on Muslim immigration:

> Rep. Adam Kinzinger (R-Ill.), an Air Force veteran who flew missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, said it would be detrimental to demonize an entire religion as Trump is doing. "To just simply say ban them all – I think frankly does more harm," Kinzinger said … "It may work for a political season and it does, maybe it's a popular sound bite, but it is very detrimental to our long-term ability to actually win this war." (*The Washington Post*, 14 June 2016, A1)

> "A ban on Muslims would not have stopped this attack. Neither would a wall. I don't know how one builds a wall to keep the Internet out," Clinton said. "Not one of Donald Trump's reckless ideas would have saved a single life in Orlando." (*The Washington Post*, 16 June 2016, A6)

President Obama, as well as academics/researchers, noted the complexity and the challenge of addressing multiple causes, such as gun availability and extremist ideology. These are examples from the news items:

> "My concern," Obama said, "is that we start getting into a debate, as has happened in the past, which is an either/or debate, and the suggestion is either we think about something as terrorism and we ignore the problems with easy access to firearms. Or it's all about firearms and we ignore the role, the very real role, that organizations like [the Islamic State] have in generating extremist views inside this country. It's not an either/or. It's a both/and." (*The Washington Post*, 14 June 2016, A10)

> Mr. Clarke says the United States needs to institute a ''much more thorough program'' to counter that propaganda. He also says that preventing terrorism suspects from having easy access to lethal weapons should be a no-brainer. But he warns that there are no panaceas. "When a guy one minute suggests he may be sympathetic to ISIS and the next minute

> decides to kill people, catching that minute is really, really hard,'' he says. (*The New York Times*, 20 June 2016)

Official CJ sources also promoted soft control measures. The following is a quote that seemingly advocates for prevention efforts:

> "Tools other than arrest and prosecution need to be established," said George Selim, who leads the administration's Countering Violent Extremism Task Force from DHS. (*The Washington Post*, 5 July 2016, A1)

When interest groups promoted soft control measures, they discussed education, training, and tolerance. For instance:

> Haiman-Marrero said local leaders were planning an event to demonstrate solidarity between central Florida's Latino and Muslim communities. The fact that the killer was a Muslim and that most of his victims were Latino, she said, should not cause a rift between the two cultures. "We're not pointing fingers. We can't point fingers. This needs to stop," Haiman-Marrero said. "I could not care less what Trump has to say. We are stopping the cycle of intolerance. "We will not judge the character of a community based on the actions of one individual." (*The Washington Post*, 14 June 2016, A14)

Policymakers/politicians also provided support for hard control measures such as expanding police power and taking military action:

> Mr. Trump … said in particular that he would ban immigration from countries where terrorism was a threat. He said, referring to the assailant in Orlando, that ''thousands and thousands of people, many of whom have the same thought process as this savage killer'' are pouring into the country, and that the ban ''will be lifted when and as a nation we are in a position to properly and perfectly screen these people coming into our country.'' (*The New York Times*, 13 June 2016)

> Hillary Clinton, the presumptive Democratic nominee, released a statement saying: ''We need to redouble our efforts to defend our country from threats at home and abroad. That means defeating international terror groups, working with allies and partners to go after them wherever they are, countering their attempts to recruit people here and everywhere, and hardening our defenses at home.'' (*The New York Times*, 13 June 2016)

Harm mitigation was not a common ideology, but interest groups, politicians, and others promoted it:

> On Wednesday, Donald Trump took time out from vilifying Muslims and put some of the blame on gun control. If the patrons of Pulse, the gay bar in Orlando, had been carrying concealed weapons, he said, they could have taken control of the situation. The gunman would have been ''just open target practice.'' (*The New York Times*, 16 June 2016, A23)

> When I reached Isquith on his cellphone, on the convention floor, he said that for furniture makers, ''security is the big new frontier, if you will. It's kind of sad to say that, but it's true.'' In a news release that morning, he noted that the kind of ''violence and terror'' seen in Orlando was ''not going away anytime soon.'' His product, the release said, offered ''a 21st-century solution to saving lives and reducing injuries to innocent people in public spaces during an active-shooter event.'' (*The New York Times Magazine*, 25 June 2016, p.15)

RQ 2 – Description and framing

Soft control measures were the dominant control ideology, regardless of whether the act was described as a terrorist attack, hate crime, both, or neither. Examples include:

> Democrats, led by Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California, are pushing to give the attorney general authority to bar gun sales to suspected terrorists, under many of the same criteria used to put people on the nation's no-fly and other broad terrorism watchlists. "If you're too dangerous to get on a plane," presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton said last week, "you're too dangerous to buy a gun." (*USA Today*, 20 June 2016, A8)

> House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (Wis.) denounced Trump for trying to rally support for his anti-Muslim policies, while others castigated Trump for the accusations he has lobbed at Obama. "I do not think a Muslim ban is in our country's interest," Ryan told reporters. "I do not think it is reflective of our principles, not just as a party but as a country." (*The Washington Post*, 15 June 2016, A1)

In fact, when discussing control measures, quoted sources tended to emphasize the availability of guns, and did not frame the attack as either a hate crime or a terrorist act. For instance:

> "Those who were killed and injured here were gunned down by a single killer with a powerful assault weapon," Obama said. "The motives of this killer may have been different than the mass killers in Aurora, or Newtown. But the instruments of death were so similar. Now another 49 innocent people are dead. Another 53 are injured. Some are still fighting for their lives. Some will have wounds that will last a lifetime." Obama tried to acknowledge the complex mix of motivations and causes of the Orlando attack, but focused mostly on just one: guns. (*USA Today*, 17 June 2016, A3)

When hard control measures were promoted, however, such as the expansion of police and military powers through immigration bans or surveillance of Muslim Americans, it was always tied to a terrorism framing of the incident:

> In his speech Monday … Trump appeared to expand his policy. If elected, he said, he would "suspend immigration from areas of the world where there's a proven history of terrorism against the United States, Europe or our allies until we fully understand how to end these threats." (*The Washington Post*, 14 June 2016, A1)

> But this week Gov. Rick Scott, a Republican, stressed that it was radical Islam that needed to be controlled, not guns. ''The Second Amendment didn't kill anybody,'' Mr. Scott said. ''Evil, radical Islam, ISIS – they killed.'' (*The New York Times*, 16 June 2016, A1)

Summary

The national newspapers analyzed in this study relied far more heavily on official sources, in the form of policy makers and politicians, than on criminal justice sources, academics/researchers, or any other source. Those policymakers/politicians framed the shooting primarily as an act of terror and promoted soft control measures, in the form of gun control laws, and criticized presidential candidate Trump's hard control ideology. The role of criminal justice officials is blurred. They were quoted far more often than is reflected in this analysis because they spoke primarily in order to present factual information about an ongoing investigation, and rarely presented ideological frames. Policymakers and politicians, however, relied heavily upon that investigative role and frequently referred directly to the information given by police or the FBI, which likely impacted framing and resulted in terrorism as the dominant description of the shooting.

Discussion

Reliance on official sources over academics was expected, though perhaps discouraging, and aligns with the earlier work by Buckler et al. (2008). The dominant frame of a pathological offender committing a terrorist act was also expected, and can be mostly attributed to the media's habit of personalizing offenders by interviewing known associates. The media attempt to create personal profiles of terrorists that focus on 'exposing the tragedy of an individual,' rather than providing a neutral presentation of the incident and its socio-political ramifications (Kampf, 2014, p. 5). This study and prior work suggests that perhaps academics and researchers could act as a counter balance. Whereas politicians and practitioners' quotes typically focus more on crime control, professors and researchers address crime causation, and can counterbalance politicians and practitioners by focusing attention on social factors (Welch et al., 1998).

The dominance of soft control measures as preferred socio-legal response was surprising, particularly since it was even found in combination with terrorist framing or descriptions. Previous research found that hard control measures were the dominant ideology of politicians and practitioners when discussing crime (Welch et al., 1998). This unexpected finding may be attributed to one or more contextual factors. Criminal justice is often a bipartisan policy arena and reform has been a priority that spans the political spectrum for much of the 21st century (Levin, 2019; Levin, 2018). The Pulse attack occurred during a democratic Presidential administration that actively promoted soft control measures like gun control and prison and sentencing reform (Lartey, 2016). Additionally, hate crime scholars have frequently advocated for soft control measures, such as anti-bias education, and criticized the punitive sentence enhancements given to hate crime offenders because longer prison sentences cannot treat or solve prejudice and bigotry (Gerstenfeld, 2018; Meyer, 2014; Mogul, Ritchie, & Whitlock, 2011). So, the dominance of soft control measures may also be a reflection of contemporary scholarly thinking around issues of bias and prejudice, even though academics/researchers were rarely utilized as sources by reporters.

In the coverage of the Pulse attack there was a noticeable lack of attention to victims and the potential that their perception of the attack was an anti-LGBTQ hate crime committed against an almost entirely Latinx population. A large portion of quoted sources were categorized as 'other,' but most of those sources were associates of the offender. Victims and their friends and family received considerably less attention and were quoted rarely. In cases of mass shooting, news media organizations seem to place considerable attention on understanding the cause and motives of the offender. This necessitates an investigation into the life of the offender and leads journalists to sources of information that were close in spatial or emotional proximity to the offender. Moreover, the direction of the commentary from key government and political sources was that the event was motivated by terrorist ideology rather than personal prejudice, and this likely impacted the narrative that media organizations pursued.

Only a few statements made by quoted sources contextualized the anti-LGBTQ nature of the attack within the social and political climate that harms and discriminates against the LGBTQ community. Most of the discussion of the offender's potential bias against his victims was described as an individual failing; his homophobia was framed as pathology. Ott and Aoki (2002) also found this to be the case

in their media analysis of Matthew Shepard's murder in which coverage actually shifted from recognition of the social context to complete focus on homophobia as a character flaw of the offenders. Scholars have heavily criticized this view of homophobia, as solely an individual trait disconnected from the environment that created it (Herek, 2015; Worthen, 2014), because both social and political hostility toward LGBTQ people remains strong. Conversion therapy is legally practiced in many states, despite knowledge of its harms, housing and employment discrimination is legal, religious refusal laws are being pushed in several states, and the current Trump administration has worked to reverse or repeal numerous policies that recognized LGBTQ Americans (National Center for Transgender Equality, 2019). The term homophobia implies that prejudice against sexual minorities is a personal, debilitating fear requiring treatment, but homophobic people do not want to be cured, and do not express fear, rather anger and hostility (Herek, 2015). Sexual stigma (and cisgenderism), however, is embedded within law, policy, institutions, media, language, and pretty much of every other part of human culture (Herek, 2015), and influences the behavior and experiences of both heterosexual and non-heterosexual individuals (Worthen, 2014).

It is, however, notable that some leading political figures quoted by news media sought to define the event as an act of terror and as an act of hate. This event – perhaps more so than any other mass killing event in the history of the United States – points to the complexity inherent in attempts to label this sort of act as either one or the other. While there is ample evidence that United States foreign policy and actions spurred the thinking of the offender, it is an inescapable fact that the aggression was levied not at white, heterosexual persons (the dominant social group in the U.S.), but, rather, at a marginalized population with respect to both sexual orientation and ethnicity. This makes the attack appear to be a 'downward crime,' as hate crimes typically are (Deloughery et al., 2012). The victims of the attack were almost entirely minorities, many of them holding intersecting minority statuses as both LGBTQ and Latinx. The fact that so many of them were specifically Puerto Rican is important because they came to Orlando in order to escape poverty and find opportunities unavailable to them on an island decimated by colonial neglect (Sullivan & Hernandez, 2016). But far more attention was given to the offender's minority status as the Muslim son of Afghan immigrants who had a long history of being bullied and acting violently and disruptively. The nuance of a minority-on-minority hate crime was lost as politicians and commentators raced to label the attack as a terrorist act against 'all of us.' A significant number of hate crimes are committed between two minority groups as they struggle to move up a rung on the social ladder (Gerstenfeld, 2018). Minority groups are strongly influenced by the dominant culture and may choose the same victims and scapegoats of white masculine supremacy (Perry, 2001). Regardless of the conclusions of the FBI investigation on the matter, there is a strong undercurrent to this event which implies that it cannot be understood singularly as an act of terror or as an act of hatred because of the marginality of both the victims and the offender.

The consequences of the one or the other terrorism-hatred dichotomy that played out politically and in the news media are not readily apparent, but they exist. When political leaders squabble over whether events like this should be classified as an act

of terror or as an act of hatred, it further exacerbates social divisions that are rooted not only in race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation, but also in society's general acceptance of difference and diversity. As Jacobs and Potter (1998) argued, hate crime laws are often merely symbolic and can actually work to increase, rather than decrease, social conflict. In this instance, the law recognizes the necessity to punish more stringently an offender who targets a large number of people from a socially marginalized population (see United States Sentencing Commission, 2019). If Omar Mateen had been taken into police custody alive and convicted, he likely would have faced an upward sentence for committing an offense against vulnerable victims and for the number of victims. While the law recognizes the difficulty of separating the primary motive (terrorism) from the outcome of the act (a number of deaths of a vulnerable population), this basic fact never made it into the mainstream discussions of the legal and social implications of this case.

Policy implications

Gun control came up as both a causation and control issue. When guns are blamed for crime, it is discussed as a social factor necessitating socio-legal responses. Firearms of all kinds are easily purchased in a variety of manners in the United States and, increasingly, can be openly carried in public spaces. It was easy to code pro-gun control arguments as soft control for this analysis because it was explicitly listed as such by Welch et al. (1998). Gun control and gun safety legislation has become a partisan issue, but when terrorism is the cause, both sides, and even interest groups like the NRA, tend to agree that government should use its power to regulate and control the sale and purchase of firearms to potential terrorists. If framed as an expansion of police power, then, it could be viewed as a hard control issue, rather than a soft one. Regardless, gun violence continues to be a serious social problem which the federal government appears unwilling to address.

It is common for public support for victims of hate crimes to spike following a publicized incident (see Husselbee & Elliott, 2002; Ott & Aoki, 2002), but it does not necessarily lead to policy change. Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. were memorialized in the name of the federal Hate Crimes Protection Act of 2009, which passed over a decade after their murders, but the state of Wyoming, where Shepard was killed, has yet to pass a single hate crime law. Since the Pulse shooting, the state of Florida has not taken any steps to improve hate crime protections and the state law still fails to cover gender or gender identity (Santich, 2019). Gun control legislation, or the lack thereof, was attributed as both a cause of the Pulse shooting, and urged as a necessary control response (as is commonly the case following a public mass shooting). Yet, neither the state of Florida nor the federal government has passed a single piece of legislation aimed at reducing the availability of firearms or increasing gun safety. The noticeable lack of attention to victim perceptions and minimal quoting of academics and criminal justice experts could potentially explain why media attention is insufficient for policy change.

Limitations & future research

Some studies of news media framing have begun to include both television and print news in their analyses as a way to counter concerns regarding decreased readership (e.g. Donaldson et al., 2015), but including television news was simply outside the scope of this article. Future research should also examine national television news coverage. Additionally, this study is limited to three national newspapers of record, therefore, the results may not be generalizable to other newspapers throughout the nation that covered the event. We did not focus attention on more regionally-known newspapers such as the *Atlanta Constitution, Boston Globe*, or *Chicago Tribune*, or on local papers like the *Orlando Sentinel* due to our concern with the national discourse and societal-level understanding of the event. This is understandably a limitation of the study. The Pulse shooting may have been presented and framed differentially across local and regional newspapers based on the social and political culture of the news outlet and the region. Future research could also further examine the portrayal of the victims or use mixed methods to analyze the impact of the event and the coverage upon public opinion and legislation.

Conclusion

News media coverage of crime has the potential to incite fear and fuel emotional outrage, and is an important influence on public opinions of crime and the criminal justice system. This study shows that news reporters continue to rely on official sources, especially politicians, and that offender pathology continues to be blamed for violent crimes. Soft control measures are now widely-discussed and offered as appropriate response and prevention tactics, even in cases of terrorism, though federal legislation has not followed this change in public discourse. This study also confirms that national concerns and federal resources are centered on terrorism and perceived pathological offenders which prevents adequate recognition and attention to sociological factors and significant harms caused to victims and their communities. For the LGBTQ and Latinx communities, this study confirms their observations and feelings of neglect in the aftermath of the Pulse shooting, as the majority of sources in the national newspapers focused on the offender and his pathology and ideology, while those most able to discuss the cause and impact of such a crime against the LGBTQ and Latinx communities were rarely quoted. As Jonathan Katz, the sole queer scholar to be quoted, observed, dismissing the fact that the queer Latinx community was the target of the attack, and not the general public, strongly suggests that many in society are still unable to associate and empathize with the queer community (Solis, 2016).

Notes

1. The Hate Crime Statistics Act, 28 U.S.C. § 534 (2010).
2. It is recognized that since 1990 the circulation of newspapers in the U.S. has precipitously declined (see Pew Research Center's 'Newspapers Fact Sheet' from 9 July 2019, https://www.journalism.org/fact-sheet/newspapers/). However, according to the work of Protess and McCombs (1991), television news is directly influenced by coverage in newspapers. Our decision to focus on national newspapers rather than national television news programs was influenced by a desire to understand the breadth of coverage of the event. With respect to what is covered and how extensively it is covered by

national newspapers is influenced by column inches, whereas national television news programs generally run for 30 minutes a day. A newspaper has more capacity than televised news programs to cover more relevant topics in a news event and to cover them for longer periods of time as more information becomes known about the event.

3. The citation method used here follows that used in other content analyses of news media, e.g. Welch et al. (1998).

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Jace Valcore, PhD is an Asst. Professor of Criminal Justice whose work focuses on queer criminology and LGBTQ issues in the criminal processing system, particularly in relation to policing and hate crimes.

Kevin Buckler is a Professor of Criminal Justice at the University of Houston-Downtown. His criminal justice-related interests and published works are in the areas of procedure and evidence, media coverage, and U.S. Supreme Court decision-making.

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