



Let's not put a label on it: right-wing terrorism in the news

Vanja Zdjelar  and Garth Davies

School of Criminology, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, Canada

ABSTRACT

Media portrayals of terrorism, particularly right-wing terrorism, have been understudied. In response, this study focuses on understanding how right-wing terrorism is portrayed by the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. A qualitative content analysis was conducted on five cases. Framing theory and thematic analysis were used to inform the research methods. Four main themes emerge: “officially, we cannot be sure this was terrorism”; “just a man – the obfuscation of motive”; “on normalisation and humanisation”; and “eventually we have to talk about gun policy.” The results show that the news providers did not label these cases as terrorism, and that the ideology of the attackers was minimised as a motive. By searching so extensively for “other reasons” for the violence, the threat of right-wing violence was minimised. As a result of these incomplete or misleading portrayals, the threat from these individuals goes unchecked.

KEYWORDS

Terrorism; right-wing terrorism; media; media frames

Introduction

In the US in the post-9/11 world, violent extremism and terrorism have become staples of the public discourse, as both receive extensive coverage by news providers. It would be erroneous, however, to equate the volume of media attention with comprehensiveness. Not all news stories related to terrorism are created equal; news media tend to focus on jihadist violence, while other types of ideological violence tend to receive more limited coverage (Chermak and Greunwald, 2006; Mitnik, Freilich, and Chermak 2020; Kearns, Betus, and Lemieux 2019). One type of violence that is typically underreported is right-wing terrorism (Kearns, Betus, and Lemieux 2019). This is not to say that cases of right-wing terrorism are always absent from the headlines; incidents of right-wing terrorism occur but are not always labelled as such (Kearns, Betus, and Lemieux, 2019; Taylor 2019). When reported on, incidents of right-wing terrorism tend to be framed as one of incidents, rather than persistent problems that are part of a right-wing extremist movement (Powell 2011, 2018). This makes it easy for them to quickly ebb and fade from public discourse.

Since 2001, academic treatments of terrorism also have been predominantly focused on Jihadism (Schmid 2011; Koehler 2019; Schuurman 2019). Academic treatments of right-wing terrorism have increased significantly over the past few years (Doering and Davies 2019; Fahey and Simi 2019; Perry and Scrivens 2018; Scrivens

and Perry 2017; Ravndal 2018; Bjørge and Ravndal 2019). However, many important questions remain. This research aims to contribute to this field by qualitatively exploring how print news media portrays acts of right-wing terrorism in the United States context. Although there is a substantial body of literature focusing on the newsworthiness of terrorism (e.g. Weimann and Brosius 1991; Chermak and Gruenwald 2006; Mitnik, Freilich, and Chermak 2020; Zhang, Shoemaker, and Wang 2013; Kearns, Betus, Lemieux 2019), and the framing of terrorism by news media (Powell 2011, 2018; Falkheimer and Olsson 2015; Betus et al. 2020; Ghazi-Tehrani and Kearns 2020), there are few studies specifically focusing on how cases of right-wing extremism are framed by news media. The current study focuses on analysing print news coverage of right-wing extremism specifically, through a thematic analysis of five case studies: the Tree of Life synagogue shooting, the Charleston church shooting, the Lafayette theatre shooting, the Kansas Jewish community centre shooting, and the Wisconsin Sikh temple shooting.

Right-wing terrorism and its coverage in the news

The perils of definitional dissensus and why labels matter

While terrorism has grown as a field of study, a single clear definition of terrorism has not emerged (Bhatia 2009; Campana 2007; Nacos 2007). Although there are some commonalities across academic definitions, when it comes to practical application, each country has outlined specific legal definitions; their creation and their application are impacted by the country's politics. Definitions of terrorism are further complicated by its subjective nature (Bhatia 2009), perhaps best captured by the facile adage that "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter." Terrorism, then, is a social construction, dependent on society and societal discourse (Jenkins 2003; Spencer 2010). Without a consistent definition, news providers are forced to either use their own discretion to label events as terrorism or rely on official sources to do so for them. Yet, as Norris (2017) and Taylor (2019) show, what is labelled as terrorism by law enforcement and prosecutors is not always consistent across attacks. A cursory examination of the public discourse around right-wing extremist violence quickly reveals that it tends not to be labelled as terrorism. Indeed, studies analysing the news coverage of right-wing extremist violence compared to violence by Muslim extremists have found that right-wing extremism is less likely to be labelled and framed as terrorism by news providers (Powell 2011, 2018; Taylor 2019; Betus et al. 2020) and by the public (D'Orazio and Salehyan 2018).

In the United States, even when right-wing extremist violence meets the legal definition of terrorism, it is not always charged as such (Norris 2017; Taylor 2019) and, thus, is not discussed as such by news providers. For example, officials have received criticism from news providers, commentators, and researchers for the lack of terrorism charges in the case of Dylann Roof, who shot Black church worshippers in Charleston. Legally, the incident appears to meet the U.S federal definition of terrorism; however, the act was never charged as such (Taylor 2019). The reluctance to label acts, such as these, as terrorism is partly due to the politicised nature of the label (Jenkins 2003); labelling something as terrorism has significant implications and consequences (Eke and Odasuo Alali 1991; Simmons 1991; Norris 2017; Baele et al. 2019). This choice determines how

news media portray an event, which in turn can affect and frame how the government and the public respond (Spencer 2010; Norris 2017; D’Orazio and Salehyan 2018).

For example, in an experimental study using vignettes, Baele et al. (2019) found that whether an attacker was labelled as “terrorist,” “shooter,” or “Islamist” affected both how the study respondents perceived the attacker and the perceived appropriateness of particular policy responses. When the attacker was presented as a terrorist or Islamist, respondents called for a global and military response, and suggested harsher penalties than when the actor was labelled as a shooter (Baele et al. 2019). Similarly, Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley (1997) found that when KKK demonstrations were framed as public order problems, the public showed less tolerance towards the KKK. Conversely, the public was more tolerant of the KKK demonstrations when they were framed as an issue of free speech (Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997). In short, the labelling of incidents matters.

Without clear definitions and consistent application, political motivations can influence the decision to label and thus shape what is labelled as terrorism (Simmons 1991). The hesitancy to label and charge right-wing extremist violence as terrorism is not surprising given the angry response from Republican officials following a leaked 2009 Department of Homeland Security report, titled “Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment”, which highlighted the growing threat of right-wing extremism (Davis and Al-Faruque 2009; Johnson 2012; Norris 2017; Reitman 2018; Kapur 2021). The legitimacy of the report was questioned and conservative policymakers interpreted the report as an assault on the “American people” rather than a warning of a real threat from right-wing extremists (Davis and Al-Faruque 2009). The Republican House Minority Leader at the time, John Boehner, was quoted saying ““I and my colleagues are trying to understand who wrote this report, why wasn’t it edited or – I just don’t understand how our government can look at the American people and say, “You’re all potential terrorist threats,”” (Davis and Al-Faruque 2009). The political response to the report ultimately hindered law enforcement’s and policy makers’ understanding of the right-wing extremist threat as one that extends beyond single unconnected events; however, right-wing extremism reflects a larger issue that is, as Norris (2017) states, policy relevant.

As long as instances of right-wing violence are not identified and categorised as terrorism, the need to respond to the threat is seen as less urgent. Consequently, US law enforcement responses to the threat of right-wing extremism have been minimal at best. For example, following the release of the Department of Homeland Report, the group of analysts who worked on right-wing extremism was disbanded (Johnson 2012; Kapur 2021). Reitman’s (2018) investigative piece highlights a history of underfunding efforts to counter right-wing extremism and a focus on Jihadist extremism. Academic work also highlights a concerning trend, indicating that although right-wing extremism is a concern, at the time of the report, law enforcement was far more concerned with Jihadist extremism (Carter et al. 2014).¹ Ignoring or minimising the threat of right-wing violence is especially problematic in light of reports showing that the threat from these groups has been on the rise (Johnson 2012; Miller 2019). Indeed, there is a growing understanding of the threat of right-wing extremists (Wray 2020; Spence 2020). As a result, greater attention needs to be paid to the context surrounding the application of the terrorism label; specifically, to when and why it is, or is not, applied.

Given that news coverage has the ability to influence policy direction and shape public concern and dialogue, mischaracterising (or completely ignoring) incidents of right-wing extremist violence makes this violence appear to be merely a series of isolated, seemingly random, incidents. Powell (2011, 2018) confirms this in her research on news coverage of domestic terrorism in the United States. This lack of labelling has allowed right-wing terrorism to go unaddressed by the public and by many policymakers, as right-wing extremism has not been considered “policy relevant” (Norris 2017). In contrast, when the public considers right-wing extremism an issue, they are able to pressure and influence their representatives to act. Given that many individuals learn about terrorism through news coverage, if news providers do not frame right-wing extremism as a serious issue, viewers are less likely to regard it as serious. Iyengar (1996) states that most people understand public affairs through “the language of television” (p. 61). News coverage provides the public with language to understand a phenomenon such as terrorism.

Adding to the difficulty of consistently labelling right-wing extremism as such is the diversity of groups that can be characterised as right-wing extremists. Because many specific groups fall under the right-wing extremist umbrella,² it is easy to see each group as separate and distinct rather than as a part of a network, part of a larger right-wing extremist movement. Right-wing extremism can include white supremacist groups, Christian Identity adherents, extremists focused on single issues such as abortion, members of patriot movements, as well as other “sovereign citizens who hold that the federal government is currently illegitimate” (Parent and James Ellis 2014, 20).³ Moreover, adherents may not be part of any particular group, but may interact online in broader right-wing extremist community forums such as Stormfront. At the same time, right-wing extremist groups have long been perceived as being fractious and lacking in cohesiveness. In contrast to Jihadism, which has largely coalesced around a few major groups, the far-right movement is made up of “a large, loose, heterogeneous collection of groups and individuals” (Parent and James Ellis 2014, 20). As a result, it is easy to look at individual acts of violence as isolated events that are not a part of a larger extremist movement, thereby minimising the salience and seriousness of the attacks (Falkheimer and Olsson 2015; Powell 2011, 2018).

This downgrading of seriousness erroneously suggests that right-wing terrorism is somehow different from other forms of terrorism. From a news coverage perspective, it raises questions about the comparative newsworthiness of right-wing violence, which in turn produces coverage that varies considerably from that afforded to Jihadist terrorism. Labelling, or not labelling, incidents of right-wing extremist violence as terrorism has important implications. Failing to acknowledge the attack as terrorism reflects a failure to acknowledge the scope of the threat right-wing extremists poses to national security.

Framing and the social construction of knowledge

Framing is the process by which the news providers organise content and create and promote themes. It is central to understanding how meaning is created. Entman offers the following definition:

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a 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. (Entman 1993, 52)

This definition highlights the relationship between text and causal meanings, and thus is relevant to any study of news texts. By making something more salient, the information is made more significant and noteworthy (Entman 1993). This directs the audience's attention to the frames and themes created by the news provider, which then has the potential to affect the audience's perception of the issue. Entman (1993) further notes that these specific frames define the issue and its consequences, explain its causes, and outline potential responses. It also allows for audiences to make moral judgements (based on cultural values) and meanings (Entman 1993). Framing is a purposeful tool that allows news providers to present a large amount of information in a short amount of time (Gitlin 1980). Similarly, framing allows audiences to understand easily and quickly what is presented by news media (Norris, Kern, and Just 2003).

Framing is best understood as a form of knowledge production linked to social constructionism theories (Tuchman 1978). Social constructionism holds that knowledge is a social creation (Berger, Thomas, and Luckmann 1966; Gergen 2015). Rather than a universal truth, what may be perceived as "facts" or "objective reality" is actually shaped by social factors. Social constructionism holds that knowledge is created through social interactions and discourse (Gergen 2015); that is, social discourse, or what we talk about and how we talk about it, is instrumental in shaping knowledge and reality. Language, and how it is used to shape "reality," matters (Berger, Thomas, and Luckmann 1966). The news provides readers with the language that helps them make meaning and discuss public events (Tuchman 1978).

Given that the news media is the principal source of information about most public issues (Surette 2007), but especially about terrorism, its role in providing meaning is significant. As mentioned, Iyengar (1996) states that most people understand "public affairs through the language of television." Consequently, news providers are one of the primary contributors to the social discourse; it provides individuals with the "facts" necessary to discuss social issues while simultaneously framing their understanding of this information (Tuchman 1978; Iyengar 1996). News consumers, thus, construct the "reality" of an issue with information from news media. Regardless, what individuals learn from the news can then be further discussed and shaped through their daily social interactions, which can result in the reinforcement or alteration of meaning. In this way, news providers are partially, but significantly, responsible for shaping the audience's knowledge of terrorism. How language is used and the manner in which terrorism is portrayed affect how terrorism is understood (Spencer 2010).

News portrayals of right-wing terrorism

While research on news coverage of right-wing terrorism is quickly expanding, the research is still limited. It is well accepted that the amount of news coverage an incident receives is affected by traditional elements of newsworthiness, such as the number of fatalities, the target, the geopolitical distance between the attack and the country

reporting on it, as well as other incident level variables (see Kearns, Betus, and Lemieux 2019; Nacos 2007; Chermak and Greunewald 2006; Mitnik, Freilich, and Chermak 2020). When it comes to ideological orientation, acts of right-wing terrorism appear to receive less news coverage than attacks committed by Muslim perpetrators (Chermak and Greunewald 2006; Mitnik, Freilich, and Chermak 2020; Kearns, Betus, and Lemieux 2019). Kearns, Betus, and Lemieux (2019) found that when an attacker was Muslim, the attack received 357% more national news coverage in the United States than when the perpetrator was not Muslim. Further, incidents labelled solely as terrorism receive more coverage than those labelled as hate crimes or hate crimes and terrorism (Ghazi-Tehrani and Kearns 2020). The act of labelling cases of right-wing terrorism as hate crimes is not uncommon and has happened in the case of Dylann Roof who was charged with hate crimes (Waters and Sullivan 2016).

Research also shows that there are thematic differences in news coverage of right-wing extremism and Jihadist extremism. Non-Muslim perpetrators appear to be less likely to be labelled as terrorists than Muslim perpetrators (Betus et al. 2020). Incidents of right-wing violence appear to be presented as one-off incidents, unconnected to a larger movement (Powell 2011, 2018; Falkheimer and Olsson 2015), and described as hate crimes rather than terrorism (Taylor 2019). Conversely, when an individual is identified as a Muslim terrorist, they are immediately connected to either a larger terrorist group or “Islam’s war on the US” (Powell 2011, 2018). In these instances, news media also focus on the imminent and future threat of Muslim terrorists (Powell 2011). Muslim terrorists were essentialised and demonised, while non-Muslim terrorists were portrayed as troubled individuals rather than terrorists. Depoliticisation was also key in Norwegian news accounts of Anders Breivik’s attack in Norway. Falkheimer and Olsson (2015) noted that news coverage focused on describing Breivik in detail and depoliticised the incident by framing it as a one-off incident by a “lone lunatic”.

The “lone lunatic,” as Falkheimer and Olsson (2015) found in their sample, is a common framing of right-wing extremist perpetrators. For example, Powell (2011) noted that a right-wing attacker’s motivation was investigated in detail and the attacker was humanised. Further, mental illness was often described as a contributing factor (Powell 2018). A non-Muslim perpetrator tended to be described as “an angry loner with [a] mental illness who was part of the gun violence culture in the US” (Powell 2018, 9). This mental illness frame, although found in thematic analyses, was not found in more recent quantitative work by Betus et al. (2020). They found no difference in the odds that an article would make references to mental illness in U.S. news coverage depending on whether the perpetrator was white or non-white. The authors explain that this frame may simply be more noteworthy for a reader or may simply be a characteristic “consistent with expectations of violent offenders” (Betus et al. 2020, 15). Overall, more research is needed to better understand the validity of the mental health frame.

The focus of news coverage when an attacker is white is on the individuals and on understanding their personal histories or propensity for mental health while ignoring their connection to larger extremist movements. White perpetrators were described as being “one of us” instead of being “othered” like their Muslim counterparts (Powell 2011). Powell concludes:

The conclusion news readers are led to is that domestic terrorists are less of a threat than international terrorists because they are isolated, troubled individuals working alone, and not part of a “war on America,” even though their acts may have been fueled by anger at the U.S. government. (Powell 2011, 108)

This depoliticisation which signals that domestic terrorism as less threatening is problematic, particularly in light of the recent sharp increase in the level of right-wing domestic violence in the United States. This same sentiment was echoed in Powell’s 2018 work.

Powell’s most recent work (Powell 2018), reviewing terrorist events between 2011–2016, produced results consistent with her original research (Powell 2011), in which she analysed news media coverage of terrorism in the United States following 9/11. It confirmed that a non-Muslim perpetrator tended to be described as “an angry loner with mental illness” (Powell 2018, 9). The updated study does include new findings. First, the 2018 study shows differences between how quickly the terrorism label was applied. Rather than focusing on labelling incidents with Muslim perpetrators as terrorism as soon as possible, news providers exercised caution and reported on the attacker’s ethnicity more generally instead. Of course, this then led to speculation about how Muslim attackers were connected to Jihadist violence. In addition to this new finding, Powell (2018) found news providers used a “tool” frame, which emphasised the guns and the gun control debate in the United States. This focus on the gun frame did not include a discussion of the risk of a future threat. Powell (2018) suggests this may be the result of the U.S.’s experiences with gun violence as an inevitable reality, making future violence a matter of when rather than if.

News media portrayals of right-wing domestic violence must be better understood as the amount and type of coverage affecting how right-wing terrorism itself is understood. The social construction of right-wing terrorism by news media has both political and social impacts, limiting what kind of response is considered acceptable or necessary. The substantive differences between how right-wing extremists and Jihadist extremists are portrayed result in a double standard, one that is seized upon as evidence of hypocrisy and serves to undermine broader attempts to promote inclusivity and integration. More generally, if news providers do not frame acts of violence motivated by right-wing ideology as terrorism, then it is easier to dismiss this violence. This inhibits attempts to address this mounting concern.

Research methods

The current study aims to contribute to media studies of terrorism by addressing the question, “How is right-wing terrorism portrayed in news articles from American news providers?” in order to understand the specific frames used by news media. A thematic analysis of five cases of right-wing extremist violence was conducted to answer the research question. The sample was made up of printed articles found in *the Washington Post*, and *the New York Times*. In each case, the attacker was associated with a right-wing group or held right-wing extremist views that served, at least in part, as motivation for the violence. Each case was indexed in the Global Terrorism Database as a terrorist incident.

The case studies

Wisconsin Sikh temple

On August 5th, 2012, Wade Michael Page used an automatic gun to kill six people, including one police officer, and injured another three people at a Sikh Temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin (Good and Kovalski 2012). When police arrived at the scene of the shooting, a police officer injured Page; Page then took his own life (Good and Kovalski 2012). Page was involved with white supremacist groups and had a presence on far-right websites like Stormfront (Good and Kovalski 2012).

Kansas Jewish community centre shooting

On April 13th, 2014, in Overland Park, Kansas, Frazier Glenn Miller opened fire at a Jewish Community Center and killed three people (Halsey 2014). Although he intended to kill Jewish people, none of his victims were Jewish (Halsey 2014). Miller, also known as Frazier Glenn Cross, was a former KKK Grand Dragon (Yaccino 2014). He has a history of racist and violent behaviour, had previously been forced to leave the military because of his overtly racist views (Halsey 2014), and was quoted as saying, "I hate Jews . . . They are the ones who destroy us" (Murphy 2015). He was charged with capital murder, attempted murder, and assault (Reese 2015).

Charleston church shooting

On June 15th, 2015, Dylann Roof killed nine people at a historic Black church in Charleston, South Carolina (Mazza, Ed and Chen 2015). A symbol of the civil rights movement (Mazza, Ed and Chen 2015), the church's symbolic meaning made the attack even more significant. Roof was welcomed to an evening Bible study meeting by worshipers, and halfway through the session he stood up and began shooting. During the shooting, he declared that: "'I have to do it. You rape our women and you're taking over our country. And you have to go'" (Mazza, Ed and Chen 2015).

In addition to Roof's statements during the shooting, authorities found Roof's manifesto online. The manifesto included the statement:

I have no choice. I am not in the position to, alone, go into the ghetto and fight. I chose Charleston because it is most historic city in my state, and at one time had the highest ratio of blacks to Whites in the country. We have no skinheads, no real KKK, no one doing anything but talking on the internet. Well someone has to have the bravery to take it to the real world, and I guess that has to be me. (Crilly and Sanchez 2015)

The investigators also found images of Roof in a jacket with two flags: the flag of South Africa's apartheid-era and the flag of Rhodesia, both of which are linked to white supremacy (Grenoble 2015). A third flag, the Confederate flag of the States of America, was also visible in the photos; this flag is associated with America's painful history of racism and slavery supremacy (Grenoble 2015). Roof was charged with nine counts of murder and three counts of attempted murder (Bellware 2015) and pleaded guilty to them (Zapotosky and Berman 2017). He was also charged and found guilty of 33 federal hate crimes (Waters and Sullivan 2016).

Lafayette theatre shooting

On July 23rd, 2015, John Russell Houser opened fire at a showing of the movie *Trainwreck*, killing two and injuring nine victims (Levine 2015). Houser had a history of mental illness and violence against women, and was known to frequent right-wing extremist websites (Levine 2015). After killing two, Houser committed suicide (Levine 2015).

Tree of life synagogue shooting

The most recent case in the current study is the Tree of Life Synagogue Shooting on October 27th, 2018. Robert D. Bowers attacked worshipers at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh using an assault rifle, killing 11 and wounding six people (Gormly et al. 2018). Bowers had a history of antisemitic posts on the internet, including on a social media site called Gab (Turkewitz and Roose 2018). Known for its lack of censorship, Gab has a strong presence of right-wing extremists. Bowers is said to have “spewed hatred online including saying things like ‘Jews are the children of Satan’” (Turkewitz and Roose 2018). Once arrested, Bowers told authorities he “just wanted to kill Jews.” His last posts included anger at Former President Donald Trump, because he felt as though the President was not doing enough to address the Jewish problem, as he saw it (Turkewitz and Roose 2018). He was charged with obstructing the exercise of religious beliefs resulting in death, which is classified as a hate crime.

Analytic framework

Each case study was analysed for specific thematic frames to determine how these acts of right-wing violence were portrayed. This was accomplished through a thematic analysis, which allows researchers to “search across a dataset [...] to find repeated patterns of meaning” (Braun and Clarke 2006, 86), or themes. This method involves an inductive approach to coding that allows the researcher to look for patterns and interpret their meanings in order to create themes (Braun and Clarke 2006; Clarke and Braun 2020). Thematic analysis allows for the creation of thematic frames from which the researcher draws conclusions about the meaning and consequences of such framing. This analytic process involves an initial familiarisation with the data, rounds of coding and checking, and the creation and naming of themes.

Using this process, the current study was conducted using an inductive and iterative coding process to identify specific frames. Each article was read and coded based on what was present in the data. As new codes emerged, the previous news articles were re-read and reconsidered in order to verify whether the new code was also present in those articles. In addition to looking for presence, the articles were examined for negative cases or lack of presence. Immersion in the data allows for greater awareness of both explicit and implicit meanings and messages. The first round of coding included a close reading of the text focused on identifying patterns in the data. A second round of coding was conducted to verify the codes, conceptualise the codes, and move from specific codes to larger, more analytically-focused categories. These more analytic and conceptual categories led to the creation of themes.

Data collection and sampling

The sample for this study was purposive, and collected using the database, Factiva. The *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* were chosen because they provide news for the entire country and thus reach a broader and larger audience than smaller city or community papers. These papers have historically been referred to as the papers of record (Caulfield 2017).

For each case, three different search terms were used, resulting in three rounds of data collection. The first round included only the “name” of the incident. This included the town, the type of incident (e.g., shooting) and the location. For example, the first search for the Charleston case was “Charleston and church and shooting.” Using the Boolean phrase indicator “and” the search was widened to include any configuration of the above words. The third round of data collection included the initial search terms with the addition of “and [attacker’s name].” For example: “Charleston and church and shooting and Dylann Roof”. The third round of data collection included only the attacker’s name. Only articles that were printed in physical newspapers were included in the sample. While the news has been consistently moving to online platforms, in this study, online pieces were excluded because of the volume of such articles.

Each article found via the search terms was then reviewed for relevance. Only articles found in the news or feature section of the paper were included. Articles from the opinion, editorial, religious, and arts sections were excluded because these sections serve different purposes: news articles are meant to inform, whereas opinion-based articles are intended to provide commentary. The final sample included 199 articles. Of these 199 articles, 95 were about Charleston, 56 about the Tree of Life Shooting, 12 about the Kansas City shooting, 17 about the Wisconsin Shooting, and 19 about the Lafayette shooting. Of the 95 articles about Charleston, 33 discussed the confederate flag and the removal of the flag from government spaces, a prominent point of controversy for the American south.

Limitations

The primary limitation of the current study is its sample size. Because only five cases were analysed, it is possible that the inclusion of other incidents could produce different or additional themes. In addition to analysing more cases, it is important that future studies examine cases from other countries that are experiencing upticks in right-wing violence, particularly in Europe, to better understand how news coverage of this phenomenon varies by context. The current sample was also limited to two major newspapers; additional newspapers should be included in future studies to understand how framing may vary across outlets. It would be beneficial for future work to focus on this type of comparative analysis across both newspapers and countries. In addition to including a larger sample of cases, future studies should also include a more extensive selection of news articles. The current study included only articles printed in physical newspapers; however, these articles are only a subset of all articles published by news media. Online news content is expanding rapidly, and online articles are more accessible, reaching a wider audience than the traditional printed newspaper. As such, it is important to understand how terrorism is portrayed in online articles as well. Using larger and more diverse samples would doubtlessly add to the existing literature.

Framing right-wing extremist attacks

Officially we cannot be sure this was terrorism

In the main, articles avoided calling these cases terrorism. For instance, in the Wisconsin shooting case, one article included statements from officials who said that the event was being investigated as a “domestic terrorism-type incident” (Markon and Laris 2012); another mentions that the “authorities are *treating* [emphasis added] the shooting as an act of domestic terrorism” (Good and Kovaleski 2012). However, it was never formally called a terrorist attack. Similarly, Charleston was at times referred to as a “potential domestic terrorism crime,” but this term was not consistently used across articles. Instead, Charleston was quickly labelled as a hate crime, and charges to that effect were filed at the federal level (Apuzzo, 2015). The Kansas shooting was also labelled a hate crime. However, although it was mentioned that federal hate crime charges may be filed, the articles in this sample only included references to the state charges, which included capital murder and premeditated first-degree murder (Phillip 2014). Miller was never charged with federal hate crime charges; he was only charged with capital murder, attempted murder and assault (Reese 2015).

Lastly, the Tree of Life shooting also included mentions of hate crime charges, as the attacker was charged with obstructing the free exercise of religious beliefs (Robertson, Mele, and Sabrina 2018). Yet, there was no evidence that the authorities were considering additional charges for Bowers; he was charged with criminal homicide, aggravated assault and “ethnic intimidation” (Robertson, Mele, and Sabrina 2018). There were no other references to this being a terrorist activity. Instead, this incident was referred to as an “anti-Semitic attack.” Interestingly, Bowers’ attack was called a shooting, even though it prompted New York Police Department’s counterterrorism chief, James Waters, to send “counterterrorism teams [...] [to] many houses of worship “out of an abundance of caution” (Newman, Schweber, and Luis 2018). The other cases in the current study were not explicitly labelled hate crimes. Attacks were often called “racially motivated”; this was especially true in the Charleston case. Across all the incidents, federal officials were often reported as being cautious of describing the event. For example, in one article officials were quoted stating that it was “too early to tell what happened and why” (Markon and Laris 2012).

These labels stemmed from official sources. In each case, it was either an attorney, a police officer, or a government official who determined how the case should be labelled. The current study demonstrates how the overuse of official sources results in a single frame, one which postulates that these violent attacks are not terrorism or extremist violence. The sole use of government or police officials to source news stories results in “officially approved” frames that may fail to accurately categorise the event, limiting policy responses. The lack of plurality of voices means that terrorism experts from academia, whose perspectives are generally not bound by politics, are missed. This is especially important considering these incidents were included in the Global Terrorism Database by prominent terrorism researchers.

It is important to note that a handful of articles following the Charleston attack focused on whether it would be more appropriate to call Charleston a terrorist event (Shane 2015; Gladstone, Zraick, and Mackey 2015). These reports mentioned that some members of the

public argued that the attack in Charleston was terrorism (Gladstone, Zraick, and Mackey 2015). In another article, the focus was on the extent to which right-wing extremism was a problem (Shane 2015). Another article discusses the threat of “lone wolf domestic terrorists” in reference to Wade Michael Page (Somashekhar 2012). While this counter-narrative is important and valuable, it, unfortunately, is not the dominant frame, nor is it salient enough in this sample to be considered a secondary frame. These references appear to be outliers in this selection of print media.

While it could be argued that these incidents simply do not meet the legal definition of terrorism, recent articles by Norris (2017) and Taylor (2019) show that Dylann Roof’s actions do constitute terrorism under United States laws and as such, he should have been charged with terrorism-related charges. A lack of a clear definition means that the label of terrorism is not consistently applied across groups. However, the role of the news media historically is to be the “fifth estate” – the last informal check on government and government power. As such, it would be appropriate for news providers to question the decisions officials are making and be critical of unequal treatment.

Just a man – the obfuscation of motive

Throughout the articles, news providers meticulously avoided labelling the attacker as a terrorist. Instead, news media referred to the attackers as “people with supremacist views.” The attackers were known as “gunmen” instead of “terrorists,” and their violence was labelled as “shootings” rather than “terrorism.”

In Charleston, Dylann Roof was referred to as someone who “clearly embraced their [white supremacists’] world view” (Wines, Saul, and Bhaskar 2015). Nevertheless, in the majority of articles in this sample, he is first portrayed as a white man with friends and family, who posted racist material instead of being labelled as an actual racist, a white supremacist, or a right-wing extremist. Conspicuously, even in this text that focuses on Supremacists online, Roof was never labelled an extremist, supremacist, or terrorist, and instead, clear distinctions between him and the movement appear to be made:

In the wake of the church massacre, many white supremacist groups have rushed to disavow any link to Mr. Roof and any role in the murders. And while Mr. Roof appears to have been in contact with some white supremacists online, investigators say it does not appear that those people encouraged or assisted in the deadly shootings (Wines, Saul, and Bhaskar 2015).

He was portrayed as a normal person who posted racist statements online rather than someone who is, in fact, a white supremacist.

In addition to distancing the attacker from the ideology by focusing on the individual, the articles framed attackers as gunmen or shooters, focusing on the act instead of the intent. In the Lafayette theatre shooting, John Russell Houser was referred to as a gunman “who inveighed against women’s rights, liberals and minorities and had been involuntarily committed for mental illness, according to court documents and interviews” (Leonning, Weigel, and Markon 2015). In the coverage of the Charleston case, Roof was described as “a young white gunman expressing hostility toward blacks [who] had killed nine worshipers at Charleston’s historic Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church” (Martin 2015). By using the language of “gunman” and “shooting,” any ideological or

political motivation is lost: the violence is reduced to just another crime. This labelling suggests to the audience that this is simply one of many unfortunate episodes of gun violence in the United States.

It is worth noting the manner in which “white supremacy” was attenuated in these accounts. Page, for example, was referred to as someone with “ties to right-wing groups” rather than someone who was actively involved in the movement:

The difficulties came into focus Sunday when Wade Michael Page, a 40-year-old Army veteran with ties to “white power” groups, opened fire in a Wisconsin Sikh temple. The FBI and watchdog organizations had known of Page, according to reports, but had not viewed him as a threat before the massacre, which took six lives and ended with Page’s death. (Somashekhar 2012)

Moreover, the use of quotation marks surrounding “white power” to casually link Page to white supremacy groups devalues the meaning and severity of the term. It implies that the white power movement is somehow not important, non-existent, or hypothetical. The sole exception to the above characterisation was in articles about the Kansas shooting, several of which referred to Frazier Glenn Miller as a white supremacist. Presumably, this difference is attributable to Miller’s high-profile position as a known Klan member and former grand dragon (Yaccino and Barry 2014).

More generally, motivation tended to remain elusive in news accounts. Overall, news providers were careful about assigning motive in these cases. In an article detailing the charges laid against Miller in Kansas, the author states:

Hours later, Mr. Miller, a well-known Klansman, made a video appearance in Johnson County District Court from jail [...] *What prompted the shooting remained unanswered.* Mr. Miller drove to Overland Park, the authorities said, armed with at least a shotgun and a handgun. (Yaccino 2014)

Although the article acknowledges that Miller is a Klansman, and thus a part of the Ku Klux Klan, it seems to ignore ideology as a possible motive. Instead, the author reports that he simply does not know what prompted the shooting. Similar language was evident in relation to the Wisconsin shooting:

Federal officials *still do not know why* [emphasis added] Wade M. Page, a newcomer to the area with ties to white supremacy groups, took six lives and wounded three people, including a police officer, before shooting himself. (Yaccino 2012)

There are even some suggestions that the motivations of the attacker may be unknowable.

[...] “We are still pursuing all aspects of his behavior, the motivations for his actions,” said James L. Santelle, the United States attorney for the Eastern District of Wisconsin. “We may never know that for certain; *we may never know exactly what was animating him.*” [emphasis added] (Eligon et al. 2012)

These commentaries stand in stark contrast to those presented for other types of terrorists. For example, immediately following the Boston Marathon bombing, the two Muslim individuals involved were labelled as terrorists.

Instead of labelling Bowers, the Tree of Life attacker, as a terrorist and the event as terrorism, the incident was linked to antisemitism more broadly. The attack was

consistently framed as the “deadliest anti-Semitism attack in US history” (Zezima and Lowery 2018). His internet history was described as Anti-Jewish, with posts that included “Anti-Jewish slurs” and references to “anti-Jewish conspiracy theories.” The only references to right-wing extremism are used to describe the social media website Gab, on which Bowers had been posting leading up to the attack:

In January, an account under his name was created on Gab, a social network that bills itself as a free speech haven. The app, which grew out of claims of anti-conservative bias by Facebook and Twitter, is a popular gathering place for alt-right activists and white nationalists whose views are unwelcome on other social media platforms. Early members included the right-wing provocateur Milo Yiannopoulos and Andrew Anglin, the founder of the neo-Nazi Daily Stormer website. (Robertson, Mele, and Sabrina 2018).

Interestingly, even here, the authors state that the website is a space for “alt-right activists” rather than right-wing extremists, or alt-right extremists. So, while Bowers’ motivation is never explored in detail, by labelling the violence as antisemitic, the motivation appears to be self-explanatory due to the extensive history of antisemitic violence across the globe and the public’s awareness of this history.

On normalisation and humanisation

Ideology was further dissociated from the violent attacks by news media, frequently framing the attackers as “normal people.” Attackers were not just white supremacists; they were also fathers and neighbours. They were flawed, to be sure, but essentially “normal”:

In an interview in Denver, where she lives, Ms. Page said she had known her stepson [Wade Michael] since he was 10. As a child, she said, he worshiped the guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan. His aspirations and dreams centered on music. “Wade, his father and me would go camping and fishing in Colorado and have just a wonderful time, and we would play games at home, like cards and Monopoly,” Ms. Page said. “We just did the normal things that a family does.” (Good and Kovalski 2012).

Even in the case of the Tree of Life attacker, reporters dug deep to find out information about his personal life, despite Bowers being described as a loner. They reached out to his neighbours, who said he was “unremarkable” (Zezima and Lowery 2018) and seemed like a “normal guy” (Selk et al. 2018). One set of reporters reached out to a “friend from childhood”:

[Bowers] was an isolated, awkward man who lived alone and struggled with basic human interactions, neighbors and others who knew him said on Sunday.

“He was in his own little world,” said Jim Brinsky, 46, a friend from childhood. Mr. Brinsky said he and Mr. Bowers, 46, grew up together but that he never met Mr. Bowers’s parents and got the impression that Mr. Bowers had a difficult home life. As teenagers, he said they built pipe bombs and blew up watermelons and trees as pranks. (Gabriel, Healy and Turkoqitz 2018)

By searching so extensively for “other reasons” for the violence, the threat of right-wing extremism is minimised. In addition to making ideology secondary by ignoring it as a potential motivation, humanising the attackers diminishes the salience of right-wing terrorism, which suggests that because it is not covered, it is not “a big deal”. While it is

not inherently bad that the individuals are humanised, it is problematic when members of other racial groups are not afforded the same courtesy. The result is biased reporting, which has the potential to increase prejudice and racism against other groups.

Eventually, we have to talk about gun policy

Given that all the cases reviewed in this study involved the use of guns, it is not surprising that gun policy inevitably emerged as a theme. Similarly, Powell's (2018) findings included a new frame not found in Powell's original (2011) study. This new gun frame included two components: the flaws of the current gun policy and the need for change; and the manner in which the attackers procured their guns. For example, in the Charleston and Lafayette shootings, the attackers should not have been able to purchase a gun due to the previous criminal convictions and mental illness of Roof and Houser respectively. However, in each case, they obtain their guns through legal channels (Schmidt 2015; Robertson, Perez-Pena, and Blinder 2015). Alternatively, while Bowers used a legally obtained gun in the Tree of Life shooting, news coverage focused on the sheer number of guns he owned (20 in total). Coverage of Bowers' attack included comments from representative Nancy Pelosi, who said "Congress must finally act on common sense, bipartisan gun violence prevention legislation" (Rogers and Mays 2018) and the mayor of Pittsburgh at the time, Bill Petuto who said "The approach we need to be looking at is how we take the guns – the common denominator of every mass shooting in America – out of the hands of those looking to express hatred through murder" (Selk et al. 2018).

Once again, by changing the conversation to gun violence, the ideological motivations for the attacks are diluted further. Instead, the focus on gun violence frames the attacks as another episode of gun violence in a seemingly endless array of shootings. In doing so, it effectively obfuscates the threat of right-wing violence. In this way, the public discourse does not address the spectre of right-wing terrorism. Instead, the public is redirected towards a gun policy debate that divides Americans. This finding is consistent with Powell's (2018) finding that showed the tools used (i.e., guns), and gun policy was prominent in U.S. news coverage of terrorist incidents. In an ironic twist, by emphasising gun violence, news media may contribute to further radicalisation of right-wing extremists, some of whom fervently believe that their unequivocal constitutional right to bear arms is perpetually in jeopardy (Adamczyk, Jeff Gruenewald, and Freilich 2014).

Conclusions

Overall, the current study confirms previous findings that right-wing extremism is often not labelled as terrorism (Betus et al. 2020). In the current sample of print articles, ideology was portrayed as a secondary motivation for violence. Instead, news coverage focused on an array of other motivations and potential causes. Our findings are consistent with findings by Powell (2018, 2011) and Falkheimer and Olsson (2015). In these studies, the actions of the perpetrators were depoliticised. Powell (2011) found that news media explored all the possible reasons for violence when the attacker was not Muslim; the same level of exploration was not seen when the perpetrator was Muslim. The current study also found that news coverage discussed the mental health of the attacker, similar

to previous findings by Powell (2018). However, more recent findings have shown that the odds of finding references to mental illness in news coverage was not different for white compared to non-white individuals (Betus et al. 2020). More research should be conducted to understand the use of this mental illness frame and its prevalence in news coverage in cases of right-wing terrorism specifically and terrorism in general. In addition, these cases explored at length how a “normal” person could do this. This stands in clear opposition to the coverage of Islamist fundamentalist extremism. Powell’s (2018, 2011) studies showed that Muslim individuals were immediately racialised and quickly labelled as terrorists. This double standard is problematic because it perpetuates generalisations about the other (in this case, the Muslim terrorist) and yet gives the benefit of the doubt to white people.

By searching so extensively for “other reasons” for the violence, the news articles in this sample minimised the threat of right-wing extremism. In addition to making ideology secondary by ignoring it as a potential motivation, humanising the attackers diminishes the salience of right-wing terrorism. This lack of salience suggests right-wing terrorism is not a problem. Humanising individuals is not necessarily a problem, as long as racialised extremists and right-wing extremists are both being afforded that humanity. When this is not the case, biased coverage has the potential to perpetuate and increase prejudice and racism against other groups. Research has already shown that whether something is labelled as terrorism and how it is framed can affect how audiences react (Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997; D’Orazio and Salehyan 2018; Baele et al. 2019)

The findings presented here have several implications. First, when right-wing extremism is not labelled as such, the readers of these news articles are not made aware of the threat of right-wing violence unless they explore the issue on their own. When news providers avoid the terrorism label, policy options for responding to this extremist ideology are limited (Norris 2017; Taylor 2019; Spencer 2010). Furthermore, reliance on a “gunman” frame, as was seen in Powell (2018) implies that these cases of right-wing terrorism are, in fact, not terrorism; rather, the issue is gun violence. As a result of these incomplete or misleading portrayals, it becomes easier to ignore or downplay the existing threat from these individuals. Ultimately, the specific language used in these cases serves to condition both the authorities’ and the general public’s responses. By ignoring or diminishing right-wing terrorism, news media limit the discourse in such a way that this movement can continue to thrive.

Disclosure of potential conflicts of interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Vanja Zdjelar recently completed her masters degree in the School of Criminology at Simon Fraser University and is a recipient of the Canada Graduate Scholarship Masters from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (Thesis title: Alone Together: Exploring Community on an Incel Forum). She has completed a Bachelor of Arts and Social Sciences (honours) in criminology and a second Bachelor of Arts and Social Sciences in political science and communications both at Simon Fraser University. Her current work involves understanding misogynist extremism in online

spaces. Her research interests also include right-wing extremism, countering violent extremism, terrorism and the internet, and modern left-wing extremist groups.

Garth Davies is an Associate Professor in the School of Criminology at Simon Fraser University and is the Associate Director of the Institute on Violence, Extremism and Terrorism at Simon Fraser University. His current work involves developing a database for evaluating programmes for countering violent extremism; the social psychology of radicalisation; the statistical modelling and projection of violent right-wing extremism; misogynist terrorism; and the evolution of left-wing terrorism. He has also been involved in the development of the Terrorism and Extremism Network Extractor (TENE), a web-crawler designed to investigate activities on the internet. The crawler is presently being used to examine violent extremism on the dark net. Dr. Davies earned his Ph.D. in Criminal Justice from Rutgers University.

ORCID

Vanja Zdjelar  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7827-5889>

References

- Adamczyk, A., J. Gruenewald, S. M. Chermak, and J. D. Freilich. 2014. "The Relationship between Hate Groups and Far-Right Ideological Violence." *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 30 (3): 310–332. doi:[10.1177/1043986214536659](https://doi.org/10.1177/1043986214536659).
- Apuzzo, M. 2015. "Nine Killings in Charleston Bring Charges of Hate Crime." *The New York Times*, July 23.
- Baele, S. J., O. C. Sterck, T. Slingeneyer, and G. P. Lits. 2019. "What Does the "Terrorist" Label Really Do? Measuring and Explaining the Effects of the "Terrorist" and "Islamist" Categories." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 42 (5): 520–540. doi:[10.1080/1057610X.2017.1393902](https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2017.1393902).
- Bellware, K. 2015. "Dylann Roof Indicted On 9 Counts Murder, 3 Counts Attempted Murder For Charleston Church Shooting." *Huffington Post*, July 7. https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/dylann-roof-indicted_n_7744644?ri18n=true
- Berger, P. L., and T. Luckmann. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Doubleday Anchor.
- Betus, A. E., E. M. Kearns, and A. F. Lamieux. 2020. "How Perpatrator Idnetity (Sometimes) Influences Media Framing Attacks as "Terrorism" or "Mental Illness"." *Communication Resaerch* 1–24. doi:[10.1177/0093650220971142](https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650220971142).
- Bhatia, A. 2009. "The Discourses of Terrorism." *Journal of Pragmatics* 41 (2): 279–289. doi:[10.1016/j.pragma.2008.05.016](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2008.05.016).
- Bjørge, T., and J. A. Ravndal. 2019. "Extreme-Right Violence and Terrorism: Concepts, Patterns, and Responses." In *ICCT Policy Brief*, 1–22. The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism. doi:[10.19165/2019.1.08](https://doi.org/10.19165/2019.1.08) ISSN:2468-0486
- Braun, V., and V. Clarke. 2006. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2): 77–101. doi:[10.1191/1478088706qp063oa](https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa).
- Braun, V., and V. Clarke. 2020. "One Size Fits All? What Counts as Quality Practice in (Reflexive) Thematic Analysis?" *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 1–25. doi:[10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238](https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238).
- Campana, P. 2007. "Beyond 9/11: Terrorism and Media in a Mid-term Period View (1998–2005)." *Global Crime* 8 (4): 381–392. doi:[10.1080/17440570701739744](https://doi.org/10.1080/17440570701739744).
- Carter, D., S. Chermak, J. Carter, and J. Drew. "Understanding Law Enforcement Intelligence Processes," Report to the Office of University Programs, Science and Technology Directorate, U.S. Department of Homeland Security. College Park, MD: START, 2014.
- Calfield, M. 2017. "Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers" *Textbooks*. 5. <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/textbooks/5>

- Chermak, S. M., and J. Gruenewald. 2006. "The Media's Coverage of Domestic Terrorism.,," *Justice Quarterly* 23 (4):428–61. doi:10.1080/07418820600985305
- Crilly, R., and R. Sanchez. 2015. "Dylann Roof: The Charleston Shooter's Racist Manifesto." *The Telegraph*. June 20. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/11688675/Dylann-Roof-The-Charleston-killers-racist-manifesto.html>
- D'Orazio, V., and I. Salehyan. 2018. "Who Is a Terrorist? Ethnicity, Group Affiliation, and Understandings of Political Violence." *International Interactions* 44 (6): 1017–1039. doi:10.1080/03050629.2018.1500911.
- Davis, T., and F. Al-Faruque. 2009. "Napolitano Facing Republican Calls for Her Ouster." *ABC News*. August 23. <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/story?id=7412992&page=1>
- Doering, S., and G. Davies. 2019. "The Contextual Nature of Right-Wing Terrorism across Nations." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 1–23. doi:10.1080/09546553.2019.1598390.
- Eke, K. K., and A. Odasuo Alali. 1991. "Introduction: Critical Issues in Media Coverage of Terrorism." In *Media Coverage of Terrorism*, edited by K. K. Eke and A. Odasuo Alali, 3–11. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Eligon, J., J. Dao, D. Johnson, and S. Yaccino. 2012. "Investigators Seek Clues in Gunman's Last Weeks before Temple Murders." *The New York Times*, August 8.
- Entman, R. M. 1993. "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm." *Journal of Communication* 43 (4): 51–58. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x.
- Fahey, S., and P. Simi. 2019. "Pathways to Violent Extremism: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis of the US Far-right." *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict* 12 (1): 42–66. doi:10.1080/17467586.2018.1551558.
- Falkheimer, J., and E.-K. Olsson. 2015. "Depoliticizing Terror: The News Framing of the Terrorist Attacks in Norway, 22 July 2011." *Media, War & Conflict* 8 (1): 70–85. doi:10.1177/1750635214531109.
- Gabriel, T., J. Healy, and J. Turkewitz. 2018. "Pittsburgh Synagogue Massacre Suspect was 'Pretty Much a Ghost'." *The New York Times*, October 28.
- Gergen, K. J. 2015. *An Invitation to Social Construction*. 55. City Road, London: SAGE Publications.
- Ghazi-Tehrani, A., and E. M. Kearns. 2020. "Biased Coverage of Bias Crime: Examining Differences in Media Coverage of Hate Crimes and Terrorism." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 1–21. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2020.1830573.
- Gitlin, T. 1980. *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media and the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press.
- Gladstone, R., K. Zraick, and R. Mackey. 2015. "Many Ask, Why Not Call It Terrorism?" *The New York Times*, June 19.
- Good, E., and S. Kovalski. 2012. "A Killer Who Fed and Was Fueled by Hate." *The New York Times*, August 7.
- Gormly, K. B., A. Selk, M. Berman, and J. Achenbach. 2018. "11 Killed, 6 Wounded in Shooting at Pittsburgh Synagogue." *The Washington Post*, October 28.
- Grenoble, R. 2015. "Charleston Shooting Suspect Dylann Roof Wore Pro-Apartheid, Rhodesia Patches On Jacket." *Huffington Post*. https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/dylann-roof-facebook-photo_n_7612708?ri18n=true
- Halsey, A. 2014. "Kansas Suspect Has Long History of Racism." *The Washington Post*, April 16
- Iyengar, S. 1996. "Framing Responsibility for Political Issues." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 546 (1): 59–70. doi:10.2307/1048170.
- Jenkins, P. 2003. *Images of Terror: What We Can and Can't Know about Terrorism*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Johnson, D. 2012. *Right Wing Resurgence: How a Domestic Terrorist Threat Is Being Ignored*. Blue Ridge Summit: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group.
- Kapur, S. 2021. "'This Isn't the Final Chapter': Analyst Warns, Again, about Rise of Right-Wing Extremists." *NBC News*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/isn-t-final-chapter-analyst-warns-again-about-rise-right-n1253950>

- Kearns, E. M., A. E. Betus, and A. F. Lemieux. 2019. "Why Do Some Terrorist Attacks Receive More Media Attention Than Others?" *Justice Quarterly* 36 (6): 985–1022. doi:10.1080/07418825.2018.1524507.
- Koehler, D. 2019. "Violence and Terrorism from the Far-Right." In *ICCT Policy Brief.*, 1–21. Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism.
- Leonning, C. D., D. Weigel, and J. Markon. 2015. "Life of Shooter Was in a Spiral." *The Washington Post*. July, 25.
- Levine, S. 2015. "Shooting At Louisiana Theater Leaves 3 Dead, Including Gunman." *The Huffington Post*. https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/lafayette-theater-shooting-gunman-victims_n_55b23a60e4b0224d8831d6ae?ri18n=true
- Markon, J., and M. Laris. 2012. "Shooter Kills Six at Sikh Temple." *The Washington Post*. A Section, August 6.
- Martin, J. 2015. "A Capitol's Confederate Flag Is Test for G.O.P. Hopefuls." *The New York Times*, June 22.
- Mazza, Ed, J. W., and K. Chen 2015. "Charleston Church Shooting: White Gunman Kills 9 At Historic Black Church." *The Huffington Post*. June 17. https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/charleston-shooting-church_n_7608738?ri18n=true
- Miller, E. 2019. *Global Terrorism in 2018*. MD: START, College Park. https://www.start.umd.edu/sites/default/files/publications/local_attachments/START_GTD_TerrorismIn2018_Oct2018.pdf
- Mitnik, Z. S., J. D. Freilich, and S. M. Chermak. 2020. "Post-9/11 Coverage of Terrorism in the New York Times." *Justice Quarterly* 37 (1): 161–185. doi:10.1080/07418825.2018.1488985.
- Murphy, K. 2015. "Ex-KKK Member Killed 3 Near Jewish Sites 'To Stop Genocide Against My People'." *Huffington Post*. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/ex-kkk-member-killed-3-near-jewish-sites-to-stop-genocide-against-my-people_n_55e0e1d0e4b0aec9f3537116
- Nacos, B. L. 2007. *Mass-mediated Terrorism: The Central Role of the Media in Terrorism and Counterterrorism*. 2nd ed. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Nelson, T. E., R. A. Clawson, and Z. M. Oxley. 1997. "Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict and Its Effect on Tolerance." *The American Political Science Review* 91 (3): 567–583. doi:10.2307/2952075.
- Newman, A., N. Schweber, and F.-S. Luis. 2018. "Brooklyn Leader, a Retired Police Captain, Will Bring Gun to Houses of Worship." In *The New York Times*, October 29 .
- Norris, J. 2017. "Why Dylann Roof Is a Terrorist under Federal Law, and Why It Matters." *Harvard Journal on Legislation* 54: 501–542.
- Norris, P., M. Kern, and M. R. Just. 2003. "Framing Terrorism." In *Framing Terrorism: The News Media, the Government, and the Public*, edited by P. Norris, M. Kern, and M. R. Just, 3–24, New York: Routledge.
- Parent, R., and O. James Ellis 2014. "Extremism in Canada: Keeping Control of Extreme Responses." In *Blue Line Magazine*, 20–22. TSAS: Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security and Society.
- Perry, B., and R. Scrivens. 2018. "A Climate for Hate? an Exploration of the Right-Wing Extremist Landscape in Canada." *Critical Criminology* 26 (2): 169–187. doi:10.1007/s10612-018-9394-y.
- Phillip, A. 2014. "Hate-crime Charges to Be Filed in Kan. Shootings, Officials Say." *The Washington Post*. A-Section. April 15.
- Powell, K. A. 2011. "Framing Islam: An Analysis of U.S. Media Coverage of Terrorism since 9/11." *Communication Studies* 62 (1): 90–112. doi:10.1080/10510974.2011.533599.
- Powell, K. A. 2018. "Framing Islam/Creating Fear: An Analysis of U.S. Media Coverage of Terrorism from 2011–2016." *Religions* 9 (9): 257. doi:10.3390/rel9090257.
- Ravndal, J. A. 2018. "Right-wing Terrorism and Militancy in the Nordic Countries: A Comparative Case Study." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 30 (5): 772–792. doi:10.1080/09546553.2018.1445888.
- Reese, D. 2015. "The Strange Trial of the Avowed Anti-Semite and White Supremacist Charged in the Kansas City JCC Killings." *The Washington Post*. August 27. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2015/08/27/the-strange-trial-of-the-avowed-anti-semite-and-white-supremacist-charged-in-the-kansas-city-jcc-killings/>

- Reitman, J. 2018. "U.S. Law Enforcement Failed to See the Threat of White Nationalism. Now They Don't Know How to Stop It." *New York Times*. November 3. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/03/magazine/FBI-charlottesville-white-nationalism-far-right.html#commentsContainer>
- Robertson, C., C. Mele, and T. Sabrina. 2018. "Rampage Kills 11 at Synagogue in Pittsburgh." *The New York Times* SECTA, October 28.
- Robertson, C., R. Perez-Pena, and A. Blinder. 2015. "Another Angry Face in the Gunmen's Gallery." *The New York Times*, July 25.
- Rogers, K., and J. C. Mays. 2018. "Trump Calls for Unity after Synagogue Shooting, Then Resumes Old Attacks." *New York Times*. SECT. A October. 28.
- Schmid, A. P. 2011. *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*. New York: Routledge.
- Schmidt, M. S. 2015. "Background Check Missed Charleston Suspect." *The New York Times*, July 11.
- Schuurman, B. 2019. "Topics in Terrorism Research: Reviewing Trends and Gaps 2007-2016." *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 12 (3): 463–480. doi:10.1080/17539153.2019.1579777.
- Scrivens, R., and B. Perry. 2017. "Resisting the Right: Countering Right-Wing Extremism in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice* 59 (4): 534–558. doi:10.3138/cjccj.2016.0029.
- Selk, A., T. Crag, S. Boburg, and A. B. Tran. 2018. "Suspect in Synagogue Massacre Known as Loner 'I Just Want to Kill Jews,' Man Told SWAT Officer after Being Shot." *The Washington Post*, SECT A. October 29.
- Shane, S. 2015. "Most U.S. Attacks are Homegrown and Not Jihadsit." *New York Times*, June 25.
- Simmons, B. K. 1991. "U.S. Newsmagazine's Labeling of Terrorists." In *Media Coverage of Terrorism*, edited by K. K. Eke and A. Odasuo Alali, 23–39. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Somashekhar, S. 2012. "'Lone Wolf' Domestic Terrorists are Hard to Identify." *The Washington Post*, August 9.
- Spence, S. 2020. "Right-wing Extremism: The New Wave of Global Terrorism". *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/right-wing-extremism-the-new-wave-of-global-terrorism-147975>
- Spencer, A. 2010. *The Tabloid Terrorist: The Predicative Construction of New Terrorism in the Media*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Surette, R. 2007. *Media, Crime, and Criminal Justice: Images, Realities, and Policies*. Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth.
- Taylor, H. 2019. "Domestic Terrorism and Hate Crimes: Legal Definitions and Media Framing of Mass Shootings in the United States." *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism* 14 (3): 227–244. doi:10.1080/18335330.2019.1667012.
- Tuchman, G. 1978. *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*. New York: Free Press.
- Turkewitz, J., and K. Roose. 2018. "An Attacker Who Spewed Anti-Semitism In Web Posts." *The New York Times*, October 28.
- Waters, D., and K. Sullivan. 2016. "Dylann Roof Guilty on 33 Counts of Federal Hate Crimes for Charleston Church Shooting." *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/dylann-roof-guilty-on-33-counts-of-federal-hate-crimes-for-charleston-church-shooting/2016/12/15/0bfad9e4-c2ea-11e6-9578-0054287507db_story.html
- Weimann, G., and H.-B. Brosius. 1991. "The Newsworthiness of International Terrorism." *Communication Research* 18 (3): 333–354. doi:10.1177/009365091018003003.
- Wines, M., S. Saul, and S. Bhaskar. 2015. "Supremacists Extend Reach Through Web." *The New York Times*, July 6.
- Wray, C. 2020. "'Worldwide Threats to the Homeland' Statement before the Senate Hoemaldn Security and Governmetnal Affairs Committee". <https://www.fbi.gov/news/testimony/world-wide-threats-to-the-homeland-092420>
- Yaccino, S. 2012. "Thousands Gather to Mourn Six Shot Dead at Sikh Temple." *The New York Times*, August 11.
- Yaccino, S. 2014. "Capital Murder among Charges in Kansas Shooting." *The New York Times*, April 16.
- Yaccino, S., and D. Barry. 2014. "Bullets, Blood, and Then Cry of Hail Hitler." *The New York Times*, April 15.
- Zapotosky, M., and M. Berman. 2017. "Charleston Church Shooter Dylann Roof Pleads Guilty in State Court, Avoids Second Death Penalty Trial." *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com>.

[com/news/post-nation/wp/2017/04/10/charleston-church-shooter-dylann-roof-pleads-guilty-in-state-court-avoids-second-death-penalty-trial/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2017/04/10/charleston-church-shooter-dylann-roof-pleads-guilty-in-state-court-avoids-second-death-penalty-trial/)

Zeizima, K., and W. Lowery. 2018. "An Online Feed Full of Hatred, neo-Nazi Rhetoric." *The Washington Post*. A-Section October 28.

Zhang, D., P. J. Shoemaker, and X. Wang. 2013. "Reality and Newsworthiness: Press Coverage of International Terrorism by China and the United States." *Asian Journal of Communication* 23 (5): 449–471. doi:[10.1080/01292986.2013.764904](https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2013.764904).