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RHETORICAL TERRORISM: ONLINE NEWS VISUAL
REPRESENTATION OF SUICIDE BOMBING

By

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For my family, I love you.

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ABSTRACT

This study rhetorically analyzes online news images of suicide bombing. I compare and contrast the visual representation of five different suicide bombing events. I gathered 181 images and 500 websites from the Google search engine, specifically from the Google News feature. Roland Barthes, Michael McGee, Stuart Hall, Susan Sontag and Grounded Theory all serve as theoretical underpinnings for the final analysis and discussion. My findings reveal that militaries create harmony; suicide bombing is the primary cause of death; terrorism is the main source of destruction; the official (governmental) response to terrorism is more visually reported about than civilian responses; and computer generated graphics are the product of journalistic/occupational convenience. Two broad observations are made about the data: namely, there is little visual variety among news sources when visually reporting about suicide bombing, and suicide bombing is visually constructed as being a cause and not an effect of conflict.

INTRODUCTION, METHOD AND SAMPLE

'Suicide terrorism' has become a media buzzword in the wake of the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in 2001. Terrorism, terrorist attacks and suicide bombing has come to constitute the subject of numerous international news stories explaining the importance of the concept of terrorism to many cultures. Suicide bombing is often discussed as being an act of terrorism, calling into question how suicide bombing contributes to the broader definition of terrorism. This inquiry investigates how online news sources around the world visually represent suicide terrorism. How is 'suicide bombing' visually constructed through media? How do online news sources across the globe visually represent suicide bombing? Whether one argues that media are powerful or inconsequential in the formation of attitudes, it is difficult to ignore the impact of media on the construction of our realities. For instance, I have never fought in a war, visited Saudi Arabia or seen the President of the United States in the flesh; does this mean that these events, places and people do not exist?¹ These things do exist but *how* they come to exist for me and for millions of other individuals, in addition to how they are visually represented, is what I am interested in understanding.

Terrorism, as a concept, has been used to justify both war and military occupation; it has also been used as validation for the revision of recent 'national security' legislation. The concept of terrorism affects what people do, whether or not they consume what they consume and, most importantly, the definition of terrorism defines whom we fear. Because this concept has been used throughout history as justification for military action or governmental decisions, the aesthetic associated with acts of terrorism becomes immensely important to conceptualizing shared cultural meanings of terrorists and terrorism. The

¹ I do not claim that mass media contribute solely to the construction of reality. Interpersonal relationships and educational exposure, among other factors, play a significant role in how, or, through what lens, we view the world.

definition of terrorism has the ability to take away a person's rights, it has the power to cause war and it has the capability of defining who is an enemy.

Understanding how news organizations visually or rhetorically represent atrocity or terrorism offers a rich text ripe for rhetorical and critical deconstruction. Using a search engine such as Google enables researchers to compare and contrast news coverage of an event from a variety of international sources. Knowing where our ideas about terrorism stem from offers insight into how the 'truth' is constructed by media in addition to explaining how social knowledge and public memory are produced and sustained by 'the news'. Visual representation of suicide bombing has vast repercussions on how the 'public'² understands foreign policy, as well as whether or not people will support their government's decisions.

Investigating the latent value judgments, knowledge claims and myths³ perpetuated by news organizations about suicide bombing offers insight into how societies conceptualize the concept of terrorism.⁴ Rhetorical and critical analysis is one method used to better understand how the idea of terrorism is framed and defined. This analysis examines how suicide bombing is visually represented and suggests repercussions for such representation. Understanding the rhetorical construction of suicide bombing explains why and how the ideologically loaded notion of terrorism is so powerful in shaping public opinion.

The Internet has had a significant impact on the way that information is used, received and valued in many societies. Increasingly, people are turning to the Internet for news information because it is updated multiple times daily, is easily accessible for those with the necessary technology, and it can access international websites with a click of the mouse. If news is the "window to the

² I use the term 'public' to denote citizens of a governed body or individuals living in a structured society. Michael McGee argues that the concept of 'the people' is created and sustained by rhetoric and specifically, media. Essentially, I use the phrase 'the public' to signify the governed or those individuals living in a nation-state.

³ The term 'myth' is derived by Roland Barthes and is better explained in the section entitled, 'myth: It is not what it appears to be.'

⁴ This analysis delves into who societies define as being terrorists.

world”⁵ then it can be stated that the Internet contributes considerably to how we see others in addition to how others see us. The Internet is thus used as yet another instrument in the construction of our varied realities. If we are unsure as to a concept, place or word we simply ‘Google it’ which produces thousands of possible answers to our commonplace questions. It is because of search engines such as Google that information is so easily and quickly both disseminated and received by millions of people daily.

Search engines such as Google and Yahoo are now more comprehensive including features such as ‘news’, ‘images’ and ‘people’. The user is able to choose what genre of information they want to explore. The ‘news’ feature through Google provides the user with credible news information on a daily and often hourly basis. Engines such as these are the starting point for many people who want to find the meaning of a word, the review of a new book or the latest news about an event. Frequently, we begin our informational searches with broad search engines such as Google and Yahoo. Because Google is widely used (predominantly among western/European cultures)⁶ and offers a consortium of news websites, it is a useful tool for media scholars interested in comparing visual information from many different news sources. I chose not to use a more academically oriented search engine such as Lexis Nexus because many people go directly to the Web as opposed to restricted access engines to begin their informational searches.

Google news displays information gathered from approximately 4,500 news sources worldwide and are arranged in a manner that presents the most relevant news site first.⁷ Algorithms track which sites people use most often and then enters that information into a complex formula, thereby deciding which news

⁵ Gaye Tuchman. Making News; A study in the construction of reality. 1978. A Division of Macmillan Publishing. New York, p. 1.

⁶ This information is derived from Google’s email response to my question, “who uses the Google search engine?”. 63% of all usage is accessed in English. 37% of the languages used to search Google are other mainly European languages. Please refer to this site specifically the pie graph entitled, “Languages used to search Google”: http://64.4.26.250/cgi-bin/linkrd?_lang=EN&lah=c1dceedfe5db0c98334fada308bf7c03&lat=1093460630&hm___action=http%3a%2f%2fwww%2egoogole%2ecom%2fabout%2ehtml

⁷ This information is from the official Google site:
http://news.google.com/intl/en_us/about_google_news.html

sites will be accessible on Google news.⁸ Staci Kramer explains, “The algorithm factors in how a story is played on news sites along with the perceived credibility of those sites and recent frequency of use.”⁹ Although the process of selecting which sites can be viewed on Google news does not involve any human interaction, there is one way that humans can determine what is posted via the Google search engine. Companies and news providers have the option of blocking Google, thus preventing their website from appearing on the Google page. Conversely, companies and news organizations can also decide to include their web page on the list of possible sites to be shown on Google. Aside from being able to choose whether or not your news site is capable of being included on Google’s page, there is no human contact with the search engine; simply, an algorithmic code that determines what is credible and what is not.¹⁰ Generally, Google has proved to be a valuable search engine for gathering my sample in that it includes articles that appear within the past 30 days¹¹. I am then able to observe over a short period of time, how stories about suicide bombing are visually represented.

I began my research very broadly, whereby I wanted to gain an understanding of what images were available through the Google search engine. I went to Google Images and typed in the words *suicide bomber*; this produced thousands of images pertaining to the broad search terms ‘suicide bomber’. Many of the images portrayed devastated buildings and cars, yet rarely the suicide bomber him/herself.¹² My informal hypothesis (for this preliminary research) stated that most of the images would in some way address the political

⁸ The Google search engine maintains that it reaches a variety of different cultures and claims to be an International news search engine and while this is true to some degree the majority of users access information in English. The sites that people (English speaking people) access most often are those deemed by the algorithm as being more credible, so as a user of Google I do not have the opportunity to understand what people in non-English speaking countries are seeing because they do not use Google to the extent that western societies do.

⁹ Staci Kramer. “Meet Editor AI Gorithm”. Online Journal Review posted 2002.

¹⁰ Staci Kramer. “Meet Editor AI Gorithm”. Online Journal Review posted 2002.

¹¹ http://news.google.com/intl/en_us/about_google_news.html. The first items to appear on Google are those that are the most present and the last are the least present. Therefore, the latter stories may not be available after new stories have become available.

¹² There were images of dead suicide bombers with bombs still strapped to their bodies but in general the aftermath of the blast was portrayed rather than the actual bomber.

struggle between Palestine and Israel, but suicide bombing is certainly not specific to this struggle; these images conveyed the variety of cultures that experience suicide bombing.¹³ Aside from the more serious pictures, bizarre images appeared of suicide bomber action figures, along with cartoon sketches scoffing at the stereotype that claims that male suicide bombers carry out their duty solely to have sex with virgins in heaven.

In general, these images can be categorized as necessarily 'foreign' in nature whereby most of the images are of 'Middle Eastern' men and women on unfamiliar (unfamiliar to a westerner) landscapes¹⁴. The current focus on women suicide bombers is noteworthy in addition to the 'visually constructed'¹⁵ religious reasons that underlie the act of suicide bombing. This initial step of looking at Google Images has been indispensable to the process of better understanding the visual representation of suicide bombing but lacked focus. It was at this point that I decided to use 'credible' news sites via the Google search engine. After this initial step I began gathering my data using Google news and changed my search terms to 'suicide bombing' from 'suicide bombers'.¹⁶

I gathered my data by going to Google news typing in 'suicide bombing' and sorting through the thousands of available news sites. Specific events appear together on the Google page making it easy to record all of the stories, web-links and images from an event. I recorded roughly 500 websites; out of the

¹³ This practice can be traced back to the early 80's in Lebanon; it later spread to Palestine as well as other colonized cultures.

¹⁴ Culturally, communities dress and look different based on factors such as climate, religion and history. To this end, western viewers are often less familiar with 'middle-eastern' dress, culture (specifically women who wear headscarves or 'hijab') and landscapes causing privileged viewers to categorize the aesthetic of suicide bombing (or even the entire middle-east) as being 'foreign' compared with westerners' understandings of culture.

¹⁵ To be clear, many of the images visually shape religious reasons for carrying out suicide attacks. Cartoons with captions about the 'virgins in heaven' and blessings from Allah create a certain religious aesthetic which functions to explain the reasons these individuals kill themselves.

¹⁶ I did this because using 'suicide bombers' as my search terms produced many stories about suicide bombers in general and I was more interested in comparing and contrasting the visual representation of a certain event. I wanted to look at all of the stories of one event and compare images within that event as well with other events. I am still interested in how the 'suicide bomber' is represented, but often the actual bomber is absent from the graphic (which is also noteworthy), but I found that using the search terms 'suicide bombing' produced more stories about given events and not simply the broad topic of suicide bombers. I began gathering data the third week in March of 2004.

500 websites I gathered 181 images, which form the basis of my data set.¹⁷ After collecting all of my data I categorized the images into 6 coding units: military, maps/filler graphic, governmental officials, people in devastated landscapes, death and miscellaneous.¹⁸ In order to code these news photographs I relied on Gaye Tuchman, Stuart Hall, Roland Barthes, Michael Calvin McGee and Grounded Theory¹⁹ to guide my rhetorical analysis. Each theorist offers a unique perspective on ideology, the nature of news and how individuals conceptualize visual information. The succeeding paragraphs explain useful theories and methods for my rhetorical analysis of suicide bombing on online news.

¹⁷ A suicide bombing would occur during the month that I collected data, I went to a story and clicked the “and more” link which produced other stories about the same event created by different news outlets. I repeated this method for each story so that I could eventually understand how different news outlets visually reported about the same event.

¹⁸ These categories will be better explained in the analysis section.

¹⁹ Grounded Theory is explained in the Analysis section.

JOURNALISM, MYTH AND THE IDEOGRAPHIC PROCESS

Journalists and journalism are often discussed as being 'gatekeepers' of reality, whereby what constitutes news is produced by a group of journalists and then disseminated by a larger media organization. The practice, both social and economic, of news making affects how information is presented through many different mediums. Thus, information is a social construct and a product of many factors other than the overt personal bias of the single journalist. Repeatedly, journalists (reporting overseas) are the targets of political violence, revealing the often-dangerous conditions associated with news journalism/photojournalism. Deadlines govern how information is gathered and presented, while profit margins control the type of information disseminated. The point is that journalists and photojournalists reporting about events overseas are confronted with many more tasks other than simply gathering information (for example staying alive). Profit margins and ideology create news bias.²⁰ The news, news organizations and journalists are all inherently biased, but this bias is often not intentional. Bias in news stems from the general capitalistic notion that production creates profit. It is clear that the quality of news has taken a backseat to profit margins, but the journalists that gather information are simply 'doing their job' and are not cognizant about sabotaging the media. To this end I would like to discuss the practice of news making and its affects on our perception of reality.

Gaye Tuchman brings to light the ideological as well as bureaucratic factors that aid in the manufacturing of news. For example, a story must pass through the hands of editors, managers and journalists before it appears on a news web page. These stories, or cultural texts, are produced by people with latent biases and subjective realities causing the final product to be an

²⁰ Ideology is inherent in the cultural products of news. Bias is a term that connotes intentional ideological control – I do not believe that this is how journalists generally operate. News organizations are primarily concerned with making money, overt ideological agenda-setting often takes a backseat to profit margins.

interpretation of an event rather than a reflection of the event itself. Thus, a news story or news image is the bureaucratic and ideological result of both an organization and of human beings. Tuchman claims that news articulates what we need to know – it informs us about who we *are* (values, beliefs etc.) as a collective society in addition to instructing us as to who we *are not*. It is because of this social ‘need to know’ that news creates both the standards and the content of what we deem as ‘knowledge’, essentially news shapes knowledge.²¹

Tuchman illustrates how news creates knowledge and then disseminates that information at a rapid pace (now even faster with the Internet) due to news’ ability to collapse time and space. Through this process of rapid dissemination we learn about what ‘Others’²² are doing; people we normally don’t physically see because of geographical limitations. Tuchman describes how news ascribes different ideological traits to events, individuals and spaces that usually function to uphold the position of the status quo.²³ Due to socially constructed hierarchies and relations of power, exactly *who* establishes the link between phenomena and ideology greatly affects how events, individuals and spaces are visually represented.

Tuchman’s chapter, “News as a Constructed Reality”²⁴, reinforces the notion that we help to construct our own reality, whereby we create and

²¹ Gaye Tuchman. 1979. Making News. Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc. New York. P. 1-2. Most of the information in this paragraph has been borrowed from the chapter, “News as Frame”.

²² The term ‘Other’ is derived from the ideas put forth by Ronald Takaki and Edward Said. This term signifies an individual who is vilified and is viewed by dominant communities as being strange or backward much like the Native Americans were thought to be barbaric in the eyes of the Pilgrims. Takaki writes about how ‘Otherness’ was also experienced by other racial ethnic groups who thought that the ‘White man’ was foreign and strange. I use the term to denote individuals who are foreign to the dominant group and whom are marginalized by society. Two references for this idea are:

Ronald Takaki, A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993.

Edward Said. Orientalism New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

²³ I am not claiming that agenda setting is the only factor contributing to the framing of a story. Rather, I am arguing that media is corporately owned and operated making it customary for the creators of news to uphold corporate interests and thus support the interests of the status quo. This is often not a cognizant process of the journalist, editor and photographer. It is rare that news create stories about marginalized cultures, environmental degradation or progressive social issues. Mainstream media because of the underlying economic function to make a profit upholds the dominant values.

²⁴ Gaye Tuchman. 1979. Making News. Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc. New York

constitute the social phenomena simply by acting. She suggests that news is not purely a mirror of society when she states, "It [news] helps to constitute it [society] as a shared social phenomenon, for in the process of describing an event, news defines and shapes that event, much as news stories construed and constructed the early period of the modern women's movement as the activities of ridiculous bra burners."²⁵ She makes the point that the modern women's movement could have been framed as a rational and needed social progression rather than an illogical, radical and angry protest against men. In essence, this movement was marginalized in large part due to *how* the event, or series of events, was portrayed via news²⁶. Stuart Hall elaborates on Tuchman's arguments and addresses questions about the very nature of news. He problematizes how news *becomes* news and what repercussions these news-making criteria have on the news photograph.

Hall questions how news is recorded and how events become newsworthy. He affirms that there exists an ideology of news that can be understood as the common-sense ideas about what events are considered newsworthy. His point is that these standards are often not discussed or debated, rather they are just known in the newsroom by journalists, producers and editors. Hall claims that all newspapers (and most likely online news web pages) reflect the economic structure of the culture in which they (newspapers) function (i.e. capitalism or communism). Thus, news photographs are reflections of cultural values, economic structures and function as indicators of the news values in a culture.

Hall argues that media are inherently biased, yet viewers continue to rely on news to 'tell us what is happening'. Hall maintains that the institution of news upholds the dominant social order by humanizing or personalizing bourgeoisie values. According to Hall, news functions to make abstract values, practices and realities of the bourgeoisie manifest in people, places and events. Often portraying people of other cultures reinforces what the bourgeoisie is *not* making

²⁵ Gaye Tuchman. 1979. Making News. Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc. New York. P. 184.

²⁶ I assume that other factors contributed to the marginalization of the movement but media coverage was no doubt a great contributor.

images of the Other²⁷ a key factor in sustaining dominant power relations. He explains, "Personalization, however, is something else: it is the isolation of the person from his relevant social and institutional context, or the constitution of a personal subject as exclusively the motor force of history, which is under consideration here."²⁸ Hall suggests that often social/historical contexts are not presented when depicting Other individuals. This is noteworthy because suicide bombers/ings are rarely discussed in terms of the bombers' specific religious beliefs, social status or general geopolitical context in which he or she lives. Essentially, suicide bombers are sole actors unaffected by the context in which they function. My research brings to light that suicide bombers are rarely visually represented creating an ambiguous and vague terrorist. How a viewer conceptualizes a situation or community of people is highly contingent on how the event or individuals are visually constructed. I find that suicide bombers lack a concrete identity and their situations are visually vague, causing meaning to be both easily malleable by powerful individuals and highly contingent on viewer interpretation.

It seems as though pictures 'speak for themselves', but just like any other cultural text, images must be interpreted while considering both the context in which the information is received and the context of the event.²⁹ Accordingly, when images of suicide bombings accompany an online news story the text rarely delves into the situations or circumstances that bring about such action. This makes it difficult to understand the bombing as anything other than an indiscriminate act of political and religious violence. Hall demonstrates that it is the interplay between all the signifiers (photo, text and title) that form the final

²⁷ I argue that the vague physical description of the suicide terrorist creates an Other. The non-descriptive rhetoric or absence of visual imagery of the suicide terrorist creates an ambiguous enemy. By virtue of not visually reporting about the suicide terrorist there is not a clear conception of the enemy.

²⁸ "The determination of news photographs", p.183. Printed in, of Stanley Cohen and Jock Young; The manufacture of news. Deviance social problems and the mass media. 1973. Constable and Co Ltd. London.

²⁹ People are not clean-slates that are waiting to be imparted with knowledge; rather each individual brings a reality to the reading of the text that ultimately determines their attitude toward the text. The title and the caption below the picture inform the reader as to how an image should be understood.

sign. He explains that images in news media do not stand on their own; rather they are interpreted considering the title, text and the reader's subjective reality.

Hall begins his article, "A World at One with Itself"³⁰ by claiming that journalists become very defensive when questioned as to what constitutes news. Most often journalists feel that they are simply reporting what happens 'out there' in reality. Hall's point is that news is not only a cultural product but also a bureaucratic and institutional product created by deadlines, editors and journalistic folklore. Hall makes clear that he is not claiming that journalists are evil creatures set out to destroy the minds of society with their ideologically loaded stories. Rather, he does state that the, "institutionalized ethos of the news media as a whole"³¹, contribute to its final product (what you and I see, hear and read). He stresses the importance of understanding the cultural/economic power structures that exist within societies as a means to better understand the nature of news in that society.

It becomes apparent, due to Hall and Tuchman's research, that the nature of news is contradictory. Specifically, news claims to teach us something new (considering the 'need to know' that media has created in privileged societies), yet it functions to reinforce what we already know. The news, under the guise of 'new information', feeds back to us what we already know about our own society and the world at large. Because news personalizes ideology making values manifest in specific people, events and places, ideology in the news functions inductively.³²

The seminal works of Roland Barthes form the basis of my argument that photographs can be 'read' and that underlying, connotative or 'myth'³³ meanings can be defined and analyzed. Barthes states, "It is true that objects, images and

³⁰ Printed in, of Stanley Cohen and Jock Young; The manufacture of news. Deviance social problems and the mass media. 1973. Constable and Co Ltd. London.

³¹ Stuart Hall "A world at one with itself", p. 89. Printed in, of Stanley Cohen and Jock Young; The manufacture of news. Deviance social problems and the mass media. 1973. Constable and Co Ltd. London

³² Causing one event or person to embody broader ideological understandings of the world.

³³ Barthes uses the word myth to connote the latent, ideological, political and historical meanings inherent in signs or 'things' in society. These 'things' could be anything from wrestling matches to billboards on the freeway, but most importantly these things could be photographs.

patterns of behavior can signify, and do so on a large scale, but never autonomously; every semiological system has its linguistic admixture.”³⁴ He suggests that while objects and photographs (and other non linguistic signs) communicate meaning, they do so because of language. To be clear, we need language (or a culturally determined system of signification or meaning) to describe these images and objects in order for them to signify cultural concepts.

Barthes maintains that the sign system used to analyze objects, photographs and text are the same ideologically and historically determined linguistic codes that mythologists use to deconstruct (and to better understand) social norms and dominant group values. He interrogates the perceived ‘naturalness’ of news and argues that news, as a constructed reality, includes myths³⁵ about society. Barthes makes the distinction between nature and history claiming that media confuse these two terms. He asserts that there is nothing ‘naturally’ true about the information produced by news, rather history and power determine what signs are used to signify which concepts or objects.³⁶

Barthes’ primary purpose is to expose the latent ideological structures that permeate media by observing and uncovering the ‘myths’ intrinsic in events and objects that we see in everyday life. Barthes recognizes the tension that exists when claiming that mythologists can uncover the ‘true’ meanings of things. He states that objectivity can never fully be achieved and recognizes that his writings are a product of his ideological, epistemological and ontological understandings. Yet, he also affirms that there are clear contradictions within French society (and other privileged societies) that can easily be defined and supported through in-depth semiological and historical research.

³⁴ Roland Barthes. 1964. Elements of Semiology, translated from French by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith. Hill and Wang. New York, p.10.

³⁵ He uses the word myth not to signify the antithesis of truth; rather myth is the system that informs the sign systems in given societies. Myth is a product of power struggles and history and exists in both language and other signs such as photographs.

³⁶ Barthes relies heavily on Saussure’s conception of sign, signified and signifier, but takes it one step further to include the underlying historical events and power dynamics (essentially named myth) which informs a particular sign system.

In Mythologies³⁷ Barthes analyzes the taken-for-granted notion that “photography has the power to convert”³⁸. He explains, considering electoral appeal that a photograph is like a mirror where the voter sees himself exalted and grandiose, in effect, people are voting for themselves. These images of potential Parliamentary officials construct an identity of the voter rather than of the candidate, which causes voters to realize the similarities between them (the voter) and the candidate. Perhaps pictures of suicide bombings reflect a terrorist who the viewer has not yet met; a stranger, the Other and the antithesis of self. Images of suicide bombing construct a bomber whose humanity is not easily recognizable and whose rituals are distant and perplexing making it difficult for westerners to identify with the bombing situation.

Myth, as Barthes conceives of it, is not an object or an idea. It is not the truth that is hidden behind a linguistic system and it is certainly not a concept, rather it is a means of signification or a “mode of signification.”³⁹ He explains that myth cannot be defined by the content of a message rather it is defined by the way in which it communicates its message.⁴⁰ Myth is a set of values and beliefs that are accepted as being natural and universal. Myth *is* ideology, or a latent value system preserved by the dominant power structure. Essentially, Barthes argues that signs are culturally bound and that every sign has both a connotative and a denotative meaning. These meanings ultimately constitute the ideology or myth underlying the sign.⁴¹

Similarly, Hall illustrates that all myths do not convey the same message to every individual, but messages *are* related in that each one has an abstract myth underlying its content and form.⁴² Within these myths is an ideological

³⁷ Specifically the chapter entitled, Photography and Electoral Appeal.

³⁸ Roland Barthes. 1957. Mythologies, translated by Annette Lavers. Hill and Wang. New York, p. 91.

³⁹ Roland Barthes. 1982. Translated by Susan Sontag. A Barthes Reader. Hill and Wang. New York, p.93 “Myth Today”. All of the information in this paragraph is from “Myth Today”.

⁴⁰ As Marshall McLuhan has stated, ‘the medium is the message’. Myth is a type of speech Barthes indicates and it is the medium and not the message that mythologists should focus on.

⁴¹ Barthes argues that there are neutral signs such as if he were to stare at the sea. The sea means nothing in terms of myth but what objects are on the beach? What are people doing? What is in the water? How has the ocean been used by humans?

⁴² Hall uses Barthes definition or explanation of myth.

structure that is difficult to see, study and track without intense deconstruction. Myths are represented as being ubiquitous and true - the point that Hall and Barthes make is that myth or ideology is not 'reality', it is simply a consortium of history, power and ideology. Myth is a particular and subjective reality.

Michael Calvin McGee creates a space for rhetoricians, social activists and anyone interested in social change to analyze ideologically loaded words⁴³ that have tremendous importance on people's bodies and minds. His conception of the ideograph explains that different individuals use ambiguous words such as 'freedom' or 'liberty' at specific times in order to signify rather divergent meanings. I can easily claim that the aforementioned words are symbolic, but finding a shared meaning of them becomes a bit problematic. These words are accepted as though they have the same meaning to all people, McGee argues that these words create a sense of 'the people' and serve specific socio-political purposes that need to be rhetorically interrogated. McGee defines the ideograph as:

"An ordinary-language term found in political discourse. It is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal. It warrants the use of power, excuses behavior and belief that might otherwise be perceived as eccentric or antisocial, and guides behavior and belief into channels easily recognized by a community as acceptable and laudable."⁴⁴

Ideographs are units of thought that exist in the mind and which help us to ascribe meaning and value to people, ideas and actions. McGee explains that a summary of historical ideology is contained within a unit of thought or ideograph. An ideograph can also guide behavior and belief negatively by associating unacceptable behaviors with a certain word such as 'terrorism' or 'suicide bombing'. These terms establish an ideology of a community where words are used in certain rhetorical instances (Bitzer's understanding of the situation) to

⁴³ The reader can substitute the word 'image' for the word 'word'. This concept is also relevant to cultural objects and photographs.

⁴⁴ Michael Calvin McGee. 1980. The "ideograph": A link between rhetoric and ideology. *Quarterly Communication Monographs*, 50, 47-65. Here I will use the example of terrorist as the ordinary term.

evoke specific responses. McGee argues that not just anyone can redefine these words on a mass scale, rather it is those who are in power and often those who have political ties that can alter the meaning of these concepts. These words function to include or exclude certain individuals depending on a word's definition.

The word 'liberty' invokes feelings of choice, free will and personal decision, meaning that 'liberty' can be fought for, defended and placed on a rhetorical pedestal. We fight for 'liberty' and people lose their lives because of this very ambiguous term that has come to be immensely significant in certain cultures. What does an image of liberty look like? Can ideographs include pictures or visual representations? A visual representation of liberty might be an American flag or the Statue of Liberty in New York City, explaining that ideographs are represented by iconography and other tangible or visual symbols other than words. Powerful yet vague concepts such as terrorism can be altered to signify many different concepts. Socially constructed relations of power define who has the social power to change such influential words, concepts or ideographs.

Noam Chomsky explains that the official definition of terrorism found in the U.S. code or U.S. army manuals states, "Terror is the calculated use of violence or the threat of violence to attain religious, political or ideological goals through intimidation, coercion or instilling fear."⁴⁵ Chomsky agrees that this is a fair enough definition but argues that it should not be accepted because of the word's (the term terrorism) powerful ability to mold, frame and give a certain meaning to a situation or group of individuals. When governments claim that they are carrying out 'counter-terrorism' they inherently state that they are fighting against something or someone bad.

Using the concept of 'terrorism' to maneuver within governmental organizations has proven to be a successful rhetorical tactic, for example, the

⁴⁵ Noam Chomsky; "Freedom fighters and Terrorism". G7 Welcoming Committee website: <http://www.g7welcomingcommittee.com/>.

U.S. led war against Iraq.⁴⁶ Governments carry out horrific acts and crimes against humanity in the name of ‘counter-terrorism’, in essence, one single word, or one unit of thought or ideograph can disguise the violence being committed against some while exposing the atrocities carried out by others. In the current war against Iraq it is very important who is defined as being a terrorist and who is defined as aiding in counter-terrorism. President Bush emphasizes the significance of being either ‘with us or against us’, explaining the consequence of defining who is *us* and who is *them*. *Them* came to constitute terrorists and *us* signified American allies.

Suicide bombing, as a rhetorical act, affects how we think about the concept of terrorism. My research concludes that suicide bombing, although heavily reported about, is a rhetorical mystery to many societies. Because suicide bombing tends to happen in countries other than Europe or the U.S., what westerners *do* know about suicide bombing is that suicide bombers are non-western. The vague visual description (i.e., never showing the suicide bomber) of who is committing these acts of terror enables certain individuals to collectively shape who we consider to be a terrorist. Essentially, viewers are responsible for filling in the ‘visual blank’ when reading about suicide bombing.⁴⁷ This gap in visual representation of the actual suicide bomber is problematic in that governments or individuals with social power can more easily define who is with and who is against the west. Governments have the opportunity of defining terrorism in such a way that can help support certain political agendas. My research reveals that there are 0 online news visual representations of suicide bombers, whereas there are a significant number of images of the victims of suicide terrorism (refer to figure 1 and 2). Arguably, it is difficult or journalistically taboo to photograph the remains of a suicide bomber’s body but there are virtually no pictures of suicide bombers before they attack. Yet, news sources continue to portray victims of a suicide attack using either a headshot photograph or picture of their bodies before burial. The visual representation of suicide

⁴⁶ The war in Iraq is rhetorically constructed as a war against ‘terrorism’.

⁴⁷ I am not suggesting that there needs to be a definitive definition of ‘suicide terrorist’; I am simply noting that news images of this phenomenon create ambiguity.

bombers (and bombings) has been made so vague and broad that its visual definition has come to constitute an entire culture or community, that of 'middle-easterners'.



Figure 1. Image of Victim

This image is from the Economist's (UK) web page posted on May 19 2004. The title of the online story reads, "The UN's Special Envoy is Finding it Hard to Choose an Interim Government". This image is of Izzedin Salim (Iraqi leader) the victim of a suicide attack.



Figure 2. Image of Victims' bodies

This image is from the Telegraph (UK) web page posted on May 22, 2004. The title reads, "Victims of Israeli raid pile up in a flower storeroom". This picture was bought from Reuters.

Based largely on McGee's understanding of the ideograph, Bethami A. Dobkin suggests that groupings of certain ideographs can define who is part of America and who is then *against* Americans.⁴⁸ He states, "Ideographs do not stand in isolation: rather, they are built from a constellation of related terms."⁴⁹ For example Dobkin states that Americans or Americanism is the antithesis of terrorism. Terrorism, as he suggests, is not related to only one action, rather such acts as hijacking, bombing, kidnapping, occupation of buildings, sniping, arson, sabotage, theft and suicide attacks can all be classified under the broader umbrella term of terrorism.⁵⁰ The ideograph of terrorism is used to create a character or standard by which we judge whether or not one is a terrorist. He explains, "Terrorism plays on our most basic fears of the unknown and of dying; calling an act a terrorist one heightens our apprehension and fear of the perpetrator."⁵¹ We no longer have to investigate the intricacies of terrorism because we simply know that it is wrong.

⁴⁸ His discussion is centered on media representations of terror and terrorists.

⁴⁹ Bethami A Dobkin. Tales of Terror: Television news and the construction of the terrorist threat. 1992. Praeger. New York. P.40.

⁵⁰ Notice that preemptive war is not considered an act of terrorism.

⁵¹ Bethami A Dobkin. Tales of Terror: Television news and the construction of the terrorist threat. 1992. Praeger. New York. P.41.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Media constructs what constitutes the 'truth'. Conceptualizing this brings to light the importance of media both in the formation of ideology, as well as in the creation of what society deems as the 'truth'. Julianne Hickerson Newton's⁵² article, "The burden of visual truth" begins with a salient quote by Marshal McLuhan (1989) that function as the theoretical basis for the ideas put forth in chapter 8 entitled, "Whose Truth?". The quote reads, "Truth... is something we make in the encounter with the world that is making us." This constant cycle of redefining what is 'true' is the point of interest in this chapter, namely; Newton analyzes how photojournalism affects our view of the world. Newton asks fundamental questions such as; "Can any image be anything but a construction?"

Newton⁵³ agrees with the notion that media are powerful while also recognizing the principal interactions between audience members and a text. She claims that visual reportage is powerful in influencing perceptions of the 'truth'. Newton offers a useful explanation by Chapnick (1994) of the impact of photojournalism:

"Those who say that photographs cannot make a difference have not thought the matter through. More to the point of the specific questions of whether photographs can change public perceptions on social issues stimulate people to be more active in support of their causes, affect the ways in which people live and governments conduct business. During my lifetime in photojournalism, photography has had a profound effect on people's understanding of the world in which they live and on their perceptions of important social and political issues."

⁵² Julianne Hickerson Newton. 2001, "The burden of visual truth: The role of photojournalism in mediating reality". Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Mahwah New Jersey.

⁵³ Julianne Hickerson Newton. 2001, "The burden of visual truth: The role of photojournalism in mediating reality". Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Mahwah New Jersey.

Newton argues that there exists a social desire to 'know what is going on', which functions to keep individuals consuming truth making machines. She concludes with a few thought provoking questions⁵⁴ pertinent to my study on the portrayal of suicide bombing/ers; "How does photojournalism report, affect, construct, or cater to various truths?" "Is photojournalism an idealistic myth?" "Are the images *really* about good reportage, or are they about selling newspapers or air time and contributing to the profits of owners of news organizations?"

John Taylor makes similar arguments to those of Newton but focuses more on the meaning of death and foreign bodies in photojournalism. He states that the nature of photography lends credibility to eyewitness testimony, namely if it is photographed then it must be real.⁵⁵ Journalists make common-sense decisions about the content of photographs; again, this is a tremendous amount of power granted to a journalist or news organization. Taylor argues that journalists abide by codes that inform them as to what *can* (what is culturally acceptable) be seen, or what is appropriate in terms of displaying the body.⁵⁶ He brings to our attention that media is obsessed with horror simply because it is understood as being unusual.⁵⁷ When depicting disasters, bodies are generally absent or signified by spatters of blood. What about foreign bodies? Do the media treat 'homeland' bodies differently than foreign bodies? Taylor states that generally journalists tend to refrain from choosing pictures of westerners because

⁵⁴ All questions in this paragraph are from: Julianne Hickerson Newton. 2001, "The burden of visual truth: The role of photojournalism in mediating reality". Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Mahwah New Jersey.

⁵⁵ John Taylor. 1998. Body Horror. New York University Press. New York.

⁵⁶ In what capacity do journalists portray death or the body? In an email to the FCC I asked about the regulations concerning showing death, specifically I asked, "what can and cannot be shown in terms of bodily harm and death predominantly in newspapers and online news images. What are the standards? Or are they simply based on a generally known journalistic idea of what is appropriate?" Their response was, "Due to the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and federal law, the

FCC's authority to regulate the content of television programming is very limited and usually is tied to an explicit directive in federal law. For example, federal law directs the FCC to regulate, but not prohibit, "indecent" programming and to limit the amount of commercial matter in children's programming. There is no federal law or FCC rule, however, concerning the depiction of death or bodily harm in news casts. Rather, each TV station exercises its discretion concerning content. You may wish to contact the TV station directly to express your views. Images on the Internet generally are not subject to regulation."

⁵⁷ The phrase, 'if it bleeds it leads' embodies this news value.

'our' journalists regard 'our' bodies with more respect than the bodies of Others. According to Taylor, American media do address foreign death and death at home very differently.

Taylor exhibits how foreign bodies are used in news media to reinforce western ideas and culture rather than revealing the inter-workings of other cultures. Foreign bodies illustrate what we (meaning westerners) are not; they perpetuate stereotypes and reinforce 'Otherness'. He claims that foreign bodies support the dominant western understandings of the way of life in 'developing countries'. As Americans, he argues, we view them as being primitive, as belonging to a repulsive or nightmarish culture and as societies that are inherently more dangerous than ours. As Tuchman has articulated, representation is not just a matter of what is shown but who has the permission to look at it and to what effect.

Photojournalism, as Taylor explains, is viewed (in privileged societies) as being an art; this lends credibility to images despite the level of gruesomeness, gore or social/historical accuracy. Audiences often think that photos of individuals from developing countries are beautiful do to their artistic value and 'authentic' nature. Taylor writes, "The rhetoric of humanitarian aid to some degree requires the constant reproduction of abject images both as justification for intervention and as the necessary restatement of a basic difference between donors and recipients."⁵⁸ Taylor demonstrates how different methods of killing help reinforce westerners' understandings of 'just' types of killing and death. Unfortunately, the manifestation of such images (of death, desperation or disaster on foreign soil) does not cause humanitarian action by most western societies. Rather, these pictures are generally ineffective in enacting social change. As Susan Sontag explains, we become used to seeing these images to the point that they are not shocking and subsequently become commonplace.

Susan Sontag argues that words are *about* the world whereas pictures *are* the world itself. Photographs certify experience, causing images to be considered socially credible as an unbiased source of information, or resource

⁵⁸ John Taylor. 1998. Body Horror. New York University Press. New York. P. 136.

that uncovers the real. Sontag posits that images are disjointed and context-less snapshots of reality. She posits that photographs have no normative theme rather they are simply cropped fragments of reality with a postmodern kind of meaning. Sontag explains that photographs blur the line between real life and art. She uses the example of how Americans value photographs – how we keep old pictures and reproduce new ones – how we file them, catalogue them and then distribute them as if they were a type of capital or a currency. Sontag describes how photography reduces reality to a malleable object causing photographs to be used as a mechanism, or tool, in the process of unveiling reality.

Sontag maintains that we have become accustomed to seeing the world through photographs whereby images have come to constitute the world itself. Again, there is a considerable amount of power latent within photographs due to their ability to substitute reality. Sontag considers photographs to be superficial and plastic, whereby images reduce complex events to merely what can be seen. Carl Rollyson explains Sontag's idea that the function of photographs is to rob the world of substance. In addition to Sontag's compelling arguments regarding photographs, she makes a political economic argument that informs us how capitalism causes pictures to be used as commodities. She demonstrates that images are used by advertisers, politicians and the status quo (ultimately for profit) in order to promote consumption.⁵⁹

News frames how a situation is both reported about and visually represented. Rhetorically constructed situations demonstrate to consumers of news what happened, how it happened and who was involved. Lloyd Bitzer⁶⁰ argues that rhetorical discourse presupposes a rhetorical situation, whereby a situation must arise in order for rhetorical discourse to emerge. September 11th, President Clinton's sex scandal or the accusations made against Martha Stuart are all examples of situations that created the need for a public rhetorical

⁵⁹ My assumption is that she is using the word 'consumption' to include not only tangible products but also ideas and structures; effectively the consumption of culture.

⁶⁰ Lloyd F. Bitzer. *The Rhetorical Situation*. Printed in; *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory*, edited by John Louis Lucaites, Celeste Michelle Condit and Sally Caudill. 1999. A Division of Guilford Publications, Inc. New York. P.217-225.

response. Bitzer suggests that certain types of discourse arise because of a condition or situation that demands a rhetorical response.

Bitzer proposes that, “In short, rhetoric is a mode of altering reality, not by the direct application of energy to objects, but by the creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action.”⁶¹ Bitzer does not claim that situations can be constructed in just one way or that a ‘fitting response’ in terms of its content is always the same. Rather, he does state that there is a type of socially acceptable response that is demanded by certain situations. For example, after September 11th it would have been socially irresponsible and rhetorically taboo for President Bush *not* to address the Nation. This is not to propose that how a situation is rhetorically constructed is fixed; rather, the form or type of response is less malleable than the rhetorical construction of the situation. For example, Japanese internment camps (1942-1945) were rhetorically constructed as being a ‘day-camp’ for all Asian-Americans when, in reality, these camps were horrific; whereby, prisoners were forced to farm rough desert lands, live in unsanitary conditions and receive inadequate healthcare. The way that this situation was rhetorically constructed does not affect the simple need the situation created; that of an explanation by the U.S. government regarding the need for the ‘camps’. Bitzer posits that, “The situation controls the rhetorical response not the rhetor or persuasive intent. Just as a question controls the answer a situation controls a rhetorical response.”⁶² The manner by which journalists and producers of media perceive the situation significantly contributes to the final product or overall representation of a situation or event.⁶³

⁶¹ Lloyd F. Bitzer. The Rhetorical Situation. Printed in; Contemporary Rhetorical Theory, edited by John Louis Lucaites, Celeste Michelle Condit and Sally Caudill. 1999. A Division of Guilford Publications, Inc. New York.

⁶² Lloyd F. Bitzer. The Rhetorical Situation. Printed in; Contemporary Rhetorical Theory, edited by John Louis Lucaites, Celeste Michelle Condit and Sally Caudill. 1999. A Division of Guilford Publications, Inc. New York. P. 220.

⁶³ Bitzer posits that a rhetorical situation creates the need for a “fitting-response”; I argue that the criteria for a “fitting-response” are culturally determined.

Richard E. Vatz⁶⁴ disagrees with Bitzer's ontological perspective that situations exist in a fixed and objective reality. Vatz states, "Fortunately or unfortunately, meaning is not intrinsic in events, facts, people, or "situations" nor are facts "publicly observable."⁶⁵ Bitzer is not arguing that meaning is predetermined, un-malleable or *not* socially determined as Vatz argues. Bitzer does explain that situations are given meaning through culturally determined rhetoric. Vatz's idea that situations can be created is intriguing, but I argue that events cannot entirely be produced rather their aesthetic can be represented in countless ways. Unless a situation is completely fabricated or staged, an 'actual' or 'real' situation cannot be created (but it can be represented in many different fashions).

Vatz asserts that situations do not control the response, rather rhetoric controls the situation. Rhetoric can control or influence the framing of a situation, but as Bitzer puts forward, there needs to be a situation to begin with in order for rhetoric to control it. Vatz explains, "Thus rhetoric is a cause and not an effect of meaning."⁶⁶ I argue that Bitzer does not make the case that rhetoric does not cause meaning, but he (Bitzer) does maintain that meaning is somewhat contingent on the situation as well as society's perceived idea of a "fitting response"⁶⁷. My research is concerned with how situations of suicide bombing are visually constructed. I ask: how has the situation been both rhetorically and visually constructed?

Arguments about what constitutes the 'real' have been discussed amongst communication scholars and academics for centuries. Every person contributes a new way of thinking about the real because each individual has a different

⁶⁴ Richard E. Vatz. The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation Printed in; Contemporary Rhetorical Theory, edited by John Louis Lucaites, Celeste Michelle Condit and Sally Caudill. 1999. A Division of Guilford Publications, Inc. New York. 226-231.

⁶⁵ Richard E. Vatz. The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation Printed in; Contemporary Rhetorical Theory, edited by John Louis Lucaites, Celeste Michelle Condit and Sally Caudill. 1999. A Division of Guilford Publications, Inc. New York. P.228.

⁶⁶ Richard E. Vatz. The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation Printed in; Contemporary Rhetorical Theory, edited by John Louis Lucaites, Celeste Michelle Condit and Sally Caudill. 1999. A Division of Guilford Publications, Inc. New York. 229.

⁶⁷ Richard E. Vatz. The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation Printed in; Contemporary Rhetorical Theory, edited by John Louis Lucaites, Celeste Michelle Condit and Sally Caudill. 1999. A Division of Guilford Publications, Inc. New York.

ontological, epistemological and ideological understanding of the world. There are trends that can be observed in the way that people conceptualize reality, such as those who believe that there exists a stable and necessarily fixed reality, and those who argue that reality is subjective and conditional. My research is based on the latter of the two ideas about reality; namely, the subjective reality and the constructivist approach.

Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman claim that reality and knowledge are contextual and not fixed; reality is a series of constructs that are constantly being renegotiated by humans and different societal and institutional forces. Reality is based upon what constitutes knowledge in a society regardless of the validity or invalidity of its (the constructed knowledge) content. Berger and Luckman define knowledge as the interplay or relationship between society and knowledge illustrating the importance of media as the largest producer and disseminator of knowledge, in many societies. Whether one argues that media are immensely powerful in the formation of attitudes or inconsequential to the way one views the world, it is difficult to ignore the subtle and latent affects of media on the construction of our realities. Baudrillard⁶⁸ argues that an image of reality, a still photograph or a representation of something real, has come to constitute reality. He argues that we can no longer grasp the difference between a simulation of reality and reality itself. 'Simulacra'⁶⁹ has been substituted for reality whereby reality no longer relies on experience. Baudrillard illustrates the ambiguous line between reality and a mediated reality created not by personal experience but by the content of media. Similarly, Susan Sontag argues, "People themselves aspire to become images: celebrities. Reality has abdicated. There are only representations: media."⁷⁰

Understanding that media are influential in the construction of our realities make salient a clear idea of what media are, how they function and how they are produced. William A Gamson, David Croteau, William Hoynes and Theodore

⁶⁸ J. Baudrillard. 1988. Selected Writings, ed. Mark Poster. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

⁶⁹ 'Simulacra', as Baudrillard conceives of it, is the simulation of reality.

⁷⁰ Susan Sontag. 2003. Regarding the pain of others. Picador. New York. 109.

Sasson⁷¹ claim that there is a generic or general reality constructed through media. Ignoring the political economic factors that help create this reality does an injustice to understanding the nature of media and its effects. Gamson et al. claim that fewer and fewer corporations own the media, causing information to be compromised. Larger corporate interests of media organizations become the focus rather than journalistic integrity or accurate news reporting. The quality of information takes a backseat to corporate interests and profit margins. Homogeneity is one of the most visible byproducts of the corporatization of media and the commodification of information. Gamson et al. asserts, "The emergence of media conglomerates with a global market has led to an unprecedented integration of multiple media which can simultaneously market the same message in multiple forms through a dazzling array of new technologies."⁷²

Gamson et al.'s argument is an extension of what Max Horkheimer and Theodore W. Adorno⁷³ have previously argued about the culture industry⁷⁴. Horkheimer and Adorno suggest that media are uniform and lack differentiation in both aesthetic and in ideas. They claim that, "... for culture now impresses the same stamp on everything. Films, radio and magazines make up a system which is uniform as a whole and in every part."⁷⁵ Media, according to Horkheimer and Adorno in addition to Gamson et al., create a homogenous reality disseminated through many and increasing mediums. These authors would argue that increasing the number and *types* of mediums does not necessarily ensure a more accurate or credible array of information. Rather, new mediums are used to portray the same reality already being disseminated by other existing mediums. Media produced and disseminated on such a large

⁷¹ William A. Gamson, David Croteau, William Hoynes and Theodore Sasson. Media images and the social construction of reality. Annual Review of Sociology, Vol. 18 (1992), 373-393.

⁷² William A. Gamson, David Croteau, William Hoynes and Theodore Sasson. Media images and the social construction of reality. Annual Review of Sociology, Vol. 18 (1992), 375.

⁷³ Max Horkheimer & Theodore W. Adorno. (1994). Dialectic of enlightenment (J Cumming, Trans.) New York: Continuum.

⁷⁴ Corporate media or media with the intention of making money.

⁷⁵ Max Horkheimer & Theodore W. Adorno. (1994). Dialectic of enlightenment (J Cumming, Trans.) New York: Continuum. 121.

scale often goes unnoticed as being a significant contributor to the social construction of our realities. Gamson et al. explain, “And the special genius of this system is to make the whole process seem so normal and natural that the very art of social construction is invisible.”⁷⁶ Similarly, Horkheimer and Adorno speculate about the culture industry, “... ideology has been made vague and noncommittal, its almost scientific aversion from committing itself to anything which cannot be verified, acts as an instrument of domination.”⁷⁷

Reality is a social construction that relies heavily on media standards for both what and how an event becomes ‘real’. Baudrillard argues that “simulacra” has come to constitute reality; many scholars including Susan Sontag contend that photographs function in this same manner (i.e. photographs replace experience and, therefore, replace reality). Images can mediate, constitute and simulate a given reality. Therefore, images as Barthes maintains, can be read like a language or as text would be read in a newspaper. Photographs tell us about our reality, as well as other’s reality both in terms of the level of ‘realness’ of an event, and in terms of the aesthetic or type of reality associated with an occurrence or situation.

Toward the latter part of WWII communication scholars became interested in the diffusion of propaganda by media: how did Hitler convince hundreds of thousands of Germans to kill hundreds of thousands of Jews and other such ‘non-pure’ people?⁷⁸ Sontag⁷⁹ questions the extent to which media, specifically photographs, unite people or change their existing attitudes. She suggests, “The photographs are a means of making “real” (or “more real”) matters that the privileged and the merely safe might prefer to ignore.” She makes clear that photographs have immense power associated with them and recognizes that not all people are able to look at or to produce images. A good example of this is the

⁷⁶ William A. Gamson, David Croteau, William Hoynes and Theodore Sasson. Media images and the social construction of reality. Annual Review of Sociology, Vol. 18 (1992), 374.

⁷⁷ Max Horkheimer & Theodore W. Adorno. (1994). Dialectic of enlightenment (J Cumming, Trans.) New York: Continuum. 147.

⁷⁸ I understand that there were many that did not need any convincing my point is that media was influential during this time in both convincing American and British forces to step in and to convince Germans of the necessity of Hitler’s plan.

⁷⁹ Susan Sontag. 2003. Regarding the pain of others. Picador. New York.

manner that Americans consume news media; they learn what is happening to 'those people' 'over there' and have the luxury of ignoring a situation that does not infringe on their personal lives. Comparatively, with the exception of September 11th, the U.S. has not been under severe military threat for many years. Americans are generally removed from the direct effects of war; Sontag contends that it is a privilege to look at pictures of suicide bombing. Sontag explains, "Look, the photographs say, this is what it's like. This is what war *does*. And *that*, that is what it does, too."⁸⁰ Arguably, photographs of violence, war and atrocity have a much different affect on western viewers than on those living in developing countries: they (non-western societies) live it while privileged societies view it.

Agreeing with Stuart Hall, Sontag argues that captions inform the viewer about how to read pictures making it easy to reuse an image simply by changing the text. Photographs also function to reinforce existing attitudes or as a vehicle of propaganda. Dr. Laura Arpan⁸¹ suggests that textual or visual information is only propaganda if one does not agree with the message. Sontag would agree explaining that when atrocities are shown as having been instigated by one's own side, the images are discounted as being fake or propaganda. Yet, when an atrocity is tied with the enemy the viewer often says, 'see' what *they* are doing to us. Photographs continually negotiate what is considered real and what has been 'staged' for propaganda.

In addition to *how* photographs represent reality, images that are absent are also noteworthy. Sontag urges viewers to ask, "... what pictures, whose cruelties, whose deaths are *not* being shown."⁸² She continues by claiming that pictures have no language requirements thus making them more ubiquitous. Death is death, flesh is flesh and destruction is destruction. She is not arguing that every culture has the same ideas about life and death, rather she posits that journalistically images are intended potentially for all. Privileged viewers, Sontag puts forth, who have not experienced war personally are primarily dependent on

⁸⁰ Susan Sontag. 2003. Regarding the pain of others. Picador. New York. 8.

⁸¹ Studies in Persuasion Lecture; Florida State University, summer 05. Dr. Laura Arpan.

⁸² Susan Sontag. 2003. Regarding the pain of others. Picador. New York. 14.

images of war to create their reality. For privileged viewers the reality of war is 'simulacra'; it is a mediated reality and an interpretation or representation of an event rather than the 'real thing'. Sontag likens photographs to a proverb or a quotation due to its, "...quick way of apprehending something and a compact form of memorizing it."⁸³ Photographs are filed away in our minds and influence how we perceive future photographs. This cognitive process of memorizing images is how photographs come to have cultural significance and where McGee's 'ideograph' can help explain why one feels a certain way about a photo.⁸⁴

As previously mentioned, Sontag claims that photographs objectify or rob reality. Photographs of people and events become *things* that privileged viewers possess, introducing a paradox between a photo's ability to portray reality while simultaneously making an event 'unreal'. Journalistic images are often praised for 'looking real' or depicting a certain reality, but Sontag posits that while each image is judged in this manner its (the photograph's) function contradicts the standards by which it is lauded. It is not fair, Sontag would agree, to claim that images substitute reality because this is only true for privileged viewers; everyone is not a spectator. Those involved in such atrocities as war or terrorism do not have the luxury of patronizing reality, rather they live in a reality where these events actually happen. Similarly, Sontag maintains that pictures of atrocity become art when privileged people hang photographs on their walls. Again, the same contradiction arises in that the very reason why the photograph was selected to be displayed on the wall (i.e. authenticity) is exactly what the photograph is diminishing (i.e. the real or authentic experience the photo represents). To be clear, Sontag is not arguing that the affect of photographs is inconsequential or insignificant, rather she is addressing the issues of power and

⁸³ Susan Sontag. 2003. Regarding the pain of others. Picador. New York. 22.

⁸⁴ Groupings of feelings, attitudes and experiences are brought to each viewing of an image; this web of associations forms the basis for what we think about an image. For instance, a photograph of suicide bombers dressed in white sheets with white hoods might trigger the imagery of the KKK to many Americans thus paralleling slavery, ignorance and violence with suicide bombers.

privilege inherent in viewing photographs of atrocity. She argues that not everyone reacts to photographs of atrocity in the same way and that privileged viewers both use and create images for specific purposes.

Graham Clarke⁸⁵ agrees with Sontag and many others who assert that all readings of images are subjective. He urges viewers to 'read' a photograph not as a visual image but as a text, thus incorporating vague contradictions in meaning that exist between the reader and the text. This creates a 'photographic discourse' that consists of a code of meaning similar to Foucault's understanding of 'discourse' and McGee's conception of the ideograph. Clarke asserts that in the process of reading a text the viewer makes sense of previous memories recalling other images and personal experiences. This creates a collage of feeling and experience he defines as 'intertextuality'. This intertextuality or discourse is never an unbiased representation, rather it is always loaded with a given subjective reality or series of experiences. Clarke maintains that photographs are historical, aesthetic, cultural and subjective. Each photograph has a history and makes history simultaneously, thus images are read against a larger subjective backdrop. This backdrop informs us about how we feel about a photo in terms of what cultural concepts are represented in the image.

⁸⁵ Graham Clarke. 1997. The Photograph. Oxford; Oxford University Press.

RELATED STUDIES

How are atrocities visually represented? What repercussions arise due to these representations? How do images of atrocity affect collective memory? These questions, in addition to many others, form the basis of Barbie Zelizer's⁸⁶ work on the visual representation of the Holocaust. Zelizer problematizes the rhetorical function of Holocaust images both historically and currently. She questions what the affect is of media saturation on viewers. Have people become inoculated by the countless images of horror during WWII? She argues that we see so many images of the Holocaust that often we become desensitized to images of atrocity. Zelizer maintains that there is a desperate disconnect between atrocities that happen around the world and the forces that contribute to them.⁸⁷ Zelizer asserts, "The repetition of the same few images has disturbingly brought with it their radical decontextualization from their original context of production and reception."⁸⁸ She asks what the affect is of reproducing the same few images out of the more than 2 million. Perhaps because media have become greatly corporatized, a small number of images are now being produced by fewer and fewer sources. Thus, smaller more independent news outlets become dependant on buying images from large media corporations in order to save company resources such as time and money.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Barbie Zelizer. 2000. Visual Culture and the Holocaust. Rutgers University Press; New Brunswick, New Jersey.

⁸⁷ This is noteworthy considering that as Americans we are cognizant that we are the most powerful country in the world; why then do we forget our influence, control or interaction with other governments, societies and atrocities?

⁸⁸ Barbie Zelizer. 2000. Visual Culture and the Holocaust. Rutgers University Press; New Brunswick, New Jersey. 217-218.

⁸⁹ How have larger news outlets such as Reuters and the Associated Press affected the visual construction of suicide bombing?

Understanding that media contribute to the creation of our realities reveals the importance of visual images on a viewer's memory. The cognitive process of associating past images with current images makes salient memories of how an event is constructed rhetorically. Due to this process, feelings and attitudes are defined and redefined when reading a photograph. Zelizer states, "Beyond recognizing that they [photographs] continually free scenes in our minds and serve as building blocks to remembering, we do not yet fully understand how images help us remember, particularly in circumstances we do not experience personally."⁹⁰ When individuals rely solely on others' accounts of an event in addition to the imagery perpetuated by media to inform them about an event, history is constructed rhetorically rather than personally. The visual rhetoric of Nazi concentration camps spread around the world caused the event to become real to those who were not personally involved. Due to this dissemination of war images photographs created awareness about the atrocity occurring in Europe. Essentially, these images recorded what was unbelievable to many. Pictures of thousands of boots, Jewish passports, locks, prison cells and Nazi ovens circulated around the world raising the question: when and how do images affect viewer's willingness to act mentally or physically address an issue?

Cori E. Dauber⁹¹ argues that images of war affect the way that governments make decisions. Dauber examines images of American POWs and casualties during Desert Storm in the Persian Gulf, the U.S. participation in UN operations in Mogadishu, Somalia, Operation Restore Hope and NATO's war with Serbia. He begins his study with the observation that news images are read as evidence rather than as representation. Viewers often accept news images at face value rather than realizing that news photographs are both *produced* and function as a representation of an event and not as an objective reflection of the actual event.

⁹⁰ Barbie Zelizer. 1998. Remembering to Forget. The University of Chicago Press; Chicago, London. 2.

⁹¹ Cori E. Dauber. 2001. The shots seen 'Round the World': The impact of the Images of Mogadishu on American Military Operations. *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*. Vol. 4, No. 4, p. 653-687.

Dauber agrees with Barthes and Hall that images are like a language. He brings to light a photograph's ability to argue for itself, photographs *are* arguments. These arguments contribute to the construction of an event for a given society. Events such as the Civil Rights Movement, the O.J. Simpson trial or September 11th each have certain iconographic representations, visual symbolism and a specified aesthetic associated with them. Dauber posits that unlike words that are read literally, images are taken "at once". This often hinders the viewer's critical eye or, "... space with which to approach them [photographs]".⁹² This lack of critical judgment causes viewers to treat images as objective evidence often thinking of photographs as reality itself. Photographs reveal what 'really happened' but we often forget that what 'really happened' could hypothetically be represented in a variety of different manners. Therefore, events have the possibility of being framed in infinite ways due to the inherent limitations of photographs. There is no one fixed representation of an event.

Dauber claims that viewing images is a form of witnessing; for example, at the moment one looks at a photograph they can attest to witnessing or knowing about an event. Often this 'knowing about an event' is dependant on how the text of an image informs the viewer about how to read it (the photograph). Agreeing with Hall, Dauber suggests that captions force a specific meaning on the viewer and essentially define the situation depicted in the image. Dauber states that rhetoric is powerful in influencing policy due to a photograph's ability to substitute reality. For example, photographs of Americans torturing Iraqi prisoners in Saddam Hussein's prison, Abu Ghraib, began circulating which created the necessity for a response from President Bush. This situation seriously jeopardizes whether or not people are supportive of President Bush and his war against Iraq. President Bush's response to this situation is a crucial factor affecting whether or not people will vote for him in the 2004 election. This imagery of torture made real what was unimaginable to many. The torture

⁹² Cori E. Dauber. 2001. The shots seen 'Round the World': The impact of the Images of Mogadishu on American Military Operations. *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*. Vol. 4, No. 4, p. 656.

happening in Abu Ghraib became real when numerous photographs surfaced and began circulating throughout the west.

Carolyn Marvin and Jessica Fishman analyze 21 years of front-page photographs of the News York Times intending to answer the question of how and why different groups are habitually portrayed as being violent while other groups, namely the dominant group that created the cultural text, portray themselves in a less violent manner. This study concludes that *explicit* violence is associated with non-US groups whereas *latent* violence is coupled with dominant groups in the US. The authors rely on social identity theory, which states that groups compare themselves to other groups “on dimensions that cast a positive light on themselves”. Fishman and Marvin explain that social identity theory helps demonstrate why newspaper photographs portray non-US individuals as being explicitly violent while concealing the violence caused by Americans. They report a significant relationship between latent violence and Americans. Explicit violence is perceived as being easily recognizable, whereas latent violence communicates a more moderate, understandable or ‘justifiable’ violence. The number of times non-US groups commit violent acts⁹³ is less than that of violent activity associated with groups from the US. Yet the acts of non-US groups proved to be explicitly violent thus making non-US groups seem like vicious aggressors.

Michael Griffin and Jongsoo Lee⁹⁴ conduct a content analysis of 1,104 images of war in Time, Newsweek and U.S. News & World Report during “Desert Storm”. They discover that the majority of photographs portray themes of military and weapons technology. They ask, “What images of the conflict did the public actually see?”⁹⁵ More specifically, they question what images came to typify the Gulf War. They explain that war images lacked the dramatic imagery that

⁹³ To be clear, the number of times newspapers report about non-U.S. groups committing violent crimes, not the actual amount of crimes committed.

⁹⁴ Michael Griffin & Longsoo Lee. 1995. Picturing the Gulf War: Constructing an Image of War in Time, Newsweek, and U. S. News & World Report. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*. Vol. 72. No. 4.

⁹⁵ Michael Griffin & Longsoo Lee. 1995. Picturing the Gulf War: Constructing an Image of War in Time, Newsweek, and U. S. News & World Report. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*. Vol. 72. No. 4. p. 813.

previous wars have been associated with. Accordingly, they argue that war-photojournalism has conditioned viewers to expect a certain amount and type of imagery pertaining to human sacrifice.

During the Gulf War the media claimed that they were giving a comprehensible report of the war, Griffin and Lee argue that due to the many pictures that were *not* seen during the war, the media were offering contradictory claims. The types of photographs not seen were pictures of non-U.S. allied military casualties, public demonstrations against the war in coalition member nations, pictures of civilian wartime life in Saudi Arabia and Iraqi troops in general. They conclude that there is a lack of actual combat activity being visually reported. Griffin and Lee report that news images emphasize military hardware and generic military graphics rather than actual military activity. The photographs promoted the American military's technological dominance while down playing the loss of life during war. Griffin and Lee argue that these images are context-less, rarely depicting the social/cultural circumstances in Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Also noteworthy is the relative uniformity amongst the images. Griffin and Lee suggest that uniformity is due to longstanding ideas about what news *is*. They posit that the homogenization of war imagery is due to a general journalistic understanding about war-illustration.

Similarly, David Perlmutter⁹⁶ analyses visual representations of "others"⁹⁷ in a secondary school history textbook in order to gain a better understanding of how visual representation affects historiography and collective memory. He focuses his study on the rhetorical construction of the Holocaust and reports that the textbook tends to dichotomize issues often portraying American and British troops as the hero and "Nazis" as the sole villain.⁹⁸ Perlmutter asks; how do photographs visually construct the Holocaust? He also questions how the

⁹⁶ David D. Perlmutter. 1997. Re-Visions of the Holocaust: Textbook Images and Historical Myth-Making. The Howard Journal of Communications. Vol. 8. p. 151-159.

⁹⁷ Perlmutter describes "others" as being those who are not part of mainstream European-derived culture.

⁹⁸ Perlmutter illustrates the complexity of WWII and wonders why the accuracy or content is compromised in order to ensure a positive portrayal of American and British soldiers. Nazi's in effect were visually scapegoated in the textbook, in a sense because they were *not* the only 'bad guys'. Rhetorical scapegoating?

Holocaust is seen and how it should be seen? Perlmutter asks, “Specifically, what visual images of the Holocaust exist and how are they used, to what ends and with what meaning?”⁹⁹ Perlmutter claims that we use images to define others and ourselves making photographs of heroes and villains pertinent to defining one’s own identity. Perlmutter maintains that absence is significant yet rarely conspicuous unless a reader is aware of other possibilities. Perlmutter demonstrates, “The visual allocation of the blame solely on the “Nazis” for the Holocaust may be an illustration not of ignorance but of how textbooks, to avoid controversy, make simplistic good and bad distinctions, with the ranks of the bad being as few as possible.”¹⁰⁰ The textbook fails to delve into the complexity of WWII and unsuccessfully illustrates that the Holocaust was not a one-man or one-party event. The textbook omitted the fact that many members of the American government and press were willing to accept the atrocities happening throughout Europe. Perlmutter posits that editors of textbooks like to bring to light lessons about life and brotherhood when offering information about a historical event. Accordingly, conflict, war and violence are to be seen as dysfunctional events rather than as being causal by militaries or other forces.

The aforementioned studies introduce the visual gap with respect to rhetorical analyses of suicide bombing in online news. Each researcher offers insight into recent studies conducted on war-photojournalism and images of Others. This body of work raises questions about public memory, the visual perpetuation of dominant ideology and the effects of images on the mind. The study of visual text introduces many rhetorical elements (such as visual memory and visual association) that remain untouched by the academic community. While there is an ample amount of work conducted on visual rhetoric, visual persuasion and the impact of images on viewers (usually advertising based), it is not as extensive as that of written rhetoric. The next section offers both an

⁹⁹ David D. Perlmutter. 1997. Re-Visions of the Holocaust: Textbook Images and Historical Myth-Making. *The Howard Journal of Communications*. Vol. 8. p. 151.

¹⁰⁰ David D. Perlmutter. 1997. Re-Visions of the Holocaust: Textbook Images and Historical Myth-Making. *The Howard Journal of Communications*. Vol. 8. p. 155.

analysis of my data in addition to a discussion about how the theory presented can help explain the empirical research.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

I collected my data beginning on May 11th of 2004 and ended my data collection on June 11th of 2004. I compared and contrasted five different suicide bombing events, May 8th in Karachi, May 9th in Baghdad, May 19th also in Baghdad, May 22 in the West Bank and June 8th again in Baghdad. I gathered a total of 181 images and roughly 500 websites, which revealed that the majority of online stories lack visual representation entirely.¹⁰¹ I collected all available images and recorded the news outlet, the date of the story and both the caption under the picture (if there was one) and the title of the article. Each of these recorded elements was later considered for the analysis. I observed themes and trends in representation and coded images into six units: military, maps/filler graphic, governmental officials, people in devastated landscapes, death and miscellaneous.¹⁰² The process of coding consisted of viewing each photograph at a basic level whereby I observed and recorded what elements of the situation were being photographed. I asked, "What everyday objects are present in the photographs?" I recorded whether or not there were people depicted in the images and if so what type of person (i.e. male, female, child, living, dead, soldier

¹⁰¹ Again, I used the 'and more' feature on Google news which enabled me to view many different news outlets' visual reportage of each of the five bombing instances. I cataloged all the available images from each news outlet. Each image was then printed and pasted on a sheet of paper with the image, title of the story, news outlet, whether or not the photo originated by Reuters or the AP, the date of the story and the caption under the image. After collecting all 181 images I began coding. Codes, as explained by Thomas R. Lindlof and Bryon C. Taylor are, "The linkages between the data and the categories posited by the researcher." (Thomas R. Lindlof and Brian C. Taylor. 2002. Qualitative Communication Research Methods. Sage Publications, Inc., Thousand Oaks California.) They also explain that the purpose of coding is to indicate units of text as they relate to categories. Lindlof and Taylor describe categories as general phenomena, concepts, constructs and themes. Therefore, coding informs categorization. Coding is a form of organizing, whereas categorization functions on a more theoretical or explanatory level.

¹⁰² Refer to Table 1. Coding.

or civilian). After this initial step I used the five¹⁰³ coding units to formulate my final categories (concepts or constructs) which consisted of military as creator of harmony; suicide bombing as the primary cause of death; terrorism as the main source of destruction; the official (governmental) responses to terrorism takes precedence over civilian responses and computer generated graphics as the product of journalistic/occupational convenience.

I rely on Grounded Theory in order to code images into larger theoretical categories. Grounded theory is based on an inductive form of reasoning whereby an object, unit of thought or single coding unit can help explain a broader cultural phenomenon.¹⁰⁴ Through the process of coding and categorizing I made two main observations that: there is little visual variety among news sources and that suicide bombing is visually constructed as being a cause and not an effect of conflict. These two primary observations are supported by each of the coding units and subsequent categories. The succeeding pages concentrate on the characteristics of each coding unit, in addition to discussing broader theoretical ideas in relation to what these units suggest relative to online news visual representation of suicide bombing.

Twenty-three images or 13% of the total images were coded as being part of 'military' photographs. Pictures of tanks and military personnel from American, Israeli and various other militia forces are included in this section. Figure 3. illustrates an image characteristic for the military coding unit. The tank in figure 3. is *not* active in the respect that the photograph does not show movement or activity. For example, there are no people running from the tank, which would indicate that the tank is in fact moving. The general lack of action in this coding unit proved to be a common trend among the 23 photographs. Stationary military personnel, as well as motionless military equipment, came to typify this coding unit.

¹⁰³ I used 5 coding units to inform my broader categories instead of 6 because the final unit is miscellaneous. There are 8 images coded as miscellaneous and there is no visually observable trend other than the fact that they do not have general commonalities with other units.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas R. Lindlof and Brian C. Taylor. 2002. Qualitative Communication Research Methods. Sage Publications, Inc., Thousand Oaks California, p.218-222.

Table 1. Coding

Coding:	Percentage of total images: Rounded percentage of total images:	Number of images:
Military:	.1270718232 13%	23
Maps/Filler Graphic:	.1104972376 11%	20
Governmental Officials:	.1767955801 18%	32
People in Devastated Landscapes:	.4254143646 42%	77
Death:	.1160220994 12%	21
Miscellaneous:	.044198895 4%	8

According to Barbie Zelizer there is a vast disconnect between an atrocity and the forces that contribute to it (the atrocity). Byway of illustrating motionless military personnel and equipment, militaries are generally framed or are given the aesthetic of being stabilizers rather than aggressors. According to David Perlmutter, aggressors become villains in a situation and stabilizers become heroes. If militaries are framed as *reacting* (after the atrocity has occurred) to an atrocity, rather than as having *previously contributed* to the violent situation, it is not rhetorically possible for militaries to be antagonists. Military forces are visually depicted as simply addressing a situation that was made horrific by another force. The disconnect between atrocity and the forces that create them stem from photojournalism's tendency to dichotomize issues into heroes and villains. Militaries cannot rhetorically have contributed to an atrocity because they are framed as reactors not as instigators. Media tend not to allow any one force to have both contributed and reacted to an atrocity simultaneously. Essentially, militaries are framed as heroes and terrorists are constructed as the

villain despite the fact that both parties commit violent acts against innocent civilians.

Had these images been of military force, aggression or simple activity, the mental association between militaries and violence might be stronger. As Graham Clark has brought to light, we create a 'photographic discourse' in our minds that calls upon our past experiences in addition to recalling other photographs we have previously viewed. The mental association or discourse that occurs when we view an image informs us about how we feel about a situation, group of people or concept (such as terrorism or the act of suicide bombing). If concepts of harmony, inactivity and guidance are visually linked to militaries it can be argued that these 23 images frame militaries as necessarily positive or helpful forces rather than aggressive entities.

As Susan Sontag brings to our attention, photographs are cropped fragments of reality. What lies beyond the frame is a mystery and is left up to the imagination. The circumstances that exist before, or happen as a result of the situation, are vague and exemplify the inherent limitations of a photograph's ability to portray *all* aspects of a situation. What *is* shown of the situation is what becomes significant. Stuart Hall claims that captions and titles of stories inform the viewer about how to make sense of an image. Referring to figure 3., the title focuses on the 'news-worthy' or 'spectacular' aspects (the gun battle and Sharon's plan) of the situation whereas; the image portrays unmoving military equipment. If, as Bitzer posits, situations can be rhetorically and visually constructed in countless ways, it is possible that this image could be substituted by a different image. Perhaps this picture could have illustrated the result of the gun battles or offered a glimpse into the circumstances that created such violence. The military coding unit demonstrates the tame nature of militaries and emphasizes their ability to help correct violent situations.



Figure 3. Israeli Tank

This image is from the Daily Star (Lebanon) posted on May 22, 2004. The title of the story reads, “Gun Battles erupt in Rafah as Sharon Unveils Revised Gaza Withdrawal Plan”.

Photographs coded as military lack ‘action’ in the respect that military personnel and military equipment are rarely depicted ‘doing’ anything. Photographs of soldiers controlling or stabilizing situations is a common trend among the 23 images. Soldiers guiding people and leading civilians to secure areas came to typify this coding unit. Figure 4. portrays two Israeli soldiers instructing an unknown person, group of individuals or vehicle to stop. They are shown standing on an unoccupied road securing and directing; essentially aiding in the stabilization of the situation. The soldier with his left hand in the air (motioning for the approaching group to stop) illustrates one of the more active poses of military personnel out of the 23 photographs.



Figure 4. Israeli Soldiers

This image is from the International Press Release (Palestine) posted on May 22, 2004. The title of the story reads, “Gaza Strip Humanitarian Situation at the Brink of Collapse”.

As represented in figure 5., the U.S. soldier is standing conversing lightheartedly with an Iraqi civilian; neither party is acting aggressively and

neither one seems adverse to the other's presence (as evidenced by the smile on each of their faces). Many of the military images depict soldiers interacting peacefully with civilians; whereby soldiers are often portrayed simply standing around, waiting, or relaxing in a friendly atmosphere. Only 6 out of the 23 images depict military force or military aggression. Two of these 6 images are the same picture of a young boy throwing an object at an Israeli tank with its gun aimed at the boy. Therefore, there are only 4 distinct photographs that display military aggression.



Figure 5. US Soldier with Iraqi Civilian

This image is from GEO World (US) posted on June 7, 2004. The title of the story reads, "Nine Iraqi Militias Agree to Disarm".

Figure 6. demonstrates a young boy throwing an object at a tank with the tank's gun aimed at the boy. This image brings to our attention the disharmony between soldiers and civilians that is often synonymous with military occupation. The boy is aggressively rather than playfully throwing an object at an intimidating piece of military equipment. The position of the gun on the tank expresses the serious and destructive nature of the tank's intended use. Figure 6. exemplifies one of the few images of military aggression in addition to revealing the disharmony that often exists between civilians and military forces. Similarly, figure 7. reveals actual activity of military personnel while the majority of images ignore this factor. The photograph displays a soldier engaging in shooting a missile; this picture is also evidence that journalists, given the right circumstances (namely that they are not in direct danger), are able to capture military action as it happens. Figure 7. offers an intimate portrait of the activities

in which militaries engage, rather than the portrayal of harmony that results from military action or occupation.



Figure 6. Boy Throwing Object at Tank

This image is from Xposed.com (US) and was posted on May 22, 2004. The title of the story reads, "Child Killed in Rafah: Incursion Ongoing". This image is also used by Al-Bawaba Middle East News (Middle East) and was posted on May 23, 2004. The title of the story reads, "After Six Days of Siege: Israeli Troops Move Out from Rafah Neighborhood".



Figure 7. Military action

This image is from Channel News Asia (Singapore) and Posted on May 23, 2004. The title reads, "Israel Says Rafah Raid to End in Few Days, Sharon Unveils New Gaza Plan".

I argue that suicide bombing is visually constructed as being a cause and not an effect of destruction. While militaries help in aiding desperate or violent situations suicide terrorists act as individual catalysts to devastation. As both Zelizer and Hall have maintained, the circumstances with which the bomber exists or how the situation initially developed, is void from news stories and their corresponding visual representation. There is a rhetorical presence of the forces that respond to terrorism, whereas there is little to no visual representation of the suicide terrorist or the environment in which he or she lives. The images, which I coded as military do not only, have similar elements within the frame, they also

help to illustrate a broader more theoretical phenomenon: that of militaries¹⁰⁵ as the sole creator of harmony in situations of terrorism. Suicide bombings are rhetorically constructed as causing terrible situations, whereas militaries visually address and improve devastating circumstances

Collectively, military photographs lack descriptiveness with respect to suicide attacks. There are images of tanks, but the tanks are rarely 'doing' anything; they simply sit in a particular landscape not moving or shooting or blowing up targets. It might be difficult for a journalist to capture this type of action, but what about capturing the aftermath of the destruction of military tanks¹⁰⁶? Arguably, there are only 3 out of the total 23 images that are 'shocking' or visually disturbing. Military photographs tend to depict the banalities of terrorism rather than the sensational, which is ironic considering the journalistic ideal that shocking 'footage' is preferred over day-to-day occurrences. We see pictures of devastated landscapes, but the destruction is rarely described (by either the title or the caption) as being caused by an army or military. Destruction is visually represented as being caused ultimately by a suicide bomber or terrorist rather than previously existing social/cultural circumstances. Subsequent military action is visually constructed as being a *reaction* and not a cause. Regardless of whether or not military occupation is part of the reason for a suicide attack, the responsibility for destruction lies on the single suicide terrorist.

Military photographs illustrate the harmonious relationship between powerful militaries and innocent civilians and ignore the struggle that often exists between these two groups. Few images portray either death caused by militaries or destruction caused by civilian backlash. There are also few images of the

¹⁰⁵ Developed nations tend to have strong militaries and developing countries often do not have a formal military presence. I do not specify which militaries I am referring to specifically, but it can be assumed that the militaries that I refer to are those of necessarily privileged or economically prosperous societies.

¹⁰⁶ One of my coding units focuses on the landscape destruction caused by suicide terrorism (and subsequent or previous military occupation), but this destruction is visually constructed as being primarily caused by terrorism and not by military action. I want to make clear that destruction is visually represented but the blame tends to lie on the single suicide terrorist rather than on military forces.

inharmonious relationship that often exist between civilians and military personnel. With the exception of the few photographs that portray military action or aggression, military images have no intrigue. They do not pull you in or pique your interest because many of the photographs are of a group of soldiers standing around; what is sensational about that?

Perhaps these images could have easily been glossed over because we, as viewers, have become so used to seeing this type of military monotony. Tanks, artillery and men dressed in military attire *not* being active, comprise the visual representation of a necessarily destructive act. The photographs function to reinforce what we already know about militaries: militaries occupy areas in order to secure and to protect people not to be aggressors against people. This is a deadly misconception in that militaries, regardless of intent, are destructive. Essentially, these images do not depict the rhetorical military force fundamental to war: destruction and acts of terrorism. These images also function to disguise the disgust and atrocity caused by large militaries while bringing to the forefront the destructive nature of suicide bombing. While it is true that soldiers spend a substantial amount of time relaxing, standing around or conversing with 'locals', there is still a strong news value about showing the spectacular. These images contradict news values by not representing the destructive nature of conflict. The fact that there *is* time spent in the ways that the images show should not take away from reporting about the destruction caused by suicide bombing, war or military occupation. Negating the horror, killing or aggression carried out by armies, frames military occupation, suicide bombing and war as something commonplace rather than as something terrible.

Eleven percent of the images are coded as being 'maps or filler graphics'. This coding unit includes computer generated maps and arial views of various locations where suicide bombings have taken place. These images function to teach the viewer where a specific suicide attack has occurred or to offer a clear idea of what an area looks like. These graphics are computer generated (not all

but most) and tend not to be very detailed.¹⁰⁷ Figure 8. displays a graphic of Pakistan and is characteristic of the maps and filler graphic coding unit.



Figure 8. Computer Generated Graph of Pakistan

This graphic is from CBS News (US) posted on May 8, 2004. The title reads, “Shiite Mosque Bombed in Pakistan”.

Gaye Tuchman addresses the bureaucratic and professional aspects of journalism and photojournalism bringing to light the rapid pace with which a story must be written, illustrated and disseminated.¹⁰⁸ I argue that computer generated graphics are a product of the professional process of news making: namely that computer graphics are both easy and cost effective to produce.¹⁰⁹ Graphics can be easily made, they are not labor intensive and they can be cataloged for future use. In addition to addressing the professional aspects of news making, Tuchman demonstrates how ‘news’ ascribes different ideological traits to events, individuals and places (this observation is exemplified by the maps and filler graphic coding unit). More specifically, the visual link between various places (Pakistan for example in figure 8.) and certain concepts (such as terrorism) is produced by graphics such as Figure 8. It is true that a suicide bombing did happen on May 8, 2004 in Karachi Pakistan, but visually illustrating where Pakistan is located in relation to other nations creates a visual or rhetorical link or discourse between Pakistan and terrorism. Computer generated graphics

¹⁰⁷ These maps display major cities and country borders.

¹⁰⁸ This process is done rapidly considering that news WebPages are updated multiple times daily.

¹⁰⁹ Cost effective in the respect that news organizations do not need to send a reporter overseas in order to display a graphic with a news story.

function to reinforce this conceptual link between acts of violence and a certain country or region of the world.

John Taylor exhibits that images of foreign bodies reinforce Otherness or the idea that one's culture is inherently less dangerous than the culture highlighted in the news. Arguably, this process of associating violence or danger with foreign bodies is the same process that connects places with certain events.¹¹⁰ Taylor states that being able to 'see' (or as Sontag argues, making something real or more real) the location where a suicide attack has taken place, causes viewers to think that other cultures are intrinsically more dangerous than their own.¹¹¹ For example, figure 8. offers a clear image of where Karachi is in relation to India, Islamabad and Afghanistan, yet aside from visually stressing where the bombing took place, the graphic does not illustrate any other details of the event. Unlike an actual photograph of a situation, a computer graphic does not crop or cut out surrounding imagery; rather graphics are pointed, specific and seek to display one aspect of an occurrence. When photographers take a picture they aim their cameras in order to capture a certain angle, aesthetic or portion of a broader situation.¹¹² Whereas, individuals that create computer generated graphics (CGG) are cognizant that they will be highlighting only *one* aspect of an event. The point is that CGGs are produced from an already existing notion of the function of the image (i.e. to show where a bombing has happened), whereas photographs (despite the intent of the photographer) are necessarily incomplete fragments of a larger phenomenon.

¹¹⁰ A good example of this phenomenon is when people discuss the Southern rejoin of the United States as being backward or 'behind the times' due to the regions' history of slavery and overt racial discrimination. Often without thinking people associate the South with people who are racist despite the fact that comparatively schools in the South are more integrated than schools in stereotypically more progressive states such as California and New York.

¹¹¹ While each reading of an image is subjective, as Graham Clarke has stated, there are observable trends with respect to audience reception of a news story (and corresponding visual representation). The reception aspect, while not the primary focus of this paper, is difficult to avoid considering one of the main purposes of photographs, which is to be viewed. A future study, as suggested by Dr. Marilyn J. Young, where subjects view a news photograph and describe the 'story' or what has happen in the photo would be a useful way to understand what exactly these images 'do' to viewers.

¹¹² I am not claiming that some photographers do not intend to capture the entire breath of a situation, but I do argue, along with Susan Sontag, that photographs are only fragments of a larger phenomenon. By virtue of being a photograph, the entire scope of a situation cannot be represented; rather portions of an event or situation can be visually represented.

William Gamson, David Croteau, William Hoynes and Theodore Sasson bring to our attention that fewer and fewer corporations own media organizations. Gamson et. al claims that the corporatization of media causes a shift in the focus of media organizations from accurate news reporting or journalistic integrity to larger corporate interests. While I do agree with Gamson et al's argument, I also think that the nature of Internet news is immensely influential in shaping how a news story is produced. News organizations update their WebPages multiple times daily, therefore the Internet adds a new element to the process of news making; that of speed. For example, many of the news stories that I recorded had very little text sometimes with only three sentences, which constituted a complete news story. These brief news reports are evidence that an online piece can easily be created and disseminated in a short amount of time. Therefore, there tends to be little detail about an event expressed in the text of many online news stories. Often what *does* constitute a news report is the minimal response to the 'who, what, when, where, why and how' questions. Out of the total 500 websites I gathered for my sample, only 181 of them contained graphics (real pictures or CGGs); therefore, less than half (36.2%) offered visual representation of an event. The lack of visual rhetoric could be evidence that using a graphic¹¹³ or picture is generally more labor intensive than providing a text only story. Thus, news organizations use fewer illustrated stories as compared with text only stories.

Figure 9. demonstrates how news images are reproduced and used for a variety of different news stories. Aljazeera consistently offers the same series of three images: one of the globe, a map of the Gaza Strip and an actual photograph of the apartheid wall around Palestine. These three images constitute most of the images coded as maps and filler graphics. Each of these pictures appears on Aljazeera's Web page occasionally accompanied by other relevant photographs more specific to the story. Many of the stories with the three basic Aljazeera graphics do not directly correspond with either the content

¹¹³ As previously stated, CGGs are generally easier to produce. I also want to bring to light that many news organizations have stock footage (real pictures catalogued for future use). Stock footage is also an option when creating visual representation to accompany an online news story.

or the title of the written story. Aljazeera and many other news organizations have the ability to create numerous news reports with graphics simply by reproducing a previously used image.¹¹⁴ Each of the graphics in figure 9. are not specific to the subject of the report about a Palestinian girl having been killed in Rafah. The Ariel view of the parted wall around Palestine and the computer generated map of the Gaza Strip pertain to the story because Rafah is a town in both Palestine and the Gaza Strip, yet these same graphics are used for countless other stories. In effect, figure 9. demonstrates how stock images are used for multiple stories that often do not directly relate to the particular story in which they illustrate.

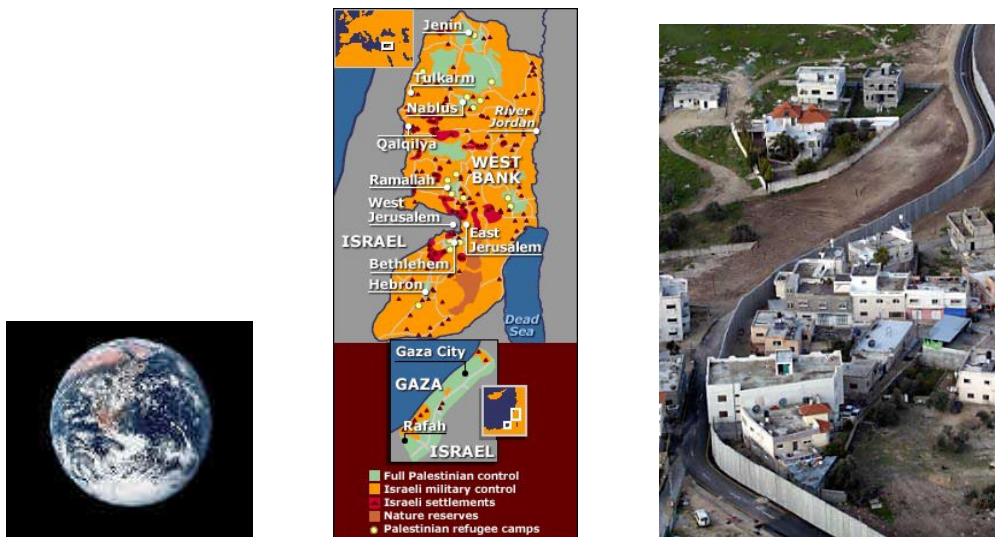


Figure 9. Aljazeera's Standard Three Images

These graphics are from Aljazeera (Middle East) posted on May 23 2004. The title of the online story reads, "Israeli Troops Kill Palestinian Girl in Rafah".

CGGs are the result of the professional aspects of news making, the corporatization of news organizations and the forces the Internet, as a medium, imposes on the visual representation of news stories. The coding unit of maps or filler graphics translates into a broader concept of CGGs as being a product of

¹¹⁴ Aljazeera was the only news outlet that consistently used the same three graphics for a variety of stories. These images have come to represent Aljazeera similar to a logo.

journalistic/occupational convenience. This category¹¹⁵ exemplifies elements of the Internet, as a medium, that contribute to the creation of a cultural text. The technical process of news making clearly forces rules, such as the rapid dissemination of information on the production of news reports. Using the Internet as a news medium causes news organizations to abide by already existing notions of the amount of time it 'should' take in order to produce and distribute a news story. The Internet, because it has the ability to access a variety of information faster than any other medium, imposes its simple *ability to access* on the process of news making. To be clear, the Internet does not cause news organizations to create and circulate information faster because the medium needs this process in order to function. Rather, the Internet provides the ability for news organizations to access information quickly, yet this aspect is a *function* of the Internet and not a *prerequisite* for its use as a medium. In essence, news organizations use the Internet in order to spread information at a rapid pace. Maps and filler graphics provide a quick and easy way to illustrate news stories without sending a journalist to the scene or overseas. These graphics are easy to both produce and reuse making them attractive to many news organizations.

The third coding unit is that of 'governmental officials and political figures'. There are 32 images in this coding unit comprising 18% of the total photographs. Within this coding unit there is no visual representation of women, exemplifying that 18% of the total images are purely of men.¹¹⁶ Pictures of men in business suits, men at UN meetings or men addressing other groups of men characterize this coding unit, an exemplar is figure 10. These images depict governmental

¹¹⁵ The category of CGGs as the product of journalistic/occupational convenience.

¹¹⁶ This finding supports the stereotype of women as being fundamentally less rational than men. This grouping of images portrays a diplomatic, rational and morally commendable response to terrorism – that of in-depth discussion and the sharing of ideas. It is true that fewer women than men hold these types of positions, yet this fact also demonstrates societal stereotypes about women's inherent lack of ability to make rational decisions. Women are shown in other coding units gathering belongings, showing emotion and tending to their children; these roles do not challenge the mainstream notion that women are naturally better in roles that do not revolve around official, rational decision-making. Therefore instinctual decision-making is less valued in many societies as compared to seemingly rational processes of decision-making. These images do not challenge the stereotype that women are better fit to carry out more domestically oriented tasks as opposed to politically oriented, male-dominated careers.

action whereby many of the photographs are of men with their mouths open as if they are in the midst of speaking. The formal attire of the men in addition to the formal settings in which they function, demonstrate the official nature of these photographs.

The serious expressions (i.e. not smiling) on their faces illustrate the importance of a terrorist situation to these men. The men are *not* shown laughing or playfully joking with one another, rather their facial expressions, dress and settings in which they speak communicate the serious nature of their discussion. This type of imagery is in accordance with the aesthetic previously perpetuated by many news organizations. Griffin and Lee claim that we have come to expect a certain amount and type of imagery pertaining to war or atrocity. Similarly, I posit that news media construct many aesthetics or archetypical ways of representing various groups of people (governmental officials) or types of stories (i.e. terrorism). This unspoken way of representing a phenomenon or group affects how all other events or individuals within the same genera (terrorism, for example, or governmental officials) are visually represented. My research indicates that news organizations tend to represent the notion of government in a similar manner namely that of being a rational body.

Michael McGee explains that ideographs are units of thought which help us to ascribe meaning and value to people, ideas and actions. He demonstrates that contained in one unit of thought or ideograph, is a summary of historical ideology. How this historical ideology manifests is useful for understanding a cultural text. The notion of government signifies different meanings to each individual depending on their personal experience with the idea, but there is a common conception of 'government' perpetuated by media. Governmental officials are not shown acting violently or irrationally, rather they are continually depicted engaging in open and calm debates. News media tends to illustrate the notion of government as a diplomatic body that engages in formal, peaceful and informed discussions about socially significant issues. Imagery of men speaking, raising their hands or sitting at UN meetings does not communicate violence,

force or irrational decision-making, rather it expresses a composed group of men acting peacefully.

When the ideograph of government is visually represented by a rational group of men that make educated decisions, those who oppose the actions of governments are looked down upon. Individuals may not agree with a particular government's actions, yet they rarely question the process used to arrive at a decision. To be clear, it is accepted in many societies that governments do not simply make decisions without discussing them with other officials. Despite the outcome of the decision, or whether or not it was well informed does not affect people's understanding that an issue was rationally and officially discussed. The visual rhetoric of government as a concept focuses on the decision-making process, rather than on the actual outcome of a decision or the concrete information that informs these discussions. Therefore, the visual representation of the concept of government exemplifies the rational decision-making process of governing officials.

The relationship between media and government is one of utter codependence. Without media representation of a leader's actions¹¹⁷, powerful governmental officials do not have a medium with which to represent their personalities or agendas. News exists in large part because of the need governments have in order to sustain a constant outlet to 'the public'. Each party both government and media validate one another and would virtually cease to exist without the others existence.¹¹⁸ Therefore, it is important for media to uphold a standard by which to visually illustrate the actions of politicians and governmental officials. Similar to Griffin and Lee's argument that the media has conditioned us to expect a certain amount and aesthetic of war photojournalism,

¹¹⁷ Or representations of those actions. Leaders are rarely shown signing bills or discussing pertinent issues, but visual imagery alludes to these actions without leaders ever actually having to do them in front of the camera.

¹¹⁸ This is due to the heavy focus of media on governmental actions and government's need to be publicized in order to 'exist'. For instance, the President of the United States is continually shown either getting on or off a plane, communicating to viewers that he is going somewhere. Without that small visual clip of the President's 'actions' (i.e. traveling around the nation or world) the public might become suspicious or confused about what their President actually does (in terms of day to day activities).

the news greatly shapes how we see (literally) the actions and agendas of governments. The images I coded as being part of governmental officials do not stray from the general aesthetic of 'government' created and sustained by media.¹¹⁹ Figure 10. displays the Israeli Minister speaking, this small amount of movement by his mouth translates into a larger phenomenon of governments *acting* specifically, discussing. The myth or ideological meaning, as Roland Barthes might explain, behind figure 10. is that governments act. Government officials are depicted diplomatically discussing, debating and giving serious, ample and informed thought to situations of terrorism.



Figure 10. Israeli Minister

This image is from Alaska Highway News (Canada) posted on May 23, 2004. The title reads, "Israeli Minister says Gaza demolitions evoke images of his family's suffering".

Despite the content¹²⁰ or topic of discussion, governmental officials are shown conversing about terrorism in a calm, structured and official manner. Regardless of whether or not governments are drafting an aggressive military strike, they are visually represented as being diplomatic. Governmental officials

¹¹⁹ The majority of news sources gathered for my sample, with the exception of Aljazeera, are considered to be mainstream. I make the claim that a certain aesthetic has been created in order to visually represent the government. I am not sure that this is the case for other, more independent or less mainstream news outlets. This question is better suited for another research paper on how independent, less mainstream news outlets visually represent suicide terrorism – I believe this to be a useful future study. Google, although it has made great strides in attempting to offer people with many different reports of the same story, tends to focus (because of the way the algorithm is set up) on more mainstream, and more widely know, news outlets.

¹²⁰ Whether or not the officials are discussing military force or a more peaceful, progressive solution to acts of terrorism is rarely visually represented. It is difficult for an image to express, on its own, the actual topic of these discussions leaving only one piece of concrete visual evidence, that of officials speaking amongst one another.

are visually constructed as having taken the rhetorical high road by rationally talking about solutions rather than irrationally acting aggressively. Therefore, regardless of the possibly ruthless nature or aggressive tactics being discussed, governmental officials are depicted as being rational men talking about a necessarily violent situation. The photographs portray these men acting at a very basic level (i.e. speaking, standing, raising their hands, sitting at meetings) illustrating that their actions are those of a peaceful nature and not of a visually destructive one (refer to figures 11. and 12.).



Figure 11. Governmental Official Addressing Other Officials

This photograph is from the New York Times (United States) posted on June 7, 2004. The title of the story reads, "9 Iraqi Militias Said to Approve Deal to Disband".



Figure 12. UN meeting

This image is from Channel News Asia (Singapore) posted on June 7, 2004. The title of the story reads, "US calls for Vote as UN Council close to deal on Iraq".

There is an absence or a visual gap with respect to images of uprisings, protests or a formalized, non-violent civilian response to terrorism. There *is*

visual representation of the effects of suicide terrorism on the lives of civilians but there is no visual rhetoric of a diplomatic response from the people (like there is of governmental officials). Peaceful civilian reactions are only shown when the response is due to a political figure's (or leader's) death. Six images depict civilian or 'the people's' response to terrorism yet 4 of the photographs are of the same young boy holding a picture of an assassinated leader (refer to figures 13 and 14.). Therefore, only three out of the total 181 images portray peaceful civilian protest or a non-violent response to terrorism.



Figure 13. Boy Mourning Leader

This photograph is from The Telegraph (UK) and was posted on June 7, 2004. The title of the story reads, "Iraqi Militiamen to disband". The caption under the photo reads, "Militia groups that use violence will be dealt with harshly". This image was bought from Reuters.



Figure 14. Civilians React to Leader's Death

This image is from Channel News Asia (Singapore) and was posted on May 18, 2004. The title of the story reads, "Officials Mourn Iraqi Leader's Death, Four Arrested Over Beheading". The caption under the image reads, "A huge picture of late governing council chief Ezzedine Salim is carried by mourners."

Collectively, these (governmental officials) images explain that individuals react peacefully to terrorism only when the death of a governmental official or leader is the result of the attack. Otherwise, as evidenced in the 'death' coding unit, civilians respond violently to acts of terrorism (i.e. violent civilian backlash). In effect, all visual indicators of peace, diplomacy and moral righteousness are coupled with governments (either the actions of governments or the effects of terrorism on governmental officials/leaders).¹²¹ Due to the mutually dependent relationship of media and government it is difficult for media organizations to reject or to challenge the (already existing) relationship simply because media relies on that connection in order for survival. Therefore, it is not in the best interest of media organizations, interested in sustaining their position as such, to challenge the already shared aesthetic of governments as being peacekeeping organizations.

The fourth coding unit is 'people interacting with devastated landscapes'¹²² and proved to be the largest percentage of the total images. These images comprised 42% of the total and are action oriented. People panicking, running away from unsafe areas and families moving their belongings out of their demolished homes came to characterize this coding unit. Many women and children are present in these photographs in comparison with other coding units such as 'military' that did not depict one single woman. Images coded as 'devastated landscapes' are visually descriptive in that they tell the story of what political strife and terrorism does to a community, family or single person. Many of the images are of children crying or are of women collecting their belongings in the rubble that was once their home (refer to figures

¹²¹ To be clear, peaceful civilian responses are visually associated with the death of governmental officials. I use the phrase 'governmental officials' to denote individuals who are part of any governing group. Governmental officials, as are represented in my research, are generally recognized by other governing organizations whether or not they have a formal title of leadership. For instance figure 13. displays a boy holding a picture of a slain militia leader, I consider the slain militia leader a governmental official. The image illustrated in figure 13. is the only instance where a militia leader is considered a government official, therefore, figure 13. is an exception rather than the rule. Aside from this specific instance governmental officials are formal and internationally recognized governing bodies. While militias are recognized regionally, generally, their organizations are less well know around the world.

¹²² I will refer to this category as 'devastated landscapes'.

15 and 16). Crying faces, children being consoled by their parents and people *reacting* to terrorism and military action are the broad themes of this coding unit.



Figure 15. Boy Crying in Rubble

This image is from Taipei Times (Taiwan) and was posted on May 21, 2004. The title of this story reads, “Israel begins Rafah withdrawal”. This image was bought from Reuters.



Figure 16. Women Moving Away from Danger with Children

This image is from Reuters (UK) posted on May 23, 2004. The title of the story reads, “Israeli Cabinet Minister Condemns Rafah Demolitions”. The caption under the photograph reads, “Palestinians run in front of Israeli Army Bulldozer after they left their home during heavy fighting in the Rafah refugee camp in the Southern Gaza strip, May 23,04. Israeli Justice Minister Yosef Lapid touched a sensitive nerve in Israel on Sunday by appearing to compare atrocities against Jews during the Holocaust.”

Figure 15. reveals an interesting element of this coding unit, namely, while devastation *is* being shown on online news, the blame of the devastation is either vague or primarily placed on terrorist activity (not specifically on ‘the terrorist’). The image in figure 15. is of a young boy crying, standing in some form of rubble or destroyed structure or landscape, yet the title simply reads, “Israel begins

Rafah withdrawal.” The title does not necessarily free the Israeli army from blame, but the words also do not entirely suggest that it was in fact the Israeli army who caused such damage. Another title of a story that uses the same image reads, “Israel moves forces out of Gaza camp.”¹²³ Neither of these titles expresses blame of any specific party but the titles do communicate one force having been involved, i.e. the Israeli army. The Israeli army is withdrawing and is moving forces out of a given area, not acting overtly aggressive. Rather, the Israeli army could be more accurately described as reacting to a situation that has already happened rather than having initially contributed to it. Again, the forces that contribute to these situations are not clearly laid out for consumers of news media.¹²⁴

Figure 16. communicates a common theme among this coding unit, that of women and children reacting to harsh circumstances. Women shown responding to devastating circumstances and tending to their children characterize the desperate and horrendous results of war, terrorism and overall political strife. Each person portrayed in this coding unit is visually constructed as being a victim. For example, the women and children in Figure 16. are not fighting back, they are not acting violently rather they are reacting to a necessarily horrific situation peacefully. Figure 16. depicts women moving their children and what belongings they are able to carry, away from an awful situation. They are shown in action, but acting peacefully. Their action is a reaction to an unclear aggressor. One woman in figure 16. is crying or crying out in desperation (as evidenced by the rubble that they walk through and the building devastation they are leaving behind) and frustration, not in aggression or in violence.

¹²³ This online news story is from Reuters (UK) and was posted on May 21, 2004.

¹²⁴ I understand that journalistic integrity is based on being bipartisan but when there is a clear aggressor I argue that journalistic integrity should consider this fact. For instance, news outlets (mainly western) vilify and communicate that Osama Bin Laden is a terrible man and a terrorist because of his actions and political ties. Why then in some situations is it ethical to focus on the violent aggressor (i.e. Bin Laden) and not to do so in other instances?



Figure 17. Devastated Building in Gaza

This image is from TVNZ (New Zealand) and was posted on May 24, 2004. The title of the photograph reads, “Israeli Military Ends Gaza Violence”.

Figure 17. represents a building that has been bombed. The title of figure 17. reads, “Israeli Military Ends Gaza Violence.” Again the Israeli army is ending violence rather than having initially contributed to the situation. As Cori E. Dauber argues, viewing a photograph is a form of witnessing; once we see an image we can attest to knowing about an event. Considering figure 17. we can see, or we know, that buildings have been destroyed; we also know that the Israeli army is ending this violence. While it may be true that the Israeli army is aiding to end the violence resulting in structural damage, the context with which this building exists is entirely ambiguous. The circumstances that existed either before or after the image in figure 17. are not visually represented and are not clarified by the title of the story.

Figure 18. again exemplifies the vagueness with which terrorism is reported about. The image shows reminisce of a suicide attack, namely the blown up vehicle. This photograph has the title, “Iraqi Militias to Disband” indicating that an Iraqi militia was *involved* in this suicide attack. The title does not overtly state that an Iraqi militia is responsible for this act of terrorism (as might the text in the actual story), but it also does not reveal that there is any other party involved in the situation. Associating the simple words, ‘Iraqi Militias’ with the imagery of a blown up vehicle, creates or reinforces the cognitive link between terrorism and Iraqi militias, or militia forces in general. This image (and surrounding text) does not clearly or explicitly disclose who is responsible for

such action. Figure 18. is a visually context-less act of terrorism.¹²⁵ Visually, blame never really rests on any one party but it is *associated* or *linked* with one particular party over another. For instance, there is a cognitive link between Israel and 'aid' in situations of terrorism (because of phrases like, Israeli military *ends* Gaza violence or, Israel *begins* Rafah *withdrawal*)¹²⁶, regardless of whether or not the Israeli military had initially contributed to the atrocity. Figure 18. by way of *not* explicitly stating who caused the car bomb, links Iraqi militia forces with the blast. Maintaining that Iraqi militia forces have been ordered or are going to disband, does not eliminate blame or confirm their innocence. Had the title of Figure 18. read, 'Iraqi Militias Withdraw' or 'Iraqi Militia ends violence', the image can be understood in a completely different manner. In essence, as Stuart Hall has argued, mental associations are made between text and an image whereby the caption or title that accompanies an image often informs the viewer about how to read an image.



Figure 18. Aftermath of Car Bomb

This image is from Reuters (UK) and was posted on June 7, 2004. The title of this story reads, "Iraqi Militias to Disband".

There is ample visual representation of the destruction caused by suicide terrorism. 42% of the total imagery is of destruction caused by suicide bombing and subsequent backlash. The images coded as 'people interacting in devastated landscapes' convey a larger phenomenon, that of destruction as

¹²⁵ To be clear, I am not arguing that blame should always be placed on one party or another, but what I do argue is that these images and the text that accompany them (excluding the story) create an ambiguous terrorist scenario.

¹²⁶ Phrases and words such as 'ends violence', 'withdraw' or 'begin' have positive connotations.

being caused by the very ambiguous construct or ideograph of terrorism. It is clear from the images gathered for my research that in many instances news organizations shy away from assigning blame to any one given force. Because news organizations are supposed to be objective and impartial they are reluctant to blame anyone other than the construct that has already been designated as being a destructive force, specifically terrorism or the single suicide terrorist. Terrorism and terrorists are undeniably bad. They cause landscape destruction and death due to a plethora of unknown reasons.¹²⁷ Blame then becomes something instinctual rather than something grounded in evidence. Terrorism, as a construct, is an easy scapegoat for destruction and death regardless of proof or concrete data.

Online news stories disclose that a suicide attack has occurred but it does not openly expose the motor forces that contribute to the larger situation. As Barbie Zelizer has argued, there is a disconnect between atrocities and the forces that contribute to them, my research supports her claim. While online news reports do inform their audience about terrorism and political violence, the visual imagery and the text that accompanies it is often vague. The titles or the captions of these images never answer who has contributed to the broader situation. A car bombing, for instance, could have been a result of a previous attack but this aspect of the situation is not shown; in essence, the historically, culturally and ideologically loaded act of terrorism is represented by vague images and non-descriptive words. The viewer is left with simple associations that simply cannot explain the complexity of these situations that result in suicide terrorism.

Both Zelizer and Sontag claim that it is possible for an audience to become desensitized to images of destruction and atrocity. Due to media's fascination with horror, blood or misfortune in general, almost half of the images gathered for my research are of landscape destruction (in addition to the 12% of images coded as 'death'); therefore, there is a significant amount of attention

¹²⁷ The reasons why suicide terrorists carry out their duties or deeds are beyond the scope of this research paper. Intense ethnographic research must be conducted in order to sufficiently address this issue.

given to both structural and landscape destruction caused by suicide terrorism. It is possible then, due to the proliferation of these types of photographs, that viewers become desensitized to images of atrocity. Viewers are inoculated, often daily, with images of atrocity happening in the 'Middle East'¹²⁸ causing the cognitive associations between this region of the world and terrorism to be immensely strong. This relationship communicates to viewers who are not from these areas that the Middle East is fundamentally more dangerous than where the viewer lives. Similarly, Carolyn Marvin and Jessica Fishman who conducted research (from major newspapers) on implicit versus explicit violence found that explicit violence is associated with non-US groups, whereas latent violence is coupled with groups from the US. Therefore violence is continually associated with non-US groups, and according to my research, violence is coupled with Middle Eastern terrorists. This causes Middle Easterners to appear more dangerous than individuals from other regions or cultures.

Each image in the 'devastated landscapes' coding unit represents the landscape destruction caused by suicide bombing, military occupation or militia backlash. The panic, destruction and desperation of these images illustrate the 'Middle Eastern' aesthetic associated with suicide terrorism. Women dressed in headscarves, Imams praying in front of destroyed mosques and environmental rubble were all coded as 'devastated landscapes'. This coding unit exhibits that terrorism is the primary cause of destruction. While all other forces that contribute to these situations are subtly introduced into the scenario, what is explicitly and visually known is that terrorism causes destruction. The vagueness of who contributed to the devastation being visually represented makes it easy to believe that the blame rests solely on the acts of terrorism. The ideograph of terrorism is used as a reason, as an aggressor and as the primary force responsible for these disturbing situations regardless of the previous involvement of other forces such as governments or militaries. In effect, terrorism is the main source of destruction in these suicide-bombing events.

¹²⁸ The 'Middle East', for many western viewers, has come to comprise customarily Muslim countries such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria and all countries surrounding or remotely close to these areas.

12% or 21 out of the total 181 images are coded as 'death'. Each image in this coding unit is of injured bodies, deceased bodies or bodies in preparation for burial (or in coffins). Considering that suicide terrorism results in at least one death per bombing (the death of the bomber him/herself), there is little visual representation regarding death in general. The visual rhetoric that is shown is that of the victims of terrorism, and never of the actual bomber. There are 0 pictures, out of the total 181 that are of the bomber either before or after he/she carried out the attack. There is a significant focus on the victims of these situations and a complete visual gap when showing the actual bomber or the one person who caused such destruction. There is a vague, unknown and unseen terrorist that committed each of the 5 suicide attacks used for my research analysis.



Figure 19. Body of a Three-Year-Old Palestinian Girl

This image is from Voice of America (United States) and was posted on May 22, 2004. The title reads, "Child Killed in Israeli-Palestinian Violence". The caption under the image reads, "Palestinian mourner weeps over the body of 3-year-old girl, Rawan Abu Zeid, during her funeral in Rafah refugee camp, Saturday."

Figure 19. portrays a woman weeping beside the dead body of a 3-year-old Palestinian girl killed by Israeli Troops in response to a suicide bombing. The child is depicted being held up on a flat board where her dead body lay in order to be displayed for others to see. This image captures the result of both military backlash and of the ongoing political struggle often resulting in acts of terrorism. Her body is not bloody or visually mutilated rather she looks as though she is peacefully sleeping in the midst of the somber crowd. Eleven out of the 21

images are of this same 3 year-old girl, signifying that there is little to no visual representation of death from the other four bombing instances. Figure 19. displays the general manner that bodies are shown in instances of suicide terrorism, specifically, in preparation for some sort of culturally specific burial process. Most of the images in this coding unit are of bodies wrapped in sheets, bodies in open or closed graves or bodies being cared for by doctors and civilians. Only three photographs out of the 21 coded as 'death' reveal any type of blood; again, the majority of photographs are of bodies wrapped in burial sheets laying side by side in large rooms (refer to figure 20.) or bodies being carried in coffins.



Figure 20. Dead Bodies Prepared for Burial

This image is from Al-Jazeera (Qatar) and was posted on May 23, 2004. The title reads, "Rafah Siege Partially Lifted".



Figure 21. Men Carrying Coffin

This image is from the Straits Times (Singapore) and was posted on June 8, 2004. The title of the story reads, "Radical Cleric's Men Fight on Despite Militia Ban".

Figure 21. exhibits a coffin being carried by a group of men. The title reads, "Radical Cleric's Men Fight on Despite Militia Ban". The information that

is known from the image is that there is a person dead inside a coffin being carried by other men. The title alludes to the fact that this death is due to militiamen's rejection of the ban on militia fighting. What lies beyond the frame, meaning the intricacies of the situation, is not visually represented. In addition, other aspects of the complex situation are not revealed in either the image or the accompanying text. Blame is not specifically placed on militiamen, but is alluded to by the title having highlighted the inability of militiamen to follow directions, (i.e. not to fight because of the ban on militias). This context-less death is visually represented by a vague image of a dead person lying in a coffin being carried by men.

The scarf over the man's face and head (the man in the forefront of the photograph) is not characteristic of western male attire. This scarf differentiates western audiences who view this image, from the men who commit these crimes. The attire of the men in the photograph is so drastically different from the clothing men tend to wear in the west causing a visual emphasis on the differences inherent between western and 'Middle Eastern' men. As John Taylor has argued, foreign bodies (alive or dead) reinforce Otherness and the fact that another society or culture is inherently more dangerous than our own. The cultures represented in the photographs, (the cultures of 'Middle Easterners') are depicted as being destructive (i.e. both the landscape devastation and death coding units) and as causers of death. Terrorism is visually linked to this region of the world, ultimately indicating that the Middle East is more dangerous than the west. As Susan Sontag maintains, pictures are the world itself, therefore, they have the ability to prove to people around the world what life is like in many different cultures. Cori E. Dauber also contends that images are viewed as evidence not as representation. Therefore these pictures of death are *evidence* of a violent or dangerous culture and not *representation* of that culture. Photographs of a dead 3-year-old girl and countless bodies piled in a room does little to illuminate the other, positively oriented, aspects of the many and varied cultures in the Middle East. Terrorism and specifically suicide terrorism has been coupled with this vast region of the world causing these images (coded as death)

to reinforce the existing stereotype in the west that western culture is less dangerous than other cultures (refer to figure 22. notice the title of the story, “Living in ‘a kind of a hell’”).



Figure 22. Dead Person being Carried by Men

This image is from Newsday New York (United States) and was posted on May 24, 2004. The title reads, “Living in a kind of a hell”. The caption reads, “Funeral Procession”. This photograph was bought from the Associated Press.

The visual absence of the actual suicide bomber is noteworthy specifically because the blame tends to lie on this individual for having committed an act of terrorism. Many cultures are fixated on *who* has committed what type of crime for what reason. As a result of *not* having any visual representation of the actual suicide bomber, viewers are forced to create a terrorist in their minds rather than being able to reference an image of the bomber on a computer screen. Based on the information offered either by the text or the photograph, audience members are virtually forced to create a face and a persona in association with a crime. They are given a limited amount of information for which to create a person in their minds for who is responsible for a given act of terrorism. The complete lack of visual representation of the person who has blown himself or herself up in order to make a political, religious or social statement is completely void from the visual equation. Suicide bombers, because they blow-up their own bodies, might be too gruesome to photograph, but there is also no imagery of

bombers before they have committed their attack.¹²⁹ This creates an immensely ambiguous sketch of the enemy, aggressor and person responsible. Arguably, this ambiguity creates fear in consumers of media essentially fear of the unknown. Western consumers¹³⁰, because they are not directly familiar with the practice of suicide bombing, might make the cognitive link between Middle-Easterners and terrorists. This mental association is reinforced by the imagery of where suicide attacks take place (maps of various places in the Middle-East), the dress of different cultures (bringing to the forefront fundamental cultural difference) and the constant imagery of destruction coupled with Middle-Eastern countries. This imagery contributes to the cognitive formation of a suicide bomber that has each of these characteristics including that of the unknown.

The final category of images is coded as being 'miscellaneous' because there is no observable trend among these 8 images or 4% of the total images. Women putting tomatoes in bags, a man crying holding a younger boy or the headshot of a woman does not necessarily fall into any of the previously mentioned coding units. Figures 23. through 25. are examples of the miscellaneous coding unit. This unit has the smallest number of images compared with all other coding units and did not have any observable trend with respect to the 5 other coding units.

¹²⁹ Suicide bombings are calculated and rigorously planned. Accordingly, there is often a videotape of the bomber before his attack. While there might be restricted access to these tapes, there are still pictures of the bomber that would be available. Often the bomber is identified and even named in the article meaning that journalists and investigators know who the bomber is – why do media organizations choose not to show the bomber?

¹³⁰ In addition to other cultures, not considered necessarily western, who do not directly experience the cultural phenomenon of suicide bombing.



Figure 23. Women Gathering Tomatoes

This image is from The Globe and Mail (Canada) and was posted on June 7, 2004. The title of the story reads, “Nine Iraqi Militias to Disband”.



Figure 24. Man Holding Boy

This image is from Turkish News line (Turkey) and was posted on May 9, 2004. The title of the story reads, “Baghdad Market Blast Kills Seven”.



Figure 25. Headshot of Woman

This image is from NDTV.com (India) and was posted on May 8, 2004. The title of the story reads, “Clashes Erupt in Karachi”.

CONCLUSION

Many communication scholars have argued that the Internet has created a 'global village'¹³¹ or that individuals live within mediated spaces governed by images. These spaces are produced and maintained by both mediums such as the Internet, in addition to the individuals that create the content of various mediums. Experience, as McLuhan and Baudrillard argue, is no longer needed in order to 'know' about or to witness an event. To this end, the visual representation of suicide bombing stands for what people consider the 'truth'. These images shape the way in which people understand war, terrorism and atrocity in addition to influencing their future political and ideological attitudes. Visual representations of suicide terrorism also inform viewers about what Others, or those whom we do not physically see because of geographical limitations, are doing, what they value and what they look like. The images gathered for my research are not only representations, but they also function as evidence¹³². Therefore, pictures of suicide bombing are utilized as empirical and visual data that uphold certain truths and knowledge claims about Others.

As a result of media having substituted experience and negated the need for individual, intimate and necessarily real observation in order to create reality, in effect, media have substituted reality. Consequently, viewers mentally process the visual representations of Others as evidence rather than as representation. Many theorists argue that a photograph or image functions as proof rather than as a portrayal or interpretation; this purpose or role (that of images substituting reality) of images enables viewers to create experience, knowledge and opinion simply by consuming media. Accordingly, images of Others are constructed for

¹³¹ This is a term used and defined by Marshall McLuhan in: Marshall McLuhan, 2002. Understanding Media: The extensions of Man. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London.

¹³² Again this idea of visual representation as being considered evidence is borrowed from Cori E. Dauber.

many *exclusively* through media. Arguably, if a viewer has had limited or virtually no 'real' or personal experience with Others their attitudes toward specific groups are solely contingent on media, second-hand accounts and knowledge passed on by other people. It is not always possible for most to travel around the world or to walk into an unfamiliar region or neighborhood in order to familiarize themselves with unknown cultures. This frequent lack of personal exposure to Others, in addition to the absorption of over-generalized and ideologically loaded fragments of situations, is detrimental to the process of constructing one's view about Others. The often-narrow portrayal of Others and, the repeated dichotomizing of complex issues causes a simplistic and black and white reading of both Others (i.e. good and evil) and intricate situations. Accordingly, the process of visually associating a group with a certain concept has vast repercussions on how that certain group is conceptualized. Just as Jews during the Holocaust were framed as being a conniving, impure and untrustworthy race, today Muslims and Arabs are persecuted for practicing a mystifying and destructive religion¹³³ (that of Islam). Understanding how a race, religion or community is visually represented offers great insight into the mysteries of public opinion.

The visual representations of Others inform many individuals about the nature, the culture and the overall values of Others. My research has brought to light the brutal, irrational and barbaric nature of so called Middle Eastern cultures and Muslims. The images gathered for my research reveal that these cultures, and specifically the religion of Islam, are the primary cause of conflict in many cultures regardless of the validity of this claim. The single ideograph, or unit of thought of Islam is visually represented as being entirely responsible for the broad scope of atrocity occurring in various areas around the world. Just as capitalism cannot be exclusively blamed for the demise of western society, or Catholicism cannot be wholly responsible for the creation of child molestation, Islam and a large region of the world (i.e. "the Middle East") cannot be solely

¹³³ I want to make clear that because Islam is one of the three most recognized and popular religions in the world, it is conceptualized and practiced in a variety of different ways by a vast number of people.

responsible for destruction and conflict. Many other factors contribute to conflict such as economic aspects, the process of colonization and general cultural values. A single religion that is conceptualized by many people in infinite ways cannot rationally be blamed for the economic and social state of a large area of the world. Conversely, it *can* be rationally claimed that Islam *contributes* to various cultures, but it is difficult to maintain that this vast and intricate concept of Islam has one ubiquitous meaning and, therefore, effect.

While large militaries continue to cause immense destruction and function as a fundamental force in various cultures, suicide terrorism is held solely responsible for having created many complex conflicts. If economic sanctions (essentially economic terrorism) or military occupation (militaristic terrorism) were visually framed as suicide terrorism is today, societies would have an entirely different view of sanctions and militaries. The point is that the ideograph of Islam and the over-generalized notion of 'Middle Eastern' culture are each visually constructed as having exclusively created and sustained many destructive cultures and people. My research reveals that the visual representation of suicide terrorism ignores other fundamental factors (such as military occupation and economic sanctions) that helped create a given situation while blaming both the religion of Islam and the notion of Middle Eastern culture for having caused the initial conflict.

The clear definition of the group, entity or organization that is responsible for having *caused* a situation is extremely important to many cultures. The concepts of *cause* and *response* are essential to how a society views a situation. An example of this phenomenon is the way in which the September 11th attacks were framed primarily in the west. September 11th can be understood in two fundamentally different ways: as a cause or as an effect. For example, there are some individuals who claim that the pressures, both economic and social, that the west imposes on Eastern cultures created such a response (i.e. the attack of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon). Therefore, September 11th can be understood as a reaction and not as an offensive act. In the west, September 11th was framed by many media organizations as an offensive action rather than

as a *result* or a *consequence* of previous actions or circumstances. For that reason, September 11th enabled those in power to use this situation as an example of how Others were *attacking* 'us' rather than as Others *reacting* to 'us'. It is immensely important to many (primarily western) cultures that *their* society remains on the defensive side of situations. Many others and I for example, value a culture that does not act irrationally, preemptively and offensively; consequently, I value being on the defensive. Framing an act as an offensive deed is socially damaging to that actions' 'reputation' or aesthetic or mental association. It is acceptable to *react* to horrific situations but it is not acceptable to *create* destructive situations. The point is that framing a destructive action (i.e. suicide bombing) as a cause and not as an effect has serious implications for how people conceptualize that act or group of individuals.

Each image or fragment of reality contains hidden myths, as Barthes would claim. Each photograph has an underlying myth meaning or ideologically loaded message. The myths that surfaced through my research are: militaries create harmony; suicide bombing is the primary cause of death¹³⁴; terrorism is the main source of destruction; the official responses to terrorism are more newsworthy or important than civilian responses; and computer generated graphics are used because they are journalistically convenient. Each basic coding unit translated into a larger ideological category that is clearly understood due to the visual elements represented within every picture. Each of the larger categories later introduced two even broader observations about the data, that of they're being little visual variety among news sources¹³⁵ and suicide bombing as being a cause and not an effect of conflict.

Each suicide bombing creates the need for a response by media, as Bitzer would contend. The responses or types of images that represent this sort of atrocity has conditioned us to expect five types of images: military; devastated landscapes; maps or filler graphics; death; and governmental officials. These

¹³⁴ Suicide bombing is the primary cause of death in these situations being reported about.

¹³⁵ To be clear, there is little variety in the types of images that are shown. The images are either of government officials, devastated landscapes ECT. The elements and aesthetic of each of the images is the same.

elements have come to constitute the full range of representation of suicide terrorism. Due to the ambiguous line between reality and a simulated reality and because reality is socially constructed, these images have vast repercussions on how viewers conceptualize the act of suicide bombing. Suicide bombing has been visually constructed as a concrete and real act carried out by a vague, faceless bomber. The ambiguity with which suicide bombers are visually reported about creates a visual gap in the minds of media consumers. Imagination and fragments of information create a mental discourse that informs viewers about what they feel about the actual suicide bomber. Viewers are not given 'concrete' visual evidence with which to base their interpretations, rather they are offered other ideological cues to help construct a suicide terrorist. Essentially, ambiguity leads to a more malleable construct of the enemy. People with social power can more easily change the ideograph of terrorism and ultimately define who is a terrorist and who is not.

There are basic limitations when conducting interpretive studies or rhetorical analyses. While personal bias is inherent in most studies regardless of whether the inquiry is qualitative or quantitative, rhetorical studies focus on a specific reading, angle or perspective. Teasing out the intricacies of that reading and supporting the theoretical ideas with empirical data is a useful method for understanding a cultural text or social phenomenon. Personal bias, individual experience and ideology each affect the way that researchers conduct rhetorical analyses. The primary pitfall of this study is the sampling of data. This study excludes other news mediums such as television, newspaper and magazine while focusing on the single medium of the Internet. Future research on ideographs and the visual representation of terrorism should include a variety of different mediums in order to conduct comparative studies. Future studies should also consider the type of news organization that is producing what type of image. For example, future researchers should ask fundamental questions such as: is the news organization mainstream; where does the funding for the news organization come from; and what is the news outlet's social reputation (i.e. accurate reporting, leftist focus, etc.).

The Google search engine and specifically the 'news' feature proved to be a useful way of understanding how a plethora of different news outlets visually represent suicide bombing. One element of my data set that I find problematic is that most of the news outlets accessed by the search engine were those of a more mainstream sort (aside from Aljazeera). I think a future comparative study using less mainstream visual news reportage would be a constructive way to compare and contrast visual representation from two different types of news organizations. I also feel that in order to fully understand this practice (suicide bombing), in-depth ethnographic work must be conducted.¹³⁶ In conclusion, I sincerely hope that my research has contributed in a small, but not insignificant way to better understand how terrorism (specifically suicide bombing) has been visually represented. It is also my wish that both media scholars and consumers of media will read these words and find elements with which to critique. I urge current media scholars to focus their attention on how visually constructed ideographs affect viewers' political decisions and general conceptualizations of particular concepts, people and places.

¹³⁶ There is ethnographic literature on the reasons why suicide bombers carry out this act but I feel that it could be more extensive and that future research should address these salient and broad questions.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

I was born in Sacramento, California on February 21, 1980. I spent the beginning of my childhood in Carmichael, California and the latter part of my adolescence in El Dorado Hills, California. I attended the University of Colorado at Boulder from 1998-2002 where I majored in Communication and minored in Ethnic Studies. Following the completion of my undergraduate work, I was accepted to the Master's program in 2003 at Florida State University with a focus in Rhetorical Theory and Political Communication. My research interests include: media effects, critical studies in media, and media and globalization. While in the Master's program I was granted a teaching assistantship, which enabled me to teach Fundamentals of Speech for three semesters under the guidance of a professor. It was at this point that I realized my passion for teaching and my desire to remain in an academic setting. I completed the Master's degree in December 2004. In the future I intend to teach in the public school system as well as the junior college system in California.