

The Terror in Terrorism: A Qualitative Analysis of the Portrayal of Terrorism in Print and Television News Media

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Presentation Description:

Is the coverage of terrorism on television more provocative than its coverage in newspapers? My research examines this question by comparing television and newspaper coverage of four major terrorist attacks in England, New Zealand, and the United States.

Abstract:

Does the network television coverage of terrorism differ from its coverage in newspapers? While the expectation is that television coverage of terrorism is more explicit than newspaper coverage, no evidence within the literature confirms this assumption. My research fills this gap in the literature.

I hypothesize that television coverage of terrorism is more provocative than its coverage in newspapers. To test my hypothesis, I am comparing the coverage of the 2016 Pulse Nightclub Shooting, the 2017 Manchester Arena Bombing, the 2019 Christchurch Mosque Shooting, and the 2021 United States Insurrection across three news outlets: ABC World News Tonight, the CBS Evening News, and the New York Times. I will be comparing the week's coverage after the attacks across three dimensions: length, sequencing, and image choice. My findings will be discussed considering the implications of assuming that different forms of media create differences in the same story's coverage.

For my presentation, I will discuss the importance of challenging the common assumption that television coverage is more explicit than newspaper coverage of terrorism. I then discuss my research design and the challenges that emerged in design a model that compares two different forms of media. Finally, I will talk about my findings and what they mean in the context of the assumption.