

spectra

The Magazine of the National Communication Association

September 2017 | Volume 53, Number 3



COMMUNICATION'S ROLE IN *DETECTING* AND *RESPONDING* TO **TERRORISM**



ABOUT spectra

Spectra, the magazine of the National Communication Association (NCA), features articles on topics that are relevant to Communication scholars, teachers, and practitioners. *Spectra* is one means through which NCA works toward accomplishing its mission of advancing Communication as the discipline that studies all forms, modes, media, and consequences of communication through humanistic, social scientific, and aesthetic inquiry.

NCA serves its members by enabling and supporting their professional interests. Dedicated to fostering and promoting free and ethical communication, NCA promotes the widespread appreciation of the importance of communication in public and private life, the application of competent communication to improve the quality of human life and relationships, and the use of knowledge about communication to solve human problems.

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Spectra (ISSN 2157-3751) is published four times a year (March, May, September, and November). © National Communication Association. All rights reserved.

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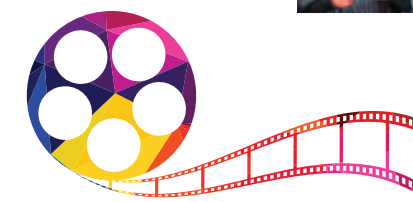
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Communication in the Age of Terrorism

By Stephen J. Hartnett, Ph.D.

Another New York City summer ended for me the Friday night before 9/11. A typically hot and hazy early September day, when the horizon and sky melt into a vast undifferentiated gray of stifling humidity, had given way to a lovely night of breezes wafting off the Bay and down the Hudson River, bringing sweet moments of reprieve as they danced along the elegant Avenues. I had dinner that night—fresh pasta from Piedmont Ravioli at Mulberry and Grand; cheeses and olives from Murray’s on Bleecker; fresh arugula and greens from the Farmer’s Market in Union Square—with friends in their 10th St. apartment in the giant marble-clad Stewart Building, named after A.T. Stewart, who in 1846 built the “Marble Palace,” what historian Stuart Blumin has called the nation’s first “large and elegant dry goods emporium.” From the 14th floor of Stewart’s namesake, with historic Grace Church across the street, we gazed out at the Empire State Building towering over the water tanks and rooftop gardens of midtown, the building’s festive lights casting colored shadows across the majestic skyline.

Four anguished days later, after frantic phone calls, I learned that Mark, my childhood friend who worked in the Towers, had left the building for a meeting uptown just minutes before the first plane hit. Who knew that his need for a second cup of coffee would save his life? Everyone in the city lost somebody or something—a neighbor, a friend, a mother, a lover, a son, a dream, a father, a vision, a sense of safety, a daughter, a sense of well-being. Even months later, walking around ground zero, the crowds were terrified, everyone crying, clinging to their loved ones as if life depended on it, holding tattered pictures of those

who would never come back. And so, after the attacks, I walked around for weeks, bodies plunging to death etched into my heart, Allen Ginsberg chanting in my ears “Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy the solitudes of skyscrapers and pavements! Holy the cafeterias filled with the millions! Holy the mysterious rivers of tears under the streets!”

.....

September 2017 marks the 16th anniversary of 9/11. In those intervening years, I presume we have learned the hard way that bombing Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, and Somalia back into the Stone Age has neither provided relief for our collective 9/11 trauma nor stopped the deadly rage of fanatics. In fact, we now know in a definitive, non-controversial way that overreacting is precisely what the terrorists wanted us to do following 9/11. They wanted us to prove to the world that America is an imperialist, racist, heavy-handed murderer who rains bombs down on the impoverished. This point cannot be stressed enough: 9/11 was meant to trigger a wave of communicative escalation, a new age of infelicitous Othering, a flood of speech and action meant, in the long run, to destabilize American values via the logic of war.

In fact, in 2006 the Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point released a secret Al Qaeda “playbook” captured by U.S. forces, in which a high-ranking Al Qaeda strategist argued that attacking the United States on 9/11 was meant, in the words of the U.S. analysts who studied the document, “to provoke a superpower into invading the Middle East directly,” hence inflaming radical Islamists and launching



9/11 was meant to trigger a wave of communicative escalation, a new age of infelicitous Othering, a flood of speech and action meant, in the long run, to destabilize American values via the logic of war.

chaos on a regional scale. Thus, when William Dalrymple traveled to the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan in 2005 to interview Maulana Sami ul-Haq, the Director of the Haqqania, “one of the most radical of the religious schools called madrasas,” Sami told Dalrymple that “[President George W.] Bush has awoken the entire Islamic world. *We are grateful to him.*” Like Marianne Moore, a poetic voice of reason from another age of war, I feared in those first post-9/11 years that my President had launched America on a course of action so shortsighted that

The enemy could not have made a greater breach in our defenses.

But even more than this sense of worry about America’s “defenses,” I have come post-9/11 to worry about the very soul of the nation. As Susan Sontag observed in “On Regarding the Torture of Others,” an essay about the atrocities committed in the Abu Ghraib prison, we have become a culture that revels in cruelty:

It is hard to measure the increasing acceptance of brutality in American life, but its evidence is everywhere. ... America has become a country in which the fantasies and the practices of violence are seen as good entertainment and fun.... What is illustrated in these photographs [of the torture committed by U.S. troops in Iraq] is as much the culture of shamelessness as the reigning admiration for unapologetic brutality.

How else to explain a nation that instead of paying the salaries and health benefits of 38,000 elementary

school teachers (roughly \$2.1 billion a year), builds one, just one, Stealth Bomber? How else to explain a nation that instead of offering daycare for 68,000 children (roughly \$413 million), creates an Amphibious Warfare Landing Ship program? How else to explain a nation that instead of providing sustenance for 200,000 poverty-stricken families (roughly \$130 million), builds seven unmanned Predator drones? (Readers can ponder such questions in detail via the information provided by the War Resisters League, www.warresisters.org).

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The essays collected in this issue of *Spectra* speak to the broad issues addressed above, in particular the question of how our collective post-9/11 life has become enmeshed in discourses of fear, or preparedness, or resilience, or healing, or vengeance. These are communication questions at heart, for as I have noted, Al Qaeda launched 9/11 with full knowledge that the whole world was watching, and that how the United States responded would set the tone for generations’ worth of choices. Do we cherish free speech more than order? Do we value privacy above national security? Will we invest in health care or weapons? Will we negotiate with those whose values clash with our own? Especially as terrorism goes viral, with individual agents sowing pain in places like San Bernardino, Paris, Beijing, Orlando, New Delhi, and elsewhere, how we speak to these questions will go a long way toward determining the final outcomes of 9/11. ■

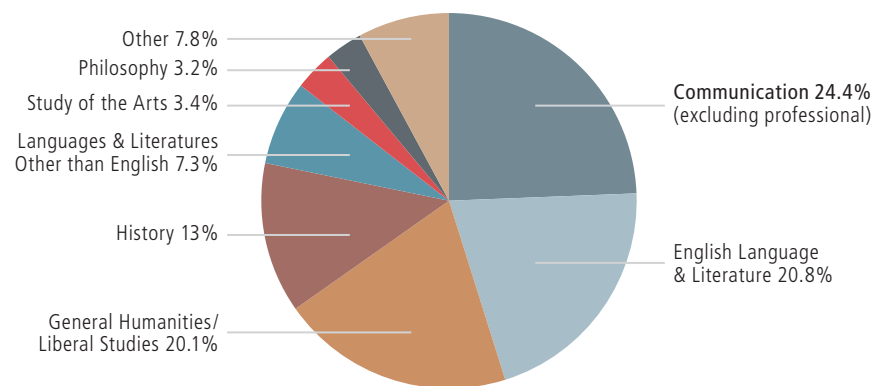
Spotlight

DATA ABOUT THE DISCIPLINE

Communication is Only Humanities Discipline to Experience Bachelor's Degree Completion Growth

The American Academy of Arts & Sciences' Humanities Indicators project recently released an analysis of bachelor's degrees in the humanities. The analysis found that while the overall number of bachelor's degrees in the humanities declined by 9.5 percent from 2012 to 2015, the number of bachelor's degrees awarded in Communication increased. In fact, Communication was the only humanities discipline to experience an increase in the number of degrees awarded from 2012 to 2015, with an 8 percent increase. In 2015, Communication accounted for the largest share of humanities bachelor's degrees; nearly one-quarter of all humanities bachelor's degrees were awarded in Communication that year.

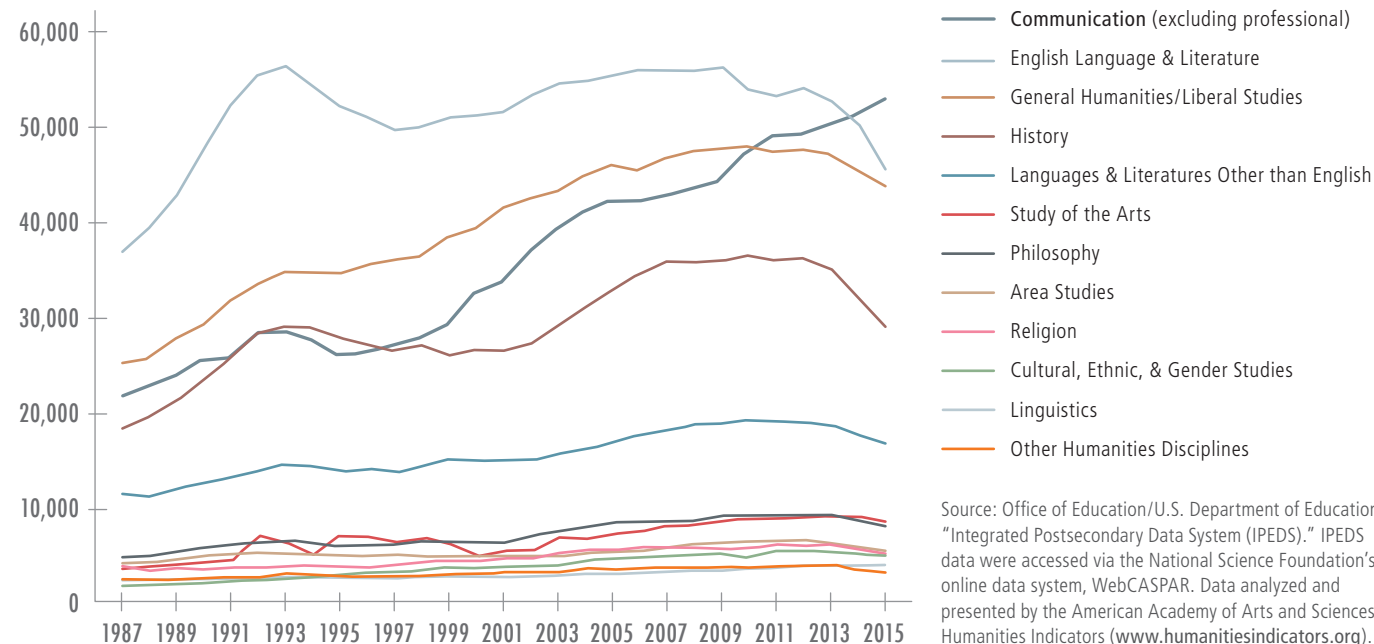
Bachelor's Degrees Awarded by Discipline, 2015



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Data System; accessed via the National Science Foundation's online data system, WebCASPAR. Data analyzed and presented by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences' Humanities Indicators (www.humanitiesindicators.org).

Since 1987, Communication and English Language and Literature (ELL), have been the two disciplines producing the largest number of degrees in the humanities. However, as a share of the total humanities degrees conferred, Communication degrees increased by 44 percent from 1987 to 2015, while ELL degrees decreased by nearly one-third during that period.

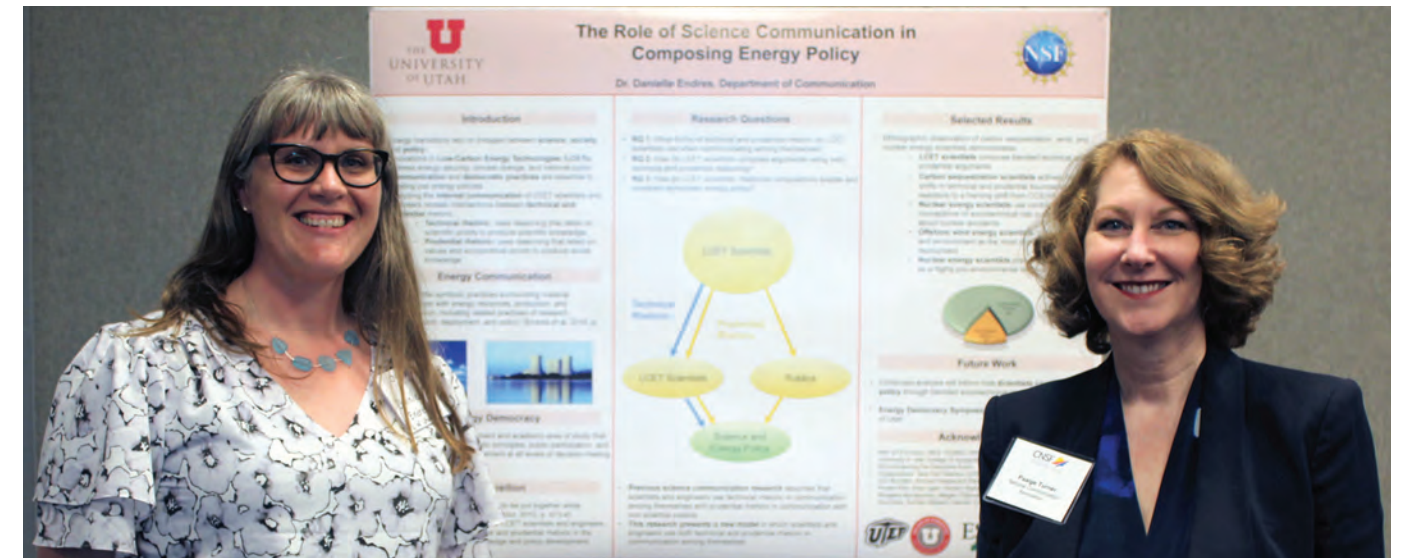
Bachelor's Degree Completions by Discipline, 1987–2015



Source: Office of Education/U.S. Department of Education, "Integrated Postsecondary Data System (IPEDS)." IPEDS data were accessed via the National Science Foundation's online data system, WebCASPAR. Data analyzed and presented by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences' Humanities Indicators (www.humanitiesindicators.org).

PUBLIC PRESENCE

NCA Member Researcher Visits Capitol Hill



NCA member Danielle Endress of the University of Utah (left) with NCA Executive Director Paige K. Turner at the Coalition for National Science Funding's 23rd Annual Exhibition on Capitol Hill.

The Coalition for National Science Funding's (CNSF) 23rd Annual Exhibition and Reception was held on Tuesday, May 16, 2017 on Capitol Hill. This annual event is designed to encourage members of Congress to support the National Science Foundation (NSF) by showcasing research and education projects that are supported by NSF. This year's CNSF exhibition was titled "Investments in

Scientific and Educational Research: Fueling American Innovation." Researchers from 35 institutions answered questions about their research, including Communication scholar Danielle Endress of the University of Utah, who spoke about her research, "The Role of Science Communication in the Composition of Energy Policy." Several NCA staff members attended the event as well.

IN OUR JOURNALS

Shiv Ganesh, "The Orlando Shootings as a Mobilizing Event: Against Reductionism in Social Movement Studies," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 14 (2017): 193-197.

Ganesh's piece addresses the Pulse nightclub shootings, assessing how the shootings momentarily emerged as a partial site for movement mobilization, and reflecting on what Orlando can teach about the development of social movements and how they spread, dissipate, or die. He discusses how discourse was affected by the shootings as well. Specifically, Ganesh explores how the shootings relate to discourses about radical Islamic terrorism, gun control in the United States, and gay rights and hate crimes. He posits that to understand how Orlando might impact movement and mobilization, the role of events in generating contemporary social movements must be taken more seriously and that these events must be seen as potentially disrupting established hegemonic discourses of society, politics, and economy.

Sarah J. Tracy and Timothy P. Huffman, "Compassion in the Face of Terror: A Case Study of Recognizing Suffering, Co-Creating Hope, and Developing Trust in a Would-Be School Shooting," *Communication Monographs* 84 (2017): 30-53.

In this article, Tracy and Huffman examine the conversational characteristics of compassion communicated by school bookkeeper Antoinette Tuff to would-be school shooter Michael Hill. This case study provides a better understanding of how to communicate

compassion to unwilling recipients and suggests the importance of careful conversational timing, face-enhancement strategies, convergence/mirroring techniques, co-creating hope, physical presence, and vulnerable self-disclosure. The case advances current conceptualizations of compassion and illustrates how compassion, conversational mirroring, hope, disclosure, and proximity can work together as an effective method of hostage negotiation.

Po-Lin Pan, Shuhua Zhou, and Marceline Thompson Hayes, "Immigrant Perpetrators in the News: A Terror Management Approach to Resultant Hostility, Perceived Vulnerability, and Immigration Issue Judgment," *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, (2017).

Pan, Zhou, and Hayes use terror management and social identity theories to examine mutual and independent effects activated by mortality salience and social group difference. The study investigates viewers' psychosocial responses to media coverage that labels immigrants as threats by measuring viewers' resultant hostility, perceived vulnerability, and immigration issue judgment. The authors found that mortality salience in TV news led to more hostile attitudes toward the immigrant perpetrators and negative judgments on the immigration issue. Social group difference influenced news viewers' immigration issue judgment, but not their resultant hostility or perceived vulnerability. Negative attitudes toward the immigration issue appeared when immigrant perpetrators were portrayed negatively in the media.

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AN INTRODUCTION



COMMUNICATION'S ROLE IN DETECTING AND RESPONDING TO TERRORISM

Acts of terrorism have periodically rocked our world for thousands of years. As terrorists' methods and operations have evolved, so have the language and media used to help deter, perpetuate, respond to, communicate about, and recover from incidents of terror. The rise of cable news television, digital journalism, and social media networks have all served to increase global exposure to the ideologies of terrorist organizations and coverage of terrorist attacks—especially since the tragic events of 9/11. Thus, communication plays an ever-important role in how we perceive, talk about, disseminate, and respond to terrorism-related news and policies. In this issue of *Spectra*, five Communication scholars write about the ways in which our discipline can help others explain terrorist and anti-terrorism rhetoric, use communication channels to share information smartly and safely, guide global leaders, and heal after traumatic and tragic experiences.

Leaders have always had the ear of their nations' citizens, but their words (or tweets) now travel beyond borders to reach the far corners of the globe. As Carol Winkler explains in her opening article to the magazine, what global leaders say about terrorism matters in profound ways. Presidents and prime ministers' words can provide fodder to terrorist organizations, guide public reaction to events at home and abroad, and/or sway support for policies aimed at deterring terrorism. "The speed and diffusion of today's global media demands that U.S. presidents maintain a resilient, credible public posture that is backed by actions consistent with their public messaging," she writes.

In their article, Hamilton Bean and Bryan Taylor argue that terrorism is ultimately a communicative act, because it is "commonly motivated by political ideology and grievance." They describe how communication theory can help policymakers, officials, and citizens prepare for and respond to terrorism, by offering

concepts such as grounded theory, network theory, cybernetic tradition, risk communication, and more. When it comes to communication by and about terrorists, "rather than perpetuating traditional concerns such as the transmission of information," Bean and Taylor suggest focusing on how "communication constitutes particular kinds of identities and relationships."

Not surprisingly, increasing numbers of Communication researchers are studying the use of social media to respond to and potentially prevent acts of terrorism. Stephanie Madden writes about how the proliferation of easily accessible digital platforms and communication channels has facilitated the spread of misinformation and hoaxes in the immediate aftermath of terrorist events. She also highlights the positive effects and uses of digital communication tools, which help survivors to check in with loved ones, and intelligence and government agencies to deter impending attacks and counter radicalization rhetoric.

Finally, Shane T. Moreman's essay looks at Communication's role in healing in the wake of terrorist events based on his personal experiences living as a Latinx and queer man. He offers recommendations on how to inquire into viewpoints that differ from our own, so that in the wake of terrorism, "we will heal through the formation of communities that are based on genuine interest outside of ourselves and within relation to our cultural surroundings."

Whether we experience terrorism ourselves or are witnesses to it via Facebook, television news, or other media, it is nearly impossible to escape—terrorism has become a part of our daily lives. And, Communication will continue to play an increasingly prominent role in how we discuss and respond to terrorists and terrorism. Perhaps it also can play an even larger role in helping to deter future attacks. We hope this issue of *Spectra* provides some insight into that possibility ■

Speaking of Terrorism...

How and Why Leaders' Words Matter

By Carol Winkler, Ph.D.

Words matter. And when U.S. presidents publicly talk about terrorism, they matter in profound ways. In the contemporary era, they signal allies about the global priorities of the United States, help define the diplomatic standing of countries within the global community, model other international leaders' own rhetorical choices about terrorism, and can shape intelligence-sharing or other security arrangements between allies in the fight against the terrorism threat.

At times, the words of presidents also function as fodder for extremist groups' media campaigns. Edited and repurposed, presidential statements can and do serve as inflammatory components of recruitment materials that are designed to attract those sympathetic to terrorist causes. Because such groups now produce and package their own messages across multiple platforms—magazines, newsletters, and videos—the potential negative impact of presidential messaging is magnified. A 2015 International Centre for Counter-Terrorism—The Hague research paper by Alex P. Schmid noted that ISIS alone was sending out 90,000 tweets and other social media responses each day.

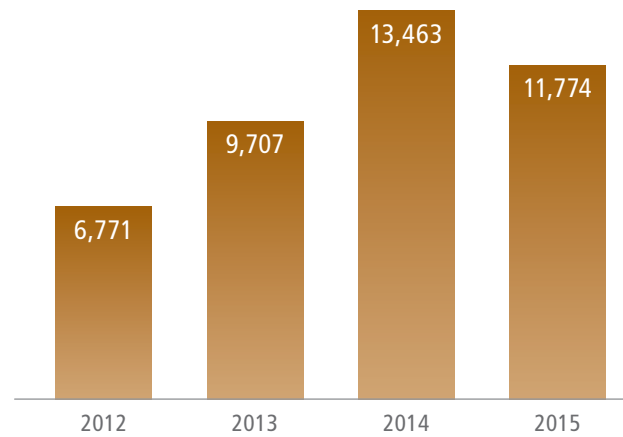
The rhetorical choices of U.S. leaders also help guide public reaction to violent events at home and abroad. The

decision to label a violent attack an act of terrorism often heightens the public's anxiety levels and helps narrow the range of what the public considers appropriate response options. In 1990, when George H. W. Bush was attempting to rally support for his Gulf War, for example, his internal polling showed that describing Saddam Hussein as a "terrorist dictator" moved the majority of the public from reluctant to supportive. Today, the former Obama administration continues to receive criticism for failing to act with due haste to publicly label the 2012 attacks in Benghazi an act of terrorism.

In my book, *In the Name of Terrorism: Presidents on Political Violence in the Post-World War II Era*, I document how the term "terrorism" is particularly impactful because it serves as a key term for defining the boundaries of American culture. The flexible, adaptive meaning of the term unites disparate audiences in ways that empower U.S. presidents to carry out actions that the public might otherwise consider inappropriate, if not entirely unacceptable. Within this complex of competing interests, the central question becomes, "What should a president say about terrorism in public?"



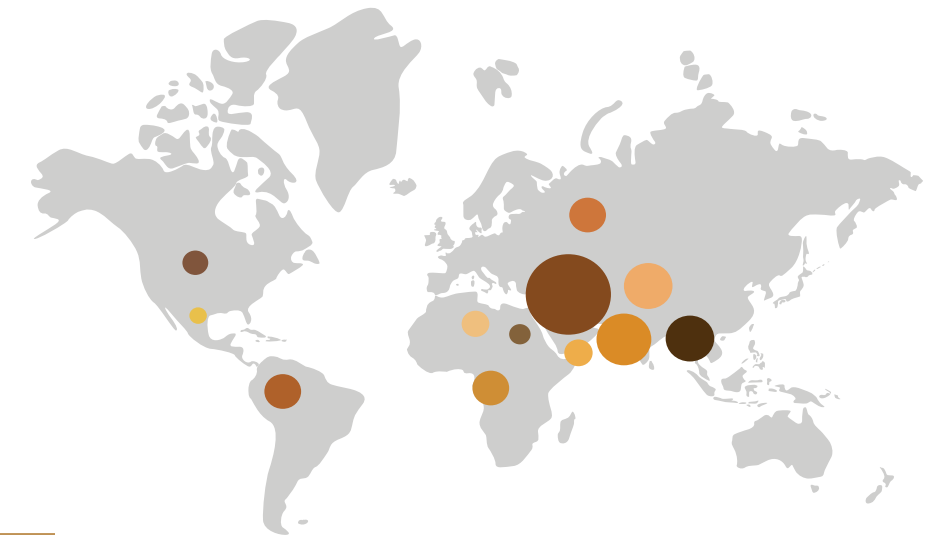
Annual Global Terrorist Attack Counts



Source: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism: Annex of Statistical Information, Country Reports on Terrorism, 2012–2015.

With thousands of terrorist attacks occurring each year, and annual deaths from those attacks numbering in the tens of thousands, presidential administrations must select which events to incorporate in their public discourse.

The mention of a terrorist incident, and its cumulative interaction with other incidents the president has previously mentioned, requires a thorough, strategic consideration.



DEFINING THE PROBLEM OF TERRORISM

When presidents publicly discuss terrorism, they immediately face a fateful choice. They can focus on the terrorists' identities, ideologies, victims, or behaviors. If they emphasize identity, they might limit their public comments to states or groups listed on the U.S. State Department's official list of State Sponsors of Terrorism or Designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations with proven patterns of conducting or supporting acts of politically motivated violence. Or, they might cast a wider net by labeling certain group affinities as terrorists (i.e., "Islamic fundamentalist terrorists," "white supremacists," "cyber-terrorists," etc.).

Presidents who focus on the identity of terrorists expose the public to several risks. The State Department's lists of state sponsors and terrorist groups exclude many dangerous groups and individuals that have demonstrated increased lethality in recent years, including lone actors, domestic terrorists, and those acting from inspiration rather than actual group membership. The wider net approach, by contrast, jeopardizes the public by defining broad, vilified "out-groups," whose parameters include individuals with no prior interest in conducting or supporting terrorist violence, by discouraging individuals with knowledge useful for attack prevention from coming forward, and by bolstering the grievance narratives deployed by groups such as ISIS and al-Qaeda to recruit new members to their causes.

U.S. presidents who, instead, emphasize terrorist ideology as the defining characteristic of terrorism also face

challenges. Announcing that terrorists have an ideology ignores the inherent difficulties associated with trying to explain what core beliefs unite the disparate group of actors who are carrying out politically motivated acts of violence. Simply put, no one terrorist ideology exists, as groups often interpret the defining values of their cultures in unique ways. Competition between perspectives often leads to aggressive, if not violent, confrontations between the groups, as the contemporary case of relations among ISIS, the PKK, and the al-Nusra Front in Iraq and Syria attest. Some groups have now pledged life-long allegiance (bayah) to al-Qaeda and ISIS; many others posing threats now and in the future, have not. Hence, presidents attempting to homogenize the ideology of all terrorist groups risk their own credibility, if not some of their capacity to enlist the international support needed to address the threat of terrorism. If other countries choose to support U.S. efforts despite the questionable veracity of the public stance, the ideological approach nonetheless bolsters the "clash of civilizations" narrative that groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIS repeatedly utilize in their media campaigns to attract an ongoing supply of recruits to their causes.

A further challenge looms in the ideological approach when groups listed by the State Department as terrorist organizations win elections in their own countries. Hamas, with its majority standing in the Palestinian National Authority, and ousted President Mohamed Morsi, Egypt's first democratically elected leader backed by the Muslim

Brotherhood in Egypt, serve as recent examples. Ideological slants on terrorism make the principle of honoring free and fair election choices in these cases particularly challenging, as they treat all designated groups, elected or not, as component parts of a homogenized terrorist threat that lacks distinction.

Given the risks associated with identifying terrorists by affiliation or characterizing their core ideology, U.S. presidents should, instead, focus on the horrifically violent behaviors inflicted upon the victims of terrorists. Violent acts, such as the use of chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons and the intentional killing of innocent civilians, function as unifiers for the majority of the world's nations and the populations living in those nations. To maintain needed global credibility, the featured behaviors should highlight unacceptable acts of violence where America lacks culpability or, at least, where clear evidence exists that U.S. actions are demonstrably distinct from and preferable to those of its opponents.

Presidents should characterize victims in ways that emphasize their innocence, where appropriate. Highlighting politically motivated, violent acts against humanitarian workers, journalists, ambassadors, and innocent women and children, for example, helps position the United States to appear, by contrast, as a nation that is committed to aiding those in need, embracing freedom of the press, wanting to resolve problems through diplomatic channels, and fighting wars while respecting non-combatants.

Taken as a whole, presidents should identify politically motivated acts of violence considered unacceptable in civilized societies. In so doing, they not only help establish the moral boundaries of American culture, but they also signal and define what behaviors deserve a response from the United States and all civilized nations.

COMMUNICATING ABOUT TERRORISM INCIDENTS

With thousands of terrorist attacks occurring each year, and annual deaths from those attacks numbering in the tens of thousands, presidential administrations must select which events to incorporate in their public discourse. The selected examples inevitably highlight specific perpetrator identities, ideologies, behaviors, victims, and strategic relationships for domestic and global audiences. Accordingly, the mention of a terrorist incident, and its cumulative interaction with other incidents the president has previously mentioned, requires a thorough, strategic consideration. Leaders' words can heighten public anxiety and create political pressure to target solutions at the types of terrorist incidents the president highlights.

Presidents who are concerned about their domestic political standing should generally limit (if not avoid altogether) public discussion of ongoing hostage situations. National leaders often lack the ability to secure the release of hostages. Nor can leaders trust the assurances of timely release by hostage-takers. Thus, presidents find themselves struggling to reassure the public that hostages are safe,

Both Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan openly discussed their concern for U.S. citizens held as hostages. Both leaders suffered more than 20 point drops in their approval ratings when the public lost faith in their ability to bring a swift end to their respective crises.



While all presidents will continue to battle terrorist groups and work to incarcerate violent offenders, they also need to develop a revised communication strategy that reassures the public.

or that the incident will come to a peaceful conclusion. Publicly magnifying the importance of those held hostage tends to amplify presidential weakness because it exposes the limited ability of a president to effect a positive outcome. Both Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan openly discussed their concern for U.S. citizens held as hostages. Both leaders suffered more than 20 point drops in their approval ratings when the public lost faith in their ability to bring a swift end to their respective crises.

By choosing instead to publicly comment on acts of terrorism with identifiable endpoints such as bombings, chemical weapon use, vehicle attacks on pedestrians, etc., presidents maintain public focus on matters they can influence. Televised presidential addresses can publicly describe a punishing response the media documents in real time on a split screen in an effort to deter other groups considering similar acts of violence. The presidents can also further isolate terrorists and their state supporters by describing how a terrorist act has resulted in neutral or opposing nations now joining in an alliance with the United States.

COMMUNICATING THE U.S. RESPONSE

Viewed simply from a short-term, domestic political perspective, U.S. presidents have an obvious incentive to say they will win the fight against terrorism. Raising public expectations of success, however, may carry swift, if not immediate, political repercussions in the era of instant global communication. Consider the case of ISIS. Even as coalition forces escalate a successful military campaign causing the group to

rapidly lose control of territory in Iraq and Syria, global media outlets and cellphones alike circulate evidence of ongoing, successful ISIS and ISIS-inspired attacks against Western democracies (e.g., Great Britain, France, Sweden, Germany, Australia, and the United States), and even more numerous attacks against the rest of the world (e.g., the Middle East, Africa, and Asia). A single attack by a shooter, driver, or airline passenger has the potential to dramatically undermine public confidence in a president's ability to keep the nation safe.

Previously, U.S. presidents have relied upon war and crime narrative frames to guide their public statements about possible responses to terrorism. Declaring a war on terror, however, invites the American public to expect the unlikely, if not impossible, scenario of eventual surrender by the enemy. Even if the leadership stresses the prospect of a lengthy conflict ahead, the public will still anticipate celebrating victory someday. Similarly, focusing on bringing perpetrators to justice creates challenges for presidents, as a cellphone picture of a free, alleged perpetrator easily demonstrates the limits of the criminal prosecution model. While all presidents will continue to battle terrorist groups and work to incarcerate violent offenders, they also need to develop a revised communication strategy that reassures the public.

In short, U.S. presidents need to speak in a way that better describes their interpretation of "winning" or "defeating" a specific terrorist group. Presidents always possess some latitude for defining their terms, but the need to bring clarity grows more acute given the complex message context prevalent in online media

produced by and for terrorist groups. When presidents tout broad goals of winning and declaring victory, they make themselves vulnerable to news media and online users who can easily undermine presidential credibility by splicing their words with vivid, engrossing pictures of ongoing attacks by the "defeated" groups.

In speeches discussing ISIS, for example, presidents could articulate an achievable standard of winning by focusing exclusively and consistently on the goal of removing ISIS from the lands they control in Iraq and Syria. Such an approach would allow U.S. leaders to claim a credible, achievable victory in the foreseeable future, while simultaneously undermining the integrity of the oft-repeated ISIS message strategy

of "remaining and expanding" articulated early on in *Dabiq*, the group's online, English-language publication. Partitioning the politically useful concept of winning into a series of achievable outcomes positions, U.S. presidents can maintain a credible, public posture, while continuing to respond to a problem likely to continue into the future.

The speed and diffusion of today's global media demands that U.S. presidents maintain a resilient, credible public posture that is backed by actions consistent with their public messaging. Maintaining the moral high ground is essential if the United States is to win the war of ideas that will help stem the steady flow of recruits to the terrorists' cause. ■



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How Communication Theory Can Help COUNTER-TERRORISM STAKEHOLDERS

By Hamilton Bean, Ph.D., and Bryan C. Taylor, Ph.D.

In mainstream discussion, “terrorism” is typically defined as the unpredictable use of violence by non-state actors to injure and kill non-combatant civilians. However, because terrorism is commonly motivated by political ideology and grievance, it is also depicted as a fundamentally *communicative* act. In this view, terrorists design and enact violence as a *message*, one that is meant to express ruthless resolve, and to intimidate and coerce governments and their citizens (e.g., by undermining the faith of the latter in the ability of the former to secure their everyday existence). Indeed, terrorists typically calculate the form and content of their violence (e.g., its location and timing) to maximize both its media coverage and its congruence with related political and military strategies.

THE PROMISE OF COMMUNICATION THEORY?

These conventions suggest that communication *theory* might help policymakers, officials, and citizens prepare for and respond to terrorism. This assumption is challenged, however, by two contingencies. The first arises from theory’s status as a scholarly project that seeks to explain, predict, and influence communication through rigorous, empirical, and falsifiable investigation. While these values commonly establish the *scientific* legitimacy of theory, the activity of theorizing cannot transcend the *ethical* and *political* issues evoked by terrorism. That is, even though terrorism is commonly stigmatized (and with good reason), that status does not preclude the responsibility of scholars to explore underlying questions. Examples

include *why* groups choose to violently express their grievances, *how* powerful actors (e.g., states) define and invoke this term to pursue their own interests (e.g., to maintain their monopoly on the legitimate use of force), and *whether* targeted groups should respond to terrorism by modifying their existing policies. In opening itself to these questions, the traditional value of *objective* theory yields to the values of *reflexivity* and *accountability*. Scholarly inquiry subsequently proceeds from alternate questions: “*In whose interests do we seek to understand and control terrorist communication?*” and “*How do these interests alternately enable and constrain the questions we ask and the claims we argue?*”

The second contingency involves the paucity of *actual* theorizing about terrorism-related communication. Curious stakeholders might reasonably begin their exploration here with the scholarly journal *Communication Theory*. Surprisingly, however, in a journal that has been publishing for more than two decades, the root term “terror” appears only three times in its article titles. A softer search for secondary use of this term in the journal’s archive yields 26 additional hits, with most connected to perennial concerns such as “media” and “networks.” Shifting to a broader search for the terms “communication theory” and “terrorism” in the database “Communication and Mass Media Complete,” we find 40 items—with only 10 published in the mainstream journals of either ICA (nine of ten) or NCA (one of ten). This pattern, of course, does not implicate the *quality* of existing theorizing—merely that this topic has not (yet) been extensively treated.

COMMUNICATION THEORIES AND TERRORISMS

Those seeking to cultivate this connection might usefully consider what Robert Craig calls communication’s meta-theoretical “traditions.” Craig’s scheme groups together *specific* communication theories that share similar philosophical commitments. One example is the “cybernetic” tradition, which emphasizes the classic sender-message-channel-receiver (SMCR) model. This model is routinely evoked in institutional and strategic discussions of terrorism. Indeed, Judith Tinnes has identified more than 100 academic journals publishing terrorism-related studies, a good number of which draw upon information-related concepts, such as *channel*, *transmission*, and *decoding*. This perspective is further normalized as

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[Former NCA President] Dan O’Hair (far right) has urged policymakers to utilize *risk communication theory* to improve public preparedness and response. In providing such testimony, communication scholars can identify, critique, and transform policymakers’ lay and vernacular theories.

stakeholders fixate on the covert use by terrorist actors of communication technologies (e.g., encryption, the darknet, etc.). It is doubtful, however, whether any single tradition can theorize the complexities of terrorism. Such complexities include the need for distinguishing among various *scales* (e.g., domestic vs. international), *degrees* (e.g., nonlethal vs. lethal; discriminate vs. indiscriminate), *forms* (e.g., cyber- vs. eco-), *motives* (e.g., dissent, protest, insurgency, etc.), and *sources* (e.g., state-sponsored, externally radicalized, lone wolf, etc.) of political violence.

CONFLICTING VALUES, INTERESTS, AND OBJECTIVES

As noted, the value of any communication theory for engaging with terrorism varies because of the diverging interests of the groups involved (to say nothing of the internal diversity of their respective subgroups). For example, *media framing* and *agenda-setting theory*—which emphasize the role of mainstream news coverage in shaping audience understanding of public issues—can “help” different groups in different ways. *Policymakers* may use these theories to disseminate messages that seek news media and public support for proposed antiterrorism laws (e.g., by promoting threat reduction over the traditional value of privacy). Alternately, *officials* concerned with enacting those laws may use framing to construct messages

that thwart terrorist recruitment efforts. Finally, as Mary Brinson and Michael Stohl’s work suggests, *citizen* groups might use framing to develop messages that resist official demonization of targeted ethnic groups. This example illustrates how the use of communication theory may contribute to both consensus and conflict among counter-terrorism officials and their stakeholders. Put another way, communication theories of terrorism are ethically and politically “promiscuous.” They serve multiple interests simultaneously, and spur complex, unpredictable interactions among policymakers, officials, and citizens. Such interactions influence the ability of these groups to imagine and enact terrorism-related policies.

IDENTIFYING USEFUL COMMUNICATION THEORIES

The discussion above regarding the cybernetic tradition indicates that, whether implicitly or explicitly, most counter-terrorism actors have assimilated *some* theoretical narratives of communication. In the case of policymakers, for example, this exposure is evident in the informational materials that they (and their staff) consume—for example, legal and budgetary analyses produced by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). However, despite the centrality of communication in these materials, they rarely mention specific *theories*. More explicit in this regard are the contributions of communication scholars who have testified before congressional committees on the role of theory in addressing terrorism-related issues. Dan O’Hair, for example, has urged policymakers to utilize *risk communication theory* to improve public preparedness and response. In providing such testimony, communication scholars can identify, critique, and transform policymakers’ lay and vernacular theories.

Elsewhere, communication theory appears more overtly in the discourse of counter-terrorism and community preparedness/response officials. Here, theory is informing

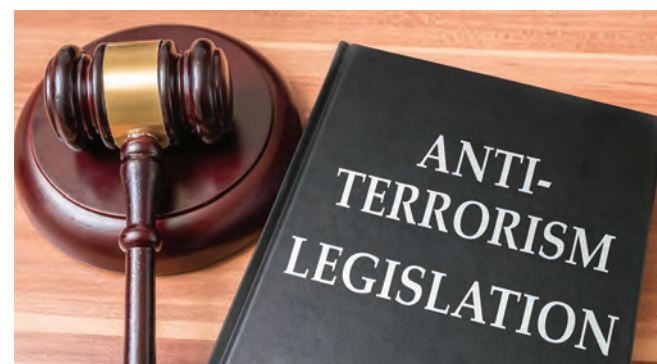


efforts by those groups to conceptualize the process of “radicalization,” and to counter the narratives that undergird violent extremism. Randall Rogan, for example, has used *grounded theory* to analyze jihadi texts. Cynthia Stohl and Michael Stohl have leveraged *network theory* to clarify the communicative structure and process of terrorist organizing. Arizona State University’s Center for Strategic Communication has been at the forefront of providing officials with actionable insights about how to disrupt terrorist communication networks and improve counter-terrorism *narratives*. Similarly, Kurt Braddock and John Horgan have identified factors that make terrorist narratives persuasive for audiences. This work has helped counter-terrorism officials design theory-based counter-narratives that maintain source credibility, conceal persuasive intent, avoid sparking psychological reactance in audiences, and encourage non-violent behavior. And in their recent briefing of U.S. CENTCOM’s Strategic Multi-Layer Assessment team, Amanda Edgar and Hamilton urged those officials and analysts to supplement their work on narratives with attention to the *genosonic* qualities of extremist video messages. Such efforts help stakeholders better understand—in the words of H. L. “Bud” Goodall, Jr.—how terrorism moves from an online “storyline” to “the streets.” Finally, professionals from the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU), which educates military and civilian special operations personnel tasked with combatting terrorism, have collaborated with communication scholars. At NCA’s 2016 Annual Convention, for example, a JSOU course director

served as the respondent for the panel, “The ISIL Strategic Communication Campaign in Context: Developing Opportunities for Disrupting Online Extremist Discourse.”

Another way of assessing the utility of communication theory for counter-terrorism is to examine the publications of soldiers and civilians earning advanced degrees at military colleges. For example, recent theses completed in the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School have used *the diffusion of innovation*, *SMCR models* (e.g., those developed by Shannon, Weaver, Berlo, and Schramm), *crisis communication theory*, and *interpersonal deception theory*. Multiple governmental and quasi-governmental research initiatives also include the use of communication theory. For example, research exploring the role of media in the jihadi-Salafist movement is currently being funded by the U.S. Department of Defense’s Minerva Research Initiative. And work by Jonathan Matusitz on the symbolism of terrorism, which draws upon *semiotic*, *cybernetic*, and *socio-psychological* traditions, has been cited by international government agencies and multinational organizations. Elsewhere, officials are using theories associated with *critical discourse analysis* to thematically code terrorist messages.

The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) supports multiple agencies across the U.S. government with applied research, and its affiliated scholars have leveraged *risk communication theory* to help emergency managers in preparing their communities for—and responding to—terrorism. For example, the 2012 START report, *Understanding Risk*



For *citizens*, communication theories can be useful in preparing for and responding to terrorism. Understandably, however, public audiences are even less concerned than policymakers with formal theory; they need scholars and officials to provide effective translation.

However, these communication theories have (so far) mostly addressed preparedness or response in the *aftermath* of terrorism, rather than providing resources to help citizens *prevent or reduce* terrorism through political participation, activism, or other forms of civic agency.

Communication Best Practices: A Guide for Emergency Managers and Communicators, pinpointed useful communication theories for terrorism preparedness, response, and recovery phases. That report explained how acts of terrorism, with differing familiarity/dread characteristics and unique psychological and emotional entailments, require risk communication approaches that differ from those used in other types of disasters. The *extended parallel process model* can be helpful in considering probable public responses to different types of preparedness and response messages. *Image restoration and repair theories*, and the *situational crisis communication theory*, have also proven useful in designing messages for the response phase of a terrorist attack.

In a related example, Vicki Freimuth managed the communication response by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to the anthrax attacks of 2001. She has written about the helpfulness of *chaos theory* in explaining how the crisis led to changes in how CDC actors organized communication. Those actors faced several challenges in this process, including uncertainty, the need to establish and maintain spokesperson credibility, the complexities of inter- and intra-organizational collaboration, and the need for speed and responsiveness. Chaos theory helped Freimuth see events in a new way and adjust the CDC's communication practices accordingly.

For *citizens*, communication theories can be useful in preparing for and responding to terrorism. Understandably, however, public audiences are even less concerned than policymakers with formal theory; they need scholars and officials to provide effective translation. For example, Claude Miller and Mark Landau have explained how a communication perspective on *terror management theory* developed in Psychology can help citizens better understand the socio-emotional environment of terrorism—including, for example, how latent sacralization of national symbols and scapegoating of vulnerable groups increase following terrorist attacks. Similarly, *uncertainty reduction theory* suggests that stereotyping also reduces affinity and increases

distance among the citizens of a community affected by terrorism. Theories such as the *coordinated management of meaning* and *uses and gratifications* also help to explain and influence public behavior in the aftermath of terrorism—for example, by promoting communicative practices of *resilience*. Laura Black has explored *dialogue theory* in the context of online discussions about how to rebuild the former World Trade Center site. However, these communication theories have (so far) mostly addressed preparedness or response in the *aftermath* of terrorism, rather than providing resources to help citizens *prevent or reduce* terrorism through political participation, activism, or other forms of civic agency. For this to change, communication theory must confront the powerful barriers erected by security states to containing—and neutralizing—such agency.

THE RISK OF INSTRUMENTALIZING COMMUNICATION THEORY

Limiting the use of communication theory to helping with preparedness and response efforts risks *instrumentalizing* this resource. This term suggests how, even when related operations are framed as conforming to values of “helping,” “effectiveness,” and “efficiency,” they may serve to maintain the top-down, unilateral power of security providers. Communication theory may thus encourage policymakers, officials, and citizens to reflect on *in whose interests* the terms “terrorism” and “terrorist” are defined, and attributed to particular events and actors. *Critical and cultural theories* may surface important issues for such reflection. For example, while far-right extremists commit the bulk of violent attacks in the United States, the Trump administration has selectively invoked the threat of “international” and “Islamic” terrorism to limit immigration and travel from several Muslim majority countries. Similarly, news coverage of events such as the murder by avowed white supremacist Dylan Roof of 12 African-American parishioners in South Carolina indicates that some journalists are reluctant to label such violence “terrorism.”

Such examples suggest that we must remain aware of how instrumentalized theory shapes the explanation of communication by and about “terrorists.” They suggest that, rather than perpetuating traditional concerns such as the transmission of information, we might focus instead on how communication *constitutes* particular kinds of identities and relationships. In other words, the “problem” of communication and terrorism appears

differently if it is framed by non-instrumental questions. Examples would include “What type of people—and what type of world—do we create by communicating in this fashion?” and “How might we communicate differently to enact our ideals in a world shaped by the interaction of terrorism and counter-terrorism?”

We do not maintain that answering such questions is easy. Only that it is urgent. ■



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Responding to Terrorism in the Digital Age

By Stephanie Madden, Ph.D.



Social media should not be viewed as a panacea for rooting out radicalization, but it does offer innovative approaches to responding to terrorist attacks, identifying potential threats, and conducting strategic counterterrorism communication.

Boston. Paris. San Bernardino. Orlando. Manchester. London. Recent terrorist attacks have ushered in a new way of thinking about how social media can be used to respond to and deter international and domestic terrorism. In the aftermath of any terrorist event, people often ask what can be done to stop another tragedy in the future. Communication scholarship has started to delve into these challenges, but at this point there are more questions than answers for the role that social media can and should play in terrorism prevention and response. Social media should not be viewed as a panacea for rooting out radicalization, but it does offer innovative approaches to responding to terrorist attacks, identifying potential threats, and conducting strategic counterterrorism communication.

THE DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The use of social media increases during terrorist attacks as people seek immediate information, and the speed at which this is shared through digital platforms can be a double-edged sword. Although terrorist attacks are still relatively infrequent in Western countries, social media are making them more visible. This feeds into the goal of terrorists to incite fear and get their message out to a large audience.

In an ongoing crisis situation, new information is constantly emerging. Government officials and emergency management organizations use social media to provide updates about the situation, but given the need for official verification regarding the threat, oftentimes this response can seem too slow. Journalists and the public may provide their own updates from the scene by disseminating information, using social media as a tip line, seeking or providing information about loved ones and family, and filling the inevitable information gap.

There is also a voyeuristic quality that allows an international audience to follow along and insert itself into the crisis narrative through tweets, hashtags, information sharing, profile picture filters, and more.

Because of the ease by which information can be shared, we have seen the proliferation of misinformation in the wake of terrorist incidents. For example, during the man-hunt that followed the Boston Marathon bombings in April 2013, the image and name of missing Brown University student Sunil Tripathi wrongly circulated as a suspect. Social media can quickly and easily influence mainstream discourse. Thus, even if information is later proven to be false, that misinformation has still become part of the narrative and has real ramifications on human lives.

Not all misinformation shared after a terrorist event is well-intentioned. Some social media users perpetuate deliberate hoaxes. After the attack in Manchester, reports of people creating fake profiles of victims of the attack emerged. Photos of people nowhere near the attacks were taken from social media pages and posted with captions saying they were missing. In the report “Social Media Use during Disasters: A Review of the Knowledge Base Gaps,” issued by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), Fraustino, Liu, and Jin note that humor can motivate online communication during disaster situations. While humor can serve as a coping mechanism for dealing with crises, misplaced attempts at humor in these situations can lead to dissonance and confusion. The perception of humorous behavior, the anonymity of online spaces, and the culture of internet trolling can all contribute to the propagation of hoaxes. Unfortunately, such hoaxes and misinformation must be taken seriously and investigated, slowing down the process for finding potential perpetrators, rescuing victims, and rebuilding after a disaster.

However, social media undoubtedly can have positive effects because of their speed of communication and network of users around the globe. In recent terrorist incidents, good Samaritans have used hashtags such as #RoomForManchester and #porteouverte (“open door” in French) to offer their homes as shelter for victims. This behavior is an example of the well-documented function

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of social media to help users self-mobilize during disasters. Social media can also help people check in on their family and friends. A 2010 survey conducted by the American Red Cross found that nearly half of respondents would use social media in a disaster to let loved ones know they were safe. Facebook Safety Check, which launched in 2014 but was activated for the first time for a terrorism-related crisis after the November 2015 Paris attacks, allows users to identify that they are safe, which is then reported to their followers. For those in crisis-stricken areas, the platform offers a place to share information about resources—food, transportation, shelter, etc.—through a Community Help section, further fulfilling one of people's primary motivations to use social media during a crisis situation.

NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK

While socially mediated responses to terrorist situations are becoming more visible, online tools are also being used behind the scenes to understand the radicalization process in hopes of deterring future attacks. As early as 1999, the research community recognized the internet's increasingly important role in how extremist groups communicate because of its enhanced interconnectivity, anonymity, access to new audiences, and affordability. Intergroup communication theory offers insights into why virtual spaces are adept at bringing together and edifying radical views for online users. Research suggests that extremist groups are especially adept at providing individuals with certainty about themselves and the world around them, making the groups especially appealing to people experiencing threat from an outside group—whether this is from the government, Western ideologies, the media, or elsewhere. Virtual communities of support work to validate otherwise stigmatized views and offer a space that is always “on” for the production and consumption of extremist narratives.

However, finding and rooting out credible threats via social media can be a challenge. Because online spaces allow for the proliferation of extremist viewpoints, social

media companies have recently come under fire for not doing enough to stop hate speech and radicalization on their platforms. In response to this criticism, sites such as Facebook have undertaken more efforts to monitor and remove content that violates the Community Standards against support for terrorist activity. While primarily relying on trained monitors to review content, Facebook is increasingly using artificial intelligence to help to review posted materials. However, this is still a highly subjective, imperfect, and contentious process. Recently, Facebook drew criticism after internal documents regarding the training of content monitors were revealed to the public. Critics alleged that many of the policies governing what constitutes acceptable material are inconsistent and seem to protect certain groups more than others. Additionally, judgments about what constitutes terrorism tend to focus on jihadists rather than white nationalist or neo-Nazi movements, which may be obscuring pressing threats and minimizing the violence of these groups.

In an aggressive effort to cut down on extremist messaging on social media platforms, Germany passed a law to take effect in October. Under the new law, social media companies will be fined if illegal, racist, or slanderous comments and posts are not removed with 24 hours. This kind of governmental action raises questions about freedom of expression, as it is difficult to discern when extreme viewpoints may lead to extreme, and even violent, actions.

Politicians such as British Prime Minister Teresa May have called for greater internet regulation to deny terrorists and extremist sympathizers digital communication tools, yet face future questions about the specifics of implementation and the expansion of government surveillance. Furthermore, cracking down on extremist accounts on social media often pushes the conversations off public sites and onto encrypted messaging platforms. Because of this, there is a growing market for predictive analysis that would mine big data for patterns of suspicious behavior to help predict crimes and terrorist attacks before they happen. Computer scientists at Binghamton



There is increasing usage of state-sponsored social media to confront online radicalization, although this approach has created its own set of challenges. When social media efforts do not consider the makeup of audiences, who they trust, and their communicative context, those efforts will never be effective in achieving the goals of the organization.

University have developed the Networked Pattern Recognition (NEPAR) Framework, which focuses less on individual terrorist behavior and more on the comparative modeling of characteristics (e.g., attack time, weapon type) associated with past attacks. This can help determine what factors are going to be important in predicting future behavior and reducing the risk of a terrorist attack.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND COUNTERTERRORISM

Extremists—both international and domestic—have become remarkably adept at using social media to recruit, radicalize, fundraise, and amplify their message. For example, ISIS utilizes an Arabic-language Twitter app called Dawn of Glad Tidings that posts tweets to user accounts that are deemed persuadable by ISIS's social media operation. Additionally, ISIS enlists hundreds and sometimes thousands of users to repeatedly tweet hashtags to make their messages trend and project an image of strength.

While extremists have learned to take advantage of the social media system, government communicators often struggle with effective counter-messaging, in part because of issues of credibility and authenticity when there is a misalignment in foreign policy practices. Historically, public diplomacy campaigns from the U.S. government

have often missed the mark in “winning hearts and minds” around the globe. The U.S. Department of State elevated its counterterrorism office to a Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism in January 2012. The bureau has been a proponent of “counterterrorism diplomacy,” which focuses on ensuring that foreign countries have the capacity and motivation to deal with extremism within their own borders. A major challenge, though, is when extremism spills across borders through social media.

There is increasing usage of state-sponsored social media to confront online radicalization, although this approach has created its own set of challenges. When social media efforts do not consider the makeup of audiences, who they trust, and their communicative context, those efforts will never be effective in achieving the goals of the organization. The Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC)—established to coordinate and inform government-wide foreign communication against terrorism and violent extremism—was quietly shut down in 2015 after unsuccessful campaigns. The most controversial social media campaign developed by the CSCC was called “Welcome to ISIS Land,” which was a one-minute viral video that used grisly footage from Islamic State propaganda videos to subvert ISIS messages

The role that social media can play in responding to terrorism, and ultimately in deterring terrorism, is just beginning to be understood. It is clear, though, that there is no silver social media bullet for confronting terrorism and violent extremism.

of Muslim persecution abroad, religious duty, and the prospect of adventure. While designed in the same vein as attack ads for political campaigns, many saw this a shocking embrace of the adversary's communication strategy that offered no clear evidence of discouraging would-be militants from traveling to Syria.

According to the State Department website, the Global Engagement Center (GEC) took the place of the CSCC in 2016 "to be more effective in the information space and... focused on partner-driven messaging and data analytics." Partnerships play a key role, as social media posts and videos with a U.S. Department of State label will always face issues of credibility and authenticity. For this reason, the GEC is working to develop a global network of local partners to develop messages that resonate with at-risk populations, which is necessary in developing effective

counterterrorism messages. Additionally, while the details are still vague, the GEC is also focused on using data analytics from both the public and private sectors to better understand and target susceptible audiences.

NO SILVER SOCIAL MEDIA BULLET

The role that social media can play in responding to terrorism, and ultimately in deterring terrorism, is just beginning to be understood. It is clear, though, that there is no silver social media bullet for confronting terrorism and violent extremism. Addressing threats of radicalization requires both online and offline efforts that consider both international and homegrown terrorism. Communication scholars, government communicators, law enforcement officials, and the private sector must work together to confront these current and future challenges. ■

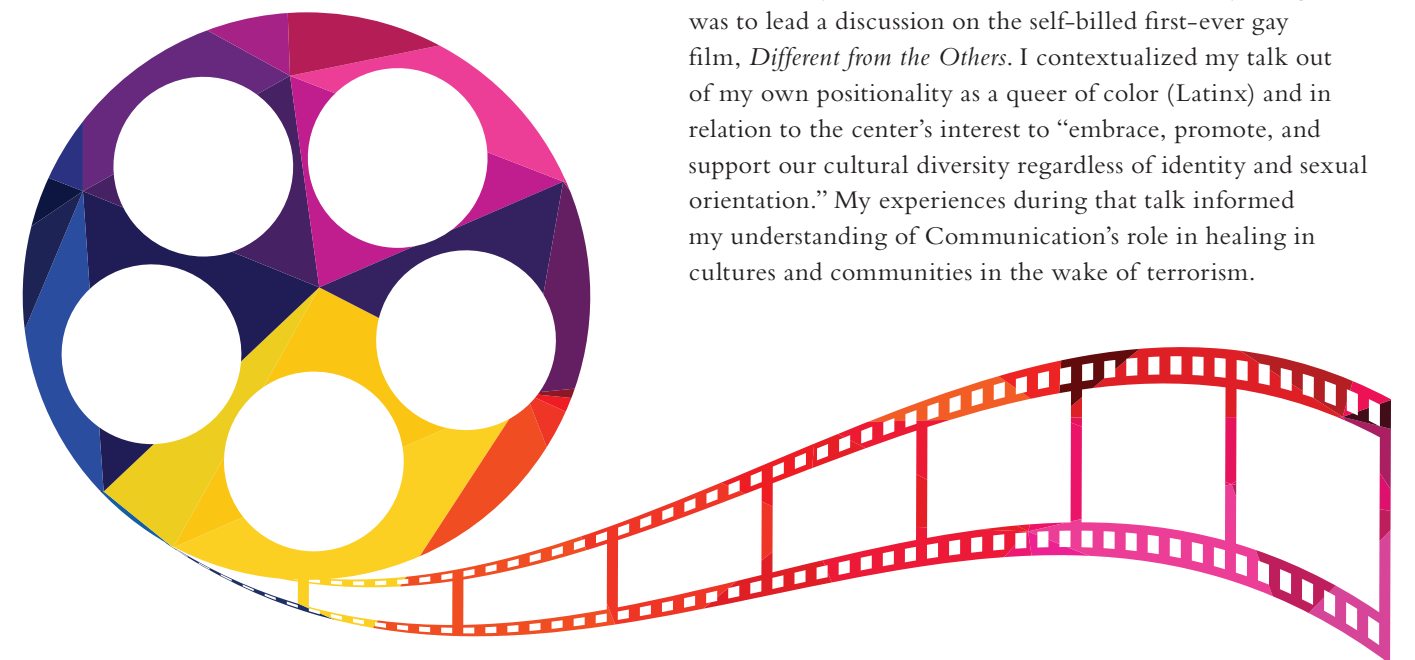


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Communication's Role in Healing: When You're Different from the Others

By Shane T. Moreman, Ph.D.

When I received the invitation to write this essay, I was on the Big Island of Hawai'i, commonly called The Healing Island. Coming to Hawai'i as part of a sabbatical retreat, I was also invited to speak to the LGBTQ+ Center at the University of Hawai'i, Hilo (UH Hilo). A fledgling group of determined students with an under-staffed but resolute coordinator, the striving LGBTQ+ Center had programmed a Social Justice Film Series addressing gender and sexuality across various cultural identities. My charge was to lead a discussion on the self-billed first-ever gay film, *Different from the Others*. I contextualized my talk out of my own positionality as a queer of color (Latinx) and in relation to the center's interest to "embrace, promote, and support our cultural diversity regardless of identity and sexual orientation." My experiences during that talk informed my understanding of Communication's role in healing in cultures and communities in the wake of terrorism.



Communication offers us multiple methods of inquiry that move us toward healing when those inquiries are borne out of and in relation to the goal of communing.

Communication offers us multiple methods of inquiry that move us toward healing when those inquiries are borne out of and in relation to the goal of communing. A socio-cultural scholar, I seek to understand cultural realities through the stories that are told and lived within given contexts. My research also seeks to introduce muted or previously under-considered narratives so that macro-cultural realities can be re-imagined and re-configured. When people learn that I am an Intercultural Communication scholar, they often ask me for a tip on improving intercultural interactions. Wars, terrorism, hate crimes—where do you begin? I begin simply. I explain that you often know you are in an intercultural communication moment when there is confusion or upset or difficulty. Being of different cultures, with differing beliefs, values, and norms, can lead to misunderstandings between and among people. As a Communication scholar, my preference is to address those moments with inquiry into intent.

The coordinator dimmed the lights and we all watched the film together. A silent film created in Germany in 1919, *Different from the Others* is scored with piano music and cast with actors who vamp and thrash. Having seen the film multiple times, I took the opportunity to scan the room. From our introductions, I knew that my fellow moviegoers were a small and wonderfully complicated crowd. There were four students. Two were enrolled at UH Hilo; one was a non-traditionally aged student, and the other was in her late teens. A third was a university-aged student who was not currently enrolled; and the fourth was a high school student. There were two middle-aged faculty—one was my friend, and one the other was from a social science department. There were three staff members, including the coordinator, ranging in ages from 20 to 40. There was also an elderly, retiree community member who had shown support for the center's mission. In one of the most diverse counties in the nation, the ethnic and racial composition of the room was wide and mixed. The attendees spanned from male to female identification, both trans and cis.

After the movie, when the lights came up, I spoke of how I had lived on the Big Island 20 years earlier for a short six months. Back then, I was a 20-something, single gay man with my M.A. in Communication and the goal of travel. In 2017, I was returning as a 40-something, married, gay man with a Communication Ph.D. and with the same goal to travel. I launched into a story of having been an undergraduate English major/Communication minor at the University of Texas at San Antonio. I had joined M.E.Ch.A. and took part in other campus clubs. The one club I'd always been too terrified to join was the Gay/Lesbian Club. I feared that my attendance to the club meeting would be the beginning of my widespread outing to my friends and then, eventually, to my family. I wasn't ready. However, one time, I had built up the gumption to attend a meeting. Ten minutes too late, I tried to turn the knob to go in, but the door was locked. Protecting club members' identities, club leaders had locked the door so that everyone inside would feel safe from being outted or shamed by a stranger at the door.

As praise for the LGBTQ+ Center, I noted how many people had gotten up and left and come back during the showing of the movie, and how many people had shown up late to a door that was invitingly propped open. I explained that living one's story of queer identity and queer community can be difficult. I applauded the students and the coordinator for nurturing the LGBTQ+ Center as a positive resource. Most importantly, I emphasized that it's so important to have spaces for LGBTQ+ people that are not built around addiction. Coming into my queer identity as a young adult required me to navigate spaces of acceptance that were too often also spaces of addiction: alcohol addiction, drug addiction, and sex addiction. The LGBTQ+ Center at UH Hilo was providing an additional space and, in many ways, a healthier space than glamorized queer nightlife provides.

Then we talked about the film. A love story, *Different from the Others* ends in the death of one of the main characters. A male violin teacher and his male violin student



Original poster for *Different from the Others*.

defy societal judgment and fall in love during a time in Germany when homosexuality was a criminal offense under the German criminal code Paragraph 175. This code criminalized same-sex intimacy and encouraged a type of societal terrorism. Many gays and lesbians who lived under Paragraph 175 accepted being blackmailed by others so as to conceal their identities. As an example, the violin teacher in the movie pays a swindler money to avoid jail time for illegal actions and to avoid societal ostracization for acting on his sexual desire. Contemporaneous to the film's original release, Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld (who plays a cameo role in the film) was helping the German public accept that homosexuality is "merely a variation, and one that is common to all in nature." Produced during a liberal time in Germany's history, the film was partially funded by Dr. Hirschfeld to not only change attitudes about homosexuality but also to condemn the blackmail that was so prevalent under Paragraph 175. Eventually destroyed by Nazi censors, the film survived in fragments, and the plot survived in published writings. What we watched was a refurbishment of the film, with some parts forever lost.

The Big Island politically contextualized the contemporary film viewing in multiple ways. As Rona

A love story, *Different from the Others* ends in the death of one of the main characters. A male violin teacher and his male violin student defy societal judgment and fall in love during a time in Germany when homosexuality was a criminal offense under the German criminal code Paragraph 175. This code criminalized same-sex intimacy and encouraged a type of societal terrorism.

Halualani states, "Though Hawai'i is the 50th U.S. state, Hawaiians view their homeland as an independent, sovereign nation that was illegally colonized and incorporated into the U.S." Additionally, the geographical distance from the U.S. east coast often isolates Hawai'i from U.S. national self-conceptualization. For example, while I was in Hawai'i, the U.S. Attorney General made his diminishing "an island in the Pacific" comment. In discussing Paragraph 175, the LGBTQ+ Center audience was, of course, accustomed to public policies and legislation that directly affected their cultural belonging and frequently resulted in overt hostilities and/or microaggressions against their humanity. And, for the residents of Hawai'i, these policies and laws are decided by institutions and people who are 4,500+ miles away.

In my own life, I have been confused and made pessimistic by legal decisions that remind me again and again that the value of my cultural body as a queer of color is never beyond public debate. Just considering my years as an adult, I have been made accepted and unaccepted, trusted and suspicious, and normal and abnormal. My cultural citizenship as a gay man and my cultural citizenship as a Latinx are constantly in flux. The double helix of being

How could we reconfigure the same-sex romance film canon so that we would not be segregated or exterminated or euthanized? How could we resist the imagined and real societal terrorism that comes with being queer?



In the wake of terrorism, we will heal through the formation of communities that are based on genuine interest outside of ourselves and within relation to our cultural surroundings.

Latinx and queer continues to spin in court cases and on legislative floors, even affecting my attendance at NCA's upcoming 2017 convention in Dallas, Texas.

I began to solicit discussion from the audience, asking people to try to imagine a different queer future. I explained that in so many of the films I had seen before and that I loved (e.g., *Boys on the Side*, *Brokeback Mountain*, *Straight Outta Oz*, and *Moonlight*), the same-sex relationship ends in the dissolution of the relationship, and often in the death of one of the lovers. I talked of looking for myself in Hollywood again and again and seeing myself being left without a fulfilled relationship or, worse, dying. (And, if you're a queer of color, you are usually the one doomed to die [e.g., *Milk*]). In the first gay film, our relationship fails and one of us dies. In contemporary films that focus on same-sex lovers, our relationships still fail and one of us still usually dies. I asked the audience to take seriously the reiteration of the annihilation of queers and queers of color within the status quo's imagination by re-writing the ending of *Different from the Others*.

How could we reconfigure the same-sex romance film canon so that we would not be segregated or exterminated or euthanized? How could we resist the imagined and real societal terrorism that comes with being queer? One student proposed that the teacher and student move from the German town that hated their homosexuality, find a community that accepts them, and live happily ever after. S/he emphasized that his/her film ending would demonstrate what an accepting community could look like. Another audience member proposed that there be an acceptable love triangle. In the film, both the student and his sister fall in love with the teacher. However, the sister comes to understand that her love will never be returned by the teacher, so she decides to be his good friend. This

audience member proposed that the brother and sister could both have a romantic relationship with the teacher. The siblings would be separate from one another, but they could both be happy in their separate loving relationships.

After some other proposals, the high school student spoke up. S/he liked the original ending. S/he saw value in tragedy. I paused and then went on to another audience member, avoiding what I felt to be an insensitive offering. But then I stopped and came back to this student to ask, "What did you mean by that? What did you mean by what you offered?" S/he further explained that, if anything, this tragedy could be heightened in the film so that audience members would feel even worse about the situation and realize the terror being perpetrated on the two main characters. The audience would then be compelled to do something—to use their own particular agency—so that this sort of ending did not happen around them. Offering a single solution concretized a then-subvertible example. As s/he spoke, I began to shake my head, but then I recognized the beauty of it all and began to nod. Smiling, I spoke of Aristotle and how he envisioned the role of tragedy. That student had captured the actionable potential of the tragic form. From my point of view, this student's offering was not my ideal ending, but it was another option offered in the spirit of open dialogue and creativity.

Something I learned from trainings with the National Coalition Building Institute is that when you are offended by someone's words or actions, ask them, "What did you mean by that?" It's simple. Give the person the opportunity to clear up miscommunication or to learn from how they made you feel. Too often, we assume ill intent and then harbor resentment. These micro-moments of resentment then build to macro-enactments that can result in large-scale harm and hate. I realize that not everyone feels

they have the power or even the energy to make such inquiry, but we must work to be courageous enough to do so. Inquiring into intent is not the only option when misunderstanding occurs, but it is an option that more people should pursue.

While on the Big Island, I thought a lot about how the Communication discipline can help us heal in the wake of terrorism. My thoughts were sometimes grand in scale, lofty in expression, and long in explanation. Time and again, I came back to the post-film discussion described

above. There is no one way. However, as Communication practitioners, we need to inquire into viewpoints that differ from our own, with a focus on intent and with a commitment to understanding. Our discipline offers multiple methods of inquiry that can move us beyond connection and into community. In the wake of terrorism, we will heal through the formation of communities that are based on genuine interest outside of ourselves and within relation to our cultural surroundings. The actionable potentials are limitless. ■



SHANE T. MOREMAN is Professor of Communication at California State University, Fresno. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of South Florida under Dr. Elizabeth Bell. His research concerns Latinx communities but more generally it involves critical approaches to communicative and performative aspects of all cultural expression and interaction. In his 14th year at Fresno State, he has also taught Intercultural Communication in China, Costa Rica, and England. At Fresno State, he has served as Coordinator of Global Education and as Executive Director of the Center for Creativity and the Arts. He recently served on NCA's Research Board. Pronouns: he/him/his.

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San Diego State University**

The School of Communication at San Diego State University invites applications for a tenure-track faculty position in Communication, at the rank of Assistant Professor, to begin in the Fall of 2018. The selected candidate will be responsible for teaching the senior Capstone course in Communication and other upper-division courses at the graduate and undergraduate level, as well as directing graduate student theses. The required senior Capstone course emphasizes competencies in the primary learning outcomes across both the generalist communication and health communication majors in the School. Preferred candidates will exhibit a strong record of, or the potential for, grants, publication, and teaching in their chosen areas of communication. All methodological approaches to research will be considered. A Ph.D. by date of hire is required; a doctorate in Communication is preferred (related degrees or areas of study considered). Salary is competitive. Application screening will begin September 4, 2017, and continue until the position is filled. Submission of application materials before September 4 is recommended to assure consideration in the first round of screening applications. Additional information and full application guidelines are available at <http://apply.interfolio.com/42647>.

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Communication, Performance Studies, Health Communication, or Ethnography, is preferred. Applicants from all research methodologies are encouraged to apply. Candidates should embrace the scholar-teacher model by demonstrating a commitment to excellence in teaching and research. Evidence of, or the potential for, external funding is preferred but not required. A Ph.D. by date of hire in Communication is required for appointment at the Assistant Professor level. Salary is competitive and based on experience. Application screening will begin October 1, 2017, and continue until the position is filled. Additional information and full application guidelines are available at <http://apply.interfolio.com/42657>.

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Candidates will have a terminal degree, such as a Ph.D. in Advertising, Public Relations, Mass Communications, Communication, or a related field. Review of applications will begin immediately. The submission deadline is November 24.

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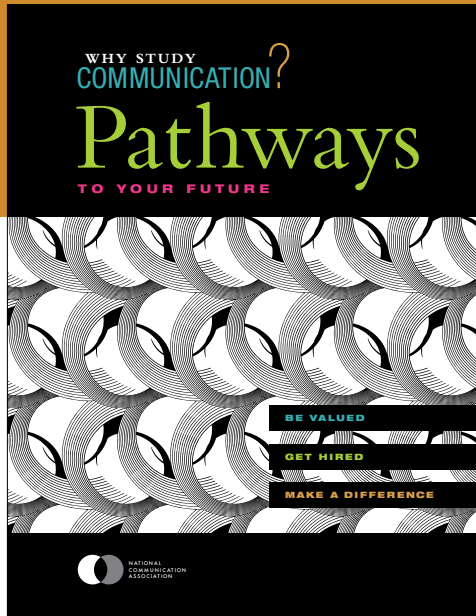
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