Terrorism as a Communication Process: The Audience

After reading this chapter, you will be able to

- discuss the audience as both the second party (immediate target of the message) and the third party (target beyond the immediate target of the message) of terrorism;
- identify the six stages of the Yale Model of Persuasion: exposure, attention, comprehension, acceptance, retention, and translation; and
- evaluate and explain the idea that terrorism is a spectacle.

THE AUDIENCE: DEFINITION

The most fundamental principle of any communication endeavor is to understand the audience. By definition, an **audience** is a group of people who participate in an event, either passively (e.g., by merely watching a show or simply attending to a message transmitted by a sender) or actively (e.g., by overtly participating in the event or providing feedback to the message sender). Whether it is passive or active, the audience is the **interpretive community**, reacting or responding to a message.[1] In the previous chapter, the point was made that terrorism is a language. Terrorists "speak" through the actions they take. The set of interactions between terrorist and society represent a dialogue. This dialogue lays the foundations for what the terrorist attempts to do or say. Terrorists take part in a dialogue with various audiences beyond their immediate target, both internal and external to the group. The message may vary for each audience, even within the context of just one act.[2]

Engaging in a dialogue with a human audience indicates that terrorists try to promote change. For example, they may seek to change policies, to coerce a specific action or set of actions, to put off or prevent enactment of policy, to garner support or sympathy, to induce someone into behaving in certain ways, or to paralyze the audience into inaction. Terrorists

addressing a human audience have a positivist attitude in that they anticipate that their message be heard, understood, and acted on. To achieve any of this, terrorists need public interaction with the audience.[3] The audience, then, is the **public character of terrorism**. Terrorism is a spectacular public action directed to the psychological and emotional state of the audience observing the disaster. The purpose is to produce, in the audience, a feeling of anxiety, a sense of horror. The audience is both the **second party** (immediate target of the message) and the **third party** (target beyond the immediate target of the message) of terrorism. As we will see in this chapter, terrorist actions can also be deliberately committed against third parties who have nothing to do with the terrorists and their goals. The terrorists' intentions are to force governmental bodies or other structures to meet the terrorists' demands.[4]

From a communicative standpoint, the discussion of audience involves the concept of **proxemics** (the study of space and distance). The audience is always situated within a context of spatial interaction with the message sender. Proxemics was introduced by Edward T. Hall (1966).[5] Hall specified four distance zones. (1) Intimate distance stretches from physical touching to eighteen inches. This zone is occupied by those with whom people are intimate. At this distance, the presence of an intruder is not accepted. For example, teachers who step over students' intimate distance will be perceived as intruders. (2) Personal distance covers eighteen inches to four feet. This is the distance of contact between good friends. This would be a more appropriate distance for teacher and student to discuss private matters such as grades, conduct, personal problems, and so forth. (3) Social distance exists from four to twelve feet. This would be the right distance for interaction between casual friends and acquaintances. And (4) public distance goes from twelve feet to an infinite distance. This is where the media come into play. Audiences from all over the world can witness a terrorist act from a remote distance.

TERRORISM AND THE AUDIENCE: FROM INTIMATE TO PUBLIC DISTANCE

The terrorist act, in and of itself, is expected by its perpetrator not only to accomplish a political, religious, or ideological goal; it is also expected to affect a target audience and modify that audience's behavior in a way that will serve the needs of the terrorist. When terrorism hits, the audience can be the immediate target (i.e., intimate distance). A great number of people will likely be in close proximity and witness the attack directly (i.e., personal and social distance), observing dead or injured people, seeing severe damage or ruins, enduring long hours of separation from kinfolk in an atmosphere of panic, losing a friend, or being forced to relocate to another region. The fourth distance zone, public distance, is the zone in which the remote audience is situated. Television has become a long-distance witness, broadcasting images that come from a world far beyond the viewers' biological vision.[6]

### Beyond the Immediate Targets of Terrorism

According to John Williams (1998),[7] two levels of audience exist: (1) the initial, immediate, or direct audience, and (2) the ultimate, delayed, or indirect audience. The former is the target of physical violence, usually innocent civilians. The latter is the

intended audience of the terrorists. Statistically, the intended audience will never be physically struck by terrorism. In our three-dimensional world, the audience is never a victim *per se*. Yet, the supremacy of terrorism is that the audience constantly fears of becoming the victim. This fear of victimization gives terrorism a powerful impact or multiplication effect.[8] For example, in the 1970s, the Red Brigades in Italy randomly shot journalists in the kneecap (a very hurting damage) with the calculated effect of terrorizing all journalists. The latter were afraid of being the next, arbitrary target. The Red Brigades also abducted and inhumanely killed former Prime Minister Aldo Moro, a well-respected and beloved politician at that time. The terrorists' purpose was not to take Moro out of power (i.e., the initial, immediate, or direct victim) but to show the Italian audience (i.e., the ultimate, delayed, or indirect audience) that the Italian authorities were ineffective and powerless in preventing terrorism and protecting the nation.[9]

As Nacos (2002)[10] observes, more than just hurting immediate victims, the terrifying "street theater" of terrorism searches for a massive audience through the media. The audience is thought out in advance, before the tragedy actually occurs. The magnitude and distribution of the audience are testimony to the power of terrorism as a method and to the terrorists' ambition to have many people watching (not just many people dead).[11] For the terrorists, the dead are part of the audience, but they do not constitute the core audience. Their death would make them unable to act according to the terrorists' wishes. The terrorists' core audience is that segment in the audience which the terrorists believe they are speaking to. On looking at Osama bin Laden's 1998 fatwa, we know that the audience was America (and the West). In justifying attacks on U.S. facilities, he invoked Allah's will to free holy Muslim territories from occupation by apostates and evil ones. While one would be quick to assume that his audience was Allah, bin Laden was actually sending a message to the U.S. government and the American people, telling the former to get out of Saudi Arabia and telling the latter to force the government to comply. What was even more important was bin Laden's endeavors to reach out to the Muslim community and to persuade them the apostates and evil ones could be ousted. In just one act and statement, Osama bin Laden reached out to three audiences.[12]

Both terrorist acts and the media need a public distance zone in which to function—both need an audience. In a sense, terrorism resembles a reality TV show. Both terrorism and reality TV have made boundaries between the audience at home and the contestants on location blurred so that everybody feels like they are participating. In the case of terrorism, the immediate participant is at all times a victim—a fatal loss or a hostage—who turns into a mediated participant (analogous to the reality television contestant) with whom the viewers can identify. The blurred boundary that exists between observer and participant is important if terrorist acts are to achieve their calculated effect within and on the public zone: either people are victims or they are potential victims—victims in waiting.[13]

Figure 4.1 is Joseph Tuman's (2003)[14] **model of terrorism and its target audiences**. The model shows there are multiple audiences for the terrorist messages. Other target audiences (TAs) besides the immediate TA (i.e., TA1) are involved (i.e., TA2, TA3, TA4, etc.), adding to the size and intricacy of the communication process. In turn, these audiences may communicate with one another or provide feedback independently or together to the terrorists in the manner described in Figure 2.1 (see Chapter 2).

Figure 4.1   Tuman's Model of Terrorism and Its Target Audiences (TAs)
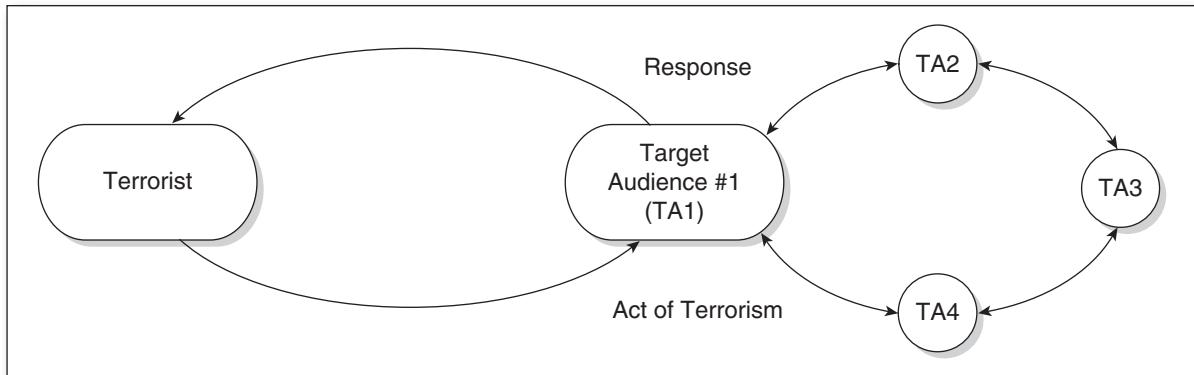
Based on this model, terrorism is inflicted against one target with the objective of influencing other target audiences. Since the purpose of terrorism is to influence multiple audiences, it follows that acts of terrorism are means of persuasion. **Persuasion** is a form of influence whereby the sender attempts to make the receiver adopt or change an idea, attitude, or action through rational or symbolic methods.[15] It is important to read the Yale Model of Persuasion on the following pages.

An Audience Already Established

In the framework of terrorism, the connections between multiple audiences are already set up before the actual communication loop, created by the terrorist message, surfaces in the media (see Figures 2.1 and 4.1). When multiple audiences interact with each other, they naturally participate in the encoding and decoding of messages. Any audience may communicate directly or indirectly. For instance, detailed images of terrorist destruction of lives will boost the identification of the target audiences (TA2, TA3, or TA4) with the immediate target audience (TA1)—the victims. A central approach for terrorists is to establish audience identification not with the immediate victims but with the terrorist message itself.[16] In this analysis of terrorism, **audience identification** refers to strategic communication adopted by terrorists, in their justification for violence, to attract and engage particular audiences. One way to achieve this is by giving the audience information within a familiar context of meaning.[17]

Generally, terrorists attempt to position themselves as saviors, leaders, or martyrs for some honorable causes. These causes can be liberating victims from an oppressor or promising a newer and more just social and political order. These messages provide an understanding of how terrorists see their actions as leading to a greater good while also

convincing the audience that the terrorists' goals are, in fact, necessary. The largest segment of the terrorist audience, the core audience, is the most important message recipient. Therefore, making this audience identify with the terrorist message remains the biggest motivating force for the terrorist.[18]

YALE MODEL OF PERSUASION

Developed by Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1953),[19] the **Yale Model of Persuasion** explains that a variety of message, source, and audience factors can influence the degree to which audiences can be persuaded; these factors bring about opinion, attitude, affect, and action change. Many terrorist campaigns follow—knowingly or unknowingly—the Yale model. There are two general dimensions of the model: the process of persuasion (six stages) and the variables of persuasion (four types). As the model suggests, an analysis of the process of any persuasion attempt will follow six stages: exposure, attention, comprehension, acceptance, retention, and translation. These stages must be adopted to effectively persuade an audience. The four types of **independent variable** (a thing that causes another thing to change) are source, message, target (i.e., recipient, audience), and channel (i.e., medium of communication).[20] Terrorism should be examined as an effort at persuasive communication. It is a persuasive instrument of (usually) a non-state group that wants significant political change.[21] Below are the six stages of the Yale Model of Persuasion (with the four independent variables included throughout the description):

- Exposure requires that the message get to the audience. For the message to be effective, the terrorist-sender must send the persuasive message through the appropriate channel and to the appropriate audience—one that can produce (directly or indirectly) the desired response. The nature of modern mass media practically ensures that target audiences will receive wide exposure to the terrorists' message. For twenty-four hours a day, almost anywhere in the world, there will be a quasi-instant transmission of news of terrorist acts to several billion viewers.[22]

- Attention can be difficult to achieve at times. The world is an information-overloaded place; news messages compete with others. The message should be crafted to go well with the channel through which it is sent. By their traumatizing nature, terrorist acts make the most of the salience effect, guaranteeing that audiences take notice of the message.[23]

- Comprehension: a terrorist campaign must make sure that the intended recipients understand the persuasive communication. The extent to which the recipient will comprehend the terrorist message is based on factors such as motivation (i.e., "Should I really care about this terrorist attack?"), issue involvement, and culture.[24] Dillard (1994)[25] suggests that message features such as message source, message content, and differences in the audience can have an influence on both the comprehension and emotional impact of the message itself.

- Acceptance: the audience must not only understand the message but also accept it. Osama bin Laden's 1996 and 1998 fatwas (i.e., declarations of war) against America and

the West were accepted by many Muslims worldwide. However, other terrorist acts, such as those committed by South Africa's PAGAD (People Against Gangsterism And Drugs), have not been accepted by the audience.

- Retention: a terrorist message must have durable effect, which means that the audience should remember the message for a sufficiently long time so that their behavior changes. A clear example of this is the Madrid train bombing of March 11, 2004. The bombing occurred three days before a national election and completely overshadowed all other issues in the election for the three following days. The devastating acts, which the Spaniards perceived as a punishment for their nation's support of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, unquestionably influenced the outcome of the election.[26]

- Translation entails cognitive change causing behavioral change or the translation of perception into action. For example, in Islamist terrorism, would-be martyrs are promised to be rewarded with a safe place in Paradise and seventy-two virgins if they kill infidels and make the rest of Muslims proud of him (i.e., the martyr). Accordingly, some youth are willing to engage in behavioral change to fulfill Allah's wishes. Influence attempts have a higher probability of success if they are carried out in an environment that enables the translation of changed attitude into changed behavior.[27]

These six stages of persuasion have been effective in many terrorist cases. The outcome seems to be the same: to change the behavior of the audience in a way desired by the terrorist group. The impact of a message significantly depends on how the audience receives it and acts on it.

USES AND GRATIFICATIONS THEORY

Terrorists are well aware of audience needs. They know that Western audiences tend to watch television a lot. Television is just one type of mass media. It can be classified into news media, entertainment media, and into broadcast media. Television is the principal channel of information for the audience to understand terrorism and the Global War on Terror. According to Nielsen ratings, Americans on average watch over four hours of television every day (which is the equivalent of twenty-eight hours per week or two months of uninterrupted TV-watching in a year). In a sixty-five-year lifespan, the average American will have spent nine years watching television.[28] So, it is clear that television is Western audience's preferred type of mass media. During the first two days after 9/11, 81% of Americans were watching television for their main source of information about the tragedy.[29] The theory of **Uses and Gratifications (U&G)**, a traditional framework for understanding the media, posits that the audience matters more than the actual message itself. The key question for U&G is not "what media does to people"; rather, it is "what people do with media."

U&G assumes that audiences are not passive but actively interpret and integrate media into their own lives. The theory also assumes that audiences are in control of choosing media that meet their needs. People, then, will select media that fulfill specific gratifications.

Because of this, various media compete against each other for viewers' gratification.[30] U&G is an example of media logic. **Media logic** looks at the process through which media display or communicate information. Elements of media logic include the distinctive characteristics of each medium and the arrangements used by these media for the news organization, the style in which information is presented, the emphasis on particular attributes of behavior, and the language rules of media communication. People will choose their favorite medium based on these characteristics.[31]

The 1995 Oklahoma City bombing is a good case that explains the effectiveness of U&G in demonstrating how people select a medium to be acquainted with news events. What is incredible is the relatively small status of an immediate target audience (i.e., the 168 victims of the OKC bombing) as compared to the other target audiences. Soon after the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, the 168 individuals who perished in the attack left behind more than 200 children, 80 grandchildren, and 9 great-grandchildren. One third of Oklahoma City youth polled said that they knew at least one victim killed in the attack.[32] Youth living far away from a terrorist scene are also exposed to a substantial amount of attack-related media coverage. In the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing, 55% of youth living 100 miles away said that they watched a lot of television coverage, and 27% of those youth revealed that they used a lot of print coverage.[33] Likewise, according to a U.S. national survey by Schuster et al. (2001),[34] on September 11, 2001, children watched on average three hours of television news coverage, with 23% of children watching over five hours. In this national survey, only 8% of youth said they were not watching television on September 11, 2001.

AUDIENCE FOR JIHADIST TERRORISTS

In their article titled "Communication and Media Strategy in the Jihadi War of Ideas," communication experts Corman and Schiefelbein (2006)[35] examined how jihadist terrorists view their multiple audiences. The audiences of jihadists are separated into categories. Two basic categories are those of the good guys and the bad guys. The good guys are the backers and supporters of the Islamic expansion, both through violent and peaceful means, throughout the world. The backers and supporters are "good Muslims" who support, emotionally or materially, the jihadists' efforts, and other Muslims who could potentially be involved in what the jihadists do. The latter have quasi-parental attitudes toward the good guys, considering their relationship as one of love, attachment, and advice, and highlighting the good in them and rectifying their mistakes.

The bad guys are any people who are not the good guys. Two varieties of bad guys exist. The apostates are former Muslims who have abandoned their faith. They are the most immediate targets of jihadist contempt (and operations), especially if they head governments or rule entire nations. They represent the main targets of their short-term goals. Occasionally called the *near enemy*, the apostates are the yardstick of measure against which the jihadists describe their social identity. The unbelievers are the non-Muslims, particularly those in America and the West, who are occasionally called the *far enemy*. These non-Muslims constitute an obstacle in the short term because they interfere

in the affairs of the Arabian Peninsula. They also appear in the long-term dreams of a global Caliphate.

Other groups that appear in jihadist writings are outsiders. For example, the troublemakers include members of the deposed government, the tribal clans, the hired fighters, and the regular criminals. They are perceived as enemies of the movement, but less dangerous enemies than the bad guys, and maybe good enough to be saved. The Jews are the penultimate targets of the jihadists' struggle. Yet, the level of disdain expressed toward Jews in Corman and Schiefelbein's sample of documents looks very similar to the level accumulated on the apostates. Indeed, the jihadists' plan seems to overthrow the apostates, which will enable the Caliphate to be formed. In turn, the Caliphate will be strong enough to topple the Jews and will then pursue its course toward the West.

9/11 AND ITS EIGHT TYPES OF AUDIENCES

When a tragedy like the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks occurs, the recipient is the audience. The 9/11 hijackers secretly attacked civilians to produce an extremely frightful state of mind in an audience different than the immediate victims (i.e., 3,000 casualties and symbolic buildings of the capitalist Western world). The phenomenon of terrorism is a spectacular interaction of a social character with multiple, socially significant audiences. Such a mammoth attack involves a multi-actor situation in which eight types of audience can be found. On 9/11, the first audience was the immediate recipient of that fatal demolition—those who were physically present in the World Trade Center (and the very proximate districts of Manhattan), the people working inside the Pentagon, and those unlucky passengers on all airliners that day.[36]

The second audience was the American public who observed and was horrified by the images of the message delivered to them constantly over television, on radio, and in print (i.e., newspapers and magazines). The American public consisted of onlookers, the large audience to the terrorist event. These onlookers watched the dynamics of the incident, public reactions to the tragedy, and political and media evaluations of the attack.[37] The U.S. political system has been significantly mediatized. As a popular medium, television fundamentally affects how Americans perceive the world around them. As Sadkovich (1998)[38] said about the influence of television in the U.S.,

> Television seems able to portray only a limited range of emotions because it lacks linear development and nuance. It homogenizes and reduces complex situations, events and emotions to simple standard items that are almost mythic…. Television precludes careful exegesis in favor of simple explanations of group conflict and reality in general. It invokes and evokes, it does not inform or explain. If television is a dream, it also decides what is real…. As the tube creates and idealizes some groups and ideas by focusing on them, it makes others disappear by ignoring them. Because it is the key source of news for most Americans it has seriously distorted our view of reality. (p. 60)

The third audience consisted of important representatives of our federal and state governments, who were felt obligated to respond to the September 11, 2001 attacks by sending messages of calmness and composure for the public. The third audience included various officials, from New York City Mayor Rudi Giuliani to President George W. Bush and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[39] The fourth audience was the media establishment. The media's response integrated coverage and treatment of the terrorist message, as well as an internal discourse about what 9/11 stories need to be reported and how they should be framed. The media are the analysts. Analysts interpret the terrorist incident. They are crucial participants because they shape perspectives, interpret tragedies, and publicize labels for the enemy. Journalists are constantly in interaction with various other audiences in the terrorist context.[40]

The fifth audience included America's allies (i.e., Great Britain) or states that might be neutral vis-à-vis terrorism (i.e., Switzerland). The sixth audience was Al Qaeda's own members. For this group, the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks boosted their own morale by proving that U.S. strength could be defeated (at least temporarily). America's hegemonic apparatus was shown to be weak at its very core.[41] For Al Qaeda's backers, destroying the World Trade Center might have been a cathartic feeling of the kind that Frantz Fanon (1965)[42] discusses: restoring self-respect as the outcome of successfully fighting back against those one perceives as apostates, infidels, and tormentors. Terrorists tend to live secluded from the outside world (i.e., in training camps for a while) and in a perpetual state of alert. They are driven by intense desires to retaliate against some perceived disgrace. Attacks reinforce a group's cohesion and establish solid bonds between its members. Inactivity, on the other hand, causes dissent and desertion. A victorious attack has an ecstatic effect on an often frustrating existence that was subversive or concealed. At the same time, a successful attack contributes to the de-legitimization of the adversary and, as a result, boosts the confidence of the terrorist group. A certain regular rate of attacks is necessary to secure a terrorist group's survival—if they don't use it, they lose it.[43]

The seventh audience consisted of rival terrorist organizations. The terrorists' strategic calculation in a multi-audience scenario also takes intergroup competition into account. Rival terrorist groups have similar goals, compete for resources and support, and seek to garner attention, recognition, prestige, and new potential members. An enormous terrorist attack like 9/11 is certainly a promising tactic for being a leader in the field.[44] The eighth audience was the Muslim world in general. Al Qaeda probably viewed 9/11 as an intermediary to propagandize its missions and grievances on the global Islamic agenda. Since the U.S. and its allies were provoked into retaliation (including the invasion of two Muslim countries—Afghanistan and Iraq), Al Qaeda must have hoped that such Western actions have radicalized many Muslims. This, in turn, serves as a recruiting mechanism for Al Qaeda (and other Islamist organizations). Furthermore, Al Qaeda may have expected that U.S. retaliations create hostility to those Middle Eastern nations considered too closely allied to America.[45]

In regard to the eighth audience, supporters of terrorists can also be patrons—persons who harbor terrorists or offer a supportive environment or system. Supporters will often justify the use of violence as a necessary consequence of a just war. The events of September 11, 2001 unfolded before 1.5 billion Muslims. A certain number of Arab and

Islamic television viewers acclaimed the attacks with great applause. As it was reported authoritatively, some Arabs were shown dancing with joy in the streets. Among Arab rulers, e-mails of satisfaction and victory were exchanged quietly. Among members of the eighth audience, a genuine sense of reunion was felt in the wake of 9/11.

Before committing suicide by flying aircrafts into buildings, terrorists had positioned themselves as martyrs who had fought for a noble cause and had secured a place in Allah's paradise. The infidels, on the other hand, had received warranting punishment, and Allah would also deal with them in an appropriate way.[46] Osama bin Laden made it clear that his core audience is the Muslim world. He wanted his community to return to a state of radical Islamic purity and sanctity (like in Saudi Arabia), a united community that is unhampered by corrupt and corrupted regimes and free of invasion by the infidels. The Saudi regime would be a specific bin Laden's message recipient. The Al Qaeda leader was warning of continued retribution in support of the faithful as long as the occupation and corruption of the infidels were happening.[47]

Looking at the big picture (i.e., all eight audiences), the September 11, 2001 tragedy demonstrates that the magnitude of the attacks were not based on the frequency of Al Qaeda's strikes but on the extent to which these strikes managed to capture the attention of the group's multiple target audiences. When it comes to persuasion and influence building, bigger is usually better. The power of the visual is magnanimous.

MEASURES OF AUDIENCE EFFECTIVENESS

A quintessential aspiration for terrorists is to create a strong link between their methods and the desired outcomes to impact the audience. According to Gus Martin (2010),[48] in *Understanding Terrorism: Challenges, Perspectives, and Issues*, to amplify their impact on the audience, terrorists tend to follow five criteria for audience effectiveness.

Media and political attention: the concentrating of world attention on the terrorists' cause is itself a yardstick of measure for success. In this era of instant media gratification, one essential fact for the terrorist is that success is frequently gauged based on the amount of publicity and attention received. Newsprint and broadcasting exposure are the highest positive rewards in the terrorists' mentality: the only measurable means they have to track their success and evaluate their progress. The June 1985 hijacking of TWA Flight 847, with its journey across several countries and the terrorists' manipulation of world media, is a textbook example of a successful media-centered hijacking incident. Likewise, as one Baader-Meinhof Group member said, "We always immediately looked how the newspapers, especially in Berlin, reacted to our actions, and how they explained them, and thereupon we defined our strategy."[49] Terrorism can also make the audience more aware of another religion (besides Christianity). According to a CBS News survey at the end of February 2002, 55% of Americans responded that they had now more knowledge about Islam than they did before 9/11.[50]

Impacting audiences: to impact viewers, terrorists use Propaganda by the Deed, hoping to provoke audiences to action or trigger a society-level reaction. Victim audiences, remote audiences, and championed groups can all be influenced by a terrorist attack. When such

an event occurs, terrorists and their supporters analyze reactions from these audiences. From the terrorists' viewpoint, the efficacy of an attack necessitates successful manipulation of multiple audiences' responses. If a victim audience is effectively manipulated, members of the audience, as Alex Schmid (1982),[51] a renowned expert on terrorism, put it, "change their travel habits or their vacation destinations out of fear of becoming victims. The rationale for this fear is small… but the fear of victimization is real, especially among heavy media consumers" (p. 101). In that case, a process of identification occurs not only with immediate casualties and potential future victims but also with all the people in the audience who share certain "victim characteristics."

Imposing concessions from an enemy interest: the terrorists' adversary embodies an important audience too. Enemy interests will occasionally yield to the demands of a politically violent organization. Concessions differ in degree or scale. They can be short-term and direct concessions or long-term and radical concessions whereby a whole audience (i.e., society) essentially gives in to a movement's cause. At the level of short-term concessions, concessions could be ransoms paid by corporations for the liberation of employees being held hostage. At the long-term level, policies might be modified or autonomy accorded to a national group.

Disruption of normal routines: a useful measure of audience effectiveness is observed in the extent to which normal routines of society are affected or halted by a terrorist attack. Targets can be the commercial transportation industry; they can be selectively attacked so that their operations will be interrupted. In that event, the day-to-day habits of citizens and societal routines will change. In this fashion, numerous people in the larger society react as victims of a fairly weak movement. Murphy, Gordon, and Mullen (2004)[52] found that the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks greatly disrupted adult value structures in the U.S. They noted that **survival, safety, and security values** increased in importance and **self-esteem and self-actualization values** decreased in importance. The former values refer to comfortable living, being in a world at peace, and enjoying equality, freedom, national security, and deliverance (or redemption). The latter values refer to having feelings of accomplishment, inner harmony, self-respect, and wisdom. In a similar vein, after 9/11, U.S. economic recovery faltered as the stock market went on its worst dip since the Great Depression (a $1.4 trillion drop in a week). The hotel industry incurred $2 billion in losses two months within the attacks, and the U.S. airline industry lost billions of dollars as the amount of passengers dropped by 50 %. Then, in subsequent months, it leveled off at 20 % below what the levels were before the attacks occurred. The U.S. airline industry suffered $2.2 billion in losses during the first quarter of 2002 as a direct consequence of U.S. travel changes after the September 11, 2001 attacks.[53]

Causing the state to overreact: a measure of audience effectiveness is the nation's enforcement of radical security countermeasures as a reaction to a terrorist attack. In the terrorist environment, the notion of setting up the enemy is widespread. Terrorists expect that the state become intensely repressive, that people suffer, and that the masses soar in rebellion after facing the true character of the enemy. This theory does not always prove true. Terrorists have also been reported to incite repression to expose the iron fist of the government and push more sympathizers to join the terrorists' resistance. The direct corollary is a **downward terror spiral** in which rebels and repressive states escalate their

violence.[54] This is the same objective as **destabilizing the enemy**—creating a sense of unrest and heightening a sense of fear that the state or the powers that be are incapable to provide security and stability to its people.[55]

A strange case of an unsuccessful attempt to maximize audience effectiveness (across all five measures) is found in the endeavors of South Africa's **People Against Gangsterism and Drugs** (PAGAD). Established in 1996, PAGAD launched a crusade of violence to object to the values of an "immoral" South African society. PAGAD adopted an anti-government and anti-Western philosophy, supposedly in the best interests of South Africa's Muslims. However, its attacks were mostly directed at "moral" targets. PAGAD chose these targets— mainly in Cape Town—to endorse moralistic Islamic values and expunge non-Islamic elements from society. Among the many targets were fast-food outlets, gay bars, tourist spots, and other icons of Western decadence and immorality. Unfortunately for PAGAD, most South Africans were insignificantly affected. In fact, there was no societal response to PAGAD's attacks (except for revulsion).[56]

EMOTIONAL AND ATTITUDINAL IMPACTS OF TERRORISM ON THE AUDIENCE

Terrorism seeks to use psychological power to attract the attention of the audience and to stimulate, in ideal conditions, behavioral change in that audience. What needs to be discussed now are the emotional and attitudinal impacts of terrorism on the audience. As such, the impacts tend to be fear and trauma, as well as the creation of tertiary identities.

Fear and Trauma

For Kaplan (1981),[57] terrorism is meant to create an enormously fearful state of mind. This fearful state, though, is not directed only to the terrorist victims. Rather, it is directed to an audience who has, in most cases, no relationship to the victims. Oots (1990)[58] insisted that terrorism is caused to "create extreme fear and/or anxiety-inducing effects in a target audience larger than the immediate victims" (p. 146). Opinion polls revealed that the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks intensified Americans' fears of more terrorist acts to happen and of the possibility that they (or their family members) might become victims themselves. This emotional and attitudinal impact on the targeted population did not decrease when Osama bin Laden and his associates surfaced in the media. On commenting on the effects of 9/11 on the American adversary, bin Laden declared with obvious satisfaction, "There is America, full of fear from north to south, from west to east. Thank God for that."[59]

In 2005, a poll asked U.S. adults to identify "the single most significant event that has happened in your lifetime, in terms of its importance to the U.S. and the world." A low 2% of those polled mentioned the collapse of communism; 3% said it was the Vietnam War; 6% said it was the Iraq War. Only one event was the common denominator among respondents: fully 46% of those respondents cited the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks as the single most significant event in their lifetime.[60] Immediately after 9/11, polls found

that 21 % of Americans all over the nation had a hard time sleeping because of nightmares about the attack and concerns about subsequent attacks.[61] A 10 % rise in the use of mental health services was also reported within thirty days of the attack. Statistics suggest that, nationwide, there was a 4.9 % increase in antidepressant prescriptions during the six months following the attacks, in comparison to the six months before the attacks.[62]

The Madrid terrorist attacks occurred on March 11, 2004. Two weeks later, a large sample was conducted all over Spain: 50 % of the respondents reported depressive symptoms, 47 % acute stress symptoms, and 14 % both. According to some estimates, the number of Spaniards who marched in remembrance across their nation (11.5 million), following the train bombings, was roughly equivalent to 28 % of the country's population (5 % gathered in Madrid alone). In the U.S., that very percentage of people (28 % of the country's population) marching across the nation would have been well over 80 million. These estimates imply a greater emotional and attitudinal impact of the terrorist attack on the mainstream Spaniard.[63]

Many of the impacts of terrorism-generated trauma on children are comparable to the effects of manmade and natural disaster trauma (think of the trauma caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005). Children differ in their responses to traumatic events. While some children suffer from anxieties and bad memories that wear down with time and emotional support, other children may be more gravely traumatized and suffer long-term problems. Children's reactions include severe stress disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, nervous breakdown, regressive behaviors, separation problems, sleep disorders, and attitudinal problems.[64]

In a sample of 17- to 25-year-olds across the U.S., the 9/11 attacks presented effects on identity change.[65] Many U.S. citizens showed a heightened need for human interaction and religious affiliation as a way to cope with such stress and devastation.[66] Case reports are still surfacing about people who have been tempted to commit suicide, more so than before 9/11, as a result of identity confusion.[67] In a study conducted by Rogers and Seidel (2002),[68] emotional reactions to 9/11 were found to be somewhat similar to those of the public after Princess Diana's death in 1997. Such phenomenon is called **mourning sickness**, a collective emotional grieving by individuals at the death of media personalities or victims of violence. According to Rogers (2000),[69] 9/11 caused a widespread outburst of grief, which was partly due to parasocial interaction. **Parasocial interaction** is the extent to which the audience considers having a personal relationship with a celebrity. Millions of Brits attended the memorial service for Princess Diana or viewed her funeral on television.

Tertiary Identities

Tertiary identities are exclusive to those who have indirectly witnessed a terrorist attack. For Lisa Sparks (2005),[70] indirectly affected viewers display terrorism survivorship behaviors just like immediate terrorism survivors would. The direct impact of terrorism also helps illuminate certain terrorism-related social processes. A tertiary identity suggests a **personalization of an attack**, the effect that a terrorist attack has on the audience that is not directly struck by the attack. People, by nature, search for a personal connection to events, a propensity of which the terrorists are well aware. Through the "personalizing" of

terrorist attacks, the impact on the target population is extended beyond the directly affected victims to include those who were not even at the scene when the attack happened.[71]

Identities are coded and regulated symbolically. The U.S. audience responded in a way that was in harmony with Al Qaeda's objectives. As the tragedy unfolded, the audience witnessed massive destruction and experienced fears of personal disgrace—almost like losing a family member or dear friend. The inconceivable devastation of colossal buildings and the shocking experience of maiming and violent death were unmistakable and psychologically debilitating. Because many Western viewers identified with people who were directly attacked, they "suffered" the injuries as if these attacks had taken place on their own symbols, bodies, and minds.[72]

As one can see, the concept of tertiary identity was palpable after 9/11. Various online bulletin boards were devoted to discussing the tragedy and sharing feelings of anguish and anger. Most online news outlets had a discussion board consecrated to 9/11. These online news outlets included *The New York Times*, *CNN*, and *USA Today*.[73] Terrorism is essentially indiscriminate. The victims' identities may not be important to the perpetrators, as long as the victims are part of a large group and the attack sends the intended message to the target population. The level at which victims identify with a victim role is extensive. Identification with victims may supersede other focal identifications that may supply positive functions for one's health. Identifying as terrorist victims or survivors, even though one was not physically present when it happened, may bear unhealthy consequences.[74]

On a side note, according to terrorism scholar David C. Rapoport (1977),[75] there is an issue in terrorism studies that has been largely overlooked: while terrorism can induce identification with victims by large segments of the audience, contributing to sensations of helplessness, terror, or anger, there are also people who experience identification with the terrorists themselves. As Corrado (1979)[76] put it, "[T]errorism also satisfies personal identification needs and other emotional needs such as revenge and a sense of potency or power" (p. 198).

IMPACTS OF MEDIA EXPOSURE OF TERRORISM ON THE AUDIENCE

Media coverage of terrorist events is likely to affect the behavior of the audience. As it was explained in the previous section, research has shown that a correlation exists between the amount of exposure to TV coverage of terrorist attacks and viewers' emotional and attitudinal reactions. As a consequence, people with higher levels of media exposure report a higher incidence of symptoms such as PSTD and depression than those who have lower media exposure.[77] A less frequently used term is **fixity**, trauma that media exposure to terrorism causes. Watching the target, location, time, duration, intensity, degree, and meaning of the terrorist attack causes the audience to have the media images anchored in their mind.[78]

Managing Citizens' Fears

In Chapter 3, it was stated that current media practices point to the fact that media and terrorism share a symbiotic relationship. On the one hand, a terrorist attack is a

sensationalized story that should be reported and that can boost audience ratings. On the other hand, terrorists exploit the media to engage in a dialogue with a large audience, beyond the immediate victims of an attack, so as to induce fear in society. As the media, in part, regulate the cognitive experience of terrorism by an audience bigger than the immediate victims, and amplify the impact through nonstop reporting of the topic (even to the detriment of other topics), the media play a crucial role in managing citizens' fears (either positively or negatively).[79] According to Roth and Muzzatti (2004),[80] media coverage can serve to magnify the gravity of terrorist incidents, making them look more atrocious and frequent than they really are. Public anxiety is heightened by means of journalistic and linguistic devices. "Special cover story" or "in-depth exposure" style coverage uses spectacular pictures, videos, and sound bites with moralistic discourses. The fear of terrorism tends to be manufactured by a popular culture with an avid appetite for more audiences (e.g., "clients"). The diet is entertainment, with a large quantity of fear.

Much of this rhetoric of fear is powered by agents of social control, who act both as news sources for television reports and as saviors, guardians, and eliminators of the sources of fear. Hence, entertainment, fear, and social control are combining the interests of popular culture with an ever-growing social control industry. The military–media landscape is a big element of programming in an entertainment age controlled by popular culture and communication forms. They share state-of-the-art information technology stimulating visual media and evocative content.[81] Der Derian (2002)[82] noted that "the first and most likely the last battles of the counterterror war are going to be waged on global networks that reach much more widely and deeply into our everyday lives" (p. 11). The **arousal hypothesis** posits that unusual or exceptional media content can intensify a viewer's desire to act aggressively. In fact, terrorism portrayed in the media can raise the likelihood for aggressive behavior from the audience. The **disinhibition hypothesis** rests on the premise that news stories detailing terrorism decrease the inhibition of the viewer to engage in extreme violence, which in turn increases the viewer's readiness to engage in aggressive behavior.[83]

Remarks on Israelis' Reactions

In a study on Israeli undergraduates' reactions to media coverage of terrorism, Weimann (1983)[84] found that the respondents had stronger negative attitudes about terrorists after seeing newspaper extracts of terrorist events. The Israelis' reactions to horrifying images of terrorism from the Israeli–Palestinian conflict have had a profound psychological toll, both short term and long term. Short-term reactions include grief, devastation, fear, phobic avoidance of public places, anger, and pain. Evidence for these short-term reactions can be found in Israeli hotline referrals; there were as high as 30,000 in the year 2001, at the height of terrorism in the Second Intifada. In the same year, long-term effects included a whole variety of post-traumatic symptoms. This was evidenced by an impressive overload of referrals to public and private mental health institutions throughout Israel. It is clear that media viewers risk becoming secondary victims from media exposure.[85] Moral panic has been played up by the media in a manner consistent with entertainment formats. What contributes, in part, to this moral panic is the **fear narrative**, which refers to the widespread communication, symbolic awareness, and

expectation that danger is constantly present or imminent. The fear narrative, then, has become a dominant feature of the symbolic environment as the audience defines and experiences it on a daily basis.[86]

Affecting Memory

Terrorists want the audience to observe, to pay attention, and to remember. The media provide the conduit for this. Emotion-loaded media images have been reported to affect memory. Thus, if a viewer strongly experiences certain emotions like anger or sorrow after watching images of an act of extreme violence, these images—those that elicited strong anger and sorrow—would be more easily remembered afterward (as compared to other images). If a viewer strongly feels emotions such as shock or anxiety after watching visuals, he or she is more likely to remember these images than images depicting sorrow or anger. For example, the images people remembered and the emotions they experienced on 9/11 were used to assess the degree of shock and anxiety the audience had vis-à-vis terrorism. Overall, the memory of 9/11 visuals had a deep effect on viewers' shock and anxiety.[87] Similarly, a study by Christianson and Loftus (1987)[88] found that participants who were shown traumatic media content were able to remember the main substance of the media message. The researchers also found that some information seems to be better recalled from very traumatic and emotional events than from non-traumatic regular events. Comparable studies (e.g., Newhagen, 1998)[89] report that visuals that provoke intense emotions such as fear and anger tend to be better recalled.

Perception Is Not Reality

What definitely changed with modern terrorist attacks such as 9/11 were American perceptions of the danger of international terrorism that actually did not match reality. Systematic evidence supplied by the U.S. State Department indicates that the actual dangers from international terrorism have tended to fall around the world. However, post-9/11, American anxieties about the danger of terrorism are much higher. As shown by countless studies, public fear of terrorism surpasses, by far, the actual number of victims of terrorism, which today are lower than victims of homicide, automobile accidents, overdoses, and any number of diseases. At the end of the 1990s, the number of Americans massacred by terrorists was actually lower than those killed by bee stings, choking on sandwiches, or lightning. Nevertheless, terrorism has remained a leading reason on surveys for why Americans are afraid.[90]

According to a study by Rummel (1996),[91] only 518,000 civilians were killed in the 20th century by actual terrorists. By contrast, in the same study, approximately 169 million people were killed by the actions of governments, including 130 million of them killed by their own government—42 million under Stalin alone and 2 million under Pol Pot. Mathematically, the number of civilian killings by terrorists amounts to less than 0.5%. The number of civilian killings as a result of non-state-sponsored terrorist activities is considerably lower: the estimates are that there are 260 state-sponsored terrorism casualties for every non state-sponsored terrorist death. In 1985, 28 million Americans

went abroad and 162 were either killed or injured because of terrorism. This translates into a .00058 % probability of being a terrorist target. On accounts of terrorism in 1985, 1.8 million Americans modified their travel plans abroad the following year.[92]

Based on these descriptive statistics, one can easily deduce that audience perception does not reflect reality. George Gerbner and colleagues (2002)[93] wrote about the Mean World Syndrome created by the media, particularly television. The **Mean World Syndrome** is a phenomenon whereby the interpretations of the world (through media coverage with violent content) are modified by means of cultivation: audience members are more prone to believing that the world is more dangerous than it truly is. People want to protect themselves more than they should. A direct corollary is the demonization of the enemy, which refers to portraying members of the group to which terrorists belong—for example, Muslims or the bad ones are jihadists—appear to be evil, worthless, or immoral, through the Mean World Syndrome.

Gradual Lessening of Interest

Though terrorists may be aware that they manipulate the media, in choosing calculated targets (for visibility purposes), and achieve sensational violence to guarantee coverage, the opposite is sometimes true. In an era of media saturation, and media already dedicated to coverage of so many stories about violence, death, and tragedy, ensuring coverage of a terrorism story requires visually captivating, spectacular, and destructive violence on a larger and larger scale. Unfortunately, this also means that, with every act of terror, the level for what is dramatic and devastating must be raised. Put simply, if terrorists abduct three missionaries in the Philippines and order the government to release rebel leaders, reporters might release a print news story and local coverage. Conversely, if terrorists blow up an embassy or a supermarket, killing hundreds and injuring more, that story will attract much more attention from the media.[94] It looks like the media constantly have to raise the bar to keep the audience's interest. This gradual lessening of interest is akin to **compassion fatigue**, a gradual avoidance of sensitivity toward dramatic events. It is desensitization. Compassion fatigue may occur as a consequence of media saturation of images of terrorism victims. People, then, grow more resistant and pay less attention to these images.[95] By extension, when one experiences too many terrorist threat warnings, one is said to experience **threat fatigue**.[96]

Then, there is the **media congestion effect**, a phenomenon whereby media coverage of one group singles out coverage of other groups. Factors on both the supply side and the demand side can work against terrorists. On the supply side, terrorists' resources are more limited and governments are much more funded than terrorists. On the demand side, the media do not have an endless source of public interest in any topic. They can find other topics that will raise public interest, *ad infinitum*. Humans' capacity to process information is restricted; many issues vie for the public eye.[97] Even if terrorists continue to contribute to Kelly and Mitchell's (1981)[98] "upward spiral of violence," they may realize that they each draw less media attention as more terrorists compete for the audience's interest. We call this the *media congestion effect*. As Delli Carpini and Williams (1987)[99] state, "On a given evening, other pressing events may push out coverage of terrorist events that would be covered on a less 'busy' evening" (p. 60).

TERRORISM AS SPECTACLE: IT'S ALL FOR THE AUDIENCE

Right after 9/11, opinion polls revealed that virtually all Americans attended to the news of the terrorist attacks (99% or 100% according to surveys) by watching television, listening to the radio, and surfing the web. Worldwide, the interest, fright, and following of the news were equally universal. This was a perfect triumph in regard to the "media exploitation" goal on which the nineteen hijackers throve.[100] The constant replays of the second aircraft hitting the South Tower and its ensuing collapse exemplify the very model of spectacle. In *The Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord (1995)[101] explains that the spectacle is the historical moment during which the commodity completes "its colonization of social life. It is not just that the relationship to commodities is now plain to see—commodities are now all [sic] that there is to see; the world we see is the world of the commodity" (p. 29). Constructed into narratives and discourses, spectacles are the core of ideology: "The spectacle is the acme of ideology" (p. 150). For Debord, the **spectacle** refers to a major human event portrayed as a form of drama or theater. From this perspective, terrorism is a spectacle. A terrorist act resembles a play, like political theater, that describes the plight of the perpetrators. The primary function of terrorism is "media spectacle," a language the West knows very well. Terrorism uses the splendid and impressive power of the visual and the image. Through the visual and the image, the media are ally and traitor at the same time, agents of their own creation. Terrorism is strategic violence, typically against symbolic targets with the intent to send a semiotic warning, a persuasive message, a suggestive blow, and a supreme symbol of fear. Such spectacle immerses us and gets us aroused into a frenzy.[102] Terrorism is spectacular through **shock and awe tactics**, tactics that form a traumatic spectacle and that can be justified as a humane method of restraint. Rather than killing a large number of people, it is enough to send them a message by subjecting them to shock and awe tactics.[103]

Commanding the Audience's Gaze

A spectacle is a form of theater. In this context, **theater** refers less to the playing out of spectacular action and more to its etymology in the Greek word for "theater," *theatron*, or a "looking place." As this definition suggests, theater has a looking or visual character.[104] A theater has a visual dimension; it is the idea that terrorist acts are spectacles because they command the viewer's gaze. They are performances that are produced to be seen. To explain this further, let us compare terrorists with assassins and serial killers. For the latter two, killing people is the primary objective. If assassins and serial killers kill a sufficient amount of people and do it "messily enough," they create violent spectacles. However, this is usually not the goal of the assassin or the serial killer. The serial killer will only create drama if he or she wants to attract the attention of the police or the public once the killings have been committed. Generally, serial killers commit their killings secretly. For terrorists, in contrast, the purpose is to create violent displays that both outright command an entire audience's gaze and become deeply anchored into that audience's collective memory.[105]

A distinction needs to be made between physical spectacle and transgressive spectacle. **Physical spectacle** is a situation in which a terrorist act creates a spectacle by overpowering

the audience's senses. Deafening howls and blinding flashes attract attention through the monstrous physical impact they have on the viewers' senses. In the case of **transgressive spectacle**, the terrorist act creates a spectacle by commanding the audience's gaze for the simple reason that the terrorist act is such an outrageous infringement on widely established rules, namely the traditional rules of war. By so spectacularly defying the rules of war, terrorists in so doing reject their adversaries as being "of their kind."[106] Commanding the audience's gaze seems to be more like a transgressive spectacle. As noted by Jenkins (1975),[107] "taking and holding hostages increases the drama. The hostages themselves often mean nothing to the terrorists. Terrorism is aimed at the people watching, not at the actual victims. Terrorism is a theater" (p. 4).

The Medium Is the Message

"The medium is the message," Marshall McLuhan's (1964)[108] famous statement in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, rests on the premise that it is not the ideas that are broadcast that influence society; rather, it is the type of medium itself that will influence it. Information technology has made the immediate airing of the spectacle possible. Information technology allows a globalization of the spectacle in a wide variety of ways, so much so that it can be called **information overload**. Paul Virilio (2000)[109] calls this an information bomb, an unusual name when considering the link between terrorism and the spectacle. The engulfing amount of information that results from one single terrorist attack overloads the audience's senses and generates confusion about the incident. Terrorists like news media coverage because it provides them with maximum publicity for their messages. Media coverage of terrorism amplifies the threat and resultant fear of terrorism to the audience. The yearning for maximum publicity, in turn, creates a tradition in terrorism to meticulously choose targets and participate in types of symbolic action that translate well visually in media exposure. Television is the main medium for all this. The medium is the message again. Bassiouni (1981)[110] refers to such situations as **translating well**, which means that terrorist violence is a dramatic form of spectacle—something that is so engaging that the audience stops and takes notice.

By exploiting this tactic of spectacle, terrorism uses the media (along with the theatrical images and montage) to arrest the audience's attention, hoping in this manner to catalyze unexpected events that will broadcast further terror to the general population. In *Suspensions of Perception*, Crary (1999)[111] extends Debord's and McLuhan's works by stressing that the significance of the spectacle is not so much *what* we see; rather, it is more *that* we see. Today's media are now capable to achieve this capture of the audience's attention and simplify the imperatives of the field of power. This happens thanks to the relationship between the spectacle that the media create, its content (i.e., stories, images, ideas, genres, rhetoric, etc.), and the methods by which this content is processed.[112]

Dawson's Field Hijackings

On September 6, 1970, the Dawson's Field hijackings took place in Jordan. Five jet aircrafts destined to go to New York City were seized by members of the Popular Front for

the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). The PFLP separated the flight crews and Jewish passengers, keeping fifty-six people hostage. On September 12, before their announced deadline, the PFLP bombed the empty planes with explosives, as they were expecting a counterstrike. Most of the reporters at the scene missed the explosions. However, a British television crew from ITN (Independent Television News) caught the explosions on camera. They had been fed streams of information by local Jordanians who had themselves been notified by members of the PFLP. On September 7, 1970, the hijackers organized a media conference for sixty reporters who had entered the zone of what was then called *Revolution Airport*. Clusters of the remaining hostages were gathered on the sand in front of the cameras. Members of the PFLP, among whom was Bassam Abu Sharif, made pro-Palestinian declarations in front of the media. The resulting spectacle, which was watched by numerous viewers worldwide, only served to increase the threshold or standard for what would be perceived as sensationalized, violent terrorism.[113] This is what Shannon Bowen (2008)[114] refers to as **terrorist spectaculars**, whereby large terrorist attacks are carried out to attract rising attention through the intensification of horror.

Culture of Terror

The phrase Culture of Terror was used by Michael Taussig (1987)[115] to depict the spectacle of killing, torture, and evil bewitchment in southwest Colombia from 1969 to 1985. Taussig associates it with Joseph Conrad's descriptions in the novel *Heart of Darkness*. As it is the case with Timothy McVeigh and his Oklahoma City bombing, in a spectacle, no strict line exists between fact and fiction, or between event and representation. The people exposed to media images become collateral damage, or "enemies of God" who should witness live what can happen to them next. The immediate target victims are holy sacrifices whose innocence is meaningless to the eyes of the terrorists. From their standpoint, their innocence makes them suitable sacrificial victims to be shown in front of billions of people. From the standpoint of counterterrorists, broadcasting the killing of the innocent is proof of the absolute, appalling evil and injustice of terrorism.[116] The terrorist spectacle communicates the language of the unspeakable. Terrorists perform and stage the inconceivable. As producers of words and images, and symbolic forms of violence, terrorist acts establish a spectacle of terror that is much more important than the acts themselves. Strategic forms of violence such as detonating bombs in churches are not as essential to their inventory. Their strongest weapon is that very Culture of Terror: the spectacle. It is the media images of destruction that create the mightiest spectacle of all, such as the collapse of the World Trade Center, in which the destruction of one of the most beloved symbols of capitalism was staged, quite consciously, as a symbol in its own right.[117]

TERRORISM AS SPECTACLE: ANALYZING 9/11

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks were a textbook example of Propaganda by the Deed. The phrase postulates that, when facing an overwhelmingly powerful enemy, the weaker group needs to accomplish a dramatically daring act to gain attention to their

cause.[118] With the advent of television, the potential for successfully performing such a spectacle has been significantly enhanced. The 9/11 terrorist spectacle unwrapped mostly in New York City, one of the most media-saturated places worldwide, and such act turned out to be a deadly spectacle live on television. The images of the airliners crashing into the World Trade Center (WTC) and the collapse of the South and North Towers were played over and over again. The spectacle conveyed the clear message that America was not a fortress; it was vulnerable to terrorist attacks like any other country. The other message was that terrorists could inflict great havoc, and that any human being could be hit by a violent attack at any time.[119]

A Disaster Movie

Heartless, abhorrent, gory, and spectacular at the same time, the terrorist act perpetrated by the nineteen hijackers turned 9/11 into a semiotic rage of television flows, informational and image-based anxiety, and a technological disaster of media spectacle. On 9/11, terrorism was intentionally generating captivating and addictive images like those we see in action flicks. As scholars have pointed out (e.g., Kellner, 2003),[120] the September 11 terror spectacle was akin to explosion scenes in disaster films. In fact, this led Robert Altman, a long-time Hollywood director, to criticize the U.S. movie establishment for allowing directors to make movies that could be copied by terrorists for attacking the U.S. On 9/11, what the world witnessed on television, in the beginning, looked unreal. The audience was not sure whether what was shown on their screens was real or not. Audiences around the world were finally convinced that America was under attack when they saw low-quality video footage. Now, audiences knew it; they were not watching a disaster movie. Rather, as a gargantuan theater scene, the spectacle was real. While it contained images of a disaster movie, it also radicalized the association of the image with reality. Terrorism captures attention through its dramatic and alarming character, resembling more like Hollywood films than prime-time news. Consequently, it inherently fashions, in the audience, a curiosity and a desire to know. The main effect is that human drama of terrorism melts into the psyche of the audience. Terrorism is aimed at an astounded public, foreclosed by the media that perform just as the terrorists want.[121] Soon after the aircrafts smashed into the World Trade Center, videotapes were sold in the Chinese market showing the tragedy, interwoven with scenes from Hollywood disaster movies.[122]

A Horror Movie

Visual images are directly associated with the audience's emotions and attitudes. Otherwise stated, pictorial images may trigger a certain emotion. For example, images of spiders and snakes have demonstrated that they can bring out fear.[123] Thus, in the dramatic footage provided on 9/11, it is very likely that some images were closely linked to emotions such as horror. By looking at scenes of bloody corpses and people jumping off the WTC towers, the audience watching 9/11 was also said to be watching a horror movie.[124] Watching a certain image has led some viewers into the emotion painted in that visual.[125] The 9/11 terrorist attacks generated fear across America because the emotional impact of

smashing two skyscrapers into pieces at the very center of the U.S. economy was intense. 9/11 was purposely designed to inspire terror not as a simple by-product, but as the fundamental product of the terrorist act.[126]

A Speech Performance

Now it is clear: 9/11 was the most dramatic and violent human-induced spectacle in modern history. In November 2001, two months after the terrorist attacks, Osama bin Laden discussed his feat. Thinking directly of the nineteen hijackers he had sent, whom he referred to as *vanguards of Islam*, bin Laden gaped with amazement: "Those young men said in deeds, in New York and Washington, speeches that overshadowed other speeches made everywhere else in the world. The speeches are understood by both Arabs and non-Arabs, even Chinese."[127] By enacting a deep-seated symbolic gesture—that is, making the WTC collapse and hitting the Pentagon—the terrorists enacted a speech performance, something akin to the following: we have shown the entire world that we can shatter our enemy's icons of strength and success. Such a speech performance also "speaks" to Al Qaeda's supporters by giving them hope and relief and by garnering support for the group's cause.[128] Around the world, 9/11 boosted morale within radical Islamic groups, anti-American movements, and all those groups that feel powerless in the midst of the U.S.-led global hegemony and America's support of Israel. A case in point was footage of Palestinians celebrating 9/11 by cheering, dancing, and firing shots in the air.[129]

TERRORISM AS SPECTACLE: DRAMATURGICAL ANALYSIS

Yale sociology professor Jeffrey Alexander (2004)[130] published "From the Depths of Despair: Performance, Counter-performance, and 'September 11'" in *Sociological Theory*. Alexander was an inspiration for writing this section on the terrorist spectacle as a form of Dramaturgical Analysis. The theory of **Dramaturgical Analysis** was initially developed by sociologist Erving Goffman (1959).[131] Later, it was reexamined by Kenneth Burke (1972)[132] in his *Dramatism and Development*. According to Dramaturgical Analysis, individuals engage in public performance—activities in the front of observers (i.e., an audience). The objective is to influence the observers' perception of the actors. Performance happens on a front-stage area. The **front-stage** is the physical or social space in which performances are enacted (unlike the **back-stage**, where people are more genuine and less "performing"). Put another way, by acting out in public, people have three key goals: to be seen, to be remembered for being seen, and to be remembered in a specific way.[133]

9/11 as Performance as Political Action

A phrase similar to Dramaturgical Analysis is Performance as Political Action. **Performance as Political Action** rests on the premise that humans participate in a performance-centered method of communicating with the purpose of changing the audience's behavior. More specifically, this theoretical framework is based on understanding

the manner in which performers involve audiences and entire communities in an effort to change social behaviors. In the end, Performance as Political Action is successful in mobilizing the audience and gaining awareness.[134] For Jeffrey Alexander, terrorism is a particular kind of political performance. It needs and relies on blood—literally and symbolically—making use of its target's fundamental fluids "to throw a striking and awful painting upon the canvas of social life" (p. 90). Terrorism not only kills; in and through killing, it also intends to gesture in a dramatic style. A terrorist act is like a morality play within the theater of political protest. The allusion to political action is powerful: Oberschall (2004) refers to this as a type of symbolic action in a "complex performative field" and a "dramaturgical framework," or a "bloody drama played out before an audience" (p. 27).[135]

Because terrorist violence is Performance as Political Action, the terrorist performs the part of a moralist: a moral order that must reach some equilibrium.[136] Performative actions have both an apparent and latent symbolic nature. Their obvious messages form against background arrangements of ingrained meaning. Put another way, social performances are like theatrical performances; they embody particular meanings only because they suggest more general, axiomatic meaning frameworks within which their performances are staged. Performances choose, restructure, and create present themes that are less explicit in the immediate context of social life—though these do not exist in a literal sense. Performance is enacted because actors have specific, contingent objectives.[137]

9/11 as Script

A performance is based on a script. A script tells of a terrorist act amid the sacred, profane, and mundane. An excellently scripted story defines fascinating protagonists and terrifying antagonists and places them in a sequence of emotionally laden encounters. Such tense and dynamic action constitutes a plot. Through plotted scenes, spectacular dramas produce emotional and moral effects. Their audiences may go through excitement and delight if the plot is a romance or a comedy, or compassion and suffering if it is a melodrama or tragedy. If the scripted story is good and if the performance of the plot is compelling, the audience will experience catharsis, from which new moral judgments will form and new series of social action will be carried out in turn.[138]

Modern terrorism can be viewed through the lens of production requirements of theatrical engagements. Terrorists focus on script preparation: a worthy story, a memorable progression of events, as well as selection of actors, sets, props, role-playing, and painstaking stage management. Just like successful stage plays or ballet performances, the effective exploitation of media in terrorism demands full attention to detail.[139] A script, in a literal sense, is written for a play that contains a plot, stage/setting, characters, and so forth. In a sociological sense, a script—that is, a sacred cultural script—is a cultural meaning structure that offers individuals tools to interpret and wrap their minds around events.[140] Consistent with Kenneth Burke's notion of dramatism, a full script explains the act (what happened), scene (when or where it happened), agent (who did it), agency (how it was done), and purpose (why it was done) of humans' actions.[141]

As one can see, primarily, a script of social drama is thought up by prospective authors and actors. Nevertheless, in this case, the social drama that the script is written to inspire

is directed at audiences consisting of the publics of complex civilizations. In such a social drama, the actors may be governmental authorities or rebels, activists or lazy bums, political leaders or rank-and-file members of social movements, or the imagined audiences of involved citizens. The inspirations and roles of such actors are influenced largely by directors. In this context, directors are the coordinators, thinkers, and leaders of collective action. Because Osama bin Laden was wealthy and was part of a mighty social network, he already had the resources to recruit actors for a growing terrorist organization (something that was never seen before). In addition, he had enough clouts to find the best actors, screen them, and test them before allowing them to work with his production crews.[142]

9/11 as Mise en Scène

Osama bin Laden had a good sense for the story line: it was a script featuring traditional Islamic martyrs (i.e., righteous Al Qaeda heroes) taking their own lives for their sacred honor against wicked Americans with blood on their hands and willing to sell their own mothers. The cunning Al Qaeda director set up secret training camps that enabled backstage rehearsals for public performances to take place. In these training camps, aspiring actors were taught how to play the parts assigned to them devotedly and persuasively in the Al Qaeda script. When the new method acting was mastered with explicit authenticity, the actor-terrorists were placed into performance teams, which carefully planned for the extravagant production of terrorism in Western lands. Osama bin Laden was capable of managing the means of symbolic production. He wanted a global stage and means for killing on a scale much larger, and more dramaturgically convincing, than nobody ever before had been able to get.[143] What bin Laden was creating was a *mise en scène*.

Indeed, such a social drama can be interpreted by the theatrical concept of **mise en scène**, in a literal sense "putting into the scene" (i.e., directing and choreographing). This dramatic performance necessitated mastering the art of symbolic production, which suggests, again, a stage, a setting, and essential theatrical props. In a social drama, mastering such means alludes to the need to build stages for performance in the public imagination and, ultimately, to build access to modern media such as television, print media, radio, and the Internet. Osama bin Laden really presented himself to be highly effective in staging an eminent phase of the long-established performance round of East versus West. In his mind, a new, unparalleled performance could be staged as well. His groundbreaking script was to turn a terrorist act in the U.S. into carnage and to put this performance on the world platform. Osama bin Laden not only placed himself as the **metteur en scène** (i.e., director) of an immensely well-organized and globally televised jihad; he also possessed the awful craftiness and all the indispensable resources to actually place himself in the heart of the *mise en scène*.[144]

Truly, Osama bin Laden became a classic actor involving audiences in a spectacular performance against America and the West. The notion of *mise en scène* is analogous to the notion of staging the scene or focality. In fact, a terrorist spectacle tends to fit all the main criteria for **focality**: a focal place, individual, or event must be well visible, have some unforgettable features, and be associated with a successful story line. Media coverage of

terrorism supports all of these criteria. It is also the case that rising actors have advantages of focality. Before September 11, 2001, Al Qaeda was much more marginal than it is today. On that fateful day, the group became focal by managing to carry out the biggest large-scale terrorist attack in the U.S.[145]

9/11 as Choreography

From the perspective of Dramaturgical Analysis, the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack was a perfectly choreographed performance to be played in front of American and global audiences. As a choreographer, Osama bin Laden was able to effectively block (choreograph) Al Qaeda's own movements and gestures and plot crafty response lines (i.e., the anticipated response from the Bush administration). The choreographed movements were practiced before the final performance. As such, Al Qaeda members learned all their script lines and tricks at terrorist training camps and flight schools. Although the spectacle metaphor remains conceptual or theoretical in nature, one has to acknowledge that it is useful for explaining how it can be managed to be recorded for television spectaculars with live breaking news. 9/11 was not only theater but also a televisual spectacular for audiences that rely on television for their understanding of the world. This choreography crosses all boundaries of theatrical events. In the past, most terrorist acts were the occasion for publicity such as news reporting. However, the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack took mass-mediated terrorism to a higher level thanks to the director/choreographer's choices in terms of method, target, timing, and scope. As an act of political performance, 9/11 was artfully executed for maximal symbolic impact.[146]

SUMMARY

Terrorists take part in a dialogue with various audiences beyond their immediate target. For this reason, the audience is the public character of terrorism. As such, the audience is both the second party (immediate target of the message) and the third party (target beyond the immediate target of the message) of terrorism. Terrorism is essentially indiscriminate. The victims' identities may not be important to the perpetrators, as long as the victims are part of a large group and the attack sends the intended message to the target population. The audience is carefully considered in advance, before the tragedy actually occurs. Of importance in this chapter is the Yale Model of Persuasion, according to which the process of any persuasion attempt will follow six stages: exposure, attention, comprehension, acceptance, retention, and translation. Terrorism should be examined as an effort at persuasive communication. These stages must be adopted to effectively persuade an audience. Another important theory is the theory of Uses and Gratifications (U&G), demonstrating for instance how audiences selected television as their main medium to be acquainted with the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. To measure audience effectiveness, one has to look at Gus Martin's (2010) five criteria: media and political attention, impacting audiences, imposing concessions from an enemy interest, disruption of normal routines, and causing the state to overreact. Nevertheless, impacts of media exposure of terrorism on the audience can cause

problems such as fear, trauma, and even gradual lessening of interest. Finally, this chapter demonstrated that terrorism is a spectacle, like a form of drama or theater. As such, it can be akin to a disaster movie, a horror movie, or a speech performance. With respect to the September 11, 2001 attacks, it was a form of Dramaturgical Analysis: indeed, 9/11 was Performance as Political Action, a script, a *mise en scène*, and choreography.

KEY TERMS

arousal hypothesis   91

audience   77

audience identification   80

back-stage   98

compassion fatigue   93

destabilizing the enemy   88

disinhibition hypothesis   91

downward terror spiral   87

Dramaturgical Analysis   98

fear narrative   91

fixity   90

focality   100

front-stage   98

independent variable   81

info[...]

inte[...]

Mea[...]

med[...]

med[...]

met[...]

mise en scene   100

Turman's model of terrorism and its target audiences   79

mourning sickness   89

parasocial interaction   89

Performance as Political Action   98

personalization of an attack   89

persuasion   80

physical spectacle   94

proxemics   78

public character of terrorism   78

second party   78

self-esteem and self-actualization values   87

shock and awe tactics   94

spectacle   94

survival, safety, and security values   87

terrorist spectaculars   96

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third party   101

threat fatigue   93

transgressive spectacle   95

translating well   95

Uses and Gratifications Theory   82

Yale Model of Persuasion   81

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