News Sources and Perceptual Effects: an Analysis of Source Attribution within News Coverage of Alleged Terrorist Plots

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Copyright Statement

Abstract

Studies of source-media relations have tended towards two principal frameworks for analysis: developing a structural approach, where access is determined by the source's position within the dominant hegemony (Hall et al. 1978); or through sociological enquiries, which examine the relationship between journalists and their news sources (Gans 1979; Schlesinger 1990). There is, however, a much smaller body of research that has considered the influence of news sources upon audiences. This thesis develops an audience centric approach to sourcing, in order to understand how journalists may influence audiences' interpretation of a story through the attribution of information to particular types of institutional sources.

This issue is considered through the media discourse of Islamist terrorism, to explore the potential for source attribution to influence audiences' perceptions of alleged terrorist plots. The justifications for focusing upon this issue are twofold. First, news coverage of suspected terrorist plots has raised questions over the position and types of sources appearing in reports. Second, news media reporting of terrorism has become synonymous with unofficial sources and leaked information. Accusations have been made, particularly following news of a foiled kidnap plot in January 2007, that government sources had relayed intelligence or operational information about the threat to a select group of journalists. For some, these charges evidence the social and political construction of contemporary terrorism, a condition, which it has been argued, is engineered by elites to make a raft of legal responses politically acceptable to the electorate (Jackson 2006; Mythen and Walklate 2006).

This thesis explores source attribution upon audiences' perceptions of terrorism through two stages of empirical research. A content analysis of UK newspaper coverage of five alleged terrorist plots and a media experiment that simulates exposure to three different types of source attribution. The results reveal that veiled references to public institutions were predominant within coverage, however, contrary to conspiratorial approaches to political discourse,

government sources were not influential in supporting details of a specific threat. Furthermore, that sourcing may simply arise as a feature of the news narrative to each event. The findings also suggest that sourcing was indicative of a broader shift in the media discourse of terrorism, with more recent coverage seeking to address public concerns over the way official or government sources communicate information about the threat from terrorism. For news audiences, the results show that the more powerful cumulative effects of trust in the media and concern over terrorism undermine any influence source attribution may have upon audiences' perceptions of the credibility of a story reporting an alleged terrorist plot. Moreover, taken together the findings demonstrate that the effect of subtle or nuanced variations in the presentation of media content upon audiences is limited and that the attitudinal and demographic characteristics of audiences serve as more significant determinants of audiences' perceptions of news.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11 scholarship examining the relationship between the media and terrorism[1] has grown exponentially. Traditionally, research has examined how news coverage of specific acts of terrorism may either influence the spread of terrorism (Midlarsky, Crenshaw, & Yoshida, 1980) or accentuate public fear of terrorism (Wilkinson, 1997). However, more recent analyses of the relationship between the mass media and terrorism have moved firmly beyond the publicity thesis. Rather than defining the media as a tool of terrorism, scholarship has explored the interaction between media interpretation of 'new-terrorism'[2] and the dynamics of public opinion (Norris, Montague, & Just, 2003; Richards, 2007; Zelizer & Allan, 2002). This thesis arose from an initial, broad research agenda that examined the influence of the evolving UK media discourse of new or Islamist terrorism upon public and political agendas.

Following initial exploratory research the focus for the thesis emerged from the UK news media's coverage of specific terrorist event. Examining reports from

[1] Terrorism is a pejorative term and there is much disagreement over its definition. However, throughout this thesis the term 'terrorism' is used to refer to threat from violence perpetrated by modern Islamist groups.

[2] September 11 2001 has engendered a new western political and social discourse, a historical dividing line between the *End of History* and today's increasingly complex late- or post-modern world. Characteristic to this was a departure from traditionally held beliefs surrounding our definition and understanding of terrorism. 'New-terrorism' refers to the emergence of loose networks of individuals motivated by a fundamentalist Islamic ideology, who exploit the complexities of modern communication technologies and banking procedures to organise and fund their organisations (Zannini, 1999; Tucker, 2001; Knorr-Centina, 2005). The political motivations of Al-qaeda and other associated groups has been the source of much debate, but it is generally held that western governments' foreign policy vis-à-vis, the Israeli/ Palestinian conflict and Saudi Arabia, and the perceived incompatibility of western liberal democratic values with Islam, influence their actions (Esposito, 2003). Traditional terrorism was split between top-down, state sponsored violence, perpetrated by governments seeking to control or coerce their populations, and bottom-up or insurgency terrorism perpetrated towards a governing political authority, guided by separatist, revolutionary or self-determinist political claims. Bottom up political violence, represented by groups such as the Basque Separatist Organisation, Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETS) and the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA), were organised around rigid command and control structures, with high profile political affiliates articulating the group's rationale.

January 2007 that the police had foiled a terrorist plot to kidnap and execute a Muslim soldier serving in the British army revealed a disparity between the news narrative and information released through official (the investigating police force and government ministers) statements and press conferences. Within hours of the story breaking journalists were able to provide detailed information concerning the nature and intended target of the alleged plot. Conversely, police chiefs and the Home Office Minister John Reid refused to elaborate on the threat and only went 'on record' to confirm that terrorism related arrests had been made. However, it became apparent when reviewing television news bulletins and the following day's newspapers that journalists frequently made reference to sources linked to these institutions during their accounts of the alleged plot. Considering this discrepancy, questions arose concerning the influence of references to 'police' or 'government sources' upon news audiences. The prominence of security and police sources in news reports seemed to authenticate the story and underline the credibility of the plot. However, how would the viewer or the reader interpret these attributions? Do people differentiate between a security source and an intelligence source? What is the meaning of such references to the audience? More significantly, how may attitudes and opinions towards organisations and institutions quoted as sources in a report influence audience perceptions of the story?

Following the initial revelations of an alleged kidnap plot, sections of the media and more recently, the deputy commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Peter Clarke, suggested that journalists may have obtained operational information about the plot through a series of secret briefings conducted with security personnel and government officials (Cobain, Dodd, & Woodward, 2007; G. Jones, 2007; Morris, 2007; Webster, Ford, & O'Neil, 2007). Importantly, it was implied that the media narrative to these events were driven by a government agenda that sought to communicate the threat and severity of the plot through these leaks. This thesis therefore seeks to understand how against a backdrop of public mistrust and scepticism towards government communications, journalism may contribute to perceptions of this threat by citing particular institutions or organisations as sources.

For those who believe that Blair and the Labour government misled them over the invasion of Iraq in 2003, how may the prominence of government sources influence their perceptions of a news story reporting a terrorist plot? Moreover, how may this contribute to public cynicism and support conspiratorial approaches to the political discourse of terrorism?

While it may be generally understood that journalists cite sources to add weight to and verify the information contained within a report (Weinberg, 1996) this research seeks to understand how underlying attitudes towards organisations and institutions referenced as a source may shape audience interpretations of a story. It could be argued that a feature of society's increasing mistrust is the emergence of a more discerning and critical media consumer (Bakir & Barlow, 2007), diminishing the influence of source citations as audiences fail to trust those who package and present the news. However, the media's crisis-style coverage of alleged plots intertwined with the complex political dynamics of terrorism provides a milieu in which sources may impact upon public opinion. Research has shown that dependency upon the mass media is higher during times of conflict and change (Ball-Rokeach & Defleur, 1976; Perse, 2001, p 80) and that this condition has the potential to reduce levels of mistrust in the news media (Mehta, 2007). Furthermore, the pervasive nature of such coverage and the frames adopted by journalists to describe these events has the potential to induce short-term cognitive, affective and behavioural effects (Ball-Rokeach & Defleur, 1976; Graber, 1997; Perse, 2001, p 80).

1.1: Why study alleged plots?

This thesis focuses upon UK news media coverage of alleged terrorist plots as a sub narrative within the media discourse of terrorism. This decision was both empirical and theoretical. First, although, primarily influenced by the episode above, examining alleged or suspected terrorist plots provides a succinct, longitudinal approach to UK media coverage of terrorism since the events of September 11 2001. Second, it could also be argued that they are now the most visible sign of the threat faced by this new form of terrorism. As the memories of the London bombings of July 2005 fade for many, it is the busting of high-profile alleged plots that serves as a reminder of the *latent and ubiquitous* threat from

terrorism, which, in turn, has provided justification for a range of government policies to meet this threat. News of suspected terrorist activity and the uncovering of high-profile plots dominate the news agenda for a short period of time, displaying similarities with the media's coverage of violent attacks. However, they differ in two important respects: first, following a major terrorist incident the threat is real and evident; yet, the credibility of an alleged plot can only be established subsequently through criminal justice procedures. Third, reporting suspected plots is highly speculative and as such sources will serve a more important function in corroborating and qualifying the information reported by journalists. Research has shown that the credibility of the source can influence audience responses to a message (Westerly and Severin 1964; Abel and Wirth both cited in Dholakia & Sternhall, 1977; Hovland & Weiss, 1952; Kiousis, 2001; Miller & Krosnick, 2000; Sundar, 1998). If we focus on news content and dissociate it from broader conceptions of 'the source', then, how may the veracity of a suspected terrorist plot be influenced by audiences' underlying attitudes towards the individuals or institutions referenced by journalists in their reports?

Breadth of coverage:

A survey comparing the breadth of newspaper coverage revealed little difference between the number of articles reporting a failed terrorist attack and reports of an alleged plot. Table 1 shows the number of newspaper articles found on the newsUK[3] database for the date that the story was first reported in the British press from eight daily/Sunday newspapers, the Financial Times and one Sunday title.[4] News that the police and security services had uncovered an alleged plot to bring down transatlantic airliners dominated news broadcasts of 10 August 2006. Similarly, news of the attack on Glasgow airport interrupted Saturday schedules on 30 June 2007, with twenty-four hour news channels providing regular updates on the story. The importance and impact of each story is reflected in the number of newspaper articles making a reference to the airport attack (102) and foiled bomb plot (134). However, significantly, there are more

[3] See Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of the use of online news archives in media research.

[4] The Daily Mail/The Mail on Sunday; The Daily Telegraph/ The Sunday Telegraph; The Guardian; The Observer; The Times/The Sunday Times; The Independent/The Independent on Sunday; The Financial Times; The Daily Mirror/ The Sunday Mirror; The Sun; The News of the World; The Daily Express/The Sunday Express; The Sunday People

articles that reference terrorism in the day following the alleged plot than the failed attack in Glasgow. While this pattern is not repeated when comparing newspaper reports of the abortive car bombing in Haymarket and the alleged kidnap plot, Table 1 does show that the overall number of articles reporting alleged activities exceeds those of the failed attacks.

Table 1: Number of articles referencing terrorist attack/plot

Episode (Failed Attack)	**Date searched**	**Term searched**	**Number of articles containing search term**
Glasgow airport bombing	1 July 2007	Terrorist; attack	102
London, Haymarket Bomb	30 June 2007	Terrorist; attack	48
Exeter restaurant bomb	23 May 2008	Terrorist; attack	18
Total			**168**
Episode (Alleged Plot/Anti-terrorist raid)			
Forest Gate 'plot'[5]	3 June 2006	Terrorist; plot	26
Transatlantic airliners plot	11 Aug 2006	Terrorist; plot	134
Kidnap plot	1 Feb 2007	Terrorist; plot	31
Total			**191**

Alleged plots as crises:

Finally, as outlined above, parallels can be drawn between the media's coverage of violent terrorist attacks such as 7/7, the failed attacks on Glasgow airport and the uncovering of high-profile alleged plots. All have been reported as dramatic crisis-style events, marked by their sudden onset and presented as a serious threat to lives and property (Perse, 2001, p57). News of both foiled bomb plots

[5] News coverage of the police operation in Forest gate on 2 June 2006, although relating to a specific terrorist threat, centred upon the conditions of the raid and the shooting of one of the arrested suspects, rather than the nature of the plot. Consequently, 'Forest Gate', as Chapter 3 will discuss, fell outside the boundaries of this research project.

and bungled attacks receive intense and emotive attention. Live broadcasts from the scene of arrests or attempted bombings, effusive interviews with witnesses or acquaintances of the suspects, an attempt to contextualise events, all evidence a shift to a crisis frame. Such coverage, as suggested above, reinforces memories of 9/11 and 7/7 and perpetuates feelings of anxiety and threat.

1.2: Why focus upon news sources?

The justification for centring analysis upon the sources of news of alleged terrorist plots are threefold. First, public awareness of sources and sourcing practice has increased following the Gilligan/Kelly affair. Information that Andrew Gilligan, the BBC journalist at the centre of the scandal, had obtained from an anonymous source, later named as Dr David Kelly, a former UN weapons inspector and government advisor, was used to accuse the UK government of at the very least, over stating and more probably, falsifying the rationale that underpinned the decision to invade Iraq. The implications of this broadcast and the later death of David Kelly were immense. Consequently, not since the early the 1980s when Sarah Tisdale was jailed for leaking government documents to the Guardian newspapers and Clive Pointing was charged and later acquitted of leaking information about the sinking of the Belgrano during the Falklands war, have journalist-source relations been under such public scrutiny.

Second, recent news coverage of terrorism has raised questions over the position and types of sources cited in reports. Following news of the alleged kidnap plot in January 2007, there was speculation that senior government officials had leaked information about the plot through a series of informal briefings with journalists. At a time of increasing scepticism towards the integrity of government communications and the way it has communicated the threat from terrorism, it would therefore seem plausible to suggest that audiences may pay closer attention to the types and roles of sources occurring within news of terrorism. The research not only considers attribution within narratives of alleged terrorist plots but also explores their influence upon public perceptions of terrorism.

Sources as Peripheral Cues:

Third, the evidential basis for exploring news sources is grounded in the belief that audiences actively scan and monitor sources when processing pieces of news (Sundar, 1998), and that source citations may act as a heuristic for news consumers when analysing the credibility or veracity of a news story (Gibson, 1997). Communication research has shown that our ability to process a message will be influenced by a range of situational and dispositional factors: external distraction and issue-relevant knowledge, for example (Brock & Green, 2005). Those who lack the motivation or ability to devote extensive cognitive elaboration towards an issue will rely upon peripheral cues when assessing a piece of communication. These heuristics act as a powerful tool in decision-making and allow judgements to be made in the absence of systematic and elaborative processing (Brock & Green, 2005; Chen, Duckworth, & Chaiken, 1999; Petty & Brinol, 2008; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

The research seeks to examine to what extent source citations may act as a peripheral cue for news audiences when assessing the credibility of a news narrative reporting terrorism. More specifically, how credibility may be determined by underlying attitudes towards an institution or organisation appearing within the story.

1.3: Research aims

This thesis aims to understand the potential for journalism to shape public perceptions of terrorism by examining the influence of source attribution upon audiences' perceptions of the credibility of a suspected terrorist plot. From this broad research aim two more specific objectives emerged: first, to identify the features of source attribution within the UK news media's coverage of alleged terrorist plots; and second, to examine how reference to different institutions within society, in particular those that define the boundaries of public discourse concerning the threat from terrorism, may impact upon audiences' interpretation and response to a particular news story.

Data was collected across two studies. A content analysis exploring the types of news sources appearing in news coverage of suspected terrorist activity and an audience study that simulates exposure to different news sources.

Following initial exploratory research it was decided that due to both practical and financial considerations this thesis would focus solely upon print journalism. The content study, consequently, examines source attribution within UK newspaper coverage of five alleged terrorist plots. Designed to encapsulate the breadth of newspaper coverage of the threat from Islamist terrorism, the timeframe for analysis begins after the September 11 attacks in 2001 and runs up until March 11, 2007. From this period five separate episodes were selected for analysis:

1. **The Ricin Plot:** On 5 January 2003 police raided a flat in North London making seven arrests. At the time it was alleged that police had uncovered a factory manufacturing Ricin poison.

2. **Old Trafford Bomb Plot:** Ten people were arrested on 19 April 2004, which the media speculated was linked to an alleged plot to bomb Old Trafford, the home of Manchester United Football Club.

3. **Canary Wharf Plot:** On 23 November 2004 a story broke that the security services had foiled an alleged plot to fly commercial airliners into Canary Wharf.

4. **Transatlantic Airliners Plot:** 24 people were arrested on 10 August 2006 following intelligence that flights from the UK to the US were to be targeted using liquid explosives.

5. **Kidnap Plot:** On 31 January 2007 nine people were arrested in Birmingham, with the media reporting that the intelligence services had uncovered a plot to kidnap a Muslim soldier serving in the British army.

Data gathered from this study will be used to address two specific questions that arise from the overall research objectives of this thesis. These are:

RQ1: What types of attributions are made in newspaper articles reporting alleged terrorist plots?

- What are the patterns and frequency of each different type of attribution?
- How prominent are official sources?
- How prevalent are anonymous or veiled references?

RQ2: How are sources used within news of alleged terrorist plots?

- Which sources act as the primary definers of news?
- Are sources used to support details of the plot or to provide background or context to a story?
- How are attributions made? Directly by quoting the source, indirectly by summarising their views or as part of the journalist's narrative to events?
- Does source attribution reflect the narrative to each plot?

The audience study was designed to assess whether attribution to different institutional sources influenced audiences' perceptions of news. Embedded within a two-stage survey was an experimental procedure intended to replicate news audiences' exposure to veiled references to three different institutional sources. The three types of reference selected for analysis were attribution to 'government sources', 'police sources' and 'security sources'. The rationale for selecting these three types of attribution is twofold. First, as the data reported in Chapter 4 evidences, reference to these three institutions or variants of each featured prominently within news coverage of alleged terrorist plots. Second, all are significant actors within the discourse of terrorism and at times have communicated, through both official and unofficial channels to the public information about the threat posed by Islamist terrorism.

The data collected from this study will be used to address the following research question:

RQ3 What is the relationship between news sources cited in reports of alleged terrorist plots and audience perceptions of news?

- How does the believability and accuracy of a news story reporting an alleged terrorist plot relate to the types of sources cited in the report?
- How do other variables interact with source attribution and can underlying audience factors predict news audiences' perceptions of a story reporting an alleged terrorist plot?
- How does trust in an organisation or institution referenced as a source influence audiences' perceptions of the credibility of a news story reporting an alleged terrorist plot?

1.4: Overview of chapters

Chapter 2 provides an introduction to the main literature themes influencing the study. Building upon the ideas introduced in this chapter, it seeks to establish a framework for the thesis and to identify common aspects within four broad areas of research. The first, influenced by the initial boundaries of this research project, recognises the growth in literature examining the relationship between the media and terrorism. It continues with a summary of the literature exploring the cognitive and behavioural effects of media content upon audiences. Two aspects of this literature are explored in greater depth: media effects during crises and news sources and audience effects. The third theme continues with an analysis of news sources. Within this theme two intertwining research agendas are addressed: both structural theories examining the interaction between news sources and news agendas and studies of news content that have sought to test these theories. In addition, it explores the sociology of journalism and considers journalists' perspectives towards sourcing. The final literature theme develops a context in which to understand the potential effects of source attribution upon audiences' perceptions of terrorism, exploring broader conceptions of trust, before considering public trust in both the government and the media. Finally, it examines the politics of fear, highlighting scholarship and commentary that has explored the political construction of contemporary Islamist terrorism.

The chapter argues that research must consider the interaction between journalism and audiences' interpretation of terrorism. Furthermore, that despite news sources receiving considerable attention within the literature, there is very little research examining how the professional practice of source attribution may

shape audiences' perceptions of a story or news event. It is also maintained that the complex political dynamics of terrorism may play a significant role in determining audiences' response to source attribution and how news coverage of terrorism may influence wider public attitudes concerning the credibility of this threat.

Chapter 3 introduces the two methodological tools used to answer the three research questions. It begins by outlining a study of news content designed to gather data concerning source attribution within alleged terrorist plots. A primarily quantitative design, this chapter outlines the methods and processes used to capture data from newspaper coverage of the five episodes introduced above. It also describes the development of a survey-based experiment designed to test audiences' response to different institutional source types within a news story reporting an alleged terrorist plot. The merits and limitations of this methodological approach are discussed within the chapter. It also deals with issues of epistemology and outlines the procedures for data collection and analysis.

Chapter 4 begins, with a summary of the narrative to each of the five plots and highlights the principal themes emerging from news coverage of these events. This introductory section, although, not a specific research aim of this project, provides a setting in which to consider the findings of the two empirical stages of the project. The remainder of this chapter describes the results from the content study. First it explores features of source attribution within each of the five plots through the narratives and themes characteristic to each episode. Using a typology of references, the most frequently referenced sources within each plot are identified. In addition quantitative data pertaining to reference use and individual named sources are reported. A more thorough investigation of the overall sample of references is then presented in the second section of this chapter. In addition to the three features above, identified and veiled attributions and reference phrasing are reported from this sample. Finally six generalised findings concerning source attribution from this overall sample of references are drawn together and discussed.

Chapter 5 reports the findings of the audience study. It examines the characteristics of the sample before addressing RQ3 and its three sub questions through the data collected from the experimental procedure. Six significant findings arising from this study are then discussed and interpreted; with particular attention paid to the characteristics of the participant sample pool and literature explored in Chapter 2.

The final Chapter, 6, returns to the three research questions and provides a summary of the principal findings arising from both the content and audience studies. Importantly, the chapter draws together these findings to understand the potential for source attribution to influence public perceptions of terrorism. Suggestions are also made concerning the wider implications of this research. First, the potential for source attribution to interact with wider political and social issues; and second, by exploring the relevance of the findings for journalism practice. The chapter also discusses limitations of the project and offers suggestions for areas of further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter will now consider four areas of literature that pertain to this thesis. Recognising the growing body of work examining the relationship between the media, terrorism and public opinion, the review of the literature will begin with a brief evaluation of the principal theories emerging from this research. It will then turn to media effects, providing a short introduction to the key research agendas within this field before outlining two areas of research that are of particular relevance to this present thesis: media effects during crises, and news sources and audience effects. It will then discuss news sources, examining both structural approaches to source access and journalists' perspectives on sourcing. Finally, a contextual prism in which to analyse the effects of source attribution upon audience perceptions of terrorism, is developed. More specifically, in the last section this review of the literature will critically analyse conceptions of trust, trust in government and the media, and the political dynamics of terrorism.

2.1: The media and terrorism: an emerging research agenda

The debate concerning the relationship between the media and terrorism has moved beyond the publicity thesis. Research now recognises the interaction between the media and public discourse, and the potential for journalists to shape public perceptions of terrorism. This first section presents a synopsis of this shifting research agenda and asserts that the publicity thesis, through a simplistic application of the direct media effects model (Picard, 1991), bypasses two of the fundamental debates within political communication: the interaction between media presentation of news and public opinion, and, by assuming uniformity, the role of the audience to limit or mitigate pervasive media effects.

2.1.1: The oxygen of publicity

Much of the early work analysing the relationship between the media and terrorism subscribed to the orthodoxy: that terrorists seek publicity for their cause through violence. Margaret Thatcher claimed, 'that publicity was the oxygen of terrorism' (Wilkinson, 1997, p2). The media act as a propaganda tool

for the perpetrators of violence as coverage of the event will provide them with a platform to present their views. This argument still pervades more recent literature.' Brigitte Nacos (2002) writing post-9/11 uses the phrase 'mass mediated terrorism', to describe the growth in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), and the greatly expanded opportunities for terrorists to exploit these to publicise their cause. This is a reoccurring theme amongst more recent exponents of the publicity thesis. Paul Wilkinson writing in *Terrorism in Political Violence,* states that,

> 'It would be foolish to deny that modern media technology, communications satellites and the rapid spread of television have had a marked effect in increasing the publicity potential of terrorism' (Wilkinson, 1997, p2).'

Exponents of the orthodox model generally agree that the principal targets of terrorism are the public or those under attack: a psychological strategy, which serves to persuade or coerce an audience through fear of further violence (Stohl, 1990 cited in Carruthers 2000). Louw (2003) expands upon this to claim that the September 11 attacks were designed to communicate to three core audiences. The first was the American public, whose opinions they sought to influence, and in turn, force a change in US policy. The second was al-Qaeda and its supporters, for whom the attacks would boost morale. Third, Muslims in general, for whom the attacks would serve as a rallying call to radicalise, potentially acting as a recruiting mechanism for groups that espouse a militant ideology. Nacos (2002) concurs with Louw but splits targets of publicity into two broad groups: a domestic or supportive audience and conversely, a fearful audience.

The potential for terrorists to reach receptive and supportive audiences, to harness support, and increase legitimacy through international coverage of their cause, demonstrates for some, the media's capacity to amplify the terrorist threat. Midlarsky et al. (1980) argued that mass media coverage of terrorism influenced a contagion effect. Witnessing 'successful' attacks on television will allow terrorists to copy the tactics of other groups and motivate them to employ similar campaigns of violence. This type of thinking dominated conservative

strategic studies and led to self-regulation by the media, or government imposed controls upon the coverage of terrorism and access to terrorist organisations and their political affiliates (Carruthers 2000, p190). Government regulation, most notably Margaret Thatcher's 'media ban' upon Sinn Féin from 1988 to 1994, has been widely criticised as an ineffective policy for reducing terrorism and setting a dangerous precedent for censorship of the press. As Carruthers (2000, p190) has argued, it treats terrorism as a problem for journalists not politicians.

If we do accept the publicity thesis, research has shown that terrorist organisations have developed complex communication strategies. Through personal accounts of those who have engaged in political violence, Robin Gerrits (1992, p60) concluded that such individuals are not solely reliant on the mass media to communicate their aims and objectives, claiming that self-made brochures, pamphlets and periodicals are also used to disseminate information. The growth of the Internet has largely superseded some of these more traditional forms of Public Relations (PR) and exemplifies the potential for groups seeking to communicate a political message to use alternative media to access their audiences. Furthermore, as Irvin (1992) contests, not all publicity may be good publicity for terrorists. 'Selective media coverage of acts of political violence can impede as well as advance the aims of insurgent terrorism' (Irvin 1992, p79). Violence may overshadow a group's political or ideological motivations. Infotainment dominates coverage, and as a consequence, the media will be more focused upon the dramatic appeal of violent ends, rather than exploring the context to the event (Miller 1994). The challenges of researching terrorist perspectives means that it is perhaps difficult, to dispute the view that terrorism, ultimately, seeks media access and publicity through violence. However, Gerrits's (1992) and Irvin's (1992) research demonstrates that further analysis is likely to show a symmetrical relationship between the media and terrorism, one in which terrorist groups understand the power of the media to shape and influence violence, but also the potential for coverage to distort the communication of specific messages or broadcasts. As Carruthers (2000) argues, al-Qaeda's desire to subvert the news media through the production of it own media bulletins, broadcast over the Internet, but often reproduced through the mainstream news

media, demonstrates a desire to publicise their own world-view independent of the forces that shape the presentation of violence.

The predominance of the publicity thesis reveals a naivety concerning the media's role in shaping and influencing coverage of an event. Its applicability to 'new terrorism' is even more circumspect as the emergence of the Internet offers a greater range of possibilities for organisations to achieve publicity without relying upon the traditional news media to communicate their politics. Finally, the orthodoxy posits that the effects of media coverage will be uniform, influencing a single, primary audience; more specifically, the citizens of a state, ethnic or ideological group targeted by violence. This subscribes to a simplistic interpretation of the direct media effects model and marginalises the influence of demographic and attitudinal factors that will often determine audiences' response to media content (Picard, 1991). As the section below makes evident, how the media choose to interpret terrorism, and the complexities in the interaction between coverage and audiences, will play a far greater role in the relationship between terrorism and various publics than the orthodoxy accepts.

2.1.2 Critiques of the orthodoxy

The second body of work is largely critical of the publicity thesis and broadens the debate concerning the relationship between the media and terrorism by emphasising the potential for the media to shape public perceptions of terrorism and exploring the complexities of communication.

Paletz and Schmid (1992) suggest that the findings of current research tend to dispute the argument that the media coverage of terrorism aids terrorists; they argue, that if anything, media coverage tends to enhance support for western governments who seek to respond to terrorism. However, they are also critical of existing research, which they claim has too often centred upon analyses of content and has largely failed to relate coverage to public opinion. They maintain that that the relationship between the media and terrorism should consider five elements.

- Terrorist perpetrators
- The influence of coverage upon the behaviour of government officials

- The effects of coverage upon public-opinion polls
- That coverage can determine the fates of victims
- That coverage can influence decisions about process and content made by media personnel in covering subsequent terrorist activities

Schlesinger, Murdock & Elliot's (1983) seminal work, *Televising Terrorism*, claimed that the media tend to support and reproduce official views towards terrorism, by reducing coverage to emotional episodes and failing to explore the motivations of terrorists. More recently, Norris, Montague & Just (2003) apply framing theory to explore the interaction between media coverage of terrorism and the dynamics of public opinion. They argue that the debate centres upon two key questions: whether media coverage is inclined to support terrorists, legitimising violence and encouraging a contagion effect, or alternatively, interpreting events through a government bias, which reinforces support for government counter-terrorism policies. Framing theory posits that the media will present news within a particular context to provide a cognitive shortcut for the audience. It centres upon the idea that subjective elements employed by journalists to report a story influence how the audience may understand and interpret an event. Through the use of language, rhetorical appeals, images, conextualisation and simple editorial decisions, a story will be presented to the public within a particular frame of reference (Entman, 1993). Significantly, framing theory recognises that the same news story may be presented differently, and to investigate the relationship between news and audience perception research should explore news frames through an analysis of media content and public opinion.

Norris et al. (2003) argue that following 9/11 the US media and government adopted a 'war on terrorism' frame, which allowed politicians and journalists alike to place global news events, particularly within the realm of conflict, into an overall narrative. Through analyses of media content and by examining the impact of different news frames upon the public, Norris et al. (2003, p292-298) concluded that four factors influence news frames: culture, 'where events may be manipulated to achieve a narrative or iconic victory'; government, 'through censorship and self censorship that tends to prioritise elite or military interests';

real-world events; and public opinion: 'how frames drive and respond to public opinion'. Other scholars who have analysed news framing during conflict place a greater emphasis upon the historical and political context that shape reporting. Gadi Wolfsfeld, (1997) examined the competing news frames in the Palestinian/ Israeli conflict, identifying two frames of reference for the conflict within both the local and international media. He noted that international media coverage had moved from the frame of the late 1970s, which defined the conflict in terms of law and order, towards one of justice and defiance, with narratives during the subsequent *intifada* emphasising the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. Wolfsfeld (1997, p196) claims that the growing legitimacy of the Palestinian movement during this ten-year period changed the political context, with 'the Palestinians given the chance to tell their side of the story.'

As Norris et al. (2003) note, the media's unwavering support for a 'war on terrorism' frame interacted with public opinion and specifically, public support for government. In the wake of news coverage of 9/11 research has shown that there was an increase in the levels of trust in political institutions and that increasing levels of social trust were positively correlated with evaluations of government institutions (Brewer, 2003). A number of scholars have been highly critical of the media coverage of September 11 suggesting that naive and biased reporting and the promotion of the 'war on terrorism' frame promoted the US government's agenda. Kellner (2002, p145) argues that a recurring theme within this frame and US media coverage of 9/11, was to invoke Samuel Huntington's (1992) prophetic 'clash of civilisations' thesis, by emphasising a binary discourse of 'us' under attack and 'them' as the perpetrators of evil. Characteristic of such coverage was the use of television banners carrying logos that read, 'the war on America', and 'America strikes back'. Kellner's (2002) interpretation of news framing, however, suggests that frames or themes emerge during particular episodes and then feed into public discourse. Zelizer & Allan (2002, p12-15) also highlighted the failure of US journalism in the immediate aftermath of September 11, arguing that critical evaluation was marginalised by 'Pentagon propaganda' and 'patriotic duty'. April Eisman (2003) conducted an analysis of the mainstream news media in the US in the two weeks following 9/11 and found that there was an increase in coverage of stories examining political or foreign

policy issues; significantly, however, the majority of these stories were related to the attacks in some way. She suggests that a 'misguided sense of patriotism' arose to keep viewers and advertisers happy by avoiding more critical and potentially controversial coverage. Schudson (2002) adds to this by stating that journalists were performing a 'community service' after September 11, and sought to provide comfort or reassurance, not only information and analysis. He disputes the notion that the media only presented a government frame, and instead refers to a consensus frame, characterised by the first person plural, 'we' and 'us'.

Structural criticisms of the media coverage of 9/11 claim that commercial logic influenced news reporting, giving rise to 'sloppy and uncritical journalism in pursuit of infotainment' (McChesney, 2002, p135). Furthermore, that an inherent bias towards official sources led to the marginalisation of coverage that was critical of the government-endorsed frame. Acts of terrorism provide a valuable commercial commodity for the media, and instead reportage focuses upon spectacle of violence, avoiding analysis and elucidation. Hewitt's (1992) analysis of public opinion data shows that the media focuses the public's attention upon the violent act and the possibility of further attacks, rather than the group's political motives. The role of the media in agenda-setting will reinforce what the public thinks, rather than how they perceive an issue.

Despite the extensive body of work focusing on the events of September 11, there is a much smaller amount of research has looked at UK media coverage of contemporary terrorism. Richards, (2007, p67) found that the discourse of terrorism presented in the UK news media can be illustrated through two models: an absolute model that describes terrorism as 'an absolute and incomprehensible force,' and the reactive model, where terrorism is seen as a reaction to UK foreign policy. More recently, Danis & Stohl (2008) conducted a framing experiment to examine how television news coverage of the London bombings in 2005 influenced attitudes towards Muslims and restrictions upon civil liberties. Their study found that interpretation of these events as domestic or 'home-grown' terrorism, rather than attributing the events to international terrorist groups led to greater support for counter-terrorism policies and restrictions upon Muslims' civil liberties. Other research has considered the role

of experts appearing in mainstream media coverage of terrorism (Miller & Mills, 2009) and the overlapping networks in which they operate.

A common theme running through these more critical approaches is the capacity of both the news and entertainment media to shape public perceptions of terrorism by interpreting events within defined narrative constructs. Postmodernist critiques, however, have centred upon the subjective influences that shape our understanding and interpretation of terrorism. For example, Tuman (2003, p135) explores the social construction of terrorism through media discourse. He argues that the boundaries that the mass media use to define and label terrorism, are in flux, and that mediated images of terrorism will influence audiences' engagement in discourse about terrorism. More specifically, that shifting mythologies surround terrorism, with media stereotyping preconditioning the public towards assumptions over terrorists and terrorism. Lockyear (2003) engenders a linguistic or semantic approach to explore the synergy between media and public discourse of terrorism, arguing that, 'terms such as 'terrorist', 'act of terror', 'fundamentalism' or 'threat' act as familiar signposts for the audience' (Lockyear 2003, p.3), allowing them to synchronise their thoughts and make sense of complex events. This has been evidenced, as De Graaf (1982, cited in Lockyear, 2003) argues, by the tendency of journalists to adopt the language of their sources when reporting news, so that when official sources are sought journalists tend to employ government rhetoric. Conversely, when interviewing an insurgent terrorist, journalists will unconsciously adopt the language and phraseology of their interviewee.

The literature that analyses the media's role in influencing public perceptions and examines the rhetorical dimensions of communication develops a more holistic approach to the relationship between the media and terrorism. One that avoids simplistic reductions, which define the media as a tool of terrorism, it recognises the potential for the media and public discourse to interact and shape government responses to terrorism. Academic research has tended to centre upon the effects of coverage of specific incidents and it is only more recently that analysis has been extended to the media itself (Picard, 1991). Through an analysis of the effects of source attribution upon news perception, this thesis

seeks to add to the literature that accepts the potential for the media to shape audiences' interpretation of the contemporary terrorist threat.

2.2: Media content and audience effects

At its heart this thesis is concerned with the influence of journalistic interpretation upon audiences' cognitive responses to a news story. It is hypothesised that through attribution to different institutional sources journalists may shape audiences' perceptions of the credibility of news of an alleged terrorist plot. The following section provides a theoretical basis for the research by critically evaluating scholarship that has explored the influence of media and news content upon audiences. It begins with a brief history of media effects research, before focusing upon two core literature themes pertinent to this thesis: media effects and crises and news sources and audience effects.

2.2.1: Media effects

Early research found that the media had the power to assert powerful cognitive and behavioural audience effects. Using the metaphor of a 'magic bullet' or 'hypodermic needle,' direct media effects describes the potential for the media to 'inject' a message into the audience, where the intended effects will be both immediate and uniform. Empirical research centred upon media content (Perse, 2001), investigating propaganda techniques and media induced mass panic (Cantril et al. 1940; Koch 1970 both cited in Lowrey & DeFleur, 1995). During the mid-twentieth century research shifted towards understanding the role of the audience to mitigate pervasive media content, and a more limited view of media influence gained acceptance. Limited models of media effects recognised how individual audience factors combined with the content of communication may serve as better predictors of behavioural and attitudinal change, rather than simply examining variations within media content (Hovland et al., 1961 cited in S. Lowrey & DeFleur, 1995).

More recent audience research merges these two traditions to develop an approach that seeks to analyse how both media and audience factors can shape interpretation and understanding (Davis, 2006, p 605). McCombs & Shaw (1972) argue that the most influential effect of the media is its agenda-setting function

and its ability to transfer the salience of news items to the public agenda (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; McCombs, 2005). Other scholars have focused upon the short-term priming effects of the mass media upon a diverse range of attitudinal constructs. Studies have documented the priming effects of media depictions of violence (Anderson, et al., 2003; Boiarsky & Long, 2003; Farrar & Krcmar, 2006; Carver et al. 1983 cited in Jo & Berkowitz, 1994; Leyens & Dunand, 1991; Scharrer, 2001), attitudes towards foreign countries (Brewer, Graf, & Willnat, 2003), political campaigns (Caliendo & McIlwain, 2006) and foreign policy (Marquis, 2007). A third approach, framing theory, discussed in detail above, examines the effects of media interpretation upon audiences (Entman, 1993). Media framing of terrorism and conflict is discussed in detail in section 2.1, however, other studies have explored the potential for media framing of policy concerns (Callaghan & Schnell, 2001) political campaigns (Valentino, Beckmann, & Buhr, 2001) minority candidates (Caliendo & McIlwain, 2006) and political discourse (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997) to produce cognitive and behavioural effects amongst news audiences. Others research agendas have emphasised the complexity of the audience and the greater influence of interpersonal communication upon opinion and attitude formation (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006; Lenart, 1994; Semetko & De Vreese, 2004).

Alternative perspectives acknowledge a more rational and discerning audience, and the exchanges between media and society. The uses and gratification model dismisses the idea of powerful media effects and suggests that the audience will gather information from a range of interpersonal sources, each contributing to influence the individual (Rubin, 1994). Furthermore, cultivation theory focuses upon the dynamics of interaction between the media and society, and the contribution the media can make to shape societal norms and values (Signorielli & Morgan, 1990). As Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli (1994, p23) propose, 'television neither "creates" not "reflects images," opinions and beliefs, rather it is an integral aspect of a dynamic process.' A final critical approach to audience studies dismisses the concept of media effects unequivocally on the grounds that empirical research has consistently failed to establish any link between the media and behaviour (Gauntlett, 1998).

The body of work examining the relationship between the media and audiences is vast and it is only possible to provide a brief synopsis of the principal research agendas within the field. The concept of powerful direct effects has largely been discredited and research has sought to analyse a combination of audience and media factors. In assessing the impact of source attributions upon audiences' perceptions of terrorism this research seeks to develop a theoretical approach that attests to the concept of limited or indirect media effects. The research will examine how subtle variations in media content (source attribution) may influences audiences' interpretation of a news narrative.

2.2.3: Media effects during crises

Parallels can be drawn between media coverage of crises and the UK news media's reporting of suspected terrorist plots. A police raid and revelations of an alleged plot targeting civilian airliners, or news of an alleged conspiracy to kidnap and execute a soldier serving in the British army, have both emerged as dramatic breaking news. Crises, similarly, will be marked by sudden onset and receive intense and emotive media attention (Perse, 2001, p57). While some plots have been presented as an immediate threat to society, others lean more towards Graber's (1997, p150), description of a "pseudo-crisis': an event that consumes media coverage but does not pose a danger to society in the way that conflict, natural disasters or terrorism may. Importantly, for many of the episodes examined in this thesis such a distinction was not always evident in the initial hours, and in some cases, for the first few days of news coverage.

It has been argued that times of crisis will heighten the public's need for information (Graber, 1997; Perse, 2001). Consequently, the effect of the media upon public attitudes and opinions may be different than during periods of stability. Crises change the way people use the media, increasing society's need for information, interpretation and consolation (Schramm, 1965 cited in Perse, 2001, p57). People turn to the media to confirm details (Greenberg, 1965 cited in Perse, 2001, p63; Riffe & Stovall, 1989) as radio, television, and the Internet become the primary source for information (Perse, 2001, p63-64). Twenty-four hour news channels will dedicate their coverage to reporting news of a particular crisis, with every twist and turn in the story speculated upon by reporters and

news anchors. Cohen (2002) suggests that during a crisis the media fulfil three functions:

- cognitive needs: the need to know and make sense of events
- emotional needs: to cope with and seek support in the face of upsetting or unsettling news
- social integrative needs: where extreme or critical views are marginalised to emphasise solidarity amongst society

Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur (1989 cited in Perse, 2001) claim that it is this dependency upon the media that is key to understanding potential media effects. Dependency theory posits that during times of conflict or change there is a greater reliance upon the mass media to supply information (Ball-Rokeach & Defleur, 1976) leading to more uniform, cognitive, affective and behavioural effects (Ball-Rokeach & Defleur, 1976; Hischburg, Dillman, & Ball-Rokeach, 1986). Lowrey (2004) examined dependency effects following the September 11 terror attacks and found that age and concern about threat, conditioned audiences' media use during the crisis. Hindman (2004), similarly, found that micro-level factors were important predictors to understanding the influence of media coverage of 9/11 upon news audiences. By analysing the relationship between Presidential approval ratings and media dependency, Hindman revealed that although solidarity-building effects may seem uniform at a macro-level, only floating voters showed an increase in support for President Bush. This, he suggests, demonstrates that the widely reported rallying effects of the media during times of crisis is limited by political partisanship.

News diffusion studies may also provide evidence to challenge the assertion that crises precipitate a shift towards direct models of media effects, since they show that audiences not only draw on the media for important news but may also seek information through interpersonal sources (Riffe & Stovall, 1989). Moreover, even when the media may be the primary source of news, people will often use more than one medium at the same time (Carey, 2002; Rosengren, 2000). Other research has also shown that the time of day, location, and demographic factors may all influence audiences' media use during times of crisis (Cohen, 2002).

2.2.4: News sources and audience effects

This section provides an overview of literature that has examined the interaction between news sources and audiences. Three areas of research are evident within the literature. The first, considers the significance of sources to media consumers; with the other two assessing the influence of source attribution and the layout and presentation of references within media content upon audiences' perceptions of news.

Culbertson & Somerick (1976) established that 80% of newspaper readers demonstrated a basic understanding of what quotation marks mean. More recently, studies have investigated the significance of sources to users of online news. Shyam Sundar (1998) assessed whether sources in online news are as 'psychologically important' as those in other mediums. He discovered that stories with quotes were perceived to be higher in credibility and quality than identical stories without quotes. However, for online users their affective reactions and judgements of newsworthiness were unaffected by sources (Sundar, 1998, p64).

Research that has investigated how audiences' perceptions of news narratives may interact with the journalistic variable of source attribution has, on the whole, centred upon audiences' impression of the quality, accuracy and credibility of news. Hugh Culbertson (1975) sampled twelve different newspapers, and found that about a third of all items contained unnamed sources. Building upon the findings of this content analysis, a later study noted that an individual's knowledge of public affairs clearly related to their understanding of attribution and led to a more favourable attitude towards unnamed sources and leaks (Culbertson & Somerick, 1977). This study was conducted a year after the Watergate scandal and suggested that these events had reinforced the findings of earlier research that showed a high belief and credibility was afforded to unnamed sources (Adams 1962, Epstein 1972 both cited in Culbertson & Somerick, 1977). Conversely, another enquiry testing audience reactions to four different newspaper articles containing attributions to named or unnamed sources, found no statistical differences in the perceived accuracy or truthfulness of the articles (Culbertson & Somerick, 1976).

Fedler and Counts (1981) investigated the use of unnamed and identified sources in shaping readers' perceptions of a story. Constructing an experiment that consisted of four different versions of two news stories; with the first, containing no attribution; the second containing attribution to an unidentified source; the third version referencing an identified source; and the fourth attributing information to an identified source but refuted by reference to a second, identified source. The results confirmed that the effects of story attribution depended upon the type of story. The story that was perceived as biased and less accurate was considered less so when it quoted two opposing sources or did not mention any source. However, attribution did not significantly change perceptions towards the other less controversial story (Fedler & Counts, 1981). More recently, Ron Smith (2007) investigated the impact of unnamed sources upon audiences' perceptions of a whistle-blowing story. His study found, however, found that there was very little difference between respondents ratings of the credibility for a story quoting unnamed sources than one that used named sources. Another study, similarly, found no differences in the believability of three versions of the same newspaper story: with specific attribution to a named source, a general attribution to the source's title but with no further details and no reference to a source. Instead, story type appeared to be the principal factor influencing reader's perceptions, with factual stories perceived to be more believable and accurate than commentary (Hale, 1984).

Research has also investigated the influence of direct quotes and paraphrased quotes upon news audiences. Weaver (1974 cited in Sundar, 1998) found no significant differences in readers' ratings of the quality of the story, and in particular, the characteristics of accuracy, believability, informativeness, interest and readability. Gibson and Zillman (1993) equally, found that direct quotations do not make reports more interesting and enjoyable for media consumers.

Three more recent studies have attempted to bridge the gap between the perceived quality of news and audiences' attitudes towards issues within the news. Gibson and Zillman (1993) found that direct quotes and personal testimony make an issue seem more salient to newspaper readers. Furthermore, the persuasive influence of direct quotes has been shown to sway readers in

favour of an issue when compared with news reports of an issue containing paraphrased quotes (Gibson, 1997). However, both these studies found that story quality was not influenced by the presence of direct quotes over paraphrased quotes.

Experimental research has also tested the persuasive influence of the presentation and layout of newspaper articles upon news consumers. Gibson, Hester & Shannon (2001) examined the influence of extracted quotations, those that appear in larger print and aim to draw readers to particular stories or segment of a story, and found that in certain circumstances, they could increase support for the position advocated in the quote.

There are only a handful of studies that have investigated the effects of source attribution upon audience perceptions of news. To summarise, print journalism has, on the whole, displayed a correlation between readers' impressions of news and the types of sources appearing within the text (Sundar, 1998). Studies that have explored how audiences' perception of news or issues reported in the news may be influenced by nuances or subtle variations in presentation have tended to focus upon two journalistic variables: direct and extracted quotes and named over anonymous sources. However, three further questions arise: first, how may underlying attitudes towards an institution when cited by journalists as a source influence the perceived veracity or credibility of a news narrative? Second, for journalists who report terrorism, how is the accuracy and credibility of news undermined by citing a particular institutional source. Third, how may this influence audience perceptions of a story reporting a significant terrorist plot?

2.3: News sources

News sources are defined as, 'the actors who journalists observe or interview including interviewees who appear on the air or who are quoted in magazine articles and those who supply background information or story suggestions' (Gans, 1979, p80). Shoemaker and Reese (1991) suggest that there are in fact two types of sources, direct and indirect. Direct sources are involved with the news event. They are participants insofar as they are the subject of the story itself, or affected by the event in question, either individually or as part of an

organisation they represent. Indirect sources are used to add to a narrative. These may be experts qualified to comment on the news event or members of the general public. Key to both these definitions is the idea that sources will convey information to journalists. However, sources not only influence the news agenda but are a tool of journalistic interpretation used to corroborate information contained within a narrative or to frame a particular news event. Definitions seldom consider this distinction and, more importantly for the proposed research, fail to consider audiences' perspectives towards news sources

The following section critically evaluates the literature that pertains to news sources. It begins by reflecting on the professional practices of journalism that guide source attribution. Before dealing with the scholarly literature that has sought to conceptualise source-media relations and reporting the findings of empirical research that has surveyed patterns of attribution within news content.

2.3.1: Journalists' perspectives

Traditionally the fundamental rule of sourcing has been that for a fact to appear in print it needs to be confirmed by at least two reliable and independent sources. If this is not possible, then, the reliability of the source and the journalist's belief that the facts are correct, will dictate whether the source is used or not (Bickler, et al., 2004). However, Mollenhoff (1981, p3) commenting upon the use of sources in the Jimmy's World[6] and Watergate scandals argues that, 'one good solid source, a direct witness with no axe to grind and with a record of high credibility, is better than two, three, or four sources who are relating second or third hand hearsay.' He contests the two-source rule on the grounds that it is meaningless without any standard for weighting the credibility of the source (Mollenhoff, 1981, p3). Steele (2002, p1) suggests that a better guideline for evaluating sources is to ask, 'what is the source's motive for providing this information? What does this source have to gain or lose? Will this information make the source look better, worse, guilty or innocent?' The

[6] Jimmy's World was a story written in 1980 by Washington Post author Janet Cooke detailing the life of Jimmy, an 8 year old heroin addict living in Washington DC. It was awarded a Pulitzer prize in 1981, however, the controversy it created led some to question the veracity of the story and whether the boy really existed. Cooke, subsequently, revealed that she had never met Jimmy and that much of the story was fictitious.

requirements for journalists to produce reports that are corroborated by credible and authoritative sources may, as some argue, lead to a bias towards official sources (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 1978). However, for journalists, the search for an authoritative source should not be conditioned by perceptions of status. An official or authoritative statement may not provide all the relevant facts. Communication professionals will attempt to spin or frame an issue so that events are portrayed in a favourable light (Bickler, et al., 2004).

Journalists vary with regard to their perspectives towards interacting and fostering relationships with sources. Doug Frantz (1999) a national correspondent from the New York Times, cites three rules that journalists should adhere to: never socialise with sources; ensure transparency, so readers can assess the background and motivations of sources; and to never advise sources (Frantz, 1999, p1). Others suggest that a journalist should demonstrate their usefulness to those people they want to develop as a source. In addition, journalists should be mindful of sources' agendas, as a story should always be written for the reader (Grant, 1999). David Barstow, a reporter from the New York Times, expands on this by stating that, 'you have to be clear, constantly, every day about what your agenda is and make it absolutely clear to these people that your agenda has nothing to do with their agenda' (Barstow, 1999, p4). Ultimately, as Grant (1999) argues, this may create conflict, as the story may not be presented in the way a source expects.

Handbooks for journalists explicate the ground rules for source attribution (Weinberg, 1996). For journalists, direct attribution is considered the best way of handling information as it enables the audience to evaluate the credibility of the source (Friendly, 1958). Members of the public may be unfamiliar with the way the media works and it may be necessary for journalists to clarify the ground rules before working with a source (Bickler, et al., 2004). Sources that are unused to dealing with the media are particular prone to confusing 'off-the-record' with 'for background only', known as without attribution. In this instance the reporter may not identify or even suggest the identity of the source (Friendly, 1958). Gene Foreman (1984) suggests that the use of an unnamed source should be a last resort, and used only when the information is of particular importance. Where

possible, the unnamed source should be described fully and without giving away their identity. Editorial guidelines for dealing with stories or information where the source is reticent to go on the record are stringent, and claim that unnamed attributions should only take place when the source may face reprisal for speaking out (Bickler, et al., 2004).

There are a number of studies by journalism scholars that have sought to survey the frequency and prominence of anonymous sources occurring within news. Culbertson's study of US newspapers (1978, cited in Boeyink, 1990) focused upon the article as the level of analysis and found that 33% of news stories quoted an unnamed source. Halin et al. (1993), however, explored sourcing patterns within US newspapers' coverage of national security issues and found that only 43.2% of all citations were to anonymous sources. Martin-Kratzer & Thorson (2007) and Sheehy (2008) developed longitudinal studies of news content to examine trends in anonymous sourcing. Examining the use of anonymous sources in US newspapers and major broadcast network news shows Martin-Kratzer & Thorson (2007) found that the frequency of unnamed news sources declined between 2003 and 2004. Sheehy (2008) exploring source trends in the Washington post between 1970-2000 found that overall 46.5% of stories contained a 'completely anonymous source', furthermore, that foreign news stories were most likely to contain unnamed news sources.

The editorial guidelines of major news organisations prescribe a strict code of conduct towards sourcing routines and practice. However, it would be impossible to test, and naive to think, that such stringent guidelines are rigorously adhered to by all journalists, and across different media. However, there seems to be a particularly strong commitment to uphold these standards within the print media and amongst established media institutions.[7] These principles are designed to maintain the journalistic standards of objectivity and impartiality, and to empower the reader in assessing the credibility and veracity of the narrative.

[7] Both the BBC and The Guardian newspaper have editorial guidelines accessible via their websites, which explicate their polices towards the use and identification of sources.

2.3.2: Reporting crises

Scholars have explored the potential for crises to impinge upon journalistic norms and practices. In the era of twenty-four hour news the normal gatekeeping function of the media may be abandoned (Kurtz, 1998; Waxman, 1973 cited in Perse, 2001, p70; Katz, 1993 cited in Williams & Carpini, 2000). Commercial pressures dictate that journalists supply a constant stream of information and updates, which during times of crisis may lead to uncorroborated reports and 'rumours' being presented as an important story development. Journalists may rely upon a single source, or gather 'eye-witness' reports, pictures and videos from the public. These factors will interact, particularly during the initial stages of a crisis (Graber, 1997), to create a conflicting and shifting narrative to events. Consequently, those who are concerned with the management of crises have called for a balance to be struck between openness and operational constraints that seek to limit actions that may trigger panic or jeopardise emergency responses (Crelinsten, 1994). Lasorsa (2003), however, disagrees that crises will always eliminate gatekeeping. By conducting a study into the rumours that circulated during the 9/11 crisis, he argues that, generally, very few false stories were reported in the mainstream press, and what reports did emerge were quickly corrected. Nonetheless, Lasorosa states that, 'journalists should guard against the appeal of stories that meet their expectations and neatly fit the crisis narrative' (Lasorsa, 2003, p 19).

2.3.3: Conceptualising source-media relations

Theoretical frameworks for analysing journalist-source relations have centred upon the political, economic, and cultural structures that influence access to the media. Davis (2003) claims that two dominant schools of thought emerge when conceptualising those who seek access to the news: a critical perspective, where researchers examine the corporate machinery of media agentry, and an alternative camp in which liberal pluralists emphasis the empowerment that media management may provide to resource poor organisations. Critical positions on source-media access are derived from a Neo-Marxist approach to political economy and cultural structuralism (Cottle, 2003). Herman and Chomsky's (1994) propaganda model, for example, asserts that the mass media are instruments of a ruling class, and that news discourse will maintain existing

ideological power structures through endorsing, promoting and legitimising the interests of the ruling elite (Herman & Chomsky, 1994; Klaehn, 2002). Consequently, two factors that limit access to the media are inequality in resources and the cultural authority afforded to government and institutional spokespersons (Davis, 2003). Conversely, pluralists would contend that the growth in PR has created greater opportunities for organisations to challenge the dominance of elite sources and allow the views of previously marginalised groups to enter mainstream news discourse (Moloney, 2006). The changing nature of journalism has decreased specialisation, and spread journalists across a range of stories, limiting the time available for investigation and research and encouraging reliance upon PR professionals and information subsidies (Davis, 2003; Gandy, 1982). These pressures allow a more even distribution of power between news sources, as it is the quality or convenience of a press release, or the timing of an announcement that, it is argued, will determine news selection. Significantly, the increasing pressures placed upon journalists by rolling twenty-four hour news and an evolving online news environment has impacted upon the news gathering process. One outcome has been that journalists are limited in the amount of time they have available to independently check and corroborate information (Lewis, Williams, Franklin, Thomas, & Mosdell, 2008). Consequently, statements and information will be gathered from official sources who are not only able to confer legitimacy upon a news narrative but are able to comment authoritatively or provide information that is reliable and requires the least amount of checking (Gans, 1979).

Primary definition and the sociology of journalism

The literature exploring source-media relations has focused upon the interaction between sources and news agendas, overshadowing the potential for sources to act as an interpretative device for journalists. Hall et al. (1978, p57) claim that the news agenda arises from official sources that are representative of institutions that traditionally wield power in society: the government, the police, and spokespersons for large corporations. These sources act as the primary definers of a topic and establish the boundaries of public discourse. Hall et al., (1978, p58) distance themselves from what they refer to as more conspiratorial approach to news and power by stating that, the media 'do not simply create

news: nor, do they transmit the ideology of the ruling class'. The media, instead, will act as a secondary definer acting upon the initial interpretation of a news event provided by privileged and powerful sources. It is, however, the professional rules which underpin journalism, together with the requirement that news is legitimised through, 'objective and authoritative statements from accredited sources, which leads journalists to seek 'official sources' (Hall, et al., 1978, p58).

Paul Manning (2001, p15-19, 199) praises Hall and his colleagues work for establishing both an empirical and theoretical research agenda to explore power relationships between political and media elites. Primary definition, he argues, provides a valuable 'starting point' from which to consider issues of access. However, by highlighting some of the deficiencies of this model, Manning develops an approach that not only considers the political economy of source-media relations but the 'mirco engagements' that take place within this political-economic environment. He suggests that politically marginal groups can access the media but that they have to work harder to secure access and rely on modern PR techniques to generate publicity.

David Miller (1993) challenges the model of primary definition for simplifying complex bureaucratic structures and failing to account for the definitional role of the media. Analysing Northern Ireland policy, Miller identified three potential limits to the ability of official sources to act as primary definers; first: divisions within an organisation; second, the effects of different levels of competition and co-operation; and third, the impact of news values. Ericson, Baranek & Chan (1989), however, provide an alternative view. Recognising the fiscal resources at the disposal of powerful organisations and institutions will offer them advantages over access to the news, Ericson et al. agree that official sources will be able to influence access. However, they suggest that it is just as important to develop an approach that understands how news texts play back on members of source organisations and how this may affect their subsequent efforts to communicate news.

Other scholars have developed a sociological approach towards source-media relations, focusing upon sources' access to the media from both the perspective of the newsmakers and the organisations the sources represent. Gans (1979) draws a distinction between sources used in story selection and those that help to shape news production. He maintains that sources, on the whole, will be representatives of official institutions, and that the role of journalists is to refine, and alter this information into a format suitable for their audiences. Utilising observational methods to understand the interaction between journalists and their sources, Gans immersed himself in the newsrooms of major US television networks, CBS and NBC, and the weekly news magazines, Time and Newsweek. He suggests that four factors determine sources' successful access to journalists, incentive, power, the source's ability to supply suitable information and geographic proximity. The relationship, however, between journalists and sources resembles a dance, each relies upon the other, for sources seek access to the media, and journalists seek access to sources. Either party may lead the relationship, however, more often than not sources are in the ascendancy given the journalists desire for a steady stream of story ideas.

Gans does recognise that journalists will often, due to practical considerations and efficiency, defer to official sources, and that source access will reflect existing cultural and economic structures. However, he states that, 'sources alone do not determine the news.' Instead, they focus the journalist's attention upon the existing social order, 'influencing but not overriding the source considerations for authoritativeness, reliability, trustworthiness, and productivity.' It is the ability of sources to supply information and not their status that grants them access to the news (Gans, 1979, p144). A more recent study examining the interaction between national political journalists and politicians confirmed Gans's conceptualisation that journalists were engaged in a symbiotic relationship with their sources. Examining how source-media relations influence the behaviour of politicians, Davis (2009, p215) found that reporter interactions often influence the daily thinking of politicians, with journalists not merely seen as conduits through which to promote a particular message but are used by politicians 'as sources of information about policy, presentation and, above all, the micro level politics of Westminster itself.'

Schlesinger (1990) analysed source-media relations from the perspective of the sources themselves, exploring the tactics and strategies they employ to gain media attention. He argues that previous research has been too media centric and refutes the notion of primary definition for ignoring the ideological motivations of sources, recognising five inconsistencies within the model:

- There may be conflicting opinions within an organisation over a particular issue. Consequently, one cannot extrapolate the views of a single entity, the source, to be representative of an organisation as a whole.
- Official sources may impart information through unofficial channels, leakings and secret briefings. Therefore the primary definers may not appear as such within the news.
- Inequalities existing within the ruling class mean not all sources will have equal opportunity and status to become a primary definer.
- Structural conditions may limit institutions capacity to act as primary definers.
- Assumes a uni-directional flow of information, ignoring the potential for the media to challenge primary definers.

In summary, Schlesinger states that it is not only power that influences relations between journalists and their sources. More importantly, for sources it is their 'incentive-desire' to get the information to the public.

Studies of media content

A number of studies have sought to test the theory of primary definition and to examine whether official sources are more routinely cited within news. The findings of this research have been mixed. Early analyses of media content found that almost three quarters of sources in news stories were attributed to government or official institutions (Manoff & Schudson, 1987; Sigal, 1973). Kern (1979 cited in Atwater & Green, 1988) studied the CBS and NBC News coverage of the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, noticing a tendency of correspondents to quote the US President with little attention given to the opinions and views of foreign opponents. Althehide, (1981 cited in Atwater & Green, 1988) in an analysis of media coverage of the Iranian hostage crisis, found that network journalists relied on official sources and were biased towards those who

appeared western and could speak English. More recently, Mason (2007) examined the types of sources appearing in Australian press coverage of the Fijian coups in 1987 and 2000, finding that journalists relied primarily upon institutional sources and, in particular, noting a tendency to quote government representatives. Correspondingly, O'Neil (2007) explored the UK press coverage of the 2002-2003 UK Fire Brigade Unions (FBU) dispute and found that the reporting was ideologically motivated. The conservative press in particular were hostile towards the FBU dispute and this was reflected in the way they covered the story by choosing to report using sources that were unsympathetic to the views of the union.

Other studies of news content, however, have produced evidence that challenges the concept of primary definition. Atwater & Green (1988) through a content analysis of the nightly television news coverage of the TWA highjacking in June 1985, showed that unofficial sources occurred most often. Rather than seeking out the views of politicians or security personnel the networks sought to personalise the event through the accounts of relatives and friends of the hostages. Similarly, other research has uncovered a diverse range of sources within news content. Grabe & Zhou (1999) examined sourcing and reporting in US news magazine programs and found that contrary to the types of soundbites included in television news, which were often attributed to government officials, news magazine shows included a far wider-range of viewpoints in each broadcast. Hallin, Manoff & Jeddle (1993) have suggested that, although official or government sources are more routinely cited within news discourse, this simply reflects the professional practices of journalism itself. They argue that it is a reporter's job to find out what the government is doing and hold them to account and therefore government officials will appear more often in the news than other sources.

It is the growth of spin and the role of sources in shaping journalists' interpretation of a news event that, Rupar (2006, p139) suggests, undermines the transparency of the news gathering process. Analysing press coverage of genetic engineering in New Zealand, Rupar argues that objectivity and evidence-based reporting may be harmed by journalism's failure to fully explain sourcing

practices. Ultimately, this may impact upon news consumers' perceptions of the credibility and accuracy of news since it 'blurs the line between news media journalist intervention and news source intervention.' Stenvall (2008) examined how references to elite or official sources may be used as rhetorical constructs by journalists. He found that journalists seek to add credibility to unnamed sources by surrounding references with expressions that aim to enhance newsworthiness to the information they provide. Rather than referencing an 'anonymous' or 'unnamed' source, journalists will cite 'analysts' or 'officials'. It is through this process, Stenvall argues, that attribution can reduce the factuality and objectivity of news discourse.

Empirical research has shown that official sources are, on the whole, more often cited within news reports. However, there are limitations in using studies of media content to support a structural approach towards news and power. Primary definition is concerned with the societal structures, social, political, and economic, that order relations between journalists and their sources. Consequently, sociological studies, from both the perspective of the source and the journalists, have proved more rigorous in assessing the concept of primary definition. They have shown that the relationship between sources and the media is complex and multilayered, and that both have the capacity to define and shape the news. Analysing the influence of source attribution upon the discourse of terrorism the research will test how reference to 'establishment' sources within news reports may influence public opinion towards the source organisations and institutions themselves. The relationship between news sources and power is not confined to the first stage of news production, access to the media, but explores the meaning given to events by journalistic practice and form.

2.3.4: Sources and Leaks

So far the discussion has focused upon the routine production of news. In the UK news media, however, reporting of terrorism and, in particular, alleged terrorist plots has become synonymous with unofficial sources, leaked information and secret briefings. Accusations have been made, particularly under Tony Blair's premiership, that unofficial disclosures have become part of the government's news management strategy (Jones, 2009, 2010). Following a suspected kidnap

plot in early 2007, allegations were made within the media, and subsequently by the Deputy Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Peter Clarke, that sensitive operational information was released to the media through a series of secret, off-the record briefings (Mulholland, 2007; Webster, et al., 2007). The implications for such claims upon trust and confidence in government are explored later in this chapter. However, before this the thesis will consider literature that has examined the flow of information through irregular channels of communication and the role of unofficial sources or leaks within news production. It should be noted, however, that the term 'unofficial' in this context is referring to the method of communication rather than status of the source or organisation they represent.

The most prominent type of unofficial source is known as a leak: defined as the disclosure of unauthorised information from official channels that has not been sanctioned for release to the press, and where there is usually an agreement between the journalist and the source that identify of the source will remain anonymous (Ericson, et al., 1989; Flynn, 2006; Sigal, 1973; Thompson, 1995). Traditionally, sources that leak information to journalists have been representatives of the public sector, who lack positions of status or power, but seek to turn information they perceive to be in the public interest into news (Flynn, 2006). Often, leaks are engineered to undermine a political administration (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991), demonstrate discord and indecision, or evidence the pursuit of politically unpopular policies. They may, however, arise in other corporate and institutional spheres, but on the whole, present information or news that will be potentially damaging to an individual, organisation or institution. This has lead some to define leaks by their impact on government: with those that are favoured by the executive branch and those infuriating to it (Downing, 1986). Hess (1984 cited in Shoemaker & Reese, 1991) lists several potential functions of leaks:

- to sound out views on policy
- to promote or sabotage policy
- to gain favour with reporters
- to pursue a grudge against bureaucratic rivals
- enhance the leaker's ego by providing an insider image

- to blow the whistle on waste or dishonesty

Empirical research investigating unofficial sources and sourcing practices is understandably limited. In part, this is due to the definitional difficulties in distinguishing between an authorised release of information and an unauthorised leak (Tiffen, 1989 cited in Flynn, 2006; Foreman, 1984), leading scholars to focus upon sources within the routine production of news. Moreover, investigating the relationship between journalists and their sources will be restricted by the journalistic norm of source anonymity. Peter Preston (2005) draws upon his experience as editor of The Guardian Newspaper during the Sarah Tisdale case (a Foreign Officer clerical worker who leaked details relating to the movement of nuclear missiles) to explore the relationship between sources and confidentiality. He concluded that it is the right of journalists to defend their sources and uphold their privacy even when this may contravene the rule of law.

Flynn (2006) explored the interaction between journalists, news organisations and unofficial sources. Conducting a series of interviews with Australian journalists and individuals who had leaked information while working within the federal bureaucracy, she highlighted three significant features of their relationships. First, unauthorised sources pass information on to journalists for any number of reasons. Some, particularly from within the middle ranks of the public sector, may leak information in the public interest, others, may leak to further their own private interests. Second, journalists claim that the most valuable information comes from the middle ranks of the public sector. Finally, trust facilitates the transfer of information between sources and journalists, and that this exchange is based upon a reciprocal concession that the information is accurate and that the identity of the source will not be revealed. Jarworski, Fitzgerald, & Morris (2004) analyse the role of leaks in enabling speculative discourse over upcoming events, arguing that four factors influence their acceptance and authentication: secrecy, authorship, ownership and future orientation. Other studies have focused upon investigative journalism arguing that leaks from an individual or institution confer status upon a journalist (Downing, 1986).

2.4: The political context: examining scepticism and trust

Trust and scepticism provide a framework in which to analyse the effects of source attribution. Recent events have ensured that public trust and confidence in political institutions and the media has remained salient. The dispute surrounding the two dossiers evidencing Iraq's ongoing chemical and biological weapons programmes and the exoneration of the government in the subsequent Hutton inquiry has precipitated, what some have referred to as 'a crisis of trust' (Stanyer, 2004).

Research conducted soon after that these events showed that this episode had consolidated feelings of mistrust towards government, with polling data confirming that many felt that the Labour government had mislead them over the Iraq war, and that Tony Blair was untrustworthy (YouGov, 2004). The Hutton inquiry, although absolving the government of any wrongdoing over its use and presentation of intelligence concerning Iraqi's chemical, biological and nuclear weapons programmes, failed to convince the UK public. Polls conducted after the publication of Lord Hutton's report showed that 56% of those questioned felt that he had been unfair to shoulder the blame upon the BBC, with 67% believing that the inquiry had failed to uncover the truth (NOP, Evening Standard Poll 2004; NOP, 2004 for Sky News both cited in Cozens, 2004). The episode also proved damaging to public confidence in the BBC with opinion polls showing a decline in trust in both the institution, and its journalists (YouGov, 2004).

As a barometer of the depth of public feeling over these events and the War in Iraq, this data is significant. However, when compared against longitudinal analyses of public trust in UK institutions the results are unsurprising, with opinion polls showing that trust in political institutions has declined steadily over the past twenty years (Ipsos-MORI, 2003, 2006, 2009).

Public trust in the media is more complex and often conditioned by the medium or brand through which audiences consume news. For example a BBC and Reuters poll in 2006 found that National Television (82%), and public radio (67%) were the most trusted mediums for news audiences, closely followed by

international satellite TV (56%). The Internet, however, and more specifically news websites (30%) and Internet blogs (25%) were perceived to be the least trustworthy (BBC/Reuters, 2006). In the UK audiences still report higher levels of trust in the BBC than in other news organisations and trust broadsheet newspapers over tabloid titles (YouGov, 2005). Data also shows a disparity between levels of public trust in journalists who write for broadsheet newspapers (60%), mid-market newspapers (34%) and 'red-top' tabloids (12%) (YouGov, 2004).

The purpose of illustrating these statistics is to understand the contextual factors influencing the proposed research. As the polling data above shows, there is a high-degree of scepticism amongst the UK public towards political institutions and politicians, and to such an extent that large sections of public opinion now claim to no longer trust the government. The 'success' of 'New Labour's communication strategies, and more importantly, the belief by many that they were mislead by Tony Blair over the Iraq war, at the very least, has ensured that trust has remained salient, and for some, has played a significant role in declining public confidence in government and elected officials (Oborne, 2005). It is, however, unclear how such attitudes and opinions may influence audience perceptions of news quoting such sources. Consequently, the following questions arise: if a journalist references government sources, how may a reader or viewer who is sceptical or less trusting of government interpret the story? Importantly, how may perceptions of news credibility regulate attitudes or reinforce opinions towards the source? Furthermore, how may this contribute to the growing conspiricism and populism that has characterised public discourse on terrorism (Oborne, 2006). It also raises questions as to how attitudes towards the media, and in particular, the mistrust of newspapers and print journalists, may influence audiences' perceptions of news? Are sources seen as incidental to the overall narrative? Understood by the reader or viewer as a journalistic device used to legitimise a story, but unlikely to receive extensive cognitive elaboration.

2.4.1: Defining Trust

According to Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995 cited in Mehta 2007, p155) trust is the 'willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party

based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party.' Sociological interpretations have focused upon the role of trust in facilitating human agency, where trust acts as a state of positive expectations regarding other people's actions and intentions' (Mollering, 2001 p404). Georg Simmel (1990, p178 cited in Mollering, 2001p, 404) argues that trust is an integral element of a functioning society, and essential to maintain social cohesion. From this perspective, trust is not only seen at an interpersonal level, but can manifest itself at all levels of a society, influencing social order and generating social capital (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000).

Rationality is a key component in the formation of trust, and it is argued that trust is based upon a form of risk assessment, where people trust each other when they assume that the risk of relying on another person to act in particular way is low (Jones, 1999). Premised upon the Hobbesian view of human nature: that people will seek to maximise their own self-interests, this approach has greatly influenced conceptions of trust in economics, rational choice and game theory. Mollering (2001) criticises notions of trust that emphasise deterministic rationality and marginalise the element of faith in establishing trust relationships. Faith recognises that there is an unknowable element to trust, which bridges our own experiences, interpretations and expectation (Simmel 1990, cited in Mollering, 2001). It is this feature that allows us to trust individuals when rational choice theory would suggest that the basis for trust is low.

Uslaner (2000) distinguishes between two types of trust. Trust in people we know, which he defines as strategic trust, and trust in people we don't know and who are different from ourselves: moralistic trust. Moralistic trust is based upon both elements of rationality and faith, we assume that people from different backgrounds still share the same underlying values, however, this can only be inferred, and as a consequence, expectations require varying degrees of faith. Uslaner (2000) makes a further distinction within trust, between generalised trust: the belief that people can be trusted, and particularised trust: faith in your own kind. This portrayal of trust develops a contradictory view to those theorists

who link trust to civic engagement (Putnam, 2000). According to Uslaner (2000) trust must exist for people to engage in volunteering, or to participate in charity work. When faith in other people is in short supply it is more likely that we will become particularised trusters, and remain within the confines of familiar social groups.

Kieron O'Hara (2004) also suggests that there are two types of trust; first, at a horizontal or vertical level or trust in authority versus a trust in equals. Second, he differentiates between local trust: trust in personal acquaintances, and global trust: trust in institutions. Politics, he argues, is, to a large extent, based upon local trust as voters make up their own minds unmediated by institutions. Both local trust and global trust display similarities, but at the global level there are increased complexities and risks if trust declines.

Modern societies and increasing social complexity leads to a situation where the basis for trust is low (Simmel, 1990 cited in Mollering, 2001). Uncertainty and risk arise as a feature of modernity; where societies now depend upon complex-expert systems that are detached from local control (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1990). However, the inconsistency is that these abstract systems, computer networks and the financial markets for example, are detached from us and as such are dependant upon trust. Simmel (1990, cited in Mollering, 2001) argues that it is the faith element of trust that allows us to adapt to the risks inherent in modern life (Luhmann & Davis, 1979).

Confidence, the final aspect of trust, rests on the idea that the element of faith can be quantified enabling a belief that someone or something can be trusted. Other scholars have separated trust and confidence, and have argued that their relationship is bi-directional (Brehm & Rahn, 1997). Examining trust in government officials, Brehm & Rahn (1997) propose that confidence in government could be an extension of trust in authority figures, and that confidence arises when people trust others. Interpersonal trust facilitates confidence in government institutions but also has the potential to reduce levels of trust in politics (Levi, 1996 cited in Brehm & Rahn, 1997). Institutions, as a consequence, act as a conduit for trust; personal trust still arises from the

individual and their experiences, but there is confidence in their competence based upon their personal insights (O'Hara, 2004).

2.4.2 Trust in Government

As the polling data above shows, political institutions are mistrusted by large sections of public opinion. Statistics consistently show that political parties, the government, and ministers are trusted by less than 50% of those interviewed. Some research has focused upon levels of trust towards the institution of government, while others have focused upon attitudes towards particular governments or ministers. Specific events and the conduct of individual governments may trigger peaks and troughs in public attitudes towards political institutions, as opinion polls conducted during the Hutton inquiry and the last five years of Blair's premiership show. Nevertheless, there is still a significant amount of research that suggests trust and confidence in government has been declining since the late 1960s (Ipsos-MORI, 2003, 2006, 2009). This experience is not unique to the British system with similar attitude trends evident amongst the American public (Nye et al 1997) and across the European Union (EU) (Brannan, John, & Stoker, 2007).

It is not clear to what extent the public are able to separate the institution of government from individual governments, the party that government ministers represent, and their attitudes and opinions towards individual politicians. For that reason, it would be impossible to project mistrust of the government as representative of a wider mistrust in the political process and political institutions without some recognition that the way pollsters phrase questions, or how the timing of their surveys may influence their data. Nevertheless, there are a number of studies that have specifically examined the relationship between the behaviour of politicians, and attitudes concerning government and political institutions in general. Bowler and Karp (2004) analysed the effects of scandal in both the US and UK, and found that scandal involving specific members of Congress or Parliament lowered support for politicians and political institutions. Moreover, citizens whose representative had allegedly been involved in a scandal were more likely to express a negative attitude towards their involvement in politics, suggesting that scandal may weaken political efficacy. Bowler and Karp's

study found no correlation between news exposure and negative attitudes towards government; however, their analysis of media use was limited, only exploring the responses of those who read a broadsheet newspaper. The results of this study suggest that, in the short-term, scandals will have an impact upon how the public regard politicians and the political system; all the same, their influence is transient, and declining trust in government cannot be attributed entirely to the transgressions of an individual MP or the collective actions of a government.

Peter Oborne (2005) disputes this, and suggests that the rise of New Labour, in particular the mendacity of Tony Blair, has heralded a level of falsehood and deception not previously seen in contemporary politics. This, he argues, changes the relationship with the electorate, 'from one of equals to one of master and servant' (Oborne, 2005, p224), and erodes our trust and confidence in politicians and government. He cites the controversy surrounding the invasion of Iraq, and the feelings of deceit that this episode has created amongst the British public, as the principal factor in public mistrust of government. To analyse Oborne's claims, however, it is necessary to distinguish between 'diffuse' and 'specific support' for government (Easton, 1965, 1975 cited in Bowler & Karp, 2004). Diffuse support is based on the notion that a 'reservoir of institutional goodwill' exists, and that this is distinct from 'specific support' for individual politicians or periods of governance when particular actions or decisions are made. These distinctions suggest that current-polling trends should not be seen as indicative of general mistrust of politicians and government, rather that they represent a reflection upon attitudes towards the current, or most recent, incumbents of political office. Research has suggested that cognitive dissonance theory may explain the difference between attitudes towards politicians (in this case individual Congressmen) and political institutions (Parker & Davidson, 1979; Fenno, 1975 both cited in Bowler & Karp, 2004). The public may have a positive attitude towards their individual representative but experience dissonance as they have a lower level of support for Congress. This discrepancy was explained by the distance that individual politicians place between themselves and Congress, and to such an extent that the public may disassociate the two. It is unclear, however, whether such a separation may happen in reverse, where negative attitudes

towards politicians reduce diffuse support for a political system and the institutions of government.

Confidence and trust in government have not fallen uniformly. Instead, each has fluctuated in response to particular events and the activities of certain politicians and governments (Orren, 1997). Furthermore, research has shown that short-term evaluations of political events and the specific measures used to analyse trust may influence the levels of mistrust shown (Cook & Gronke, 2005). Broader theoretical approaches focus upon socio-economic and cultural changes that may influence attitudes towards government. Specifically, it has been argued that the slowing of economic growth for the western industrialised nations has led to a search for political scapegoats (Citrin & Green, 1986; Hetherington, 1998 both cited in Chanley, Rudolph, & Rahn, 2000; Lane, n.d cited in Nye, Zelikow, & King, 1997). Dissatisfaction in government, and the failure of governments to meet the expectations of electorates seeking continued growth and prosperity has, consequently, led to a decline in confidence and trust in political institutions (Chanley, Rudolph, & Rahn, 2000; Lawrence, 1997). Changes in society, the rise of post-material values that criticise authority and emphasise individuality and self expression; the decline in traditional family structures; and technological changes, have also been proposed as reasons for the growing mistrust of public institutions. Mansbridge (1997) explores two socio-cultural factors that correlate with the decline in trust: the increase in violent crime, and the increase in the number of children whose families were unable to keep them out of poverty. Rising expectations and a 'politics of overpromise' produce unrealistic expectations, and as a consequence, such changes within society lead 'directly and independently to increased negative perceptions of government (Mansbridge, 1997, p148). Orren (1997) elaborates upon this idea by stating that satisfaction with government depends upon both citizens' perceptions and expectations. Perceptions, he argues, are influenced by external trends, but are also tied to the performance of government itself. Citizens expectations are a combination of wants: what people expect from government, and anticipations: the standards by which they will be judged.

It has also been suggested that changes in the political process have contributed to the decline in public trust in government. Negative campaigning by politicians and political parties, and increasing cynicism towards the political process arising from the actions of individual politicians, and the news management tactics of political parties, has lead to disengagement amongst the electorate (Kurtz, 1998; Semetko & De Vreese, 2004). The consequence is that the public becomes increasingly detached from politics and suspicious of the motives of political elites, and thereby eroding confidence and trust in government (Davis, 2002; Nye, et al., 1997). Evidence for this is demonstrated by declining voter turnout and a general apathy towards politics and political issues.

2.4.3: Trust in the Media

Alongside public attitudes towards government, audiences' trust and confidence in the media or news narrative is central to this thesis. As outlined in the opening section of this chapter, public trust in the media as an institution and journalism as a profession is low. It is therefore important to consider how underlying mistrust or cynicism towards the media may influence news audiences and their response to news content. It is to this issue that review of the literature will now turn, examining research and scholarship that has explored the relationships between media and trust.

Bakir and Barlow (2007) identify two approaches to trust in the media. The first, emerging from media studies, focuses upon the role of the media within the public sphere, and a second, grounded in marketing and advertising theory, which focuses upon the interaction between consumers and brands. Within the public sphere the relationship between trust and the media is founded upon the idea that the media provide a forum for public debate (Curran, 2002; Habermas, 1989) and thereby aid the formation of public opinion. According to pluralist, liberal approaches, public trust and confidence in the media to provide unbiased information is essential for ensuring government accountability and facilitating democracy (Bakir & Barlow, 2007). When information is perceived to be untrustworthy or manipulated then it can be argued that people will be less informed, which ultimately undermines the role of journalism in civil society. Critical theorists would contend this view, suggesting that elite control over the

flow of information allows organisations at the top of the hierarchy, governments and powerful business groups for example, to manipulate public opinion rather than promote rational debate (Davis, 2003; Herman & Chomsky, 1994). Consequently, trust is undermined by inequalities in the system and the tendency of the media to reproduce elite discourse.

Empirical research that has examined public trust in the media, similarly, can be split into two broad research agendas. The first group aligns the concept of trust with credibility, and analyses how credible or trustworthy people perceive different types of media to be; while the second body of work examines how trust in the media may moderate the effect of media content upon audiences.

Trust in the media has, more commonly, been explored by assessing perceptions of media credibility. Westley & Severin (1964 cited in Kiousis, 2001) undertook the first extensive analysis of channel credibility and found that television news was perceived to be more accurate then print news. These results have subsequently been confirmed by a number of later studies (Abel & Wirth, 1977; Gaziano & McGrath, 1986 both cited in Kiousis, 2001). Recent opinion polls that have analysed public trust in the news media have generally produced data that supports this argument, with national television news consistently perceived to be more trustworthy than newspapers (BBC/Reuters, 2006). Kiousis (2001), however, explored the credibility of three different news formats, television, newspapers and online news, and found that audiences were generally sceptical of news. More recently, research has focused upon the credibility of the emerging online news environment, producing a mixed set of results. Some analysts have found that online news is perceived by the audience to be more credible than print (Johnson & Kaye, 1998 cited in Kiousis, 2001) and television journalism (Kiousis, 2001). Conversely, other scholars have discovered that online news is considered less trustworthy by audiences when compared with newspapers and television news (Sundar, 1998).

Research has also examined the influence of trust in the media upon media effects. Levin, Frensley & Fackler (2005) investigated the relationship between trust, priming effects and public attitudes towards terrorism, finding that people

who are more trusting of the media will tend to rally around the President and be more supportive of policy responses. However, those who are less trusting of the news media are more likely to be sceptical of counterterrorism and foreign policy measures. This agreed with earlier studies that established that media trust accelerate priming via agenda-setting (Miller & Krosnick, 2000) and influences framing though the effects of media source credibility (Druckman, 2001 cited in Levin, et al., 2005). Further studies have investigated the influence of media trust upon media use. For example, Tsfati and Cappella (2005) found that the need for cognition overrides news scepticism, and as a consequence, people will consume news that they do not trust.

2.4.4: Media Negativity and Trust

The media have been blamed for the decline in trust and for accentuating and contributing to the changes in the political process outlined above, The role of the media in contributing to negative perceptions of politicians and the political process is probably one of the most widely explored debates within the literature, and as a consequence is dealt with as a separate section in this review.

John Lloyd (2004) contrary to Oborne, attributes the declining trust in politics to the media, rather than the conduct of politicians and government. He argues that mistrust and suspicion pervades the media's view of politicians, and that journalists are now acting as 'an abrasive and cynical' opposition. For Lloyd, Andrew Gilligan's infamous broadcast on the Today programme was a watershed, demonstrating just how confrontational and sensationalist journalists have now become. The failure of the media to enhance the democratic process, he argues, arises from a corporate media culture that demands a steady stream of high-profile, attention-grabbing stories, which lead journalists to focus upon conflict and scandal.

Empirical research examining the influence of the media upon public trust in government has led to the development of two contrasting theories. First, the media malaise hypothesis, which posits that negative media coverage causes political disaffection (Robinson, 1976; Miller, 1979; Hart et al., 1990 all cited in Gross, Aday, & Brewer, 2004) and second, the mobilisation hypothesis, which

claims that the news media supply information to the public, which enhances trust and participation in the political process (Norris, 2000).

Early research established that the press have a tendency to emphasise bipartisanism and discord when covering political news (Jamieson & Cappella, 1994 cited in Kurpius, Goidel, & Sheffer, 2006). Cappella & Jamieson (1997) explored the effects of strategy driven press coverage upon voters. They found that those who were exposed to strategically framed news reacted more cynically towards election campaigns and policy debates than those who viewed issue-framed stories. They claim that this not only leads to disaffection and mistrust of political institutions, but also contributes to negative perceptions of the media itself for emphasising conflict over substance. Their conclusions built upon earlier studies that found that television news has the potential to modify the salience of issues by changing the standards that viewers use to judge politicians (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987).

Valentino, Beckmann and Buhr (2001) developed a similar experimental approach to assess how strategically framed news coverage of campaign stories may alter the way voters describe candidates and campaigns, and to also investigate how framing effects may influence turnout and trust in government. They found that strategy-based interpretations of candidates' policy speeches tended to lead to lower confidence in government and less intention to participate in elections. However, they also found that the impact of reading a story framed to emphasise the contest over issues can be moderated by other factors. Those who do not identify with a particular party and those with lower levels of education are more likely to express cynicism towards the political process as a result of exposure to strategy frames.

Pippa Norris (2000) contests the media malaise hypothesis and argues that the media and political communication are part of a virtuous circle. Those who are the most active and most politically informed are those who are most trusting of the political system. Exposure to media coverage of public issues helps those seeking information and serves to reinforce their perceptions of government. Norris argues that we should not blame the media for disaffection and apathy,

instead, this stems from problems with representative democracy itself. Scholars that have examined the media mobilisation hypothesis have focused upon the relationship between media use and political trust. A study by Newton (1999 cited in Gross, et al., 2004) found higher levels of political trust and political knowledge among readers of broadsheet newspapers. Maurer and Garcia-Luengo (2006), however, found that exposure to television news and political content in newspapers did not have a positive influence on perceptions of political institutions. Comparing attitudes in twenty-one European countries they suggested that the longstanding attitudes towards the political process were more likely to be influenced by either positive or negative presentations of politics. This agreed with the findings of an earlier study that found that political trust is not a function of media use, rather it is influenced by education and political ideology (Moy & Scheufele, 2000).

Other studies have examined how media use may correlate with social trust and civic engagement. Kurpius et al. (2006) noted that media attentiveness and newspaper use increase the likelihood that people will become involved in local community organisations and participate in elections. However, they also noticed that media use may have a negative effect since newspaper exposure was associated with pessimistic assessments of social issues. Moy & Scheufele (2000) analysed data from the 1996 American National Election study and established that reading newspapers enhanced social trust; conversely, watching television news undermined trust in others. Both papers complemented earlier research that reported a positive association between reading local newspapers and willingness to engage in the local community (McLeod 1996; 1999 cited in Kurpius, et al., 2006). In the year following the terrorist attacks of September 11, Gross et al., (2004) explored the relationship between media use, trust and confidence in governments. Their research found that watching television news was associated with higher levels of trust in government in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks and that newspaper use influenced individual level social trust over the course of the following the year.

To summarise, research that has examined content, and in particular how the media portray politics and political campaigning, presents a strong case for the

influence of the media upon trust in government. The news media's tendency to develop narratives that emphasise negativity and conflict has been shown to increase cynicism towards politics and political institutions. However, these effects are not uniform, with research showing that other audience variables, most notably, political affiliation or educational attainment, will influence attitudes towards politics. Furthermore, one cannot separate theories of media malaise from the rapid changes occurring within the political process. Increasing negativity within the discourse of politics and, a growing number of politicians who seek to distance themselves from political institutions has changed the way the media reports politics. The alternative hypothesis posits that the media contribute to trust and participation in the political process by providing information to the public. Empirical research investigating this theory has, on the whole, failed to establish a clear relationship between media use and political trust. It has, however, noted a positive correlation between media use, particularly for those who read newspapers, and social trust. What is not clear is how social trust may be predictive of political trust. If social trust is related to political efficacy and political participation then there is a stronger argument for the positive influence of the media upon political attitudes and behaviour. Finally, it should be highlighted that the literature exploring the relationship between media use and trust in government, and to a lesser extent media content has principally focused upon perceptions towards politicians and political institutions, rather than exploring how media negativity and media use may influence wider attitudes and opinions.

2.4.5: The Politics of Fear

Populist theories that question the way the state communicates with the public are fed by the declining trust in government and government communications. There is a growing body of literature that claims that political discourse is constructed by elites to sustain a culture of fear, allowing political decisions to be taken that would otherwise cause greater controversy (Mythen & Walklate, 2006). Following the alleged kidnap plot in February 2007, allegations were made within the media, and subsequently by the Deputy Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Peter Clarke, that sensitive operational information was released to the media through a series of secret, off-the record briefings (Cobain,

et al., 2007; G. Jones, 2007; Morris, 2007; Webster, et al., 2007). Such claims, in a climate of mistrust and scepticism, have the potential to increase public cynicism towards government and the veracity of the threat posed by contemporary terrorism.

Richard Jackson (2005) critically analyses the social and political construction of terrorism, and claims that the threat from terrorism has been exaggerated by political elites to pursue political goals. He suggests that terrorism is conceptualised through four sub narratives:

- a new and 'apocalyptic' form of terrorism
- that we are living in a 'semi-permanent, supreme emergency situation'
- the enemy is ubiquitous and highly dangerous
- the threat posed by new terrorism is different from traditional terrorism, with its perpetrators referred to as religious fanatics to depoliticise their cause

These themes, it is argued, serve to individualise the risk of attack, and have made more repressive legal responses politically acceptable to the electorate (Mythen & Walklate, 2006). Legislation introduced in the UK since September 11th, which updated and extended powers under the Terrorism Act 2000, and subsequently the introduction of the Terrorist Act 2006 following the London bombings in July 2005, have been criticised for infringing civil liberties. Moreover, it is argued that exaggerating the terrorist threat has been used to support international policy decisions, and in particular, used to rationalise the UK's participation in the US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Oborne (2006) criticises Tony Blair's Labour government for developing a 'false narrative of terror,' which he argues was engineered to politicise terror and gain narrow political advantage. Oborne's critique centres upon the falsehood and misinformation within government communications. In particular, he argues that irresponsible press leaks emanating from both the police and government departments were part of a publicity campaign designed to increase support for unpopular domestic and foreign policies.

The 'politics of fear' has been dismissed by some for merely advocating a conspiratorial, structural critique of political discourse, one that is

unsubstantiated by empirical research, with little attention paid to the role of the media in accentuating the sub narratives of terrorism or its potential to shape public discourse through its interpretation of terrorism. Füredi (2005, p53), for example, challenges the notion that the media are able shape society's perceptions of fear and risk. Instead, he argues that society's sense of risk emerges from, 'a disposition towards the expectation of adverse outcomes,' which is then amplified by the media. Furthermore, the public now have a greater knowledge and consequently, a greater awareness of potential risks. Indeed, there is a large body of evidence in literature investigating the 'mean world hypothesis', how media depictions of crime may influence public fear of crime, to suggest that the media has only limited influence upon risk perception (Ching & Xiaoming, 2001) and that more important indicators are age, (Williams & Dickinson, 1993), gender, (O'Keefe, 1984) and ethnicity (Chiricos, Eschholz & Gertz, 1997 cited in Ching & Xiaoming, 2001).

Conversely, Althehide (2001) argues that the mass media and popular culture are the most important contributors to fear. Although those who define the problem, politicians, academics, and experts, endorse issues, they have become much more successful due to a news and entertainment media culture that promotes fear. He claims that since the media shape our perspective of the world, narratives that emphasise anxiety and fear will influence public perceptions of particular issues. Importantly, for decision makers, political psychologists have demonstrated it is the perceived level of risk from these specific problems that will influence attitudes towards policies designed to reduce risk. For example, Huddy, Feldman, Capelos & Provost (2002) found that both perceptions of personal and national threat from terrorism were related to support for national policies designed to reduce the risk of terrorism.

Legislation introduced since September 11th, which updated and extended powers under the Terrorism Act 2000, and the introduction of the Terrorist Act 2006 following the bombings in July 2005, have been criticised for infringing civil liberties. The control order regime, the extension of pre-charge detention to 28 days and the introduction of ID cards have all been legitimised by the government as being necessary to maintain security and fight terrorism. The

politics of fear theory argues that such measures are unnecessary and disproportional to the actual threat posed by Islamist terrorism and only serve to heighten public anxiety (Jackson, 2005). Popular discourse has focused upon more extreme variants of this theory, with writers and filmmakers developing a polemical critique of the social construction of terrorism. Examples of such work include the documentary films by Adam Curtis (2004), *The Power of Nightmares*, and Alex Jones (2007), *Terrorstorm* and articles by Paul Watson (2006) published on the propagandamatrix.com website. While academic research has developed a more analytical approach, the prominence of such views in both public and media discourse perpetuates scepticism and contributes to a 'culture of suspicion'. This thesis explores how these attitudes may interact with the journalistic practice of source attribution to shape public perceptions of news narratives of terrorism.

2.5: Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter has outlined the principal research agendas influencing this thesis and sought to provide a theoretical framework in which to explore the influence of source attribution upon public perceptions of Islamist terrorism. As part of an emerging area of scholarship this thesis seeks to understand how UK news coverage of alleged terrorist plots may shape audience perception of the threat posed by contemporary Islamist terrorism. Effects-based research has shown that variations in the presentation of media content can influence audiences' interpretation and response to specific news events. Importantly, for the research, the dynamics of such effects are strongly influenced by the pervasive nature of the crisis style coverage of high-profile media events.

Journalism research has explored the influence of news sources and news agendas and the interaction between journalists and their sources. This significant body of work provides a perspective and depth within which to situate this study of news sources. Finally, this review developed a contextual prism in which to examine the role of news sources within the media discourse of terrorism. Trust in government and public fear over the threat from terrorism

are both integral to the wider discourse of terrorism and are debates which contribute to and underpin the political dynamics of terrorism.

The next chapter will now turn to the two empirical studies designed to address the three research questions set out in the introduction to this thesis.

Chapter 3: Methodologies

Through an analysis of news sources, this thesis aims to explore the relationship between the media discourse of Islamist terrorism and public perceptions of terrorism. The previous chapter considered the potential for the types of sources appearing in the news to influence news audiences and established a rationale for developing a nuanced approach to audience effects. This chapter briefly returns to the specific research aims of the project before addressing questions of epistemology. It then develops separate sections for the two stages of empirical research: a content analysis, which explored the types of news sources appearing in newspaper coverage of suspected terrorist plots and an audience study that simulated exposure to different news sources.

3.1: Research aims

In order to explore the role of news sources in press coverage of alleged terrorist plots and their influence upon audience perceptions of news, this thesis will address the following research questions:

RQ1: What types of attributions are made in newspaper articles reporting alleged terrorist plots?

a) What are the patterns and frequency of each different type of attribution?
b) How prominent are official sources?
c) How prevalent are anonymous or veiled references?

RQ2: How are sources used within news of alleged terrorist plots?

a) Which sources act as the primary definers of news?
b) Are sources used to support details of the plot or to provide background or context to a story?
c) How are attributions made? Directly by quoting the source, indirectly by summarising their views or as part of the journalist's narrative to events?
d) Does source attribution simply reflect the news narrative to each plot?

RQ3 What is the relationship between news sources cited in reports of alleged terrorist plots and audience perceptions of news?

a) How does the believability and accuracy of a news story reporting an alleged terrorist plot relate to the types of sources cited in the report?
b) How do other audience variables interact with source attribution and can underlying audience factors predict news audiences' perceptions of a story reporting an alleged terrorist plot?
c) How does trust in an organisation or institution referenced as a source influence audiences' perceptions of the credibility of a news story reporting an alleged terrorist plot?

The first two questions aim to provide a context in which to consider the influence of source attribution in news coverage of terrorism but have also informed and shaped the second-stage of empirical research. Two specific areas of enquiry that the content analysis addresses are, first, to identify the types and use of references by journalists; and second, drawing upon the work of Hall et al. (1978) and Miller (1993) to identify the types of sources acting as the primary definers for news of alleged terrorist plots. Research question 3 seeks to understand how the types of sources referenced within a news narrative may influence audiences' perceptions of the credibility of an alleged terrorist plot. More specifically, it examines how underlying trust in the organisation and institutions quoted by journalists influences audiences' assessment of both the believability and accuracy of a story.

3.2: Epistemology

Before turning to the methodologies used to address these questions, this chapter will briefly deal with questions of epistemology and outline the theories of knowledge informing the research.

Both studies align themselves with a positivistic approach to social science, where research is defined as a method for combining deductive logic with precise empirical observations to discover and confirm a set of probabilistic casual laws (Neuman, 1994 cited in Gunter, 2000, p58). Underlining this research, however,

are implicit principles that constitute an essentially post-positivist epistemological base.

Positivism is grounded in the concepts of impartiality and objectivity, where human experience can be studied through a scientific method and the collection and observation of measurable data (Schroeder, Drotner, Kline, & Murray, 2003, p176). The type of research associated with this paradigm has, more commonly, used quantitative techniques to understand social phenomena and has relied on numerical measurements to prove or disprove hypotheses (Gunter, 2000, p4). This tradition informed early audience research using experimental and survey-based techniques to investigate the influence of media content upon public opinion (Hovland & Weiss, 1952). However, as scientific discourse has turned away from pure positivism and embraced interpretivist and critical paradigms of social knowledge, so too has media and audience based research. Consequently, quantitative audience research went out of fashion as researchers, influenced by the Frankfurt school's criticism of positivism and quantitative empiricism, developed qualitative or mixed-method methodologies that sought to uncover audiences' subjective sense of reality and individuals' different interpretations of social events (Gunter, 2000, p6-7). In particular, experimental methods to test causal relationships between media content and audience effects fell out of favour as researchers turned to alternative methods for exploring the influence of news and entertainment media upon audiences.

Post-positivism, while still assuming ontological realism, recognises that objectivity can never be separated from the context in which research is conducted. Therefore while research may have an open-ended and exploratory character (Hemmersley, 2000, p456 cited in Ryan, 2006, p9), by developing objective and replicable methods researchers are able to reanalyse and extend each other's data (Charney, 1996, p599 cited in Cooper, 1997, p558). This process produces context-dependent generalisations that, as Karl Popper argues (n.d cited in Cooper, 1997, p558), 'build upon each other to grow knowledge.' It is the recognition that empirical reality is complex and diverse that leads some exponents of post-positivist approaches to assert that a pure form of scientific objectivity should be replaced by a 'perspectival' view in which neither

objectivity or subjectivity is allowed to prevail (Guba, 1985; Clark, 1985, Lincoln 1985 all cited in McKelvey, 2002, p7), and instead, should support the concept of a 'negotiated outcome' by the researcher (McKelvey, 2002, p7).

To explore the influence of source attribution upon audience perceptions of terrorism this research intertwines an analysis of context and content with a study of audience effects. Developing such a multi-study method allowed the researcher to examine the interaction between news discourse of terrorism, the practice of journalism and audiences' response to news narratives of terrorism. As other scholars have noted, the complexity and difficulties involved in measuring the effects of news sources upon audiences has meant relatively few studies have attempted to follow 'the complete circuit of communication' (Manning, 2001, p225). However, recognising the recent re-emergence of experimentation within media research, and in particular, by researchers attempting to explore the influence of journalism on public opinion and political engagement (Iyengar, 2010). This research developed a method that contextualised an objective approach to attribution effects through an analysis and discussion of news content of alleged terrorist plots, in an attempt to contribute to the wider debate concerning the role of journalism and journalistic practice in shaping public perceptions of the threat from contemporary terrorism.

Reasons for rejecting a qualitative approach

Before turning to the first empirical study it is necessary to briefly outline the researcher's justifications for rejecting a qualitative approach to source attribution. The first and overarching concern was to select a method that, not only followed the epistemological assumptions introduced above, but provided the most suitable tool for addressing the three research questions. The content study below focused upon a detailed analysis of individual references to examine both the types of attributions appearing within news coverage of alleged terrorist plots and the characteristics of reference use. Importantly, this approach allowed the researcher to explore a range of quantitative variables pertinent to each individual case within the data. A qualitative method would have required the

researcher to step back from the news texts themselves and to focus on the interaction between sources, news texts and the media discourse of alleged terrorist plots. For example, an in depth thematic analysis could have explored the use of sources to develop a particular angle or approach to a story (Hall et al., 1978; Harcup 2003). More specifically, to examine how language, style or rhetoric is supported through reference to particular sources (Stenvall 2008). Ultimately, such an approach would have only provided context to the audience study, and would have failed to produce the insights acquired by the method described below.

A quantitative approach to audience-source effects was even more compelling for the researcher. The advantages of experimentation are explored in detail below, but in summary, it was chosen as the most reliable and valid method to examine the cognitive effects of news content upon audiences. Quantification, and in the study described below, the measurement of the two dependent variables, provided a means to determine the effects of the subtle manipulation of news content upon the participants in the research. Importantly, it allowed the researcher to isolate these effects from other variables and reduce the influence of extraneous factors upon story perception. While it would have undoubtedly been possible to develop a method that drew upon Brewer's (2002) technique of 'open-ended' or 'qualitative experimentation', in which participants are allowed to reflect upon and discuss their impressions of content. It would have proved difficult due to two features of the research. First, a complex exposition of themes or ideas may have lead to the creation of groups or sets that were unable to detect the nuanced effects explored in the study. Consequently, in an attempt to provide greater depth a complex exposition of themes and ideas may have missed the micro-effects under investigation. Second, developing a method that allowed the audience to discuss and reflect upon the issue with peers would have shifted the focus from individual-level perception towards interpersonal perception. Such an approach, potentially, may have only served to facilitate a group discussion around the story or alleged plot itself, rather than news coverage of the issue and the influence of source attribution upon news perception.

It is for this same reason that a focus group or open-ended interview technique was discounted. Audience research has developed methods for exploring the interaction between participants and media content. For example, Paul Lazarfeld's (1972) early work examining radio audiences through focus group interviews to qualitative reception research by Reilly (1999), where the researcher presents media artefacts to stimulate discussion and reflection by participants upon the content and the issues it reports. A similar approach to audience analysis was considered in the early stages of this research project, where participants could have been shown examples of news content reporting recent alleged plots, for example, and asked to discuss the role and influence of sources in the stimulus items. However, such a study would have required the researcher to present content reporting recent events, rather than using a fictitious story. In the case of all but one of the five episodes examined in the study the credibility of the story and alleged plot had been established through subsequent media coverage. As a consequence, it would have proved difficult to move discussion beyond each of the events themselves and explore the immediate impact of coverage upon story perception. Ultimately, this approach would not have allowed the researcher to draw such firm conclusions concerning the influence of source attribution upon news audiences.

3.3: Study 1: Content analysis

Research questions one and two were answered through a content analysis of newspaper coverage of five alleged terrorist plots. The following section provides justifications for this methodological approach and highlights research that has explored patterns of source attribution within news content. It will then discuss the research design, sampling strategy, and coding procedure utilised within the study.

Berelson (1952, p18) originally defined content analysis as 'a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication.' This view has been criticised for restricting itself to quantitative content analysis (Huber, 1989; Kracauer 1952; Lasswell, 1949 all cited in Gunter, 2000, p56), and for merely describing content rather than

examining the influence of media texts on audience perceptions of social reality (Krippendorf, 1980; Merten 1995 both cited in Gunter, 2000, p56). Alternative definitions have emerged that emphasise content analysis as a systematic (Walizer & Wienir, 1978 cited in Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p166) and replicable (Krippendorff, 1980, p19) procedure for collecting data. More recently, there has been a move towards developing interpretive techniques of content analysis to uncover the meanings of media content and the social construction of news discourse (Fowler, 1991) and to explore the cultivation effects of media content upon audiences (Gerbner, et al., 1994).

The study described below employed a quantitative method for analysing news content of alleged terrorist plots and centred upon the three concepts identified by Kerlinger (1973 cited in Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p166) as common to quantitative content analysis. First, content analysis is systematic. News content was selected and analysed according to a defined set of rules and procedures that were consistently applied to all newspaper articles within the sample. Second, content analysis should be objective. One of the strongest criticisms of content analysis is that it is impossible for it to achieve perfect objectivity due to the subjective influences of the researcher when selecting rules for classification (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p166). Gunter (2000, p57) argues that to overcome these issues, 'operational definitions and rules for the classification of variables should be explicit and comprehensive enough that other researchers that repeat the process will arrive at the same decisions and same results.' The content study, as stated above, articulated explicit rules and definitions for the selection, coding and analysis of newspaper content. Third, content analysis is quantifiable: a precise and accurate representation of a body of messages. It is argued that quantitative measures of content help to increase accuracy and standardise the evaluation procedure (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p166). While critics of positivistic research paradigms would challenge claims of 'true objectivity' in quantitative analyses of media content, it could be claimed that quantification serves to increase objectivity and reliability as it requires the development of simplified and standardised procedures for the evaluation and analysis of data (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p167). In order to explore source attribution within newspaper coverage of alleged terrorist, this research developed a quantitative

method for evaluating and analysing content, utilising a range of descriptive statistics to highlight patterns in attribution.

Communication researchers have criticised quantitative content analysis for producing 'descriptive accounts of the characteristics of media output' and in many cases for 'failing to achieve any meaningful insights into media process and effect' (Gunter, 2000, p81). Others argue that measures should be used that can identify the meanings conveyed by media content, rather than employing techniques that simply describe and count surface events (Fowler, 1991; Krippendorf, 1980 both cited Gunter, 2000, p57). The content study described below, however, was used to contextualise and inform an additional audience study that sought to understand the potential for source attribution to influence story perception. Moreover, the analytical framework for this thesis developed through Chapter 4 relates quantitative data pertaining to source attribution to an analysis of the principal narrative themes characteristic to the five episodes examined in this research.

A further limitation of content analysis is that the breadth or lack of messages relevant to the research can result in unmanageable or inadequate samples (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p170). To analyse an issue that receives very little media or news coverage the researcher must include a wider selection of content or increase the timeframe for analysis. Alternatively, investigating a topic that has received a great deal of media exposure has the potential to involve large and unwieldy samples of content. As stated above, this study explored one aspect of the news discourse of terrorism, police raids and reports of suspected terrorist plots, as indicative of wider coverage of Islamist terrorism. Aside from the theoretical and contextual factors underpinning the project, methodologically, focusing on alleged plots, provided a coherent and succinct body of media in sufficient quantities for analysis. The final criticism of content analysis is that the generalisability of results is often limited due the varying definitions and category systems used by researchers to investigate concepts and issues (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p170). To limit these issues the study attempted to develop a method for evaluating content that was clear and replicable for further studies of news sources.

Content analysis has previously been used to provide an insight into four aspects of the relationship between media content and news sources. First, to describe the types of sources and trends in source attribution in both broadcast news and newspaper content (Atwater & Green, 1988; Martin-Kratzer & Thorson, 2007; Stromback & Nord, 2006); second, to assess the diversity of sources appearing in newspaper content (O'Neil, 2007) third to support studies of media—source relations and journalists' sourcing strategies (Ericson, et al., 1989; Mason, 2007); and finally, combined with other methodologies to measure the influence of sources upon media audiences (Culbertson & Somerick, 1977).

This study developed these characteristics of content-based research to explore the influence of source attribution in newspaper coverage of alleged terrorist plots. Not only to present an overview of the types and use of different references to identify patterns in attribution, but importantly, as part of a multi-method design, to provide a context in which to explore the effect of attribution to specific public institutions upon audiences' perceptions of news reporting an alleged terrorist plot.

3.3.1: Sample

The study was designed to encapsulate the news media's coverage of the threat posed by Islamist terrorism. The starting point for the sample was from the September 11 attacks, with the timeframe for analysis running up until the beginning of this project on 11 March 2007. Within this period five distinct episodes were selected to provide an overview of news media coverage of alleged terrorist plots:

1. **The Ricin Plot**: On 5 January 2003 police raided a flat in North London making seven arrests. At the time it was alleged that police had uncovered a factory manufacturing Ricin poison.

2. **Old Trafford Bomb Plot**: Ten people were arrested on 19 April 2004, which the media speculated was linked to an alleged plot to bomb Old Trafford football ground.

3. **Canary Wharf Plot:** On 23 November 2004 a story broke that the security services had foiled an alleged plot to fly commercial airliners into Canary Wharf.

4. **Transatlantic Airliners Plot:** 24 people were arrested on 10 August 2006 following intelligence that flights from the UK to the US were to be targeted using liquid explosives.

5. **Kidnap Plot:** On 31 January 2007 nine people were arrested in Birmingham, with the media reporting that the intelligence services had uncovered a plot to kidnap a Muslim soldier serving in the British army.

These five alleged plots were selected as representative of the breadth of coverage during this five and half year period. The Ricin plot was the first major story to emerge where the police had uncovered a direct threat to the UK. Although other stories featured prominently in the media, most notably an attempt by a British national to detonate an explosive device on a flight from Paris to Miami in December 2001,[8] these were not included in the analysis as they discussed non-UK based threats or more general claims from the British security services over the number or types of plots, rather than making any specific allegations. The five plots and narrative themes that emerged during coverage of each event are described in detail in Chapter 4.

The sample was restricted to newspaper content from eight Daily/Sunday newspapers, the Financial Times and one Sunday title.[9] The timeframe for the sample was three days; beginning on the day news of the alleged plot was first reported in the press. For four of the episodes this was the day after broadcast and online news channels first covered the story. For the Ricin plot, however,

[8] British citizen, Richard Reid, was convicted by a US court of attempting to detonate explosives hidden in his shoe on an American airways flight from Paris to Miami on 22 December 2001.

[9] The Daily Express/The Express on Sunday; Daily Mail/ The Mail on Sunday; The Daily Mirror/ The Sunday Mirror; The Daily Telegraph/ The Sunday Telegraph; Financial Times; The Guardian/The Observer; The Independent/ The Independent on Sunday; The Sun/News of the World; The Sunday People; The Times/ The Sunday Times

newspapers did not report the story until three days after initial arrests were made in connection with the plot. Table 2 shows the date that the police raided properties or made arrests relating to a major plot; the date that the story was first reported in broadcast or online news; and the period of analysis for newspaper content.

Table 2: Content Study Significant Dates

Plot	Date of raid or arrests	Date first reported in broadcast or online news	Period of analysis
Ricin Plot	5 January 2003	7 January 2003	8-10 January 2003
Old Trafford Bomb Plot	19 April 2004	19 April 2004	20-22 April 2004
Canary Wharf Plot	-[10]	22 November 2004	23-25 November 2004
Transatlantic airliners plot	10 August 2006	10 August 2006	11-13 August 2006
Kidnap plot	31 January 2007	31 January 2007	1-3 February 2007

The decision to focus solely on newspaper content was influenced by both the nature of the research and the practicality of collecting a sample that is representative of media coverage, yet small enough for detailed evaluation and analysis. Studies that have examined how the media covered specific terrorist attacks have developed methods for 'real-time' content analysis of online (Vengerfeldt, 2002) and broadcast news coverage (Mogensen, 2008). This method is suited to the reporting of crisis or specific large-scale events where content is constantly evolving and updated. An exploratory study was conducted, collecting hourly snapshots of online news and 24-hour television news channels' coverage of the alleged kidnap plot in January 2007, to assess the feasibility of such a method to the present study. However, this method was rejected for two reasons. First, it is more suited to studies analysing a specific timeframe, rather than particular events, where the parameters for sampling are established prior to data collection. Second, more importantly, 'real-time' content analysis could only have been conducted with future events. It would have been impossible to replicate the method of collecting data with past events as online news content is updated frequently in the first hours or days as a story develops but archived material will often only reflect the final published update. Archived television

[10] News of the Canary Wharf plot was not related to a specific police operation.

content was considered for analysis but eventually discounted, due to the difficulties in accessing an adequate range of material and in order to maintain the link between the medium chosen for analysis and the stimulus item to be used within the audience study.

The reasons for using newspaper content were threefold. First, they offer a snapshot of coverage, providing a greater opportunity for journalists to reflect upon and contextualise events for their audiences. The pressures of twenty-four hour news to supply a steady stream of information and updates reduce the time for reflection and elucidation (Eisman, 2003; Lewis, et al., 2008). Newspapers, on the other hand, particularly broadsheet or mid-market titles have greater space to explore alternative angles of themes within their coverage. Second, although, newspapers have seen declining circulation figures, they still remain an important source of news for UK audiences, with over 11 million purchasing a daily newspaper (Cole, 2007 cited in Temple, 2008, p93). Further studies have found that despite the availability of 'free' online news, young people are now more likely to read a newspaper than previously (Barnett 2006; 2007 cited in Temple, 2008, p87). Finally, although scholars have noted limitations to the use of digital news archives for analysing and interpreting meaning from texts (Deacon, 2007), the availability of newspaper articles via online databases offers a comprehensive and convenient archive for sampling, but more importantly, allows a thorough and methodical process of informational retrieval through the database's electronic search tools.

NewsUK, a subscriber research database which contains all articles that are printed in 115 UK newspaper and magazines (NewsUK, n.d.), was used to identify material for analysis. Using the database's search facilities, which allow the user to search for particular words or phrases and publications through relevant time periods, searches were conducted across eight UK National Daily/Sunday newspapers, the Financial Times and one Sunday only title. The selected titles reflect a range of readerships, ideologies and reporting styles. They include the four 'quality' papers: the *Independent, Guardian, Telegraph and Times*, and their Sunday titles/sister papers; the mid-market *Daily Mail/Sunday Mail* and *Express/Sunday Express;* and the two daily and three Sunday tabloid papers with

the highest circulation figures, the *Sun* and its Sunday sister title, *News of the World*, the *Daily Mirror/Sunday Mirror* and the *Sunday People.* The *Financial Times*, although a specialist title, is not limited to the reporting financial and business and news and is included in the analysis as it maintains a loyal readership base, selling just under 400,000 copies daily (ABCs, 2010).

For each of the five plots the following search terms were used to identify relevant articles for analysis:

Table 3: Search Terms used to identify articles for analysis

Plot (Period of Analysis)	First search phrase	Second search phrase
Ricin Plot-8-10 January 2003	Ricin	Terror Plot
Old Trafford Bomb Plot 20-22 April 2004	Old Trafford	Terror Plot
Canary Wharf Plot 23-25 November 2004	Canary Wharf	Terror Plot
Transatlantic airliners Plot 11-13 August 2006	Transatlantic	Terror Plot
Kidnap Plot 1-3 February 2007	Kidnap	Terror Plot

Two separate search terms were used to ensure that all appropriate articles from the period were included in the sample and to reduce the influence of 'false negatives': when search wording is too precise thereby excluding relevant content (Grover, 1997 cited in Deacon, 2007). Although this approach produced a high volume of duplicate articles, they were identified and removed during the final, manual sampling procedure. Table 4 shows the total number of articles for each plot obtained from electronic searches.

Table 4: Number of articles for each 3-day period retrieved from NewsUK database

Plot	Number of articles containing first search phrase	Number of articles containing second search phrase	Total number of articles
Ricin Plot	122	30	152
Old Trafford Bomb Plot	87	22	109
Canary Wharf Plot	22	9	31
Transatlantic airliners Plot	123	306	429
Kidnap Plot	114	73	187

The final stage of sampling was a manual sift of articles to remove duplicates and identify 'false positives': spurious or irrelevant articles that were unconnected to terrorism or the specific plot under consideration (Grover, 1997 cited in Deacon,

2007). Commentary, readers' letters or editorials were removed from the sample as sources are seldom quoted within such writing and by their nature reflect upon issues and stories reported elsewhere in the news. The other rule guiding the manual stage of sampling was that for articles to be included for analysis they must have made a direct reference to the threat or alleged plot under investigation. Articles that discussed broader themes relating to terrorism were excluded if they did not make a reference to the plot. As a consequence, articles that reported the 'War on Terrorism', political responses to terrorism, or to provide a specific example from one of the episodes, summarising the effects of Ricin poison, were omitted from the final sample. The final number of articles selected for analysis were as follows:

Table 5: Number of newspaper articles selected for analysis from each episode

Plot	**Number of articles**
Ricin Plot	35
Old Trafford Bomb Plot	19
Canary Wharf Plot	13
Transatlantic airliners Plot	105
Kidnap Plot	57

3.3.2: Coding procedure

This study was designed to capture the range of sources occurring in the newspaper articles, and focused on any 'quoted source of information' as the unit of analysis. The 229 articles were each coded using the following categories:

a) **Newspaper**
b) **Article title**
c) **Overall article context**
d) **Journalist**
e) **Page number**
f) **Date**
g) **Number**
h) **Attribution:** Reference appearing in the text
i) **Reference phrasing:** Direct; indirect; narrative
j) **Reference use:** does the attribution relate to the core story theme of the plot or police operation (Yes or No)

Category *a* and *b* are self-explanatory. Category *c* is a subjective assessment of the main theme/s discussed within the article. Although only pieces making a reference to one of the five selected plots were included in the final sample, this category considers how the story was reported. Did the article simply report details of the plot and the arrest of suspects, or did it relate the story to wider issues or focus on other elements of the story? Where available the names of the journalist/s (d), the page number of the piece (e), and the date that the article was published (f) were also recorded. Category g referred to the number of the article from the initial sample printed from the NewsUK database. The final three categories, *h*, *i*, and *j*, are the most substantive and record each individual source reference occurring within the article. Category *h* noted the individual, organisation or institution appearing in the text as an information source. This may be the name of someone directly quoted in the piece, a reference to a specific department or office, a veiled attribution to 'an insider' or a reference to a non-specific source type, 'security sources' for example. Category *i* logged reference phrasing, whether each recorded reference was a direct quote from a source, an indirect quote, where a piece of information was attributed to a source but not quoted directly or occurred as part of the narrative: where sources were named

by journalists during their account of events. An example for each is provided below:

Direct: ***Westminster sources*** *revealed that levels of security surrounding Tony Blair have been 'significantly upgraded' over the past few days.*

Indirect: ***Security sources*** *said at least three members of the alleged terror cell were still at large and may be in possession of the chemical.*

Narrative: *The information has led* ***security officials*** *in the UK and a number of other European countries, including France and Spain, to focus on the activities of Algerian fundamentalists linked to al-Qaeda.*

The final category (j) recorded whether the reference occurred during the article's description of the plot, police operation or arrests made or was used to support information relating to wider narrative themes or background reporting to the story. Those that were related to the key story theme were categorised as 'yes', with all other references coded as 'no'. An example from the data of this distinction is as follows:

Example 1: ***Security sources*** *said at least three members of the alleged terror cell were still at large and may be in possession of the chemical.*

The above reference was coded as **Yes** during the analysis since it explicitly referred to the plot, the nature of the threat and suspects wanted in connection with the plot.

Example 2: ***Westminster sources*** *revealed that levels of security surrounding Tony Blair have been 'significantly upgraded' over the past few days.*

This second reference was classified as **No** during the coding process since it related to details that were not central to the plot or threat itself. Although it seems to authenticate the threat by emphasising the upgraded security measures

for the UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair, the attribution occurs during a discussion of wider issues and themes arising from the allegations.

As its heart, this thesis attempts to uncover the influence of source attribution upon audience perceptions of news. As a consequence, the content study developed an audience-centric approach to the content under investigation with the coding categories designed in such a way as to capture all references that in some way could be interpreted by the reader as a source for either the story or a particular piece of information. To develop the procedures for classifying references and to operationalise the coding process a preliminary analysis of selected articles was conducted by the researcher. This exercise highlighted a number of potential inconsistencies and discrepancies in the categories and to ensure reliability the following rules were established prior to the final coding of the data:

- **Rephrasing:** All individual references were counted unless they fall into one of the three categories below. Although the reference may be only a rephrasing of an earlier reference, from police sources to police insiders; for example, these were both counted as separate references for the purpose of analysis.
- **Repetition***:* Although the coding counted each individual source reference within an article, a reference was only counted once if it was obvious to the reader that the journalist is using the same source: *i.e*. the second reference was not introducing a new piece of information and only elaborating upon the original idea; or no other sources were introduced between the first and second reference.
- **Vox pops:** Members of the public, neighbours, local residents, are counted as sources, however, when a range of opinions are highlighted within an article they were only counted as a single reference.
- **Unidentified sources:** Unnamed or unidentified sources were recorded during the coding procedure. However, where a named source was followed by a reference to an unnamed source that is clearly a rephrasing of the original named source then these were not counted as separate references.

All articles were coded using these guidelines for selecting and categorising sources and then input into a database for analysis. A complete list of articles analysed in the content study are shown in the Appendix to this thesis.

3.3.3: Reliability and validity

All 229 articles were coded by the same researcher; however, to check the reliability of the coding process three methods were used to verify the coding of the source categories (h-j). First, the coding categories were established following a preliminary analysis of the content. This allowed the researcher to establish clear rules for coding the content and to revise the coding categories. Second, to assess intercoder reliability, two volunteer coders were recruited to code 10 randomly selected articles. These volunteers were given a short presentation and written instructions on coding the newspaper articles. After they had completed their task, the results were compared with the initial coding of the articles to check for consistency in responses. The percentage of agreement in intercoder reliability was well above the 90% threshold widely used in similar studies of media content.

3.4: Study 2: Audience study

Research question three was addressed via a two-stage audience survey designed to simulate exposure to different news sources. This section begins by exploring 'the case for experiments,' examining the advantages and limitations of this methodological approach and highlighting relevant research from media, journalism and politics. It will then outline the sampling procedure and discuss the creation of the stimulus material used within the study. Finally, this section provides an overview of the 'research sessions' and data collection methods, and summarises the measures and hypotheses to be discussed in Chapter 5.

3.4.1: Overview of Research Design

Students at Bournemouth University were recruited to participate in a series of research sessions, during which they were asked to complete two surveys. The first survey included an experimental procedure, where participants were asked to read two newspaper articles. It also included a range of and pre and post-test questions. The first newspaper article, reporting an alleged terrorist plot, was

created by the researcher and acted as the stimulus item for the study. The second survey asked specific questions concerning the influence of source attribution upon participants' perceptions of news.

The stimulus article reporting an alleged terrorist plot (see Appendix 8.3) was edited to produce four different treatment conditions. The first acted as the control or neutral condition and did not attribute the story to a dominant source; the second cited government sources; the third, police sources; with the final condition referencing security sources as the central source for the piece. As discussed, these three institutions were selected for analysis as all three references have featured prominently within both the news and public discourse of terrorism. At times, the police, government and to a lesser extent, MI5 or the security services, have communicated, through both official and unofficial channels, the nature of threat and current level of risk posed by Islamist terrorism to the British public. Furthermore, and as Chapter 4 will discuss, the findings from the content analysis show that the three sources selected in the study, or similar variants of each reference type, featured prominently within news reports of alleged terrorist plots.

The study outlined below employed a quantitative, survey-based experiment to understand the influence of veiled attributions to public institutions upon audiences' perceptions of news. The advantages of developing such an approach is that it allowed the researcher to measure the influence of the independent variable (news sources) in the study upon audiences' perceptions of news content. More specifically, it acknowledges the importance of experimentation and quantitative observation to explore causal relationships between the institutions quoted as sources and audiences' response to news of an alleged terrorist plot.

3.4.2: The case for experiments

Media experiments

Experimental methodologies have a long history within mass communication and media research. Influenced by behavioural psychology, early studies of propaganda and mass persuasion used clinical trials to explore the impact of

Second World War propaganda films upon soldiers' knowledge and opinions (Hovland, Lumsdaine, & Sheffield, 1949). Other researchers developed these techniques using experimentation to explore the influence of persuasive communications upon attitude formation (Hovland & Weiss, 1952; Janis et al., 1954; McGuire, 1962 both cited in Schroeder, et al., 2003, p299-300); the impact of the media upon public learning and opinion change (Schramm et al. 1961; Chaiken & Eagly, 1976 Schroeder, et al., 2003, p305); and the relationship between media portrayals of violence and audience behaviour (Zillman 1978; Bandura 1973 both cited in Schroeder, et al., 2003, p317). Studies examining the relationship between news and public opinion have also employed experimental methods to explore the effect of content upon news audiences. Agenda-setting studies have used experiments to examine the correlation between the news agenda and public agenda by manipulating the hierarchy of items appearing in news broadcasts (Iyengar et al., 1982; 1984 cited in Gunter 2000, p201). In addition, studies of framing and priming effects have developed experimental designs to explore the potential for subtle differences within media interpretation to shape audience perception and understanding of news events. More commonly, media content has been manipulated to emphasise particular elements of coverage and to then explore the influence of these variables upon audiences. Experimentation has also been used to explore the effects of strategy-driven and conflict-biased press coverage upon public cynicism (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Jackson, 2009; Valentino, et al., 2001); the influence of the language used within news frames upon voters (Brewer, 2002); to understand priming effects within political communication (Marquis, 2007); and to measure the effect of news frames upon audience perceptions of various political issues (Danis & Stohl, 2008; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006).

These more recent experimental studies of framing and priming effects have focused on the cognitive impact of media upon audiences. Importantly, for this research, they have developed methods that allow the researcher to explore the relationship between the way news is presented to audiences and their impressions of these issues. However, while such studies have often explored the interaction between audience variables and news content, in the tradition of limited models of media effects, the manipulation of content has more commonly

involved different articles, news items or programmes acting as the independent variable under investigation. This research, however, seeks to understand how subtle variations within content, the attribution to different sources, may interact with other audience variables to shape audiences' perceptions of news.

A much smaller body of research has used experimentation to examine the influence of journalistic variables upon news audiences. As outlined in chapter two, studies have examined how minor variations in the way news is presented, the layout of an article, (Gibson, et al., 2001), or how the use of particular quotes or sources may affect audiences' evaluation of the quality or objectivity of news or issue perception (Fedler & Counts, 1981; Gibson, 1997; Gibson & Zillman, 1993; Sundar, 1998). The study described below draws on this research to explore how nuances within news content, the attribution of sources, may influence audience perceptions of the credibility of a story reporting an alleged terrorist plot. By developing a micro-study of audience effects it limited the researcher to a variable that can be clearly defined and isolated, rather than relying upon complex framing devices that will always be open to a degree of interpretation and subjectivity by participants. Combined with a study of content and context this process allowed the researcher to explore the interaction between journalism and audiences' responses to news of terrorism.

3.4.3: Testing for causation

Morton and Williams (2010, p19) define experimental research as, 'the intervention of the researcher in the data generating process.' This intervention is usually in the form of a treatment selected by the researcher and then applied in various forms to different groups within the sample population. Other definitions emphasise control and random assignment as key determinants of an experimental design (Morton & Williams, 2010, p22). The main advantage of experimentation within media research is that it allows the researcher to isolate and test the effects of specific content variables and to measure audiences' response to the manipulation of these variables. In an experiment the researcher can explore causal relationships and reduce the influence of other potential factors by controlling the variables and participants under study (Gunter, 2000, p35). Although empirical studies of media effects can never completely separate

themselves from the contextual factors and subjective elements that shape audiences' interpretation of different media content, with most contemporary effects scholars aware of the uncertainty surrounding the use of experiments within social sciences (Devereux, 1967 cited in Schroeder, et al., 2003, p323). Experimental designs are best equipped for exploring causation and provide the researcher with an effective tool for demonstrating that other potential causes of audiences' response to news content can be discounted. As Guala (2005, p38 cited in Morton & Williams, 2010, p24) states, 'the experimental method works by eliminating possible sources of error or, in other words, by controlling systematically the background factors that may induce us to draw a mistaken inference from the evidence to the main hypothesis under test.'

Experiments rely on the selection of an independent variable to act as the treatment or condition to be altered within the study. Importantly, it is the degree to which the researcher can isolate and control this variable that will determine the efficacy of an experimental design. As opposed to other approaches to media effects that have sought to explore the influence of specific messages and news frames upon audience cognitions, this research used experimentation to assess the influence of a variable within content, the attribution of different institutional sources, upon audiences' interpretation of news. It is the ability to explore subtleties within media content that lends itself to experimentation, as it provides the researcher with greater control over the independent variable to be modified in the study, thereby, strengthening the internal validity of the research and reducing the influence of confounding variables (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p91).

Finally, Morton & Williams (2010, p28) argue that randomisation within experiments, where participants are randomly assigned to different treatment conditions, is the single most important requirement of an experiment and that it is through this process, 'the experimentalist can eliminate, within statistical limits, extraneous factors that may obscure the effects they expect to observe.'

3.4.4: Types of experiments

The 'classic' laboratory experimental design, adapted from scientific enquiry, involves the manipulation of one variable, the treatment, and comparing results between two groups: an experimental group who receive exposure to the treatment and another (control group) who do not. There are, however, many variations on this basic design, with contemporary studies of the media developing more complex and elaborate experimental procedures to assess the influence of media content upon audiences.

Media researchers have developed pre-test/post-test designs for exploring the influence of particular news frames, upon attitudes towards foreign countries (Brewer, et al., 2003), political participation and confidence in government (Valentino, et al., 2001) as well as to explore how citizens use language to explain their views on political issues (Brewer, 2002). A pre-test/post test design allows the experimenter to compare whether there has been a change in the dependent measure following exposure to the treatment (manipulated news content). However, to reduce the possibility of 'subject sensitisation' (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p94) it is also not uncommon for researchers to omit the pre-test measure and develop a post-test only design (Schuck & de Vreese, 2006).

Other variations on the traditional lab experiment include the Solomon four group design,[11] which vary the groups' exposure to a pre-test variable allowing the researcher to assess the impact of this variable on the participants' post-test performance; and factorial designs, which allow the researcher to introduce two or more independent variables and to study the interaction between these variables.

Criticisms of the artificiality of laboratory style experiments have led media researchers to develop designs that reflect the more naturalistic settings in which audiences interact with media content (Cotton 1985, p29 cited in Iyengar, 2009).

[11] In the Solomon four group design, participants are assigned to one of four groups. 'Two of these groups receive the pre-test and two do not. All of the groups receive the treatment variable. Two groups (one with pre-test and one without pre-test) undergo one version of the treatment, while the other two groups undergo the second version, or receive no treatment. All groups are then post-tested.' (Gunter 2008, p34)

Field experiments have been used to measure audience response to media, where content is viewed or read in more familiar surroundings. It is argued that such an approach might be called, 'the ideal experiment', in the sense that one is able to observe a subject in a controlled setting but where the subject does not perceive any of the controls as being unnatural' (Harrison & List, 2004, p1011). Experimental designs in the field have developed a variety of different approaches to selecting and manipulating content. Some have used selective exposure to future news or television broadcasts (Loye et al. 1977 cited in Gunter, 2000, p265), while others have provided specially created content to be watched or read at home (Steuer et al., 1971; Josephson 1987 both cited in Gunter, 2000, p258, p263).

More recently, advances in technology have allowed the Internet to become a viable tool and environment in which to conduct experiments. Internet experiments have been used to study a variety of research questions; some have replicated in the field designs by manipulating online content to produce different treatment conditions (Sundar, 1998; Jackson, 2009), while others have used the technology to provide online participant pools (Iyengar & Hahn, 2007; Lechler et al., 2009 cited in Iyengar, 2010).

Finally, Morton and Williams (2010, p41) define a fourth category of experimental designs, survey experiments, as 'individual decision-making experiments embedded in surveys conducted in the field or via the Internet.' The principal advantages of this method over the other approaches to experimentation is that although the participants are aware that they are taking part in survey they are not generally told that other respondents may be receiving different questions, question ordering or stimuli material (Morton & Williams, 2010, p48).

Recognising the opportunities offered by online technologies, an Internet experiment was considered in the initial stages of this research project. However, this approach was rejected due to the complexity of the design required to collect sufficient data to answer RQ3 and the cost of building and hosting an online experiment. Unless researchers are investigating the influence of relatively

simple 'home-made' media content, such as Blogs or forum debates, cost and issues of copyright limit the ability of the researcher to create content that adequately replicates users' experiences of accessing and consuming online media.

Instead, this research developed a survey-based technique by embedding an experimental procedure within the first stage of a two-part audience survey. The benefits of this approach are twofold. First, as outlined above, it allows the researcher to randomise treatment conditions during the data collection sessions without other participants being aware that this process was taking place. Participants were only asked to complete the (first) survey and 'to take some time' to read the two newspaper articles (one containing the treatment condition), without revealing that the research was using multiple edits of the articles. Second, a survey-based design provides continuity in the data-collection process. Upon completion of the first survey participants were also asked to complete a second survey, which explored trust in the three institutional source types examined within the study and participants' interpretation of a variety of source references that have appeared within news coverage of terrorism.

3.4.5: Limitations of experiments

As suggested above, the overarching concern with experimentation amongst media scholars is that experiments 'assume that people can be cleansed of their social backgrounds so that any effects the media may have upon them can be clearly identified' (Lewis, 1991 cited in Ruddock, 2007, p39). This research, however, acknowledges that, while studies of media effects can never be completely divorced from the social forces that shape perception, experimentation is best equipped to provide an insight into causal relationships between content and audience effects (Gunter, 2000).

Researchers have highlighted three features of media experiments that limit the validity of their findings: artificiality, lack of representative sampling pools and experimenter bias (Iyengar, 2002). The artificiality of experiments, it is argued, particularly those conducted in 'labs' raises questions over the applicability of the results they generate outside of their controlled conditions (Gunter, 2000).

Experiments often place participants in unnatural environments that are seldom able to replicate the way they would normally interact with media content. Furthermore, much of the stimuli used in experimental research is either created or selected by the researcher. In reality, audiences' media consumption is only dictated by their individual constraints and choices, for example, their time and interest in a topic or the availability of a particular medium. Ward & Greenfield (1998 cited in Gunter, 2000) argue that research examining the effects of television has tended to assess the medium in isolation, whereas in reality audiences will turn to a combination of media sources for entertainment and news. While the research sought to address these concerns by providing material that was representative of press coverage of terrorism and by conducting the experiment within a relaxed and familiar environment, there will always be a degree of artificiality within experimentation as researchers attempt to control and limit the influence of confounding variables.

Concerns have also been raised over the representativeness of experimental participant pools and the generalisability of research that relies on 'samples of convenience' (Brady 2000, p52 cited in Iyengar, 2002; Morton & Williams, 2010): usually undergraduate students drawn from an institution or degree programme that the researcher is affiliated with. Critics of experimentation argue that by drawing from such a narrow sample pool it is impossible to extrapolate results to populations other than those participating in the experiment. Blanton and Jaccard (2008, p100 cited in Morton & Williams, 2010, p101) argue that the weakness of experiments within social psychology derives from the researcher's decision to move away from the traditional approach of specifying a population and drawing a random sample from that population to, 'starting with a sample and to then arguing that the sample can be construed as a random sample from some population of individuals.' The consequence of this is that, 'the task then turns into figuring out what the population might be and the generalisability of results, rather than the representativeness of a sample.' Contrary to this view, however, other experimental social psychologists suggest that psychological processes differ very little between populations and that since studies are essentially examining 'humanity' as the target population important insights can be gained from what, on the surface, may appear to be a relatively narrow sample

of a population (Bassi 2008, p100 cited in Morton & Williams, 2010, p101). A meta-analysis conducted by Kuhberger (1998) suggests that the use of student subject pools may not significantly influence the results of media research. Examining the results of 136 empirical papers reporting framing effects on decision-making processes, Kuhberger found that there was little difference between the size of the effect between student and non-student subject pools, inferring that both groups make similar choices.

The audience study was based on a sample of undergraduate students. However, the sample was not restricted to students participating in one particular course, degree programme or faculty and instead it drew from a wide body of undergraduate students. Furthermore, as Henry (2008 cited in Morton & Williams, 2010, p103) states, 'students are not so different from non-students that we should never study them. They provide a convenient, cheap and readily available pool of participants.' So although some researchers attempt to achieve greater statistical validity by drawing samples from larger target populations and there is always a potential cost in using a convenience sample for research. Student sample pools deliver a 'low-opportunity' cost compared to other non-student samples (Morton & Williams 2008, p103).

The final limitation of experiments is the potential for experimenter bias to influence the data collection process. Gunter (2000, p37) defines 'experimental bias' as a situation, 'when individuals participating in an experiment pick up clues about the hypothesis being tested or the goal of the experiment and produce the responses they think the experimenter wants them to produce.' Iyenger (2009) also suggests that 'experimental realism' or the power of manipulation can produce experimenter bias. As researchers, in many cases, would like manipulation to produce an effect participants can become aware of the research objectives due to the way an experiment is presented to participants, either by the use of an 'overwhelming' stimulus or through the measures used to determine the size or power of the effect. To reduce the influence of experimenter bias Iyengar suggests that researchers ensure that experiments, as far as possible, maintain 'mundane realism' by disguising the true purpose of the experiment from the participants and by embedding stimulus materials amongst

non-stimulus material. To overcome these issues, the specific objectives of the research were not revealed to the participants until after the period of data collection, and instead, they were told that they were contributing to research that was exploring trust in the media. In addition a second 'dummy' article, which was unrelated to terrorism, was also included as part of the first survey so participants would not realise that this was the particular issue that was under investigation by the researcher.

3.4.6: Sample

From 9-16 February 2009 ten separate data-collection sessions were held with undergraduate students at Bournemouth University. The sessions were held at the beginning or end of timetabled teaching periods (both lectures and seminars), where it was explained that they had an opportunity to participate in a research project exploring trust in the media. Those who did not wish to take part were given the option to opt-out of participating in the study. The sessions targeted three separate undergraduate course modules running within both the Media School and the School of Services Management at Bournemouth University. The three modules providing participants for the study were:

- Maths for Computer Animation
- Communication and Marketing Research
- Services Marketing

These three units were selected as they are core modules for a range of first and second year programmes. Although the research would have ideally liked to have engaged final year and placement students enrolled at the University, this was not possible due to timetabling constraints. The courses selected included students from the following undergraduate degree programmes at the University:

- Computer Visualisation and Animation (Year 1)
- Computer Animation Arts (Year 1)
- Computer Games Animation (Year 1)
- Marketing (Year 2)
- Advertising with Marketing Communications (Year 2)
- Hospitality Management (Year 1)

In total, 147 (n=147) students participated in the study (53.1% male).

Ideally the researcher would have engaged with additional undergraduate student groups drawn from other UK Universities. This was considered and initial contact was made with a number of different institutions, however, ultimately this proved difficult to convene within the strict time boundaries that were set for the collection of the data. To reduce the potential impact of participants' exposure to a news story reporting terrorism the twelve research sessions were condensed into a period of 6 (working) days. The sessions were designed so that they included all individual seminars or one group lecture for each course to ensure that all students on one of the three courses had the opportunity to participate in the study should they wish to do so.

Since concerns have also been raised over the internal validity of studies using student participant pools (Morton & Williams, 2010), where the independent variable is randomised between groups rather than amongst groups, the audience study employed a method of intra-group randomisation. Although assumptions are often made about the homogeneity of student participants due to shared demographic characteristics of age, affluence, educational attainment, for example, selection bias and extraneous factors may influence experimental studies that rely on inter-group randomisation. Consequently, one of the four different versions of survey 1 was handed to the participants at the start of each data collection session.

3.4.7: Stimulus material

A story reporting an anti-terrorism raid and three arrests relating to an alleged bomb plot in Greater London was created by the researcher (see Appendix 8.3). To summarise, the article began by reporting that a number of individuals had been arrested in connection with an alleged terrorist plot, discussing the search of addresses in London and Birmingham; before alluding to potential targets and speculating that the redeveloped Wembley stadium in London may have been the intended target for the plotters. Finally, background reporting to the story

highlighted the current threat level in the UK and provided additional information concerning the timing and nature of the police operation.

Creating the fictitious article

The article was intended to broadly reflect both broadsheet and tabloid newspaper coverage of the transatlantic airliners plot in August 2006 and kidnap plot in February 2007. Overall, however, by attempting to achieve balance between these two contrasting forms and to retain control over the independent variable in the study, the article was presented in a more neutral style than one may normally associate with British print journalism. Nevertheless, the piece did convey some of the more speculative coverage of alleged terrorist activity, a prominent feature in tabloid and mid-market newspaper reports of recent plots, by suggesting a potential target, the redeveloped Wembley stadium, and even going as far as to highlight forthcoming sporting events at the venue. Importantly, there was also speculation over the intended target for the plot, which seemed to contradict official 'on the record' statements from the Metropolitan Police Deputy Commissioner, Paul Stephenson, who was quoted as saying, "I am aware there is extensive speculation about possible targets. As with any counter terrorism operation we will not confirm or deny any targets." Furthermore, characteristic of the greater depth and detail found in writing published in broadsheet newspapers, the article also included background on the arrests and police operation, including eyewitness accounts from residents who lived close to those arrested.

The treatment article was presented in such a way so that participants could not associate the piece with a particular newspaper title. The name of the article, 'Three arrested over alleged bomb plot', was highlighted in bold and written in a larger font, with the body of the piece presented in a newspaper style (three columns of text, with succinct paragraphs). However, no newspaper title publication date or page, were included at the top of the piece, except an introduction to say that article(s) had been taken from a recent newspaper.

Finally, the piece was checked by two former newspaper journalists to confirm that the article was, as far as possible and within the confines of the method, an

authentic representation of the type and style or reporting found in the British press.

Manipulation of the article

The article was presented in four different versions so that information relating to the arrests and alleged plot were attributed to four different source types: no sources (control condition); security sources; government sources; and police sources. For the security sources condition the statements were attributed to either a security source/s or official; to a government source/s or official in the government sources condition; or to a police source/s or official in the police sources condition. The no sources (control) condition contained the same statements but they were not corroborated by a named organisation or institution, instead the source was either removed from the statement or replaced by the following phrases:

'It is believed'….

'According to reports'…

As Chapter 4 will discuss, the vast majority of newspaper articles reporting alleged terrorist activity cite more than one source within a story. Consequently, all four versions contained six additional references: two attributed to the Met's Deputy Commissioner, with the first discussing targets for the plot (quoted above) and the second commenting on the decision to instigate the police operation; with four further quotes from local residents describing the police raids, expressing their shock at the arrests, and commenting on those arrested by the police.

3.4.8: Data collection

A pilot study was conducted during October and November 2008 to operationalise and identify any potential problems with the data collection methods. The two recommendations arising from this phase of the research were to first, reduce the length and complexity of the research sessions, and second, to develop procedures that would ensure that instructions and procedures were the same for each participating group.

Following the recommendations of the pilot study, the audience study was redesigned to include two self-completion surveys. Embedded in the first survey (see Appendix 8.4) was an experimental design, consisting of a set of pre-test questions, two newspaper articles (the treatment described above and a dummy article), post-treatment ratings of the articles and demographic indicators. The second survey (see Appendix 8.4) was designed to collect additional data on participants' recall of sources, the interpretation of different citations and their trust in different sources when quoted in news of suspected terrorist activity.

Data were collected during ten separate research sessions from 9-16 February 2009. The sessions were held either at the beginning or the end of timetabled lectures or seminars, and were conducted under strict 'exam-style' conditions. Participants were told that they would be required to complete two surveys, with 15 minutes set aside for the first and 10 minutes for the second. The sessions began with a brief set of instructions before the four versions of survey 1 were randomly handed out to the participants. Once all the participants had completed the first survey, the second survey was given out to participants, explaining that it would allow the researcher to collect additional data on the two articles read in the first part of the study. Once all the surveys had been collected a short debrief took place thanking the participants for taking their time to complete the surveys and explaining that the researcher would be available to discuss the project and any questions that they may have at a later date.

This procedure was conducted with twelve different groups of participants over the six-day period, under the same 'examination-style' conditions and following the same processes and procedures for administering the surveys.

To assess the influence of noise upon participants in the study, the news media's coverage of terrorism was monitored from two days immediately preceding the first research session (7 February 2009), until the end of the day in which the last session was held (16 February). The concern was that should a major news story surface relating to a terrorist incident or a suspected plot then this would have influenced any subsequent data collection session. During this period of time, however, no major stories were reported by the British press, with only one story

emerging on the 15 February, which reported the arrest of five men who were on their way to join on aid convey to Gaza (George Galloway £1 million aid convey link to three terror suspects arrested on M65, *The Daily Mail*, Sunday, 15 February 2009; Counter-terrorism police arrest nine, *The Daily Mirror*, Sunday, 15 February 2009).

3.4.9: Hypothesis and Measures

This final section will clarify the specific hypotheses and measures that were used to answer RQ3.

Hypotheses

The audience study tested the following specific hypotheses:

Research Question	Sub question	Hypothesis
RQ3 What is the relationship between news sources cited in reports of alleged terrorist plots and audience perceptions of news?	a) How does the believability and accuracy of a news story reporting an alleged terrorist plot relate to the types of sources cited in the report?	H1: Source attribution will influence participants' rating of the believability of the article H2: Source attribution will influence participants' rating of the accuracy of the article H3: A news story citing police sources will be rated more believable than an article citing government sources H4: A news story citing police sources will be rated more accurate than an article citing government sources

Research Question	Sub question	Hypothesis
	b) How do other audience variables interact with source attribution and can underlying audience factors predict news audiences' perceptions of a story reporting an alleged terrorist plot?	H5: Trust in broadcast and online media will show a positive relationship with participants' ratings of both the believability and accuracy of the story H6 Trust in newspapers will show a positive relationship with participants' ratings of both the believability and accuracy of the story H7 Concern over terrorism will show a positive relationship with participants' ratings of both the believability and accuracy of the story H8 Support for counter-terrorism policies or proposals will show a relationship with participants' ratings of both the believability and accuracy of the story
	C) How do attitudes towards an organisation or institution referenced as a source influence audiences' perceptions of the credibility of a news story reporting an alleged terrorist plot?	H9: For participants reading news of an alleged terrorist plot citing government sources, levels of trust in government sources will show a positive correlation with participants' ratings of the believability and the accuracy of the story H10: For participants reading news of an alleged terrorist plot citing security sources, levels of trust in security sources will show a positive correlation with participants' ratings of the believability and the accuracy of the story H11: For participants reading news of an alleged terrorist plot citing police sources, levels of trust in police sources will show a positive correlation with participants' ratings of the believability and the accuracy of the story

Measures

The first part of the audience study (survey 1) explored the influence of different sources upon story perception. The independent or treatment variable in the experimental design embedded within survey 1 was exposure to different news sources: no sources (control condition); security sources; government sources; and police sources. The principal aim of the second part of the study (survey 2) was to provide data to support RQ3c. However, additional data, relating to recall of the sources and trust in specific institutions and organisations quoted as a source, was also collected in survey 2 and cross-referenced with participants' responses to survey 1. The following section will provide further details on the questions asked in the two surveys and the dependent measures to be discussed in Chapter 5.

Survey 1

Survey 1 comprised three separate sections. The first section surveyed media use and trust in the media, asking respondents to score on a 5-point Likert scale, how often they use various news outlets or read various newspapers and how much they trust each to report the news objectively. Section 2 explored issues in the news, asking respondents to rate on a 5-point Likert scale how much trust they have in newspapers to report on five recent issues and how worried they were about those issues. The final question in section 2 asked participants to rate on a 5-point scale whether they strongly oppose or strongly support a range of government policies or proposals. Section 3 asked participants to read the two newspaper articles. The first reporting a police raid and an alleged terrorist plot contained the treatment condition, with a second dummy article reporting the decline in the UK housing market. The survey then asked respondents to rate on a 5-point Likert scale how believable and accurate they considered each story to be. The final section in survey 1 asked participants to record their gender and political identification.

The key dependent variables measured in the audience study were participants' ratings of believability and accuracy. The reason for selecting these two concepts as measures of credibility are twofold: first, they follow earlier work by Fedler &

Counts (1981) and Sundar (1998) that assessed the effects of source attribution through similar aspects of story perception. Second, since the concept of credibility when applied to news content is often associated with overall evaluations of objectivity (Wilson & Sherrell, 1993 cited in Sundar, 1998, p57) then the two concepts of believability and accuracy provided a separation between an overall assessment of the credibility of the story or plot (believability) and a more specific assessment of the accuracy of specific details it reported in the article (accuracy). Other covariates that were also considered alongside these measures were as follows:

Mean broadcast and online media use: Survey 1 measured the frequency that participants use seven major online and broadcast news outlets, on a 5-point Likert scale: from 1=*occasionally*, to 5=*every day*. A mean media use score was derived from the participant's overall rating of six of these seven outlets[12].

Mean newspaper use: Survey 1 measured the frequency that participants use 10 daily and Sunday newspapers, on a 5-point Likert scale: from 1=*occasionally,* to 5=*every day*. A mean newspaper use score was derived from the participants' overall ratings for the ten newspapers.

Mean trust in online and broadcast news: Survey 1 measured participants' trust in seven major online and broadcast news outlets, on a 5-point Likert scale from 1=*no trust at all*, to 5=*complete trust*. A mean media trust score was derived from participant's overall rating of six of these seven outlets.[13]

Mean trust in newspapers: Survey 1 measured participants' trust in 10 daily and Sunday newspapers, on a 5-point Likert scale from 1=*no trust at all*, to 5=*complete trust*. A mean media trust score was derived from participant's ratings for the ten newspapers.

[12] As a news aggregator, rather than a producer of content, Google News was excluded from the final analysis.

[13] BBC Online was excluded from this measure since trust in the BBC brand was assessed by asking participants to rate their trust in BBC television news

Trust in newspapers to report terrorism: Survey 1 asked participants to score their trust in newspapers to report five issues on a 5-point Likert scale from 1=*no trust at all*, to 5=*complete trust*.

Concern over terrorism: Survey 1 asked participants to rate their concerns about five issues that have appeared in the news recently on a 5-point Likert scale from 1=*not worried at all*, to 5=*very worried*.

Support for counter-terrorism policies or proposals: Survey 1 asked participants to rate on a 5-point scale, from 1=*strongly oppose* to 5=*strongly support*, whether they strongly oppose or strongly support five policies or proposals. Mean ratings across the following two issues providing an overall score for 'support for counter-terrorism policies or proposals':

- Greater police powers towards those suspected of terrorism offences
- The introduction of national identity cards

Survey 2

The first question on survey 2 asked participants to recall the sources that appeared in the newspaper article describing a terrorist plot, with nine possible responses. Questions 3 to 7 provided examples of 5 different source citations that have appeared in newspaper coverage of alleged terrorist plots: security sources; whitehall sources; police source; government source; counter-terror source, and asks participants to select which definitions best match their interpretation of the reference. Finally, question 8 asked participants to rate on a 5-point scale, with 1=*not trustworthy* at all and 5=*very trustworthy*, how trustworthy they consider the following institutions when quoted as a source in news of terrorism: police sources; government sources; security sources; and sources (unnamed).

Following initial, exploratory data analysis, only participants' response to question 8 from survey 2 are reported in this thesis and are used to address RQ3 and to test hypotheses H9-11. The remaining questions failed to yield data in sufficient quantity and depth to support extensive analysis; however, as Chapter 6 will discuss audiences' disambiguation of common attributions remains an area for future development and further research.

3.5: Conclusion

In summary these two empirical studies sought to develop a two-stage methodological design to explore the influence of source attribution within news coverage of terrorism. At the first stage data was collected from previous news content to identify patterns in frequency and use of sources. The second stage centres upon an experimental technique for testing the influence of different institutional references upon audiences' perceptions of a news story.

The next chapter discusses the results of this first empirical study, examining the features of source attribution within five news episodes where allegations emerged of a specific terrorist plot or threat.

Chapter 4: Content Analysis Results

This chapter examines the types of sources that have appeared in press coverage of the five alleged plots. Descriptive statistics are presented for the five individual plots and integrated with a discussion of the narrative and narrative themes that developed across the five episodes. The second part of the chapter presents an aggregated analysis of all references coded from the study and explores source attribution within an overall narrative of alleged terrorist plots.

4.1: Summary of Plots and Themes within News Coverage

Before turning to the features of source attribution, this chapter will begin with a brief summary of the narrative to each of the five plots and highlight the principal themes within news coverage. It will also provide a retrospective assessment of the credibility of each plot by drawing upon subsequent media coverage of these stories and any criminal proceedings that may have followed the initial allegations explored in this research.

4.1.1: Ricin Plot (8-10 Jan 2003)

A total of 36 newspaper articles reported news of an alleged Ricin plot. The story first featured in the British press on 8 January 2003 and centred upon allegations that an anti-terrorist raid at a flat in North London had uncovered a quantity of ricin poison. Reports claimed that the discovery had foiled a major terrorist plot that sought to target the UK by dispersing the poison amongst its population centres; with articles speculating over a number of public places that could have acted as potential targets. As described in the previous chapter, the focus for analysis for each of the five individual plots included in the study is the first three days of press coverage. There are, however, two features of the media reporting of the alleged ricin plot that differed from the other four episodes examined in this study. First, the story was not reported by the UK news media until three days after the initial police operations had taken place and only following the arrest of a seventh additional suspect wanted in connection with the plot ("Timeline: UK ricin terror probe," 2003). Second, a significant story development, the death of Detective Constable Stephen Oake on 14 January 2003,

occurred outside the time frame for analysis. Newspaper reports from 15 January 2003 claimed that the officer was killed during an operation to arrest an additional suspect, later named as Kamel Bourgass, wanted in connection with the plot. This further development in the story was not included in the analysis since the research focuses, as outlined in Chapters 1 and 3, upon the immediate impact of news upon audience perceptions of an alleged terrorist plot. It is also important to note that although there was widespread and emotive coverage in the UK news media of DC Oake's death, a search of the NewsUK database revealed that this episode generated a smaller number of articles than the initial allegations of a terrorist plot.[14]

All 35 articles included in the sample for analysis made some reference to a terrorist plot involving the use of ricin poison. The central theme to reporting, and particular to those articles printed on January 8 and 9, was the revelation that police had foiled a major chemical attack. The articles claimed that a 'serious' or 'sophisticated' laboratory dedicated to the production of ricin had been discovered at a flat in Wood Green, London (Chemical weapons factory found in north London flat: six men under arrest anti-terrorist police and MI5 agents discovers traces of deadly poison, *The Financial Times*, Wednesday, 8 January 2003; Factory of Death, *The Sun Newspaper*, Wednesday, 8 January 2003). Other more specific details about the plot also emerged during reports, with articles suggesting that one of the suspects had worked as a school science teacher (Poison gang on the loose, *The Daily Mail*, Wednesday, 8 January 2003) and that small quantities of the poison had already been identified from initial searches of the raided properties (Britain on alert, terror Lab Raided, *The Daily Mirror,* Wednesday, January 8 2003). Within this central theme there was also a more general discussion about the severity of the threat and the means by which the alleged plotters would have been able to disperse the poison. The London Underground was identified as a potential target, with reports speculating on the possible impact of a chemical attack on crowded commuter trains or in a busy station concourse (Britain on alert, terror lab raided, *The Daily Mirror,*

[14] 97 articles contained a reference to the search term 'ricin and 31 to 'terror plot in the 11 selected newspapers between January 15-17 2003. In comparison, 122 articles contained the search term 'ricin' and 30 'terror plot' from the initial sample used to select articles for analysis.

Wednesday, 8 January 2003). Other pieces, however, disputed these claims and instead suggested that a more plausible use of the poison would have been to use it to assassinate a high-profile public figure (UK poison gas gang on the loose, *The Express*, Wednesday, 8 January 2003; Alarm over terror suspects with deadly toxin, *The Independent*, Wednesday, 8 January 2003).

Background reporting to the story explored the plot's potential **links to al-Qaeda** militants or Chechen separatists (Poison factory yards from Osama pal's home**,** *The Sun Newspaper*, Thursday, 9 January 2003; Ricin 7 link to Chechnya, *The Sun Newspaper*, Friday, 10 January 2003) or recalled the death of the Bulgarian dissident, **Georgi Markov** in 1978.[15] Other articles, in addition to reporting details of the alleged plot, took time to explore the use and effect of ricin as a poison. More specifically, how the alleged plotters may have tried to distribute the poison and its physiological effects upon the human body (Gang's bid to unleash poison, *The Express*, Thursday, 9 January 2003).

Thematically, two dominant frames emerged from newspaper coverage of the story. The first was to explore the ricin plot as evidence of a **growing and inevitable threat to the UK** from Islamist terrorism. A subtext to this theme was the potential for the plot, as part of an emerging threat from terrorism, to provide a **mandate for the invasion of Iraq**. (Government struggles to warn without spreading public panic, *The Financial Times*, Wednesday, 8 January 2003; Ministers clash over plans to hit Iraq: The lethal link, *The Daily Mirror*, Wednesday, 8 January 2003). The second, in response to revelations that the suspects linked to the plot were asylum seekers, expanded their discussion to **immigration** and an assessment of the efficacy of **UK immigration policies**. (Osama poison gang funded by DSS, *The Sun Newspaper*, Thursday, January 9, 2003; Council paid for flat used as terror laboratory, *The Times*, Thursday, January 9, 2003).

[15] Georgi Markov was a BBC journalist and Bulgarian dissident who died in London in 1978 following exposure to ricin poison. It is alleged that he was injected with a single pellet of the poison through the tip of an umbrella while crossing Waterloo Bridge. However, no arrests were ever made in connection with his death, with many believing that he was assassinated at the behest of the Soviet government for his anti-communist views.

In retrospect, it seems unlikely that an alleged ricin plot was ever as close to fruition as the dramatic claims that appeared in the UK press, between 8-10 January 2003, may have led readers to believe. Significantly, of the five original suspects, arrested and charged in connection with the plot, all were later acquitted of any serious terrorism offences. Kamel Bourgass was, however, found guilty on 8 April 2005 of a lesser charge of 'conspiracy to cause a public nuisance', along with two other suspects, Mouloud Sihali and Aissa Khalef who were also convicted of charges relating to the possession of false passports. At an earlier murder trial in June 2004 a jury had also found Kamel Bourgass guilty of the murder of DC Oake and the attempted murder of two of his Greater Manchester Police colleagues (CPS, 2005).

4.1.2: Old Trafford Bomb Plot: (20-22 April 2004)

A further 19 newspaper articles reported news from 19 April 2004 that the police and UK intelligence services had uncovered an alleged terrorist plot to bomb a target in the city of Manchester. Reports confirmed the arrest of ten suspects in connection with the plot and suggested a range of public venues in and around the city that could have acted as potential targets. Reports suggested that Old Trafford, the home of Manchester United football club, was the intended target for a terrorist bomb plot. The Sun newspaper from 20 April led with its now infamous headline, 'Man U suicide bomb plot', with the article that followed alleging that the previous day's arrests had thwarted an attempt by Islamists to carry out coordinated suicide bombings at one of the club's forthcoming fixtures. The report even went as far as to claim that the plotters had already purchased tickets for various parts of the stadium (Man U suicide bomb plot, Bomb gang had tickets all around the ground, both in *The Sun Newspaper,* Tuesday, 20 April 2004). Other pieces were similarly emotive and alarmist providing a detailed description of how the plot may have unfolded and its potential impact upon fans caught up in a blast at the stadium (Warning to soccer fans in Man Utd terror crackdown, *The Daily Mail*, Wednesday, 21 April 2004).

All 19 articles included in the sample addressed news of a foiled bomb plot in the city of Manchester. While some reports only mentioned targets in and around the

city of Manchester, with the Old Trafford shopping centre suggested in a number of reports (Police arrest ten in anti-terror raid, *The Daily Mirror*, Tuesday, 20 April 2004), An article published in the Guardian newspaper directly challenged the veracity of reports, which had claimed Old Trafford was the intended target for the alleged plot. (Ten arrested as anti-terror police stage dawn raids, *The Guardian,* Wednesday, 21 April 2004). Although this article was only one amongst 19 included in the sample from this episode, it was significant as it evidenced a more measured and critical approach to the story.

All articles made some reference to the foiled bomb plot. The coding process, however, identified two additional themes, which emerged during background reporting to the story. The first, was to highlight the plot as evidence of the **inevitability of an al-Qaeda attack in the UK.** Many of the articles, and in particular those drawn from the tabloid press, suggested that the plotters planned to carry out multiple suicide bombings and that these tactics were consistent with previous attacks perpetrated by militant Islamists. Through this frame there was a tendency for narratives to revisit recent terrorist attacks, most significantly 9/11 and the Madrid train bombings of the previous month, and to suggest that the Old Trafford plot was destined to become the next story on an inevitable continuum of terrorism.

The second, more noticeable amongst articles printed on 21 and 22 April, was to discuss and examine UK asylum policies. Since many of the articles claimed that all or a number of the suspects arrested in connection with the plot were seeking asylum in the UK, background reporting often made reference to immigration and more specifically, local authorities' policies towards housing asylum seekers (Terrorist in house for illegal immigrants, *The Express*, Wednesday, 21 April 2004). In many of the pieces from 21 and 22 April background reporting also assessed the **security arrangements at Old Trafford** and discussed whether additional measures would be put in place for forthcoming fixtures at the stadium (Extra anti-terrorist guard on United's home games, *The Daily Telegraph*, Wednesday, 21 April 2004*,* Fortress Old Trafford, *The Sun Newspaper,* Wednesday, 21 April 2004).

It could now be argued that of all the five episodes examined in this study the Old Trafford Bomb plot is probably the clearest example of the sensationalised reporting that has, at times, characterised UK news media's coverage of Islamist terrorism. Indeed for some commentators this episode is cited as evidence of the complicity of British journalism in sustaining public fears over the threat from terrorism (Oborne, 2006). Importantly, as the discussion of subsequent plots will show, the issues raised by media coverage of this story became significant in shaping how successive episodes have been framed and discussed within both the media and public discourse of terrorism.

Of the ten people arrested over the suspected bomb plot, all were eventually released within a week of their arrests. Moreover, while there has been no 'official' comment concerning the integrity of the intelligence that precipitated the arrests in Manchester, the Observer newspaper later carried an interview with Rebecca Yates, the solicitor of one of the arrested suspects. In this article it was claimed that the link between the suspects and a specific plot to target Old Trafford was tenuous, and had only emerged following the discovery of a ticket stub at the home of one the suspects (Man U bomb plot ends in farce, *The Observer*, Sunday, 2 May 2004).

4.1.3: Canary Wharf Plot: (23-25 November, 2004)

The third cluster of articles reported allegations that the UK security services had foiled a terrorist plot to target Canary Wharf in London's regenerated Docklands development. Reports claimed that the plot intended to replicate the events of 9/11 by flying hijacked planes into the three skyscrapers of Canary Wharf (Target Canary Wharf, *The Daily Mail,* Tuesday, 23 November 2004; 9/11 bid to hit London, *The Express,* Tuesday, 23 November 2004). The coding revealed, however, that aside from those articles reporting the plot there were also a significant number that questioned the reliability of the story. The majority of these pieces were published in newspapers from 24 November 2004. One article from the Independent referred specifically to reports made by the Daily Mail and ITV news that attributed the story to a 'senior source' (Home Office Linked to Discredited Claim of al-Qaeda plot, *The Independent,* Wednesday, 24 November 2004). Other pieces centred on accusations that government ministers or officials

were responsible for leaking information about the plot (How Al-Qaeda's London plot was foiled, *The Times*, Wednesday, 24 November 2004). An important subtheme to this was for the reports to highlight **the timing of the story**. In particular, it was claimed that releasing information about such a plot on the eve of the Queen's speech would be construed by some as an attempt to exploit public fears and to justify the introduction of new anti-terrorism legislation.

The narrative to the plot reflected these two contrasting approaches to the story. Articles appearing on 23 November 2004 and in particular those in the tabloid press focused upon a spectacular and audacious plot. However, articles from 24 November, drawn almost exclusively from broadsheet newspapers, presented the story differently. Many cast doubt over the veracity of the story and the credibility of the plot, or at least, demonstrated some scepticism towards its timing or the way it had been presented to the media.

The most prominent theme in both approaches to the story was to refer to the plot as **Britain's 9/11**, drawing comparisons between the plot, the use of hi-jacked planes, and its target, One Canada Square, as one of London's symbolic landmarks (Target Canary Wharf, *The Daily Mail,* Tuesday, 23 November 2004). However, articles within the sample also focused on the plot within the overall context of the **threat from terrorism**, hinting at the alarmism and inaccuracy that has marked coverage of previous plots (Mayor Told of 74 Terror Plots to Attack London, *The Daily Telegraph*, Wednesday, 24 November 2004). Although there was no mention of the Old Trafford plot, there were references to David Blunkett's[16] decision to fortify Heathrow airport with armoured personnel carriers and military personnel in February 2003 (Foiled 9/11 on London, *The Sun Newspaper*, Tuesday, 23 November 2004).

Examining the narrative to the Canary Wharf plot and common themes within press coverage revealed that there were two distinct approaches to the story within the UK press. One was to cast the threat as real and immediate with the other more objective in its assessment of the credibility of the plot. As with the

[16] David Blunkett was Secretary of State for the Home Department between June 2001 and December 2004.

previous episode the initial allegations have largely been discredited. Contrary to how the story was presented in articles published in tabloid and mid-market titles on November 23, it is now generally believed that the story was never referring to a specific terrorist threat. Instead information about the plot had been sourced from outdated intelligence documents that are thought to have been setting out a range of various scenarios and options for attack, one of which discussed the possibility of an attack on the skyscrapers of Canary Wharf. More significantly, no arrests were ever made or individuals charged with terrorism offences in connection with the plot.[17]

4.1.4: Transatlantic Airliners Plot (11-13 August 2006)

The fourth episode centred on reports that the police and the security services had foiled a terrorist plot to target transatlantic aircraft. This episode is arguably the most high-profile of the five plots examined in the study, both in terms of the volume of articles included in the sample and the significance of the allegations, with news from 11 August 2006 describing details of a terrorist plot 'to rival 9/11'. Reports suggested that the plot involved a plan to blow up passenger jets with liquid explosives hidden in hand luggage, confirming that 24 suspects had been arrested in connection with the plot during a serious of police raids at various locations around London and in the West Midlands (Terror plot: Months of monitoring exposed details of conspiracy: security operation stepped up after 'go' order from Pakistan intercepted. *The Guardian,* Friday, 11 August 2006).

The arrests on 10 August 2006 triggered a huge security operation at airports across the UK. Travellers faced severe disruption with flights either cancelled or delayed as airlines struggled to implement additional security measures. The most significant being a temporary ban on hand luggage. Much of the media coverage of this story, particularly from 12 and 13 August, not only examined details of the alleged plot but focused upon its **impact on passengers** flying to

[17] Recent coverage of the conviction of three men over charges relating to the alleged plot to target Transatlantic airliners have reported that during the trial the prosecution referred to documents found on their personal computers, which showed that Canary Wharf was one amongst a number of potential UK targets. (Airline terror trial: 'Heathrow, Canary Wharf and nuclear plants in bomb plot, *The Sunday Times Newspaper*, Sunday, 5 April 2008).

and from the UK. Other background reporting to the story and common narrative frames used to report these events were as follows:

Previous terrorist attacks: As stated above, many reports suggested that if the plot ever came to fruition it would be as 'devastating' and 'murderous' as 9/11. Reflecting and drawing **comparison with the events of September 11** was a common theme within press coverage (Mother of Satan; 24 Britons are held as police smash plot to mark 9/11 anniversary with 'mass murder on unimaginable scale.', *The Daily Mail,* Friday, 11 August 2006*;* The Liquid Bombs Plot; worse than 9/11, *The Daily Mirror*, Friday*,* 11 August 2006). In addition, many reports also described two previous terrorist incidents involving **mid-air explosions**: the botched shoe-bomb plot of December 2001 and the death of Ikegami Haruki in December 1994[18] (They tried it before; The liquid bombs plot 1990s bid a carbon copy of yesterday's arrests, *The Daily Mirror*, Friday, 11 August 2006; Terror plot: Copycat plot, *The Guardian*, Friday, 11 August 2006), and to explore **the efficacy of liquid explosives** in downing passenger airliners (Blow up plane guide on internet, *The Daily Mirror,* Friday, 11 August 2006).

Pakistan's role: During the second and third day of press coverage the story explored the plot's connections to Pakistan. More specifically, reports examined the role of Pakistan's Police and Security Services in assisting the British security agencies in tracking and uncovering the conspiracy. Articles reported the arrest of seven people connected to the plot, suggesting that these arrests evidenced the plots inevitable connection to al-Qaeda (Fugitive Briton Arrested in Pakistan Over Jet Bomb Plot, *The Daily Telegraph*, Saturday, 12 August 2006; Pakistan Arrests Seven and Links Al-qaida to plot, *The Independent,* Saturday, 12 August 2006).

[18] Ikegami, Haruki, a 24 year old Japanese businessman, died following a mid-air explosion on board a Philippines airline flight from Manila to Tokyo in December 1994. The explosion, masterminded by Ramzi Yousef and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, was believed to have been a test run for a serious of bombings aboard American passenger jets as they crossed the Pacific Ocean. The operation, Bojinka, is alleged to have provided the inspiration for al-qaeda's attacks on 9/11 (Wright, 2006).

Reaction amongst Muslim Communities: A prominent development within press coverage of the Transatlantic plot was to highlight the potential impact of the story amongst the UK's Muslim communities. Articles from both the second and third day of coverage disclosed details about the suspects arrested on 10 August. Since those arrested were mainly identified as young Muslim men, journalists surveyed Muslim reaction to the story (Terror plot: Muslim community: Police and ministers move to defuse backlash, *The Guardian,* Saturday, 12 August 2006). Further subtexts to this were the issues of **racism and Islamaphobia**, increasing **community tensions** and the path to **radicalisation** for young British Muslims (This is sad. I'm afraid for the community. I do hope they're innocent, I do hope; Bomb Plot Muslim reaction, *The Independent*, Saturday, August 12, 2006; University students at centre of terror plots, *The Sunday Telegraph*, Sunday, August 13, 2006).

Since the alleged targets were US Airlines, another sub-narrative that emerged alongside discussions of the plot was to explore **US Perspectives** towards the plot. In particular, it was common for reports to include the views of US officials, either praising the British investigation or commenting upon the threat in the wider context of the 'War on Terror' (Terror plot: United States' Officials see plot as worst threat since 9/11, *The Guardian*, Friday, 11 August 2006, Bush: Threat is still there, *News of the World,* Sunday, 13 August 2006) A noticeable feature of coverage from 12 and 13 August was for articles to focus on aspects of **criminality** and to highlight the potential for the UK news media to bias the judicial process through its coverage of the story. Alongside this theme, there were a number of articles that were critical of comments made by the then Home Secretary, John Reid, in which he claimed that all 'the main players' were under arrest (Reid Spin is wrecking terror case, *The Mail on Sunday,* Sunday, 13 August 2006). Further criticism of John Reid centred on the **politicisation of terrorism**, with reports suggesting that the text for a key speech on immigration was amended following news of the plot, to highlight the threat posed by Islamist violence (How Reid hijacked the terror crisis, *The Daily Mail*, Sunday, 13 August 2006). Finally, in addition to describing the **disruption at UK airports**, background reporting examined the **security procedures at airports** and within

aircraft. (Why isn't the technology in place to prevent this? Bomb plot foiled, *The Independent,* Friday, 11 August 2006).

Unlike the previous episode, there were very few articles that directly challenged the veracity of the story. The coding procedure did identify a scattering of references which 'refused to comment on specific allegations' or intelligence (US accused of jumping the gun in blaming al-Qaeda, *The Times*, Saturday, 12 August 2006; The Karachi connection: From Pakistan to Britain, the remarkable story of an international web of terror, *The Observer*, Sunday, 13 August 2006). A critical discourse did, however, emerge from the explanatory paradigms through which the story was interpreted by the UK press. Pieces reflected upon the cynicism and scepticism within Muslim communities towards the plot (Terror plot: Muslim reaction: concern and relief mixed with fear and cynicism, *The Guardian*, Friday, 11 August 2006), and the possible prejudicing of any eventual criminal trial by Home Office media briefings (Claims may prevent fair trials, fears Goldsmith, *The Daily Telegraph*, Saturday, 12 August 2006).

Following the initial high-profile coverage there was a period of reflection. During this time a number of commentators expressed reservations about the integrity of intelligence that had precipitated the raids, referring to the bungled police operation in Forest Gate earlier that summer (Donovan, 2006). Others criticised the government and more specifically, the Home Secretary, John Reid's handling of the story (Glover, 2006). However, it was later confirmed that 8 men from the original 24 who were arrested were to face trial over terrorism offences. Following the collapse of the first trial on 18 Febuary 2009 a second trial began in March 2009. Three of the defendants in the case, Abdulla Ahmed Ali, Assad Sarwar and Tanvir Hussain, were convicted of charges relating to the Transatlantic plot, specifically, conspiracy to cause explosions on aircraft, conspiracy to murder, conspiracy to cause explosions and conspiracy to cause public nuisance. An additional suspect, Umar Islam, was convicted of a general charge of conspiracy to murder and conspiracy to cause a public nuisance. One defendant, Donald Stewart-Whyte, was acquitted of all charges. Of the remaining defendants, one man was acquitted of both counts of conspiracy to murder and three others were acquitted of conspiring to bring down aircraft (CPS, 2009).

4.1.5: Kidnap Plot (1-3 February 2007)

A total of 57 newspaper articles were drawn from this final episode. Reports detailed a series of police raids in and around the city of Birmingham, which papers alleged, was linked to a terrorist plot to kidnap and behead a Muslim soldier serving in the British army.

Background reporting to the story focused on the death of Ken Bigley, the British contractor who was kidnapped and killed by Iraqi insurgents in 2004, and drew comparisons between his murder and the tactics of the alleged plotters (Bigley copycat fears, *The Express*, Thursday, 1 February 2007). In addition, a number of articles revisited the death of Lance Corporal Hashmi, the first soldier of the Islamic faith to be killed in the UK's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and suggesting that the kidnap plot may have been inspired by his death (Did this soldier trigger the plot? British Muslim killed on duty became a hate figure for the Islamic radicals, *The Daily Mail*, Thursday, 1 February 2007). In the final two days of press coverage, reporting again, and as with the previous episode, became more critical of the story and how it had been presented. While details of the plot, the suspects, and its potential targets were still emerging, including the arrest of a ninth suspect on 1 February, others issues came to the fore. Reports suggested that the government and its ministers were exploiting or politicising the threat from terrorism, to push through the proposed extensions to pre-charge detention limits for terrorism suspects (The Exploiter, *The Daily Mirror*, Thursday, 1 February 2007). Finally, specific accusations were made that the government, through a series of leaks and secret briefings, forewarned journalists about news of a significant terrorist plot to deflect attention away from other politically-damaging stories (Police fear lurid terror briefings being used to divert attention from Whitehall problems: Kidnap inquiry is hampered by speculation, *The Guardian*, Saturday, 3 February 2007).

The coding process identified two dominant themes within newspaper coverage of this story. The first, prevalent in almost all the articles included in the sample, was to interpret the threat as a **new form of terrorism**. Articles suggested that an alleged plot to kidnap and behead a soldier marked a significant change in tactics, a move away from mass casualty attacks and indiscriminate bombings of

civilians. A subtext to this was the suggestion that the UK would see the 'horrors of Baghdad' or the Middle East brought to the UK, with many articles containing elaborate details about how a group of British Muslims planned to replicate the kidnapping and beheading tactics of Iraqi insurgents (From Baghdad to Birmingham: Nine held over plot to kidnap British Muslim soldier, *The Independent*, Thursday, 1 February 2007; A British beheading on the net, *The Guardian*, Thursday, 1 February 2007). The second theme, evident throughout the three days of press coverage, was the **impact of the arrests upon Birmingham's Muslim community** and **social cohesion** within the city. Articles recalled the outcome of previous police raids in Forest Gate, exploring the views of local residents and families and friends of those arrested (Police battle to contain Muslim extremism, *The Financial Times*, Thursday, 1 February 2007, Image of a veiled defiance, *The Express*, Thursday, 1 February 2007).

Six men were eventually charged with offences relating to an alleged terrorist plot to kidnap and kill a British Muslim soldier. Parviz Khan, the alleged ring leader of the plot, was convicted in February 2008 of 'engaging in conduct with the intention to commit acts of terrorism,' and 'possession of a document likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism,' and was sentenced to fourteen years in prison. Four other defendants were also convicted of involvement in the plot and handed prison sentences of varying lengths. Mohammed Irfan was convicted of engaging in conduct with the intention to commit acts of terrorism; Bassiru Gassama of failure to disclose information relating to an act of terrorism; Hamid Elasmarof engaging in conduct with the intention to commit acts and Zahoor Iqbal of engaging in conduct with the intention to commit acts of terrorism. The remaining defendant, Amjad Mahmood, was found not guilty of two changes under the Terrorism Act 2006 (CPS, 2008a, 2008b).

4.2: Results by Plot

The results presented in the following section groups references from the sample into five separate sub samples to explore the patterns of attribution within each

alleged plot. The following three features of source attribution will be considered:

References by Type:

A preliminary analysis of each sample set categorised references by source type. This procedure was based on a typology comprising 16 reference types, plus a number of additional categories depending on the specificity of the plot. The 16 primary categories of reference type and their rules for classification were as follows:

Table 6: Reference Categories

	Category	Rules for Classification
1	Government sources (Veiled)	A reference to 'government sources' or 'officials'. Includes references to No 10 and Downing Street
2	Identifiable government sources	A reference to a named individual or department from the government or their spokesperson: allows identification with an individual or their portfolio.
3	Political sources (Veiled)	References to Westminster or administrative sources, Whitehall sources, civil servant, Political Parties etc.
4	Identifiable political sources	A reference to a named politician or their spokesperson allowing identification.
5	Police sources (Veiled)	Veiled reference to the police: police officials, detectives, officers etc.
6	Identifiable police sources	Named individual, police force, department or their spokesperson. Allows identification of an individual police officer or police force.
7	Security sources (Veiled)	Veiled reference to security sources, official or chiefs.
8	Security sources (Identifiable)	Named security individual, official or agency. The Head of MI5 or a reference to MI5
9	Senior/Authoritative sources	Reference suggesting seniority or authority: top level sources, official sources, for example.
10	Counter terrorism sources	Reference to counter terrorism, anti-terror or intelligence type sources.[19]
11	Member of the Public	Person on the street. (Individual anonymous accounts are not counted separately, instead each set of interviews are counted as one individual reference unless their comments are punctuated by references to other sources.
12	Experts	Named and veiled reference to an expert/s, academic/s, analyst/s, scientist/s, writer, or think tank.[20]
13	Hybrids	A reference to two or more reference types. A police security official or government security source, for example.
14	Community sources	A reference to either a named or unnamed community leader, activist or local councilor.

[19] A reference to an anti-terror officer of counter terrorism officer is counted as an anti-terror source rather than a police source.

[20] A reference to an expert from one of the specific categories, security expert or intelligence expert for example, were not counted as expert references. Instead these were included in the relevant veiled category.

	Category	Rules for Classification
15	Anonymous sources	A reference that only refers to a 'source': a well-placed source, a Daily Mail source for example.
16	Miscellaneous	A reference to any other type of named or veiled source. Includes: 'chief Executive', 'immigration sources', quotes from website message boards.

Reference Use

Other information collected during the coding process allowed the researcher to examine whether the attribution was cited while discussing specific details that relate to the plot and arrests, or used by journalists within background or supplementary reporting to the story. In addition, where applicable, a further coding variable, over and above the simple dichotomous variable of reference use, was used to highlight whether a reference was used to downplay or refute details that had appeared in other media reports.

Individual named sources

The coding process recorded all individual named sources in the sample, their job title and the organisation or institution they represent. From this data the analysis below will explore the most frequently quoted named sources from each plot. References to an unnamed source that allows identification by nature of their position, the Prime Minister or the Home Secretary, for example, were only included in the counts if their position was preceded by their name. This is to differentiate between references that follow the prescribed values of journalism, where, whenever possible, sources are named in full to allow news audiences to asses the veracity and credibility of the information (Bickler, et al., 2004; Friendly, 1958), and unnamed or veiled attributions to a source. There is perhaps a case for including references to the 'Prime Minster', and to a lesser extent references to a minister for a government department, as a named attribution, as for the overwhelming majority of readers the position is clearly associated with an individual source or spokesperson. However, to provide a consistent approach to analysis, only explicit named references were included in this category.

4.2.1: Ricin Plot sources

In addition to the 16 source categories outlined above, three further categories were used to classify references cited during newspaper coverage of the alleged ricin plot: health sources, United States sources and French sources. The

rationale for this was to, first provide a separate classification for references to health authorities and General Practitioners (GPs) who featured prominently within the story. Second, to provide a distinction between UK government, official and security sources and foreign agencies quoted in the articles. The preliminary categories are shown in the Appendix to this thesis.

References by Type

Table 7 below groups the references by type. Overall, references to police sources (both identifiable and veiled) were the most prominent source types, accounting for 27.7% of all references. The next two most frequently quoted reference types in the plot were references to security sources (14.1%) and government sources (13.1%).

Table 7: Ricin Plot: References by Type

Reference Type	N	%
Police sources	57	27.7%
Security sources	29	14.1%
Government sources	27	13.1%
Others[21]	23	11.2%
Experts	19	9.2%
Members of the Public	14	6.8%
Health sources	11	5.3%
Political sources	10	4.9%
Hybrids	5	2.4%
Anonymous	5	2.4%
Counter-terrorism sources	3	1.5%
Senior/Authoritative sources	3	1.5%
Total	**206**	**100.0%**

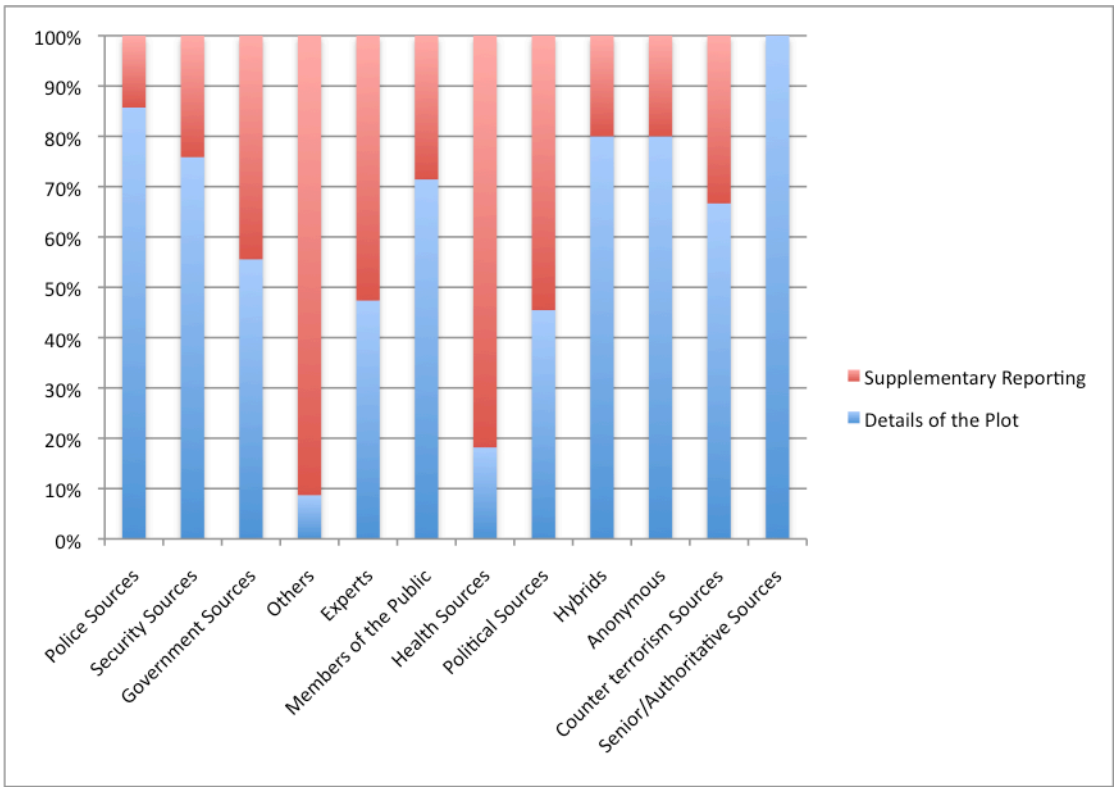
Reference Use

The stacked column graph (Figure 1) shows the overall number of references for each type and the number that were classified as relating to 'details of the plot':

[21] Includes the following preliminary reference categories: US sources, French source, community source and miscellaneous.

attributions that were used to confirm or support details of the plot, the core story theme.

Figure 1: Ricin Plot: Stacked Column Graph Showing Reference Use



The data shows that for the two dominant source types in coverage, police and security sources, 84.2% and 75.9% of all references within each category were found to be supporting or discussing specific details concerning the alleged ricin plot. For example, security sources were quoted commenting on the suspects (Poison gang on the loose, huge hunt for terrorist armed with deadly ricin. *The Daily Mail*, Wednesday, 8 January 2003); the type of poison discovered by the police (Chemical weapons factory found in north London flat, *The Financial Times*, Wednesday, 8 January 2003); and possible targets for the plot (Where is poison hidden? *The Sun Newspaper*, Wednesday, 8 January 2003). Government sources, however, were less likely to be found supporting specific details or information about the plot, with just over half of all references to this type (55.6%) classified as 'related to the plot'. For example, references to government officials, the Prime Minister and his spokesperson, were found as reports examined immigration and asylum policy (Ricin suspects were arrested in France

then freed, *The Daily Telegraph*, Friday, 10 January 2003), or explored the broader threat posed by Islamist terrorism (Seventh terror suspect arrested over poison plot as hunt goes on, *The Financial Times*, Thursday, 9 January 2003).

Individual named sources

In total there were 51 individual named sources cited in newspaper reports of the alleged Ricin plot. Table 8 below lists the 9 most frequently cited sources, their title or position, and the number of times they occur in the sample.

Table 8: Ricin Plot: Individual Named Sources

Name and Title	N
David Veness, Head of the Metropolitan Police Anti terrorist branch	9
Tony Blair, Prime Minister	8
Dr Pat Troop, Deputy Chief Medical Officer	6
Nicholas Sarkozy, French Interior Minister	3
Iain Duncan-Smith, Leader of the Opposition	3
John Wadham, Director of Liberty	2
Magnus Ranstrop, Director of the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence at St Andrews University.	2
Simon Reeve, Author/Broadcaster[22]	2
Simon Hughes, Liberal Democrat Home Affairs Spokesman	2

Of the top 9 sources, 8 are what can arguably be referred to as elite or official sources. David Veness, the Head of the Metropolitan police at the time, was the most frequently cited source, mirroring the prominence of police sources in the categories of reference type above; with his comments centring on intricate details of the police raid and alleged ricin conspiracy. Other frequently quoted sources were Tony Blair, the UK Prime Minister, again reflecting the prominence of government sources in the categories of reference type above, and Dr Pat Troop, the Deputy Chief Medical Officer.

In summary

Three conclusions can be drawn from the data above:

[22] Italics indicate that the source's title was not provided in the newspaper article but added by the researcher.

- Police sources were the most common attribution, accounting for almost 30% of all references from newspaper articles reporting the alleged ricin plot. Government, followed by security sources, were the next two most frequently quoted source types, at 14.1% and 13.1% of all references from this episode.
- Importantly, the overwhelming majority of references to police sources (84.2%) were classified as 'relating to details of the plot'.
- Only 51 references were to a specific named individual or 24.8% of all references within the sub sample; with David Veness, the Head of the Metropolitan Police Anti Terrorist Branch and Tony Blair, the UK Prime Minister, the two most prominent individual named sources in newspaper coverage of the plot.

The results above provide some evidence for the view that journalists have a tendency to rely on elite or official sources of information. (Hall et al, 1978). The data for both reference type and individual named sources revealed that the most frequent attributions were to police or government sources. While it could be argued that the dominance of such sources simply reflects the narrative to the plot or the narrative frames which were used to interpret or contextualise these events, for others it evidences the power of these institutions in shaping the news discourse on terrorism (Klaehn, 2002; McChesney, 2002; Snow & Taylor, 2006). Since the data shows that government sources, while prominent within press coverage of the plot, were less significant when it came to reporting key details of the plot. Then the findings from this episode may possibly provide evidence to dispute suggestions that government communications have sought to overemphasise or promote the threat from terrorism (Jackson, 2005).

4.2.2: Old Trafford Plot Sources

One additional category was used during coding and analysis of the articles: 'Sources from Manchester United Football Club'. The preliminary reference categories are shown in the Appendix (8.5) to this thesis.

References by type:

Table 9 below groups the references by type. The data shows that references to police sources were the dominant reference type within newspaper coverage of the Old Trafford plot, accounting for almost half of all references coded from the articles (49.1%). Other prominent sources in this episode were members of the public (18.2%) and references to anonymous sources (9.1%).

Table 9: Old Trafford Plot: References by Type

Reference Type	N	%
Police sources	27	49.1
Members of the Public	10	18.2
Anonymous	5	9.1
Sources from Manchester United Football Club	3	5.5
Others[23]	3	5.5
Counter terrorism sources	2	3.6
Security sources	2	3.6
Political sources	1	1.8
Hybrids	1	1.8
Senior/Authoritative sources	1	1.8
Government sources	0	0.0
Experts	0	0.0
Total	**55**	**100.0**

The high frequency of police sources in the sub sample is perhaps to be expected if we consider the narrative to the events. News of the alleged plot emerged following a series of police raids across the city of Manchester. Many of the articles included in the sample began by outlining details of the police operation before moving towards an assessment of potential targets and speculating that a plot to bomb Old Trafford may have been behind the arrests (Police arrest 10 in anti-terror raids, *The Daily Mirror,* Tuesday, 20 April 2004; Ten arrested as anti-terror police stage dawn raids, *The Guardian,* Tuesday 20 April 2004). As news of the operation continued to unfold it is perhaps inevitable that police sources would have remained key definers for the story. Importantly, the data also shows

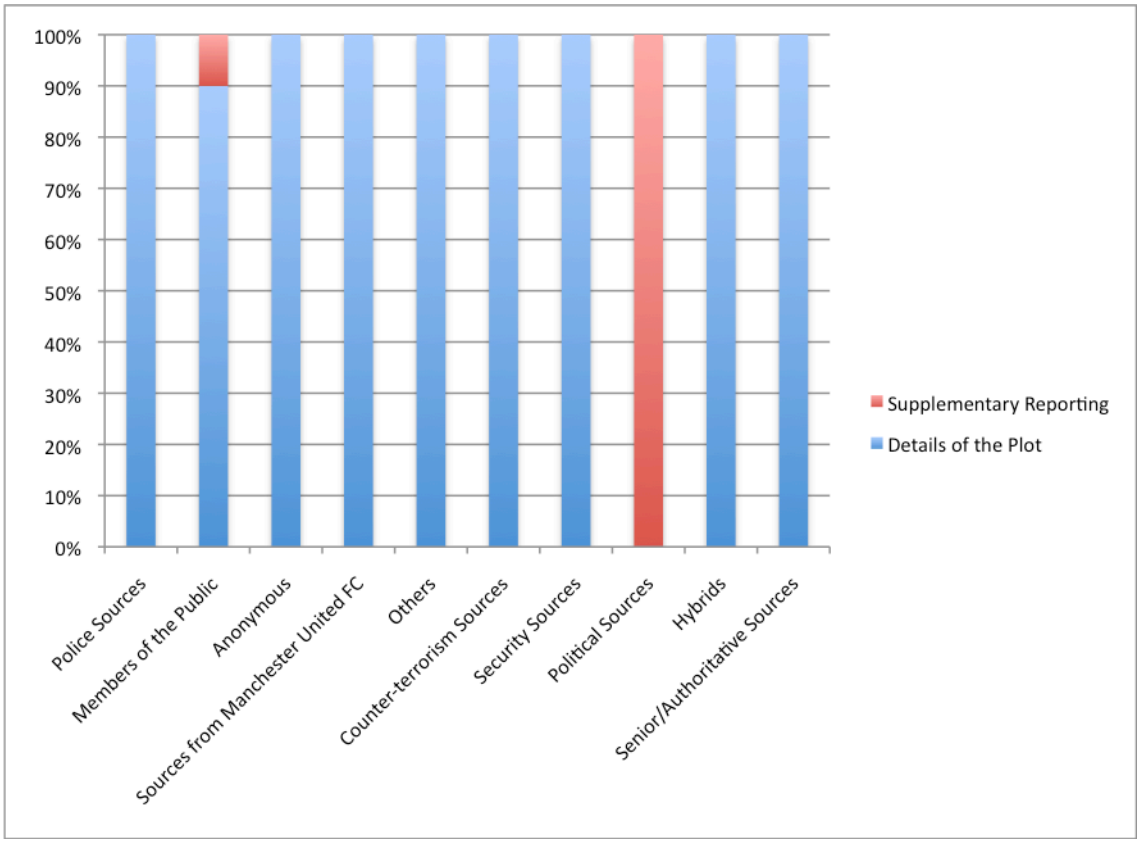
[23] Includes the following two preliminary categories of reference: community sources and miscellaneous.

that ordinary members of the public were significant within newspaper coverage of the plot, as the second most frequently quoted source in the subsample. The majority of these references were summarising the views of football supporters commenting on their perceptions of the threat and the security measures at Old Trafford.

Reference Use

Figure 2 below splits the overall number of references for each source type between those classified as 'relating to details of the plot' and those cited in supplementary themes.

Figure 2: Old Trafford Plot: Stacked Column Graph Showing Reference Use



The data shows that nearly all references from the Old Trafford plot were categorised as 'relating to details of the plot.' Although drawn from a relatively small sample, this finding may suggest that the nucleus of press coverage concerned the plot itself, rather than exploring background to the story or examining wider narrative themes. Alternatively, it could also be argued that

source attributions were either absent from these additional themes or that the ideas that they expressed were implicitly linked to key details of the plot. As a consequence, only handful of references for each source type was classified as 'supplementary' attributions within the subsample.

It is also important to note that the classification of reference use highlighted one reference to a counter-terrorism source, as 'downplaying the threat'. Cited in an article published in the Guardian newspaper on 21 April 2004, which refuted claims that Old Trafford was the intended target for a terrorist plot, the source was quoted as 'playing down the significance of the operation', and describing the arrests as 'part of a disruption operation', rather than being linked to a specific British target. (Ten arrested as anti terror police stage dawn raids, *The Guardian*, Tuesday, 20 April 2004). Although this represents a single case from a sample of 19 articles that reported the Old Trafford plot it sets an important precedent in the way subsequent media coverage of high-profile terrorist plots has been challenged by both commentators and journalists alike (Glover, 2006; A. Jones, 2007; Oborne, 2006). As the overall analysis of the narrative of alleged terrorist plots explores below, it is important to understand, not only the contribution source attribution may make towards critical perspectives towards the media discourse of terrorism, but their impact upon audiences' trust and confidence in the media itself.

Individual named sources

Table 10 lists the 18 named sources referenced in newspaper coverage of the Old Trafford Bomb plot. The most frequently quoted individual, accounting for more than 50% of all named references in the sample, was the Assistant Chief Constable of Manchester Police, Dave Whatton. His comments were used to inform readers of key details pertaining to the police operation, including the number of arrests, the arrestees' countries of origin and the procedure for issuing arrest warrants in such incidents. However, he also went on the record to deny speculation about possible targets and to describe the arrests as part of an, "operation looking at the threat of terrorism across the whole of the United Kingdom" (Terror arrests after fears of football bomb, *The Times,* Tuesday, 20 April 2004).

Table 10: Old Trafford Bomb Plot: Individual Named Sources

Name and Title	N
David Whatton, Greater Manchester Assistant Chief Constable	10
Sheikh Mohammed bal Qadri, Deputy Director of the Islamic Academy in Upper Brook Street	3
Matt Markhan, Detective Inspector, West Midlands Police	2
Philip Townsend, Spokesman for Manchester United FC	1
Michael Todd, Greater Manchester Chief Constable	1
Tony Lloyd, MP for Manchester Central	1
Total	**18**

The prominence of individual named police sources reflects the overall influence of police sources in this episode. However, interestingly, it was a community source, Sheikh Mohammed bal Qadri, the Deputy Director of the Islamic Academy, Manchester, who was the second most frequently quoted source in newspaper coverage.

In Summary

Three principal conclusions can be drawn from this data:

- Police sources were the most frequent attribution, providing 49.1% of all references within the 19 newspaper articles.
- The vast majority of attributions in press coverage of the story were used to support details of the central story theme.
- A reference to a counter terrorism source was used to dispute reports that Old Trafford was the intended target for the plot.

The results show that journalists relied upon official sources, more often through references to the police, to confirm details of the police operation and alleged plot. However, the data also suggests that alternative views, the personal accounts of football supporters and their experiences of increased security at the stadium, were an important aspect of news coverage. Significantly, government sources were absent from newspaper articles reporting the Old Trafford plot. This again may provide some evidence to challenge those that claim that the UK government has sought to distort and politicise media coverage of terrorism

(Mythen & Walklate, 2006; Oborne, 2005). However, coverage of the Old Trafford plot was less extensive when compared with some of the other episodes analysed in this study and consequently formed a much smaller subsample of references. These ideas will therefore be returned to later in this chapter when the findings from the overall sample of references are analysed and discussed.

4.2.3: Canary Wharf Plot sources

The preliminary categories (see Appendix 8.5) showed that references to identifiable government sources (16.9%) and identifiable political sources (15.5%) were most frequently cited in newspaper coverage of the plot. Other prominent references were senior/authoritative sources (11.3%) and veiled references to security (11.3%), political (9.9%) and government sources (8.5%).

Source References by Type

Table 11 groups the references by type, illustrating the frequency and percentage of the overall total for each source category. The data shows that references to government and political sources were most prominent in news of the Canary Wharf plot, with both categories accounting for 25.4% of all references in the subsample. However, unlike the previous two episodes, no single source type was dominant in coverage. Other prominent references in the plot were attributions to security sources (15.5%) and senior-authoritative sources (11.3%).

Table 11: Canary Wharf Plot: References by Type

Source Type	N	%
Government sources	18	25.4%
Political sources	18	25.4%
Security sources	11	15.5%
Senior/Authoritative sources	8	11.3%
Police sources	5	7.0%
Counter terrorism sources	4	5.6%
Anonymous	4	5.6%
Hybrids	2	2.8%
Experts	1	1.4%
Members of the Public	0	0.0%
Others	0	0.0%
Total	**71**	**100%**

Reference Use

If we consider the background to the story the data seems to support the assertion that details of the plot arose from a government or Home Office official, with government sources the most prominent reference type within the sample. However, as both Table 12 and Figure 3 show only a small proportion of references in this category (16.7%) were classified as 'relating to details of the plot'. This pattern was repeated for political sources, with only 22.2% of all references classified as 'discussing the plot'. Conversely, for other source types the vast majority of references were related to specific details of the plot. Importantly, attribution to a senior or authoritative source, which some pieces had suggested was actually a veiled attribution to a source from within the government or Home Office, were generally (87.5%) found to be corroborating or supporting information about the plot.

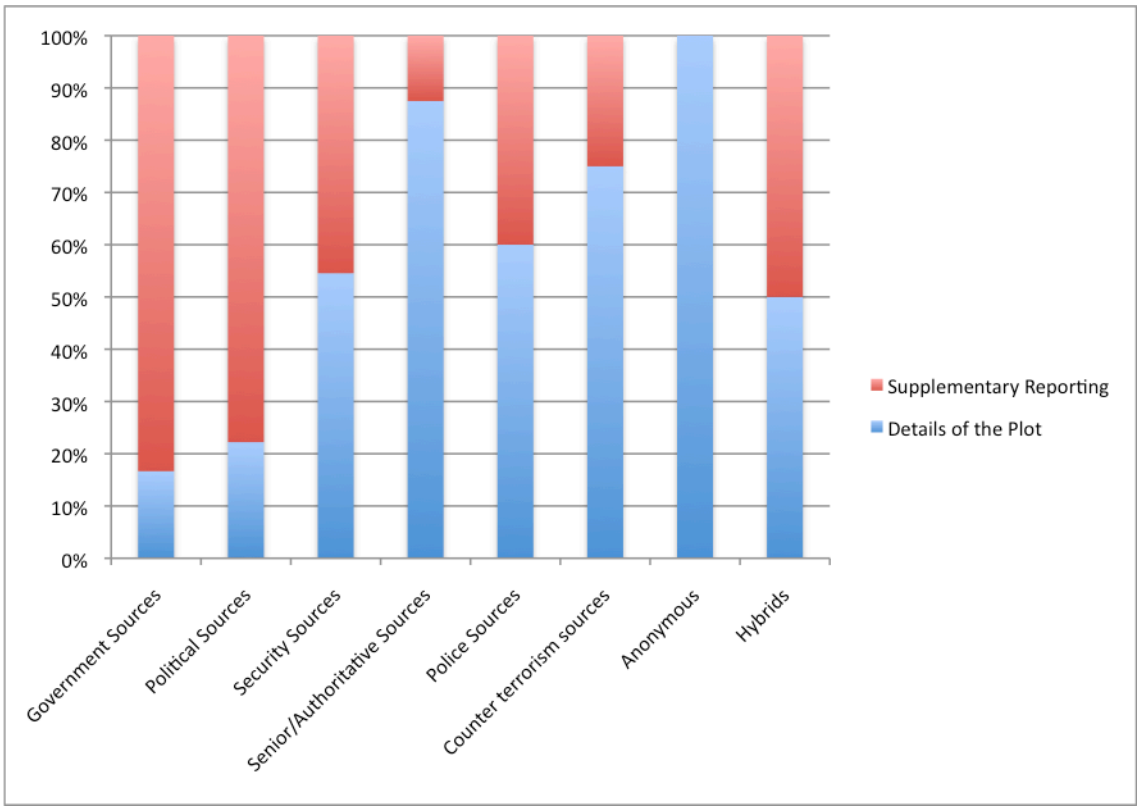
Table 12: Canary Wharf Plot: Reference Use

Reference Type	Details of the Plot	Supplementary Reporting	Downplaying the threat
Government sources	3 (16.7%)	15 (83.3%)	2
Political sources	4 (22.2%	14 (77.8%)	3
Security sources	6 (54.5%)	5 (45.4%)	1
Senior/Authoritative sources	7 (87.5%)	1 (12.5%)	2
Police sources	3 (60%)	2 (40%)	3
Counter terrorism sources	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	3
Anonymous	4 (100%)	0 (0%)	1
Hybrids	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	1
Experts	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	0
Members of the Public	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0
Others	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0
Total	**32**	**39**	**16**

Two further categories of references, counter-terrorism sources (75%) and anonymous sources (100%), included a greater proportion of references that were classified as discussing the plot or threat. Although the frequency of references in each category was small, the findings suggest that these specific types of veiled or anonymous attributions were a significant feature of news coverage of the Canary Wharf Plot, particularly when journalists sought to emphasise the credibility of the story.

A number of articles drawn from the 24 November 2004 questioned the veracity of the story and the credibility of information that had been reported elsewhere in the media. Consequently, a total of 16 references in addition to their classifications of reference use were categoriesed as 'downplaying the threat.' However, no distinct patterns emerged from this sample, with the three most prominent source types, government, political and security sources, each used at least once to either refute or 'distance themselves' from the story (London terror plots thwarted, *The Times*, Thursday, 23 November 2004).

Figure 3: Canary Wharf Plot: Stacked Colum Graph Showing Reference Use



Individual Named Sources

A total of 25 named attributions were found in articles reporting the Canary Wharf plot. References to named sources were found in both approaches to the story; however, none specifically challenged the existence of the plot. Of these 25 sources, all but one are representatives of the major hegemonic institutions within society (Hall et al., 1978; Harcup, 2003). The top two most frequently cited sources were, the UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and David Blunkett, the Home Secretary at the time of the story, which again reflects the position of government sources in the overall categories of reference type above. However, if we consider the findings for reference use, then it could be suggested that these named attributions to government ministers would have also been unlikely to have been commenting on the specific threat to Canary Wharf, since the majority of references to government sources were classified as pertaining to supplementary reporting, rather than commenting on key details of the plot or threat.

Table 13: Canary Wharf Plot: Individual Named Sources

Name and Title	n
Tony Blair, UK Prime Minister	7
David Blunkett, UK Home Secretary	3
Peter Hain, Leader of the House of Commons	3
Eliza Manningham Buller, Head of MI5	3
Sir John Stevens, Police Commissioner	2
Barry Hugill, Spokesperson for Liberty	1
Patrick Mercer, Conservative Party Spokesperson on Homeland Security	1
Charles Kennedy, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Party	1
Liam Fox, Conservative Party Co-chairman	1
Matthew Taylor, Parliamentary Chairman, Liberal Democrat Party	1
Michael Howard, Conservative Party Leader	1
David Cameron, Conservative Party Policy Coordinator	1
Total	**25**

In summary

To summarise, the principal findings arising from the analysis of source attribution within the Canary Wharf plot were as follows:

- References to government sources and political sources were the most frequent attributions, with each reference type providing just over a quarter (25.4%) of all references in the story. However, the majority of references to these two source types occurred during background reporting and were not used to support details of the plot.
- Newspaper coverage of the plot was significant as it was the first time that a range of sources was not only used to support the story but to challenge the veracity and credibility of the threat. However, no single source type was prominent in downplaying the threat to Canary Wharf.

The subsample of references from articles reporting the Canary Wharf plot again demonstrate the tendency for news values to prioritise official sources over other voices, with government and political sources predominant within newspaper coverage. Unlike the previous episode, there was no suggestion that alternative sources of information were used during reports of the plot. Even pieces that

challenged the integrity of information concerning the alleged plot relied upon official sources to downplay the threat. Furthermore, the suggestion that the story arose from an unnamed government source again influenced a more critical media discourse that sought to examine the role of unofficial sources and information leaks in determining the narrative to the plot

4.2.4: Transatlantic Airliners Plot Sources

In addition to the 16 standard reference types, three further source types were included in the preliminary classification of references. References to Pakistani sources and United States (US) sources were selected as additional reference types to distinguish attributions to foreign sources from those to UK sources. Moreover, references to sources associated with the airline industry or airport authorities were also categorised as a distinct reference grouping.

The preliminary categories (shown in Appendix 8.5) revealed that, overall, references to US sources (12.3%) were the most frequent attribution in newspaper coverage of the Transatlantic airliners plot, closely followed by identifiable government sources (11.3%) and Pakistani sources (11.1%).

Source References by Type:

Grouping the references by type shows that government sources (13.3%) were the most frequently quoted source type, closely followed by references to police sources (12.7%) and US sources (12.3%).

Table 14: Transatlantic Airliners Plot: References by Type

Reference Type	N	%
Government sources	65	13.3%
Police sources	62	12.7%
US sources	60	12.3%
Pakistani sources	54	11.1%
Security sources	49	10.1%
Members of the Public	42	8.6%
Experts	36	7.4%
Political sources	30	6.2%
Others[24]	30	6.2%
Counter terrorism sources	19	3.9%
Hybrids	14	2.9%
Anonymous	13	2.7%
Community sources	11	2.3%
Senior/Authoritative sources	2	0.4%
Total	**487**	**100.0%**

The data in Table 14 shows that a range of different source types were referenced in press coverage of the plot, with no individual category containing more than 14% of references for the plot. This contrasts with the findings from the previous 3 episodes, where one or two types of source were dominant. Government and police sources were again prominent in the articles; followed by references to Pakistani and US sources. The frequency counts for these two additional types are high, perhaps an indication of the breadth of references each may encompass, but also reflecting the emergence of additional or alternative angles to the story. References to these two types of foreign sources aside, then the data from the Transatlantic plot still suggests journalists' are predisposed to seek information from official or elite sources as the basis for their news stories.

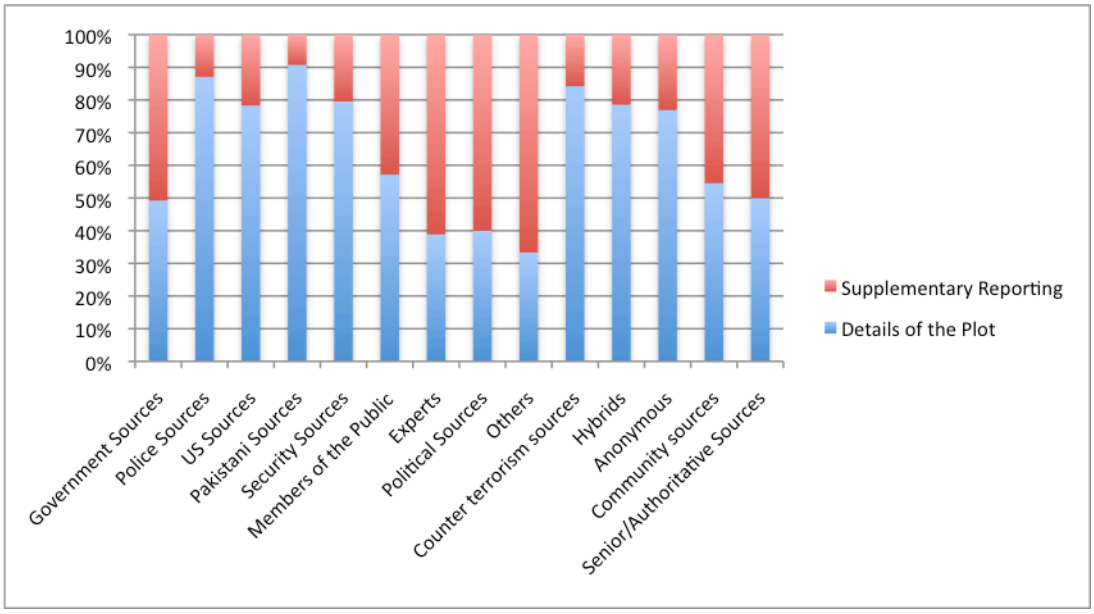
Reference Use:

Figure 4 illustrates the number of references for each source type that were categorised as 'discussing details of the plot'. The results show that of the five

[24] Includes Miscellaneous and Airline sources from the preliminary categories of reference type:

most frequently quoted reference types, only government sources were more commonly found during background reporting to the story, with 49.2% of attributions 'discussing the plot'. For the other three source types, 87.1% of references to police sources, 78.3% to US sources and 90.7% to Pakistani sources were classified as 'discussing the plot'. These results show a similar pattern to the previous three episodes, where government sources, although conspicuous within newspaper coverage, where more often cited in supplementary reporting to a piece or within themes that drew the reader away from the specific characteristics of the plot. Articles from August 12 and 13 cast a wider net, exploring the political issues raised by the story. Consequently, although Home Office or government sources were used to confirm arrest details or to comment on the success of the operations conducted by the police and security services, attributions to the Home Secretary or Department for Transport were found in equal or greater measure commenting on airport security or denying allegations that the government sought to gain political capital through the events. Experts (38.9%), political sources (40%) and others (33.2%) also included a lower proportion of attributions that discussed details of the plot. These findings suggest that source attribution may simply reflect the media narrative to these events, with sources mirroring the additional themes that emerged through background to the story.

Figure 4: Transatlantic Airliners Plot: Stacked Colum Graph Showing Reference Use



Individual Named Sources

In total there were 174 references to an individual named source in the plot. The most prominent named source was John Reid, the Home Secretary at the time of the story, with 30 separate references within the sample.

Table 15: Transatlantic Airliners Plot: Individual Named Sources

Name and Title	N
John Reid, The Home Secretary	30
Michael Chertoff, US Homeland Security Chief	14
George Bush, US President	11
Paul Stephenson, Metropolitan Police Deputy Commissioner	9
Peter Clarke, Deputy Assistant Commissioner for the Metropolitan Police	9
Douglas Alexander, Secretary of State for Transport	5
Tasnim Aslam, Pakistani Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman	5
Tony Blair, UK Prime Minister	5
Imtiaz Qadir, Spokesman for the Waltham Forest Islamic Association	4
Aftab Khan Sherpao, Pakistani Interior Minister	4
Fahd Ansari, Spokesperson for the Islamic Human Rights Commission	3
Robert Mueller, Director of the FBI	3
Lord Goldsmith, Chief Legal Adviser to the Government	2
Khurshid Ahmed, A member of the Commission for Racial Equality	2
Peter King, Republican Congressman and Chairman of the House Security Committee,	2
Khalid Mahmood, Member of Parliament for Birmingham, Perry Bar	2
Professor Peter Zimmerman, Chair of Science and Security at King's College London	2
Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra	2
Murray Walker, Broadcaster	2
Fran Townsend, US Homeland Security Adviser	2
Alberto Gonzales, US Attorney General	2

While the data shows an overall tendency towards representatives from the major institutions within society, in particular sources from the government or police, other notable references are illustrative of alternative voices within society, those drawn from outside positions of political or economic power (McChesney, 2002 cited in Harcup, 2003). Two such sources, Imtiaz Qadir, Spokesman for the Waltham Forest Islamic Association and Fahd Ansari, Spokesperson for the Islamic Human Rights Commission, featured prominently in news narratives when journalists explored local reactions to the police raids and allegations of a terrorist plot.

In Summary

The principal findings from newspaper coverage of the Transatlantic airliners plot were as follows:

- No single reference type was predominant in coverage. Government sources (13.3%), police sources (12.7%), US Sources (12.3%) and Pakistani sources (11.1%) were the most common reference types found within press coverage of the plot.
- The results show, however, that references to government sources were more common in background reporting to the story and through themes tangential to the plot itself.

These findings demonstrate the continued influence of official sources in news coverage of alleged terrorist plots. Even when journalists focused on the international dimensions to the story, the plot's potential link to militant Islamists in Pakistan and US reactions to the plot, individual named government sources were prominent within their reports. Alternative narratives explored the political issues raised by the allegations and the UK government's response to the crisis. Consequently, as with the three previous stories, (UK) government sources, although a prominent reference type, were not always found to be supporting or authenticating key information about the plot, the suspects or the threat to the British public. While these themes are important elements within the discourse of terrorism it demonstrates that other sources by virtue of their centrality to information confirming or authenticating the plot may have a more significant impact on audiences' interpretation of the story and consequently, their perceptions of the credibility of the threat.

Unlike the previous episode, there were very few articles that directly challenged the veracity of the story. The coding procedure did identify a scattering of references which 'refused to comment on specific allegations' or intelligence (US accused of jumping the gun in blaming al-Qaeda, *The Times*, Saturday, 12 August 2006; The Karachi connection: From Pakistan to Britain, the remarkable story of an international web of terror, *The Observer*, Sunday, 13 August 2006); with more critical approaches emerging through additional themes to the story. Most obvious were pieces that reflected upon the cynicism and scepticism of Muslim

communities towards the plot (Terror plot: Muslim reaction: concern and relief mixed with fear and cynicism, *The Guardian*, Friday, August 11 2006), and the possible prejudicing of any eventual criminal trial through Home Office media briefings (Claims may prevent fair trials, fear Goldsmith, *The Daily Telegraph*, Saturday, August 12 2006).

4.2.5: Kidnap Plot Sources

Four additional categories were used to classify references in the plot: military sources (both identifiable and veiled), relatives or friends of Lance Corporal Hashmi, and relatives or friends of Ken Bigley.

The preliminary categories (see Appendix 8.5) show that references to veiled police sources (14.8%) were the most frequent reference in newspaper articles reporting the plot. This was followed by references to members of the public (13.4%) and identifiable police sources (11.5%).

References by Type

Table 16 below groups the references by type. The data shows that attributions to police sources were predominant in newspaper coverage of the plot, accounting for just over a quarter of all references (26.3%). However, significantly, the second most prominent type of attribution was to 'members of the public' (13.4%), through informal person-on-the-street style interviews.[25] Other influential sources in the sub sample were references to security (10%) and community sources (10%).

[25] The data below reflect the number of times that such polls occurred in reports and not the number of individuals quoted by journalists.

Table 16: Kidnap Plot: References by Type

Reference Type	N	%
Police sources	55	26.3%
Members of the Public	28	13.4%
Security sources	21	10.0%
Community sources	21	10.0%
Government sources	15	7.2%
Political sources	13	6.2%
Experts	13	6.2%
Others	10	4.8%
Relatives/ Friends of Lance Corporal Hashmi	9	4.3%
Anonymous	8	3.8%
Military sources	7	3.3%
Counter-terrorism sources	4	1.9%
Hybrids	4	1.9%
Senior/Authoritative sources	1	0.5%
Total	**209**	**100.0%**

For the three previous episodes that reported details of police raids in response to an alleged terrorist plot, police sources, unsurprisingly, were influential in coverage of the story. As has been suggested, these findings reflect the nature of the story, and in this case, the need for journalists to clarify aspects of criminality. However, the incidence of alternative sources, references to members of the public and to a lesser extent, community sources, also demonstrates how the story was thematised around particular issues. Reports emphasised the feelings of victimisation and resentment that the raids had engendered amongst Birmingham's Muslim communities, exploring the influence of the allegations and arrests upon social cohesion in the city, with local residents featuring prominently in reports commenting on the arrests and allegations. Through this narrative theme, journalists evidenced a partial shift from elite or official accounts of the events. Although police sources were still the dominant reference in the sample, and as such the primary source definer for the episode, the importance of alternative sources may also reflect how over the course of this study the news discourse of terrorism has evolved from an interpretative

framework, which sought to understand and define the post 9/11 threat, to one that has explored the impact of this threat on wider social and political issues.

Reference Use

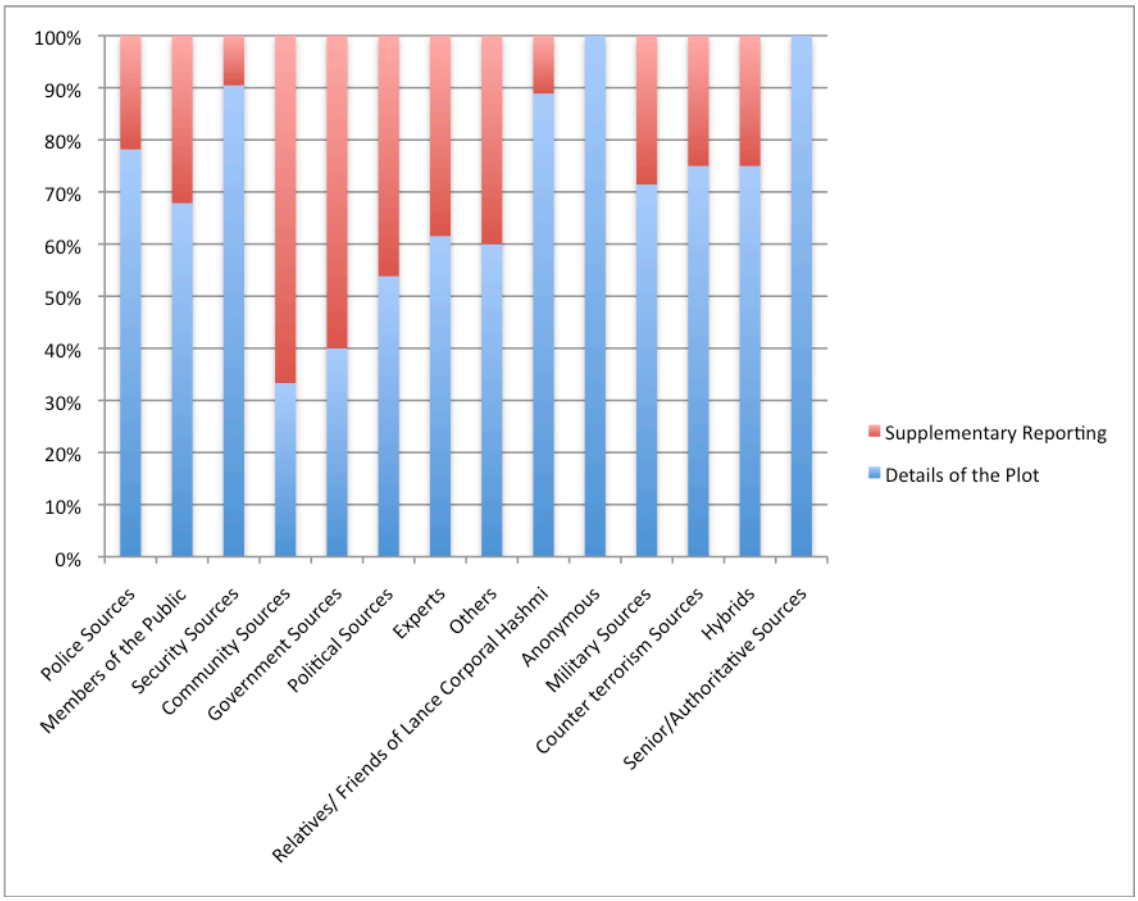
As Table 17 and Figure 5 show the vast majority of references to police sources (78.2%) were discussing details that related to the plot. For example, during the first and second day of press coverage references to police sources were used to confirm details of the police operation, the number of suspects held in custody, and to support specific allegations about the exact nature of the plot. However, as the data shows there were also a handful of references to police sources that sought to defuse speculation about the plot or to refute information reported elsewhere. The vast majority of these attributions were to either challenge allegations that police had uncovered a beheading video or to denounce political leaks (Live bait for the beheading gang; Muslim soldiers used as 'tethered goats', *The Daily Mail,* Friday, 2 February 2007; Police fear lurid terror briefings being used to divert attention from Whitehall problems: Kidnap inquiry is hampered by speculation, *The Guardian*, Friday, February 2007).

Table 17: Kidnap Plot: Reference Use

Reference Type	Details of the Plot	Supplementary Reporting	Downplaying the Threat
Police sources	43 (78.2%)	12 (21.8%)	6
Members of the Public	19 (67.9%)	9 (32.1%)	0
Security sources	19 (90.5%)	2 (9.5%)	1
Community sources	7 (33.3%)	14 (66.7%)	0
Government sources	6 (40%)	9 (60%)	1
Political sources	7 (53.8%)	6 (46.2%)	4
Experts	8 (61.5%)	5 (38.5%)	0
Others	6 (60%)	4 (40%)	1
Relatives/ Friends of Lance Corporal Hashmi	8 (88.9%)	1 (11.1%)	0
Anonymous	8 (100%)	0 (0%)	0
Military sources	5 (71.4%)	2 (28.6%)	0
Counter terrorism sources	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	1
Hybrids	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	1
Senior/Authoritative sources	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	0
Total	**143**	**66**	**15**

When journalists canvassed the opinions of local residents they were more commonly (67.9%) found commenting on the plot or the culpability of those arrested. Therefore in that sense it could be argued that these sources were important to readers when forming their impressions of the credibility of the plot. Community sources, however, included a much smaller proportion (33.3%) of attributions classified as 'discussing the plot', with references to community leaders more often used to comment upon the impact of the story on Birmingham's Muslim community.

Figure 5: Kidnap Plot: Stacked Colum Graph Showing Reference Use.



Individual Named Sources

There were a total of 63 individual named sources in newspaper coverage of the plot. Table 18 lists the 9 most frequently cited sources. The data shows that the most prominent individual source in news coverage of the plot was David Shaw, Assistant Constable of West Midlands Police. Importantly, the findings show that a greater number of references were to unofficial or alternative sources. The brother of Lance Corporal Hashmi, the soldier whom some reports had claimed provided the inspiration for the plot, representatives of Birmingham's Muslim communities and local councillor, Ansar Ali Khan, were all notable sources within press coverage of the story.

Table 18: Kidnap Plot: Individual Named Sources

Name and Title	N
David Shaw, Assistant Constable of West Midlands Police	15
Lance Corporal Hashmi's Brother Zeeshan	8
Shabir Hussain, Chairman of the Ludlow Road Mosque	6
Mohammed Naseem, Chairman of the Birmingham Central Mosque	6
Ansar Ali Khan, Local Councillor	3
Will Geddes, Head of Security Firm ICP Group	3
Professor Paul Wilkinson, Director of the University of St Andrews Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence	2
Patrick Mercer, the Conservative homeland security spokesman	2
Shami Chakrabarti, Director of Liberty	2

In Summary

The principal finding from newspaper coverage of the alleged kidnap plot were as follows:

- Police sources were the most prominent reference type (26.3%) in the subsample. However, there is some indication from the data that unofficial sources were also important definers of the story. In particular, members of the public (13.4%) and community sources (10%) were common references in press coverage of the plot.
- In tandem with the themes described above, there is evidence that reports of the alleged kidnap plot turned to alternative sources of information. Importantly, the general public were significant within newspaper coverage of the story.

News coverage of the alleged kidnap plot was the first episode in which journalists departed from 'official' sources. The police were still important definers of this event by authenticating details at the heart of the story; however, there were also a significant proportion of references to what Harcup (2003) defines as 'alternative sources'. Examining reference type and the individual named sources revealed that local residents and community representatives featured prominently within coverage. The reason that these sources were used

appears to lie in the way that the events were thematised by the press (Harcup 2003), with coverage focusing upon the impact of the story upon Birmingham's Muslim community. Following a series of false and as yet unproven terrorist plots and against a milieu of growing public cynicism towards the threat from Islamist terrorism a more critical approach to reporting became characteristic to the story. Not in the sense of the earlier Canary Wharf and Old Trafford plots where specific concerns were raised by the broadsheet and more liberal titles over the validity and veracity of each story but in the way news coverage was shaped by ordinary British Muslims and their commentary upon the story. Although this approach may have been influenced by previous episodes, it may also be indicative of a shift in the media discourse on terrorism, where journalism has sought to address public concerns over the way official or government sources communicate information about the threat from contemporary terrorism.

4.3: Overall Results

The following section collates all references from the sample to explore source attribution within the overall narrative of alleged terrorist plots. This longitudinal analysis focuses on all 1020 references coded from the 229 newspaper articles. Rather than discussing the findings in isolation, patterns emerging from the data will be explored by reference to the wider interpretative and discursive frameworks identified during the analysis of the five individual plots. However, it is not until the final summary section that these findings will be drawn together to highlight and discuss the principal themes within the data pertinent to the specific research questions (RQ1 and RQ2) set out at the beginning of this thesis.

The results presented in this section will consider the same three features of source attribution as discussed in the results by plot: references by type, reference use and individual named sources. However, in addition, two further characteristics of attribution will also be considered within the overall sample of references.

Identifiable and Veiled Attributions

Culbertson (1975) defined veiled sources as 'non-specific attributions in news stories' that do not allow identification with a named individual. The present study, however, distinguishes between veiled and identifiable attributions by the transparency of the reference and the accountability that it provides to a particular individual, institution or organisation. This audience-centric approach recognises that citing a West Midlands Police source, for example is more precise than a vague attribution to police sources. More importantly, it shows that their comments, or the information they have provided, can be traced to a specific police force and as such will have defined responsibilities and obligations to the public. Similarly a reference to a 'Home Office source', rather than a vague attribution to a 'government source', allows the audience to reflect on the information attributed to this source as representative of a departmental or ministerial position on the issue. The analysis of the overall sample will uncover the proportion of veiled attributions to those that are identifiable for the four core reference types analysed in the study: government, political, police and security sources.

Reference Phrasing

The final characteristic of source attribution to be explored is the phrasing of different references. During the coding procedure each reference was classified as either a direct, indirect or narrative-style reference. A direct reference was an attribution to a quoted source, an indirect reference was without a quotation to the source but still made it clear to the reader that the source was associated with a specific piece of information by use of phrases such as said or stated.[26] Finally, a narrative-style reference included all other references to a source that a reader could construe as being used to support, authenticate or corroborate a particular statement, viewpoint, or piece of information

4.3.1: Presentation of Data

The preliminary reference categories reported in Appendix 8.5 show that across the five episodes the most frequently quoted reference type were veiled police

[26] Examples of these three types of reference phrasing are outlined in Chapter 3.

sources, at 10.6% of all references coded. This was closely followed by references to four other prominent source types: veiled security sources (9.9%); identifiable government sources (9.7%); identifiable police sources (9.6%); and person on the street interviews with individual members of the public (9.2%). The remaining 21 categories of references used during the preliminary analysis each represented less than 7% of the overall sample.

References by Types

Table 19 groups these preliminary source categories by type. Any category of source that was highlighted as specific to one of the five plots and included more than 10 references was also included as a separate source type in the analysis. Those categories, which had frequency counts lower than 10, were included as part an aggregate group: plot specific sources. The columns show the overall number of references for each source type and as a percentage of the overall sample total.

Table 19: Overall Sample: References Grouped by Type

Reference Type	n	%
Police sources	206	20.0%
Government sources	125	12.2%
Security sources	112	10.9%
Members of the Public	94	9.1%
Political sources	72	7.0%
Expert	69	6.7%
US sources	61	5.9%
Pakistani sources	54	5.3%
Community sources	43	4.2%
Anonymous	35	3.4%
Counter terrorism sources	32	3.1%
Plot specific sources[27]	29	2.8%
Miscellaneous	28	2.7%
Hybrids	26	2.5%
Airline sources	16	1.6%
Senior/Authoritative sources	15	1.5%
Health sources	11	1.1%
Total	**1028**	**100.0%**

The results show that police sources were the most frequently cited reference type, representing 20% of all coded references and almost double the number of the next most frequently cited reference type: government sources (12.2%). Other prominent source types in the sample were references to security sources (10.9%) and members of the public (9.1%). Rather surprisingly, references to counter terrorism sources were not a noticeable feature within newspaper coverage of alleged plots, accounting for just over 3.1% of all references in the sample.

[27] Plot specific sources collates other reference categories with less than 10 attributions and included: spokesperson from Manchester United Football Club; Military sources; Family or Friends of Lance Corporal Hashmi; Family or Friends of Ken Bigley; and French sources

Reference Use

Table 20 splits each reference type between attributions that were used to confirm or support details of the plot, the core story theme, and those that occurred during supplementary or background reporting to a story. In addition to frequency counts for each of these two categories of reference use the table also shows the frequencies as a percentage of overall references for each type. The final two columns show the number of references within each source type that downplayed allegations of a plot or refuted specific details and these frequencies as a percentage of the total number references for each type.[28]

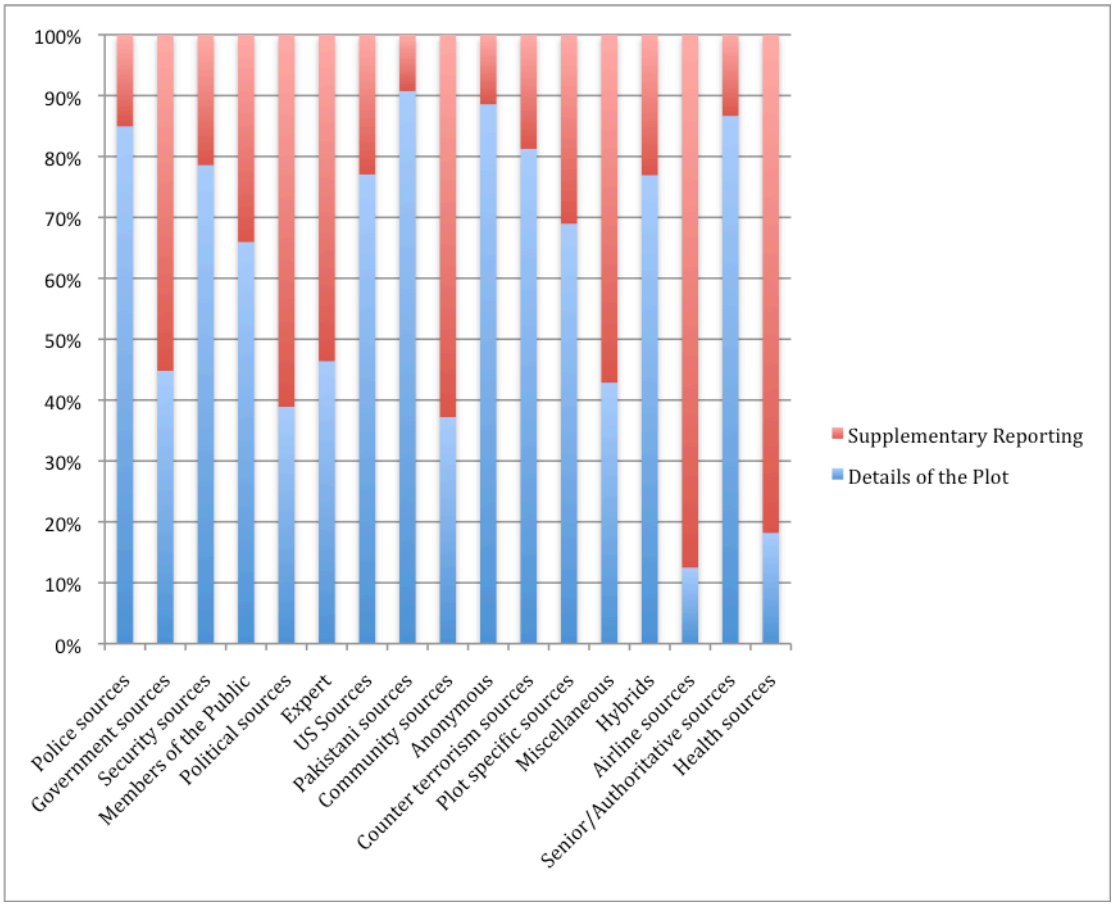
Table 20: Reference Use

Reference Type	Details of the Plot	Supplementary Reporting	Downplaying the threat
Police sources	175 (85%)	31 (15%)	14 (6.8%)
Government sources	56 (44.8%)	69 (55.2%)	3 (2.4%)
Security sources	88 (78.6%)	24 (21.4%)	2 (1.8%)
Members of the Public	62 (66%)	32 (34%)	0 (0%)
Political sources	28 (38.9%	44 (61.1%)	7 (9.7%)
Expert	32 (46.4%)	37 (53.6%)	0 (0%)
US Sources	47 (77%)	14 (23%)	0 (0%)
Pakistani sources	49 (90.7%)	5 (9.3%)	0 (0%)
Community sources	16 (37.2%)	27 (62.8%)	0 (0%)
Anonymous	31 (88.6%)	4 (11.4%)	1 (2.9%)
Counter terrorism sources	26 (81.3%)	6 (18.8%)	6 (18.8%)
Plot specific sources	20 (69%)	9 (31%)	0 (0%)
Miscellaneous	12 (42.9%)	16 (57.1%)	1 (3.6%)
Hybrids	20 (76.9%)	6 (23.1%)	3 (11.5%)
Airline sources	2 (12.5%)	14 (87.5%)	0 (0%)
Senior/Authoritative sources	13 (86.7%)	2 (13.3%)	2 (13.3%)
Health sources	2 (18.2)	9 (81.8%)	0 (0%)
Total	**679 (66.1%)**	**349 (33.9%)**	**39 (3.8%)**

[28] 'References classified as 'downplaying the threat' was an additional coding variable over and above the simple dichotomous variable of references use.

The stacked column graph (Figure 6) illustrates reference use for each source type splitting the total number of references between those 'reporting details of the plot' and those classified as 'supplementary reporting'.

Figure 6: Overall Sample: Stacked Column Graph Showing Reference Use



The results above show that for the most frequently quoted reference type in the sample, police sources, the majority of attributions (85%) were found within the principal theme of news coverage: details or speculation about the nature and threat posed by an alleged terrorist plot and, where relevant, police operations and arrests linked to such allegations. From the top ten most frequently cited references, only one other reference type, Pakistani sources, contained a greater proportion of references that were classified as 'discussing details of the plot', at 90.7% of all references for that type. Attribution to security sources and

members of the public the third and fourth most frequently cited reference type within the sample were also found to be more often used to support details of the plot, at 78.6% and 66% of all references for each type. Less prominent reference types from the sample that also showed a significantly higher proportion of references coded as 'relating to details of the plot' were anonymous sources (88.6%); counter-terrorism sources (81.3%); hybrids (76.9%); and senior authoritative sources (86.7%).

From the 18 categories of reference type only 6 showed a greater proportion (>50%) of attributions that were used during supplementary reporting to the story. Government sources were the most prominent reference type, with only 44.8% of references coded as 'discussing details of the plot' followed then by references to political sources, at 38.9% of all references by type. Expert sources (46.4%), community sources (37.2%), miscellaneous (42.9%), airline (12.9%) and health sources (18.2%) also comprised a lower proportion of references that related to the details of one of the five plots.

Overall, only 3.7% of coded references were classified as downplaying the threat. Across the individual categories, counter-terrorism sources (18.8%) contained the greatest proportion of references that were used to refute or downplay allegations. This is less significant, however, if we consider that only 3% of all references in the overall sample were to this source type. For the three most frequently cited reference types, police sources (6.8%), government sources (2.4%) and security sources (1.8%), only a handful of references were classified as downplaying the threat.

Individual Named Sources

Within the overall sample of newspaper articles there were a total of 331 individual named sources or 32.5% of all coded references. Table 21 below shows the name and title of the top 10 most frequently quoted sources.

Table 21: Most Frequently Quoted Named Sources

NAME AND TITLE	N
John Reid, UK Home Secretary	30
Tony Blair, UK Prime Minister	20
David Shaw, Assistant Constable of West Midlands Police	15
Michael Chertoff, US Homeland Security Chief	14
George Bush, US President	11
Dave Whatton, Greater Manchester Assistant Chief Constable	10
David Veness, Head of Metropolitan Police Anti terrorist branch	9
Paul Stephenson, Metropolitan Police Deputy Commissioner	9
Peter Clarke, Deputy Assistant Commissioner for the Metropolitan Police	9
Lance Corporal Hashmi's Brother Zeeshan	8
Dr Pat Troop, Deputy Chief Medical Officer	6
Shabir Hussain, Chairman of the Ludlow Road Mosque	6
Mohammed Naseem, Chairman of the Birmingham Central Mosque	6

The findings in Table 21 replicate the results for reference type, showing a relationship between the characteristics of the top ten named sources and the most prominent source types shown in Table 19. All of the top six named sources in newspaper coverage were from one of three prominent reference types: police sources, government sources, or US sources. The most frequently quoted source was John Reid, Secretary of State for the Home Department between May 2006 and June 2007. Other prominent named sources include the UK Prime Minister during the period of data collection, Tony Blair, and David Shaw, the West Midlands Police Assistant Chief Constable between 2004 and 2008. It should be noted, however, that because the plots have taken place within different regions then senior police officers have been drawn from a range of different police forces. If we were to aggregate named senior police officers from the sample then they would form the largest group of individual named sources.

Identifiable and Veiled Sources

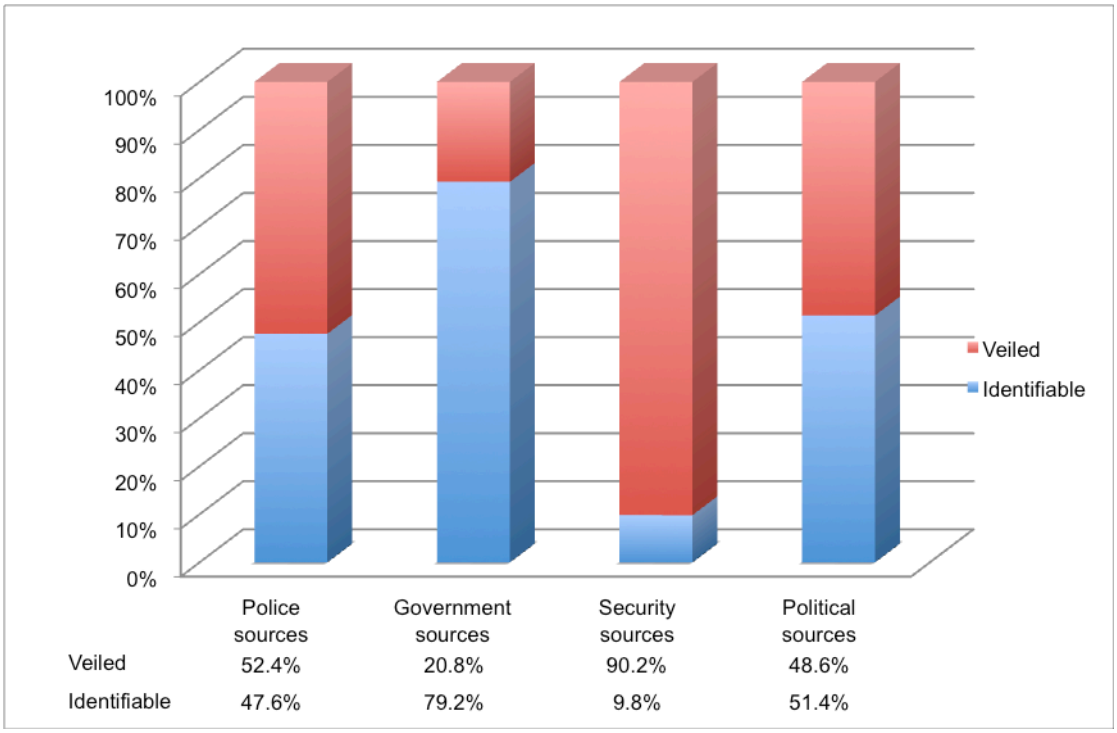
Table 22 splits the four core reference types by the frequency and a percentage of identifiable and veiled attributions.

Table 22: Identifiable and Veiled Source Frequencies

Source Type	Identifiable	% Identifiable	Veiled	% Veiled
Police sources	98	47.6%	108	52.4%
Government sources	99	79.2%	26	20.8%
Security sources	11	9.8%	101	90.2%
Political sources	37	51.4%	35	48.6%
Total	**245**		**270**	
Total %	**47.6%**		**52.4%**	

Figure 7 illustrates this data on a stacked column graph showing the proportion for each reference type that were classified as either identifiable or veiled attributions. The data shows that for the most frequently cited source type, police sources, there were a somewhat greater number of veiled attributions than those identifiable to the reader. References to political sources also showed little disparity between the two classifications, but conversely, showed a somewhat greater number of identifiable rather than veiled attributions to a source. The other two core source types, however, were dominated by one classification of attribution. Most significantly, if we examine these results in light of the overall totals for each reference type, the data shows that the majority of references to government sources (79.2%) were attributions that allowed the reader to identify the source by either naming an individual minister or referring to a specific government department. This contrasts with references to security sources, which, although a less prominent reference type, were almost exclusively (90.2%) in the form of veiled attributions to 'security sources' or 'officials'.

Figure 7: Overall Sample of References: Stacked Column Graph Showing Proportion of Veiled and Identifiable References



	Police sources	Government sources	Security sources	Political sources
Veiled	52.4%	20.8%	90.2%	48.6%
Identifiable	47.6%	79.2%	9.8%	51.4%

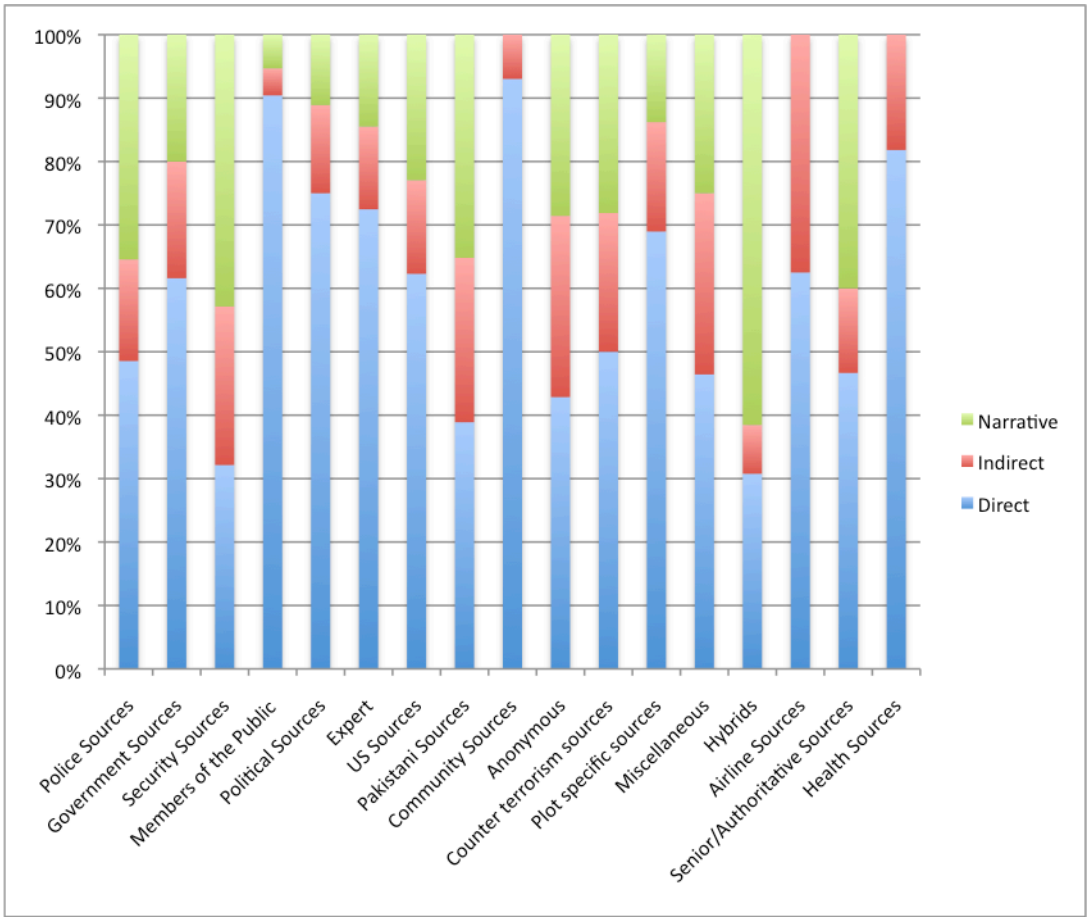
Reference Phrasing

During the coding procedure each reference was classified as either a direct, indirect or narrative-style attribution. Table 23 splits reference type by these three different styles of attribution phrasing. The data shows that of the four core source types examined in the study only government sources (61.6%) and political sources (75%) contained more than half of all references as direct quotes from a source. References to police sources (48.5%) and more noticeably security sources (32.1%) were more frequently as indirect or narrative-style phrasing. Other reference types from this data set that included a significantly greater (>=50%) proportion of direct attributions to a source were members of the public (90.4%), experts (72.5%), US Sources (62.3%), counter-terrorism sources (50%), plot specific sources (85.7%), airline sources (62.5%) and health sources (81.8%).

Table 23: Reference Type Split by Direct, Indirect and Narrative Style Attributions

Reference Type	Overall	Direct	Indirect	Narrative
Police sources	206	100 (48.5%)	33 (16%)	73 (35.4%)
Government sources	125	77 (61.6%)	23 (18.4%)	25 (20%)
Security sources	112	36 (32.1%)	28 (25%)	48 (42.9%)
Members of the Public	94	85 (90.4%)	4 (4.3%)	5 (5.3%)
Political sources	72	54 (75%)	10 (13.9%)	8 (11.1%)
Expert	69	50 (72.5%)	9 (13%)	10 (14.5%)
US sources	61	38 (62.3%)	9 (14.8%)	14 (23%)
Pakistani sources	54	21 (38.9)	14 (25.9%)	19 (35.2%)
Community sources	43	40 (93%)	3 (7%)	0 (0%)
Anonymous	35	15 (42.9)	10 (28.6%)	10 (28.6%)
Counter terrorism sources	32	16 (50%)	7 (21.9%)	9 (28.1%)
Plot specific sources	29	20 (85.7%)	5 (4.8%)	4 (9.4%)
Miscellaneous	28	13 (46.4%)	8 (28.6%)	7 (25%)
Hybrids	26	8 (30.8%)	2 (7.7%)	16 (61.5%)
Airline sources	16	10 (62.5%)	6 (37.5%)	0 (0%)
Senior/Authoritative sources	15	7 (46.7%)	2 (13.3%)	6 (40%)
Health sources	11	9 (81.8%)	2 (18.2%)	0 (0%)
Total	**1028**	**599 (58.3%)**	**175 (17%)**	**254 (24.7%)**

Figure 8: Overall Sample of References: Stacked Column Graph Showing Proportion of Direct, Indirect and Narrative-Style References



4.3.2: Discussion

The results from the overall sample of references can be summed up into six generalised findings concerning the use of sources in newspaper coverage of alleged terrorist plots.

- References to police sources were the dominant source type within newspaper coverage of alleged terrorist plots providing 20.2% of all references coded from the five episodes. Other frequently quoted source types in reports were government sources (12.3%), security sources (11%), and members of the public (9.2%) through vox-pop style interviews.
- The influence of official or elite sources were found in both the results for reference type and individual named sources, suggesting such sources are important definers of news of suspected terrorist plots. However, contrary to

the orthodox view of the ideological and hegemonic forces shaping news production, the evidence also indicates that alternative sources were granted access to journalists or media organisations during the process of news gathering, with references to members of the public (9.2%) and named community leaders significant if not predominant within coverage.

- The results also show that although government and political sources were frequently quoted in news coverage of alleged terrorist plots they were found more often in supplementary reporting rather than as part of the central story theme.
- Attribution was more often in the form of unnamed references, with only 32.5% of all references in the sample referring to an explicit named source. The results above, however, also showed that, although attributions were infrequently to named sources, almost half of those to the four institutional reference types (47.6%) afforded some identification as to whom or where the information originated.
- Of the four institutional reference types, attribution to government sources (79.2%) and political sources (51.4%) were more frequently categorised as identifiable, by either naming an individual source or referring to a specific government department. Attributions to police sources and more evidently, security sources were more often in the form of veiled references to these two non-specific source types, with 47.6% and 9.8% respectively of references from each group classified as identifiable.
- In total 58.5% of all references in the sample were in the form of a direct quotation from a source. However, there were significant variations in attribution phrasing amongst reference types. If we exclude members of the public, a category in which the vast majority were, unsurprisingly, categorised as direct references, then from the top four most prominent reference types only attribution to government sources (61.6%) were found to be more commonly phrased as direct quotations from a source.
- Finally the results suggest a relationship between the way a journalist identifies a source and the way that this source is quoted in newspaper coverage. References to government sources were found to be more often identifiable to the reader and at the same time provided direct attribution to a source. Conversely, references to security sources contained a higher

proportion of veiled references, and correspondingly, a higher proportion of indirect and narrative-style attributions.

Public Institutions were Predominant in Coverage

The findings for both reference type and individual named sources identified from the sample, evidence the tendency for journalists to rely on information originating from public institutions or their representatives when reporting news of alleged terrorist plots. If we consider the centrality of the police and criminal investigations to four of the five episodes included in the study, the results show attribution to police sources as the primary reference type within the sample. Similarly, senior police officers featured prominently amongst the top ten most frequently quoted individual sources. Two broader categories of reference type, government sources and security sources, which are at least suggestive of the institution of government, were also significant within newspaper coverage.

These patterns are indicative of a pragmatic approach to sourcing, emphasising the synergy between the nature of a story and the functional or practical concerns of journalists to source relevant information about the story. As Hallin et al., (1993) found, journalists' use of sources are not necessarily influenced by the ideological forces shaping news access but by the professional practices of journalism itself. The news media reporting of suspected terrorist plots, in particular the two most recent high-profile conspiracies to bomb transatlantic aircraft and kidnap a British soldier, have been fluid, generating substantial coverage over the periods of analysis. Consequently, it could be argued that sources fulfil a need for journalists. As news emerges of a dramatic terrorist plot journalists will turn to those who are best placed to provide them with accurate and timely information. Since for the majority of the episodes included in this study, news of a suspected plot was precipitated by a series of anti-terrorist police raids then it is a merely a reflection of the story and journalists' interpretation of this story that police sources occur most frequently within reports. It could also be argued that it is through this same process that government and security sources occur so frequently within the sample, as each reflect institutions or individuals that are able to comment authoritatively on both the story itself and the issues surrounding the UK terror threat. It is the

ability of named individual or anonymous or veiled spokespersons acting on behalf of these public institutions to provide newsworthy information that leads to a predisposition to information from these institutions. Consequently, news coverage of a foiled terrorist plot will be characterised by references to these institutions or their relevant spokespersons. So not only will issues of power determine access and subsequent referencing of information but so too will the ability of the source to supply relevant information and their social or geographic proximity to the journalist (Gans, 1979).

Others would argue that the concentration of sources from major public institutions reflects the realities of modern journalism as changes in journalists' working practices impact upon the newsgathering process and decrease the amount of time available to source and independently check and corroborate information (Lewis, et al., 2008). As a consequence, journalists will turn to sources who are not only able to comment authoritatively on or provide information concerning anti-terrorism operations but are able to do so reliably and supply information that requires the least amount of checking without undue expenditure on staff time and effort (Gans, 1979).

The Primary Definers of News of Alleged Terrorist Plots

A number of studies have sought to uncover the primary definers of a particular story or issue by examining the frequency and prominence of reference types within news texts (Atwater & Green, 1988; Grabe & Zhou, 1999; Mason, 2007; O'Neil, 2007). While there are obvious qualifications to employing a micro-study of content to explore what is essentially a structural theory of media access (Anderson, 1991, 1997), a survey of news content is able to shed light upon the journalistic practices that determine sources' access to the media and their ability to influence journalists' interpretation of a news event. The results above indicate that public institutions were predominant within newspaper coverage of alleged terrorist plots. This may, as it has been argued, be a reflection of the story and the types of sources needed to obtain information about the story. However, it could also be claimed that these findings reveal the role of journalism in sustaining the interests of the dominant or powerful groups in society by allowing these elite or official sources to establish the boundaries of definition

over news of terrorism (Herman & Chomsky, 1994).

Earlier studies examining the primary definers of news (Mason, 2007; Miller, 1993; O'Neil, 2007) and source attribution during particular terrorist incidents (Kern, 1979 cited in Atwater & Green, 1988) found a disproportionate amount of information or quotes from official sources. More recently, McChesney (2002) noted a tendency for news discourse surrounding the September 11 attacks and the subsequent 'War on Terror' to reproduce elite opinion by emphasising the views of government or official sources. Certainly, at a glance, the results for reference type also seem to indicate a bias towards official perspectives within UK press coverage of alleged terrorist plots, with over 40% of all references in the sample to one of three public institutions: police, government or security sources. In addition, representatives from these institutions also feature prominently as individual named sources in the sample. However, there is also evidence that journalists drew on unofficial sources when reporting alleged plots with references to members of the public and community sources prominent within press coverage. As the discussion of the individual plots above has suggested, there was a noticeable shift in the news discourse of terrorism over the period of study, away from a frame of inevitability and preparedness towards a news frame that focused on the impact of anti-terrorism operations and counter-terrorism legislation upon social cohesion. It is a reflection of this emerging narrative to terrorism that we also see the personal accounts of those affected by police operations and the views of the general public concerning a specific story featuring within the overall sample of references.

It is perhaps not surprising that members of the public have become central to news coverage of recent plots. As argued in Chapter 2, news coverage of high profile alleged plots has often precipitated a shift to a crisis model, where journalists depart from the routine practices of news gathering and turn to the public for eye-witness reports, pictures and videos. Research has shown that the modern citizen journalist has become pre-eminent within media narratives to major terrorist events (Allan, 2007; Hughes & Vieweg, 2009), but as the results from this study show the British public have also been instrumental in shaping coverage of recent terrorist plots, where the focus for recent episodes has been

for journalists to give voice to ordinary members of the public disrupted by anti-terrorism operations within their communities. Furthermore, while other research has found that to personalise coverage the media may rely on soundbites from relatives or friends of those affected by terrorist incidents (Atwater & Green, 1988), the content study shows that members of the public may also have a significant role to play in responding to the news media's framing of terrorism and challenging government or official discourse concerning the threat from terrorism.

Government Sources Not Supporting the Plot

The overall sample shows that government and political sources, although amongst the five most frequently quoted reference types, were more often found during supplementary reporting, rather than supporting information relevant to the plot. This contrasted with references to the police, security services and members of the public, which all had a significantly higher proportion of references classified as relevant to the plot, at 85%, 78.6% and 66% respectively of all coded references.

At one level these findings suggest that source attribution is simply a feature of the narrative to alleged terrorist plots. As the discussion of the individual plots has shown, newspaper coverage was often supplemented by a discussion of associated political and social issues. For the three plots prior to the London bombings of July 2005, this was to emphasise the emerging threat from Islamist terrorism and the failure of the UK's immigration and asylum polices; with the two more recent episodes characterised by narratives that focused upon the impact of anti-terrorism operations upon Muslim communities. For these themes it is predictable that journalists turned to government or political sources. Consequently, references to these sources were more often found as part of background reporting to a story or emerged within wider interpretative of narrative frames. Unlike government sources, however, references to police or security sources were more likely to be used to support key information pertaining to the plot or police operation; and aside from a handful of references to each that were used to challenge the authenticity or credibility of two of the

five plots, the majority, in some way, would have served to validate a specific allegation or threat.

If government sources were not commenting on details of the plot then there is also little empirical evidence to support the view, as others have claimed, that the British government has been active in seeking to distort and misinform the public over the threat from terrorism (Jackson, 2005; Oborne, 2006; Watson, 2006). Some may argue that reference to these sources was in the form of veiled or unnamed attribution to mask the identity of the source. However, the data shows quite the opposite, with references to government sources more often identifiable in some way to the reader. Alternatively, it could be claimed that the three non-specific categories of anonymous sources, senior-authoritative source and hybrids, were rhetorical devices employed by journalists to maintain the anonymity of official or government sources who were unwilling or unable to 'go on record' (Stenvall, 2008). Again the data would dispute this assertion since each contained only a tiny proportion of references across the sample. Such an approach would also seem to contradict the news values and sourcing strategies discussed in Chapter 2, where journalistic practice has traditionally placed an emphasis on the identification of sources to provide audiences with a means of assessing the veracity of a story or piece of information. Research has similarly identified reluctance on the part of journalists to attribute information to anonymous sources (Boeyink, 1990), since the axiom of journalism is that the credibility of a story is enhanced by attribution to senior or authoritative sources. For these reasons it would seem unlikely that references without some form of organisational or institutional affiliation would be provided in the narrative without, as Culbertson (1975) suggests, at least some indication as to the source's job or role within the institution.

Unnamed and Veiled Sources as a Feature of Newspaper Reporting

The data shows that the vast majority of references in the sample were to unnamed sources, with only 32.5% of all references in the sample quoting an individual named source. In contrast, other studies of content, though noting the influence of unnamed or anonymous sources, generally found that such references were as common as those to named or identified sources (Culbertson

1978 cited in Boeyink, 1990; Hallin, et al., 1993; Martin-Kratzer & Thorson, 2007; Sheehy, 2008).

While a study of content cannot establish causality, the findings are perhaps explained by the nature of the story and in particular, the difficulties that journalists may have faced in obtaining information that is either of operational or political sensitivity. Research has shown that journalists and their editors will usually reserve anonymity for stories where on the record information is hard to obtain (Martin-Kratzer & Thorson, 2007). Certainly media coverage of a high profile plot could have had significant implications for a criminal investigation and UK national security. Consequently, in their desire to get information to the public about one of the plots journalists may have had to agree to anonymity for some of their sources.

The discussion of the five plots above showed that there was a sense of scepticism amongst some journalists writing for broadsheet and liberal newspapers towards the timing of particular stories and the role of the UK government in providing information to the press. Allegations of a ricin plot, some two months before the invasion of Iraq in March 2003 and a plot to target Canary Wharf on the eve of the Queen's speech in 2004, suggested to some that the government was seeking to gain political capital by driving news coverage of these events. The media and senior police officers also later criticised the initial media coverage of the alleged kidnap plot, claiming that government 'spin-doctors' had jeopardised the operation by leaking information to the press (Cobain, et al., 2007; G. Jones, 2007; Morris, 2007).

While it can not be determined from the data it would seem plausible to suggest that for some public officials there would be a strong political motivation to release information to the media about the ongoing threat from terrorism (Schlesinger, 1990). Therefore, weary of becoming embroiled in controversy, may have attempted to protect their identities as news sources by seeking to access journalists through unofficial or unauthorised channels of communication (Flynn, 2006).

Certainly, conspiracy theories argue that it is this process of informal relations between senior officials and journalists that fosters a politicised discourse of terrorism (Mythen & Walklate, 2006). The results above, however, demonstrate that, although anonymous sources were a prominent feature within press coverage of alleged terrorist plots, the level of identification given to sources varied by type. Importantly, comparing partially identified references, by the nature of the source's department, job title, to veiled attributions within the four institutional source types in the study (police, government, security and political sources), revealed that government sources contained a significantly greater proportion (79.2%) of references that identified a source in some way to the reader. This finding, supported by the prominence of government sources as individual named sources, suggests that senior ministers did go on record to discuss the story or at the very least permitted journalists to provide some indication to their audience as to the department or ministry from which this information was sourced.

So while anonymous sourcing may be a significant characteristic of the UK news discourse of terrorism, contrary to populist conspiracism, it would seem difficult to assume that government sources are the key drivers of 'the false narrative of terrorism' (Oborne, 2006). Alternatively, references of this type were more often in the form of overt rather than veiled attributions to an institutional source and importantly, for the reader, increasing accountability to the source for the views or information attributed to them within the news.

Finally, it is also important to note that almost all references to security sources were categorised as veiled attributions. A reference to a 'security source' is ambiguous, however, it does perhaps suggest a connection to the UK's security services, or more specifically, the work of MI5. Historically, the reporting of information provided by such sources has been in the form of veiled or ambiguous references to maintain the anonymity of the individual or organisation. As a consequence, it is perhaps to be expected that an institution who's existence until recently was never acknowledged publicly by senior government or military officials, will only be referred to by journalists through a non-specific attribution to a 'security source.'

Direct Attributions to add Credibility

Despite the prevalence of anonymous or veiled attributions within the sample the findings show that a greater proportion of references (58.5%) were phrased as direct quotations from the source. The remaining references were split between indirect (16.8%) or narrative-style attributions (24.7%). At one level this finding may suggest that direct attribution provides a means for journalists to enhance the credibility of anonymous or veiled attributions by showing that the comment is authentic and unaltered by their reportage (Culbertson, 1975). The fact that so many references within the sample were veiled or non-specific attributions may potentially undermine the credibility of the story for the reader. Therefore, it seems plausible to suggest that journalists may seek to authenticate their narrative by quoting sources verbatim.

However, on closer inspection the data reveals a more complex relationship between phrasing and identification. First, references to government and political sources, both reference types that included a greater number of identifiable attributions, were also found to be more often in the form of direct quotations from a source. This again suggests caution against the conspiratorial approaches towards the discourse of terrorism, as it shows that, not only are government sources identifiable to the reader, but their views are more often reported through direct quotation from the source. As Rupar (2006) argues, it is this increased visibility that enhances the credibility and accountability of the source.

These findings also cast some doubt upon Culbertson's (1975) explanation. Although, confirming expectations, the data shows that references to public officials were more often in the form of direct attribution to a named or identifiable source. This seems to arise, as Boyenink (1990) proposes, because editors feel that is the responsibility for such figures, particularly those who have been elected, to be represented on record and held accountable for their view or comments.

Second, references to security sources, which were found to be more often in the form of veiled attributions, were not normally as direct quotations from the

source but instead through indirect or narrative-style phrasing. These findings also seems to confound Culbertson's (1975) view that anonymity will be moderated through direct attribution to a source. For news coverage of terrorism one possible suggestion is that these references to a 'security source' were more commonly referring to documents or information relating to matters of security. For example, a leaked departmental memo or email, or strategic documents providing a more general assessment of the current threat from terrorism, as opposed to the views of an individual. The consequence of which is that unless journalists are quoting directly from such documents then the reference is more likely to appear as a paraphrased attribution to a source. The data does offer some support for this notion as almost half of all references to security sources (42.9%) were in the form of narrative-style attributions, indicating that these references were discrete associations with specific story elements or facts, rather than the more overt direct or indirect attribution phrasings.

An alternative explanation may rest in the authority that can be conferred upon a story reporting an alleged terrorist plot or key story details that is attributed to a security source. We already know that when journalists referenced 'security sources' it was during the key story theme and would therefore be more likely to corroborate or support details of the plot. It is possible therefore that veiled references to this source type were used to 'add glamour to their stories' (Johnston, 1987 cited in Boeyink, 1990), when in fact the attribution masks another information source. These vague and indirect references to 'security sources' may simply be a rhetorical device employed by journalists to frame the source in such a way as they attempt to make their sources seem credible or authoritative to the reader (Stenvall, 2008).

4.5: Conclusions

This study sought to describe the patterns of source attribution within news coverage of alleged terrorist plots. The aims were twofold. First, to provide an overview of the news discourse of alleged terrorist plots and an examination of sources within news narratives. Second, to establish a content-based framework in which to explore the effects of attribution upon audiences' perceptions of news.

The analysis began by exploring the interaction between the narrative to each episode and the characteristics of source attribution. The results indicate that official sources, references to the police, government and security sources, were common to the five episodes. However, attribution does appear to arise as a feature of the narrative to each event. Importantly, as both the media and public discourse of terrorism began to focus upon public concern over policing and counter terrorism operations, sourcing reflected this transition. Consequently, audiences, through reference to ordinary members of the public, became important definers of more recent plots as journalists examined the impact of events upon the UK's Muslim communities

This study does suggest that an analysis of content can provide an insight into the values and agendas that determine journalists' interpretation of news events. In summary the findings indicate that news coverage of alleged terrorist plots, contrary to popular conspiracism, is shaped by the professional imperatives of journalism. More specifically, patterns of attribution indicate that sourcing practices reflect the news narratives themselves, with journalists seeking information from those sources who are able to comment authoritatively on a story.

The results provide little evidence to imply that news narratives of alleged terrorist plots are politicised or weighted towards a government agenda. Instead the analysis reveals that reference to government sources were not always tied to the principal theme within each news episode, allegations of a suspected terrorist plot, but were more commonly found in supplementary or background reporting to a story. Furthermore, when contrasted with other institutional sources, attributions to a government source were often in the form of identifiable, rather than veiled references to the source.

These ideas are returned to in the concluding chapter of this thesis and discussed in relation to the two specific research questions set out in Chapter 1. The next chapter, through the results of an experimental study, explores the perceptual effects of source attribution upon audiences.

Chapter 5: Audience Study

The preceding chapter identified the principal features of source attribution within newspaper coverage of alleged terrorist plots. The results from this first stage of empirical research demonstrated that attribution to public institutions, most commonly to police or government sources, were predominant within the overall sample of references. The study also found that when journalists referenced sources this was more often in the form of veiled or non-specific attribution to the institution or source type, rather than through full or partial identification of the source. This chapter will present the findings of an empirical study, which considers the potential for journalism to shape audiences' perceptions of news through attribution to such sources.

As outlined in the rationale for this research, previous coverage of terrorism and suspected terrorist plots has focused public attention upon the role and types of sources appearing in the news. A series of unproven or fictitious plots, at a time when the government's counter-terrorism policy was argued to be both controversial and unpopular, has in part engendered a more critical approach from the media towards the threat posed by Islamist terrorism. Through this process, the objectives of both those acting as sources and journalists' sourcing strategies have come under closer scrutiny. Of particular concern has been the authentication of reports through unnamed attributions to sources, from those institutions that are concerned with mitigating or responding to the threat from terrorism. Although the results from the content analysis may dispute this assertion, the prominence of such unnamed or veiled attributions to government sources are cited by some as evidence of a government policy of misinformation and overstatement when communicating the terrorist threat (Jackson, 2005; Oborne, 2006). The present chapter draws together the findings of an audience study designed to address these issues and considers how journalists, through ambiguous references to public institutions may shape audiences' perceptions of the credibility of news of an alleged terrorist plot.

The chapter will begin by taking a closer look at the sample to consider any significant demographic or attitudinal trends amongst those students who

participated in the study. It will then move on to address research question three and its three sub questions, by presenting the relevant findings from the data. Finally, the chapter will close with an interpretation of the principal findings arising from the audience study to consider the relationship between source attribution and audience perceptions of terrorism.

5.1: The Sample

A total of 147 students participated in the study over the six-day period of data collection. The gender split amongst the participants was 53.1% male and 46.9% female. This relatively even split reflects the purposive approach to sampling used to recruit participants to the study. Where undergraduate programmes were known to contain a greater proportion of male students (computer animation) this was balanced by also recruiting from degree courses known to include a higher proportion of female students (communication degrees and hospitality management).

Online and broadcast media use

Section 1 of survey 1 explored participants' media use behaviour and trust in various online and broadcast news outlets. Media use was assessed by asking participants to report whether they used six news[29] outlets: *every day, several times a week, once a week, occasionally or never.*[30] The data in Table 24 shows mean media use scores derived from participants' responses for each of the six outlets, where 1=*never* and 5=*everyday*.

[29] As a news aggregator, rather than a producer of content, Google News was excluded from the final analysis.

[30] Question 1 read as follows: For each of the following please tell me how often you use each as a source of news:

Table 24: Online and Broadcast Media Use: Descriptive Statistics

News Outlet	Mean	Std. Deviation
BBC online news	2.96	1.364
BBC 1 evening news (6pm or 10pm)	2.49	1.023
ITV evening news (6:30pm or 10pm)	2.06	.931
24 hour TV news channel	2.03	1.126
National newspaper website	2.02	1.156
Channel 4 evening news	1.95	.927

Note:
Ratings of Media Use were on a five-point Likert scale with 1=Never and 5=Everyday

The results for media use show that BBC online news (M=2.96) was the most frequently accessed news outlet, followed by BBC 1's evening broadcasts (M=2.49). There was, however, only a small difference between participants reported use of the other four news outlets, with all but two of the scores falling in the *occasionally* category. From this data it may appear that participants were not frequent or habitual consumers of online and broadcast news. Alternatively, it may also suggest that participants use a variety of different news sources but infrequently, evidencing a wide reading of news.

Considering the recent growth in online news and the emergence of web technologies that allow the user to individually customize and select the types of content they receive it is perhaps not surprising that participants in the study reported frequent use of the BBC's news website. Even more so if we consider that all those participating in the study were undergraduate students, a demographic group that has been shown to be amongst the most frequent visitors to online news sites (Jarvis, Stroud, & Gilliland, 2009; KPMG, 2007). However, the results also show that students still rely on television for news, choosing the BBC's main evening news programmes over a twenty-four hour news channel or ITV's evening news broadcasts.

Newspaper use

Newspaper use was assessed by asking participants to rate on the same five-point scale from *never* to *every day*, how frequently they use ten daily national newspapers.[31] The data in Table 25 shows mean newspaper use scores derived

[31] Question 2 read as follows: How often do you use the following newspapers as a source of news?

from participants' responses for each of the ten newspapers, 1=*never* and 5=*everyday*.

Table 25: Newspaper Use: Descriptive Statistics

Newspaper	Mean	Std. Deviation
The Guardian/The Observer	1.78	.913
The Sun/The News of the World	1.75	1.034
The Times/The Sunday Times	1.73	.881
The Daily Mail/The Mail on Sunday	1.66	.833
The Daily Telegraph/The Sunday Telegraph	1.52	.822
The Independent/The Independent on Sunday	1.39	.637
The Daily Mirror/The Sunday Mirror	1.34	.567
The Daily Express/ The Express on Sunday	1.28	.692
The Financial Times	1.19	.544
The Sunday People	1.06	.242

Note:
Ratings of Newspaper Use were on a five-point Likert scale with 1=Never and 5=Everyday

All ten scores for newspaper use fall within the 'never' category, showing that the means were not significantly different. The newspapers with the highest mean use score were The Guardian/The Observer (M=1.78), The Sun/The News of the World (M=1.75) and the Times/Sunday Times (M=1.73). Importantly, the data shows that participants in the study were not regular newspaper readers.

Moreover, taken together with the data for mean media use, the results show that participants in the study were not frequent or habitual news consumers. Although studies have found that for some groups of young people, most notably those who score highly on the psychological construct of *the need for cognition*, newspapers remain an important source for news (Tsfati & Cappella, 2005). Other research has shown a substantial decline in newspaper readership amongst young people (Lauf, 2001). What is perhaps surprising about this sample is that unlike much of this existing research, the data does not show a significant shift to free online news sources amongst the participants. Even BBC news online, ranked as one of the most popular and frequently accessed news sites on the World Wide Web ('Top 15 Most Popular News Websites', 2010), was only found to be accessed *occasionally* by participants in the study.

Trust in broadcast and online media

Question 3 asked participants to rate on a five-point Likert scale (where 1=*no trust at all* and 5=*complete trust*) how much trust they have in five[32] broadcast and online news outlets to report the news objectively.[33] The data in Table 26 shows that BBC 1 evening news broadcasts (M=3.96) and 24-hour TV news channels (M=3.66) were considered to be the most trustworthy by participants in the study. Conversely, participants rated a national newspaper's website as the outlet that they least trusted to report the news objectively (M=3.2).

Table 26: Trust in Online and Broadcast Media: Descriptive Statistics

News Outlet	Mean	Std. Deviation
BBC 1 Evening news (6pm or 10pm)	3.96	.912
24 hour TV news channel	3.66	.992
Channel 4 evening news	3.49	.993
ITV Evening News (6:30pm or 10pm)	3.47	.984
National newspaper website	3.20	.921

Note:
Ratings of trust were on a five-point Likert scale with 1=*no trust* and 5=*complete trust*

These findings broadly follow those of more specific research examining public trust in the media. Recent polling data has shown that national television news, followed by international satellite news channels are perceived as the most trusted source of news for media consumers. Online resources, however, have been found to have lower levels of trust than other mediums (BBC/Reuters, 2006). When it comes to specific news brands polls have also shown that in spite of recent scandals UK audiences still consider BBC to be trustworthy (YouGov, 2005). Academic research has tended to replicate these findings, demonstrating that audiences perceive television to be more accurate than print news (Westley and Severin, 1964; Abel and Wirth, 1977; Gaziano & McGrath, 1986 all cited in Kiousis, 2001). Furthermore, the results do not show, as other scholars have suggested (Kiousis, 2001), that audiences are sceptical towards news itself.

[32] BBC Online was excluded from this third question since trust in the BBC brand was assessed by asking participants to rate their trust in BBC television news. In addition, Google News as a news aggregator, rather than a producer of content, was also excluded from the final analysis

[33] Question 3 read as follows: please rate how much trust you have in the following news outlets to report the news objectively. Respondents who answered 'don't know' were excluded from the analysis.

Instead, while there may be some degree of mistrust or ambivalence towards online news the data shows that generally participants still consider television news to be trustworthy.

Trust in Newspapers

Trust in newspapers was assessed by asking participants to rate on a five-point scale from 1=*no trust* to 5=*complete trust*, how much trust they have in ten national newspaper to report the news objectively.[34]

The data in Table 27 below shows a noticeable split between participants' trust in broadsheet and tabloid newspapers. The mean scores for participants' ratings of trust in the five broadsheet titles falls between M=3.82 and 3.39, with the five mid-market/tabloid titles between M=2.87 and 1.85. The findings from this study replicate those of other larger samples of public opinion, with the red top tabloids, the Daily/Sunday Mirror (M=2.2), the Sunday People (M=2.12) and the Sun and its Sunday sister title, the News of the World (M=1.85), considered most untrustworthy by participants (Barnett, 2008; BBC/Reuters, 2006). Conversely, the Financial Times (M=.3.82), the Guardian/Observer (M=3.76), the Times/The Sunday Times (M=3.68) and the Independent/Independent on Sunday (M=3.58), were rated the most trustworthy; with the two mid-market tabloids, *The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Express* falling in between these two groups.

[34] Question 4 was worded as follows: overall, please rate how much trust you have in the following newspapers to report the news objectively.

Table 27: Trust in Newspapers: Descriptive Statistics

Newspaper	Mean	Std. Deviation
The Financial Times	3.82	.907
The Guardian/The Observer	3.76	.800
The Times/The Sunday Times	3.68	.853
The Independent/The Independent on Sunday	3.58	.900
The Daily Telegraph/The Sunday Telegraph	3.39	.911
The Daily Mail/The Mail on Sunday	2.87	1.030
The Daily Express/ The Express on Sunday	2.58	.919
The Daily Mirror/The Sunday Mirror	2.20	.985
The Sunday People	2.12	.917
The Sun/The News of the World	1.85	.877

Note:
Ratings of trust were on a five-point Likert scale with 1=*no trust* and 5=*complete trust*

If we consider these mean scores in the context of the data relating to trust in broadcast and online news outlets then these findings suggest, as other researchers have claimed, that trust in newspapers may not actually be as low as it is often assumed (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000; Johnson & Kaye, 1998 cited in Kiousis, 2001). Only BBC 1 evening news broadcasts were rated more trustworthy than the three highest rated newspaper titles: *The Financial Times, The Guardian/The Observer*, *The Times*. Tabloid and mid-market titles, however, did not follow this trend. Contrary to the relatively high levels of trust in broadsheet newspaper, tabloid and mid-market publications, including the Sun newspaper, with the highest circulation of any of the UK's daily newspapers, were considered less trustworthy than any of the broadcast or online news outlets listed in Table 26.

Trust in newspapers to report terrorism

Survey 1 also explored participants' trust in newspapers to report five issues that had featured in the news just prior to the period of data collection. The specific aim was to examine trust in newspapers to report terrorism. Therefore, participants were asked to rate on a five-point scale how much trust, with 1=*no trust* at all and 5=*complete trust*, they have in newspapers to report these issues.[35]

[35] Question 1 was worded as follows: overall, how much trust do you have in newspapers to report on the following issues?

Table 28: Trust in Newspapers to Report Issues: Descriptive Statistics

Issue	Mean	Std. Deviation
House Price Falls	3.36	.885
Economic recession	3.28	1.042
Terrorism	2.97	1.006
Health Service Reform	2.97	.858
Immigration	2.85	.957

Note:
Ratings of Trust were on a five-point Likert scale with 1=*no trust* and 5=*complete trust*

The data in Table 28 shows that participants reported higher levels of trust in newspapers to report economic issues, both declining house prices (M=3.36) and the economic recession (M=3.28), than health service reform (M=2.97) and terrorism (M=2.97); with immigration (M=2.85) as the issue participants least trusted newspapers to report.

It is, however, important to note that the disparity between participants' ratings of trust in these five issues was slight. This is perhaps unexpected if we consider the controversy that has surrounded both recent coverage of the economic crisis and the UK's immigration and asylum policies. Significantly, prior to the period of data-collection commentators has claimed that media coverage of the banking crisis had been both irresponsible and inflammatory, with some even going as far as to suggest that influential journalists had played a part in the economic collapse (Crossley-Holland, 2008). The British tabloid press, has also at times been accused of exploiting the issue of immigration through sensationalised and inaccurate reporting (Dragomir, 2004). However, the data shows that the mean ratings of participants' trust in both these and the issue under examination, terrorism, fell close to the median score (3) on the five-point scale.

Concern over terrorism

Question 2 assessed participants' concern over five issues that had featured in the news just prior to the period of data collection. The specific aim was to assess an individual's perception of the threat and level of risk posed by terrorism. To uncover these attitudes participants were asked to rate on a five-point Likert

scale (*1=not worried at all and 5=very worried*) how worried they were about terrorism[36]

Table 29: Concern over Issues: Descriptive Statistics

Issue	Mean	Std. Deviation
Economic recession	3.67	1.083
Terrorism	3.02	1.193
House Price Falls	2.82	1.169
Health Service Reform	2.64	1.069
Immigration	2.40	1.099

Note:
Ratings of Concern were on a five-point Likert scale with 1=*not worried at all* and 5=*very worried*

The data shows that terrorism (M=3.02) was second to the economic recession (M=3.67) as the issue that participants felt most concerned about. This finding is likely to be explained by the immediacy of the issue to the participants. In late January, some three weeks prior to the data collection sessions, the UK government had confirmed that the UK economy had entered recession for the first time since 1991 (ONS, 2009). The collapse of the British banking sector and the UK government's decision to provide capital loans to banks in October 2008 was also a significant story running up to the period of data collection. The threat from terrorism, however, had not been as prominent during this period of time. The last major story to break was news of the abortive car bombings in London and Glasgow some 18 months earlier in June 2007. Although terrorism did not completely disappear as an issue, with the collapse of the first trial of those charged with planning the Transatlantic airliners plot and the introduction of identity cards both important news stories in the weeks and months to prior to research sessions. It did not dictate the UK news agenda in the way the banking crisis and economic recession did in late 2008 and early 2009. Research has shown that the mass media has the potential to transfer the salience of issues from their news agendas to the public agenda (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Consequently, participants at the time may have perceived the economic recession to be a more immediate and worrying issue than the threat from Islamist terrorism. It should be noted, however, that participants, still reported

[36] The precise wording of question 2 in the second section of survey 1 was as follows: how worried are you about the following issues that have appeared in the news recently?

concern over terrorism, rating the issue as a greater worry than the other three explored in the survey.

Support for counter terrorism policies and proposals

Question 3 from section 2 assessed participants' support for five UK government policies or proposed policies. The specific aim, however, was to explore individual-level support for counter-terrorism policies or proposals. To uncover these attitudes participants were asked to rate on a five-point Likert scale their level of support for each statement (1=*strongly oppose* and 5=*strongly support*).[37]

Table 30: Support for Counter-terrorism Policies and Proposals

Policy or proposal	Mean	Std. Deviation
The decision to end military operations in Iraq by May 2009 and begin the withdrawal of British troops from the country	4.12	.939
Greater police powers towards those suspected of terrorism offences	3.62	1.133
The introduction of national identity cards	2.73	1.277

Note:
Ratings of Support were on a five-point Likert scale with 1=*strongly oppose* and 5= *complete support*

The data shows a very high level of support amongst participants (M=4.12) for the proposed withdrawal of British troops from Iraq. Overall, participants were supportive of greater police powers towards those suspected of terrorism offences (M=3.62) but were ambivalent towards the proposed introduction of national identity cards (M=2.73). This last finding replicates the results of an ICM poll conducted in December 2008 that showed that 48% polled thought identity cards were a *good idea* and 46% a *bad idea* (ICM, 2008).

5.2: Source Attribution and Story Perception

The first part of the study utilised an experimental procedure to explore the influence of source attribution upon audiences' perceptions of a news story

[37] The precise wording of question 3 from section 2 was as follows: please tell me if you support or oppose the following UK government policies or proposals that have featured in the news recently.

reporting an alleged terrorist plot. The following section presents the results from survey 1 and discusses the findings in relation to the relevant research questions and hypotheses set out in the introductory chapter of this thesis.

5.2.1: RQ3a: How does the believability and accuracy of a news story reporting an alleged terrorist plot relate to the types of sources cited in the report?

The first two hypotheses explored the influence of source attribution upon participants' perceptions of story credibility measured through the two dependent variables of believability and accuracy. It was expected that referencing key information pertaining to an alleged terrorist plot to different institutional sources would influence participants' interpretation of the story. Therefore the first two hypotheses were as follows:

H1: Source attribution will influence participants' ratings of the believability of the story

H2: Source attribution will influence participants' rating of the accuracy of the article

The next two hypotheses predicted that levels of public trust in institutions would shape participants' perceptions of the story. It was predicted that when a news narrative references key story details to an institution that has higher levels of public trust and confidence then participants would be more likely to perceive the story and consequently the threat it reports as credible. Conversely, news that cites an institution that is mistrusted by the public would be perceived as less trustworthy and for that reason rated less believable and accurate by the participants. Hence,

H3: A news story citing police sources will be rated more believable than an article citing government sources

H4: A news story citing police sources will be rated more accurate than an article citing government sources

Overview of the analysis

To test these four hypotheses two key dependent variables were used to measure different aspects of story perception. The first asked participants to rate the

believability of each story on a five-point Likert scale, with 1=*not very believable* and 5=*very believable.*[38] The second assessed how accurate participants considered the story to be by again asking them to rate the article on a similar five-point Likert scale, with 1=*not very accurate* and 5=*very accurate.*[39]

Ratings of believability and accuracy were analysed using a one-way ANOVA. The aim of this analysis was to assess whether participants' ratings of these two dependent variables differed between the four treatment groups: attribution to unnamed sources, police sources, security sources or government sources. Although, considerable debate exists of the legitimacy of using Likert scale data in parametric statistical procedures (Jamieson, 2004 cited in Grace-Martin, 2008), it is now generally accepted, and particularly within the study of political communication and media effects, that the underlying concepts which such attitudinal scales attempt to uncover are continuous and measured in intervals that are approximately equal (Grace-Martin, 2008). For comparison, however, Kruskal-Wallis tests, a nonparametic equivalent to the one-way ANOVA, are presented in the Appendix.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Before addressing the four specific hypotheses, it is useful to explore the descriptive statistics for the two dependent variables: ratings of the believability and accuracy of the story. *Table 31* and *Table 32* provide a summary of these statistics for each of the four treatment conditions.

Table 31: Believability Descriptive Statistics

Condition	*M*	*SD*	*Median*	*Possible Range*	*N*
Neutral	2.97	.885	3	1-5	38
Security Sources	2.86	.882	3	1-5	37
Government Sources	3.06	.873	3	1-5	35
Police Sources	3.0	.816	3	1-5	37

Note. Ratings were made on a 1 to 5 scale with 1=not very believable and 5=very believable.

[38] Question 1 from section 3 read as follows: how would you rate the overall believability of each story?

[39] The precise wording of question 2 from section 3 read as follows: how would you rate the accuracy of the details reported in each story?

Table 32: Accuracy Descriptive Statistics

Condition	*M*	*SD*	*Median*	*Possible Range*	*N*
Neutral	2.61	.775	2.5	1-5	38
Security Sources	2.83	.941	3	1-5	36
Government Sources	2.80	.833	3	1-5	35
Police Sources	2.70	.996	3	1-5	37

Note. Ratings were made on a 1 to 5 scale with 1=not very believable and 5=very believable.

Despite the different mean ratings reported above the one-way ANOVA in *Table 33* and Table 34 show that these effects were not significant. Participants' ratings of believability (F(3,143) =.33, p =.81) and accuracy (F(3,142) =.5, p=.68) did not differ significantly at p<.05 between the four treatment conditions. Additional non-parametric tests of significance yielded similar results to the ANOVA and are presented in Appendix 8.6.

Table 33: Analysis of Variance for Believability of the Article

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	.707	3	.236	.327	.806
Within Groups	103.184	143	.722		
Total	103.891	146			

Note. *p<.05*

Table 34: Analysis of Variance for Accuracy of the Article

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	1.174	3	.391	.498	.684
Within Groups	111.409	142	.785		
Total	112.582	145			

Note. *p<.05*

Hypotheses 1 and 2 are not supported by the data. There is no evidence to suggest that attribution to one of the four different source types influenced participants' perceptions of the believability and accuracy of the story. Therefore, H3 and H4 can also be rejected without the need to undertake further post-hoc tests. The data does not support the hypothesis that attribution to institutional sources that have greater levels of public trust (the police) will be rated as more believable and more accurate by the participants than a story citing sources from a less-trusted institution (the government).

5.2.2: RQ3b: How do other audience variables interact with source attribution and can underlying audience factors predict news audiences' perceptions of a story reporting an alleged terrorist plot?

Prior research has shown that news perception may be influenced by the attitudinal and behavioural characteristics of audiences. This research question aimed to explore the potential for such audience factors to moderate the influence of source attribution upon participants' perceptions of the credibility of a story reporting an alleged terrorist plot. Seven key audience indicators were used to assess their relationship with participants' ratings of the believability and accuracy of the news story:

- **Mean broadcast and online media use:** Derived from participants' response to a scaled measure of frequency of use for six major online and broadcast news outlets.
- **Mean newspaper use:** Derived from participants' response to a scaled measure of frequency of use for ten daily and Sunday newspapers.
- **Mean trust in online and broadcast media:** A mean media trust score was derived from participants' ratings of trust in five major online and broadcast news outlets.
- **Mean trust in newspapers:** A mean score derived from participants' ratings' of trust in 10 daily and Sunday newspapers.
- **Trust in newspapers to report terrorism**
- **Concern over terrorism**
- **Mean support for counter terrorism policies or proposals:** A mean score derived from participants' ratings of support for the two counter terrorism policies or proposals.[40]

These seven indicators were used to address four hypotheses. These assumptions, however, were merely exploratory and hypothesise on possible relationships between these indicator variables and participants' response to the article. They were as follows:

H5: Trust in broadcast and online media will show a positive relationship with participants' ratings of both the believability and accuracy of the story

H6 Trust in newspapers will show a positive relationship with participants' ratings of both the believability and accuracy of the story

[40] Support for greater police powers towards those suspected of terrorism offences and support for the introduction of national identity cards.

H7 Concern over terrorism will show a positive relationship with participants' ratings of both the believability and accuracy of the story
H8 Support for counter-terrorism policies or proposals will show a positive relationship with participants' ratings of both the believability and accuracy of the story

The rationales for these four assumptions were as follows. First, for participants who were generally trusting of the media, and in particular newspapers, then it follows logically that they would find the story to be more believable and accurate than those that were generally sceptical towards the media. Second, for those who reported greater concern over terrorism it may also be expected that they would be more receptive to a story that confirms or highlights these fears. Finally, participants who expressed support for counter-terrorism initiatives may be less sceptical towards the threat posed by terrorism and as such rate the story higher in believability and accuracy than those who are less supportive of counter-terrorism measures.

Overview of analysis

For the four hypotheses (H5-H8), Pearson *r* correlations were used to explore the data. However, for comparison Spearman's nonparametric correlation coefficients are also shown in the Appendix. To explore the interaction of these relationships, participants' ratings of the believability and accuracy of the news article were regressed on the seven indicator variables using a hierarchical method of entry. The purpose of this statistical analysis was not to test specific hypotheses but to assess the predictive power of these audience factors upon story perception. Predictors were entered on the basis of the size of the significant correlations' coefficients, beginning with the strongest effect sizes first.

Results

Correlations

Table 35 provides an index of the correlations between the indicator variables and participants' mean ratings of the believability and accuracy of the treatment article.

Table 35: Correlations between audience factors

	Believability of the article	Accuracy of the article	Mean broadcast and online media use	Mean newspaper use	Mean trust in broadcast and online news	Mean trust in newspapers	Trust in newspapers to report terrorism	Concern over terrorism	Overall support for counter terrorism policies and proposals
Believability of the article	1.000								
Accuracy of the article	.499**	1.000							
Mean broadcast and online media use	.010	.127	1.000						
Mean newspaper use	.109	.029	.434**	1.000					
Mean trust in broadcast and online news	.411**	.259**	.056	.095	1.000				
Mean trust in newspapers	.327**	.245**	-.045	.092	.607**	1.000			
Trust in newspapers to report terrorism	.178*	.239**	-.041	-.060	.289**	.284**	1.000		
Concern over terrorism	.331**	.271**	.110	.252**	.265**	.319**	.334**	1.000	
Overall support for counter terrorism policies and proposals	.291**	.213**	-.011	.142*	.232**	.373**	.021	.347**	1.000

Note: ** denotes correlation is significant at the p<0.01 level (1-tailed).

* denotes Correlation is significant at the p< 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Believability

The data indicated the presence of significant correlations between four[41] indicator variables and participants' perceptions of the believability of the article. Participants who reported higher levels of trust in broadcast and online news were more likely to rate the article as believable (r=.414, p=.000). A significant positive relationship (r=.327, p=.000) was also found between mean trust in newspapers and ratings of believability. These findings seem to suggest that trust in the media is an important indicator of audiences' response to a news story. The data also showed a significant but weaker relationship between trust in newspapers to report terrorism and participants' ratings of the overall believability of the article (r=.178, p=.016). This is not unexpected but it does provide further evidence to show that those who are more trusting of the press to report terrorism, were also more likely to believe a story reporting an alleged terrorist plot. These findings closely replicate previous research on media effects and trust, which has demonstrated that those individuals who trust the media are more likely to be influenced by news or media content (Hovland & Weiss, 1952; Miller & Krosnick, 2000; Sundar, Silvia, & Matthias, 2007).

The data also showed a significant positive relationship between participants' ratings of the believability of the article and reported concern over terrorism (r=.331, p=.000). The more worried participants were about terrorism then the more likely they were to believe the news story reporting an alleged terrorist plot. These results confirm the findings of other research that has found that perceptions of the threat posed by terrorism may condition audiences' response to news of terrorism (Maeseele, Verleye, Stevens, & Speckhard, 2008). The data also evidenced a positive relationship between overall support for counter-terrorism policies and proposals and believability. Although, not as strong as other relationships (r=.291, p=.000) it does perhaps indicate that those who are generally supportive of counter-terrorism policies are also more likely to believe a story concerning a suspected terrorist plot or more generally, be less cynical or sceptical towards the threat from terrorism.

[41] In addition the data shows a significant correlation (r=.499, p=.000) between participants' ratings of believability and accuracy.

Accuracy

Significant positive relationships were found between participants' ratings of the accuracy of the treatment article and six indicator variables. The data showed a significant positive correlation between frequency of media use and participants' ratings of accuracy (r=.158, p=.029). This demonstrates that participants who watched broadcast and used online news more regularly were more likely to find the article accurate. Mean trust in news (r=.250, p=.000) and mean trust in newspapers (r=.245, p=. 002) was also positively correlated with participants' ratings of accuracy. Although not as strong as the relationships between trust and believability, these findings still show that credibility of the story is related to underlying trust in the media.

Other variables that were positively associated with accuracy were trust in newspapers to report terrorism (r=.239, p=.002), concern over terrorism (r=.271, p=.001) and overall support for counter terrorism policies and proposals (r=.213, p=.005). This means that participants reporting higher levels of trust in newspapers to report the issue of terrorism were more likely to find the article accurate. For those who were more concerned about terrorism then they were also likely to find the story accurate. Finally, for those who expressed greater support for recent counter-terrorism policies and proposals were also more likely to consider the article to be accurate. These findings again suggest that perceptions of the threat and underlying support for counter-terrorism measures may predict audiences' response to news of an alleged terrorist plot.

Summary of Hypotheses

The data provides support for all four hypotheses. H5 is strongly supported with trust in broadcast and online media showing a significant positive relationship with participants' perceptions of both the believability and the accuracy of the story. H6 is also supported, as trust in newspapers shows a positive relationship with participants' ratings of the believability and accuracy of the article. In addition, the data also provides strong support for H7, with both participants' ratings of believability and accuracy positively correlated with concern over terrorism. Finally, H8 is also supported by the data with support for counter-

terrorism policies or proposals showing a significant positive relationship with participants' ratings of believability and accuracy.

Regression Models

The data shows that there were significant relationships between a range of audience indicators and participants' ratings of both accuracy and believability. The strongest relationships across both dependent measures were found between participants' ratings of trust in the media (assessed through three separate variables), concern over terrorism, and support for counter-terrorism policies and proposals. However, to consider the strength of these variables in predicting participants' ratings of believability and accuracy two separate models of hierarchical regressions are shown below. Hierarchical regression was chosen as a method of entry as it allows the researcher to develop an exploratory approach to the analysis by beginning with those variables that are known to influence the dependent variable before assessing their predictive power when combined with other predictors in the model (Field, 2009). The approach chosen for the two models reported below, however, was to enter variables that displayed the strongest effect size first before entering other significant variables at step two and step three of the analysis.

Believability

Participants' ratings of believability were regressed against the five indicators identified above. The order that each was entered into the model were as follows: mean trust in the media, concern over terrorism, mean trust in newspapers, overall support for counter-terrorism policies and proposals and trust in newspapers to report terrorism.[42] Table 37 shows a summary of the model.

[42] The first two variables were entered as separate steps in the model before the remaining three variables were included in the final stage of the model

Table 37: Summary of Hierarchical Analysis for Variables Predicting Participants' Ratings of Believability (N=138)

	B	*SE B*	*β*
Step 1			
(Constant)	1.398	.315	
Mean trust in broadcast and online news	.440	.086	.404***
Step 2			
(Constant)	1.160	.320	
Mean trust in broadcast and online news	.378	.087	.347***
Concern over terrorism	.151	.056	.215**
Step 3			
(Constant)	.806	.364	
Mean trust in broadcast and online news	.272	.106	.250*
Concern over terrorism	.098	.062	.140
Mean trust in newspapers	.182	.131	.145
Overall support for counter terrorism policies and proposals	.113	.076	.128
Trust in newspapers to report terrorism	-.002	.071	-.002

Note:
*denotes significance at p<.05, **p<.01 and ***p<.001.
R^2 = .16 for step1; ΔR^2 =.04 (p<.01); for step 2; ΔR^2 =.03 (p<.01); for step 3;

Overall the hierarchical regression model including all five variables showed a moderate fit (R^2 =.23) for predicting participants' perceptions of story believability. The model was found to be significant at (F (5, 4.577) = 8.3, p < 0.001). The most important indicator, entered at the first stage of the model, was participants' mean trust in the seven broadcast and online news channels, which accounted for 16% (R^2 = .16 p<.01) of the variation in participants' ratings of believability. Controlling for mean trust in news and including concern about terrorism as the predictor variable increased the model's predictive power by 4% (R^2 = .04, p<.01). The final step, however, which included the remaining three variables, only increased the model's ability to predict believability by 3% (R^2 =.03, =p<.01).

These findings demonstrate that the most important factor influencing participants' ratings of believability was an individual's trust in the media. Although, trust in newspapers was not shown to be significant, participants' trust across six broadcast and online news outlets was found to predict believability. Concern over terrorism was also found to be a significant predictor of participants' perceptions of believability and as the correlations above show, those that were more worried about terrorism were more likely to rate the article as believable. The other variables, although demonstrating a significant positive relationship with ratings of believability, were less important in predicting how participants would rate the believability of the article.

Accuracy

Participants' ratings of accuracy were regressed against the six indicator variables identified above. The order that each was entered into the model were as follows: concern over terrorism, mean trust in broadcast and online media, mean trust in newspapers, trust in newspapers to report terrorism, overall support for counter-terrorism policies and proposals and mean media use.[43] The order that the first two variables, concern over terrorism and mean trust in broadcast and online news, were entered was reversed from the first model. This was to reflect the larger effect size of the correlation reported between concern over terrorism and participants' ratings of accuracy. Table 38 shows a summary of the model.

[43] The first two variables were entered as separate steps in the model before the remaining three variables were included in the final stage of the model

Table 38: Summary of Hierarchical Analysis for Variables Predicting Participants' Ratings of Accuracy (N=137)

	B	*SE B*	*β*
Step 1			
(Constant)	2.067	.201	
Concern over Terrorism	.212	.061	.286**
Step 2			
(Constant)	1.311	.359	
Concern over Terrorism	.170	.062	.230**
Mean trust in broadcast and online news	.245	.097	.212*
Step 3			
(Constant)	.372	.487	
Concern over terrorism	.082	.070	.110
Mean trust in broadcast and online news	.151	.118	.130
Mean trust in newspapers	.031	.146	.023
Trust in newspapers to report terrorism	.134	.080	.151
Overall support for counter terrorism policies	.173	.085	.191*
Mean media use	.227	.124	.148*

Note:
*denotes significance at p<.05, **p<.01 and ***p<.001.
R^2 = .08 for step1; (p<.01); ΔR^2 =.04 (p<.01) for step 2; ΔR^2 =.6 (p<.01) for step 3

The final model (step 3) including all six variables in the analysis showed a moderate to weak fit (R2=.18) for predicting participants' ratings of the accuracy of the story. An analysis of variance showed that the model was significant at (F (6, 3.231) = 4.746, p < 0.001). Concern over terrorism was found to be the most important predictor of accuracy. When entered at the first stage of the model this variable was found to account for 8% (R^2 = .08) of the variation in participants' ratings of believability. Including mean trust in news outlets in the second stage of the model resulted in an increase of 4% in variation of believability predicted by the model at (R^2 = .12). Controlling for both concern over terrorism and mean trust in news outlets and including the remaining four variables increased the variation in believability predicted by the model by a further 6% to (R2=.18). The

standardised beta values show that overall support for counter terrorism polices and proposals (***β*=**.191, p=<.05) was significant in this change in R^2.

The results confirm that concern over terrorism is the best predictor of participants' perceptions of accuracy. Trust in broadcast and online news outlets was found to have a smaller influence on participants' ratings of accuracy than believability. However, it was still found to be a significant predictor of participants' response to the article. The inclusion of the four remaining variables, which reported significant correlations with participants' ratings of accuracy, showed that overall support for counter terrorism policies and proposals and mean media use also had a significant influence upon accuracy.

5.2.3: RQ3c: How do attitudes towards an organisation or institution referenced as a source influence audiences' perceptions of the credibility of a news story reporting an alleged terrorist plot?

The second part of the audience study required the participants to reflect on the stories that they had read. Question 8 asked participants to rate how trustworthy, on a scale of 1 to 5 (1=*not very trustworthy* and 5=*very trustworthy*), they considered police sources, government sources, security and sources (unnamed) when quoted by journalists reporting news of a suspected terrorist plot.

The descriptive statistics in Table 39 showed that participants considered unnamed sources to be the least trustworthy, with a mean trust rating of 1.77. Police sources were considered the most trustworthy with a mean trust rating of 3.35, followed by security sources at 3.13. Government sources were considered the least trustworthy out of the three named sources with a mean trust rating of 3.03.

Table 39: Mean Ratings of Trust in Sources: Descriptive Statistics

Source	N	Mean	Median	SD
Police sources	145	3.35	4	1.004
Government sources	144	3.03	3	.938
Security sources	145	3.13	3	.945
Sources unnamed	145	1.77	2	.850

Note: 1=*not very trustworthy,* 5=*very trustworthy*

RQ3c explored the relationship between participants' ratings of trust in the source and their perceptions of the news article reporting an alleged terrorist plot. This stage of analysis reduced the sample size to the number of participants assigned to each condition (see Chapter 3 for sample details) and tested the following three hypotheses:

H9: For participants reading news of an alleged terrorist plot citing government sources, levels of trust in government sources will show a positive correlation with participants' ratings of the believability and the accuracy of the story

H10: For participants reading news of an alleged terrorist plot citing security sources, levels of trust in security sources will show a positive correlation with participants' ratings of the believability and the accuracy of the story

H11: For participants reading news of an alleged terrorist plot citing police sources, levels of trust in police sources will show a positive correlation with participants' ratings of the believability and the accuracy of the story

Results

Government sources condition

For participants who read a news article attributing information to government sources there was a modest positive correlation (r=.311, p.034) between levels of trust in government sources and ratings of the accuracy of the article. There was no significant correlation between trust in government sources and believability. Therefore, there is only partial support for H9.

Security sources condition

For participants who read the article citing security sources there was a significant positive correlation, at p=0.01, between trust in security sources and ratings of credibility. Trust in security sources and ratings of the believability of the article demonstrated a strong positive correlation at r=.502, p=.001; with accuracy and trust showing a strong/modest correlation at r=.460, p.002 .The data supports H10 that 'levels of trust in government sources will show a positive correlation with participants' ratings of the believability and the accuracy of the story.

Police sources condition

For participants reading a news article citing police sources there were no significant correlations between trust in police sources and ratings of credibility. Therefore H11 is not supported. Levels of trust in police sources showed no relationship with participants' ratings of the believability and accuracy of the news article.

5.3: Discussion

The results from the audience study produced six significant findings concerning the influence of source attribution upon audience perceptions of alleged terrorist plots.

- At the first level of analysis, attribution to specific institutional sources was found to have had no significant influence upon audiences' perceptions of a story reporting an alleged terrorist plot. Furthermore, there is no support for the hypothesis set out at the beginning of this thesis that attribution to a source from a more trusted institution enhanced story credibility.
- The results do, however, suggest that perception of the credibility of a news story reporting an alleged terrorist plot is determined by the attitudinal and behavioural characteristics of the audience. From the seven key audience factors explored in the study, trust in the media and concern over terrorism were found to be the most significant indicators of participants' perceptions of story credibility. Participants who found the story most credible were also more trusting of the media and reported greater concern over the threat posed by terrorism.

- Other audience variables, although weaker, were also found to be significant indicators of participants' perceptions of story credibility. These included trust in newspapers, overall support for counter terrorism policies and proposals, trust in newspapers to report terrorism and levels of media use.
- Reported levels of trust in the three institutional source types and unnamed sources when appearing in news of terrorism did broadly reflect existing polling data concerning trust and academic research, which has explored news consumers trust in anonymous sources. Participants in the study reported higher levels of trust in police sources, an institution that is generally trusted by the public, than government sources, an institution that is perceived as less trustworthy by the public. Unnamed sources, however, were considered to be the least trustworthy by participants when appearing in news of a suspected terrorist plot.
- The results showed that for two of the institutional sources there was a positive relationship between participants' trust in the source that the story was attributed to and perceptions of story credibility. These findings, however, were inconsistent. For participants who read the story manipulated to cite government sources, those who found the story accurate were also more likely to trust government sources. Similarly, for participants who read the article attributing the story to security sources, those who found the story accurate were also more likely to trust security sources. A positive relationship was also found between trust in security sources and believability. Surprisingly, there were no significant relationships between participants' trust in police sources and their perceptions of the credibility of the story.
- Finally, together the results evidence the complex nature of media effects. The study demonstrates that the effect of content alone may be limited and that more significant factors influencing story perception are attitudinal and demographic variables within news audiences.

These six findings will be discussed through reference to the sample characteristics highlighted at the beginning of this chapter and by returning to relevant research and writings summarised in Chapter two.

5.3.1: Limited influence of source attribution

The study did not establish any direct causal link between source attribution and participants' perceptions of the article reporting an alleged terrorist plot. These findings are consistent with much of the previous research concerning the influence of attribution on news perception, which has more often found that attribution makes little or no difference to audiences' evaluation and interpretation of media content (Culbertson & Somerick, 1976; Gibson & Zillman, 1993; Smith, 2007; Sundar, 1998). Where attribution has been shown to produce audience effects it has predominately arisen during research that has contrasted the influence of named and unnamed sources (Fedler & Counts, 1981) or studies exploring the impact of sources upon online news audiences (Sundar, 1998).

The limited influence of attribution to veiled institutional sources upon participants' perceptions of credibility could firstly be explained by the nature of the story or content explored in the study. Story type has been shown to mitigate the effects of source attribution. In particular, opinionated and controversial stories were perceived to be less believable and less accurate by audiences (Hale, 1984). The threat posed by Islamist terrorism and the UK government's response to this threat has certainly been an important issue for the public since 9/11, but one that became more immediate following the London bombings in July 2005. The attitudinal data collected in the survey confirms that despite no specific terror threats emerging in the 18 months prior to data collection, participants still felt a degree of concern or unease over the threat from terrorism. It could therefore be argued that the relevance of the issue of terrorism to participants, or involvement as it more often referred to in social cognition research, masked the perceptual effects of source attribution.

In the introduction to this thesis the rationale alluded to dual process models of message processing where it was hypothesised that source attribution may act as heuristic or peripheral cue for news audiences when assessing the credibility or veracity of news. Such models as the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) and the Heuristic-Systematic Model (Chaiken, Liberman, & Eagly, 1989) posit that under conditions of high involvement individuals will be

more attuned and consequently, more receptive to a piece of communication.[44] Furthermore, when an individual is motivated and able to process information they are more likely to consider the message, or narrative in the present research, rather than relying on peripheral or heuristic cues. Since the sample characteristics above identified terrorism as an issue of personal concern for the participants then issue salience may have led them to carefully consider and evaluate the narrative and the alleged plot it reported. Perceptions of the accuracy and believability of the story were therefore not influenced by the subtlety of source attribution. Instead, if story perception and opinion formation concerning the credibility of the plot were shaped by content alone then it would be due to narrative framing or interpretation by the researcher.

Research has often found that media framing of terrorism has the power to affect public fear and anxiety over terrorism, as well as support for political leaders and the dynamics of public opinion (Brewer, 2003; Danis & Stohl, 2008; Norris, et al., 2003). As with other studies of framing or priming effects, however, this research has more commonly explored the influence of more significant variations in the presentation of news. For an issue of high personal relevance to the participants, content and framing would have been the main determinants of story perception. Since all four treatment conditions were identical except for the rephrasing of four attributions then the study found no significant differences between participants' ratings of both the believability and accuracy of the story reporting an alleged terrorist plot.

Social Judgement Theory (SJT) (Sherif & Hovland, 1961) offers an alternative theoretical perspective in which to explore the influence of issue salience upon story perception and attitude formation. SJT contrasts with the dual process theories outlined above by suggesting that involvement makes an individual more resistant to subsequent communication about an issue (Park, Levine, Westerman, Orfgen, & Foregger, 2007, p81). Furthermore, that for each issue an individual will have an attitudinal continuum from acceptance, through noncommitment, to rejection. Any subsequent communication concerning that

[44] An individual's ability to process a piece of communication is also highlighted by the ELM as a determinant of central or peripheral process (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986).

issue will be judged by an individual against their existing attitudes towards that issue. For someone under high involvement their latitudes of acceptance will be narrower than those who perceive the issue to be of less personal relevance and consequently they will be more resistant to subsequent communication on that issue (Sherif, Nebergall, & Sherif, 1965). The attitudinal data in this study demonstrates that the threat from terrorism was still a salient issue for participants in the study. SJT therefore would suggest that since they were familiar with such stories reporting terrorism and had already developed strong attitudes concerning the UK's terror threat, and how the news media have reported suspected terrorist activity, then subtle differences between news content would have had very little influence on their perceptions of the story and the credibility of the suspected plot.

Furthermore, as outlined in the rationale to this thesis and discussed through Chapter 4, UK news media coverage of terrorism and more specifically, alleged terrorist plots has been both controversial and at times inaccurate. Legislation introduced by the UK government including the extension of pre-charge detention limits and the introduction of national identity cards has also been contentious. Coverage of these issues, and public discourse concerning the threat from terrorism would have shaped participants' attitudes towards terrorism. Over time the interaction of interpersonal and media influence may have contributed to the development of attitudes towards terrorism that were resistant to any influence that a single newspaper article may have had upon participants in the study (Rubin, 1994).

A further explanation for the limited influence of source attribution upon story perception may arise from participants' attitudes towards newspapers as a news medium. The sample data shows that students who participated in the study were not frequent newspaper readers and that they were less trusting of news reported by newspapers. Levels of trust reported for mid market and tabloid newspapers were particularly low. Broadsheet or specialist titles were considered more trustworthy by participants, however, overall levels of trust reported in newspapers was lower than television news. It could be argued that audiences' assessment of the believability or accuracy of a story were not

influenced by subtle variations in the story itself but by the medium through which they consume news. Research has already established that cognitive and behavioural responses to a story are influenced by audiences' perceptions of the credibility of television over print news (Westerly & Severin, 1964; Abel & Wirth, 1977 both cited in Kiousis, 2001). Since the credibility of newspapers was low amongst participants in the study then this was a more significant determinant of their response to the article than attribution of the story to a particular type of institutional source.

Finally, it is important to note the synergy between the findings in this study and other research that has examined the affect of subtle variations in news content upon audiences. Aside from the studies cited above, which explored the influence of source attribution upon story perception, other studies of the micro effects of content have often found little or no significant effect of manipulating news content. Gibson, Hester & Shannon (2001), did find that extracting quotes in a newspaper article shaped readers' perceptions of news stories. However, Josyln & Haider-Markel (2006) found that varying advocates for a particular issue in a news story were less important for issue perception and opinion formation than content alone. Furthermore, Hale (1984) also found that story type had a more significant influence upon readers' perceptions of the believability and accuracy of news than subtle variations in the presentation of a newspaper article. As discussed above, media effects have tended to only be reported when examining the influence of the content itself rather than nuances within content or its presentation. Although the rationale for this study suggested that levels of trust in institutions may determine how audiences respond to a story when they or their representatives are cited in a news story. The results show that the variations in trust between the three institutional source types were too subtle or nuanced to yield any effect upon story perception.

5.3.2: Trust in the media

The data showed that both ratings of believability and accuracy were positively correlated with trust in broadcast and online news media and trust in newspapers. Participants' trust in newspapers to report terrorism also showed significant positive correlations with both ratings of believability and accuracy.

Furthermore, the regression models identified trust in broadcast and online news as a significant predictor of both believability and accuracy of the article. Although the data does not establish a causal link between perceptions of the credibility of the story and trust in news the relationships are strong enough to make some inferences about the impact of these audience factors upon story perception.

The relationships reported above demonstrate that those participants who trusted the media tended to give more credence to a news story reporting a suspected terrorist plot. This finding is unsurprising in the light of the substantial body of research that has examined the influence of source credibility on persuasion (Dholakia & Sternhall, 1977; Hovland & Weiss, 1952) and medium credibility upon audiences' media preferences and news perception (Westerly & Severin, 1964; Abel & Wirth, 1977 both cited in Bracken, 2006; Kiousis, 2001; Sundar, 1998). In both domains trust in the source has been shown to relate to cognitive and behavioural responses to communication and news content. Extending this body of research to the current study, it would therefore follow logically that those who are generally trusting of the media would report higher levels of story credibility than those who were more sceptical towards news.

It is important, however, to note the subtleties within this relationship between trust in the media and perceptions of story credibility. First, for both mean trust in broadcast and online news outlets and mean trust in newspapers there was a stronger positive relationship for participants' ratings of the believability of the article than for their ratings of accuracy. This could be explained by the different connotations implied by each term and participants' interpretation of their meanings. Although the two concepts of believability and accuracy have been used in similar studies of story perception to uncover audiences' attitudes towards the veracity and credibility of news (Fedler & Counts, 1981; Sundar, 1998), they reflect different aspects of credibility in the context of this study. *Believability*, it could be argued, is more closely associated with perceptions of the veracity of the alleged terrorist plot and whether the story and what was reported about the plot appeared credible. *Accuracy* leans more towards an assessment of the quality of the report and whether the facts or the details of the

story were perceived to be a correct and an accurate reflection of the events. The difference between these two facets of credibility suggest a general belief in the story and the acceptance that police had uncovered an alleged terrorist plot against a more specific assessment of the reporting of the story and the details concerning the plot and arrests. Therefore, and as the descriptive statistics in Table 35 showed, although some participants felt the plot was believable, there was greater scepticism towards the accuracy or credibility of reportage. In particular, the data showed that those who trusted the media were more likely to find the plot credible than those who did not trust the media; however, for some of these more 'trusting participants' there were questions over the accuracy of specific details reported in the article.

Second, the results demonstrated that credibility was more strongly related to trust in broadcast and online media than to trust in newspapers. The regression models showed further evidence of this by demonstrating that trust in broadcast and online media was a more important predictor of believability and accuracy than trust in newspapers. This finding is unexpected. Since the experimental design aimed to replicate participants' experience of reading newspaper content, one would assume that if the study were to establish a relationship between trust and the two dependant measures then the relationship would be stronger for trust in newspapers than trust in broadcast and online news. However, in many ways, except for its presentation as part of a paper survey, the article was perhaps a more accurate reflection of online content and in particular, the style favoured by BBC News online. As outlined in the methodology chapter of the thesis, the treatment article was presented in such a way that it would not be associated with a particular newspaper title. Not only without branding but also in a style that was perhaps more neutral than one would normally identify with British print journalism, and in particular that favoured by the mid-market and tabloid press. The rationale for this approach was to maintain control over the independent variable in the study, attribution to different sources. The neutral style of the piece, however, may have led participants to feel as though they were reading an article taken from BBC online rather than, as stated, one that was taken from a recent newspaper. As a consequence, stronger relationships were found between trust in broadcast and online news and the two dependent

measures than with trust in newspapers. This limitation is discussed further in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

The findings from this research suggests that when it comes to reporting news of terrorism, it is underlying trust in the news media that conditions how an individual will respond to a story, rather than the types of sources that are cited within a narrative. Although, trust and scepticism provided the prism through which to explore the influence of news sources upon audiences, with the rationale for this study highlighting the potential for trust in institutions rather than trust in news itself to influence story perception. The data, however, demonstrates that it is fact the perceived credibility of news that will determine audiences' perceptions of the credibility of an alleged terrorist plot and not attitudes towards the sources used to support the story. This is not to say that participants reported similar levels of trust across the four different source types explored in the study, with trust in the three institutional sources reflecting existing polling data concerning trust in professions (Ipsos-MORI, 2009) and trust in public institutions (Ipsos-MORI, 2003). Rather, the influence of source attribution was too subtle to yield any affect upon participants' perceptions of the story against the more powerful dynamics of trust in news.

Other research that has explored the influence of media trust upon media effects has found that trust accelerates priming via agenda-setting (Miller & Krosnick, 2000) and that when it comes to public attitudes towards terrorism this process can led to increased support for political decision-makers and their policy responses (Levin, et al., 2005). The findings from this study also suggest that those who are more trusting of the media are more receptive to a story reporting an alleged terrorist plot. Importantly, this may have wider implications for understanding the impact of such news coverage upon public attitudes and behaviours concerning the threat posed by Islamist terrorism and government counter-terrorism policies and proposals. Since, as it has been argued, terrorism is an issue of high personal relevance to participants then their need for cognition is high. This condition coupled with the crisis-style coverage, which often characterises the news media's coverage of high profile plots, may reduce the influence of news scepticism and lead people to consume news they do not

trust (Tsfati & Cappella, 2005). As a consequence, trust and dependency upon the news media may produce rally effects and solidarity building similar to those that have occurred following crises (Ball-Rokeach & Defleur, 1976; Hischburg, et al., 1986) and recent terrorist attacks (Hindman, 2004; W. Lowrey, 2004).

While it can be argued that trust in news may enhance the credibility of an alleged plot for news audiences, it would also seem plausible to suggest that news scepticism may undermine credibility. We know from the data that those participants who were less trusting of news were also less likely to believe the story. However, the relationship between trust, or mistrust, and perceptions of accuracy, which, as suggested above, has a stronger connotation with the credibility of the news narrative than the plot, were found to be weaker. This suggests that news scepticism may have a greater bearing upon audiences' perceptions of the credibility of the threat than the credibility of the news narrative itself. An explanation for this can, in part, be attributed to the way the media has tended to report terrorism and associated issues, in particular the controversy surrounding recent anti-terrorism legislation. Although there is currently a lack of empirical evidence relating to news coverage of terrorism, research examining the effects of strategy driven coverage on trust has found that controversy and bipartisanism not only leads to mistrust of politics and the political process but contributes to negative perceptions of the media itself (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Valentino, et al., 2001). It could therefore be argued that the sensationalism that has at times characterised news coverage of alleged terrorist plots and the conspiricism that pervades public discourse of terrorism has in some way underpinned a growing sense of public cynicism towards the threat from contemporary terrorism. As a consequence, participants who reported lower levels of trust in the news media had developed stronger attitudes concerning the level of risk posed by terrorism. As SJT claims, these attitudes will be more resistant to subsequent communication on an issue. Therefore, 'less trusting' or sceptical participants who mistrust the media focused upon the overall credibility of the narrative, rather than doubt the accuracy of elements within the reportage.

5.3.3: Concern over terrorism

In addition to trust in broadcast and online media, the findings show that concern over terrorism was positively related to participants' perceptions of credibility. The regression models, as with trust above, also demonstrate that concern over terrorism was a significant factor in predicting participants' response to the article.

If we consider the two facets of credibility, in line with the findings on trust, concern over terrorism also evidenced a stronger positive relationship with participants' perceptions of the believability of the article than accuracy. Participants who reported greater concern over terrorism were more likely to find the article believable and accurate. Although the difference between these two relationships were far smaller than the relationships between trust and the two measures of credibility. It does demonstrate that concern or fear over terrorism may have a greater influence upon a general assessment of story believability than a more specific appraisal of how accurately these events were described in the article. The regression analyses also show that, although audience factors were less significant in determining participants' ratings of accuracy than believability, concern over terrorism was the most significant factor determining accuracy from the six indicators that were included in the model.

The following section will examine these relationships and consider how concern over terrorism may have a greater bearing upon audiences' assessment of the story than attribution to different institutional sources.

At one level the findings seem to confirm expectations, with those participants who were more fearful over the threat from terrorism likely to have these fears confirmed by news of a suspected terrorist plot. Certainly, research examining the consequences of threat upon cognitive processing and behaviour have found that risk may either increase an individual's sensitivity to subsequent communication (Cacioppo & Gardner, 1999 cited in Huddy, et al., 2002) or may lead to an exaggeration of that risk (Lichenstein, Slovic, Fischhoff, Layman & Combs, 1978; Thaler, 1983 both cited in Huddy, et al., 2002). It would therefore

seem plausible to suggest that concern over terrorism will bias processing of subsequent narratives relating to this threat. These biases, as the findings demonstrate, will determine how an individual responds to news of terrorism and outweigh the influence of subtle variations in content.

While this present study is unable to provide adequate data to comment on the causal processes influencing news consumers fear of terrorism, sociological research indicates that the mass media has an important role in defining society's perceptions of fear and risk. There is some conjecture as to whether the media is the most important contributor to fear (Altheide, 2001), or whether it merely interprets and transforms society's sense of risk (Critcher, 2002, 2003; Füredi, 2005, p53). The central theme, however, underpinning both approaches is the tendency for the mass media to emphasise narratives that promote fear. As a consequence, the media will be influential in shaping public perceptions of particular problems or threats to societies.

Similarly, for those who claim that the threat from terrorism has been engineered to gain narrow political advantage, the media acts as a conduit through which to promote public fear of terrorism (Jackson, 2005; Mythen & Walklate, 2006; Oborne, 2006). Effects based research, however, has been inconsistent in establishing whether public fear and anxiety are accentuated by media coverage of specific risks or threats. Studies that have examined the mean world hypothesis, the notion that media coverage of crime leads to greater fear of crime, have found that fear often depends upon the type of media used (Stroman & Seltzer, 1985) or variables amongst the audience (Williams & Dickinson, 1993). Furthermore, that excessive exposure to a particular problem such as crime will eventually desensitise audiences from individual-level threat perception (Gebotys, Roberts & DasGupta. 1988 cited in Ching & Xiaoming, 2001). Despite the controversy that has surrounded news coverage of terrorism and political measures to address the threat from Islamist terrorism, it would appear to be unfounded, as those who advocate the politics of fear suggest, to attribute public concern over terrorism to news and media framing of this without acknowledging the complex interactions between news audiences and news content. Alternatively, and as the findings from this study indicate, although

individual-agenda-setting effects may occur following exposure to narratives reporting suspected terrorist plots, attitudes towards the credibility or veracity of the plot are more likely to be determined by an individual's assessment of the current threat from terrorism. Moreover, as social psychologists have shown, that individual risk perception will often be determined by the attitudinal characteristics of the individual (Huddy, et al., 2002).

Since the findings from this study suggest that perceived concern over the issue of terrorism, rather than subtle differences within journalist's interpretation of a story, is a more significant determinant of audiences' reaction to a story, then variations between individuals in their perception of this threat will affect whether they accept or reject news of a suspected terrorist plot. As research has confirmed (Huddy, et al., 2002), it is the pervasive influence of perceived threat that shapes audiences' response to this threat. Those who feel most concerned about terrorism will be the ones who are motivated to support government policies or proposals to reduce that threat. These attitudes arise from an attempt to maintain cognitive consistency and reduce the negative emotions created by fear of this threat Importantly, in the context of this study, it is these attitudes, rather than the news content itself and the practicalities of sourcing, that may have the greatest bearing upon public attitudes towards subsequent policy initiatives designed to reduce the risk from terrorism.

5.3.4: Trust in the source

The experimental manipulation revealed that there was no causal link between attribution to different institutional sources and participants' perceptions of the credibility of the story reporting an alleged terrorist plot. However, the findings for RQ3c suggest that it would be premature to dismiss attribution effects in their entirety at this stage.

By reducing the overall sample to each of the four experimental conditions it was possible to examine the relationships between participants' ratings of trust in the source that they had been exposed to and their perceptions of the news article. Although there are obvious limitations to the validity of any findings drawn from such a subsample, with only 35-38 participants included in each analysis. The

relationships reported above, albeit inconsistent, do hint at a more complex interaction between attitudes towards the institutions quoted as sources and audiences' perceptions of news.

For those participants' who read the article citing government sources there was a significant relationship between their trust in government sources when appearing in news of terrorism and their perceptions of the treatment article. More specifically, those participants who reported higher levels of trust in government sources were more likely to rate the article as accurate. Surprisingly, however, accuracy was the only facet of credibility that displayed this relationship, with the relationship between trust in government sources and participants' perceptions of believability statistically insignificant. For those participants who read an article citing security sources trust in security sources and story perception were positively associated across both measures of credibility. Participants who reported higher levels of trust in security sources were also the ones who were more likely to find the article believable and accurate. However, when we move into the last institutional source type, attribution to police sources, there were no statistically significant relationships between participants' trust in police sources and their perceptions of story credibility.

These findings are contradictory and limit our ability to draw any meaningful conclusions from the data. At one level, and contrary to the main finding from this study, they suggest that the types of sources cited in a news report may have the potential to influence audiences' interpretation of the piece. Importantly, for audiences' perceptions of terrorism there is some indication that attitudes towards both the veracity of a plot and the accuracy of the reportage are related to levels of trust in the source. However, since these findings were derived from subsamples from the overall data set and only examine relationships between variables they can only ever be suggestive of causality. Furthermore, if we were to accept that there is a casual relationship between trust in the source and perceptions of the article then, most importantly, it is impossible to establish the direction of this relationship from the current data set. Participants' trust in the four source types was not asked until the second part of the study and crucially,

only after they had read the treatment article. It is possible therefore that reported trust in the four source types was influenced by reading the article reporting an alleged terrorist plot. This contrasts with the main findings from the study, which were derived from an experimental procedure designed to control for the influence of extraneous variables and to explore the clear relationship between attribution to different sources and perceptions of news credibility.

As reported above, participants' trust in the four different source types broadly reflected recent polling data concerning trust in different professions (Ipsos-MORI, 2009) and academic research exploring news consumers' attitudes towards unnamed sources (Fedler & Counts, 1981). The police, historically, have benefited from higher levels of public trust and confidence than government or government ministers. Participants' trust in sources attributed to these institutions reflected these attitudes. Police sources were considered to be the most trustworthy source type, followed by security sources then government sources. Unnamed sources, however, were considered to be the least trustworthy source when appearing in news of terrorism. Since, these results mirror existing data it would seem plausible to suggest that reading the news story citing one of the four source types did not significantly affect levels of trust in the three institutional source types. An alternative position would be to argue that underlying trust in the three institutions did have some influence upon participants' perceptions of the story.

If we look beyond these methodological issues then what explanations can be offered for the particularly strong relationships between trust in security sources and perceptions of credibility? And why were these findings not replicated for the other two institutional source types? One possibility is that participants expected to read references to security sources or intelligence services during reports of suspected terrorist activity and that attribution to such sources in some way enhanced the credibility of the narrative. Although participants did not consider security sources to be the most trustworthy source when appearing in the more broadly defined, 'news of terrorism', within the context of the story they added credibility to the narrative. The ambiguity of a reference to a 'security source' may have led participants to associate the information with a range of

different institutions, agencies or departments and any combination of each. It could be argued, however, that a reference to a 'security source' suggests information obtained from an individual or department within the UK 's domestic intelligence agency, MI5. An institution that was only acknowledged officially in 1989 and until very recently had almost no direct communication with the public. Despite the new openness of MI5 a secretive and shadowy image of the organisation prevails amongst the general public. It could therefore be argued that participants expected security sources or MI5 to be able to provide credible information concerning the plot since the organisation would have been closely involved in monitoring the threat.

Importantly, the findings from RQ3c indicate areas for further research. Future study could attempt to uncover audiences' interpretations of specific references and to examine attitudes towards the institutions or organisations these references imply. Furthermore, the research reported in this thesis could be replicated with a pre-test built into the experimental design to allow participants to be placed into different treatment groups dependent upon their levels of trust in specific institutions or organisations. These ideas are returned to and explored in greater depth in the concluding chapter to this thesis.

5.3.5: A word on media effects

The conceptual framework for this research explored the media's role in producing cognitive and behavioural effects amongst news audiences. Specifically, it was proposed that attribution to veiled institutional sources, although seemingly a nuanced element of news coverage, may have a significant effect upon news audiences' perceptions of terrorism due to recent controversies over the role and use of news sources and the political dynamics that underpin this issue. However, collectively the findings from this study demonstrate that the effect of content alone upon audiences may be limited and that attitudinal and demographic predictors serve as more significant determinants of audiences' cognitive response to news. For terrorism, trust in the news media and fear of terrorism had a greater influence upon audiences' perceptions of the credibility of story reporting a terrorist threat than subtle differences in interpretation.

Media effects, however, are multifaceted. This study only explored nuances within content rather than the effects of wider interpretative frames upon audiences' response to news. Research that has examined more substantial variations in presentation have often found that content does produce significant effects amongst news audiences. For example, studies examining the news media's framing of terrorism have shown that interpretation influences audiences' perceptions of these events, public support for political leaders and attitudes towards government counter terrorism strategies (Brewer, 2003; Danis & Stohl, 2008; Norris, et al., 2003; Wolfsfeld, 1997). The findings, however, from this study suggest that while journalism has a role in constructing and shaping narratives of terrorism it is the interaction between the dynamics of news audiences and content that ultimately determines audiences' interpretation of a specific terrorist threat.

Exploring the influence of subtle variations in content rather than the content itself may have produced effects that were so small that they were not adequately reflected by the dependent measures employed in this study. The methodological limitations of the study are discussed in Chapter 3 above and in the conclusions to this thesis in Chapter 6. An alternative explanation, however, may also lie in the complexities of the issue under investigation and the strength of public attitudes towards the threat from terrorism. If we exclude earlier studies examining the influence of unnamed sources during the Watergate scandal then the perceptual effects of source attribution have addressed more mundane and less salient issues than terrorism. Amusement park safety (Gibson & Zillman, 1993), a womanising judge (Smith, 2007) and hyperactivity in children linked to the consumption of food additives (Hale, 1984), are just three examples that reflect the types of issues explored in this body of research. However, despite these studies using less controversial and contentious issues as experimental stimuli they also found that the effect of source attribution on story perception was limited. It is therefore, unsurprising that exploring attribution effects within such a salient issue as terrorism would ultimately highlight the underlying audience dynamics of trust in the media and concern over terrorism as more significant than veiled references to institutional sources.

These themes are returned to in the conclusions to this thesis in Chapter 6. In addition, the findings from this study are discussed by highlighting its implications for journalism practice and more specifically, future reporting of terrorism and suspected terrorist plots.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

This thesis has examined the potential for journalism to shape public perceptions of terrorism through an analysis of source attribution within news coverage of alleged terrorist plots. The results from the two studies, although complex and multifaceted, allow a number of significant conclusions to be drawn. This final chapter will explore these findings in light of the two research objectives and three questions set out in Chapter 1, and outlines the contribution to knowledge of this thesis. It also makes suggestions concerning the practical implications of this research for journalism and discusses the limitations of the project and areas for further research.

6.1: The Research Questions

This thesis was organised around two objectives. First to identify the features of source attribution within UK news media coverage of alleged terrorist plots; and second to examine how references to different institutional sources may shape audiences' perceptions of such narratives. More specifically, the research sought to address three specific questions. The first and its three component questions were as follows:

RQ1: What types of attributions are made in newspaper articles reporting alleged terrorist plots?

- What are the patterns and frequency of each different type of attribution?
- How prominent are official sources?
- How prevalent are anonymous or veiled references?

At one level the patterns and frequency of attribution confirmed expectations; with more than 40% of references identified and coded from newspaper coverage of the five plots to either police, government or security sources: the same three institutional source types tested in the second audience study. The prominence of references to these major public institutions is expected if we consider both their significance to the discourse of terrorism and the characteristics of news coverage of alleged terrorist plots. These results, as structural theories of media access have claimed, may also evidence the tendency

for journalists to turn to official sources of information when reporting news of a suspected plot.

However, investigating the interaction between the narrative to each episode and patterns in attribution, revealed that sourcing may in fact be a product of the narrative itself. As news of suspected plots became thematised around the impact of these operations upon Muslim communities, then accordingly, alternative sources became more prominent within news coverage. This finding is important in two respects. First, it contributes to contemporary debates concerning journalist-source relations by providing evidence to suggest that sourcing is as much a feature of journalistic practice than a product of any guiding ideology or hegemony. Second, it extends earlier work in the field of journalist-source interaction by demonstrating that the factors which shape this relationship are both complex and multifaceted.

Finally, the content study showed that anonymous sources were a prominent feature within news coverage of alleged terrorist plots. Most significant were what Culbertson (1975) defined as 'veiled attributions'. In particular, opaque references to an institution, rather than to a named individual. Crucially, however, government sources did not follow this trend. Separating those references that provide some identification to the reader and vague attributions to an institution, revealed that government sources were more often partially identified in some way. For example, through a reference to the source's department or job title. This is significant if we consider the rationale to this research. It was proposed in the introduction to this thesis that political leaks attributed to unnamed government sources and recent political events have contributed to growing public cynicism towards the veracity of the threat posed by Islamist terrorism. Furthermore, conspiratorial approaches to political discourse cite references to unnamed sources as evidence of government complicity in overstating this threat. The empirical evidence from this analysis, however, shows that, contrary to this view, in news of alleged terrorist plots journalists use more transparent and identifiable forms of referencing when citing government sources over other institutional sources.

The second research question and its four component questions were as follows:

RQ2: How are sources used within news of alleged terrorist plots?

- Which sources act as the primary definers of news?
- Are sources used to support details of the plot or to provide background or context to a story?
- How are attributions made? Directly by quoting the source, indirectly by summarising their views or as part of the journalist's narrative to events?
- Does source attribution reflect the narrative to each plot?

Research question 2 addressed the deeper theoretical and conceptual issues pertinent to a study of news sources. Further analyses of the data revealed a greater complexity to source attribution within press coverage of alleged terrorist plots and provide further support for the two themes emerging from the discussion of RQ1.

Instead of simply examining source type, the content analysis also assessed reference use. A one-dimensional analysis of source type, as discussed above, would suggest that official sources, through reference in the content to police, government and security sources, were the primary definers of alleged terrorist plots. However, the data pertaining to reference use demonstrated that government sources were more commonly found supporting alternative story themes or used to provide background to a story. So while government sources were important definers of these five alleged plots, significantly, they were not seeking to influence news discourse concerning the plots or anti-terrorism operations. This finding makes an important contribution to our understanding of both methodology and theory. First, it shows the limitations of relying on a survey of reference type to uncover the primary definers of a particular topic and event. Conversely, that developing a more sophisticated methodological approach to counting and coding references may uncover subtleties that are not detected by cruder forms of source analysis. Second, it challenges those who claim that news narratives of terrorism promote a government agenda in order to sustain public fear over the threat from terrorism. Contrary, to the conspiracism that pervades public discourse, there is little evidence from this

research that government sources are promoting details of terrorist plots and threats through the UK news media.

As discussed above, the results do seem to suggest that attribution arises as a feature of the narrative to each event. For journalists reporting terrorism this will inevitably mean that 'official sources' will feature in their reports as these sources are able to provide information and comment authoritatively on a specific threat. As Halin et al. (1993) argue, this is simply a reflection of the professional practices of journalism, rather than any pre-determining ideology shaping news access.

A closer inspection of reference phrasing revealed a possible relationship between journalists' phrasing and identification of attributions within news coverage of alleged terrorist plots. Most significantly, the research showed that attributions to government and political sources were not only identifiable but more often in the form of direct quotations from the source. This provides further evidence that journalists sought to increase the credibility and accountability of comments attributed to government sources by quoting them directly within news reports. This may suggest that despite accusations of sensationalism and irresponsible reporting of terrorism, the UK news media's coverage of alleged plots journalism has, on the whole, contributed to rationale discourse concerning the threat from Islamist terrorism by increasing the visibility and, consequently the accountability, of government communications on this issue.

Finally, as outlined above, the research provides a further original contribution to knowledge by demonstrating that news coverage of alleged terrorist plots seems to be as much a product of the shifting narrative frame of terrorism as to the professional imperatives of journalism. The results from this research show that sourcing mirrored journalism's transition to a more critical, interpretative frame. Consequently, for news coverage of the alleged kidnap plot in January/February 2007 ordinary members of the public also became important definers of the story as journalists explored the impact of high-profile plots and police counter-terrorism operations upon the UK's Muslim communities.

The third research question and its three component questions moved on to explore the influence of source attribution upon news audiences. They were as follows:

RQ3 What is the relationship between news sources cited in reports of alleged terrorist plots and audience perceptions of news?

- How does the believability and accuracy of a news story reporting an alleged terrorist plot relate to the types of sources cited in the report?
- How do other audience variables interact with source attribution and can underlying audience factors predict news audiences' perceptions of a story reporting an alleged terrorist plot?
- How does trust in an organisation or institution referenced as a source influence audiences' perceptions of the credibility of a news story reporting an alleged terrorist plot?

To address these questions the second empirical study tested the effects of the three most common reference types identified from the study of news content upon audiences. Through an experimental design embedded within a two-stage survey, the study explored the influence of manipulating attribution to one of the three veiled institutional source types, police, government and security sources, upon participants' perceptions of the credibility of a news story reporting an alleged terrorist plot.

The experimental manipulation, however, failed to establish any direct causal link between attribution to one of the three institutional sources and participants' perceptions of news. Examining believability and accuracy as two component measures of the credibility of both the news narrative and the alleged terrorist plot it described; the research showed that within press coverage of suspected terrorist plots news sources were incidental to the narrative and dynamics of the audience. Despite considerable differences in the levels of public trust in these three institutions participants' perceptions of the credibility of a story were uninfluenced by the subtlety of source attribution.

The explanation for these findings may arise from the issue itself and the interaction between audiences and news content. The results indicated that participants' perceptions of the credibility of a story reporting an alleged terrorist plot were related to levels of trust in broadcast and online news media and perceived concern over terrorism. This suggested that attitudes towards the media and the threat posed by terrorism, rather than news content itself will determine audiences' perceptions of the credibility of a particular threat. It was proposed that that these attitudes were more significant indicators of audiences' response to news of terrorism than subtle variations in the presentation of story.

The findings demonstrate that the strength of public attitudes towards both the issue of terrorism and the UK news media are resistant to nuances within journalism's interpretation of terrorism. These attitudes may, in part, have formed through the media's coverage of recent terrorist events and reflect the narrative frames through which journalism has reported terrorism. However, the insights provided by this research do seem to suggest that source attribution by itself does not contribute to audiences' evaluation of the credibility of subsequent terrorist threats.

There is, however, a cautionary note to add to these findings. Examining the relationship between participants' trust in security sources and their perceptions of the credibility of the news article revealed that those participants who reported higher levels of trust in security sources and read the version of the article citing security sources were more likely to find the story credible. Although the results for the other source types were inconclusive it does perhaps hint at a more complex interaction between source attribution and audience perceptions of news. It was cautiously proposed that the implied meaning of a reference to a security source and its connotations with the security services or MI5 may enhance the credibility of a story reporting an alleged plot. However, in the absence of any clear patterns emerging from the data, the findings from RQ3c more importantly, suggest areas for further research. These are discussed below in the final section of this chapter: 6.4.

6.2: Implications for journalism

With sourcing integral to the professional practice of journalism two implications arise from this research. The first is that, along with the results of prior studies, source attribution by itself appears to have very little influence on audiences' assessment of the credibility of news. While direct attribution and full identification is considered the best way of allowing audiences to evaluate the credibility of a news narrative, the results from this study indicate that other factors are more significant determinants of audiences' perceptions of news credibility. Crucially, this supports and extends the findings of earlier research, which has shown that trust in the channel or brands through which audiences consume news will determine how audiences respond to news narratives.

Editorial guidelines for dealing with sources state that unnamed or anonymous sources should only be used as a last resort and when the information is of particular importance (Foreman, 1984). However, tentatively, the findings from this research propose that if journalists decide to report information or a story where the source is reluctant to speak on the record then how he or she presents that source will have little bearing upon audiences' assessment of the credibility of the narrative. When journalists have a story that they perceive to be in the public interest but provided to them by a source who is reluctant to go on record, it suggests that audiences' perceptions of the believability and accuracy of the story may not be undermined by attribution to a veiled or anonymous source. Moreover, if we consider the contemporary issues influencing journalistic practice, it may also evidence a shift amongst audiences away from the standards and imperatives that have underlined traditional print journalism to those emerging from the new and evolving online media environment.

For news coverage of terrorism, where such anonymous or veiled references to the police or security services predominate, this research suggests that off the record or for background comments may be used if the release of this information would serve the public interest.

6.3: Limitations

The more substantive methodological issues arise from the audience study conducted as part of this research. In particular, experimentation raises concerns over the representativeness of participant sample pools and the generalisability of research that relies on samples of convenience (Sears 1986, cited in Iyengar, 2002; Brady 2000, p52 cited in Morton & Williams, 2010, p93). However, as discussed in Chapter 3, the procedures for sampling sought to attend to some of the criticisms levied at media experiments. There will always be a degree of concern over the external validity of research that relies on undergraduate participants. However, as many other studies of social psychology and media effects have shown student participant pools can provide a valuable insight into the way people respond to specific stimuli or events. For this exploratory research project the results inferred from students not only indicate the limited effects of attribution within news of terrorism, but also point towards areas for further research.

Additionally, three further limitations of the research arose from the theoretical discussions in Chapter 5. The first appears to be a product of the subtlety of the variable under analysis, source attribution, against the salience of the issue. It is possible that the effects of source attribution were so small that they were not reflected by the dependent measures employed in the audience study. To examine minor effects of content may require more sophisticated scales of measurement to uncover audiences' responses to specific news narratives. The second is that isolating the effects of such a specific and nuanced element of coverage upon audiences within an issue as contentious as terrorism is undermined by the immediacy and fluidity of this issue to participants in the study. Further studies could replicate the methodological approach developed in this study and examine the effects of attribution upon audiences' perceptions of credibility but within a more mundane or trivial issue than terrorism.

Finally, as discussed in Chapter 5, attempting to maintain control over the experiment may have unintentionally increased the artificiality of the treatment article for participants in the study. To maintain an objective and accurate

account of an alleged plot the writing emulated a more neutral reporting style than that which is often found in the UK press. This was a conscious decision by the researcher to maintain an objective and balanced tone to reporting. However, further research could develop a method of online experimentation that examines the effects of attribution within the online news environment.

6.4: Further Questions and Future Research

Three areas for further research emerge from this thesis. First, the methodological approach provides a framework for future studies of news sources. Research could build upon the findings of this thesis to examine source attribution within other media and across alternative issues and events. Developing the two-stage methodological approach of this thesis, future studies could examine patterns and frequency of sources in broadcast and online news content and test the effects of attribution within alternative news environments.

Subsequent studies could also develop the methods used in this research to explore more complex interactions between audience variables and the perceptual effects of source attribution. It was proposed in Chapter 5 that the variance in trust in the three source institutional sources may have been too small to have had any significant influence upon story perception. Further research might examine participant pools grouped around attitudes towards various sources. For example, trust in a particular source would determine which treatment article participants read, providing data that could be used to compare the interaction of the interdependent factors of attribution and trust.

Second, several questions were raised during the discussion of the data that were not addressed adequately by the research. Therefore, future research could consider the following complementary avenues of enquiry. The thesis proposed that source attribution arises from the narrative to alleged terrorist plots, challenging the view that the media discourse of terrorism promotes a political agenda. An area for further research would be to consider a wider body of news content to examine the extent to which source attribution interacts with other aspects of the media discourse of terrorism. Additionally, future studies could explore the news frames of Islamist terrorism to further understand how the

news discourse of terrorism has evolved since the final (kidnap) plot examined within this study. There is also an opportunity to examine the relationship between these news frames and political responses to terrorism.

Finally, a further area for research would be to examine journalists' perspectives concerning the influence of source attribution upon their audiences. One opportunity for future study would be to reflect upon the findings of this research with journalists who report and comment upon terrorism. In addition, other questions might consider the rhetorical constructs of the references made by journalists within news coverage of terrorism and consider how audiences disambiguate common reference types.

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8: Appendix

8.1: Newspaper articles

Newspaper	Article title	Journalist	Page	Date
Daily Mail	Poison gang on the loose; huge hunt for terrorist armed with deadly ricin	Ben Taylor, David Williams, David Hughes	1	9-Jan-2004
Financial Times	Chemical weapons factory found in north London flat: six men under arrest anti-terrorist police and MI5 agents discover traces of deadly poison.	NA	1	9-Jan-2004
Financial Times	Government struggles to warn without spreading public panic.	NA	3	9-Jan-2004
Financial Times	London chemical weapons haul provides the evidence sought by security services	NA	3	9-Jan-2004
Daily Mail	Britain on alert	Jeff Edwards	2	9-Jan-2004
The Daily Mirror	Ministers clash over plans to hit Iraq: The lethal link	Simon Reeve	6	9-Jan-2004
The Daily Telegraph	Six arrested in poison terror alert Hospitals on stand-by after raid on flat	John Steele; Sandra Laville	1	9-Jan-2004
The Express	UK Poison Gas gang on loose	John Twomey	?	9-Jan-2004
The Guardian	Poison find sparks terror alert: Hunt for lethal toxin as six are held after raid on London flat	Nick Hopkins, Tania Branigan	1	9-Jan-2004
The Independent	Alarm over terror suspects with deadly toxin	Jason Bennetto; Kim Sengupta	1	9-Jan-2004
The Independent	Fear and Rumour in London suburb	Chris Gray	3	9-Jan-2004
The Sun	Factory of Death	Mike Sullivan	2	9-Jan-2004
The Sun	Where is poison hidden?	Mike Sullivan	1	9-Jan-2004
The Times	Police 'looked like men from space.'	Steve Bird	4	9-Jan-2004
The Times	Terror raid on poison factory	Stewart Tendler, Domin Kennedy, Daniel McGrory	1	9-Jan-2004

Newspaper	Article title	Journalist	Page	Date
Daily Mail	Poison suspects were asylum seekers	David Williams, Peter Allen	1	10-Jan-2004
Financial Times	Fear, not casualties, is the aim of the ricin terrorists: training manuals suggests al-Qaeda cannot make weapons from biochemical agents.	Stephen Fidler	6	10-Jan-2004
Financial Times	Seventh terror suspect arrested over poison plot as hunt goes on	?	1	10-Jan-2004
The Daily Mirror	They posed as refugees	Jeff Edwards, Kanchan Dutt	5	10-Jan-2004
The Daily Telegraph	Ricin terror flat was rented for asylum seekers	John Steele, Philip Johnston	1	10-Jan-2004
The Express	Gang's bid to unleash poison	?	?	10-Jan-2004
The Express	Poison gang are asylum seekers	Greg Swift and John Twomey	?	10-Jan-2004
The Guardian	New arrest as toxin hunt intensifies	Nick Hopkins, Audrey Gillian	2	10-Jan-2004
The Independent	Ricin arrests: How MI5 homed in on kitchen-sink lab; inquiries were launched into group of young Algerians after tip-off from foreign intelligence services	Jason Bennetto, Kim Sengupta	2	10-Jan-2004
The Independent	Seventh al-Qa'ida suspect held over ricin plot	Jason Bennetto, Kim Sengupta	1	10-Jan-2004
The Sun	Osama poison gang funded by DSS	Mike Sullivan, Nick Parker	1	10-Jan-2004
The Sun	Poison factory yards from Osama pal's home	Nick Parker, Michael Lea	2	10-Jan-2004
The Times/ The Sunday Times	Council paid for flat used as terror laboratory	Stewart Tendler	11	10-Jan-2004
The Times	Poison hunt police hold asylum seekers	Daniel McGory	1	10-Jan-2004
Financial Times	No extra refugee checks despite ricin find	?	3	11-Jan-2004
The Daily Telegraph	Ricin suspects were arrested in France then freed	Sean O'Neil, Sandra Laville	15	11-Jan-2004
The Express	Find the Sleepers	John Twomey	?	11-Jan-2004
The Guardian	Poison suspect trained at al-Qaida camp	Richard Norton-Taylor, Nick Hopkins, Jon Henley	7	11-Jan-2004

Newspaper	Article title	Journalist	Page	Date
The Sun	Ricin 7 link to Chechnya	?	2	11-Jan-2004
The Times	Poison 'factory' suspects were freed by French	Daniel McGory	14	11-Jan-2004
Daily Mail	Al-Qaeda terror strike at Man Utd match is foiled	Stephen Wright, Ben Taylor	13	21-Apr-2004
The Daily Mirror	Police arrest 10 in anti-terror raids	Patrick Mulchrone	4	21-Apr-2004
The Express	10 held in terror swoop	Tony Brooks and Richard Moriarty	?	21-Apr-2004
The Sun	Bomb gang had tickets all around the ground	Philip Cardy, Andy Russell	4	21-Apr-2004
The Sun	Man U suicide bomb plot	Philip Cardy	1	21-Apr-2004
The Sun	More killed the better for Osama	?	5	21-Apr-2004
The Times	Terror arrests after fears of football bomb	Russell Jenkins, Daniel McGory	1	21-Apr-2004
The Guardian	Ten arrested as anti-terror police stage dawn raids: Operation involves more than 400 officers and Manchester takeaway is key target as suspects are seized over alleged bomb plot	Helen Carter, Richard Norton-Taylor	5	21-Apr-2004
Daily Mail/Mail on Sunday	Warning to soccer fans in Man Utd terror crackdown	Stephen Wright, Ben Taylor, Adam Powell	19	22-Apr-2004
Financial Times	Raids thwarted soft target attack News Digest	William Hall	6	22-Apr-2004
The Daily Mirror/ The Sunday Mirror	Football is United in bid to beat terrorism	David Anderson	53	22-Apr-2004
The Daily Telegraph	Extra anti-terrorist guard on United's home games	Paul Stokes	6	22-Apr-2004
The Express	Terrorist in house for illegal immigrants	Richard Moriarty	?	22-Apr-2004
The Guardian	Man Utd step up security after raids: club denies plot to bomb games as police quiz 10 terror suspects	Helen Carter	4	22-Apr-2004
The Sun	Fortress Old Trafford	?	2	22-Apr-2004

Newspaper	Article title	Journalist	Page	Date
The Daily Mirror	Terror police raid four flats	?	2	23-Apr-2004
The Express	MI5 alert as terror suspects go on run	?	?	23-Apr-2004
The Sun	Man Utd terror raid	?	2	23-Apr-2004
The Times	Safe Houses' raided in terror suspects hunt	Russell Jenkins, Daniel McGory	2	23-Apr-2004
Daily Mail	Target: Canary Wharf; Al Qaeda plot to hijack jets and fly them into skyscrapers is smashed.	Benedict Brogan	1	24-Nov-2004
The Daily Mirror	Annetta rescue mission a failure	Damien Lane	2	24-Nov-2004
The Daily Mirror	MI5 Thwart Al-Qaeda Canary Wharf attack; Jet Crash Plot in Capital	Tom Parry	20	24-Nov-2004
The Express	9/11 Bid to hit London	Jane Young and Maurice Mcleod	?	24-Nov-2004
The Guardian	Security Services play down 'terror plot.'	Richard Norton-Taylor	3	24-Nov-2004
The Sun	Foiled 9/11 on London	David Wooding	1	24-Nov-2004
The Times	London Terror plots thwarted	Greg Hurst	2	24-Nov-2004
The Daily Telegraph	32 Bills 'extend Labour's security state	George Jones	1	25-Nov-2004
The Daily Telegraph	Mayor told of 74 terror plots to attack London	Celia Walden	25	25-Nov-2004
The Guardian	Laboue unveils security gambit: *Raft of crime bills to outflank Tories: *Ministers deny they are 'focusing on fear'.	Michael White, Alan Travis, Patrick Wintour	1	25-Nov-2004
The Independent	The Queen's Speech: Home Office 'linked to discredited claim of al-qa'ida plot.	Jason Bennetto	4	25-Nov-2004
The Times	How al-qaeda's London plot was foiled	Michael Evans, Sean O'Neil	4	25-Nov-2004
The Times	ID cards for all to fight crime and terrorism	Philip Webster, Stewart Tendler	1	25-Nov-2004
Daily Mail	Mother of Satan; 24 Britons are held as police smash plot to mark 9/11 anniversary with 'mass murder on unimaginable scale.'	David Williams, Stephen Wright, Ben Taylow	2	12/08/206

Newspaper	Article title	Journalist	Page	Date
Daily Mail	Our leaders do a vanishing act	Tim Shipman	6	12-Aug-2006
Financial Times	Air bomb plot foiled, say police 'Britain goes on highest alert as 24 are arrested*Threat of mass murder on an unimaginable scale'** Pakistan says it played part in uncovering plans.	Roger Blitz, Demetri Sevastopulo, Bob Sherwood	1	12-Aug-2006
Financial Times	MI5 tracked group for a year SURVEILLANCE OPERATION: Detectives let the alleged plot continue for as long as they dared	Stephen Fidler, Bob Sherwood,	3	12-Aug-2006
The Daily Mirror	Blow up plane guide on internet	Louise Male	8	12-Aug-2006
The Daily Mirror	Boutrab arrest led cops to terror bid; the liquid bombs plot	Jenna Sloan	9	12-Aug-2006
The Daily Mirror	Busted; This is 21 year old Don Stewart Whyte	Jeff Edwards	1	12-Aug-2006
The Daily Mirror	Mayhem for 1/2M; The liquid bombs plot passengers stranded as alert grounds planes and plunges airports into chaos.	Stephen White	6	12-Aug-2006
The Daily Mirror	Mi5 fears revenge strikes by new cells; Exclusive the Liquid bombs plot	Chris Hughes	3	12-Aug-2006
The Daily Mirror	Mi5 fears new cells will bring attacks forward; exclusive the liquid bombs plot	Chris Hughes	5	12-Aug-2006
The Daily Mirror	The Liquid Bombs Plot; worse than 9/11; Liquid bombs exploding on nine jets above eight cities killing tens of thousands and foiled with just 48 hours to spare.	Jeff Edwards, Vanessa Allen	4	12-Aug-2006
The Daily Mirror	They tried it before; The liquid bombs plot 1990s bid a carbon copy of yesterday's arrests	Simon Reeve	16	12-Aug-2006
The Express	21 Suspects all	John Twomey and Tom Whitehead	?	12-Aug-2006
The Express	Acts of evil that inspired plotters	Martin Evans	?	12-Aug-2006
The Express	Climate of fear adds up to new grim victory for Bin Laden	?	?	12-Aug-2006
The Express	Terror plots that inspired bombers	Martin Evans	?	12-Aug-2006
The Guardian	Terror plot: cabinet forewarned Bush of terror threat to US airlines: Decision to sanction raids took ministers by surprise: First Cobra meeting took place late on Wednesday	Patrick Wintour	6	12-Aug-2006

Newspaper	Article title	Journalist	Page	Date
The Guardian	Terror plot: Copycat plot	Owen Bowcott	3	12-Aug-2006
The Guardian	Terror plot: intelligence: Pakistan's role in uncovering conspiracy	Randeep Ramesh, Lee Glendinning	5	12-Aug-2006
The Guardian	Terror plot: Months of monitoring exposed details of conspiracy: security operation stepped up after 'go' order from Pakistan intercepted	Richard Norton-Taylor, Sandra Laville, Vikram Dodd	2	12-Aug-2006
The Guardian	Terror plot: Muslim reaction: concern and relief mixed with fear and cynicism	Stephen Bates	5	12-Aug-2006
The Guardian	82. Terror plot: The raids: Arrest of 'normal' neighbours shocks residents: Suspects seized at addresses in south and Midlands	Hugh Muir, Jeevan Nasagar, David Pallister, Duncan Campbell	4	12-Aug-2006
The Guardian	Terror plot: United States: Official see plot as worst threat since 9/11	Oliver Burkeman	7	12-Aug-2006
The Guardian	Terror plot: warning why Reid changed his speech: sometimes we may have to modify some of our freedoms	?	7	12-Aug-2006
The Independent	A terror plot, 24 arrests and the day when chaos reigned; Bomb plot foiled	Jason Bennetto, Nigel Morris, Terry Kirby, Andrew Buncombe	2	12-Aug-2006
The Guardian	How a group of suicide bombers planned to blow up 10 planes; Bomb plot foiled the conspiracy.	Jason Bennetto, Kim Senupta	4	12-Aug-2006
The Independent	Passengers warned they will face tougher airport security checks: bomb plot foiled flight safety	Jonathan Brown, Nigel Morris	5	12-Aug-2006
The Independent	The 'loud bang' plot that employed the same tactics; Bomb Plot Foiled The 1995 Conspiracy	Jerome Taylor	4	12-Aug-2006
The Independent	Why isn't the technology in place to prevent this?; Bomb plot foiled	?	5	12-Aug-2006
The Sun	2 Days from doom	Simon Hughes, George Pascoe-Watson	2	12-Aug-2006
The Sun	Born a Christian	Jamie Pyatt, Thomas Whitaker	6	12-Aug-2006
The Sun	Bottle Bombers	?	1	12-Aug-2006
The Sun	Ireland a 'perfect base' for bombers	Myles McEntee	9	12-Aug-2006
The Sun	No fly zone	Charles Rae, Antonella Lazzei, David Goodwin, Gail Cameron	8	12-Aug-2006
The Times	Islamabad claims credit for foiling bomb plot	Zahid Hussain	15	12-Aug-2006

Newspaper	Article title	Journalist	Page	Date
Financial Times	Boost for police follows high-profile blunders Intelligence Agencies	Ben Hall	2	12-Aug-2006
The Daily Telegraph	Britons 'planned to commit mass murder on an unimaginable scale'	John Steele	4	12-Aug-2006
The Daily Telegraph	Middle-class and British: the Muslims in plot to bomb jets Britain on 'critical' alert after police arrest 24 in night raids Thousands of holidaymakers stranded as flights are grounded	Caroline Davies, John Steele, Catriona Davies	1	12-Aug-2006
The Express	At war with Islamic fascists	Alison Little	?	12-Aug-2006
The Times	Five planes and the plot to commit Britain's 9/11	?	1	13-Aug-2006
Daily Mail	Bomb plot traced back to Al-Qaeda; Briton arrested in Pakistan 'was link to masterminds'	Stephen Wright, David Williams	4	13-Aug-2006
Daily Mail	THE NIGHTMARE RETURNS; Five years on, America had started to forget 9/11. Until this week's terrifying events in Britain—and a powerful new film—brought it back to haunt them	David Jones	14	13-Aug-2006
Financial Times	Anti-terror boost for duty-free *Relief for airport retailers and travellers in wake of alleged bomb plot *Pakistan arrests 'breakthrough' suspects linked to al-qaeda	Roger Blitz, Farhan Bokhari, Bob Sherwood	1	13-Aug-2006
The Daily Mirror	Fire chief: we could not cope	Pat Flanagan	5	13-Aug-2006
The Daily Mirror	Mr Big From Brum; Exclusive he was 'behind plot to blow up 9 planes'.	Jeff Edwards, Vanessa Allen	1	13-Aug-2006
The Daily Mirror	PM Thanks Pakistan; the Liquid Bombs plot	Allison Martin	4	13-Aug-2006
The Daily Mirror	The Liquid Bombs plot: al-qaeda corrupts a generation	Simon Reeve	9	13-Aug-2006
The Daily Mirror	The Liquid Bombs Plot: on the loose; more plotters may be ready to launch terror strike, Reid warns	Rosa Prince	8	13-Aug-2006
The Daily Telegraph	Fugitive Briton arrested in Pakistan over jet bomb plot	Isambard Wilkinson, Nick Britten, John Steele	1	13-Aug-2006
The Express	Likely lads who got religious	?	?	13-Aug-2006
The Express	How brothers changed	?	?	13-Aug-2006

Newspaper	Article title	Journalist	Page	Date
The Express	Suspect worked at Heathrow	Marco Gianangeli	?	13-Aug-2006
The Express	The brothers who changed	?	?	13-Aug-2006
The Express	The convert in flowing robes	?	?	13-Aug-2006
The Express	We've got the mastermind	John Twomey and Martin Stote	?	13-Aug-2006
The Guardian	Birmingham: Surprise over arrest of cake firm brothers	David Ward	2	13-Aug-2006
The Guardian	Terror plot: Muslim community: Police and ministers move to defuse backlash	David Hencke, Alan Travis	5	13-Aug-2006
The Guardian	Terror plot: Pakistan and al-qaida links revealed: key suspect seized on Afghan border: Arrested med attended Islamic camps: Martyrdom tapes found during searches: Tip off came from Muslim informer	Richard Norton-Taylor, Sandra Laville, Vikram Dodd	1	13-Aug-2006
The Guardian	Terror plot: The Pakistan connection: a suspicion falls on al-qaida: British citizens arrested in Karachi and Lahore linked to planes conspiracy	Ewen MasAskill, Vikram Dodd	4	13-Aug-2006
The Guardian	Terror plot: United States: Intelligence chiefs looking at transatlantic phone calls	Dan Glaister	4	13-Aug-2006
The Guardian	Terror plot: Walthamstow: He was as good as gold…. A good kid as far as I know	Maev Kennedy	4	13-Aug-2006
The Independent	This is sad. I'm afraid for the community. I do hope they're innocent, I do hope; Bomb Plot Muslim reaction	Cahal Milmo, Genevive Roberts	3	13-Aug-2006
The Independent	If you want the roots of terror, try here	Robert Fisk	33	13-Aug-2006
The Independent	Pakistan arrests seven and links al-qaida to plot	Justin Huggler	5	13-Aug-2006
The Sun	Italians hold 40	?	5	13-Aug-2006
The Sun	Mister Talibrum	Mike Sullivan, Simon Hughes	1	13-Aug-2006
The Sun	Suspect's model sis	John Troup, Jamie Pyatt, Tony Bonnici	4	13-Aug-2006
The Times	Airline terror plotters 'linked to 7/7 bombers'	Zahid Hussain, Russell Jenkins, Sean O'Neil	1	13-Aug-2006

Newspaper	Article title	Journalist	Page	Date
The Times	The view from America	?	4	13-Aug-2006
The Times	Top al-Qaeda trainer 'taught suspects to use explosive'	Daniel McGory, Zahid Hussain, Karen McVeigh	2	13-Aug-2006
The Times	US accused of jumping the gun in blaming Al-Qaeda	Tom Baldwin	9	13-Aug-2006
The Daily Telegraph	Claims may prevent fair trials, fear Goldsmith	Toby Helm	15	13-Aug-2006
The Daily Telegraph	Textbook operation marred by politics	?	23	13-Aug-2006
The Guardian	Ordinary friends who grew up to be devout together	Paul Lewis, Sandra Laville	1	13-Aug-2006
The Independent	Police recover bomb-making equipment as search goes on; Bomb plot police inquiry	Jason Bennetto, Nigel Morris, Andrew Buncombe	4	13-Aug-2006
The Times	Past blunders put pressure on police to make case stick	Sean O'Neil, Stewart Tendler	9	13-Aug-2006
The Mail on Sunday	24-hour terror quiz delay…to give suspects time to pray; 10/8 Terror plot	?	6	14-Aug-2006
The Mail on Sunday	Did couple plan to kill baby too? ; 10/8 Terror Plot	Martin Smith	8	14-Aug-2006
Daily Mail	Five guns at his head….The Talibrum was seized, and back in Britain the arrests began; 10/8 Terror plot: The dramatic arrest IN Pakistan badlands that sparked the biggest alert since 9/11	Glen Owen	8	14-Aug-2006
The Mail on Sunday	How Reid hijacked the terror crisis; 10/8 Terror plot	Simon Walters	10	14-Aug-2006
The Mail on Sunday	Inside the windowless Cobra nerve centre, the drama unfolds; 10/8 Terror Plot	Christopher Leake	10	14-Aug-2006
The Mail on Sunday	Reid Spin is wrecking terror case	Simon Walters, Jonathan Oliver	1	14-Aug-2006
The Mail on Sunday	Suspects bugged by MI5 'sneak and peek' teams; 10/8 Terror Plot: Agents used tactics honed against IRA to spy on bomb factory weeks before airports plot	Jason Lewis	6	14-Aug-2006
The Mail on Sunday	The scrubbed-up schoolboy who became terror suspect; 10/8 Terror Plot: The troubled past of a suspect from the suburbs	Nick Constable, Andrew Wilkes	9	14-Aug-2006
News of the World	2 more 'on run'	?	4	14-Aug-2006

Newspaper	Article title	Journalist	Page	Date
News of the World	Bush: Threat is still there	?	7	14-Aug-2006
News of the World	£75 clean passports	Ryan Sabey	5	14-Aug-2006
News of the World	Summer of war	Sara Nuwar, Mazher Mahmood	4	14-Aug-2006
The Sunday Telegraph	They used quake cash; exclusive the 10/8 JET bomb PLOT Terror bosses siphoned off British charity funds claim	Susie Boniface, Grant Hodgson, Khalid Butt	9	14-Aug-2006
The Sunday Mirror	Convert wanted change in his life; exclusive the 10/8 Jet bomb plot	Michael Duffy, Tom Latchem	6	14-Aug-2006
The Sunday Mirror	The 10/8 Jet Bomb Plot: Race attack on suspect	?	5	14-Aug-2006
The Daily Mirror	The 10/8 Jet Bomb Plot: The baby will die with us; exclusive husband and wife team plotted to use child as decoy police feared.	Susie Boniface, Michael Duffy	4	14-Aug-2006
The Sunday Telegraph	Inside this building, a terror suspect ran a London university's Islamic group. Was it also a recruiting ground for a 'holy war'?	Roya Nikkhah, Andrew Alderson	3	14-Aug-2006
The Sunday Telegraph	University students at centre of terror plots	Roya Nikkhah, Andrew Alderson, Julie Henry	1	14-Aug-2006
The Independent on Sunday	They are ordinary British boys this would be totally out of character;	Severin Carrell, Tan Parson	8	14-Aug-2006
The Independent on Sunday	Apocalyptic; Bigger than 7/7? Worse than 9/11? Piece by piece, the plot unravels from Pakistan to London……..	Raymond Whitaker, Paul Lashmar, Sophie Goodchild, Severin Carrell, E Woolf, Justin Huggler	2	14-Aug-2006
The Independent on Sunday	Reid 'put trial of terror suspects in jeopardy'; Premature: Home Secretary claimed that police had caught the main players	Marie Woolf	9	14-Aug-2006
The Independent on Sunday	So how much did Blair know of the threat? Who knew what when?	?	4	14-Aug-2006
The Independent on Sunday	Target Britain; Apocalyptic wave of attacks planned, say investigators	Raymond Whitaker, Paul Lashmar, Sophie Goodchild, Severin Carrell	1	14-Aug-2006
The Independent on Sunday	The brothers from 'an honest family' at the heart of a terror swoop; Part 2: The suspects	Sophie Goodchild	8	14-Aug-2006
The Independent on Sunday	When did Blair know of terror raids? ; Who knew what when?	Marie Woolf	4	14-Aug-2006

Newspaper	Article title	Journalist	Page	Date
The Observer	Focus: The Karachi connection: From Pakistan to Britain, the remarkable story of an international web of terror	Jamie Doward reporting team, Mark Townsend, Anthony Barnett, David Smeeth, David Rose, Paul Harris	18	14-Aug-2006
The Observer	Police hunt 'two dozen' terror cells in Britain: direct link to 7 July atrocity says Pakistan: BA chief attacks airport chaos.	Jamie Doward, Ned Temko, Mark Townsend, Urmee Khan, Antony Barnett	1	14-Aug-2006
The Sunday Times	Britain's al-qaeda leader seized	David Leppard	1	14-Aug-2006
The Sunday Times	Terror in the skies	David Leppard, Jonathan Calvert, Abul Taher, Dipesh Gadher	11	14-Aug-2006
Daily Mail	Al Qaeda was behind plot to behead soldier; British gang planned to kidnap British Muslim serviceman	Stephen Wright, Ben Taylor	1	2-Feb-2007
Daily Mail	Did this soldier trigger the plot?; British Muslim killed on duty became a hate figure for the Islamic radicals	David Wiles	6	2-Feb-2007
Financial Times	Police battle to contain Muslim extremism	Jimmy Burns, Jonathan Gutherie	2	2-Feb-2007
Financial Times	Suspected terror plot nine arrested in UK	?	1	2-Feb-2007
The Daily Mirror	They were planning a 'ken bigley'; beheading plot gang nine kidnap suspects held in police raids	Jeff Edwards, Rod Chaytor	4	2-Feb-2007
The Daily Telegraph	Beheading plot: security stepped up for Muslim soldiers	Philip Johnston, Nick Britten	1	2-Feb-2007
The Express	Image of a veiled defiance	?	?	2-Feb-2007
The Express	Plot to behead soldier here in Britain	Padraic Flanagan and John Twomey	?	2-Feb-2007
The Guardian	Birmingham terror raids: Disbelief and shock at arrest of 'family men' Keen football fan and pizza shop owner among suspects taken from their beds.	Steven Morris, Paul Lewis, Alexandra Topping	4	2-Feb-2007
The Guardian	Birmingham terror raids: The target: Intended victim and family under police guard	Ian Cobain	5	2-Feb-2007
The Independent	Birmingham's Muslims fear reprisals after anti-terror raids	Terri Judd	6	2-Feb-2007
The Independent	From Baghdad to Birmingham? Nine held over plot to kidnap British Muslim soldier	Jason Bennetto, Nigel Morris	4	2-Feb-2007
The sun	Mister ordinarys	Andrew parker, John Scott, Julie moult	8	2-Feb-2007

Newspaper	Article title	Journalist	Page	Date
The sun	Target: Muslim squaddie	Tom Newton Dunn	6	2-Feb-2007
The sun	Welcome to Britain	Mike Sullivan	1	2-Feb-2007
The Times	Bookshop is well known to the police	Steve Bird, Dominic Kennedy	7	2-Feb-2007
The Times	How al-qaeda tried to bring Baghdad to Birmingham	Russell Jenkins, Daniel McGory	6	2-Feb-2007
The Times	Muslim soldiers faced kidnap and beheading	Daniel McGrory, Stewart Tendler, Dominc Kennedy	1	2-Feb-2007
Financial Times	Police hold nice after terrorism sweep in Midlands	Jimmy Burns, Jonathan Gutherie	1	2-Feb-2007
Financial Times	Raids illustrate task of winning over Muslims MI5 has been warning that the threat of terrorist attack remains high	Jimmy Burns, Jonathan Gutherie	2	2-Feb-2007
The Daily Mirror	Behead a hero; gang held over plot to kidnap British Muslim soldier, parade him on web…then execute him	Jeff Edwards	1	2-Feb-2007
The Daily Telegraph	To the sound of splintering doors, police squads storm homes of suspects at 4am	Nick Britten	4	2-Feb-2007
The Express	Bigley copycat fears	Paul Broster	?	2-Feb-2007
The Guardian	A British beheading on the net—police claim to foil plot: nine held after 4am raids in Birmingham over feared abduction of Muslim soldier	Ian Cobain, Steven Morris	1	2-Feb-2007
The Guardian	Birmingham terror raids: Beheading: Ritual intended to shock and appal west	Karen McVeign	5	2-Feb-2007
The Sun	Beeb's shame	?	8	2-Feb-2007
The Times	Online footage can do more damage than bomb attacks	Daniel McGory	8	2-Feb-2007
Daily Mail	Live bait for the beheading gang; Muslim soldiers used as 'tethered goats'	Matthew Hickley, Ben Taylor, David Williams	6	3-Feb-2007
Daily Mail	Name that will not go away	Paul Harris	7	3-Feb-2007
Financial Times	Reid accused of exploiting terror plot	Jimmy Gurns; Ben Hall	3	3-Feb-2007
The Daily Mirror	The Exploiter	?	5	3-Feb-2007

Newspaper	Article title	Journalist	Page	Date
The Daily Telegraph	Spy plane hunts terror suspects	Nick Britten, Richard Alleyne, Nigel Bunyan	1	3-Feb-2007
The Express	Terror suspects had 25 Muslims on hitlist	John Twomey	?	3-Feb-2007
The Guardian	Birmingham terror raids: Tighter security for Muslim police officers in fear of kidnap by Islamic extremists: Met promises urgent risk assessment after arrests: Magistrates allow 7 more days to question suspects	Vikram Dodd; Steven Morris; Paul Lewis	4	3-Feb-2007
The Independent	Politics, propaganda, and persecution: how Muslims see the raids	Terri Judd	7	3-Feb-2007
The Independent	Reid accused of using raids to push through longer detention limits	Nigel Morris; Jason Bennetto	6	3-Feb-2007
The Independent	Suspects had list of targets	Jason Bennetto	6	3-Feb-2007
The Sun	Hate on the shelves	?	5	3-Feb-2007
The Sun	Operation gamble	Tom Newton Dunn	4	3-Feb-2007
The Times	Plots and paranoia are mainstream views for Muslims of Sparkhill	Andrew Norfolk	6	3-Feb-2007
The Times	Terror hitlist named 25 Muslim soldiers	Daniel McGrory, Russell Jenkins, Steve Bird	1	3-Feb-2007
Daily Mail	Suspect raised in same street as war victim	?	6	3-Feb-2007
Financial Times	New move to extend detention period	Ben Hall	4	3-Feb-2007
The Daily Mirror	Twenty targets	?	1	3-Feb-2007
The Guardian	Muslim police may get extra security	?	1	3-Feb-2007
The Sun	Murder videos at raid house	Andrew Parker	1	3-Feb-2007
The Times	British radicals abroad told to go home and fight	Daniel McGory	7	3-Feb-2007
Financial Times	More Birmingham properties searched	Jonathan Guthrie	4	4-Feb-2007

Newspaper	Article title	Journalist	Page	Date
The Daily Mirror	Keep Calm; Fear of Muslim backlash increases after police raids. Call to charge suspects or free them from custody	Rod Chaytor, Stewart Maclean	8	4-Feb-2007
The Daily Mirror	The Terminator; beheading plot suspect known as….	Rod Chaytor, Stewart Maclean	8	4-Feb-2007
The Daily Telegraph	Muslim unrest as terror police carry out new raids	Nick Britten, Nigel Bunyan	2	4-Feb-2007
The Express	SAS on standby to foil a second terrorist	Jo Wiley and Padraic Flanagan	?	4-Feb-2007
The Guardian	National: Police fear lurid terror briefings being used to divert attention from Whitehall problems: Kidnap inquiry is hampered by speculation	Ian Cobain, Steven Morris, Michael White, Sandra Laville	6	4-Feb-2007
The Sun	He's going back to Iraq….he'll be safer there	Andrew Parker, John Scott, Julie Moult	7	4-Feb-2007
The Times	For those living on the Rock everyone is a victim	Andrew Norfolk	11	4-Feb-2007
The Times	Kidnap plot suspect had threatened to have soldier's head cut off before	Daniel McGrory	10	4-Feb-2007
Daily Mail	The suspect known as the Terminator	Andy Dolan, Sam Greenhill	8	4-Feb-2007

8.2: Stimulus Article

Below are two version of the stimulus article. The first cites government sources with the edited attributions highlighted in bold. The word government was substituted with the word security or police in the other two treatment conditions. The second version is the neutral or control condition and is without attribution to a dominant source type.

Article 1 (Government Sources condition)

Three arrested over alleged bomb plot

Three people have been arrested over a suspected terrorist plot to bomb a high-profile target in London

The operation involved two police forces and over 100 police officers.

It is thought that the arrest warrants were executed in response to intelligence indicating a possible bombing of a 'symbolic' location in Greater London.

Anti-terrorist police were continuing to search properties in London and one address in Birmingham. **Government** officials said officers have found a number of items causing interest.

Police have so far refused to comment publicly on the suspected targets. But **government** sources believe they have uncovered plans to launch a bombing attack at a major public event, rather than to target a particular landmark.

Metropolitan Police Deputy Commissioner, Paul Stephenson said: "I am aware there is extensive speculation about possible targets. As with any counter terrorism operation we will not confirm or deny any targets."

Unsubstantiated reports allege that the arrests follow the uncovering of a spectacular plot to target the new Wembley stadium with sophisticated explosive devices.

The stadium is due to host the Carling cup final on March 1st and two international matches over the coming weeks.

Government sources said that yesterday's arrests had been carried out as a "matter of urgency."

The UK's current threat level is severe—the second highest—meaning an attack is highly likely. A Home Office Minister refused to comment on whether these recent allegations would prompt an increase to the highest level of threat—critical.

Mr Stephenson said the Metropolitan police took action last night following a "prolonged period" of surveillance.

The majority of the raids took place in or around London, where the focus was a small newsagent in Forest Gate, East London.

During yesterday's raid, codenamed operation "Tugboat," two men were held in London and one other suspect was picked up in the West Midlands.

The three men are all alleged to have links with extreme Islamist groups.

Those arrested were held under the Terrorism Act 2000 and are being detained on suspicion of the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism.

The newsagents in Forest Gate and the neighbouring take away were ringed by police tape. Two officers stood guard outside.

During the afternoon, police detectives, dressed in protective overalls were seen entering the living accommodation above the shop. Later they were seen loading items into a police van before driving away.

Neighbours and local business owners expressed their shock at the arrests. “They seemed like normal, hard-working people,” said one man.

“As far as I know they are friendly and they get a lot of customers,” he said

Residents in the flat opposite were woken by police at 4 am. “We heard a lot of noise and shouting from outside. I opened the window to see what was happening and was told to get back inside by the police.’”

“I thought it was just a regular family who owned the shop.’”

It is not clear what prompted the timing of the raids. But according to **government sources**, officers from the Menwith Hill Listening station, in North Yorkshire, and GCHQ, in Cheltenham, spent weeks monitoring the communications and movements of the suspects.

Arrest warrants were executed following liaison between Special Branch and Scotland Yard’s anti-terrorism division

Article 1 (Neutral/ control condition)

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Arrest warrants were executed following liaison between Special Branch and Scotland Yard’s anti-terrorism division.

8.3: Survey 1

Survey 1: Media Use and Issues in the News

This first survey comprises three sections. The first section and second section explore media use; trust in the media and attitudes towards recent issues that have appeared in the news. The third section will ask you to read two newspaper articles and will then explore your perceptions of each piece. Please complete all sections of the survey. Your student number, asked in the final section, will not be used to identify your responses.

Section 1: Media Use and Trust in the Media

Q1. For each of the following please tell me how often you use each as a source of news:

	Every day	*Several times a week*	*Once a week*	*Occasionally*	*Never*
BBC 1 evening news (6pm or 10pm)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
ITV evening news (6:30pm or 10pm)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Channel 4 evening news	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24 hour TV news channel (Sky news, BBC News 24)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
BBC Online news	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Google News	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Online national newspaper's website	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q2. How often do you use the following newspapers as a source of news?

	Every day	*Several times a week*	*Once a week*	*Occasionally*	*Never*
The Sun / The News of the World	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Daily Mirror/ The Sunday Mirror	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Daily Telegraph/ The Sunday Telegraph	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Times/ The Sunday Times	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Guardian/ The Observer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Financial Times	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Daily Mail/ The Mail on Sunday	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Daily Express/The Express on Sunday	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Sunday People	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Independent/ The Independent on Sunday	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q3. **Please rate how much trust you have in the following news outlets to report the news objectively** ***(1= no trust at all and 5=complete trust)***

	1	2	3	4	5	Don't know
BBC 1 evening news (6pm or 10pm)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
ITV evening news (6:30pm or 10pm)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Channel 4 evening news	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24 hour TV news channel (Sky news, BBC News 24)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Google News	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Online national newspaper's website	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q4. **Overall, please rate how much trust you have in the following newspapers to report the news objectively** ***(1= no trust at all and 5=complete trust)***

	1	2	3	4	5	Don't know
The Sun/ The News of the World	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Daily Mirror/ The Sunday Mirror	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Daily Telegraph/ The Sunday Telegraph	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Times/ The Sunday Times	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Guardian/ The Observer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Financial Times	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Daily Mail/ The Mail on Sunday	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Daily Express/The Express on Sunday	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Sunday People	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Independent/ The Independent on Sunday	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section 2: Issues in the news

Q1: **Overall, how much trust do you have in newspapers to report on the following issues?** ***(1= no trust at all and 5=complete trust)***

	1	2	3	4	5
Immigration	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Health Service reform	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Terrorism	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
House price falls	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Economic recession	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q2: **How worried are you about the following issues that have appeared in the news recently?** ***(1=not worried at all and 5=very worried)***

	1	2	3	4	5
Immigration	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Health service reform	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Terrorism	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
House price falls	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Economic recession	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q3: **Please tell me if you support or oppose the following UK government policies or proposals that have featured in the news recently** ***(1=strongly oppose and 5=strongly support)***

	1	2	3	4	5
Greater police powers towards those suspected of terrorism offences	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To allow home owners suffering a loss of income to defer interest payments on their mortgage payments for up to two years.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The decision to end military operations in Iraq by May 2009 and begin the withdrawal of British troops from the country.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The introduction of national identity cards	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To allow patients to still receive free treatment under the NHS if they have part funded their care i.e. paid for drugs not currently free under the NHS	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section 3: Ratings of the Newspaper articles

Please take some time to read these two short articles taken from recent newspapers. When you have finished, please carry on with the questions on page 6.

Article 1

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Neighbours and local business owners expressed their shock at the arrests. "They seemed like normal, hard-working people," said one man.

"As far as I know they are friendly and they get a lot of customers," he said

Residents in the flat opposite were woken by police at 4 am. "We heard a lot of noise and shouting from outside. I opened the window to see what was happening and was told to get back inside by the police.'"

"I thought it was just a regular family who owned the shop.'"

It is not clear what prompted the timing of the raids. But according to police sources, officers from the Menwith Hill Listening station, in North Yorkshire, and GCHQ, in Cheltenham, spent weeks monitoring the communications and movements of the suspects.

Arrest warrants were executed following liaison between Special Branch and Scotland Yard's anti-terrorism division.

Article 2

House prices 'fell 15.9% in 2008'

House prices fell by 15.9% last year, according to the latest survey by the Nationwide building society.

The building society says that prices are 18% lower than their peak in October 2007.

The Nationwide's chief economist said last year was a "year of turmoil".

"The disruption in the financial markets worsened throughout 2008 and had larger implications for the real economy than we anticipated a year ago," said Fionnuala Earley.

"We did not anticipate the speed of house price falls or the extent of the global and domestic economic slowdown," she added.

The Nationwide's survey confirms last week's report from the Halifax which also said that prices had dropped by 16% in 2008.

Last year saw the biggest annual house price drop on record, which was prompted by a sharp fall in the availability of mortgage funds from lenders who had been hit by the international credit crunch.

This led to a sudden drop off in demand from buyers at a time when house prices had already reached record levels, as a result of which sales are currently down by 60%.

With mortgage approvals suffering an even bigger fall, sales and prices are expected to continue to drop for the time being.

"Prices have further to fall before significant numbers of buyers will be willing to return to the market," said Ms Earley.

Ms Earley warned that the developing economic recession would drag the housing market down further.

"Until the economy and the labour market stabilise, it is hard to imagine households becoming upbeat about the immediate future for house prices and this will hinder the pace of recovery," she said.

"In addition, the wider economic recession also impacts negatively on household expectations of future incomes."

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, (Rics) added its voice to the calls for government action to reinvigorate mortgage lending.

"I think to secure an improvement in transaction activity what we will need to see is some measures taken to increase the supply of mortgage finance," said Simon Rubinsohn, the Rics chief economist.

The biggest fall in house prices last year was in Northern Ireland where prices dropped by 34.2%, partly reversing the huge house price boom seen in the previous few years.

In Scotland however, prices were much more resilient, falling by only 8.1%.

Elsewhere in England and Wales the drop in prices was more uniform, ranging from 11% in Northern England to 16.6% in East Anglia.

Prices are still highest in London where they average £257,963.

"The ongoing deep problems of the housing market maintains pressure on the Bank of England to deliver another interest rate cut," said Howard Archer, chief economist at IHS Global Insight.

"Although mortgage lenders are likely to be increasingly unwilling to pass on much of any further interest rate cuts," he added.

Q1: How would you rate the overall believability of each story? *(1=not very believable and 5=very believable)*

	1	2	3	4	5
Article 1 (Three arrested over alleged bomb plot)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Article 2 (House prices 'fell 15.9% in 2008')	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q2: What are the specific reasons for the above evaluations of believability? Please list as many answers as necessary.

Q3: How would you rate the accuracy of the details reported in each story? *(1=not very accurate and 5=very accurate)*

	1	2	3	4	5
Article 1 (Three arrested over alleged bomb plot)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Article 2 (House prices 'fell 15.9% in 2008')	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q4: What are the specific reasons for the above evaluations of accuracy? Please list as many answers as necessary.

Section 4: About you

Q1: Are you?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Q2: If there were a general election tomorrow, which party would you vote for?

- ☐ Labour
- ☐ Conservative
- ☐ Liberal Democrat
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Would not vote
- ☐ Undecided
- ☐ Unable to vote in UK general elections

Q3: Please note down your student number so the responses to this survey can be cross referenced with your responses to survey 2:

Thank you for completing the survey.

8.4: Survey 2

Survey 2: About the news articles

This second survey asks some more specific questions on the 2 newspaper articles that you read in the first part of the study.

Q1: When you read the newspaper article describing a terrorist plot, can you remember which sources were quoted in the reports? *(Please tick all that apply)*

- Police sources/officials ☐
- Government sources/officials ☐
- Security sources/officials ☐
- Sources (unnamed) ☐
- Anti-terror sources ☐
- Whitehall sources ☐
- Metropolitan police commissioner-Paul Stephenson ☐
- Defence sources ☐
- Intelligence sources ☐

Q2: When you read the newspaper article describing a terrorist plot, were you aware of the different sources that were used to corroborate information relating to the plot?

- Yes ☐
- No ☐

1

Q3: If you read a newspaper article that quoted a 'security source', what does that reference mean to you? *(Please tick all that apply)*

A representative of the government ☐
A representative of Mi5 ☐
A senior police representative ☐
A representative of the armed forces ☐
Other...Please explain below ☐

Q4: If you read a newspaper article that quoted a 'whitehall source', what does that reference mean to you? *(Please tick all that apply)*

A representative of the government ☐
A civil servant ☐
A politician ☐
Anybody working in or connected to politics ☐
Other...Please explain below ☐

Q5: If you read a newspaper article that quoted a 'police source', what does that reference mean to you? *(Please tick all that apply)*

A serving police officer ☐
A senior police officer ☐
A Home office minister ☐
A representative of Mi5 ☐
Other...Please explain below ☐

Q6: If you read a newspaper article that quoted a 'government source', what does that reference mean to you? *(Please tick all that apply)*

A cabinet minister	☐
A government press officer	☐
A junior minister	☐
A civil servant	☐
Other...Please explain below	☐

Q7: If you read a newspaper article that quoted a 'counter-terror source', what does that reference mean to you? *(Please tick all that apply)*

A police officer from special branch	☐
A government minister	☐
A Home office spokesperson	☐
A representative of Mi5	☐
Other...Please explain below	☐

Q8: When journalists report news of suspected terrorist activity how trustworthy would you consider the following when quoted as sources: *(1=not at all trustworthy and 5=very trustworthy)*

	1	2	3	4	5
Police sources	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Government sources	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Security sources	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Sources (unnamed)	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

Q9: When you read newspaper articles or watch news bulletins, how do the types of sources cited by journalists or reporters influence your perceptions of the credibility of a story? Please write your thoughts below.

Q10: Please write your student number in the box below.

Thank you for completing the survey.

8.5: Preliminary Coding Categories

8.5.1: Results by Plot

Source	Ricin Plot	Old Trafford Bomb Plot	Canary Wharf Plot	Transatlantic Airliners Plot	Kidnap Plot
Government Sources- Veiled	8 (3.88%)	0 (0%)	6 (8.5%)	10 (2.05%)	2 (0.96%)
Government Sources- Identifiable	19 (9.22%)	0 (0%)	12 (16.9%)	55 (11.29%)	13 (6.22%)
Political Sources- Veiled	4 (1.94%)	0 (0%)	7 (9.9%)	18 (3.70%)	6 (2.87%)
Political Sources- Identifiable	6 (2.91%)	1 (1.82%)	11 (15.5%)	12 (2.46%)	7 (3.35%)
Police Sources- Veiled	37 (17.96%)	13 (23.64)	1 (1.4%)	26 (5.34%)	31 (14.83%)
Police Sources- Identifiable	20 (9.71%)	14 (25.45%)	4 (5.6%)	36 (7.39%)	24 (11.48%)
Senior/Authoritative Sources	3 (1.46%)	1 (1.82%)	8 (11.3%)	2 (0.41%)	1 (0.48%)
Counter terrorism Sources	3 (1.46%)	2 (3.64%)	4 (5.6%)	19 (3.90%)	4 (1.91%)
Security Sources- Veiled	28 (13.59%)	2 (3.64%)	8 (11.3%)	45 (9.24%)	18 (8.61%)
Security Sources- Identifiable	1 (0.49%)	0 (0%)	3 (4.2%)	4 (0.82%)	3 (1.44%)
Member of the Public	14 (6.8%)	10 (18.18%)	0 (0.0%)	42 (8.62%)	28 (13.4%)
Experts	19 (9.22%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.4%)	36 (7.39%)	13 (6.22%)
Hybrids	5 (2.43%)	1 (1.82%)	2 (2.8%)	14 (2.87%)	4 (1.91%)
Community sources	8 (3.88%)	3 (5.45%)	0 (0%)	11 (2.26%)	21 (10.05%)
Anonymous source	5 (2.43%)	5 (9.09%)	4 (5.6%)	13 (2.67%)	8 (3.83%)
Miscellaneous	6 (2.91%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	14 (2.87%)	8 (3.83%)
Health Source	11 (5.34%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
US Sources	1 (0.49%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
French Sources	8 (3.88%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Spokesperson from Manchester United FC	0 (0%)	3 (5.45%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Military Sources-Veiled	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (2.87%)
Military Sources - Identifiable	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.48%)
Relatives or Friends of Lance Corporal Hashmi	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	9 (4.31%)
Relatives or Friends of Ken Bigley	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (0.96%)
Pakistani Sources	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	54 (11.09%)	0 (0%)
US Sources	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	60 (12.32%)	0 (0%)
Airline Sources	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	16 (3.29%)	0 (0%)
Total	206	55	71	487	209

Source	Overall	Direct	Indirect	Narrative	Details of the Plot	Supplementary Reporting	Downplaying the threat
Government Sources- Veiled	26 (2.53%)	8 (30.77%)	7 (26.92%)	11 (42.31%)	13 (50%)	13 (50%)	1 (3.85%)
Government Sources- Identifiable	99 (9.63%)	69 (69.7%)	16 (16.16%)	14 (14.14%)	43 (43.43%)	56 (56.57%)	2 (2.02%)
Political Sources- Veiled	35 (3.4%)	21 (60%)	9 (25.71%)	5 (14.29%)	20 (57.14%)	15 (42.86%)	3 (8.57%)
Political Sources- Identifiable	37 (3.6%)	33 (89.19%)	1 (2.7%)	3 (8.11%)	8 (21.62%)	29 (78.38%)	4 (10.81%)
Police Sources- Veiled	108 (10.51%)	32 (29.63%)	21 (19.44%)	55 (50.93%)	97 (89.81%)	11 (10.19%)	7 (6.48%)
Police Sources- Identifiable	98 (9.53%)	68 (69.39%)	12 (12.24%)	18 (18.37%)	78 (79.59%)	20 (20.41%)	7 (7.14%)
Senior/Authoritative Sources	15 (1.46%)	7 (46.67%)	2 (13.33%)	6 (40%)	13 (86.67%)	2 (13.33%)	2 (13.33%)
Counter terrorism Sources	32 (3.11%)	16 (50%)	7 (21.88%)	9 (28.13%)	26 (81.25%)	6 (18.75%)	6 (18.75%)
Security Sources- Veiled	101 (9.82%)	31 (30.69%)	28 (27.72%)	42 (41.58%)	83 (82.18%)	18 (17.82%)	2 (1.98%)
Security Sources- Identifiable	11 (1.07%)	5 (45.45%)	0 (0%)	6 (54.55%)	5 (45.45%)	6 (54.55%)	0 (0%)
Member of the Public	94 (9.14%)	85 (90.43%)	4 (4.26%)	5 (5.32%)	62 (65.96%)	32 (34.04%)	0 (0%)
Experts	69 (6.71%)	50 (72.46%)	9 (13.04%)	10 (14.49%)	32 (46.38%)	37 (53.62%)	0 (0%)
Hybrids	26 (2.53%)	8 (30.77%)	2 (7.69%)	16 (61.54%)	20 (76.92%)	6 (23.08%)	3 (11.54%)
Community sources	43 (4.18%)	40 (93.02%)	3 (6.98%)	0 (0%)	16 (37.21%)	27 (62.79%)	0 (0%)
Anonymous source	35 (3.4%)	15 (42.86%)	10 (28.57%)	10 (28.57%)	31 (88.57%)	4 (11.43%)	1 (2.86%)
Miscellaneous	28 (2.72%)	13 (46.43%)	8 (28.57%)	7 (25%)	12 (42.86%)	16 (57.14%)	1 (3.57%)
Health Source	11 (1.07%)	9 (81.82%)	2 (18.18%)	0 (0%)	2 (18.18%)	9 (81.82%)	0 (0%)
Spokesperson from Manchester United FC	3 (0.29%)	3 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Military Sources-Veiled	6 (0.58%)	4 (66.67%)	1 (16.67%)	1 (16.67%)	5 (83.33%)	1 (16.67%)	0 (0%)
Military Sources -Identifiable	1 (0.10%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)
Relatives or Friends of Lance Corporal Hashmi	9 (0.88%)	9 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	8 (88.89%)	1 (11.11%)	0 (0%)
Relatives or Friends of Ken Bigley	2 (0.19%)	1 (50%)	0 (0%)	1 (50%)	2 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Pakistani Sources	54 (5.25%)	21 (38.89%)	14 (25.93%)	19 (35.19%)	49 (90.47%)	5 (9.26%)	0 (0%)
US Sources	61 (5.93%)	38 (62.3%)	9 (14.75%)	14 (22.95%)	47 (77.05%)	14 (22.95%)	0 (0%)
Airline Sources	16 (1.56%)	10 (62.5%)	6 (37.5%)	0 (0%)	2 (12.5%)	14 (87.5%)	0 (0%)
French Sources	8 (0.78%)	2 (25%)	4 (50%)	2 (25%)	2 (25%)	6 (75%)	0 (0%)
Total	**1028**	**599**	**175**	**254**	**679**	**349 (33.95%)**	**39 (3.79%)**

8.6: Audience Study: additional data

8.6.1: RQ3b

Non parametric tests of significance for the difference between groups' ratings of believability and accuracy:

Table 40: Mean Ranks of Believability and Accuracy

	Experimental condition	N	Mean Rank
Believability of the news article	Neutral condition	38	71.99
	Security sources condition	37	70.64
	Government sources condition	35	76.91
	Police sources condition	37	76.68
	Total	147	
Accuracy of the news article	Neutral condition	38	67.53
	Security sources condition	36	77.68
	Government sources condition	35	75.47
	Police sources condition	37	73.70
	Total	146	

Table 41: Kruskal-Wallis Test for Believability and Accuracy

	Believability of the news article	Accuracy of the news article
Chi-Square	.716	1.345
df	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.870	.719

Note: p<.05,

Table 42: Non Parametric Correlations between Audience Factors

	Believability of the news article	Accuracy of the news article	Mean media use	Mean newspaper use	Mean trust in news	Mean trust in newspapers	Trust in Newspapers to report Terrorism	Concern about Terrorism	Overall support for counter terrorism policies and proposals
Believability of the news article	1.000	.501**	.020	.042	.430**	.362**	.198*	.342**	.267**
Accuracy of the news article	.501**	1.000	.144	.001	.302**	.245**	.204*	.247**	.199*
Mean media use	.020	.144	1.000	.420**	.041	-.027	-.056	.142	.013
Mean newspaper use	.042	.001	.420**	1.000	.047	.068	.009	.256**	.106
Mean trust in news	.430**	.302**	.041	.047	1.000	.590**	.256**	.318**	.155
Mean trust in newspapers	.362**	.245**	-.027	.068	.590**	1.000	.283**	.353**	.289**
Trust in Newspapers to Report Terrorism	.198*	.204*	-.056	.009	.256**	.283**	1.000	.335**	.008
Concern about Terrorism	.342**	.247**	.142	.256**	.318**	.353**	.335**	1.000	.316**
Overall support for counter terrorism policies and proposals	.267**	.199*	.013	.106	.155	.289**	.008	.316**	1.000

Note: ** denotes correlation is significant at the p<0.01 level (1-tailed).

* denotes correlation is significant at the p<0.05 level (1 tailed)