Terrorism in Film Trailers:
Demographics, Portrayals, Violence, and Changes in Content
After September 11, 2001

JAMES D. IVORY
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

ANDREW PAUL WILLIAMS
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

JENNIFER HATCH
College of William and Mary

DAVID COVUCCI
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Please address correspondence to:
JAMES D. IVORY
111 Shanks Hall (Mail Code: 0311)
Department of Communication
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Blacksburg, VA 24061
Phone: 540.231.6507   E-Mail: jivory@vt.edu

Terrorism has long been a popular theme in theatrical films. Movie trailers, which have grown increasingly ubiquitous due to technologies such as the World Wide Web and portable digital media players, reach a far greater audience (some viewing intentionally, some unintentionally) than do the films themselves. This paper reports a content analysis examining the demographics and portrayal of terrorists in major-release film trailers, as well as the trailers' prevalence of violence. Action movie trailers tended to portray terrorists more negatively and feature more violence (both committed by terrorists and in general) compared to other genres. More interesting (and disconcerting) was the finding that terrorists in trailers for films released after September 11, 2001, were found to be more often non-White and more negatively portrayed than were their counterparts in trailers for films released before. Implications for cultivation effects are discussed and recommendations are made for future research.

In the old days, villains had moustaches and kicked the dog. Audiences are smarter today. They don't want their villain to be thrown at them with green limelight on his face. They want an ordinary human being with failings.

> *Alfred Hitchcock (quoted in Bartleby.com)*

Hey, terrorist! Terrorize this!

> *Kristen Miller as the voice of "Lisa" in the 2004 film* Team America: World Police

Although terrorism has long had some presence in the U. S. media (Simmons & Lowry, 1990), the unprecedented tragic events of September 11, 2001, immediately brought terrorism to the forefront of the media and public agenda, where it has more or less stayed in the long term (Craft & Wanta, 2004; Matsaganis & Payne, 2005; Scheufele, Nisbet, & Ostman, 2005). Although terrorism was painfully and immediately salient to news media and their audiences in the direct aftermath of the 2001 tragedy (Cho et al., 2003; Li & Izard, 2003; Reynolds & Barnett, 2003; Rubin et al., 2003), some evidence suggests that terrorism had not previously tended to receive consistently extensive coverage in the U. S. media (Traugott & Brader, 2005; Weimann & Brosius, 1991).

If terrorism had been neglected by the news media prior to September 11, 2001, it was certainly a common motif in motion pictures long before then (Boggs & Pollard, 2006; Lundegaard, 2005; Pollard, 2002). Boggs and Pollard (2006) describe the long-standing allure of terrorist elements to film, stating,

"Terrorism has become a vital source of narratives, fantasies, and myths that contribute so much to highly entertaining cinema, with its international intrigue, exotic settings, graphic violence, and the putative conflict between good and evil" (p. 335). Such themes may have once been thoroughly detached from the everyday lives of many a moviegoer. However, in the present climate, with terrorism commanding new prominence in both the public consciousness and individuals' outlooks and views of the world (Eidelson & Plummer, 2005), portrayals of terrorists in motion pictures may have new importance with regard to real-world perceptions.

Furthermore, film depictions can impact a much larger group than the film's actual audience via trailers, which are more readily accessible now than ever before via the Web and portable video media. At any given time, Apple Computer's trailer site (http://www.apple.com/trailers) hosts hundreds of trailers viewable on a computer or a portable iPod device. Sites of various other affiliations offering free trailers abound online. Of course, trailers are also still widely shown as television ads and in theaters before other films, one of many strategies that combine to make up an average marketing cost of $36.2 million per U. S. film in 2005 (Motion Picture Association of America, 2006).

To better understand the content of such widespread messages, this paper reports findings from a quantitative content analysis exploring the nature of terrorist depictions in trailers for major-release films, including terrorists' prevalence, demographics, portrayal and commission of violence. Also investigated are relationships between these variables other film production dimensions such as genre, rating, budget and box office. Lastly, the depictions in trailers for films released before September 11, 2001, are compared to trailers for those released after to determine whether changes in film depictions appear to be apparent.

Significance of Terrorist Depictions in Film Trailers

Ostensibly, fictional theatrical representations of terrorism may seem irrelevant to perceptions of real-life events. There is, however, a substantial body of literature strongly indicating that entertainment media shape users' real-world perceptions, behavior, and policy advocacy (e.g., Besley, 2006; Slater & Rouner, 2002; Slater, Rouner, & Long, 2006). Among the most popular frameworks outlining such effects is cultivation theory (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner et al., 1979), which maintains that media incrementally "cultivate" heavy users' perceptions of reality over long periods of time so that they more closely mirror those depicted in the media.

Film trailers' broad audience, easy accessibility, and often frequent and repetitive presentation on television and other media suggest a potential for cultivation effects. Additionally, the way they are often viewed may also make them particularly contributory to cultivation effects. Research on the role of message processing in cultivation (Shrum, 2001) indicates that cultivation effects are strongest when messages are processed heuristically, or without deliberation. Film trailers' brief and superficial nature, as well as their frequent exposure to viewers who are not actively engaged in attending to and processing messages (e.g., before a movie or during a television commercial break) therefore suggests that trailers' content may be even more conducive to cultivation effects than the films they advertise.

Although research has been dedicated to news media coverage of terrorism (e.g., Cho et al., 2003; Li & Izard, 2003; Reynolds & Barnett, 2003; Rubin et al., 2003; Simmons & Lowry, 1990; Traugott & Brader, 2005; Weimann & Brosius, 1991), less attention has been devoted to detailed systematic analyses of terrorism in entertainment media. Given the salience and sensitivity of terrorism as present and film trailers' potential for cultivation effects a more detailed understanding of their terrorism depictions is warranted.

Analyzing Film Trailers

Other content analyses have explored movie trailers because of the ubiquitous trailers' potential for effects. Oliver and Kalyanaraman (2002, 2006) investigated the prevalence of sex and violence in movie trailers on a sample of VHS films available for rent, as well as relationships between these con-

tent dimensions and the films' rating, genre, marketing costs, and box office (for both the film advertised in the trailer and the film the trailers preceded). The advent of easily accessible online trailer sites makes trailers even more widespread, increasing the need for research exploring their content and potential effects. Ivory (2007) explored depictions of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in online trailers because of the IRA's decades-long history of support among a sub-population in the United States (Guelke, 2001), but a similar analysis of terrorist depictions in general has not been conducted. To address this gap in the literature, we asked:

RQ1: What is the gender and ethnic makeup of terrorists featured in trailers for major cinema release films?

RQ2: How positive or negative are the general portrayals of terrorists in trailers for major cinema release films, and do portrayals vary with terrorist characters' ethnicity or film rating, genre, budget, or box office gross?

RQ3: How prevalent is violence, both committed by terrorists and in general, in trailers for major cinema release films featuring terrorists, and does the amount of violence vary with terrorist characters' ethnicity or film rating, genre, budget, or box office gross?

Impact of September 11, 2001

Just as the content of movie trailers may impact audience perceptions of the real world, some have suggested that the unprecedented scope of the September 11, 2001, attacks may have altered the way films—and, subsequently, their trailers—represent terrorism. Pollard (2002) maintains that the attacks of September 11, 2001, precipitated an unofficial moratorium on Hollywood films featuring terrorists, but also seems to suggest the long-term effect of the attacks will be to stimulate more films featuring terrorists: "From this standpoint, the unofficial ban on terrorist pictures is likely to be superseded by the war on terrorism. Hollywood can be expected to manufacture plenty of films dramatizing

noble wars against evil adversaries" (p. 138). Boggs and Pollard (2006) describe a post-September 11, 2001, change in the zeitgeist of war-themed films where "story lines have begun to shift as 'combat' itself morphs into something considerably more diffuse, reflecting a situation where military battle takes place anywhere and everywhere in the absence of definitive lines" (p. 344), but also forecast a status quo of formulaic action films predominately Arab terrorists as stock villains to replace the "commies and fascists" (p. 350).

Such statements seem to predict continued representation depictions of terrorists, consistently negative if not more so in response to real-life events and perhaps increasingly Arab in reaction to the perpetrators of the September 11, 2001, attacks. In the interest of assessing whether these or other trends have marked terrorist depictions after September 11, 2001, we therefore ask:

RQ4: Do trailers for major cinema release films that opened after September 11, 2001, differ in demographics and portrayal of terrorists, prevalence of violence, or budget and box office figures?

Method

Sample

Films for the sample were identified using the online Internet Movie Database (IMDb) Web site (http://www.imdb.com), a popular online database owned by Amazon.com that contains categorized information about movies, television programs, actors, production personnel, and other related media productions and people. The Internet Movie Database includes information for over 350,000 theatrically released movies, not including other titles such as direct-to-video movies, television programs, made-for-TV movies, and mini-series (Internet Movie Database, 2006). Over 30,000 trailers are also provided by the site, usually through links to third-party sites.

The database entry for many movies provides a brief plot summary and a list of plot keywords, both of which are searchable. These searchable plot summary and keyword entries were used to obtain the sample for this study. To obtain films for the sample, the search term "terrorist" and all identified

suffix permutations of the term (e.g., terrorists, terrorism, counter-terrorism) were entered into plot summary and keyword searches on the IMDb site. The alternative terms "guerilla" (and related permutations), "paramilitary," "freedom fighter," "revolutionary" (and related permutations), and "insurgent" (and related permutations) were also entered to obtain more films for the sample. These terms were partially generated by the authors and partially based on alternate keywords listed for movies obtained in the initial "terrorist" term searches. The additional terms were also intended to limit excessive bias in the sample's makeup based on possible pejorative connotations of the "terrorist" terminology.

Of all films obtained from these searches, only English-language non-documentary films that were theatrically released (not straight-to-video, made-for-TV, etc.) were included. Films whose IMDb entries did not include a trailer link (mostly films more than a few decades old or with very limited releases) were also excluded from the sample. A few extremely small theatrical releases that did have trailers available on the IMDb site, so all films having both a budget and U. S. box office under $100,000 were also excluded (along with films for which neither budget or U. S. box office information could be obtained at all) to limit the sample to major theatrical releases.

The selection criteria described above resulted in an initial identified sample of 96 trailers, completed on July, 11, 2006. Coders (see "Coding" section below) culled 18 more trailers from this initial sample because these trailers contained no reference to terrorists or portrayal thereof despite the IMDb plot reference. For example, the 1985 movie *Back to the Future* includes the keyword "terrorist" in its IMDb entry because the movie's fanciful time machine runs on plutonium purchased from vaguely identified terrorists. This connection to terrorists is unreferenced in the movie trailer, however, so *Back to the Future* was removed from the sample by the coder. This reduction of sample was appropriate because this study is primarily concerned with portrayals of terrorism that movie trailers' viewers are exposed to, not what portrayals viewers might be exposed to should they choose to watch the entire movie or search an online database for more information on it. Therefore, trailers with no reference to terrorism were deemed irrelevant regardless of what might be contained in the movie advertised.

After all search and elimination procedures were completed, a final sample of 78 trailers was used in analysis, representing available trailers for all identified English language, non-documentary, major theatrical release films that included reference to terrorists (or guerillas, paramilitaries, revolutionaries, and related entities). The films advertised in the final sample of trailers are listed in Appendix A.

Unit of Analysis

For each title in the sample, one trailer accessible from the film's IMDb entry was analyzed. In cases where more than one trailer was available from IMDb, only the first trailer listed was used (except in a few cases where a trailer link was nonfunctional, in which case the next available trailer was used). The trailer was used as the unit of analysis, with each trailer serving as one case in all analyses.

Coded Variables

Primary terrorist ethnicity. For each trailer in the sample, the primary terrorist ethnicity was coded. This was operationalized in coding protocols as "either the ethnicity of the primarily featured terrorist or, lacking a primary terrorist, the primary ethnicity of group." Categories for the variable, selected based on preliminary examination of the sample, were: "White," "Black," "Middle Eastern/Arabic," "Indian Subcontinent," "Hispanic/Latin American," "Asian or Pacific Islander," "Other," and "Unknown." If a predominant ethnicity could not be determined due to ethnic variation in the featured characters, coders were instructed to select "other" and add the note, "No primary ethnicity."

Primary terrorist gender. The primary terrorist gender was also coded for each trailer, operationalized in coding protocols as "either the gender of the primarily featured terrorist or, lacking a primary terrorist, primary gender of group." Categories for the variable were "Male," "Female," "Other," and "Unclear." If a predominant gender could not be determined due to variation in featured characters, coders were instructed to select "other" and add the note, "No primary gender."

Terrorist portrayal. The extent to which terrorists were generally portrayed as positive or negative in each trailer was coded using a continuous five-point scale (1 = "Clearly Negative," 5 = "Clearly Positive"). Because the continuous scale required a degree of subjectivity, detailed criteria were used to maximize intercoder reliability in portrayal ratings. Coding protocols guiding this variable instructed coders as follows:

> *Treat choices as equidistant, with moderate choices representing mild degrees of portrayal and end choices representing extremely positive or negative portrayals. Positive portrayals depict the characters as heroic, likeable, sympathetic, or reasonable; negative portrayals depict the characters as villainous, unlikable, unsympathetic, or unreasonable. If characters' portrayals in a setting are contradictory, code the approximation of the aggregate portrayal of the characters. If no determination can be made of the characters' portrayal, code as neutral, but avoid neutral category if a general trend is observed. If characters are consistent, extremes are probably justified. If characters show inconsistencies, but follow a pattern, non-extreme, non-neutral categories are probably justified.*

Terrorist violence. For each trailer, coders counted the number of scenes featuring violent acts committed by terrorists. Violence was operationally defined, in accordance with the National Television Violence Study (Wilson et al., 1997) and in previous analyses of movie trailers (Ivory, 2007; Oliver & Kalyanaraman, 2002), as "intentional aggression, physical force, or threat of physical force designed to physically harm an animate being or group of beings." This measure included only such violence committed by terrorists, either on-screen or in instances where violence could clearly be inferred to have been committed by terrorists (e.g., an explosion, targeting terrorists' foes). The mere display of weapons was not counted unless threat is involved (e.g., pointing in a menacing manner). Aggression in a sporting context (e.g., a boxing match) was not counted as violence.

Instead of counting and delineating individual acts during the trailers, which might have been extremely difficult given their fast-paced production,

the variable was enumerated by counting the number of scenes featuring terrorist violence. A scene was operationalized as each segment of the trailer continuously featuring events during the same time and place setting. For example, an interaction between two characters was counted as one scene even if the camera cut to multiple points of view during the interaction.   If the same scene was shown (or appeared to be shown) twice during a trailer with other scenes between, the interrupted scene was counted as two separate scenes. Scenes defined in this manner might last a fraction of a second or several seconds. Multiple acts of violence occurring during the same scene (e.g., a flurry of punches, two terrorists firing submachine guns simultaneously) were counted as only one violent scene using this operationalization.

Overall violence. The total number of violent scenes was also counted for each trailer. The same operational definition for violence and scenes was used as with the terrorist violence category, except that all scenes featuring violence committed by anyone (including terrorists and any other characters in the trailer, such as anti-terrorist characters) were counted in this variable's enumeration. The total number of violent scenes overall could therefore be equal to the number of scenes featuring terrorist violence (if no other character committed acts of violence in other scenes) or greater (if another character committed acts of violence in other scenes, including against terrorists), but could not be smaller because all scenes with terrorist violence were included in the count for the total number of violent scenes overall.

External Indicator Variables

Rating. MPAA rating information for each film featured in the trailers was obtained from the IMDb site. These ratings pertained, however, to the film advertised, not the trailer itself.

Genre. The IMDb site was also used to obtain primary genre information for each trailer's advertised film. Although multiple genres were listed for many films (e.g., "Drama," "History," and "Thriller" for the 2005 film Munich), only the primary genre given on the site was listed. Primary genres given for films featured in the sample trailers were "Action," "Comedy," "Drama," and "Horror."

Release date. The U. S. release date for each advertised film (not for its trailer) was obtained from The Numbers (http://www.the-numbers.com), a Web site that bills itself as "the largest freely available database of movie industry information on the web" (The Numbers, 2006, n. p.). Although specific release dates were recorded, only the year of release was entered for the release date variable. For analyses comparing trailers for films released before and after September 11, 2001 to address RQ4, however, specific release date was used in one case to determine whether films released in 2001 would be categorized as having been released before or after September 11.

Budget. When available, The Numbers was also used to obtain budget information for films advertised in the trailers in U.S. dollars (USD). Typically, though not always, these figures were estimates rounded off to the nearest million or half-million USD. This variable was left blank when no budget information was available.

Box office. In most cases, The Numbers also provided U. S. box office gross figures for films advertised in the trailers in USD. In some instances, box office gross was provided in a precise dollar figure; In others, it appeared to be rounded to the nearest thousand, ten thousand, or hundred thousand dollars.

All external indicator data were collected by July 11, 2006, except in the case of one recently-released film (*United 93*) for which box office data were added later (October 26, 2006) to allow the film to complete its cinematic run.

Coding Reliability

Two student coders (one male and one female) were trained in the coding protocols, with the film trailer assignments from the initial sample of 96 trailers randomly distributed evenly among them with a randomly selected overlap of 12.5% ($n = 12$) included in each coder's assigned list so that reliability could be assessed. With this overlap included, each coder was initially assigned 54 trailers. Coders culled a total of 18 cases from the initial sample (see "Sample" section above) that did not feature a trailer with a terrorist portrayal, including three cases originally included in the overlap (coders agreed on all of these removal decisions). The

final sample's overlap was therefore 11.5% (N = 9). After reliability was assessed, random selection was used to determine which coder's decisions were used for each case in the overlap list.

For the categorical measures of primary terrorist ethnicity and primary terrorist gender, reliability was calculated using Scott's (1955) π. For both of these variables, though, coder agreement was 100%, rendering the π value redundant. (In cases of 100% agreement, π is either 1 or indeterminate, depending on whether values for an item vary or are constant across all cases.)

For the continuous scene frequency (number of scenes with terrorists committing violent acts and total number of violent scenes) and rating scale (general portrayal of terrorists) measures, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r) was used to assess reliability (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 1998). This strategy mirrors the reliability assessment employed by Oliver and Kalyanaraman (2002) in their analysis of sexual and violent movie trailer content. Strong reliability was found for number of scenes with terrorists committing violence ($r = .82$), total number of scenes containing violence ($r = .87$), and general portrayal of terrorists ($r = .82$).

Results

Sample Descriptive Statistics

The trailers in the final sample ($n = 78$) varied in length from 29 to 194 seconds ($M = 98.0$, SD = 45.05). Film release dates ranged from 1942 to 2006, with all but one (98.7%, $n = 77$) released no earlier than 1970 and most (74.4%, $n = 58$) released no earlier than 1990. The median year of release was 1992 ($M = 1991.10$, $SD = 9.70$).

Budget information was only available for 64.1% ($n = 50$) of the sample. For available cases, budgets ranged from $200,000 to $120,000,000, with a median of $47,500,000 ($M = $46,664,373.74$, $SD = $33,491,822.34$). The U.S. gross was available for 96.2% of cases ($n = 75$). For these cases, U.S. box office receipts ranged from $12,903 to $215,409,889, with a median of $25,096,862 ($M = $43,498,366.59$, $SD = $46,252,681.96$). In those cases where both budget and U. S. box office information were available (61.5%, $n = 48$), budget and U. S. gross information were highly correlated, $r(46) = .667$, $p < .001$.

Over two-thirds (67.9%, n = 53) of the sample were listed as action films by primary genre, with drama the next most common (25.6%, n = 20). Less frequent were comedy (5.1%, n = 4) and horror (1.3%, n = 1) films. Most of the trailers were for R-rated films (82.1%, n = 64), followed by PG-13 (11.5%, n = 9) and PG (6.4%, n = 5).

Terrorist Demographics

The study's first research question concerned the gender and ethnic makeup of terrorists featured in the trailers. The primary terrorist gender in nearly all trailers was male (94.9%, n = 74). In a few cases, primary terrorist gender was unclear (3.8%, n = 3) or irrelevant (1.3%, n = 1, this film featured alien creatures with no sex characteristics in the role). Primary terrorist gender was not female for any films. Because primary terrorist gender was so predominantly male, gender was not explored in relation to other variables in subsequent analyses.

For the majority of trailers, the primary terrorist ethnicity was White (59.0%, n = 46), followed by Middle Eastern/Arabic (10.3, n = 8), Hispanic/Latin American (6.4%, n = 5), Asian or Pacific Islander (3.8%, n = 3), and Black (2.6%, n = 2). Primary terrorist ethnicity was unknown for 12.8% of the sample (n = 10), with a smaller minority of trailers specifying no primary terrorist ethnicity (2.6%, n = 2) or featuring a primary terrorist ethnicity not listed in the categories (2.6%, n = 2; both of these cases involved terrorist entities from other planets).

Portrayal of Terrorists

The second research question asked how positively or negatively terrorists tended to be portrayed in the trailers. Portrayals on the five-point continuous tended to be negative (M = 1.53, SD = 1.07). In fact, almost three quarters of the trailers sampled (74.4%, n = 58) were rated with the most negative score on the terrorist portrayal scale (1, "Clearly Negative").

Further analyses tested for differences in portrayal of characters by ethnicity. Because individual non-white groups were too small to be used as individual categories in an ANOVA analysis testing for ethnicity's effects on portrayals, categories were collapsed into "White" (59.0% n = 46) and "Non-White" (41.0%, n = 32) for an independent samples t

test comparing portrayals of these two groups.[1] The test found no significant difference between the two groups (p > .05)

A final set of analyses explored potential relationships between portrayals of terrorists and the rating, genre, budget, and box office variables. An independent samples t test found no significant difference between terrorist portrayals in trailers for R-rated films and films with lower ratings, (p > .05). An independent samples t test comparing terrorist portrayals in trailers for action movies (M = 1.24, SD = .68) and non-action movies (M = 2.12, SD = .29) found portrayals of terrorists in the former to be significantly more negative in action movies, Welch's $t(29.03)$ = 2.87, p = .008 (Equal variances not assumed; Levene's test F = 38.59, p < .001).[2] No significant correlation was found between terrorist portrayals and budget or box office (rs < .10, ps > .05).

Terrorist Violence

The third research question concerned how much terrorist violence and overall violence was featured in the trailers. To assess the proportional frequency of violent scenes in trailers, both variables pertaining to violence frequency (scenes with terrorist violence and scenes with overall violence) were divided by the trailer length variable, with the result multiplied by 60 to produce violent scene per minute measures. Trailers' rates for terrorist violence scenes per minute ranged from 0 to 26 (M = 3.05, SD = 3.62); Total violent scenes per minute ranged from 0 to 26 (M = 6.44, SD = 5.06).

Further analyses examined whether primary terrorist ethnicity, rating, and genre had any effect on the terrorist violence or overall violence frequencies, using independent samples t tests as with the above tests pertaining to terrorist portrayals. Among these, the only significant relationships found were between the violence variables and genre. Predictably, terrorist violence was more frequent in the trailers for action films (M = 3.69, SD = 4.06) than in non-action films (M = 1.68, SD = 1.86), $t(76)$ = 2.37, p = .02. (Equal variances assumed: Levene's test F = 1.63, p < .05). Frequency of violence in general followed the same pattern, with more violent scenes per minute in the action film trailers (M = 7.98, SD = 5.23) than in the non-action film trai-

lers ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 2.52$), Welch's $t(75.94)$, $p < .001$. (Equal variances not assumed: Levene's test $F = 3.98$, $p = .05$). No significant differences were found in t tests comparing scores the violence variables using the dichotomous ethnicity and rating groups (all $ps > .05$), and no correlations between either violence variable and the portrayal, budget or box office variables were significant ($rs < .20$, $ps > .05$).

Comparing Before and After September 11, 2001

The study's fourth research question asked whether there were any changes in terrorist ethnicity, portrayal, or violence after September 11, 2001. To address the question, the release date variable was collapsed into two categories: one including all films released before September 11, 2001 (88.5%, $n = 69$), and one including all trailers for films released after (11.5%, $n = 9$).[3] A significant difference was observed in portrayals of terrorists before and after September 11, 2001, with portrayals after the event ($M = 1.11$, $SD = .33$) more negative than portrayals before the event ($M = 1.58$, $SD = 1.12$), Welch's $t(38.79) = 2.69$, $p = .01$. (Equal variances not assumed: Levene's test $F = 6.82$, $p = .01$).

Along with increasingly negative terrorist portrayals, there is at least partial evidence for changes in the ethnic makeup of featured terrorists after September 11, 2001. After collapsing the primary terrorist ethnicity variable into "White" and "Non-White" categories,[4] a chi-square test comparing prevalence of these two ethnic group categories before and after September 11, 2001, found the relationship to be significant (Table 1), $\chi^2(1, n = 78) = 5.68$, $p = .017$. The continuity correction (Yates' correction) was used because of one expected cell count below five, and the corrected statistic was also significant, $\chi^2(1, n = 78) = 4.09$, $p = .043$. The significance of the result was also consistent for a

Cramer's V test, $V = .27$, $p = .02$. White was by far the most common primary terrorist ethnicity (63.8%, $n = 44$) for trailers released before September 11, 2001, but represents the primary ethnicity for only a small minority (22.2%, $n = 2$) of trailers released after.

Also of interest, the most frequent non-white ethnic group represented in primary terrorist portrayals after September 11, 2001, was among the Middle Eastern/Arabic group (33.3%, $n = 3$) of the total primary portrayals after. This second finding should be interpreted very cautiously, though, as the proportions observed are based on extremely small groups in some cases and distributions of specific non-white ethnic categories were not subjected to inferential tests.

Independent samples t tests comparing pre-September 11, 2001, films and those released after found no significant differences in the frequency of terrorist violence or overall violence, nor were differences found in the budget or box office revenue of the advertised films (all $ps > .05$).

Discussion

It is not particularly surprising that negative portrayals and violence have been consistently common in film trailers featuring terrorists. Also predictable are the findings that action films have been the predominant vehicle for terrorist portrayals and that they feature more negative portrayals of terrorists and more violence (by terrorists and in general).

More interesting are many of the significant findings regarding comparisons between trailers for films released before and after September 11, 2001. The overall predominance of White terrorists in the sample overall is not particularly striking, but the dramatic shift toward predominantly non-White

Table 1:

Distribution of primary terrorist ethnicity in trailers before and after September 11, 2001.

	Before Sept. 11 ($n = 69$)	After Sept. 11 ($n = 9$)
Ethnic Group		
White	63.8% ($N = 44$)	22.2% ($N = 2$)
Non-White	36.2% ($N = 25$)	77.8% ($N = 7$)

$\chi^2(1, N = 78) = 5.68$, $p = .017$; After continuity correction: $\chi^2(1, N = 78) = 4.09$, $p = .043$; $V = .27$, $p = .017$.

terrorists after September 11, 2001, is noteworthy. Part of the change can be explained the release of the directly-related *United 93*, whose subject matter is the September 11, 2001, attacks, but this is not enough to account for such a shift away from White terrorist portrayals among the other films with subject matter unrelated to the September 11, 2001, events. The potential implications of this trend regarding cultivation effects are troubling: If non-White terrorists (especially, as this study's findings at least tentatively suggest, Arabic ones) will continue to be the trend in future trailers, what impact will that have on public perceptions of racial minorities if terrorism continues to maintain such salience in the public consciousness?

Although the entire sample of trailer portrayals generally portrayed terrorists negatively, evidence that portrayals tended to be even more negative nature after September 11, 2001, also suggests an impact of real-life events on the films and their marketing: Pollard's (2002) forecasted "evil adversaries" appear to have indeed lined up to take their places in post-September 11, 2001, movie fare. More troubling, though, is the confluence of increasingly negative terrorist depictions and increasingly non-White terrorist depictions after September 11, 2001, both observed here. Again, the implications for cultivation effects are disconcerting. If the events of September 11, 2001 have indeed impacted terrorist depictions, this study suggests that it has done so in ways that may exacerbate social stigma and ethnic tension.

Of course, this study cannot definitively suggest that any such effects on viewers results from such changes in trailers. A major limitation of the present research is that the potential media effects that partially motivate it are not ascertainable via content analysis. To further explore the potential impact of September 11, 2001, on film depictions of terrorism and possible subsequent impacts on viewers, surveys or experiments need to be used in conjunction with continued analyses of entertainment media content.

Such an undertaking would also benefit from a follow-up content analysis exploring the concepts measured here in greater scope. One difficulty this study encountered, especially with post-September 11, 2001, film trailers, was that the small population of movies in the analysis thwarted some analyses (e.g., there were not enough cases for definitive inferential testing of specific ethnic makeup of terrorists post-September 11, 2001). Although the sample here represents a concerted effort to obtain all relevant trailers and may well represent a census of all relevant trailers available at the time of data collection, more insight might be gained if another sample is obtained in several years after more films have been released in the future. Also, other means of identifying the population of relevant trailers may yield a few more cases that were not included here. The present study's use of established film database search tools was effective and efficient and seems to have been fairly exhaustive, but another sampling method (e.g., obtaining a list of films from an industry group) might more clearly identify film trailers for inclusion and exclusion. Applying the study's methods to other entertainment media offerings (e.g., entire films, television, video games) would also help to assess whether the trends observed here—some of them disturbing—are truly prevalent.

Generally, this study represents a useful step toward a better understanding of how major-release movie trailers depict terrorism and how the terrible events of September 11, 2001, may have influenced these depictions. Future research may better assess the possible effects of these depictions on viewers. In the meantime, we are left to reflect on the observed post-September 11, 2001, trend toward increasingly negative, increasingly non-White (and, possibly, increasingly Arab) terrorists on big-screen previews and to ponder what messages such a cast of villains might be sending to movie viewers during an already unsettled period in global politics.

Notes

[1]Analyses featuring the rating and genre variables employed t tests using collapsed dichotomous categories for the same reason: They were similarly distributed with most cases in one category (R and action, respectively).

[2]Welch's t is appropriately used and reported when equal variances cannot be assumed due to a significant Levene's test result ($p \leq .05$). Levene's test results are also reported for all t tests.

[3]One film, *Spy Game*, was released on November 21, 2001 and was included in the "after" category, though it could be argued that the film should be included in the

"before" category because the bulk (if not all) of its production would have been completed by September 11, 2001. The issue is moot, however, because the significance of tests did not materially differ from those reported here when the analyses were repeated with *Spy Game* shifted to the "before" category or removed from groups altogether.

[4]This was done to increase cell prevalences to an acceptable level for a chi square test to be conducted, as some individual ethnic group categories were infrequently represented in one or both temporal categories. It also created a 2 X 2 table that allowed the continuity

Appendix A: Final Trailer Sample

A Prayer for the Dying (1987)
Action Jackson (1988)
Air Force One (1997)
Apocalypse Now (1979)
Arlington Road (1999)
Bad Company (2002)
Bananas (1971)
Best Defense (1984)
Brazil (1985)
Broken Arrow (1996)
Casablanca (1942)
Collateral Damage (2002)
Commando (1985)
Con Air (1997)
Death Before Dishonor (1987)
Die Hard (1988)
Die Hard 2 (1990)
Die Hard: With a Vengeance (1995)
Double Team (1997)
Eleni (1985)
Extreme Prejudice (1987)
Face/Off (1997)
Homocide (1991)
In the Name of the Father (1993)
Invasion USA (1985)
JFK (1991)
Knock Off (1998)
Let's Get Harry (1986)
Mad Max (1979)
Man on Fire (1987)
Michael Collins (1996)
Mission Impossible II (2000)
Money Talks (1997)
Munich (2005)
Navy SEALS (1990)
Network (1976)
Nighthawks (1981)
Parasite (1982)
Passenger 57 (1992)
Patriot Games (1992)

Proof of Life (2000)
Red Dawn (1984)
Rollercoaster (1977)
Romero (1989)
Ronin (1998)
Savior (1998)
Some Mother's Son (1996)
Spy Game (2001)
Stone Cold (1991)
Sudden Death (1995)
Superman II (1980)
Team America: World Po lice (2004)
The Avengers (1998)
The Beast of War (1988)
The Boxer (1997)
The Crying Game (1992)
The Delta Force (1986)
The Devil's Own (1997)
The Imposters (1998)
The Jackal (1997)
The Long Kiss Goodnight (1996)
The Molly Maguires (1970)
The Octagon (1980)
The Patriot (2000)
The Peacemaker (1997)
The Quiet American (2002)
The Rock (1996)
The Siege (1998)
The Sum of All Fears (2002)
Thunder Run (1986)
To Live and Die in L.A. (1985)
Toy Soldiers (1991)
True Lies (1994)
Under Siege (1992)
Under Siege 2: Dark Territory (1995)
United 93 (2006)
Wanted Dead or Alive (1987)
XxX (2002)

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