

RESPONDING TO THE RISK OF TERRORISM:

THE CONTRIBUTION OF METAPHOR

(Respondendo ao risco de terrorismo: a contribuição da metáfora)

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Abstract: *This discourse-based study investigated semantic and affective aspects of metaphors used by people talking about background risk of terrorism. 96 members of the UK public participated in 12 focus group discussions, organized by gender, religion (Muslim / non-Muslim), and socio-economic status. 12,362 metaphors were identified in transcribed talk, coded for vehicle domain and discourse topic, and subjected to qualitative and some quantitative analyses. In contrast to negative, dominant metaphors found in studies of media and political discourse, 'ordinary' people use an intersecting range of systematic metaphors, including "GAMES OF CHANCE", "NATURAL WORLD" and "THEATER". Affect works across linguistic metaphors with various source domains, and in connection with non-metaphorical language such as reflection on action and explicit expression of empathy. Gender, religion and social class intersect in metaphor preferences.*

Key-words: *metaphor; spoken discourse; terrorism; risk; focus group.*

Resumo: *Este estudo baseado no discurso investigou aspectos afetivos e semânticos de metáforas usados por pessoas ao falarem no risco de terrorismo em potencial. 96 informantes do público inglês organizados por sexo, religião (Mulçumanos / não-Mulçumanos), e estatus social participaram de 12 grupos focais de discussão. Foram identificadas e transcritas 12.362, metáforas, codificadas por domínio de veículo e tópico discursivo, as quais foram submetidas a análises qualitativas e quantitativas. Em contraste com metáforas predominantemente negativas encontradas em estudos da mídia e no discurso político, as pessoas 'comuns' usam uma variedade de metáforas sistemáticas que se interrelacionam e incluem "JOGOS DE AZAR", "MUNDO NATURAL" e "TEATRO". O afeto funciona em metáforas linguísticas com diversos domínios fonte, e em conexão com linguagem não metafórica tal como reflexão sobre ações e expressão explícita de empatia. Gênero, religião e classe social se interrelacionam em preferências quanto à metáfora.*

Palavras-chave: *metáfora; discurso falado; terrorismo; risco; grupos de discussão.*

INTRODUCTION

This paper relates to a plenary given at the conference “Metaphor in Language and Thought III”, Fortaleza, Brazil, 21-24 October 2008.

The paper reports findings from one stage of a larger project “Perception and Communication of the Risk of Terrorism” (PCTR)¹, carried out in the UK. The project was conceived in response to the problem of how to communicate effectively about the risk of terrorism, and had two main aims: firstly, to investigate how people conceptualize the background risk of terrorism; secondly, to explore the potential that knowledge of these conceptualizations might have for making official communications about the threat more effective and more sensitive to the diverse nature of the UK population.

The post-9/11 era has seen a great increase in discourse around terrorism and risk. The topic has become ubiquitous in private conversations, in political debate, and in media reporting and analysis. At the same time, there is a more urgent need on the part of the authorities to communicate with the public about the practicalities of the risk - to give a realistic assessment of the threat, to inform people of action that is being taken, and to ask for public co-operation in dealing with terrorism. Effective official communication is complicated by the very nature of terrorism. Terrorism involves deliberate acts which occur at unpredictable times and have fatal consequences; people in affected locations are harmed or spared at random; crucially, instances and images of terrorist attacks seen on television or newspaper pictures are extremely easy for most people to recall. The emotional responses aroused by these characteristics of terrorism influence people’s perceptions of the risk (Kahneman 2003; Slovic, Finucane, Peters, & MacGregor 2004). In the United Kingdom, the process is further complicated by the demographic diversity of the population and by the fact that the London bombings in July 2005 were carried out by young men from minority ethnic and Muslim communities who had been born in the UK.

1. The project was funded by the UK’s Economic and Social Research Council as part of their New Security Challenges programme. The project team included J. Maule, R. Maslen, Z. Todd, P. Stratton and L. Cameron.

Metaphor was adopted as a particularly appropriate tool for investigating such a topic, since not only is it intrinsic to people's conceptualizations, but also an important carrier of affect: emotions, attitudes and values (Cameron 2003, 2007; Deignan, 2005).

The next section presents a brief review of relevant studies, before moving on to describe the methodology of the metaphor analysis and then reporting findings.

TERRORISM, RISK AND METAPHORS

The study aimed to analyse the metaphors used in discourse about the risk of terrorism and their affective value in order to reveal people's cognitive frames and the attitudes and values associated with them, and how these vary.

A key connection between risk perception and metaphor lies in affect – emotions, feelings and moods (Damasio 1999). A study of educational discourse showed that the teachers' metaphors carried attitudes and values associated with learning that were consistent across varied source domains and across conventional and less conventional metaphors (Cameron 2003). Affect has emerged as an important heuristic that people use when estimating risk² (Slovic 1999; Slovic et al. 2004), working in interaction with analytic or rational reasoning in what Finucane, Peters and Slovic called "the dance of affect and reason" (2003; in the title of the paper). Emotions connect into our embodied experience and are stored in memory attached to images or mental patterns (Damasio 1999). Since metaphors activate affect as well as conceptual information, we can expect that metaphors are of particular use in talk about risk, and will be especially interested to find out what kinds of emotional meanings and memories metaphors may activate or carry.

2. Slovic uses 'affect' in a more limited way than Damasio to refer to just the evaluative aspect: "positive or negative evaluative feeling towards an external stimulus (Slovic 1999: 694). Here we use the more extended sense "affect is the thing (sic) you display (emote) or experience (feel) towards an object, or situations" (Damasio 1999: 342)

Studies from the field of risk perception and from metaphor suggest a range of individual and social factors that might be expected to influence or interact with how people use metaphor in talk about risk.

STUDIES OF METAPHOR IN DISCOURSE AROUND TERRORISM

The specific area of metaphors used in talk about risk is not, as far as we have discovered, reported in the literature. Metaphors used by politicians and the press, however, have been investigated. The body of work on media and political discourse about terrorism shows that metaphor plays an important role in framing discourse, with the probable effect of constraining public discourse. A number of studies have looked at the metaphors used by President George W. Bush when talking about security issues. An analysis of metaphors used by the US government following 9/11 shows that they are very consistent with US foreign policy but, as metaphor inevitably conceals as well as reveals, also hide some aspects of the international relations agenda (Zhang 2007). In Bush's speeches from 2001 – 2004, a conflict frame was used alongside a strategy of fear as a persuasive device to garner support for war (Ferrari 2007). Within the conflict frame, a number of metaphors were used, including personification of the victims of the 9/11 attacks, and metaphors of wounds and struggle.

Discussions of terrorism in the US and beyond have largely been framed by the idea of 'war on terror'. Krebs and Lobasz (2007) argue that as the meaning of 9/11 became fixed as 'war on terror', this created a limited discursive space in which people could talk about the war in Iraq. Specifically, they argue that opposition politicians were "rhetorically coerced": "given the dominance of the War on Terror discourse, opponents of war with Iraq had few rhetorical resources with which to challenge these 'logical' steps leading down the path to war" (Krebs and Lobasz 2007: 444). Media coverage of terrorism has tended to use pre-existing discourses about crime and control in an uncritical way (Altheide 2007). Comparing the US and the UK in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, there were many similarities in the way that Bush and Blair talked about terrorism and the war on terror (Johnson 2002). In the UK, press coverage of emergency measures to counteract terrorism have used a discourse which re-frames freedom as a freedom from fear, rather than freedom of action (Tsoukala 2006).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions addressed by this part of the study were:

1. How is metaphor used in the conceptualization of terrorism and risk?
2. What differences are found in metaphor use across the dimensions of socio-economic status, religion and gender?

METHOD

The view of metaphor adopted in this study

A discourse dynamics approach to metaphors in social interaction underlies the methodology of the study (Cameron 2007; Cameron, Maslen, Maule, Todd, Stratton & Stanley 2009) and is combined with a 'weak' version of conceptual metaphor theory (e.g. Lakoff 1993). Conceptual metaphor theory is concerned with conceptual metaphor as applied to the population at large, i.e. across the speech community. It should not be assumed that conceptual metaphors structure thought in the minds of each individual involved in focus group discussion. The method works with linguistic metaphor, identified in language use and not assumed as necessarily reflecting a conceptual metaphor³. Conceptual metaphors are seen as just one possible influence on what happens in on-line conversation and one possible source of linguistic metaphors, along with linguistic and cultural influences of other types (Gibbs & Cameron 2008). Metaphor is seen as a phenomenon of both language and thought, dynamically produced in spontaneous talking-and-thinking (Cameron 2003: 35); systematic use of metaphor offers insights into conceptualizations and affect, with different kinds of systematicity available to the researcher, including semantic, affective, and distributional.

3. The term 'linguistic metaphor' used in the sense of 'metaphorically-used language' as in Steen (1994) and Cameron (2003), and not as in Steen (2007) to mean the linguistic expression of a conceptual metaphor.

Data collection, participants

96 participants were recruited to 12 focus groups (8 in each), selected primarily to include a spread of members of the general public, using four two-way criteria: location⁴, gender, socio-economic class (A / B and C1 / C2)⁵, and religion (non-Muslim and Muslim). A range of ages was represented in each group. Most Muslim participants were recruited from the ethnic groups which account for the majority of the UK Muslim population (Pakistani and Bangladeshi), though other ethnic groups were also represented. A female Muslim colleague from outside the research team was employed to conduct the Muslim focus groups.

Each focus group met with a moderator and another researcher for a discussion of around 90 minutes between March and May 2006. Discussions were audio-recorded. Moderators guided the discussions with a schedule of questions related to the risk of terrorism. They did not participate in the discussion, except to introduce a new theme or guide participants back from irrelevant topics.

Transcription

Recorded focus group discussions were transcribed, providing a corpus of some 213,000 words for metaphor analysis. Transcripts were formatted in intonation units following Chafe (1994) and Du Bois, Schuetze-Coburn, Cumming and Paolino (1993) (see Stelma & Cameron 2007 for a discussion of the use of intonation units in metaphor research). The transcription was orthographic, with pauses marked but not stress.

4. The dimension of location in the UK is not further examined here. Muslim groups were not separated for socio-economic status.

5. Demographic and social grade definitions from the National Readership Survey (UK) were used by the recruitment company who recruited the participants:

A: upper middle class; higher managerial, administrative or professional occupations

B: middle class; intermediate managerial, administrative or professional occupations

C1: lower middle class; supervisory or clerical, junior managerial, administrative or professional occupations

C2: skilled working class; skilled manual workers

(source - <http://www.businessballs.com/demographicsclassifications.htm>, accessed 20 January 2008)

Metaphor analysis

Metaphor analysis begins with a three-stage coding process: identification, vehicle grouping coding and key topic coding. The method is close to constructivist grounded theory in that it “assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by viewer and viewed, and aims towards interpretive understandings of subjects’ meanings” (Charmaz 2001: 509). Codings and categories are constructed to keep the data alive and meaningful as it is condensed, through “flexible, heuristic strategies rather than formulaic procedures” (Charmaz 2001: 511)

Metaphor identification

The identification of linguistic metaphor followed the procedures set out in Cameron (2003), adapted to follow some of the principles of the pragglejazz metaphor identification procedure (Pragglejazz 2007). Metaphor identification requires difference or incongruity between the contextual meaning of the vehicle term and a more basic, often concrete meaning of the term, and potential transfer of meaning or interaction between the two meanings. Our procedure differed from the pragglejazz procedure in identifying vehicle terms rather than words, on the principle that the individual word is not always a unit of talking-and-thinking but that units might be words or phrases of varying lengths, often formulaic to some degree (Wray 2002; Cameron & Deignan 2006). A further advantage of identifying vehicles from the start in transcribed talk is that each vehicle signals an instance of linguistic metaphor. Vehicle terms ranged from highly figurative and ‘obviously’ metaphorical phrases – “*put a spanner in the works*”, “*pawns in a game*”⁶– to single closed-category words, such as the preposition “*in*” (when used in phrases such as “*in the UK*”, or “*in society*”, to conceptualize a country or social group as a contained space).

Inevitably, difficult decisions about what to include or exclude as metaphor had to be taken (Cameron 2003). For example, in this study, we included “*THING*” metaphors (“*something*”, “*anything*”, “*thing*”, “*everything*” when used to talk about non-concrete entities), and “*FEELING*” metaphors

6. All examples of figurative language are taken from the transcriptions of talk.

(“*feel*” etc used to talk about emotional or mental “*feelings*” rather than physical). Demonstratives (e.g. *this*, *that*) were not included but “*here*”, “*there*” used to talk about non-locations were.

A proportion of each transcript was blind-coded by a second researcher in order to ensure reliability of metaphor identification; agreement was reached through discussion. Inter-rater reliability was also strengthened through training of raters and keeping a record of decisions made for future reference.

A total of 12,362 linguistic metaphors were identified, equivalent to production of approximately 800 per hour.

Vehicle coding

An alphabetical list of metaphor vehicles for each focus group discussion was coded in an Excel spreadsheet, accompanied by details of speaker, line number in the transcript, and immediate linguistic context, i.e. the intonation unit in which it occurred.

The vehicle coding involved assigning each metaphor vehicle to a ‘vehicle grouping’ according its literal semantics: “*pawns in a game*”, for example, was assigned to the vehicle grouping “*GAMES OF CHANCE*”. The grouping and naming of vehicles was inductive, iterative and collaborative. The level of groupings between general and specific was kept just beyond that of language used by speakers, e.g. “*lottery*”, “*odds*”, “*pawns*” in a game were collected in a grouping called “*GAMES OF CHANCE*” rather than “*GAMES*” or “*COMPETITION*”, since the affect of metaphors often comes from this level of specificity and can be lost in over-generalization. The iterative process of coding led to groupings being combined: e.g. food, clothes and bodily states were combined with parts of the body into one grouping labelled “*BODY*”, or separated: e.g. “*CLEAN / DIRTY*” metaphors were separated from the grouping called “*CRAZY – WILD*” where they were originally placed.

All codings were checked by a second researcher and vehicle groupings finalized through discussion. As the twelve transcripts were coded, a final set of vehicle groupings emerged that was checked for internal consistency and for consistent application across all transcripts.

A set of 59 vehicle groupings emerged from the coding process and these can be seen in the Appendix. The ‘other’ category is small, as considered desirable in inductive coding. The groupings are a mix of source domains familiar from conceptual metaphor theory, such as “*MOVEMENT*” and “*SEEING*”, and domains more specific to the type and topics of this discourse, such as “*VIOLATE / LIMITS*”, “*she was taking it to extremes*”, and “*CRAZY – WILD*”, “*our lives would be chaos*”. The importance of a vehicle grouping to the study of terrorism justified keeping separate some groupings that could have been combined: for example, “*GIVING / TAKING*” could be seen as a kind of “*PHYSICAL ACTION*” but was an important way of talking metaphorically about communication and belief, e.g. “*how can they give the truth?*”; “*gain the trust back*”.

It was often possible to categorize a particular linguistic metaphor vehicle in more than one way e.g. “*caught up in*” as “*CONSTRAINT*” or “*VIOLENT ACTION*”. Vehicles were not multiply coded in this study but, as is the norm in interpretive research, extensive notes were kept of connections across groupings that were found while coding, and drawn on in the interpretive stage of the analysis. Indeterminacy of source domains is an important phenomenon in coding naturally-occurring data that reflects people’s use of language to do or say more than one thing at a time (Zanotto & Palma 2008).

Key Topic coding

Identifying a topic for each vehicle is extremely difficult since many, if not most, vehicles did not have explicit topics in the discourse. To solve this problem, we used five ‘key topics’ relating to our research questions. For each vehicle, we asked which of the key topics was being talked about when the vehicle was used. The key topics were:

- 1) terrorism, including acts, risk, causes, perpetrators;
- 2) communication, by the authorities and by the media;
- 3) responses to terrorism, including responses by the authorities and responses by, or particularly likely to affect, Muslims;
- 4) society and social groups, including Muslims

5) topics outside the project's main areas of interest, including the focus group discourse itself.

When all 12 focus group discussions had been coded for vehicle groupings and topics, the separate spreadsheets were transferred to a single master Excel file that listed all the linguistic metaphors with their immediate contexts of use and contextual information. After a final re-check to eliminate any inconsistencies in coding across transcripts, the master file was used for quantitative and qualitative analyses.

The combinations of vehicle groupings and key topics produced 'systematic metaphors' for this data, such as "*RESPONSES TO TERRORISM AS PHYSICAL ACTION*"; "*SOCIETY AS CONTAINER*". In the discourse dynamics approach, systematic metaphors are emergent metaphor groups that reflect the contextualized discourse, not necessarily conceptual metaphors. The systematic metaphors serve as an intermediate level of analysis, allowing quantitative comparisons by gender, religion and socio-economic status, and qualitative, interpretive analysis of how metaphors are used in the talk. Combinations of systematic metaphors sometimes work together in metaphor scenarios (Musolff 2004) to construct larger narrative conceptualizations of topics.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section reports the range of vehicle groupings that emerged from coding the data, and the systematic metaphors these were used in, describing differences in use according to the dimensions of socio-economic status, religion and gender. Where chi squares are reported, these are based on the actual count of metaphors adjusted for the number of words.

Identifying and interpreting systematic patterns of metaphor use is an iterative procedure that moves back and forth between the linguistic metaphors in context and the larger source domains. We examine the conceptual content of metaphors and their affective senses and how these may go across source domains. We examine what the metaphors do as well as what types they are: how they position and frame people, events and ideas; the values and attitudes of the speakers that they carry; the feelings and emotions they prompt; how they are accepted or challenged in the

dynamics of the talk. A claim of shared metaphorical conceptualization rests on common use of the same vehicle / source domain for the same topic. Claims about metaphorical affect may rely on evidence of metaphors from different source domains that convey the same emotions or attitude about a topic. To make more general claims about affect, non-metaphorical language also needs to be examined. (For more detailed discussion see Cameron et al 2009.)

Terrorism and “MILITARY ACTION”

Despite the literature reported above that records the construction of “*TERRORISM AS WAR*” in response to 9/11 and the political consequences, when ordinary people talk about acts of terrorism, “*WAR*” does not seem to be a particularly strong conceptualization of what is happening. Rather, members of the public acknowledge that politicians and terrorists may see terrorism as war, but themselves remain as if at a distance: “*terrorists do see it as war*”; “*Blair’s excuse for a war*”. Terrorist acts are compared to negative action from scenarios other than “*WAR*”: “*bullying*”, “*bribery*”, “*blackmail*”, “*hit and run*” or talked about in terms of “*VIOLENT ACTION*” more general than “*WAR*”: “*the London bombings would have had a big impact*”; “*they could strike anywhere*”; “*was just so devastating*”.

However, some language from the domain of “*MILITARY ACTION*” does seem to have entered people’s ways of talking. For example, the term “*target*” has become conventionalized as the way to talk about people or buildings that are or potentially are affected by acts of terrorism (57% of “*MILITARY ACTION*” metaphors): e.g. “*it’s mostly people that are targeted*”; “*old people are a target*”; “*they’re aiming at innocent people*”. The original use of “*target*” as noun, something specific and concrete aimed at physically with a weapon such as bow and arrow or gun has been metaphorically and metonymically extended to mean something like: ‘non-specific people or buildings or institutions whom terrorists intend to harm through bombing or who are harmed contingently’, and is often used as a verb rather than a noun.

The juxtaposition, as in the examples above, of “*MILITARY ACTION*” terms such as “*target*” or “*aim*” with *old* or *innocent people* produces affect through contrast. Although terrorists might see what they are attacking

as an abstract symbol of what they oppose, those on the receiving end of terrorism understand the action in terms of real people, *old* or *innocent*. The phrase “*soft target*” (“*they do seem to go for soft targets*”) encapsulates this contrast through figurative collocation: “*soft*” as metonymy for the softness of human bodies jars with the concrete and impersonal “*target*”.

Quantitatively, “*MILITARY ACTION*” metaphors are used more by non-Muslims than Muslims ($\chi^2 = 6.149$, $df=1$, $p<0.005$). Significant gender differences are found in the use of “*MILITARY ACTION*” metaphors by Muslims ($\chi^2 = 5.00$, $df=1$, $p<0.05$), but not for non-Muslims. The gender and religion differences illustrate the need to go down to the specific level in interpretation; Muslim women use more “*MILITARY ACTION*” metaphors than Muslim men but this does not mean they are more militant, since most instances involve “*target*” as vehicle, as above. “*target*” is also used to talk, not about acts of violence, but about abuse or official measures in response to terrorism: “*why are Muslims being targeted?*”.

“THE OUTCOMES OF TERRORISM AS VIOLENT ACTION”

The social, mental or physical outcomes of acts of terrorism were talked about with metaphors of “*VIOLENT ACTION*”, often involving hyperbole or extreme-case formulation:

The effect on institutions: “*break down the civil order*”; “*to shake the world*”
 The mental or emotional effect: “*impacting on other people's lives*”; “*paranoia kicks in*”;
 “*she's frightened to death*”; “*families being ripped apart*”
 Possible effects on people physically: “*stampeding*”; “*being slaughtered*”.

There is a highly significant gender difference in the use of “*VIOLENT ACTION*” metaphors, with men using more than women ($\chi^2 = 6.80$, $df=1$, $p<0.01$). Furthermore, religion and socio-economic status come into play, with non-Muslim A/B men making most use of strong, violent metaphors to describe terrorists and the effect of terrorism on society. C1/C2 men use fewer, but more than Muslim men. The use by middle class, professional white males of violent metaphors to describe the effects of terrorism suggests that, despite tending to underplay the risk of terrorism in their explicit talk, this group is strongly affected by terrorism.

Muslims use no “*VIOLENT ACTION*” metaphors to talk about the effect of terrorist attacks on victims, but do use them to talk about the

effect on Muslims of responses to terrorism: “*they’re going to throw us out*”; “*the violence of the backlash of terrorism*”.

“TERRORISM AS DISTURBING SOCIAL AND MENTAL BALANCE”

A metaphor that not only describes the effect of terrorism but also incorporates an explanatory theory was labelled “*BALANCE*”. In this metaphor, peaceful normality for individuals, communities and society is seen as equilibrium. Acts of terrorism violently upset this balance:

“the world’s out of balance”
“when things are out of balance”
“stir everything up”
“in this time of unrest”
“upsets the fragile .. peace”
“they try to disrupt the government”

After a period of time, things “*settle down*” and go “*back to normal*”. There is a connection or coherence at least, with “*UP/DOWN*” metaphors for risk and threat. “*UP*” implies the balance has been disturbed, “*messing up the country*”, whereas “*DOWN*” marks the restoration of equilibrium, “*but I think it calmed down a lot*”.

“*BALANCE*” metaphors show very highly significant gender difference, with women (particularly non-Muslim C1/C2 women) using more than men ($\chi^2 = 19.322$, $df=1$, $p<0.001$).

“GAMES OF CHANCE” metaphors

The process of estimating risk is talked about in terms of “*GAMES*”, particularly “*GAMES OF CHANCE*”:

“*THE RISK OF TERRORISM IS A GAME OF CHANCE*”

“a poker game”; “*a game of bluff*”; “*lottery*”; “*odds*”; “*my number’s up*”; “*pawns in a game*”; “*they’re actually dicing with your life*”.

“*TERRORISTS ARE PLAYING A GAME*”

“they will play that bluff”; “*stepped up their game*”

“AUTHORITIES ARE PLAYING A GAME”

“CIA playing with people’s minds”; “you don’t want to play into the hands of the terrorists”; “the government underplays”

“GAMES OF CHANCE” metaphors emphasize people’s lack of control over outcomes. The overwhelming affective sense that one gets from this set of metaphors is of helplessness and lack of agency. In some of them, people are not even players in a game they cannot control, but pieces manipulated by players who are the authorities or the terrorists, compounding the affect sense of helplessness.

Loss of agency and lack of control over the outcomes of the game is accompanied by determination not to be beaten

“don’t let them bea- beat you”; “it’s like this <Q don’t let the system beat you Q>”.

and a sense of the un-fairness of such a game:

“it’s not a level playing field”; “on the total sense of fair play”

Superficially, these metaphors might seem to underplay the seriousness of terrorism risk by comparing it to something trivial like a *poker game*. However, when we examine the talk around the metaphors, we more often find a context of accepting grim reality rather than of light-heartedness.

Men use more *“GAME OF CHANCE”* metaphors than women (NS), and non-Muslims make significantly greater use than Muslims ($\chi^2 = 12.75$, $df=1$, $p<001$), as might be expected since gaming is contrary to Islamic ethics. There is something of a “white male effect” here, with white men using more than half of the *“GAME OF CHANCE”* metaphors, although no difference according to socio-economic status. Within the Muslim group, women using many fewer GAME metaphors than men ($\chi^2 = 5.52$, $df=1$, $p<0.05$).

“NATURAL WORLD” metaphors and explanations of terrorism.

“NATURAL WORLD” metaphors are used in talk about the processes of terrorism, and about issues that people connected to terrorism such as asylum seekers and refugees, often contributing a sense of inevitability, of things that will continue beyond the realm of human control unless efforts

to stop them are powerful. The potentially vast source domain of the “*NATURAL WORLD*” is only partially drawn on, with vehicles including animals and animal actions, and more abstract natural processes such as growth, breeding, and flow of water.

Gender but not religion is significant in the use of “*NATURAL WORLD*” metaphors to describe terrorists and the effects of terrorism on people and society, with men using many more than women (about 70%: 30%) ($\chi^2 = 19.00$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.0001$).

GROUPS OF TERRORISTS AS NATURAL WORLD AGGREGATES:

“a bunch of terrorists”; “a cell”; “an element”
“AS HIDING AWAY IN DARK PLACES”:
“they hide in the woodwork”; “they worm their way in” (to workplaces)

Metaphors used about government action after the London 2005 bombings also draws on the domain of difficult-to-control animals in allusions to culturally conventionalised scenarios:

“it’s locking the stable door after the horse has bolted”
“how many times can you cry wolf?”

“TERRORISM AS DEVELOPING THROUGH NATURAL GROWTH”
“things will evolve”;
“terrorism doesn’t just stem from one person”;
“they should look at the root cause”;
“that the community has bred this”;
“that’s what breeds conflict”;
“and how it’s propagated”;
“in that environment”;
“like the political climate”;
“a virulent strain of Islamic fundamentalism”.

Terrorism is seen as developing through growing like a plant or animal, with animal metaphors usually stronger affectively than plant metaphors. An entailment of these growing metaphors is that, like a growing plant or animal, terrorism requires a nourishing medium in which to grow.

Part of the negative affect of these metaphors comes from its combination with social group (the UK, the community) as “*CONTAINER*” (see below) – if something grows out of control inside a container the outcomes are potentially much more serious. At the time of writing this article, a US spokesman was heard to use the phrase “home grown terrorists” to describe Muslims who have lived since childhood in European countries and then turn to terrorism. A sinister antonymic resonance is created between terrorism and the goodness conventionally attributed to “home grown food” or “home baked cakes”. Terrorism that comes from something that is supposed to be cosy and reassuring is even more terrifying.

The Muslim groups favoured plant over animal metaphors, but these also captured the idea of a natural product gone wrong in the “*CONTAINER*” that is the community:

*“there are bad onions in every sack”
“and there’s always a bad apple, in any society in any community”*

We note that it is not only terrorists who are talked of in terms of potentially dangerous animals but other threatening groups of young people in speakers’ communities:

(kids like) *“a gang of wolves”; “young bucks”; “cocky 17 and 18-year-olds”*

The affective import of these “*NATURAL WORLD*” metaphors is largely negative in respect of terrorists. The logic of the metaphors is potentially dangerous in implying that strong counter-actions are needed to prevent natural growth, as seen in extreme version in Nazi propaganda against the Jews (Musolff 2007). In the topic domains of our focus groups discussions, such logic occasionally emerged:

*“round them up”;
“crack the whip a little bit more”;
“it should have been nipped in the bud”*
From a Muslim group:
“and the community must root them out”

The more extreme versions of control such as the following did not, however, pass without being challenged by other members of the group:

- E [] the government,
 isn't actually doing anything.
 .. they're not,
 stopping people coming in,
 or kicking people out.
- F you know,
 what's that going to do?
 .. what's that going to solve?
 .. not letting people in,
 or kicking people,
 out of the country,

In the same group (C1/C2 Men), the following extract demonstrates how nationality is, partly at least, conceptualised through “*NATURAL WORLD*” metaphors, and that people who are “*naturalized*” can still be seen as not really belonging:

- A 'cos they've got British passports,
 .. 'cos they've,
 .. been naturalized
- B <X could have been X> born over here
 but --
- A .. naturalized,
 I mean,
 .. but- but,
 .. they're not English.

“*NATURAL WORLD*” metaphors seldom explicitly name animals, other than in idiomatic or proverbial uses such as “*cry wolf*”. More often, the metaphors occur as verbs, like “*bred*” or “*rounded up*”, that suggest animals implicitly. Semino, Heywood and Short (2004), in a discussion of “*galloping*” used to talk about cancer, searched this metaphor in the British National Corpus and concluded that categorizing this as an “*ANIMAL*” metaphor would be going beyond what is warranted by the data. It seems important for researchers not to push metaphor beyond what is warranted since it might misrepresent speakers as unduly negative. However, the use of metaphor entailments to argue solutions to the problem of ‘home grown terrorism’ is potentially dangerous in allowing extremes to be voiced through the distancing of metaphor, and needs to be guarded against.

“*LABELING AS A RESPONSE TO TERRORISM*”.

A small but important set of metaphors, used mainly by Muslims, describes how responses to terrorism lead to simplistic “*labeling*” and division:

“*Muslims are labeled as terrorists*”;
 “*brand*”;
 “*trademark*”;
 “*we get a bad name*”;
 “*everyone’s being painted, tarred with the same brush*”.

“*RELIGION AS TOOL FOR JUSTIFYING TERRORISM*”.

Explanations of terrorism used “*PHYSICAL ACTION*” metaphors, particularly “*use*”, to explain the relation between religion (Islam) and terrorism as deliberate employment as a tool:

“*terrorism is using Muslim religion*” (Muslim participant)
 “*the way they use their religion*”;
 “*they use it as a shield*”;
 “*religion is used by some people*”

“*OFFICIAL COMMUNICATION AS THEATRE*”.

An important metaphor that captures the feelings of ordinary people towards the government acting in response to terrorism is what we have called the “*THEATER*” metaphor. The “*THEATER*” metaphor includes metaphors of “*ACTING*” and “*STORIES*”, together with allusions to culturally-familiar characters and scenarios. In the metaphorical “*THEATER*” scenario, ordinary people are watchers in the audience as people in authority act their roles in a performance on stage. A “*POWER IS POSITION*” metaphor places the authorities as actors on stage at a distance and higher than their lay audience. The audience are aware of activity “*behind the scenes*”.

The “*THEATER*” metaphor is overwhelmingly negative in its evaluation of government action and communication in response to terrorism. The audience are not, on the whole, impressed by what they see on the stage; they seem to feel that authorities act inappropriately: “*someone’s acting shady*”, or make fools of themselves: “*it’s a fucking farce*”.

The role labels applied to the actors are more pantomime than prestigious: “*Billy the Kid*”, “*baddie*”, “*Captain Hook*” and metaphors applied to events emphasise the farcical nature of what is observed:

“*like a shotgun wedding*” (the political alliance between Bush and Blair);
 “*this country is the laughing stock of the world*”;
 “*it’s just a PR stunt*” (suicide bombing).

The government is described with “BODY” and “PHYSICAL ACTION” metaphors, using personification, either acting through embodied simulation (Gibbs 2006) to metaphorically suggest weakness: “*bend over backwards*”, “*spineless*”, or that compare their actions to those of weak animals, is seen as “*pussyfooting around*” or “*chicken to America*”.

Linked into the “THEATER” scenario is the metaphor of “SPEAKING / LISTENING”. Sometimes metonymic in origin, this metaphor places the authorities in the role of speaker and the public in the role of listener or audience:

“*the Foreign Office say*”;
 “*what they’re trying to tell people*”;
 “*they still aren’t saying anything*”.

We can note that this metaphor again removes agency from the public, leaving control with the authorities who can choose whether or not to tell: “*to keep as much of it quiet as possible*”.

The “THEATER” metaphor is likely to be influenced by people actually watching members of government and the authorities on television in the wake of acts of terrorism. They do literally watch officials perform in front of their eyes, and appear to judge them quite harshly. An implication is that communication between authorities and public needs to reach across the distance imposed by power and by screen, somehow connecting with people in ways that encourage more trust. Turning around the negative affect of the “THEATER” metaphors, we can infer that lay people would like their authority figures to act with more authority and literalizing the metaphors, it may be that a strong physical posture and presentation matters in presenting a reassuring presence to the public.

“SOCIETY AS LANDSCAPE and CONTAINER”.

Talk about terrorism often touched upon society and social groups. A set of connected spatial metaphors served to conceptualize the relations between society and various social groups, principally “*LANDSCAPE*”, “*MOVEMENT*” and “*CONTAINER*” metaphors. Despite the apparent contradiction between “*LANDSCAPE*” as horizontal and “*CONTAINER*” as vertical, these highly conventionalized metaphors were used together without any apparent problems of coherence. The scenario constructed by this set of metaphors offers a rich resource for talking-and-thinking that allows people to express and adjust their views of how social groups interact and come to form a society. There is a metonymic sense to this metaphor in that social groups are often found in physically different locations, e.g. different social classes may occupy different areas of town, and for socio-historical reasons, some industrial cities have areas where Muslim families live in close proximity to each other forming homogeneous communities.

In the “*LANDSCAPE*” metaphor, society is seen as composed of groups co-located in a landscape: physical positioning represents social positioning and events, and the distance between groups stands for the degree of connection between them. Social groups and their geographical places are talked of as “*CONTAINERS*”, with prepositions “*in*”, “*over*”, “*into*”, “*out of*” etc, contributing to these metaphorical conceptualizations.

“things are happening all over the world”;
“last week I was over in the Czech Republic”;
“the situation over there”;
“since it’s come over here”;
“everyone’s been in different situations”.

Terrorism as activity is talked of in terms of “*MOVEMENT FROM A SOURCE*” somewhere on the landscape: “*it starts from somewhere*”; “*this is where terrorism starts from*”. The source of recent terrorism in London was Muslim communities within the UK, so that, in people’s minds, place and ideology become co-positioned.

Within this “*LANDSCAPE*” scenario, “*CONNECT / SEPARATE*” metaphors are used to express relations between social groups:

“SOCIAL CONNECTION IS PHYSICAL CONNECTION”

“you are at the interface ..of this ..situation” (Muslim);

“build the bridges”;

“people close to you”

“community cohesion”

“and everybody’s intermingled... integrated”.

“SOCIAL SEPARATION IS PHYSICAL SEPARATION”

“divisions between the nations”;

“I think it must have a divided community”:

“and they kept themselves to themselves”

“hatred on both sides”;

“that’s why I’m opposed to war”;

“one side of your family was Irish”

“a bit of a breach of human rights”.

Distance on the “*LANDSCAPE*” represents degrees of disconnection, with “*EXTREME*” as far away from accepted norms in thinking and ideology. Imposing “*LIMITS*” to prevent extremes is generally seen as positive for a society:

“she was taking it to extremes though”;

“I think there definitely are limits”;

“you’re crossing a line there”.

The “*LABELLING*” metaphors that we saw earlier on also fit into this “*SOCIAL LANDSCAPE*” scenario; in response to recent acts terrorism carried out by young men from Muslim communities in British cities, Muslims are being lumped together in a “*CONTAINER*” that is labelled and that is thus further disconnected from mainstream society.

CONCLUSIONS

The reported study was part of a social sciences project in which metaphor was employed as a research tool, applied to focus group discussions as data. The research process revealed systematic metaphors that capture people’s talking-and-thinking and their emotions, feelings and attitudes.

The paper has described a range of metaphors employed in talk about terrorism. Unlike some other studies, we did not find one or more dominant metaphors but multiple metaphors that interact and intertwine. Data from focus groups questions the dominance of the metaphor “*TERRORISM AS WAR*” suggested in other studies, and has produced alternative metaphors, including “*TERRORIST RISK AS GAME OF CHANCE*”, “*AUTHORITIES’ RESPONSES TO TERRORISM AS THEATER*”.

Implications of this study for communication rise from considering that alternative metaphors can offer alternative ways of thinking. For example, “*NETWORK*” metaphors offer an alternative view of social cohesion to the potentially harmful metaphor of “*CONTAINERS*” in a social “*LANDSCAPE*”, with the potential to see such entailments as strength in connections, multiple paths, and parts as connected into the whole.

Some metaphors suggest dangerous entailments that need to be kept in check. For example, the consequences of some “*NATURAL WORLD*” metaphors may need to be explicitly challenged.

Strong gender differences were found in the use of some metaphors, with religion and socio-economic status interacting in others. Affect is found to work across linguistic metaphors rather than being attached consistently to all expressions of particular conceptual metaphors: for example, the following metaphors across domains of “*NATURE*”, “*CONCEALMENT*”, “*SEEING*” and “*SPEAKING*” all express the same attitude towards terrorists who, in a cowardly way, keep themselves unknown to their target victims:

“they hide themselves away”;
“they hide behind a god”;
“an invisible enemy”;
“they don’t declare themselves”.

The removal of agency and control from people through terrorism emerged as a key affective theme in the study.

The subtle patterns of metaphor in use that we have found endorse the view that, in trying to reveal patterns of thought through applied metaphor analysis, it is not sufficient to work with generalized conceptual metaphors extracted from discourse. Metaphors need to be examined in

their context of use, in a continual moving across levels of discourse, from the macro level of similar affect expressed through different metaphors or larger metaphorical scenarios, through the intermediate level of systematic metaphors, to more micro levels of linguistic metaphors in their collocations, intonation units and episodes of interaction.

When we consider the full range of discourse dynamics, we also see a more subtle picture of affect with some positive aspects:

- people explicitly challenge negative metaphors expressed by others in their group:

“what’s that going to solve, not letting people in?”

- people express positive attitudes and empathy towards other groups:

“innocent Muslim people,| are being victimised then,| aren’t they,| for what’s happening in the world”.

“I think it’s affected Mus- Muslims,| in this country,| who are,| completely against the whole <X load of it X>.| I think it’s affected them,| more than anyone else,| ‘cos they’re getting,| ridiculed everywhere they go,| shops are getting ransacked,| because they’re Muslims’,| . . . | I don’t think that’s fair”.

- people express regret and a sense of shame at their affective responses to terrorism and Muslims that, in a more analytic frame of mind, they might reject

“I find that really upsetting,| when it--| it feels like ordinary people, | like us are--| because we’re scared and frightened,| you know, | our way to protect ourselves, | is to--is to push out everyone, |who--| who sort of reminds us,| maybe of what has happened”

“it makes me sad,| that my first .. image,|... | that came to mind, | was, | .. of someone of Middle Eastern appearance.| and that, | totally goes against, | what I really believe”.

It is reassuring to find that people are not as completely negative as the media or politicians might lead us to believe. The complexity and variation of people’s attitudes in the face of terrorist risk reflect the complexity and

variation of their real world experiences, and is in turn reflected in their discourse use of metaphor.

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APPENDIX

Metaphor vehicle groupings in the focus group discussions

ANIMALS / NATURE
 BALANCE
 BLOW
 BODY-FOOD-CLOTHES
 BUILDING
 CIRCLE
 CLEAN - DIRTY
 COMMERCE
 CONCEALMENT
 CONCRETISING
 CONNECT - SEPARATE
 CONSTRAINT
 CONTAINER
 CRAZY / WILD
 DEPTH
 DIMENSION
 FEELING
 FINDING - LOSING
 FOLLOWING - LEADING
 FORM
 GAME
 GIVING - TAKING
 HARD
 HOME
 HORIZONTAL (LANDSCAPE)
 HOT - COLD
 INCLINE
 LABEL

LOCATION
 MACHINE
 MILITARY
 MOVEMENT
 NUMBER
 OPEN - CLOSE
 PHYSICAL ACTION
 POINT
 READING - WRITING
 RELIGION
 SEEING
 SORT
 SOUND
 SPEAKING / LISTENING
 STRENGTH
 SUPPORT
 THEATRE / STORIES
 VIOLATE LIMITS
 VIOLENT ACTION
 WATER
 COMPONENT PARTS
 THING
 EXPLETIVE
 OTHER

Table 1: The metaphor densities of the focus group discussions, without moderator talk

Focus Groups ¹	Number of words in transcripts	Number of linguistic metaphors	Metaphor density ²
A/B Women	31425	1924	61
C1/C2 Women	25507	1659	65
Muslim Women	31976	1663	52
A/B Men	38800	2108	54
C1/C2 Men	35767	1907	53
Muslim Men	27115	1710	59

¹ Each category in this column combines 2 focus groups, N=16.

² Metaphor density = number of metaphors per 1000 words of transcribed talk.

Table 2: Metaphor density by gender and religion

Focus groups (N = number of speakers)	Metaphor density of women's talk	Metaphor density of men's talk
All non-Muslim ¹ (N = 64)	63	54
A/B Non-Muslim (N = 32)	61	55
C1/C2 Non-Muslim (N = 32)	66	53
All Muslim (N = 32)	52	64

¹ Non-Muslim combines A/B and C1/2 group