Key issue (Terrorism Coverage)

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KEYWORDS
news topics, frames, issue salience, issue ownership

BRIEF DESCRIPTION
“Key issue” describes the main issue or perspective an article focuses on when reporting on a news topic. There might be different key issues for the same topic: When reporting on terrorism, articles can for example concentrate on the incident itself, the perpetrator behind it, victims and/or political reactions to terrorism.

FIELD OF APPLICATION/THEORETICAL FOUNDATION
Key issues share similarities with other variables such as news “frames”, “issue salience” or “issue ownership” that also try to identify different perspectives for the same or different news topics. Therefore, studies based on “Framing” (Entman, 1993) work with similar variables to analyze what issues journalists focus on and many studies cited here use the concept of framing to identify key issues, for example Li (2007) or Zhang & Hellmüller (2016).

REFERENCES/COMBINATION WITH OTHER METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION
Studies for example combine content analysis and interviews with journalists to shed more light on dynamics and structures of terrorism coverage, including key issues (Larsen, 2019).

EXAMPLE STUDIES
Li (2007); Matthews (2016)

INFORMATION ON LI, 2007
Authors: Li (2007)
Research question: How did television outlets frame 9/11 during the first 24 hours of coverage and how did this framing change over time?
Object of analysis: News coverage by five TV outlets (ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, and FOX news)
Time frame of analysis: 24 hours after attacks on September 9, 2001 occurred

INFO ABOUT VARIABLES
Variable name/definition: Coverage frame: “The coverage frame is defined as the aspects of a perceived reality identified through a story that makes these aspects more salient in the news coverage” (Li, 2007, p. 676).
Level of analysis: News story (TV)
Variables and values: Political coverage frame, economic coverage frame, criminal coverage frame, environment coverage frame, safety coverage frame, human interest coverage frame, religion coverage frame, disaster coverage frame, other coverage frame
Reliability: Scott’s pi: .8

INFORMATION ON MATTHEWS, 2016
Authors: Matthews (2016)
Research question: How did newspapers react in the immediate aftermath of the London bombings 2005?
Time frame of analysis: July 8, 2005 to July 15, 2005
INFO ABOUT VARIABLES

Variable name/definition: Story themes

Level of analysis: News article

Variables and values: Reconstruction and reaction, bombers’ identities, police investigation, victims/the missing, heroism and survivors, London's reaction

REFERENCES


Table 1. Measurement of “Key Issue” in terrorism coverage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Manifestations</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
<th>Codebook</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An et al. (2018)</td>
<td>Articles from terrorist websites</td>
<td>31 different key issues, ranging from terrorist attacks to their political consequences</td>
<td>Average Holsti value for all pairwise comparisons: .66</td>
<td>Available under <a href="https://www.hope.uzh.ch/doca/article/view/2u/1542">https://www.hope.uzh.ch/doca/article/view/2u/1542</a> and <a href="https://www.hope.uzh.ch/doca/article/view/2u/1543">https://www.hope.uzh.ch/doca/article/view/2u/1543</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Du &amp; Li (2017)</td>
<td>Online news articles</td>
<td>6 different key issues, including “description and updates of the incident itself”, “causes of the incident”, “consequences of the incident”, “conflicting viewpoint related to the incident”, “condemn the terrorist behavior and discuss the punishment/reprisal”, and “background/history knowledge of the incident areas”</td>
<td>Scott’s pi for all variables in study: between .798 and 1</td>
<td>Available under <a href="https://www.hope.uzh.ch/doca/article/view/2u/1544">https://www.hope.uzh.ch/doca/article/view/2u/1544</a></td>
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<td>Haußecker &amp; Jirschitzka, 2010; Jirschitzka et al., 2010</td>
<td>Broadcasting pro-grams</td>
<td>11 different key issues, ranging from war against terror to communication of terrorists</td>
<td>Average Holsti value for all pair-wise comparisons with five coders and one main coder: .66</td>
<td>Available under <a href="https://www.hope.uzh.ch/doca/article/view/2u/1545">https://www.hope.uzh.ch/doca/article/view/2u/1545</a> and <a href="https://www.hope.uzh.ch/doca/article/view/2u/1546">https://www.hope.uzh.ch/doca/article/view/2u/1546</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Li (2007)</td>
<td>Broadcasting programs</td>
<td>9 different key issues, including “political”, “economic”, “criminal”, “environment”, “safety”, “human interest”, “religion”, “disaster”, and “other” coverage frame</td>
<td>Scott’s pi: .8</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthews (2016)</td>
<td>Newspaper articles</td>
<td>6 different key issues, including “reconstruction and reaction”, “bombers’ identities”, “police investigation”, “victims/the missing”, “heroism and survivors”, and “London’s reaction”</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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