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Rural Perspectives On Terrorism: A Study Based in Western Montana
Research Question

“What is the perception of terrorism among rural Western citizens in the United States who have never experienced terrorism first-hand?”
Orientalism

◊ Multi Dimensional:
  1. Institutionalized academic study
  2. Style of thought
  3. Source of power

"Shaping Western attitudes towards ‘non-western’ peoples, cultures, and societies"
~ Julia Clancy-Smith and Charles D. Smith
Methodology

**Target Population**
- Local Montana resident
- Age 18 or older
- Not affiliated with the military

**Population Sample**
- Convenience sample
- Purposive sample
  - Age
  - Gender

**Data Collection**
- Qualitative interviews
- Participants: 8
- Interview length: 1 – 2 hours
1. What is terrorism to you?

2. In your view, when did terrorism begin?

3. When you think about terrorist attacks, what is the first terrorist attack that comes to mind? How come?

4. It’s been said that “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter,” what does this mean to you?

5. I am going to show you a few photographs and for each photograph I show you, I would like you to tell me about the photograph?

6. How do you feel talking about terrorism?
Research Instrument (Imagery)

- Anwar al-Awlaki: Ethnicity
- Timothy McVeigh: Domestic Vs. International
- Leila Khaled: Gender
- Anders Breivik: Social Class
Findings

- Rural participants relationship to terrorism
- Key words associated to terrorism
- Rural definitions of terrorism
- The case of Timothy McVeigh in relation to rural perspectives on terrorism
- Rural fears other than terrorism
Relationship to Terrorism

- Participant 1 – Occupation
- Participant 2 – Belief Systems
- Participant 3 – Family Circumstances
- Participant 4 – General Perspectives
- Participant 5 – Memory of Specific Events
- Participant 6 – Family Connections
- Participant 7 – Occupation
- Participant 8 – Formal Education
Key Words Associated With Terrorism

- Violence
- Intimidation
- Fear
- Destruction
- Mayhem
- Power
- Domination
- Disruptive
- Hateful
- Terror
- Political
- Means to an end
Select Definitions

“Terrorism is any act or action that is intended to engender fear.”
~ Participant 7

“Any kind of attack that is meant to intimidate.”
~ Participant 3

“It’s a perspective.”
~ Participant 8

“Terrorism to me seems like it’s mostly a political term.”
~ Participant 4

“Terrorism is an act of destruction and mayhem and power.”
~ Participant 1
The Case of Timothy McVeigh

- (4) Participants mentioned the Oklahoma City Bombing
- (1) Participant initially mentioned McVeigh’s name
- (7) Participants recognized McVeigh’s photo
- (4) Participants identified McVeigh’s act of terrorism
Fears Other Than Terrorism

- Automobile accidents
- School shootings
- Social interaction
- The current administration
- Neighbors
- Becoming terminally ill

“I think a feature of rural life is to not worry about terrorism.”

~ Participant 8
Further Analysis

- Acts of terrorism
- The terrorist
- Specific events
- Terrorism as a perception
- Rural components
- Emotions
Key References
