

“Terrorist Organizations and Agency:
A Comparative-Historical Approach”

by

J. I. (Hans) Bakker

University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada

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.[I]t is much easier to condemn terrorism than to understand it.”

(Silke 2004: 19).

I. Introduction:

In this chapter the emphasis will be on a holistic and comparative-historical examination of terrorism. I will utilize the general “Web Approach” (Phillips 2001) as well as aspects of the more specific “web of sociological concepts,” particularly notions of “group” and “conformity” (Phillips 2001: 24, Figure 1-3). This discussion will be framed within the context of the understanding of “culture” and “power” (Barrett 2002) that is dominant in mainstream sociology and anthropology, although I am not entirely opposed to

¹ This paper benefits from the work of other members of the sociological imagination group (SIG), especially a draft version of the chapter by Jonathan Turner. It is not the paper I originally presented at the SIG meeting in San Francisco in August, 2004. A version of that paper has been printed (Bakker 2004) and provides a starting point for this further exploration of terrorism within the framework of the web approach.

Neo-Marxist theory generally (Burawoy 2005) or “World Systems Theory” specifically (Wallerstein 2005), as paradigmatic alternatives.

Another important component is the notion put forward by Scheff (1990: xv) that “... social bonds generate the primary motives in human conduct ...” The emphasis on conformity to group norms by terrorists is an important ingredient in a general theory. There has not been enough attention paid to the ways in which the “civilizational” features of terrorist ideology as a whole (e.g. extreme *Wahabi* Islam) link up with the micro-level groups of social actors. Scheff (1997: 19-52) has argued that a “part/whole” analysis is required. In this chapter I will utilize the social bond among members of terrorist organizations (or, “cells”) as the “part” and attempt to place that component within the wider comparative-historical framework.

Charles Tilly (2004) is quite correct to point out that words like “terror,” “terrorist,” and “terrorism” have be unpacked. If we simply use them in a simplistic manner we are likely to get into logical traps. There is no question about the fact that “terrorists” are not a unitary group. Nevertheless, there is a certain degree of “unity in diversity.” One unifying sociological feature is that almost all non-state terrorists, despite their diversity of goals and means, tend to belong to a small group that is, in turn, part of a somewhat larger organizational structure. That informal organization may then be part of a larger and perhaps more formalized umbrella organization. Regardless of whether a group of

terrorists operate within territory they perceive as their own (e.g. their own nation-state, as they define it) or go to another country or region, part of what holds them together is their loyalty to their peer group. It is incorrect to assume, as Tilly does, that since there is such a wide array of actors who adopt terrorist strategies "... therefore no coherent set of cause-effect propositions can explain terrorism as a whole" (Tilly 2004: 11). I would like to argue that if we move up and down the ladder of abstraction from the part to the whole and back again (as well as from the empirically-specific to the theoretically more general) we can perceive one universal (or almost universal) aspect of terrorism: group loyalty. The organized group may be very small (i.e. a "cell" in the more literal sense) or it can be relatively large (e.g. Al Qaeda as an umbrella organization). But, in a manner of speaking, no terrorist is an island, with very few exceptions.

In this chapter I have attempted to fore-ground the importance of the bonds among members of a terrorist organization. Such "cells" are only a part of the whole.¹ But they represent a significant aspect of the answer to the question: Why would anyone engage in terrorist acts? It would almost always have something to do with the social bonds which such individual social actors form with others. It is quite possible that "humiliated fury" was a part of the chain of causation which led to World War I (Scheff 1997: 115-145). A similar basic sociological dynamic as the one that caused the French reaction to their military defeat by the Germans during the Franco-Prussian War in 1871, is part and parcel

of non-state actors' reactions as well. Phillips' web approach is usefully supplemented by Scheff's views on part/whole morphology. I will return to these theoretical frameworks at the end of this chapter.

The terrorist attacks of September 11th do not need to be described in detail here. Clearly, they form an important background. Instead of emphasizing September 11th, I will briefly mention five other terrorist situations which are somewhat different from 9/11. The goal is in part to move beyond an American-centered perspective of the immediate circumstances of the current situation in the world. There is much loose talk about terrorism, but even experts on terrorism seem to have great difficulty in defining and delimiting the relevant phenomena. Moreover, there is so much concern with Islamic fundamentalism that the general problem of non-state terrorism is frequently forgotten, particularly in journalistic accounts. What is a terrorist organization? It may or may not be affiliated with an interpretation of a religious belief system. It may or may not be associated with a movement to which most Americans are strongly opposed.

For example, Walter Laqueur (1987) provides many examples relevant to this analysis, but he also stretches the meaning of the term to cover Muammar al Qadhafi (Qaddafi) of Libya, who came to power in September, 1969. Whatever else one might say about Qadhafi's disregard for human rights, he is not a non-state actor or agent. Libya is hardly an exemplar of freedom and democracy. For example, six medical personnel (five nurses and a physician) have languished in a

Libyan jail for allegedly infecting children with HIV intentionally, an accusation that leading scientists have roundly criticized. He has recently been accepted by the U.S. government as an ally and the many murders which were undertaken by Libyan killing squads (as in the Olympic village in Munich) seem to have been forgiven, if not entirely forgotten. The terrorist training bases which were sponsored by Qadhafi's Libya were no secret. Nevertheless, since Qadhafi himself is a head of state he does not fit into the category of terrorist, strictly defined. A strict definition would have to restrict the use of the term of activities which fall outside of the violence perpetrated by leaders of a government.

We can talk about "state terrorism," but that is another topic.² The Socialist People's Libyan Arab *Jamahiriyah* has been an attempt to find a third way that goes beyond pure capitalism and Stalinist communism, and equity issues have been important (Perdue 1989: 111-132). The Libyan revolution has been part of a symbolic war against the U.S. and bourgeois capitalism; Qadhafi was very effective in the 1970s in helping to establish OPEC as a key player in the world economy. To compare Qadhafi to members of non-state terrorist organizations requires broadening the definition of terrorism considerably. A broadened definition would then have to consider other forms of state terror.³

Instead, the focus here is primarily on what could loosely be called "terrorist organizations" which are not directly linked to any legitimate nation-state. The main thesis is that terrorist organizations are best conceptualized as

meso-level *non-state* agents who engage in murder, hostage-taking and other violent crimes. Terrorists are hardly ever purely isolated individuals; they are “organization men” (Jenkins 2001). Terrorist organizations need to be studied from a holistic approach that takes the web-like inter-connectedness of many factors and variables into account. Those non-state agents are engaged in a process which has not been well understood etic-ally or emic-ally.⁴ The notion of “structuration” (Giddens 1995) is heuristic in providing insight into the way in which terrorist activities are self-defeating.

When Alvin Gouldner wrote about the “crisis” in sociology he was pointing out that the theoretical framework (or “meta-paradigm”) associated with Talcott Parsons’ Structural Functionalism was inadequate. But, ironically, Gouldner himself was also contributing to the crisis. He helped to put the nails in the Structural Functionalist coffin. Since the late 1960s sociology has become a tower of Babel and there are many dissonant voices. If the web approach can utilize insights from Gouldner, Mills and others to provide a more sophisticated basis for more unified sociological insights then it will be well worth the effort. This chapter is an attempt to move a little further along the road to that goal.

But unifying sociology under the banner of a web approach that recognizes the importance of the inter-relationships of parts and wholes is no easy task. Indeed, it will require the cooperation of many actors over a long period of time. Nevertheless, there is a goal. That goal is academic, but the ultimate aim is

not simply to interpret the world; we are also seeking to change it, and change it for the better.

Ironically, perhaps, terrorist organizations are also involved in trying to change the world. But they tend to suffer from the lack of an adequate analysis. Since the ultimate goals which a terrorist organization is attempting to accomplish are often very vague and open-ended it is practically impossible to achieve those goals. There can hardly ever be a resolution of the conflict if it is not clear what the parties to the conflict really want. In war the goal is to defeat the enemy. For example, at the end of World War II the Nazi government of Germany was defeated. It could no longer be considered to hold legitimate power. But after the military victory it was not possible or desirable to attempt to completely destroy the German way of life. German leaders and citizens were not forced to stop speaking German or to adopt a completely different ideology. Many people who had more or less accepted the Nazi government were allowed to continue in their occupations.⁵ They were not killed or enslaved.

Some terrorist organizations do have specific political goals, but many do not.⁶ To the extent to which there is no clear delineation of the ideal outcome, there can also not be a clear resolution of the conflict. The killing of civilians tends to provoke very extreme reactions and counter-reactions. It is easy enough to see why terrorist and counter-terrorist activities escalate (e.g. Northern Ireland, Palestine, Nepal); but, it is very difficult to provide a relatively objective long-

term analysis of the sociological processes involved. "...[I]t is much easier to condemn terrorism than to understand it" (Silke 2004: 19). But to really understand terrorism one needs a very good general theoretical understanding.

II. Some Examples:

Before getting more deeply involved in the abstract, theoretical issues, let us briefly examine some specific examples. That will make it clearer what is at stake. I will briefly mention six examples of acts of terrorism, starting with the most familiar and most recent, 9/11. (Since the 9/11 terrorist attack is very familiar I have not gone into detail.) This list could easily be expanded.⁷

1. September 11, 2001, U.S.:

Four groups of men hijacked four planes and undertook coordinated terrorist attacks. Two of them flew into the twin towers of the World Trade Center. One flew into the Pentagon. The fourth might have been intended to fly into the White House. The attack was well planned and the effect of the killing of so many civilians was dramatic. Most of the men were from Saudi Arabia and it is clear that they were members of an Islamic terrorist organization that is opposed to the U.S. That organization is usually called Al Qaeda, an Arabic word meaning "the base." The term was coined during the struggles in Afghanistan against the Soviet military occupation. But the attack on 9/11 was almost entirely counter-productive. There was some initial enthusiasm among some individuals and groups who are diametrically opposed to the U.S., but most countries' leaders

condemned the attacks. It did nothing whatsoever to promote any form of Islamic government anywhere in the world. It did not convince American citizens to democratically change their form of government. Ultimately, the whole exercise was a waste of lives, and a waste of time and effort. Structurally speaking, the deaths of thousands of people did not really change a thing. Indeed, the reaction to the attacks has caused a public reaction which has made life more difficult for many people. The rights of some groups of people have become more restricted than before 9/11. The government of the U.S., under President George W. Bush, has associated the 9/11 attacks with Osama bin Laden, of Saudi Arabia, but also with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the government of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Heated political debates have taken place around the world concerning the initial reasons for the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. U.S. legislators are now beginning to call for a more explicit exit strategy from Iraq since more than 1,700 American military have been killed there since the war began in March, 2003, and an additional 16,000 have been seriously wounded. Many soldiers from coalition partner countries, as well as civilians from abroad and from Iraq, have also died – not to mention Iraqi soldiers -- and there has been a continuous series of insurgencies. The internal quarrels between Shiite and Sunni Muslims have been a source of the violent conflict and the Jordanian born Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is thought of as a leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq. Zarqawi does not represent any legitimate government.

2. April 9-10, 1948, Palestine:

Jewish colonists revolted against the British. Two Zionist groups, the Irgun and the Lehi (the Stern gang) carried out attacks against Arab civilians. The Irgun Tsvai Leumi, which included Menachem Begin, had blown up the King David Hotel in Jerusalem. Irgun-Lehi carried out a terrorist attack on the village of Deir Yassin in April, 1948. About 250 people were killed, with 40 percent women and children. The State of Israel was officially declared on May 14, 1948, a month *after* the attack (Perdue 1989: 145). Clearly, *before* Israel declared its independence as a nation-state, violence was carried out by non-state terrorist organizations.

2. October 6, 1976, Barbados:

Cubana Airlines Flight 455 exploded after takeoff in Barbados, killing all seventy-three persons aboard (Lakshmanan 2005: A10). A man named Luis Posada Carrilles who was opposed to the Castro government in Cuba had boasted of the attack days before it occurred. In interviews he claimed responsibility for bombings at Cuban resorts that resulted in the injury of six people and the death of an Italian tourist. Mr. Posada Carriles left Cuba after Castro had taken power and served in the U.S. Army. He was enrolled in officer training at Fort Benning, where he was "...trained in demolition, propaganda, and intelligence" (Lakshmanan 2005: A10). At one point Mr. Posada Carriles was hired by U.S. covert operations to help direct the re-supply of Nicaraguan contras from El

Salvador. He was a leader of anti-Castro guerrilla operations while in the U.S. and later in Venezuela. In 1976 the CIA cut ties with him. It is not clear what role his CIA involvement had in the terrorist bombing of the Cuban Airlines flight. Two other men were convicted in Venezuela of planting the bomb in the airline lavatory. Posada Carriles escaped from a prison in Venezuela on August 18, 1985, while awaiting trial by a civilian court. (A military court had acquitted him but that acquittal was nullified on March 24, 1983.) Orlando Bosch, a co-conspirator, was eventually acquitted by the civilian court in Venezuela. Since Posada Carriles escaped the civilian trial was never held and a verdict was never issued. In 2000 he was convicted in Panama of plotting to kill Castro, after having been arrested with forty tons of explosives in Panama, but he was pardoned by the outgoing Panamanian President. Now the government of Venezuela, under Hugo Chavez, has been pushing for extradition from the U.S. A lawyer has described Posada Carriles as

“the Osama bin Laden of Latin America” (Lakshmanan 2005: A10). Bin Laden, of course, had been supported by U.S. forces when the Soviet Union occupied Afghanistan, and is subsequently associated with the September 11th terrorist attack. But Luis Posada Carriles has only acted against the government of Fidel Castro, activity that is generally supported by the Cuban exile community in the U.S. Cuban-Americans in Florida generally supported the re-election of President George W. Bush in the very close election against Al Gore. It is likely that Hugo

Chavez of Venezuela, who is pro-Castro, is concerned with the extradition of Posada Carriles for reasons having to do with the U.S. government stance against Cuba.

4. 1968-1976-1980s terrorist acts in Germany:

The activities of the RAF (*Rote Armee Fraktion*, Red Army Faction) are often associated with the suicides in 1976-77 of Ulrike Meinhof (daughter of art historians) and Andreas Baader. The Baader-Meinhof gang was a loose collection of about a dozen New Left individuals (e.g. Gudrun Eisslin, Holger Meins, Horst Mahler) who were influenced by Franz Fanon's views on violence and who held eclectic, loosely Marxist views about society. They collaborated with activists and terrorists from Latin America and the Middle East. For more than a decade they carried out violent acts such as the killing of industrialists, bankers, jurists and bombing various buildings (banks, offices, military bases, a newspaper). Their objectives were vague (Laqueur 1987: 236-239).

5. 1981-82 The Mujaheddin and Fedayeen in Iran:

During the reign of the Shah of Iran the Mujaheddin and the Fedayeen were terrorist organizations with a few hundred members who opposed the Shah and his secret police force (SAVAK). When Shiite fundamentalist ayatollahs and radical university students overthrew the Shah's regime, and Prime Minister Bani Sadr resigned in June, 1981, the Mujaheddin and some elements of the Fedayeen were strengthened. They had the support of many members of the officer corps.

They killed many political opponents and openly opposed the revolutionary guards. For example, on August 10, 1981, they managed to kill the President of Iran, Ali Rajai, as well as the Prime Minister and Chief of Police. Attacks against the Khomeini regime occurred all over Iran. But the Khomeini regime struck back with mass executions of suspects that numbered in the thousands (Laqueur 1987: 259-261). In retrospect the Shah's government had been somewhat less ruthless in suppressing the terrorists. Moreover, the Majaheddin had underestimated the resilience of the supporters of the Khomeini regime, the Islamic Republican Party, especially clergy who represented the urban poor (the *mustazefin*).

6. 1878-1911: Russian *Narodnaya Volya* and Social Revolutionaries:

In Russia there were many terrorist activities, usually involving assassination of highly placed officials. In August, 1878, General Mezentsev, the head of one section of the Tsarist secret police, was assassinated, and in September, 1879, the *Narodnaya Volya* declared that the Tsar was sentenced to death (in absentia). On March 1, 1881, they were finally successful. In 1901 the Minister of Education and in 1902 the Minister of Interior were assassinated by members of the Social Revolutionary Party. Even after the November, 1917, Bolshevik Revolution, there were further terrorist attacks. (Lenin was wounded when Uritski and Volodarski were killed.) When the Tsar of Russia was a

relatively authoritarian tyrant there was opposition to his rule. Terrorism in Russia was the tool of the weak against the strong.

Those six cases (September 2001 U.S., April 1948 Palestine, 1970s Germany, 1980s Iran, 1880s Russia) are all quite different. But they each represent, in their own way, concrete examples of what could be could non-state terrorist activity by organized terrorist groups (Al Qaeda, Irgun-Lehi, Baader-Meinhof RAF, Mujaheddin, and Narodnaya Volya). The activities were not always well organized, but they were carried out by groups of people who formed an organization. In each case the terrorist acts of individuals can only be understood as aspects of the activities of terrorist organizations. So the question that we need to deal with here is how can a web approach that emphasizes the relationship between part and whole (e.g. individual terrorist and terrorist organization, or terrorist organization and broader terrorist ideology) be further refined? What can we say about these (and possibly other) examples in terms of the sociology of terrorism (Laqueur 1987: 72-141)?

III. Sociological Theory: Part and Whole:

A meso-level organization (or, “gang”) is embedded in broader macro structures and processes, of course, and we should never lose sight of the importance of the agency of individual social actors in the social construction and reconstruction of institutions related to power and economy. Nor should we ever ignore the wider cultural aspects of the problem. The five examples above all

involve non-state actors. The examples could be multiplied. Each case could be elaborated. But it is telling that the five situations are all quite different.

A web approach (Phillips 2000) to the study of terrorism has to move up and down the ladder of abstraction when it comes to the study of society and the individual. Why did Vera Zasulich shot the Governor-General of St. Petersburg? Why did the Umkhonto We Sizwe carry out hundreds of terrorist attacks in South Africa in the late 1970s? Why did Massoud Rajavi, a leader of the Mujaheddin in Iran, think he could defeat the Islamic Republican Party and Ayatollah Khomeini? The answers to such questions involve more than simply psychological understanding of the terrorists.

We have to consider the most macro and the most micro units of analysis as inter-connected, although we do not necessarily have to try to study everything all at once. It is necessary to have a general theoretical understanding in mind, but it is not always possible to articulate all aspects of the whole web of inter-relationships in every study.

There has been quite a bit of work done on individuals, considered psychologically (Crenshaw 1992, Moghaddam and Marsella 2004), and there is considerable reflection on macro-level social processes (Laqueur 1987, Perdue 1989), but students of terrorism have to some extent ignored the importance of the meso-level, both empirically and theoretically. In summarizing the research on terrorism, a noted British expert, Andrew Silke, comments that “The activities of

terrorist groups and the nature of their membership, have by and large been studiously ignored by social scientists” (Silke 2004: 9).⁸ We can study terrorist organizations comparatively and historically and gain better insight into the ways in which terrorist organizations have often operated in the past.

A clue to the importance of a meso-level approach is Anthony Giddens’ notion of “structuration.”⁹ This is not the place to attempt a complete review of Giddens’ paradigm, but a few brief comments will help to set the stage. Giddens (1995) argues that the polarization of (macro) “structure” and (micro) “agency” is too rigid. Instead, the situated practices of social actors can be understood according to principles of organization. It is often through interaction and exchange that macro structures become routinized. But at the organizational level we can see empirically where structures are produced and reproduced. The long-term reproduction of societal-level macro institutions is a matter of complex processes. There are aspects of human social action which are universal and which can perhaps be conceptualized in terms of deterministic laws useful for testing through natural scientific, hypothetico-deductive reasoning. But, there are also other aspects of social action which cannot be analyzed in terms of laws true for all times and all places. In such situations the natural science approach associated with the Positivism of Auguste Comte is often not relevant. In other words, the structuration that takes place through symbolic interaction and

exchange among human social actors can be quite variable. It is frequently not trans-historical and trans-cultural.

C. Wright Mills (1959) sociological imagination is central to the web approach. Mills' work on the power elite followed in the footsteps of one aspect of Max Weber's historicism and tended to develop ideas concerning power which were specific to U.S. society in the post World War II era. That is, Mills did not attempt to provide a general nomological theory of power. But Mills did not always provide a consistent theory concerning the link between macro and micro processes. For that we have to turn to other theorists.

Giddens differentiates his structuration approach from three other ways of conceptualizing the relationship between society and individuals. He rejects functionalism, totalism and structuralism.¹⁰ For Giddens "functionalism" is the idea that society is primarily a system of functionally inter-related parts. (Thus, he does not favor Parsons' idea of a social system or Merton's theory of functions and dysfunctions.) Giddens also rejects ideological "totalism," the notion that the *Zeitgeist*, identity, or expressive cultural "totality" of a society (e.g. Romanticism, Modernism) is adequate as a description of that society. (Think here of the idea of the U.S. as characterized by the "American Dream" or of *wahabi* Islam as essentially opposed to modernity.) For both functionalism (which often tends to be conservative) and totalism (which frequently tends to be radical) there is emphasis on normative consensus as the glue that holds a society together.

Finally, Giddens rejects other nuanced “structuralist” views. For example, he explicitly rejects Althusser’s notion of “metonymic” effects. Giddens views Althusser’s attempt to resolve the Marxian problem of the relationship between base and super-structure as flawed. However, Althusser’s attempted resolution of other Marxist versions of totalism (e.g. expressive totalism) does aid Giddens in thinking through his own idea of structuration. That is, Giddens explicitly builds on Althusser.

The web approach emphasizes the inter-relatedness of the part and the whole. Giddens’ structuration is one reasonable theoretical solution to the dilemma of the relationship between the individual and the society. The dialectical inter-relatedness of individual social actors and macro-level institutional, societal structures can be resolved at a higher conceptual level. The resolution of the theoretical paradox helps us to theorize about concrete social phenomena, social processes located in time and space.¹¹ The emphasis here is on “signification” and the ways in which “modes of discourse” and “symbolic orders” contribute to structuration. Structuration always includes domination and legitimation, but perhaps the most heuristic way to fully understand the ideological justifications used in domination and legitimation involves examining significations.¹²

IV. Terrorist Organizations in CHS Perspective:

The looseness of the term “terrorist organization” is in the way in which I will be using the idea of an “organization.” In the sub-disciplinary specialization known as the sociology of organizations there is often a more limited notion of the concept of an organization, a conceptualization related to the study of “formal organizations”. If we are studying a corporation or a university then it is fairly clear what is meant by the formal organizational structure of such a unit. When the network ties among terrorists are less explicit and when terrorist organizations may only be linked through processes of signification (“common cause”) then we are obviously discussing a different kind of organizational structure. Al Qaeda does not have a board of directors! But for the purposes of this conceptual analysis I would like to move beyond the stricter definition of what an organization is. That is necessary in order to be able to analyze the idea comparatively and historically. It is also important due to the fact that terrorist organizations are closed to the outside world and no researcher can ever really know the intricacies of the organizational structure. Indeed, it is often the case that the terrorist activists themselves (e.g. those who actually flew in the planes on September 11th) do not know the full scale and scope of the organization. It is kept secret.

The assumption is that by studying different times and different places it will be possible to begin to formulate broader sociological generalizations. If we merely study our own time (early twentieth century) and our own place (U.S.) we

will not have as full an appreciation for what terrorism represents historically (before September 11th) and cross-culturally (in regions outside North America). A web approach to the study of terrorism based simply on recent events and American perspectives is likely to be incomplete.

In sociology today we often attempt primarily to study our own society, often aspects of life in our own nation-state. That is, many French sociologists primarily study France and many German sociologists primarily study Germany. Introductory textbooks tend to reflect the way in which American sociologists tend to study the U.S. and to comment on the rest of the world, if at all, from a primarily American perspective. One manifestation of that bias in textbooks is the way in which publishers will produce “Canadian” editions of American textbooks, editions sold in Canada but not sold in the U.S. For example, the introductory textbook by Macionis has a Canadian edition which is by Macionis and Gerber. But Macionis and Gerber is not used in the U.S. The national focus of a sociology text often means that information about other kinds of sociological arrangements is limited. An American student learns about political institutions through the filter of the American congressional system and the constitutional separation of powers among the executive, legislative and judicial branches, and may not know very much at all about the British or Canadian parliamentary systems, where the executive (the Prime Minister) is part and parcel of the legislature. Similarly, discussions of race and ethnicity tend to be very biased

toward the U.S. situation in most American textbooks, with very little discussion of what race and ethnicity may mean elsewhere (e.g. Cyprus, Lebanon, Singapore). Sociology is thus seen by many as the study of a society.

But, in classical sociological theory (e.g. Marx, Weber, Simmel, Durkheim, Martineau, DuBois) there was an emphasis on studying *societies*. That is, the classical tradition, emphasized by Mills (1959), was not primarily about one society at one time but about historical changes in societies over time. Particularly important to the classical tradition is the study of the emergence of modern capitalism. There was often a Euro-centric bias in those classical accounts, but there was also an awareness that the study of sociology must be comparative and historical if it is going to help us to understand aspects of human life which are not strictly universal.

A distinction is sometimes made among macro, meso and micro aspects of society. That distinction is usually made within the context of the study of one society at one point in time. Thus, for example, the more macro aspect of American society may be viewed by Structural-Functionalists and Neo-Functionalists as having something to do with the various institutions of U.S. society (political, economic, military, educational, familial, etc.). The idea of linking macro, meso and micro levels of analysis together in a comparative and historical manner is rarely emphasized. Most comparative-historical sociology (CHS) is done at a more macro level. For example, the early work of Theda

Skocpol compared macro level aspects of revolution in three societies, following a template for CHS associated with Barrington Moore.

In the web approach the epistemological principle is that we should examine the relationship of the parts to the whole in a holistic manner, moving along different levels of abstraction. But such holistic theorizing is a tall order. It requires thinking some of the common sense ontological assumptions that tend to get built into our ways of investigating sociological phenomena in one society at one point in time. Consider the question of agency.

V. Meso-level Agency?:

The question of agency is a perplexing one for sociology. Agency is often associated with individual social actors. That would tend to imply that the main avenue for the discovery of agency would be psychology. For many, the most micro unit in sociology would be the individual. That leads to social psychological theories concerning the motivation of individuals. For example, Turner (this volume) has emphasized the social psychology of the individual terrorist. The emphasis on individuals and their agency is important, of course, but a full use of the sociological imagination, at least as C. Wright Mills seems to have understood it, requires also examining the ways in which individuals are affected by broader meso level sociological phenomena. If we are going to think of meso (and macro) level phenomena as emergent phenomena and not merely epi-phenomenal analytical categories then such phenomena should be given a

kind of systemic agency. After all, we speak of the U.S. going to war or Japan suffering defeat. We could simply think of such turns of phrase as metaphorical, but there is a sense in which they are not merely shorthand ways of speaking about complex sets of events. There is no necessary reason to limit the notion of agency to individual persons.

Moreover, there is no necessary reason to think of the human individual as the most micro level of analysis. In psychology there has been less emphasis on persons (and personality) than there has been on such abstractions as motivation and cognition. In this paper, I concentrate primarily on the other end of the spectrum. Rather than focus on the intense emotions (both positive and negative) of individuals – which is a useful way to explore the topic, too -- I try to examine aspects of larger-scale socio-cultural arrangements: non-state terrorist organizations.

VI. Terrorism versus State-violence:

There are many forms of violence. Terrorism is only one of many ways that meso and macro level agents engage in violence. Terrorism is violence associated with aggression by non-state “organizations” against states. When we use the phrase “state terror” we confuse the issue. A nation-state which has legitimate authority may resort to violence, but such military action is not terrorism in the narrow sense. Military actions engaged in by one state against another state are often violent, but they are not terrorist. The bombing of a city

during a war (e.g. Tokyo and Dresden in World War II) is an attempt to terrorize the civilian population, but it is not terrorism in the sense in which I am discussing terrorist organizations. Armies representing states have often employed what might loosely be called “terrorist” tactics to achieve political and military ends (e.g. Hiroshima and Nagasaki), but such tactics are not usually considered to be terrorist actions in the more technical sense. The main military objective of a nation-state actor is to achieve victory over the military of another society (e.g. the U.S. victory in the Pacific theatre during World War II).

It is precisely in situations where the non-state organization is attempting to make itself heard that terrorism is more likely to occur and be labeled as terrorism. Two armies fighting one another (as in the battle at Omaha Beach during World War II) may indulge in extremes of killing and violence, but they will not be considered to be engaging in terrorism. For the purposes of this chapter, terrorism is defined as sporadic acts of violence by non-governmental, non-state organizations or “groups” against those societally-institutionalized organizations and systems which are perceived as interfering with intended goals.

VII. Agency and the Part-Whole Problem:

One goal of this book is to explore the usefulness of the web approach, defined in part as an emphasis on part-whole relations. It is difficult to develop a general solution to the question of structure versus agency, but empirical events can be considered in terms of the relative extent to which a sociological

explanation relies on the more meso level of analysis. That is, rather than conceptualize agency as pertaining primarily or even exclusively to human individuals, it is possible to conceptualize agency as relevant to the conduct of violence by state and non-state actors. When two state actors engage in violence we call it war. Even the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese military in World War II cannot, technically speaking, be regarded as a terrorist act. It was an act of war, and regarded as such. But when a non-state actor (e.g. Al-Qaeda) engages in violence against a state then the idea of terrorism is more appropriate to the situation being analyzed.

Silke (2004: 16-18) points out, for example, that the International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) in Israel has studied the Arab-Israeli conflict. Much of their work is valid and reliable. However, in classifying combatants and non-combatants the researchers at ICT placed the fatalities of ten percent of uniformed Israeli soldiers (who were carrying weapons) into the non-combatant category. This was considered by some outside observers as a bias in the report. The ICT researchers may have had good reasons to classify some Israeli soldiers with weapons as non-combatant fatalities, but that certainly runs counter to the general idea that a soldier in uniform represents a legitimate state and does not represent a category equivalent to a civilian non-combatant.

There are, of course, various levels of societal organization. There has never been a systematic conceptualization of the taxonomy of sociological agents

but it is generally understood that there is a kind of continuum from very large to very small-scale actors. The largest sociological unit may be the world as a whole, but since there is no clear way to think about the world acting as a whole we tend – at least outside of science fiction -- to limit ourselves to sub-units. For example, it is possible to think of “civilizations” as symbolic totalities. Any such notion of a civilization is a somewhat arbitrary theoretical construct. Before World War II there was still talk of Christian civilization. After the war it became more common to speak of “Judeo-Christian” civilization, even though many people resisted such a classification. It is possible that someday the notion of “Judeo-Christian-Islamic” civilization will become a more widely accepted idea within social science.

At the meso level of sociological agency there are various kinds of analytical social units. Such units of analysis include small groups, voluntary groups, informal and formal organizations, neighborhoods and communities. Much of the work of Alfred Schutz is devoted to the phenomenological understanding of this *Umwelt* and *Mitwelt* in the lives of individuals (Barbe 2004: 56, 64, 106), which is partly a matter of inter-subjective *Verstehen*.¹³

At the macro level are larger theoretical units. Those can include class, status and power units, institutions within a society (e.g. the military), whole nation-states, and various kinds of systems of societies. The World Trade Organization, for example, is a kind of system which encompasses many nation-

states. Using Giddens (1995) structuration theory involves all of those levels of analysis, but here the concern is simply with the terrorist organization.

VIII. Empirical Examples Revisited:

Having briefly sketched the application of structuration theory to the meso-level terrorist organization, let us look at the five examples with which I initiated this paper. Has anything been gained by the broader theoretical argument? Is anything clearer as a result of emphasizing the idea that we are not just talking about individual terrorists or macro-institutional processes? What is the relationship between the part (e.g. the individual) and the whole (e.g. the terrorist organization)?

It seems clear from a reconsideration of these concrete examples that terrorist organizations are often only very loosely organized and frequently based on very unrealistic evaluation of the likelihood of success. None of the six examples show a tightly-organized, clearly functioning organization. There may be very effective actions (e.g. Al Qaeda and 9/11, early stages of Mujaheddin in Iran, Socialist Revolutionary assassinations in Russia). But such “successes” are only temporary. Hundreds or even thousands of people may suffer and be killed, but nevertheless the ultimate success of such terrorist organizations is severely limited. They have no clear objective. They do not provide a path toward a new legitimate structure. No terrorist organization has ever been able to achieve legitimate authority simply on the basis of terrorism. While it is certainly true that

all nation-states have had to resort to the use of violence, it is also true that legitimacy can never be maintained through violence alone. This is a fundamental aspect of Max Weber's discussion of the use of the means of coercion (Bakker 2004). It is also central to Weber's conceptualization of authority or domination (*Herrschaft*), as is clearly articulated by Ringer (2004: 176-201).

That does not mean that the long term repercussions of various forms of terrorist activities by terrorist organizations cannot segue into more politically viable forms of structures. The example of the Irgun-Lehi (the Stern gang) in Palestine, before the declaration of Israeli independence, shows that not all forms of terrorism result in complete self-defeat. Several Israeli Prime Ministers engaged in non-state terrorism before May 14, 1948. Given the conditions in the world at that time it is impossible to make simplistic ethical pronouncements about the activities of Israeli leaders. But the Israeli example is useful here as a reminder that outright condemnation of all non-state terrorist activities is also not something with which a scholar or academic, in the safety and comfort of his or her study, can easily feel comfortable. We can condemn terrorist organizations, but it is another thing altogether to try to understand them in historical context.

We are now in a situation that is characterized by many authors as a period of "globalization." But as Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel Prize winning economist, former Chief Economist of the World Bank, has pointed out, globalization has its "discontents." Surprisingly, it took the 9/11 disaster to shake the International

Monetary Fund (IMF), a public institution, out of its complacency concerning the secrecy of its offshore banking arrangements.

The billions of dollars in the Cayman Islands and other such centers are not there because those islands provide better banking services than Wall Street, London or Frankfurt; they are there because the secrecy allows them to engage in tax evasion, money laundering, and other nefarious activities. Only after September 11 was it recognized that among those nefarious activities was the financing of terrorism” (Stiglitz 2002: 228).

Reform of the IMF is important because, according to Stiglitz, it has sometimes served the interests of the financial elite rather than promoting economic stability. Mistakes made by the IMF were often shoved under the rug. Overly confident assessments and recommendations made on the basis of ideological conviction rather than economic analysis are characteristic of the IMF, according to Stiglitz. For example, the Fund emphasizes the problem of inflation when it makes reports on developing country economies, but it sometimes ignores other important economic factors like growth in productive capacity or employment. There has been significant reluctance to undertake even relatively minor reforms.

If a leading World Bank economist can be so critical of the IMF it is not surprising that there may be a great deal of loose rhetoric by those less well informed about the IMF. Many people who do not know much about economic theory can nevertheless sense that something is wrong when IMF policies result in the hyper-inflation in East and Southeast Asia. One does not need to know the latest academic research on short-term capital flows to understand that there are times when capital moves in such a way as to benefit elites with insider information. There has been a growing disparity between the haves and the have-nots. Poverty reduction in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) has not been effective. There are attempts now to reform the global economic system but debt

relief (amounting to around twenty billion dollars for the LDCs), even if undertaken, will still not produce results if not matched by significant increases in foreign assistance that is specifically ear-marked for infrastructure projects (e.g. roads, electrification, ports, telecommunications). The world has a long way to go before we can speak of a "just civilization" (Bakker 1993).

None of this justifies terrorist acts of violence, of course. No one in the World Trade Center deserved to die. But if we simply assume that everything in the world is as it should be then we ignore the circumstances under which it is possible for terrorist organizations to emerge. The situation in Iraq today is very complex but one thing that is abundantly clear is that no solution will be found by assuming that the U.S. has always acted in a purely benevolent manner toward countries and people in the Middle East.

Such macro considerations are not directly in evidence in the five cases briefly considered here. But a more complete analysis would indicate that in each case there is some grain of truth – however small – to the analysis that motivates the terrorist organization and its members. Russians who fought the Tsar were perhaps somewhat naïve, but they certainly understood that an autocratic regime was something that had to be changed. Eventually, of course, the Kerensky and the Leninist revolutions did change the structure of Russian society. Those who opposed the Shah of Iran may have under-estimated the extent to which they were going from the frying pan into the fire when they opposed the Islamic Republican Party, but in hindsight we can understand why they were opposed to the Shah and SAVAK.

How can sociological theory help us to formulate a broader vision of non-state terrorism? It is partially a matter of using *Verstehen* to comprehend the ways in which the terrorist organizations (and individual terrorists) were responding, as well as they could, to situations which are complex. As Ringer (2004: 24-25, 91-92) indicates, the Weberian use of *Verstehen* – based in part on Dilthey's earlier

formulations – involves a certain degree of empathy (*Nachfühlen*) but it also requires a sense of the macro-, meso-, and micro- structures of the situation (structural causation).

The Baader-Meinhoff gang is very instructive in this regard. The things they did were illegal and immoral. But to leave it at that is to simply condemn and not understand. If Ulrike Meinhof or Andreas Baader had been better informed it is quite possible they would not have resorted to such violent (and ultimately self-defeating) tactics. The Green Party in Germany today is in part an outgrowth of the same impulse as the RAF (Red Army Faction), but instead of an unsophisticated version of Marxist polemics the Green Party has a fairly advanced analysis of politics and economics. Would Baader and Meinhof not have become terrorists if they had finished doctorates in social science? We will never know. But clearly their lack of in-depth comprehension of the Marxist ideas they had become acquainted with may have been part of the initial problem.

The on-going controversy concerning Mr. Luis Posada Carriles indicates, at the very least, that the use of the label “terrorist” is sometimes selective and that terrorist activities undertaken by those who support a particular ideology are not necessarily roundly condemned by those who tend to accept the basic premises of that ideology. In Miami, it is one thing to condemn Osama bin Laden among members of the Cuban “exile” community in Florida, and it is quite another matter to critique Luis Posada Carriles. The same kind of brutality and violence may be viewed quite differently depending on one’s political convictions and immediate circumstances.

Of course, social science itself is often very difficult to penetrate. There are hundreds of different groups working in isolation. In the U.S. alone there are thousands of universities and journals. It is not easy to discover what is really going on in the world. Sociologists disagree among themselves concerning the most fundamental epistemological and ontological assumptions. There is not even

any agreement whether teleological and axiological concerns should enter into our theoretical and methodological choices. The recent controversy concerning “public sociology” from a Marxist Critical Theory perspective has made it clear that it is very easy for even relatively sophisticated thinkers to completely misunderstand one another. When journalists like Michael Savage comment the analysis becomes even more muddled. Hopefully this analysis will bring us a little bit closer to a more nuanced understanding of what a non-state terrorist organization is, and what it is not. The fact that it is often necessary to repeat the phrase “non-state terrorism” is indicative of the way in which the discussion continues to be confused.

IX. Conclusion: The Web Approach and Terrorism:

Since it was first published, the “Web Approach” has undergone some modification. There is still some room for further development of that heuristic approach. But, as Kincaid has argued (Phillips, Kincaid and Scheff 2002: 133) it allows for a reflexive ability to develop “...awareness of the historical, sociological and psychological processes influencing the research itself.” I am aware that I would not have written this chapter if it had not been for the fact that I am committed to the pursuit of a general sociology which ranges from the empirical study of idiographic detail in one time and place to generalizations about universal patterns applicable to all relevant times and all places where human beings exist.

The web approach is a general theoretical framework that can be used to study any substantive topic (Phillips 2001). The “part/whole morphological method” (Scheff 1997) is viewed as a stage of inquiry intermediate between purely qualitative and purely quantitative that can (also) “be used to generate micro-macro theories,...” (Scheff 1997: 19). Anything that is of interest to sociologists can be studied using sociological theories and methods. Therefore, it is important to try to construct the most comprehensive and accurate theoretical paradigm possible. Giddens’ rejection of functionalism, totalism, structuralism and other approaches is an attempt on his part to articulate a theory which he feels is more comprehensive and useful. The idea of structuration fits well with the web approach because it allows us to move up and down the ladder of abstraction. It implies, for example, that if we only study the actions of individuals (whether psychologically or sociologically) we may be missing a part of the whole. But, it also implies that if we move to a very macro-level of analysis we make a similar error. All of the levels of social organizational “structure” or “system” are important to consider.

In the case of theorizing and research on terrorism it might be fruitful to give more consideration to the inter-mediate level of structure, the level of “organization.” (Again, this is not to be confused with the specialized study of formal organizations such as business organizations, although there may be some overlaps.) If we simply caricature terrorist organizations and express moral

repugnance we do not get very far analytically. There is a time and place for the expression of emotions and terrorist killing frequently evokes very powerful feelings of hatred. But we need to move beyond those kinds of gut-level reactions to a more sophisticated level of understanding.

The reactions that individuals and groups have to violence carried out by state and non-state agents often change dramatically in the course of time. Today, for example, many American citizens drive cars manufactured in Japan, Germany and Italy, even though it is well recognized that the large American corporations are bound to suffer. American citizens who work for Ford, G.M. and Chrysler may lose jobs, but nevertheless people buy Toyotas, Mercedes and Ferraris. The Second World War ended in 1945, some sixty years ago. We remember the war, but we also move on. Nevertheless, such perspective requires time. Immediately after 9/11 there was a visceral reaction. Like Pearl Harbor, the Al Qaeda attack resulted in a day of infamy. But also, like Pearl Harbor, there will be a time when time and distance will allow for a clearer understanding of what happened, and why. One of the reasons we eventually soften our attitudes toward former military enemies is because a war can really end. Since the goals of terrorist organizations are not well articulated, – and may not even be clear to the protagonists – moving on will be more problematic. But careful theoretical and empirical analysis may make it possible to resolve certain kinds of conflicts and to provide the beginning of a basis for moving forward. It is possible to conceive of a time in the future

when terrorist organizations will no longer be as central to our immediate concerns as they are now. It is not overly optimistic to think that solid sociological understanding may contribute to achieving the amelioration of the worst aspects of international terrorism. But such solid knowledge will require a web approach, not a rigidly “bureaucratic” approach in which the discipline of sociology is divided into more than forty different sub-specialties.

That is why it takes a generalist like Leo Braudy, a Professor of English on fame and other topics, to pull together a wide range of materials on the relevance of the social construction of masculinity to violence. His book *From Chivalry to Terrorism* (Braudy 2005) compares favorably to some of the more general work done by sociologists like C. Wright Mills and Alvin Gouldner. He argues that Al Qaeda is about “masculine tribal self-esteem” and not nationhood or the clash of civilizations. What I believe this chapter adds to Braudy’s thought provoking analysis is the idea of the social bond, as articulated by Scheff (1997). Hence, Braudy utilizes the ladder of abstraction but he nevertheless misses an important component of the specifically *sociological* imagination: the importance of the group or organization.

The combined Web Approach and Part/Whole Method provides an intriguing theoretical and methodological framework or “Meta-Paradigm” for sociological analysis. It is not merely a matter of Cultural Studies, as valuable as that approach may be for certain kinds of problems. Phillips and Scheff have

worked together with Kincaid to try to conceptualize a general framework that utilizes the spirit of C. Wright Mills' "sociological imagination." In their edited volume (Phillips, Kincaid, Scheff 2002) a number of authors have attempted to apply the Web-Part/Whole Approach. (These are detailed by Phillips in Chapter I.) The Sociological Imagination Group is a sincere attempt to move beyond simplistic dichotomies (such as qualitative versus quantitative) and integrate the highly specialized sub-fields of general sociology into a pragmatically useful theoretical and methodological framework.

A key aspect of the Web Approach is moving up and down the ladder of abstraction. But that has come to mean several different things. In the initial statement a metaphor of the globe was used, with literary concepts at a relatively low level and scientific concepts at a relatively high level (Phillips 2001: 22). But the metaphor breaks down when we recognize that it is only a partial model. (There is no necessary reason, for example, to think of the highest level of abstraction in physical sciences as "cold" like the North Pole.) The ladder of abstraction can also refer to a number of different aspects of the scientific method, although not all aspects of Peirce's (1955 [1877]) "semiotic" approach have been incorporated.

A key aspect of the Part/Whole Method is developing a middle ground between purely exploratory qualitative methods and purely verificational quantitative methods. If we combine the Web and Part/Whole Methods we get a

very general conceptualization of theory and methodology which can encompass all aspects of human social life. By examining cases at the more micro level, as I have done in a preliminary fashion here, we can test the utility of the Web and Part/Whole Approach.

Phillips has tended to discuss the “Web or Part/Whole Approach” but I have preferred to say the “Web and Part/Whole Approach.” The initial formulation of each of those general theoretical and methodological approaches makes it clear that they are not completely equivalent (“or”), although they do supplement one another (“and”). It is a task for the future for members of the Sociological Imagination Group to more clearly articulate how contributions by Phillips and Scheff can be even better integrated.

A final reflexive comment may help to bring this discussion of terrorist organizations to a close. Phillips (2001: 36- 37) asks: “...[I]s it in fact possible for sociologists to come up with the kind of powerful knowledge that in fact can affect forces as large and invisible as anomie, alienation, and addiction within modern society? Even more difficulty, can we hope to alter the very worldview and cultural paradigm that are basic to modern society?” I believe that this chapter has provided a clear example of how such questions can be answered. A more interactive worldview is necessary for a reduction in terrorism. If we persist in seeing the alienation and anomie of the individual terrorist as the major cause of terrorist acts then we will be mis-informed. But if we situate the terrorist

organization in the wider “whole” of the clash of strong affective bonds we can be better informed. Both the more impersonal and the more personal aspects of reflexive analysis are necessary. My personal “abduction” (or, best guess, based on the evidence and theories at hand; see Peirce 1955) is that the same kinds of factors that might contribute to a terrorist committing a violent act might, if directed elsewhere, persuade that same person to undertake actions which are more likely to lead to positive outcomes. The intense loyalty to the group and strong urge to do something for the benefit of that group is mis-directed when it results in terrorism. As Scheff (1997: 229) clearly points out, it is the “shame/anger spirals” that are a central source of violent conflicts.¹⁴ These often have to do with misplaced and exaggerated images of “masculinity” (Braudy 2005: 542-555).

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Endnotes:

¹ The term "cell" as applied to terrorist groups is taken from biology. Microscopic and cellular biology is a specific sub-discipline of biology. Interestingly, Scheff makes an analogy to the ways in which zoologists and botanists study individual cases. A zoologist might study a specific animal. A botanist might study an individual plant specimen. The study of the minutia of a single case does not, however, preclude comparisons among cases. Scheff's intent is to escape the biases he finds in Glaser and Strauss' (1967) grounded theory – as originally formulated – and Durkheim's more comparative approach. When I say I am utilizing a "comparative-historical" approach I am, of course, attempting to situate that kind of comparison within the Web and Part/Whole Framework.

² Bakker (2004) examines the execution of a well-known Dutch independence leader in the sixteenth century, Jan van Oldenbarnevelt, as an example of "state terror" and the use of what Weber calls the "means of coercion." Ultimately legitimate authority always carries with it the right to use violence. See the discussion of Weber's theory in Ringer (1997, 2004).

³ The Inquisition undertaken by the Roman Catholic Church in the seventeenth century is an example of state terror, or quasi-state terror, that is not generally considered to be terrorism in the narrow sense. That is in part because the violent tactics associated with the church at that time were part and parcel of the maintenance of the Holy Roman-Germanic-Italian-Spanish Empire. The hegemony of any nation-state actor in a global world system is maintained in part by the use of violence, as in the case of British imperialism in the nineteenth century.

⁴ The understanding by outsiders (etic) is often flawed, but the internal understanding of the goals and purposes of terrorist activities may also often be vague for insiders (emic). Anthropologists who study sub-cultures and cultures in indigenous, small-scale societies attempt to study the "structures" of such societal groups (e.g. villages, clans, tribes) scientifically, but often acknowledge that even the most intensive field work will not provide a complete understanding equivalent to that of a "native." Yet it is hardly ever recognized that even the insiders may not

fully appreciate the functions of rituals or the importance of symbols. It is possible to underestimate the “ethno-science” of indigenous people but it is also possible to over-estimate and romanticize the “primitive” or “exotic.”

⁵ An interesting example is the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer. He was not a member of the Nazi Party but he benefited from the way in which the Nazi government organized universities and he was more than simply a passive observer. He attended Nazi training camps and did not protest when scholars were removed from their professorships. Moreover, his own work was much less than critical of fascism. Yet, after the war he continued to be allowed to function as a prominent German academic in Frankfurt and Heidelberg, without any real taint or blemish.

⁶ Osama bin Laden is often depicted as someone who has no specific goals and simply wants to eliminate “Western Civilization” altogether. But a careful reading of his pronouncements makes it clear that he is largely concerned with eliminating the role of Western countries in Saudi Arabia and other traditional countries in the Middle East (Southwest Asia). If more attention were paid to his specific goals then Al Qaeda might not seem as mysterious and unfathomable as it does now to many people. His goals are largely unacceptable (e.g. the elimination of Israel as a nation-state) but they are hardly equivalent to the complete annihilation of Judeo-Christian and/or secularized Enlightenment values and freedoms.

⁷ Since writing the first draft of this paper the London bombings which killed fifty-six or more people have been widely reported. See the New York Times, July 17, 2005. I have chosen not to add that case to this analysis. However, the importance of group norms is as significant in that case as it is for the cases briefly presented in the body of this chapter. Indeed, a proper test of the central thesis of this chapter is whether or not it can help to predict future incidents and tragedies.

⁸ The exceptions involve the study of prisoners who have been accused of terrorist activities. There are obviously significant practical problems in studying terrorist groups empirically, but there is no necessary reason why the idea of a terrorist organization cannot be conceptualized. Comparisons can be made between terrorist groups and other forms of deviant sub-cultural groups and “worlds.”

⁹ Giddens’ structuration theory is complex and not all aspects of his paradigm need be accepted in order to nevertheless adopt the general idea as a backdrop to the study of terrorist organizations as on-going structures that are defined, re-defined, framed and re-framed. There is a gap between Giddens’ theory and micro-level social psychological versions of Symbolic Interactionism, Phenomenological Sociology, Existential Sociology, Ethnomethodology and other “definitional” approaches. Giddens’ “Foreword” to Scheff (1990: ix-xiii) emphasizes the complexity of the interpretation of meaning and the way in which Scheff’s concern with “attunement” makes it possible to go beyond the more simplistic versions of the individualism versus holism debate.

¹⁰ The three terms (functionalism, totalism and structuralism) are my extrapolation from Giddens’ analysis. I regard them as idealized portraits of the positions that Giddens is rejecting. It would require another paper to fully explore the strengths and weaknesses of those three theoretical orientations. Giddens does not fully discuss phenomenological sociology (Barber 2004).

¹¹ Giddens’ notion of structuration is used here in a way that he himself might not approve of. He is interested in the process of structuration as a universal aspect of human social action and interaction. To some extent his ideas are meant to be universal. All societies must include processes of domination, legitimation and signification. Hence, his theoretical concerns – like those of Weber and Mill -- are not always focused on a comparative-historical sociological approach. But Giddens does indicate that economic, political, legal and symbolic institutional orders can be different in different times and places.

¹² Weber’s notion of a “means of coercion” is primarily useful for the understanding of the relationship between legitimation and domination, but other aspects of Weber’s oeuvre concern signification (e.g. the idea of a Protestant-Puritan “Ethic”). See Ringer (2004) and Bakker (2003).

¹³ Schutz was a “student” of Max Weber’s methodology and incorporated Weberian ideas that stem from Neo-Kantian and Neo-Hegelian theorists into his phenomenological sociology. The complexities of Schutz’s intellectual development are discussed by Barber (2004: 26-31).

¹⁴ The quotation is taken from a context where Scheff is discussing the limitations of quantitative studies of conflict in marriage. But Scheff’s book as a whole is clearly concerned with all aspects of the spiral of conflict. His “shame/anger” hypothesis refers to micro, meso and macro levels of social structures, but always involves relatively micro nuances of emotion. See his Appendix, which lists verbal, paralinguistic and visual markers for shame and anger, based on Retzinger’s (1995) work.