

PACKAGING ANTI-TERRORIST ATTITUDES THROUGH THE POWERFUL LANGUAGE OF COLOURING BOOKS

Margaret Rasulo

(University of Campania 'Luigi Vanvitelli', Italy)

Abstract

The overall aim of this paper is to explore how the genre of colouring books has been exploited (Bhatia 2004) by the American publishing house *Really Big Coloring Books, Inc.*¹ in the attempt to shape reality according to a specific cultural perspective. The present study focuses on how these books, published and distributed mainly in the United States, activate processes of power that pervade social life and institutions (Fitzpatrick and McPherson 2010) through the use of visual and verbal features which are used to engage young adults (Newman and Newman 2014) in the discourse of freedom and democracy now that these principles, according to Wayne Bell, the CEO of *Really Big Coloring Books*², are being systematically undermined by terrorist attacks. The view that is put forth in this study is that the conventions of colouring books have been reinvented in order to provide an anti-terrorist response to the provocation of terrorist organizations, al-Qaeda first and the Islamic State after, whose online magazines are being used for the recruitment and self-radicalization of young Muslims living in different parts of the world. By conducting a comparative analysis of these two different genre types, namely the colouring books and the terrorist magazines, and by drawing attention to the stark contrast between their divergent purposes, the author intends to reveal a *stimulus/response* pattern underlying their communicative action whose purpose is to establish their own version of the truth. The study's methodological framework is based on Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996, 2001, 2006) social semiotic approach to multimodal analysis (van Leeuwen 2005). Through the interdisciplinary tools of multimodality, the meaning-making resources of visual and verbal conventions (O'Halloran and Smith 2011) employed to communicate contrasting views of terrorist representation are revealed.

1. Context of the study

In 2011, *Really Big Coloring Books, Inc.* came out with a series of controversial products with the intention of teaching children and young adults about the threat of terrorism. In 2010, for the purpose of recruiting and radicalizing young Muslim men mainly

¹ *Really Big Coloring Books, Inc.* <http://www.bigcoloringbooks.com/>.

² D. Mosbergen: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/04/terrorism-coloring-books-isis_n_5767904.html.

living in Western countries, but also in other parts of the world (Helfstein 2012), the militant Islamist organization al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)³ published the first issue of the digital magazine *Inspire*, released by the *al-Malahem* Foundation⁴.

Through the *al-Hayat* Media Centre⁵, the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2014 published the digital magazine *Dabiq* in correspondence with the announcement of the Caliphate. The comparative analysis of these two different genre types is based on the assumption that the colouring books constitute the response of the US-based publisher to the terrorist provocation enacted by al-Qaeda and the Islamic State through their respective recruitment and radicalization magazines.

Drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006: 3) view that "visual language is not transparent and universally understood, but culturally specific", this study's main challenge and overarching research question is to investigate how Western visual communication conventions are exploited to design editorial products originating from two different cultural systems whose purposes are completely antithetical. This also entails assessing the extent to which the content of these products is packaged and manipulated by these terrorist organizations in order to control their audiences and turn them into their major stakeholders, by which we mean those who share common beliefs, value systems and mission and are willing to become fully involved with an organization and therefore take on responsibilities towards it and contribute to its success⁶.

In American culture, colouring books have been published for over one hundred years, the earliest ones starting out with paints and continuing with crayons (Greenaway 1915), but they have also been the focus of research studies related to child and adolescent issues such as abuse, stress and serious illness (Fitzpatrick and McPherson 2010). Adult colouring books, which have recently enjoyed a surge of popularity, have also been the focus of several studies, especially in the 1960s with the first modern colouring book about conformity in the workplace, namely *The Executive Coloring Book* (Altman *et al.* 1961), published in 1961. Throughout the decade, many other adult colouring books were regularly published, such as *Drucker's JFK Coloring Book* (Drucker and Roman 1962), *The Nation's New Frontier Coloring Book* (Nation 1962), and *Khrushchev's Top Secret Coloring Book: Your First Red Reader* (Shalit and Davis 1962). The aim of these historic satirical books was to read their message and take a stand. Adults were therefore not expected to actually colour the pages, but just browse through them and have a laugh⁷.

³ The name AQAP came into existence in 2009 when Al-Qaeda's Saudi branch merged with its Yemeni branch. However, Al-Qaeda's presence in Yemen dates to the early 1990s when fighters returned home from Afghanistan accompanied by those from outside the country, including bin Laden, after successfully fighting off Soviet occupation. Retrieved from: <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/1/14/who-is-aqap-.html>.

⁴ The *al-Malahem Foundation* is the media centre of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. Retrieved from: <https://ds-dupal.haverford.edu/aqsi/resources/jihadi-agazines?page=2>, and <https://ent.siteintelgroup.com/mediagroups.html>.

⁵ The *al Hayat Media Center* is one of the main media outlets of the Islamic State. From here, messages in different Western languages (English, French, German) are spread through images, video and audio. Retrieved from: <http://formiche.net/2015/01/15/al-hayat-media-center-isis/>.

⁶ <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/stakeholder.html>.

⁷ L. Marsh (2015). *The Radical History of 1960s Adult Coloring Books*. Retrieved from: <https://newrepublic.com/article/126580/radical-history-1960s-adult-coloring-books>.

Indeed, colouring books have also attracted criticism from educationalists mainly related to the act of inducing people to colour within the lines, an activity which is thought to stifle creative thinking and encourage stereotypes⁸. Nevertheless, regardless of the pros and cons of this medium, the effectiveness of colouring books as educational and therapeutic tools and as a means for self-expression and relaxation continues to be addressed by mainstream research studies (Fitzpatrick 2010; Drake *et al.* 2014).

Very few studies, however, have been conducted on recently published colouring books, supposedly aimed at children and young adults, which have been designed to explore the controversial issues of terrorism and religion. These colouring books cannot be defined as representative of their genre, although they use typical features such as a large format and figures traced in black and white lines ready to be filled in with coloured crayons. Upon closer scrutiny, it becomes clear that some of them, and especially those included in this study's corpus, are not intended for children at all; the complexity of the figures does not facilitate colouring, and the chilling content of the verbal expressions accompanying the images can only be approached by an older age group.

Creating a more flexible version of a colouring book by interconnecting conventional visual features with those that usually characterize comic books and graphic novels, such as speech balloons, thought bubbles, panels, captions, headings, and stylized typography, would appear to be an attempt on the part of the publishing company to contrive a counter-provocation strategy to withstand the provocation of terrorist recruitment and radicalization magazines. In light of the above, this study aims to reveal the strategies employed by the *Really Big Coloring Books* publishing house to co-opt and adapt (Schnatz 2015) the features of what has always been widely understood as a favourite childhood pastime in order to exploit them as an editorial response to the terrorist threat.

It is the author's view that the publishers of both editorial products have strategically selected a tool of communication that would best disseminate their message according to effective packaging devices. The initial impression that one gets by visiting the *Really Big Coloring Books, Inc.* website⁹ is that of uniqueness as their products are customized to meet the communication needs of wide audiences that include individuals, institutions and businesses. Reaching large audiences and popularity are probably the two main objectives that have also led the terrorist organizations investigated in this study to use online magazines for radicalization purposes. Magazines are, indeed, powerful tools that can shape attitudes and encourage identification with the images or narratives that are told (Breazeale 1994). A common feature of *Inspire* and *Dabiq* is the combination of ideological and religious texts with lighter items such as rap songs, poems, religious dictates, warrior success stories, and messages from imprisoned and regretful Western journalists awaiting their fate.

The contrastive analysis of the different data sets described above will attempt to identify how entities from different cultural backgrounds package their equally provocative message through similar multimodal artefacts (van Leeuwen 2005) in order to legitimize their specific mission. The anti-terrorist message of the colouring books, analysed

⁸ <http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/07/02/478396922/the-people-vs-coloring-books-the-verdict-is-in>.

⁹ <http://www.coloringbook.com/>.

in this study by setting it against the content of the terrorist magazines, is meant to be discussed, according to *Really Big Coloring Books*, with open dialogue within the American community as a whole. For the terrorist organizations, their digital magazines serve the purpose of spreading the *jihadi* message within homeland territory and beyond.

1.1. *Terminological disambiguation*

When dealing with sociological issues that intersect the multimodal analysis of culture-sensitive data, a point to be made from the very beginning is the clarity of terminological references. Hence, the meanings of the words ‘terrorism’, ‘terrorist’, ‘terrorist organization’ and *jihad/jihadi* provided below are used within the context of this study as strictly related to the terrorist militant groups.

Despite the familiarity with the terms ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist’, they are still nebulous concepts and it is hard to agree on internationally accepted definitions. Regarding the definition of ‘terrorism’, this study adheres to the one formulated by the United Nations (1992) which states that terrorism is “*[a]n anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby – in contrast to assassination – the direct targets of violence are not the main target*”¹⁰.

This definition is then supplemented by quoting the one given by the British Government (1974) which is less complicated, but quite compatible with this context: “[*Terrorism*] is [...] *the use of violence for political ends, and includes any use of violence for the purpose of putting the public, or any section of the public, in fear*”¹¹.

The term ‘terrorist’ best fits the organizations for which terrorism is the principal activity even if political motives are also part of their agenda. According to the EU¹² a ‘terrorist’ “*commits such acts as attempted murder, kidnapping, etc, where the aim is of seriously intimidating a population [...] or seriously destabilising or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organization*”¹³. In this study, the term ‘terrorist’ is used to indicate an individual who commits acts of violence by specifically and voluntarily targeting civilians (Ganor 2002).

The term ‘terrorist organizations’ is generically used to refer to militant groups involved in acts of terrorism. Specifically, however, the single term ‘organizations’ within the context of terrorism refers to militant groups that operate according to different ideologies, infrastructures and operational modalities. With reference to the context of this study, al-Qaeda is best defined as a terrorist organization as it counts hundreds of members, does not hold territory, and cannot directly confront military forces. The Islamic State, on the other hand, has about 30,000 fighters¹⁴, funds itself, holds territory in both Iraq and Syria, although they are now in retreat and increasingly being forced

¹⁰ Retrieved from: <http://www.terrorism-research.com/>.

¹¹ Retrieved from: <http://www.terrorism-research.com/>.

¹² The Council of The European Union. Council Framework Decision of 13 June 2002 on combating terrorism (2002/475/JHA). Retrieved from: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/>.

¹³ D. Shariatmadari, Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/global/commentisfree/2015/jan/27/is-it-time-to-stop-using-the-word-terrorist>.

¹⁴ US Lieutenant General Sean MacFarland claims that although ISIS had over 45,000 fighters at the height of its powers in 2014, it has lost over 15,000 of them and is currently losing more as casualties in

out of these same areas¹⁵, engages in sophisticated military operations, controls lines of communication, and is therefore more than an organization, but rather a new type of terrorist group that can be designated as a complex network of individuals which also calls itself a State¹⁶. These defining features should be kept in mind as the discussion unfolds, but as the distinction between the two does not alter the data that are being analysed and compared, both militant groups will be referred to as 'terrorist organizations'.

The Arabic word *jihad* is often translated as 'holy war', but its definition is closer to the act of struggling or striving¹⁷. In a religious sense, *jihad* refers to the internal and external efforts of every Muslim to be a good believer and to inform people about the faith of Islam. The term also takes on military significance in terms of the legitimate use of force which can only occur if and when protecting the faith against others through peaceful solutions is not possible. Also, military *jihad* follows strict rules as it is proclaimed by a religious authority who advises those involved that there is an imminent external threat and violence is needed as a form of defence¹⁸.

Unfortunately, the implementation of military *jihad* has been exploited by many political and religious groups to justify various forms of violence even if scholars of Islam affirm that this misuse of *jihad* contradicts their faith. The activity of the two militant groups investigated in this study exemplifies their constant alignment of the military aspect of *jihad* with religious conceptualizations; all of which is clearly reflected in their terrorist magazines.

Another major terminological concern regards the variety of names given to the Sunni group known as the Islamic State. Part of the trouble is that since the group has evolved over time, the changing of its own name has led to other variants such as the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS)¹⁹, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and *Daesh*²⁰. The militants themselves prefer to be identified as the Islamic State in recognition of their self-declared Caliphate, but this study will also use ISIS as it is the most commonly encountered acronym in major worldwide media outlets.

1.2. A brief history of the self-proclaimed Islamic State

Considering that clarity of terminology depends on context, this subsection briefly discusses the origin and the evolution in time of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State by first-

the caliphate's strongholds increase. Retrieved from: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-syria-iraq-fighters-number-us-military-campaign-impact-how-many-soldiers-a7184886.html>.

¹⁵ Islamic State and the crisis in Iraq and Syria in map. Retrieved from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27838034>.

¹⁶ A.K. Cronin 2015. Retrieved from: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/isis-not-terrorist-group>.

¹⁷ S. Kabbani. Retrieved from: <http://islamicsupremecouncil.org/understanding-islam/legal-rulings/5-jihad-a-misunderstood-concept-from-islam.html?start=9>.

¹⁸ S. Kabbani. Retrieved from: <http://islamicsupremecouncil.org/understanding-islam/legal-rulings/5-jihad-a-misunderstood-concept-from-islam.html?start=9>.

¹⁹ Endonym of the region bordering the eastern Mediterranean Sea, usually known as the Levant or the region of Syria. Retrieved from: <http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/644304/IS-Islamic-State-Destroy-West-Terrorist-Syria-Iraq>.

²⁰ *Daesh* or *Da'ish*, the Arabic name for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, is a less common acronym for ISIS, but it is one that the militants do not favour. Retrieved from: <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/what-daesh-mean-IS-threatens-6841468>.

ly illustrating some differences and similarities that are relevant to the understanding of the data presented in this study.

As separate organizations, al-Qaeda and the Islamic State began their terrorist activities at different times, evolving from different tactics and under different leadership conditions. Despite these differences, there are also some similarities. Firstly, they both adhere to a variation of *Salafi Jihadism*. According to a study published by the RAND cooperation (2014)²¹, a group is defined to be *Salafi Jihadist* based on two criteria: the first is the return to a pure Islam, that of the *Salaf*, the pious ancestors; the second is based on the belief that violent *jihād* is a personal religious duty.

Secondly, with reference to their enemies, both terrorist organizations tend to share their hatred for those they consider deviants, crusaders and infidels, and both also wish to fulfil certain Islamic prophecies dealing with the end of the world by engaging Western forces in Syria, and specifically in Dabiq. However, al-Qaeda's primary enemy is the US, which is seen as the root cause of the problems of the Middle East. Its ultimate goal, therefore, has been to invalidate US domination and authority and overthrow America's allied Muslim state regimes. The Islamic State does not target the US exclusively, but demonstrates a more global reach, as testified by the terrorist attacks committed in over twenty countries. At the same time, it is also intent on conquering territory at a regional level by targeting 'apostate' regimes in the Arab world, namely the Assad regime in Syria and the Abadi regime in Iraq²². As for the major political concerns of the two militant groups, al-Qaeda has not traditionally been interested in establishing a caliphate, while the Islamic State has always sought to re-establish this governing body in order to "bring their brand of justice and *Shari'a* law to the entire world"²³. Historically, the Islamic State traces its origins to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who formed the group al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) in 2004 following the US invasion. After al-Zarqawi's death in 2006, the group rebranded itself as the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI), and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi became its leader in 2010. In April 2013, Baghdadi announced the merger of his forces in Iraq and Syria and the creation of the "Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant" (ISIL, ISIS). The leaders of al-Nusra and al-Qaeda rejected the move and disavowed ISIS, but fighters loyal to Baghdadi abandoned al-Nusra and helped ISIS remain in Syria. In June 2014, ISIS overran the northern city of Mosul, and moved southwards towards Baghdad. After consolidating its hold over dozens of cities and towns, ISIS changed its name to the 'Islamic State', of which The Caliphate is the political entity that governs according to the fundamental approach to *Shari'a* law (Vallee 2015).

It is important to point out that although the Islamic State has supplanted al-Qaeda as the jihadist threat of greatest concern, it does not stand as its outgrowth, especially

²¹ The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and decision making through research and analysis. Retrieved from: https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/CT400/CT405/RAND_CT405.pdf.

²² Syrian President Bashar Hafez al-Assad; Iraq's Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi (D. Byman 2015). Retrieved from: <https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/comparing-al-qaeda-and-isis-different-goals-different-targets/>.

²³ P. Mansoor 2016. *How to defeat ISIS*. Podcast interview retrieved from: <https://www.hoover.org/research/strategika-how-defeat-isis-peter-mansoor>.

considering that al-Qaeda continues to be a dangerous threat in Afghanistan, Yemen, Africa and South Asia²⁴.

2. Corpus

The corpus of this study is divided into two subcorpora. The first is the *Colouring Book* subcorpus comprising 25 images selected from three colouring books, namely *We Shall Never Forget 9/11* (2011), *We Shall Never Forget 9/11 - Vol. II - The True Faces of Evil – Terror* (2012), and *ISIS – A Culture of Evil* (2015), currently available in the US to disseminate information about terrorist organizations and their activities. The books can be ordered directly from the publishing company, but many of the pages can also be retrieved online.

Of the three colouring books, *ISIS – A Culture of Evil* is certainly one of the most violent and controversial as it has drawn heavy criticism from American Muslim groups for its representation of Muslims. The two volumes of *We Shall Never Forget*, despite the fact that their content is closely related to the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks²⁵, and there are very few images of brutal violence against individuals such as those contained in *ISIS – A Culture of Evil*, have also received negative reviews from the same Muslim community, mainly due to its references to “Radical Islamic Muslim Extremists” (Vol. II)²⁶.

The *Inspire-Dabiq* subcorpus comprises 30 images selected from those analysed in the 16 issues of *Inspire*, published between June 2010 and November 2016, and in the 15 issues of *Dabiq*, published between July 2014 and July 2016. These magazines can be downloaded from various websites in PDF format only, and are free of charge, a method that most certainly increases their accessibility from anywhere in the world.

As previously mentioned, *Inspire*, written in English, was created by members of al-Qaeda and designed to radicalize young Muslim men mainly living in Western countries. *Dabiq*, the Islamic State’s propaganda magazine, by harshly criticizing leading political and religious figures from the Western world as well as those from countries in the Middle East who have betrayed the *jihad*, hopes to radicalize any young person, but mainly men, who is willing to be a member or at least a supporter against all enemies and apostates of the Caliphate. To this purpose, the magazine is published in a number of languages besides English such as French, German, Russian and Arabic.

The above account of magazine affiliation clarifies, at least in part, the selection rationale of this corpus. As aforementioned, al-Qaeda and the Islamic State are separate organizations, but they are both willing to do whatever is necessary to bring about a global Islamic society (Jones 2014), and this is reflected in their online magazines albeit in different ways. Articles in *Inspire*, for example, include tutorials about making bombs and conducting one-man attacks, but *Dabiq*’s articles encourage a wider but more visually brutal and violent discussion on Islamic theology in support of the universal

²⁴ J. Burke 2016. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/29/a-more-dangerous-long-term-threat-al-qaida-grows-as-isis-retreats>.

²⁵ <https://www.rt.com/usa/185584-anti-terrorist-coloring-book/>.

²⁶ R. Spencer 2011. Retrieved from: <https://pt.scribd.com/document/64114750/Liberty-News-post-Sept-06-2011>.

Caliphate. This study argues that their message, notwithstanding the diversity of perspective, has been packaged as a deliberate action or provocation requiring a reaction or response from media outlets located all over the world. This implies that although the colouring books *We Shall Never Forget* (volumes I and II) are more comparable to *Inspire's* provocation tactics supported by al-Qaeda, and despite the fact that the Islamic State's *Dabiq* came out four years later and is therefore more comparable to *ISIS – A Culture of Evil*, the analysis undertaken in this study looks at broader categories that go beyond magazine affiliation and publication time. The focus is on the common exploitation of Western editorial conventions, styles and youth-oriented propaganda as well as on their similar justification tactics in murdering fellow Muslims.

3. Theoretical framework

This study, as mentioned above, employs Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996, 2001, 2006) social semiotic approach to multimodal analysis (Machin and van Leeuwen 2005), which draws on Halliday's (1985) Systemic Functional Linguistics and the three Ideational, Interpersonal and Textual metafunctions, as well as on the principles of genre theory (Chandler 1997; Martin and Rose 2007; O'Halloran 2008).

Based on Halliday's theory, Kress and Van Leeuwen use a slightly different terminology in discussing the meaning of image in visual communication: representational instead of ideational; interactional instead of interpersonal; and compositional instead of textual. In operating a shift from the semantic to the visual level, Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodal theory, as Balirano (2014: 11) points out, is constructed on the view that the visual mode embodies the same semantic system as language, and "that everything which can work with the semiotic code of language can work with the same semiotic code of images". Therefore, the act of reading images entails decoding the deployment of the elements that are the constituent parts of the three metafunctions which establish semiotic relations between the participants and the structural elements of the image itself (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 45-46).

The representational metafunction identifies two kinds of structures in terms of how to distinguish what is actually happening in the images: the narrative and the conceptual structures.

In order for an image to be classified as a narrative representation which makes a proposition of some kind, a vector is needed. A vector is a line, often an eyeline, or implied line, that suggests direction. Elements of a visual composition are called 'participants'. The participant from which a vector departs is known as the 'actor' and the arrival point is known as the 'goal'. Kress and Leeuwen distinguish different narrative processes by the types of vectors and the number and kinds of participants involved. These are action processes whereby the participant must either have a vector coming out of it or actually form the vector, and reactional processes, whereby an eyeline, such as a glance, by one or more of the participants, forms a vector that connects those participants. The meaning generated if the vector is pointed at a participant is known as a transaction. If the vector is not pointed at any other participant, it is a non-transaction.

Conceptual structures work on stable and timeless essence, in terms of class, structure or meaning. They include the following processes:

- classificational: the participant is positioned in taxonomic representations of superordinate and subordinate functions;
- analytical: the participant is related according to part-whole structures whereby possessive attributes contribute to creating the whole;
- symbolic: the participant is represented in terms of meaning in the image, revealed by attributive processes where identity is assigned to the Carrier by another participant, and by suggestive processes whereby the participant is only the Carrier, and meaning and identity are derived from other qualities within the Carrier or from other resources such as verbal aspects.

Kress and Van Leeuwen have suggested three ways to examine the interactional meaning of images from three aspects: contact (demand or offer achieved through gaze), social distance (intimate, social, or impersonal size of frame), and attitude (involvement, detachment, viewer power, equality and representation of power perspectives). This dimension illustrates the relationships established between the image, the viewer and the producer, and thus mirrors the verbal mode where producers address their interlocutor through speech acts.

Gaze is perhaps one of the most revealing signs whereby relationships with the viewer are revealed. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996: 117) developed the notion of gaze as either 'demand', in which the gaze directly demands something of the viewer, or 'offer', in which the absence of gaze represents participants as objects of contemplation.

Social distance is also discussed in this study with a specific reference to the analysis of the different picture shots. The use of more personal close-ups is quite common in the magazines' representation of stakeholders such as the superheroes and the lone wolf warriors. Longer shots are especially used in the colouring books, partly owing to the convention of this genre to portray full figures and objects, but also partly due to the impression these full images leave on the viewer.

The compositional meaning of image deals with the layout of the aspects on a page in order to discern whether these create or represent a coherent whole. It is realized through three interrelated systems: information value (given or new, ideal or real), salience (achieved through size, colour, tone, focus, perspective, overlap, and repetition) and framing.

Left and right information positioning denotes the given and the new. According to western conventions, the eye tends to start reading from the left of an image and moves to the right. In a triptych, the central panel is often the mediator between left and right and between given and new. Top and bottom information positioning denotes what is ideal and real, or what is promised and what is delivered, or even what is more emotive and more practical.

Salience is considered in terms of features of size, focus, tonal values, sharpness and foregrounding. The diversity of visual weight attributed by the use of these features gives the image a more or less dynamic composition.

Framing may be explicit according to the lines that break the image or they may also be implied in the alignments of participants. Lack of framing suggests group identity and collectivity, while the presence of frames usually identifies more individualistic aspects.

Modality is another concept applied to multimodal discourse analysis and refers to the truth value or credibility of statements about the world (Kress and van Leeuwen

2006: 155). In social semiotics, which adapts Halliday's analysis of other sign systems, the point of departure is van Leeuwen's premise (2005: 160) that the question of truth is a social question, and what "is regarded as true in one social context is not necessarily regarded as true in others". Therefore, modality is the reliability, veracity and authority of an image which is assessed according to its primary element, namely its 'naturalistic representation': what can be seen by one's naked eye (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996). In the West, high modality is signified by the broad category of realism when it is equated with truth, or in other cultures it might be equated with the sacred or spiritual. Markers of realism may be such things as colour saturation and differentiation, detail (especially background detail), depth, quality of material, illumination and brightness (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006).

Since the publication of Kress and van Leeuwen's seminal books *Reading Images* (1990) and *Reading Images. The Grammar of Visual Design* (1996, 2006), multimodal studies have flourished (Machin 2007; Kress 2010; O'Halloran and Smith 2011), and the interest in this research approach has progressively included other multidisciplinary approaches such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (van Leeuwen 2008; Fairclough 2010; van Dijk 2001; Machin and Mayr 2012), making it possible to move beyond the describable aspects of multimodal discourse in order to raise awareness of the relationship between verbal and visual texts (van Leeuwen 2008, 2013). Applying some of the linguistic principles pertaining to the above disciplines has led to the approach of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) which identifies how images, photographs, diagrams and graphics work to create meaning through specific choices made by the author of the visual or verbal text (Machin and Mayr 2012). As these choices and their inherent meanings are often more implicit or indirect in visual language, MCDA adopts a critical approach to reveal not only how these semiotic resources are put together, but also what they mean (*ibid.*:10).

It is important to point out, however, that this study's multimodal critical approach focuses primarily on instantiations of the *stimulus-response* struggle contained in the visual representations of the terrorist magazines. This implies that the critique is not extended to the discussion of specific political, religious or ideological interpretations that may be inferred from the findings; these issues deserve an extensive discussion in the complex areas of terrorism and counter-terrorism conducted with a more insider view of the historical, cultural and political meanings.

As mentioned previously, this study is also indebted to the contribution of genre theory and to the seminal work conducted in various disciplinary fields by a number of key authors such as Halliday (1978, 1994), Martin (1984), Biber *et al.* (1998), Chandler (1997), Hyland (2003), Swales (2004), Coffin (2006), and Martin and Rose (2007, 2008).

However, the investigation especially draws on Halliday's (1978; 1994) SFL theory of language that represents genre as a mode or conduit of communication and communicative action, with a focus on the contextual interaction between social purposes and text meanings. This functional model asserts that meanings are realized through sets of choices that a given culture uses to express itself (Halliday 1994: 15).

Working on genre within Halliday's SFL theory, Martin and Rose (2008) build on their own previous work (Martin and Rose 2007) to extend the notion by defining genres as configurations of meaning, with the final goal of mapping cultures as systems of genre. My view is that the colouring books and the terrorist magazines and the sets of

meanings that can be inferred from them are material products of a cultural context (Prown 1982) and, as such, provide their own representation of reality according to their identity within that context.

Also closely related to the conceptualization of genre in this study is that more than one modality of communication is needed to realize a specific genre (Martin and Rose 2008). This consideration includes all that is non-verbal which can be analysed through multimodal analysis as in the case of this study's methodological approach.

Hybridity is another element that characterizes the genre types in this study. It is argued that the colouring books and the digital magazines are easily exploitable as they belong to what Chandler (1997) refers to as looser and more open-ended genres in terms of permeability of features and boundaries, and are therefore more easily transformed into hybrid products. In particular, the colouring book is similar to a picture book, and is therefore "a complex macro-genre whose bimodality (visual and linguistic semiotic modes) ranges from the wordless or near-wordless picture book to "illustrated stories" (Martin and Rose 2008: 4). *Really Big Coloring Books* added the verbal features of speech balloons, thought bubbles and typography to transform the traditional colouring book into a mixed-genre type. With reference to these verbal features, it is important to point out that this study's text analysis regards the visual aspects of speech and attempts to illustrate how these contribute to the general composition of content and their role in supporting the images. This implies that the intervention of hybridity on these colouring books foregrounds visual resources, while verbal features are consequently positioned in relation to these in order to amplify the more prosodic and paralinguistic aspects of speech.

The above perspective, by positing that genres are not constant concepts but ever-changing ways of meaning-making, facilitates the description and analysis of the genre-dissimilar products that form the two subcorpora. The kind of visual and verbal communicative action identified by the author is based on a pattern of *stimulus / response* that connects the two different genres. This pattern can also be construed as *provocation / counter-provocation* or *recruitment rhetoric / anti-terrorist admonition*.

4. Methodological tools

Table 1 below provides a comprehensive view of the visual and verbal features analysed in both the colouring books and the digital terrorist magazines. Considering that the analysis and interpretation of visual forms requires going beyond the study of a single aspect alone (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996), the representational, interactional and compositional metafunctions are taken into account as they are part of the same network system of visual communication (Kress and van Leeuwen 1990, 1996), although each can be foregrounded according to the aim of the investigation. Table 2 illustrates the resources under each metafunction that have been selected for this study's visual and verbal analysis.

5. Findings

This section presents the analysis of the images by applying the framework in Table 1 according to the *stimulus/response* pattern discussed previously, also interpreted as

Resources	Product features
Visual	Packaging: - front and back covers
	Stakeholder representation: - superheroes - brothers and community - lone wolf warriors - the enemies
Verbal	- Headlines - Cover lines - Speech balloons - Thought balloons

Table 1. Visual and verbal resources and product features

Resources	Representational	Interactional	Compositional
VISUAL/ VERBAL	Identity and action: participants, actors, goals, carriers	Vectors: eyeline, gaze Distance/status: frame shots	Information value: given/new ideal/real Saliency Framing Modality

Table 2. The three metafunctions and the visual/verbal meaning-making resources (adapted from Kress and van Leeuwen 1996)

provocation / counter-provocation, recruitment rhetoric / anti-terrorist admonition. The aspects pertaining to the colouring books and the digital magazines in Table 1 will be analysed according to the structures and processes of the three metafunctions listed in Table 2. Furthermore, each element of analysis that constitutes the stimulus, thus originating from the recruitment and self-radicalization magazines, will precede the response of the colouring books.

5.1. Packaging

The discussion begins with the analysis of the front and back cover pages of *Inspire* (Figure 1) and with the feature of saliency. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), saliency is the visual weight allocated to elements according to size, focus, colour and distance. Both *Inspire* and *Dabiq* magazines feature high-definition, finely-grained colour photographs on glossy paper. The colour scheme of the *Inspire* cover page is dominated by the full colour brown of the hooded jacket and the black gun. These colours are contextualized against a poorly articulated background with faded pictures of individuals probably cut out from magazine covers or newspapers. The colour scheme of the back cover is dominated by the recognizable but faded green of the shrubbery in the background, reinforced by the full green of the individual's vest. Through this image, the degree of naturalness, and therefore the perception of 'realness' of context, is increased compared to the front cover, along with a higher level of credibility of action (*ibid.*). As regards the 'information value' of the cover photos, weight is given to the two guns by placing them on the left-hand side of the foreground which is the area attributed to the given or universally known information. The participants' gaze is not



Figure 1. The front cover (picture 1) and back cover (picture 2) of *Inspire*, Issue 14, 2015

directed towards the viewer, and their guns, which are used as vectors (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996, 2006), are presumably pointed at the intended victims. By looking at the front cover, the viewer is given a glimpse of what the hooded individual is about to do, and the back cover increases the likeliness of that happening by showing the perpetrator of a possible act of violence. The fact that these individuals are alone most likely suggests and supports the lone wolf attack theory (Pantucci 2011), as claimed in the Editor's letter at the start of the magazine: "We at *Inspire*, and in the cause of the events of 9/11 encourage the Muslims in the West to join the Lone *Jihad* caravan, the caravan that has and always will continue to trouble and bring nightmares to the west" (Yahya Ibrahim, *Inspire*, Issue 14, 2015, p. 4). In terms of layout, framing panels allow the reader to establish a relation with the actors and events (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996, 2006), and the creation of a reading path from top to bottom is facilitated by the masthead on the front cover with the name of the magazine *Inspire*, which delineates the top frame and sweeps across the page on a white linen cloth, understood as the symbol of innocence and purity. On the back cover, a call to arms is clearly given by the inclusive pronoun 'we', as it is a community term used to prompt collective action. The reading path here begins with the gun, whose function is clearly stated by the front cover line "*Assassination Operations*", and subsequently leads to the warning line "*O Aqsa*"²⁷ *We are coming*" in the bottom frame of the back cover.

The packaging features of the front and back covers of the colouring book *ISIS – A Culture of Evil* (Figure 2) include the use of glossy paper similar to that of the magazines. The participants are attributed a high level of salience through the use of full

²⁷ According to a report by the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) the phrase "*O Aqsa, We are coming*," has become almost an official sign-off for *Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula* (AQAP) in any productions by its official media arm, *al-Malahem*. This warning refers to the liberation of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, located in the Old City of Jerusalem, which will come after the war of the End of Days in Dabiq (Israel <http://www.jns.org/>).

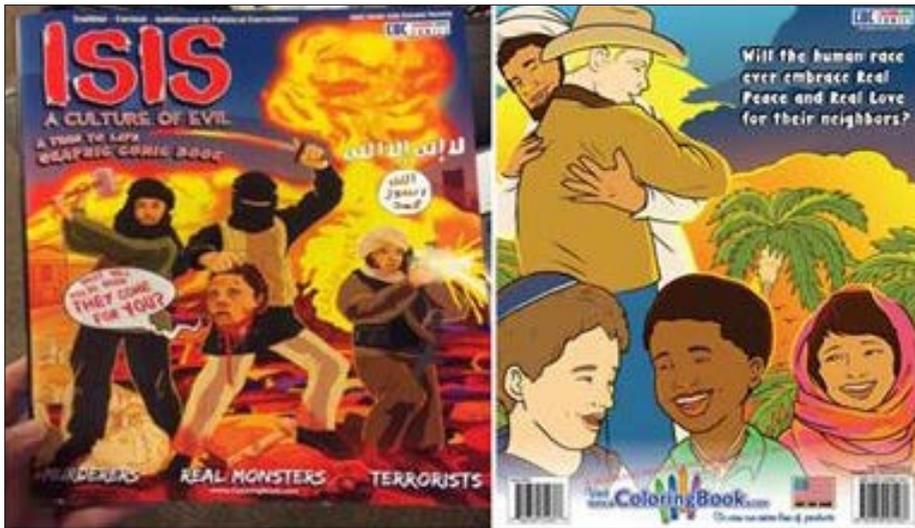


Figure 2. The front cover (picture 1) and back cover (picture 2) from *ISIS - A Culture of Evil* (2015)

colours based on the modulation of dark red, yellow, brown and the white of the speech bubbles. The back cover uses a wider range of lighter colours that give it a greater degree of brightness. The larger size of the actors compared to the other objects on both covers is established by placing them in the foreground and by drawing their silhouette with clearly defined lines. In this polarized composition of front and back, the reading path seems to accompany the reader from darkness to light, from the present (given) to the future (new), which might be considered a message of hope. In reference to gaze, while the participants on the front cover establish eye contact with the viewers, the participants on the back cover look at each other, thus emphasizing the idea of community and belongingness. As for the framing strategy, the masthead on the front cover with the name of the colouring book “*ISIS – A Culture of Evil*” and the sub-heading “*a true to life graphic comic book*”, forms the top panel. The centre panel is completely occupied by the actors carrying out a number of highly symbolic actions. The first speech bubbles appear in the centre frame with a white background and rhetorical question written in red letters: *what will you do when they come for you?* As these colouring books aim to mimic the same rhetoric contained in the terrorist digital magazines which are full of intertextual quotations from a variety of sources including religious texts, poems, songs, films and adverts, this reference brings to mind the 1987 Inner Circle song *Bad Boys* whose provocative refrain is “*Bad boys, bad boys, whatchagonna do, whatchagonna do when they come for you*”²⁸. The bottom panel is occupied by symbols of ancient Greek or Roman civilization that have been destroyed. The back cover is also divided into three panels. The top panel features a blue sky with the rhetorical question placed in the ideal position “*will the human race ever embrace real peace and real love for their neighbours?*”, thus emphasizing, as mentioned previously, the idea of Utopia. The cen-

²⁸ Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4MRmEPNUxY>.



Figure 3. Superhero representation. Picture 1 (*Inspire*, Issue 14, 2015:44); picture 2 (*Dabiq*, Issue 8, 2015:33); picture 3 (*Dabiq*, Issue 9, 2015:30); picture 4 (*Dabiq*, Issue 14, 2016:27)

tre panel highlights a symbolic embrace between individuals from apparently different religions against a more naturalistic background. The bottom frame of the back cover, placed underneath the three children, the name of the company and the statement “100% USA MADE” seem to establish identity and superiority, very similarly to the warning line closing off the back cover of the terrorist magazine described above.

5.2. Stakeholder representation

Stakeholder representation (Table 2) would seem to be an affiliation strategy used by the terrorist organizations for self-radicalization purposes conducted through magazine propaganda and by the publisher of the colouring books to disseminate their anti-terrorist warnings. Stakeholders are represented differently in the two subcorpora images even if the narratives that are used are the same. The superhero narrative along with perfect brotherhood belongingness and lone wolf representation in these magazines are employed to highlight the superiority of the Islamic State warrior. These same narratives are used in the colouring books to represent ordinary heroes as superheroes that protect the American community as a whole, whether as entire institutions or individuals, from the threat of terrorism. Enemies in both publications are also considered stakeholders as they especially represent the counter-narrative of the opposing culture and, as such, they are the evil force that must be destroyed.

Repeated and reinforced through various stylistic and content elements, the superhero in the magazines is first of all representative of the Islamic State’s ideal of masculine superiority manifested through the stark contrast with the simplistic construction and dehumanization of the enemy.

The men in Figure 3 are attributed superhero status as their behaviour clearly displays strong commitment to the *jihad* cause. Picture 1 is only one of the many close-up shots contained in both magazines. The eyeline vector that emanates from this participant is directed towards an unidentified something and there is no action, but rather a reaction. Indeed, the cover line *O, America, Our response is what you see, not what you hear* seems to be a thought formed in the mind of the participant himself. The man in this picture is ready to act as his gaze and naturalistic pose stand for confidence and credibility. Brotherhood and belongingness, another indicator of superhero status, is established in picture 2 by the presence of props: the *keffiyeh*, the headwear often worn



Figure 4. Concealing the identity of the superhero. Picture 1 (*Inspire* Issue 14, 2015:62); picture2 (*Inspire* Issue 14, 2015:56)

with camouflage-style clothing, the guns that are part of their apparel, the ISIS flag barely visible in the background, and their beards. In many countries and throughout time, this last item has often been considered as the symbol of manliness (Bengry 2014), but within the ISIS militant group it is more than that: it is also a symbol of obedience. In fact, ISIS recently issued an order stating that all of their warriors were to grow full beards on the grounds that shaving is *haram* (forbidden) under *Sharia* law²⁹. By displaying a naturalistic pose, these two men, interconnected by their gaze while engaging in conversation, are placed in what looks like a garden or tree-lined context emphasizing the credibility of the situation. The superhero warrior in *Dabiq* appeals to a multiethnic audience from which they find their recruits who are exhorted to abandon the land of *Shirk*: a land of idolatry or polytheism, where there is the worship of another God besides Allah³⁰. The two young radicalized Western-looking men in picture 3 have probably followed this call as they hold the Koran and use the one-finger salute as a vector towards Allah. This salute is common in ISIS propaganda, both on the battlefield and in the final minutes before martyrdom. It refers to the first half of the *shahada*, the affirmation of Muslim faith that is recited before every prayer. The reference passage defines the Muslim faith in saying that: “*There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his Prophet.*” This gesture was actually used by Muslims long before the Islamic State and signified the *tawhid*, the belief in the oneness of God³¹. According to the article headline in picture 4, *Affliction and Faith* are two qualities that allow the injured ISIS superhero to overcome the fear of death and look with courage towards suffering and the possibility of martyrdom.

²⁹ <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/isis-beard-police-enforce-shaving-ban-mosul-1503787>.

³⁰ Retrieved from: <http://imammufti.com/shirk-types-causes-effects/>.

³¹ Retrieved from: <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/isis-what-story-behind-islamic-state-one-fingered-salute-1506249>.



Figure 5. Picture 1 (*Inspire* Issue 14, 2015:41); picture 2 (*Inspire* Issue 14, 2015:40); picture 3 (*Inspire* Issue 14, 2015:37)

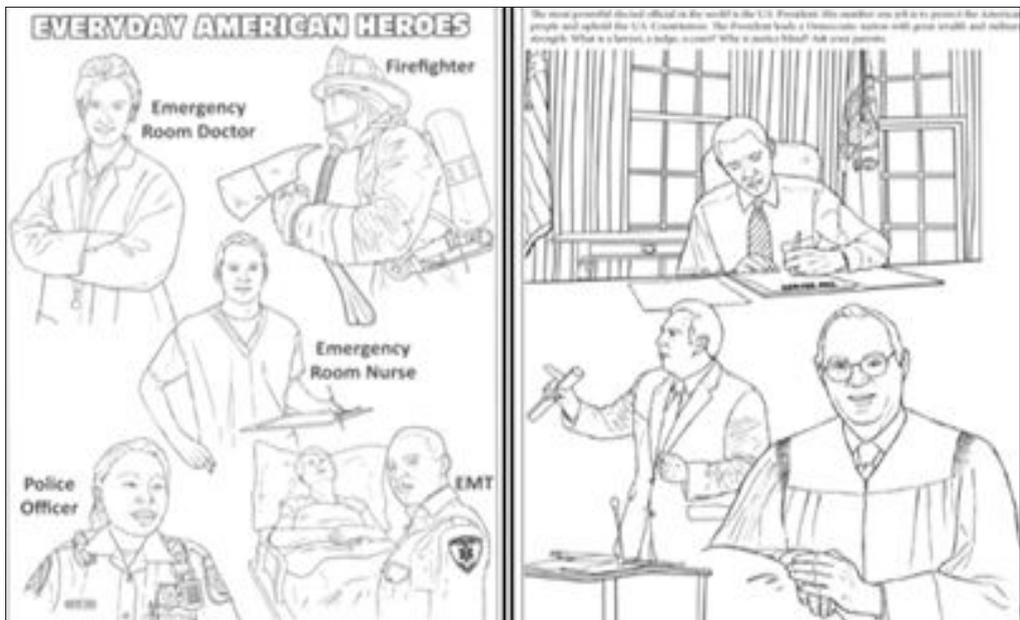


Figure 6. American heroes. Picture 1 (*We Shall Never Forget Vol. II – The True Faces of Evil – Terror*, 2012:18); picture 2 (*We Shall Never Forget Vol. II – The True Faces of Evil – Terror*, 2012:22)

In Figure 4 above, pictures 1 and 2 are only two examples of the many others found in these terrorist magazines, and especially in *Inspire*, as they portray the lone wolf warrior, another representation through which the superhero narrative is reinforced. Avoiding the disclosure of the superhero's identity by depicting convincingly intriguing, strong, mysterious versions of undercover *jihād* soldiers, capable of intermingling with the rest of society without being noticed, encourages self-radicalization and attracts potential terrorist recruits.

The dehumanization of individuals, as shown in the next set of pictures in Figure 5, is a strategy consisting in the representation of the Western citizens as awkward and helpless individuals (Weimann 2008). By treating the enemy as 'less than human', the superiority of the ISIS warrior is strengthened. The participants in picture 1 are not



Figure 7. Part-whole symbols. Picture 1 (*Inspire* Issue 14, 2015:31); picture 2 (*Inspire* Issue 14, 2015:30); picture 3 (*ISIS - A Culture of Evil* Issue 14, 2015:31)

well defined owing to the context which is faded and distorted. Pictures 2 and 3 use intertextual references to *DEAD* or *ALIVE* posters for the purpose of turning their targeted victims into ransom money.

Stakeholder representation is also employed by the colouring book publisher to convey an anti-terrorist admonition message.

The superhero strategy, as illustrated in the terrorist publications, is also part of the colouring books' rhetoric. The two images above are from the colouring book *We Shall Never Forget - Vol. II - The True Faces of Evil - Terror*.

The individuals in picture 1 (Figure 6) represent superheroes that are, in fact, ordinary heroes who, according to *Big Coloring Books*, are always in the frontline against terrorist attacks, and are in stark contrast with the Islamic State's idea of hero and heroic actions. In picture 2, the US President and other top politicians and institutional figures are also pictured among these heroes, as they are the guardians of the US constitution.

Conceptual processes of narration are used by both publishers to represent the symbolic attributes of the enemy. The objects and the accompanying text in pictures 1 and 2 (Figure 7) from *Inspire* are metonymic expressions of the attacks committed in New York and Paris. Similarly, in picture 3 from *ISIS - A Culture of Evil*, the terrorist threat is directed towards the destruction of entire continents, also represented by their recognizable symbols.

Through the use of the broken pencil as a simple but potent vector, all of the actions undertaken in pictures 1, 2 and 3 of Figure 7 are placed on a timeline showing the past, present and future of terrorism, emphasized by the colour red that gives salience to the rising and blood-shedding action on the flow chart (Figure 8, picture 1).

The community of stakeholders in the colouring book *ISIS - a Culture of Evil*, represented by journalists, politicians, members of the armed forces, Christian and Muslim men, women and children, immigrant communities, and Western institutions, mirror the 'brotherhood' metaphor used in the terrorist magazines. Collectively, they are heroes intent on defending their freedom and potential victims of terrorism.

The top panel of picture 1 (Figure 9) is occupied by headline news announcing ter-



Figure 8. Timeline. Picture 1 (*Inspire* Issue 14, 2015:48)



Figure 9. Institutions as stakeholders. Picture 1 (*ISIS - A Culture of Evil* 2015:4); picture 2 (*ISIS - A Culture of Evil* 2015:27)



Figure 10. Victims of violence. Picture 1 (*Inspire* Issue 14, 2015:18); picture 2 (*ISIS - A Culture of Evil* 2015:7); picture 3 (*ISIS - A Culture of Evil* 2015:10); picture 4 (*ISIS - A Culture of Evil* 2015:22)

rorist actions. The element of intertextuality, similarly to the terrorist magazine, is evident in the use of TV news references such as ‘Live’ and ‘Breaking News’, placed in the top panel. The centre panel emphasizes this element with the pictures of famous anchor women and men from major US TV channels who are framed in poster-like fashion. There is no transaction among the actors, but the connection is established directly with the reader especially through the use of gaze and personal close-up shots. Targeting members of the media either as victims or enemies is a common strategy in both publications. In the colouring book these men and women are victims, but also holders of the truth as they are the ones, according to the *Big Coloring Books* publishing house, who tell-it-like-it-is. The bottom panel is occupied by a message written in TV style credits. The institution that is being targeted as the victim of terrorism in picture 2 (Figure 9) is the United Nations and its representatives. Shown in the close-up shots of the foregrounded bottom panel are two other individuals who might be interpreters or other service officers who are looking quite distressed.

Picture 1 in Figure 10 shows a multipanel representation of African-American young men killed by US police soldiers on the streets of their own hometown. *Inspire* frames this narrative as “the US against their own people”, a subtle message that reinforces the view that American Muslims are not safe in the US. As a response to the terrorist message, pictures 2, 3 and 4 (Figure 10) from the colouring book *ISIS – A Culture of Evil*, convey a similar message about ISIS and the Muslim people. Divided into three diagonal panels, picture 2 shows rows of young Muslim men who converted to Christianity and are about to be executed in their own country. The articulation of detail draws attention to the degree of probability that these actions correspond to the truth.

Pictures 3 and 4, in which women and children are threatened, as specified in the text written in headline position, are also detailed accounts of how ISIS targets their own people. The absence of panels in these two pictures and the crowded features weaken the idea of the individual being treated as a human being and reinforce the concept of collective dehumanization.

The dehumanization of the enemy described above is substituted by compassionate and caretaking attitudes manifested in the pictures in Figure 11. These pictures are the



Figure 11. Targeting youth. Picture 1 (*Inspire* Issue14, 2015:51); picture 2 (*Inspire* Issue 12, 2014:57); picture 3 (*ISIS - A Culture of Evil* 2015:14)



Figure 12. The lone wolf strategy. Picture 1 (*ISIS - A Culture of Evil* 2015:24); picture 2 (*ISIS - A Culture of Evil* 2015:25)

representations of stakeholders that are universally known as a country's future: youth. In picture 1, there are 4 panels delineated by alternating shades of grey and yellow. If read from left to right, the focus is both on the message headline *Be Merciful*, and on the young child's bandaged finger. In pictures 1 and 2, the reiteration of the image of the adult warrior as a superhero apparently aims to present an alternative, peaceful narrative which is sophisticated and appealing (Becker 2014). However, by exploiting images of youth and children in their propaganda, *Inspire* hopes to recruit Western and North African youth (Ali 2015), but also others who live in areas such as Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, central Asian parts of the former Soviet Union and Asia. This double stand-



Figure 13. The enemies of ISIS. Picture 1 (*Inspire* Issue 12, 2014:85); picture 2 (*Dabiq* Issue 8, 2015:57); picture 3 (*Dabiq* Issue 8, 2015:64)



Figure 14. Enemies. Picture 1 (*We Shall Never Forget Vol. II – The True Faces of Evil – Terror*, 2012: 21); picture 2 (*We Shall Never Forget Vol. II – The True Faces of Evil – Terror*, 2012:29); picture 3 (*ISIS – A Culture of Evil* 2015:15)

ard attitude is unmasked in the colouring books in picture 3 of *ISIS – A Culture of Evil* which shows an ISIS soldier inviting the “kids” to “join the Caliphate”. This, however, is written in a speech balloon with a jagged tail, which usually indicates anger or shouting and, in fact, in the upper left-hand side of the top panel, the word “hate” written in bold letters seems to reveal the real truth behind the warrior’s intention.

Lone wolf representations are also exploited in the colouring books. In pictures 1 and 2 of Figure 12, readers are warned of possible attacks by terrorists who can look like ordinary people. Picture 1 is divided into two panels which have an articulated background with sufficient details that provide contextual reference of location confirmed by the war apparel. Panels 1 and 2 of this picture are connected not only by the same figure, but also by the vectors that are pointing upwards, the gun on the left and the freedom tower with the long antenna pointing skyward. In this picture, the headline “coming soon to a city near you” is clearly an intertextual reference related to film or theatre trailers.

Picture 2 is characterized by articulation of depth. The figure in the background is given more salience compared to those of the victims that are in the foreground as it is

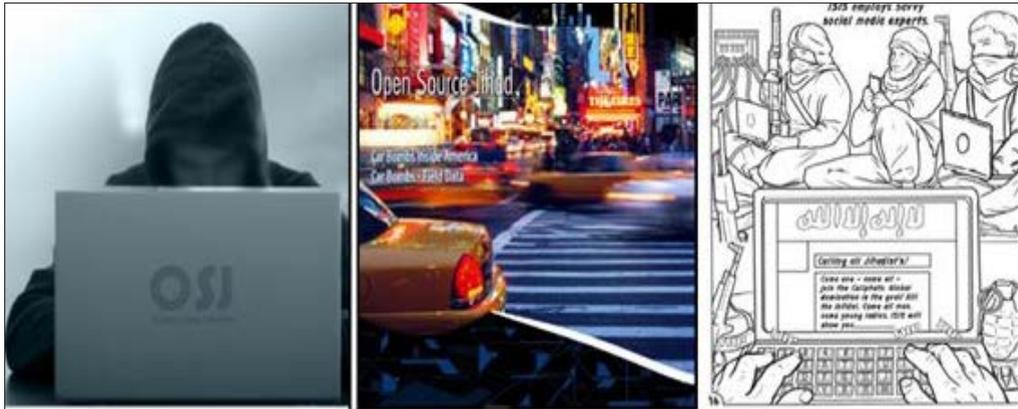


Figure 15. Media-savvy terrorists. Picture 1 (*Inspire* Issue 14, 2015:8); picture 2 (*Inspire* Issue 14, 2015:62); picture 3 (*ISIS - A Culture of Evil* 2015:16)

totally black. This figure, placed above the rest in the ideal frame, cannot be coloured in, and it is therefore untouchable. Although these too are simplistic representations of terrorists, similar to those shown in the recruitment magazines of Western citizens, the purpose here is to convince the readers, through the use of colouring book conventions, that the threat of terrorism within our own countries is real.

In both publications, the enemy is the counterpart's victim and is therefore a stakeholder. In the terrorist publications, the enemy is a well-known politician or businessman, and close-up shots with name and affiliation (Figure 13, pictures 1 and 2) or a cover line, as in the Obama picture, are effective representational conventions through which weaknesses and faults are revealed. Those in the colouring books can take the form of cut-out trading cards (Figure 14, picture 1) with names and descriptions of state leaders (picture 2), or the entire ISIS organization (picture 3).

The use of modern media as a message conduit is common to both publications. The terrorist magazines contain pictures showing members of ISIS using laptops (Figure 15, picture 1) or references to open source materials (Figure 15, picture 2). Internet media are also the primary link to *jihadi* ideology due to the digital nature of the magazine.

The colouring books also contain references to the media-literate and knowledgeable terrorists (Figure 15, picture 3), pictured as informed and savvy individuals.

Inspire magazine and the colouring book *ISIS - A Culture of Evil* also normalize what is really not normal as illustrated by *Inspire's* business-of-the-day page (Figure 16, picture 1) and a who-to-call page in the colouring book (Figure 16, picture 2).

5.3. Verbal analysis: speech balloons and headlines

A speech balloon, or the carrier, is one of the most representative devices associated with the visual language of comics (Cohn 2013). These devices are conventionalized signs of speech, thought and sound effects that extend towards the speaker, or the root (*ibid.*), with a line known as the tail. They play a variety of functional roles in representation, but one of the most important is the integration of text and image into a meaningful whole (Horn 1998; McCloud 1993; Cohn 2003, 2013), which Mitchell (1986) has referred to as "*imagetexts*". Another element that describes this combination is



Figure 16. 'Business of the day' and 'who you need to call'. Picture 1 (*Inspire*, Issue 14, 2015:10), picture 2 (*ISIS - A Culture of Evil* 2015:37)



Figure 17. Headlines. Picture 1 (*Dabiq* Issue15, 2016:30); picture 2 (*ISIS - A Culture of Evil* 2015:33)

adjoined texts which are a 'voice over' of an entity's narration (Mitchell 1986). Adjoined texts can take on a reading track separate from that of the visual sequence, which is not specifically connected to any carrier in order to give the narration a universal message (Cohn 2003, 2013).

The headlines and sub-headlines of a magazine or newspaper are often the reader's point of entry (Dor 2003). Along with photos, they are the first element of a composition that is noticed, often followed by additional information in sub-headlines. They follow rules of simplicity and directness in order to make an immediate impact. Both publications use headlines in similar ways, but to achieve different purposes. In picture 1 of



Figure 18. Speech balloons. Picture 1 (*ISIS - A Culture of Evil* 2015:2); picture 2 (*ISIS – A Culture of Evil* 2015:9); picture 3 (*Dabiq* Issue15, 2016:37)

Figure 17, *Inspire* places the headline text containing the loaded words *hate* and *fight* in the lower panel accompanied by the exclamation mark as the vector that originates from the top panel. The colouring book page (Figure 17, picture 2) also uses the vector of the *Jihadi John* knife to connect the headline question positioned in a text box in the top panel which stands for the unknown information, and the pictures of destruction in the other three overlapping panels. The pronoun *you* in both images acts as the intended recipient of the message, but this direct address also clearly establishes a polarization of the participants.

As mentioned above, these devices are more frequently used in comic books than in picture or colouring books. As can be noticed in picture 1 of Figure 18, the message in the top panel is not actually encapsulated in a balloon or a bubble, but is nevertheless delineated by an uneven line resembling the tail of a balloon. The lower panel also features a speech balloon, but the text resembles a ‘to-do’ list of items and the tail is a jagged line, usually signifying loudness.

In picture 2 (Figure 18), the top panel headline uses narrative markers such as ‘*meanwhile*’. The rest of the spoken text is not contained within speech balloons, but it is out in the gutter, understood as the space between the panels. The unorganized position of the spoken text is emphasized by the overlapping images that occupy two or more panel spaces. As substitutes for speech balloons, the *Inspire* picture (Figure 18, picture 3) uses a quote as the carrier of the message (Cohn 2003, 2013). The pronoun ‘*we*’ establishes a dialogue and provides a window into thoughts and ideas of the speaker but, as in the previous example, it is also an ‘*us*’ and ‘*them*’ polarization device (van Dijk 2005). There are overlapping panels, but the world time zone clocks are vectors that connect the whole image carrying the message of a ‘24/7’ terrorism. All three pictures are an example of how text and image are directly interfaced with each other.

5.4. Thought balloons

While the content of speech balloons and sound effects are meant to be heard by all characters in the narrative, the content of thought balloons is known only by the char-

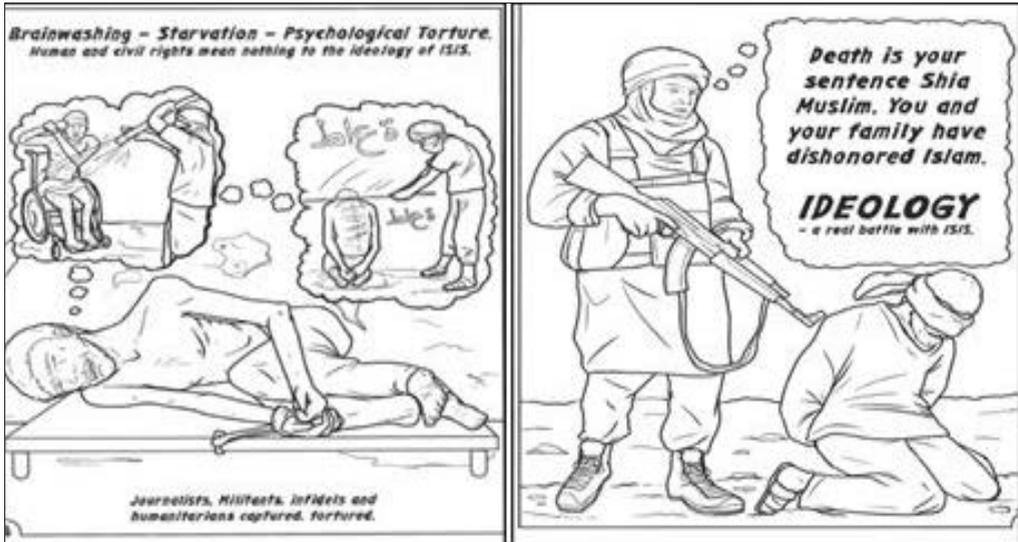


Figure 19. Thought bubbles. Picture 1 (ISIS - A Culture of Evil 2015:8); picture 2 (ISIS - A Culture of Evil 2015:13)



Figure 20. Using speech and thought bubbles in magazines. Picture 1 (Inspire Issue 14, 2015:32); picture 2 Inspire Issue 14, 2015:33)

acter in the panel. A thought balloon can also contain a visual image such as in picture 1 of Figure 19.

Salience is given to the characters in the foreground of the bottom panel in pictures 1 and 2 of Figure 19. In picture 1, the victim's thoughts are connected to him through the use of indexical tails which also connect the present situation to the past events. In picture 2, the thought bubble contains the terrorist's thought, but the word 'Ideology' seems to be disconnected from the rest of the image and is similar to an external voice.



Figure 21. Adjacent text. Picture 1 (*Inspire* Issue 14, 2015:35); picture 2 (*Inspire* Issue 14, 2015:66); picture 3 (*Inspire* Issue 14, 2015:67)

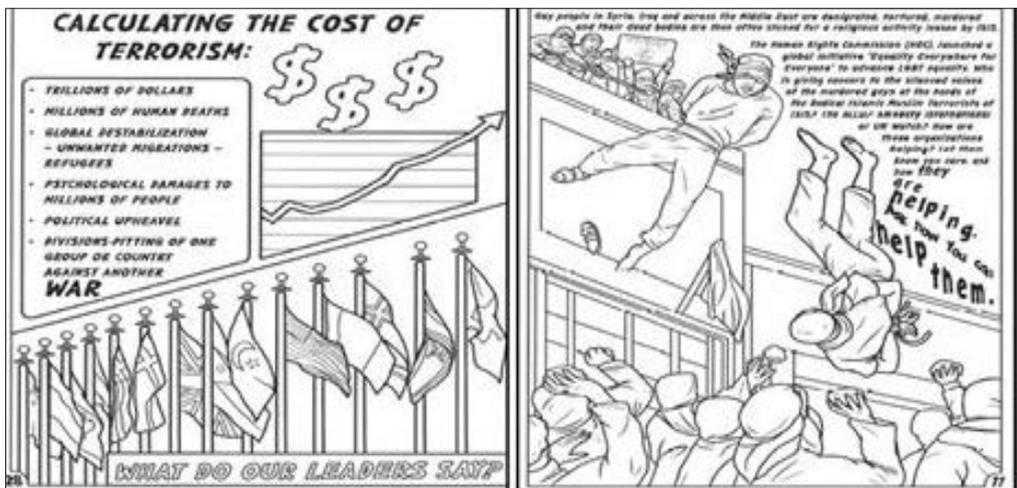


Figure 22. Adjacent text. Picture 1 (*ISIS – A Culture of Evil* 2015:28); picture 2 (*ISIS – A Culture of Evil* 2015:11)

Although thought bubbles are not a typical convention of magazines, *Inspire* uses the technique of bringing the past into the present and gives access to a character's thoughts through personal storytelling techniques (Figure 20, picture 1). The typography used in the title of this article contained in the top panel, whose space is shared by the character, is a revelation of inner thoughts and motivations. Picture 2 (Figure 20) uses a tail-like bracket to indicate that the text placed underneath it is also a personal account of a character's experience.

5.5. Adjacent text

Adjacent text is connected to the image through captions or proximity (Cohn 2013), as in Figure 21, picture 1. This form is typical of captions positioned in the top or bottom panels of the picture which usually have a narrative or storytelling function (Cohn 2013). In picture 1, the caption is in a text box on the side, while in pictures 2 and 3 the adjacent text is in caption style overlapping the pictures.

The colouring books contain many captions, a feature co-opted from the comic book or graphic novel (Figure 22, pictures 1 and 2), but they also contain text which is adjacent to the images, either in the panel gutter or in text boxes, so as to highlight that the message has a multiple root and not a single individual. Elements of typography are expertly woven into the images (picture 2).

6. Discussion

An NBC news I-Team press release dated November 11, 2015 states that the counter-terrorist colouring book, produced by the St. Louis company, is in contrast to “flashy recruiting magazines put out by some foreign terrorist groups” published in the Arabian Peninsula and distributed within the US³². I only partially agree with the content of this press release as the comment does not take into account genre-dissimilar aspects and the process of hybridity discussed in the previous sections. The study has attempted to demonstrate that the colouring books’ mission, clearly in contrast with the ideology of the terrorist magazines, was to re-write the genre by exploiting conventions similar to those used by *Inspire* and *Dabiq* in order to provide a counter-terrorist response to terror provocation. More specifically, Western and non-Western writers, illustrators and publishers have relied on the following common features to design their editorial products:

1. flexible genre conventions to convey a specific vision of the world;
2. same-age group audiences for radicalization or admonition purposes;
3. exploitation strategies to convey the essence of their message through visual and verbal resources.

As also mentioned above, colouring books are a unique medium that reaches out to people of all ages and *Really Big Coloring Books* have built an entire business dedicated to this production. In my opinion, however, this company’s biggest intuition was to contaminate the medium by turning it into a hybrid genre in order to disseminate their perspectives on issues such as education, religion, politics and terrorism among young audiences. Indeed, the genre has been transformed into a channel for the popularization of terrorism discourse. Drawing on knowledge dissemination theories, identified specifically with popularization processes, the re-packaging and communication of content for clearly defined purposes (Ciapuscio 2003; Calsamiglia and van Dijk 2004) and for specifically targeted audiences is the design rationale underlying the Chicago publisher’s products.

In similar ways, dissemination of self-radicalization ideology through digital magazines has been expertly exploited by the terrorist organizations, as discussed throughout the paper. The medium has served the purpose of appealing to Muslim youth living in many areas of the world, preferably, but not exclusively, in the English language, and through cultural and religious symbols.

It is hard to determine the extent to which the target audiences of both cultural products have been influenced by the content, but the workings of the narratives proposed and realized by the visual and verbal meaning-making resources in both genre

³² Retrieved from: <http://www.nbcnewyork.com/investigations/>.

types cannot leave the viewer unaffected; their messages are not neutral, but act as potent weapons that require both an action and a reaction from the onlooker.

The analysis of the visual structures has been foregrounded because of the nature of the publications that are heavily based on visual stimuli and mainly dependent on narrative patterns. Visual structures, such as the ones presented in this study, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 47), do not simply reproduce the structures of reality, but “they produce images of reality which are bound up with the interests of the social institutions within which the images are produced, circulated and read. They are ideological. Visual structures are never merely formal: they have a deeply important semantic dimension.”

More specifically, the representational meaning of the terrorist recruiting magazines is sustained by the narrative of heroism and individual commitment to the cause. But the hero does not act alone. He is supported by an entire community that reaches out wherever Muslim youth might be located. This is where the interactional metafunction is realized. Throughout the narrative, the element of community is tangible and is characterized by aspects of equality, involvement, and intimacy as well as by processes of the exclusion of ‘the others’. Through this recruiting rhetoric, conventional structures, resources and symbols of Western communication strategies are exploited, and compositional elements of terrorist speech, thoughts and plans within a business-of-the-day framework are portrayed.

With reference to the colouring books, my impression is that the American publishing house wanted to create a counter-narrative based on a *stimulus-response* pattern. The colouring books’ representation of terrorism is that of an imminent and perpetual threat coming from the inside; a threat which includes targeting Muslims and non-Muslims. There is no mercy for the stakeholders of peace, according to CEO Wayne Bell. *Really Big Coloring Books*, in answer to the provocation enacted by the recruitment magazines, exploits the same visual and verbal features to establish a universally-understood language in order to launch a wake-up call addressed to all those who are striving to defeat terrorism.

Conclusion

The discussion outlined above provides an overall response to the study’s overarching research question which focused on the impact that media packaging might have on popular opinion, beliefs and affiliation. One of the paper’s aims was to discuss how these media products formulated a *stimulus-response* pattern of communication in order to increase the cultural resonance of their storytelling techniques. In so doing, the study has arguably provided evidence that these colouring books and magazines, open to manipulation and exploitation, inevitably encourage visual media messages that stereotype groups or individuals that reinforce rather than challenge social misconceptions (Lowenfeld in King 1991). Borrowing from cultivation theory, which mainly refers to the long-term effects of television, it can be argued that the same effects of repeated exposure to TV also apply to the repeated exposure to a certain view of the world depicted in other media materials, by which mental content is generated that is by and large homogeneous and with a partial view of reality (Griffin *et al.* 2014; West and Turner 2014). As discussed in this paper, the superhero and lone wolf narratives are created by

both western and non-western cultures through their products in order to become part of a common consciousness and shape certain perceptions of the world.

As a final remark, I would like to briefly discuss this study's limitations. The first is related to the sensitive nature of the collected data and to the scope of the study which deserved a fuller exploration of the meaning potential underlying the data and, consequently, of the results. Another limitation, as briefly mentioned above, regards ascertaining the impact that these magazines and colouring books or other similar media might realistically have on both Muslim and non-Muslim youth. Research in this area would increase the awareness that media formats have alternative agendas that do not always correspond to fair and balanced representations of reality, and would hopefully encourage a more peaceful and unbiased discussion of issues concerning terrorist opposition.

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