

On the street

Bryan Eneas asked people at Loyalist College the following question:

What is your opinion on the banning of tobogganing?

<http://www.qnetnews.com>



Scott Azuma, sales and marketing, "Go back how many years, I'll bet that kids tobogganed back then, their parents tobogganed. Nobody was wearing helmets back then and nobody seemed to die, so I think it's a little outrageous."



Thomas Groves, engineering, "Honestly, things happen. If someone dies in an accident, there isn't really much that can be done to stop that from happening."



Stephanie Clue, online print and broadcast journalism, "It's sad that happened but I don't think we should stop people from having a good time because of a freak accident. I don't think it should be banned."



Rachel Stark, online print and broadcast journalism, "I think that if the hill is really dangerous then maybe it's reasonable to ban it, but to ban it everywhere is kind of ridiculous."



Gareth Martin, chemical engineering, "I don't think they should ban it. So many kids toboggan, you can't just take away a central part of winter. If they're so worried, they should monitor the hills and close them down if they're too icy."



Kyle Giroux, survey technician, "I think we should put a little more safety in tobogganing. Maybe introduce helmets and some regulation or things like that into it. Take a look at hills and inclines so that those types of things are safe for it."

Editorial

Statistics and bikinis

When was the last time you used the math you learned in high school? If you're not an engineer, scientist or economist, chances are it's been a while.

Most of the math taught in high school in Canada quickly becomes obsolete for the majority of students as they move into non-technical college or university education. If there is one type of mathematics beyond basic arithmetic that is directly applicable to the average person, it has to be the study of statistics and probability.

Statistics are everywhere—news reports, academic papers, commercials, humanitarian organizations. Everyone is forced to make judgments on probability. That's the way the world works. Certainty is an unusual luxury.

Even with prevalence of statistics in society, however, many people have very little understanding of how individual statistics should be interpreted and what they actually mean. Even so, they are often taken at face value and viewed as definitive hard facts.

In the words of Aaron Levenstein, a former business professor at Baruch College, "Statistics are like bikinis. What they reveal is suggestive, but what they conceal is vital." There is a good example of this given in lecture by the statistician Peter Donnelly, for the organization TED:

You are told that a certain medical test, say an early screening for cancer, is right 99 per cent of the time. If you take the test and it comes back positive, what is the likelihood that you do in fact have cancer?

Spoiler—the answer probably isn't 99 per cent.

It's heavily dependent on the prevalence of that type of cancer in the general population and is likely much lower.

In the talk Donnelly proceeds to give a detailed explanation as to why that is.

Errors in statistical interpretation have also had dramatic effects in the courtroom when statistics have been presented to juries with little or no mathematical background. This has led to numerous miscarriages of justice such as the case of Sally Clark who was wrongfully convicted of murdering two of her children when in actuality they died of sudden infant death syndrome or SIDS.

Clark was convicted on the bases of statistical evidence presented by a medical expert who did not have the mathematical background to support his conclusions. After spending three years in jail, the conviction was overturned.

Clark died of alcohol poisoning a few years later.

In spite of this, there is little emphasis placed on statistics and probability in the public education system. Secondary schools tend to focus on preparation for calculus, which is far less applicable to the average person.

Additionally, because statistics are so directly applicable to the real world, it is much easier to get students interested in learning them than more abstract forms of mathematics.

If the average person had a basic grasp of statistical analysis, the effects would be felt in our economy, government, direction of humanitarian aid and almost every other facet of society.

For that reason, this type of mathematics needs to be a mandatory part of our secondary education system and it needs to be taught so that it is practically applicable to the broadest range of professions and contexts possible.

It doesn't matter if you're "not a math person." It's not just improbable you can avoid statistics—it's impossible.

Micah Bond

Not all tragic events are by terrorists

Terrorism is a word thrown around with increasing frequency and decreasing consequence. With seemingly no clear definition for an act of terror – or at least none that are clearly adhered to – it may be time that we talk about the meaning and implications of labeling tragic events as acts of terror.

The historical context of the word terrorism, according to the Oxford English dictionary is: "Government by intimidation as directed and carried out by the party in power in France during the Revolution of 1789-94."

The modern definition, according to the Oxford English Dictionary is: "The unofficial or unauthorized use of violence and intimidation in the pursuit of political aims; (originally) such practices used by a government or ruling group (freq. through paramilitary or informal armed groups) in order to maintain its control over a population; (now usually) such practices used by a clandestine or expatriate organization as a means of furthering its aims."

If you watched the news, even one time, in 2014 or the beginning of 2015, you likely noticed that terrorist attacks have been on the rise in the 'western world.' And the feeling is that we should be scared. The military personnel run down by a car in Quebec, the shooting and killing of Cpl. Nathan Cirillo in Ottawa, the Sony cyber hacks, and the most recent attacks on Paris, including the shooting of 12 staff at Charlie Hebdo, are examples of stories on terror that shaped our dialogue this past year.

It's strange how a population reacts as soon as the word terrorism is thrown into the story. Rather than the logical reaction that one might have to a report on a murder, we shift into an emotional state, and our reactions become much less predictable. It has led people to back their government's decision to go to war. It turns the death of a terrorist into a celebration party rather than a simple sigh of relief. And frankly, does more to scare a larger amount of people than the act itself (in most cases).

The media has a huge role in this, and must exercise caution in reporting on things that could be terrorist related.

We should wonder if some of these attacks could be classified differently. If a deranged gunman shoots a Canadian Armed Forces reservist in the head, is that a terrorist attack, or murder?

We have to think critically about the way in which news on terrorism is delivered to us. Is this a trend, throwing the word around as though it has no implications? Was the Sony hack really an act of cyber terrorism? Do we even really know what that means?

It shouldn't have to take courage to question everything we hear. The 'with us or against us' idea needs to be tossed out the window so that meaningful, critical dialogue can take place about real security threats – meaning they be labelled as acts of terror or not. We need to collectively use sound, reasonable judgement and not be guided by our emotions just because of word-choice. We need to not let a single word cause more fear than the actions it describes.

Franki Ikeman



Opinion

Blaming those responsible – not religion

By Bryan Eneas

Radicalized terrorism is not a new issue by any means in North America. It may frequent our top news stories more today than it ever has in the past 10 years, however terrorism has been around longer than radicalized Islam has been making headlines.

We often forget that terrorism isn't something that is unique to Islam, or any other religion, for that matter.

The mainstream media may hold the largest blame for this modern-day interpretation of terrorism.

A simple Google news search of "homegrown terrorism in Canada" finds about 142,000 news articles on the issue. Large portions of these articles talk about many of the recent events involving Canadians, or Canada, ranging from the death of Islamic State insurgent John Maguire on Jan. 14, and the attack on Parliament Hill in October all the way back to the Toronto 18 arrests in 2006.

Perhaps instead of focusing just on the actions of Canadians abroad, and trying to sensationalize the fear of such attacks happening on our own soil, the media should be reporting these incidents as actions carried out by individuals who have twisted or warped views of what Islam is.

The current state of fear around Islam has us so wrapped up that we buy into many stereotypes built by a lack of understanding. Sikhs are frequently stopped and interrogated at airports simply for having a beard and wearing a turban.

Focusing on stories or events that are perpetrated by extremely radicalized individuals does no one any favours. It helps to promote harmful stereotypes about everyday Canadian citizens.

The closest thing that the average Canadian can compare to would be the large gangs or crime rings of any major city. These groups appeal to those who have very little in terms of a support system in life by offering a sense of belonging, or a "family," for these individuals.

Radical groups will play on these themes and add more, by highlighting perceived injustices towards the organization to show that their cause is a necessary one for people to support.

Radicalization is something that can occur as a reaction to almost any topic, not just religion. In 1970, members of the Front de Liberation de Quebec took matters into their own hands after much discontent in Quebec during

a time of many social issues and a strong desire for a change in government.

In 1982 and 1983, five members of an anarchist group called Direct Action took matters of environmentalism and a quest for peace into their own hands when they blew up a hydroelectric substation and a missile development factory.

Continuing on the theme of environmental radicalization, between October 2008, until July of 2009 six EnCana natural gas pipelines were bombed in Dawson Creek, B.C by an unknown individual or group. Threatening letters were sent to local newspapers telling EnCana to cease all operations in the area following these attacks. No charges have yet been laid in this incident.

More recently, in October 2014, attacks on Parliament Hill and on two soldiers as they were driving in Quebec within a span of two days were announced in retaliation to Canada's military participation against ISIS in Syria.

Despite the fact that more recent terror events in the last 10 years may be caused by radicalized religious individuals, we Canadians need to remember that homegrown terrorism is a term that encompasses more than religious extremists.

Are we really all Charlie Hebdo?

By Giovanni Capriotti

Between 1789 and 1799, "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité" was the motto that changed the course of France's history and on a larger scale, set the pillars for the concept of freedom the way we approach it today. In the three days of the Charlie Hebdo massacre, a globalized and multicultural France had to rethink its idea of freedom and suddenly readjust to a reality light years away from the original master plan.

When a bomb is dropped in the backyard of a household, the neighbourhood will most definitely stand up in support of the family affected, no matter what. Probably the same events happening in a remote location would resonate less for the

same audience in the terms of emotions.

Satire has always been a sensitive issue since the ancient Romans and Greeks. It often happened to be shut down by the despotism of emperors and kings or approved at their convenience.

Back in 2008, the now 86-year-old Maurice Sinet was fired by the satiric paper Charlie Hebdo because of anti-Semitic allegations. The old geezer has probably accessed his champagne reserve on numerous occasions since last week, as his longevity has been miraculously preserved.

On the other hand, Charlie Hebdo made its editorial name through caustic satire, often mocking only two of the monotheistic religions. Dieudonne M'bala M'bala, a French comedian was arrested few days

ago for his comments about the tragic events and few months before, sued and widely condemned for anti-Semitic allegations in his shows.

It seems like history is repeating in the land of Marie Antoinette, therefore I personally wonder what is the real thinking behind satire and freedom of speech?

Violence must always be condemned and consistency in opinions facilitated by the media. Lately, propaganda and social networks have polluted journalism which seems always more prone to the logic of profit rather than the verification of facts, causes and consequences.

Roughly 2,000 people died in Nigeria because of Boko Haram. Unfortunately I have seen neither a rally nor a hashtag. Je suis Giovanni Capriotti. Tout o rien!

The Pioneer

Editor, Micah Bond
Photo editor, Franki Ikeman
Multi-media editor, Giovanni Capriotti
Infocus editor, Bryan Eneas
Faculty advisers: Patti Gower, Frank O'Connor, Scott Whalen, Luke Hendry, Linda O'Connor

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