Running head: Historical analogies after the Paris Attacks

Long live the past: A multiple correspondence analysis of people's justifications for drawing historical analogies between the Paris attacks and past events

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Comparing present and past situations by means of historical analogy is prevalent in political and public discourses. But when researching this phenomenon, scientists often use reception paradigms, where they ask people which past event is most applicable to a current situation or issue. In these paradigms, analogies are treated as unequivocal—rather than flexible—in their meanings. In this paper, we use a production paradigm to examine why European citizens (in France, Belgium, and Germany) selected historical analogies and justified their meanings following the two 2015 terrorist attacks in France. We find that most participants tend to mention a relatively small number of past events, characterized by similarities in time (recent), space (geographically close) and type (terrorist attacks) with the current attacks. However, a multiple correspondence analysis indicates that, even when they overwhelmingly agree about the relevance of a particular event (the attacks of September 11th 2001) for the present situation, participants confer widely varying—even conflicting—meanings to the "same" analogy, which align with different socio-political attitudes. We suggest that these variations do not just represent the emphasis that different participants place on particular sets of similarities between the past and the present attacks: They also embody specific, and conflicting, stances on salient and controversial issues surrounding the topic of contemporary terrorism (e.g., why were 'we' attacked, who deserves to be grieved, how should the government respond). Results are discussed in light of the literature on social representations of both history and terrorism.

Keywords: historical analogies, terrorism, Paris attacks, Charlie Hebdo attacks, 9/11, multiple correspondence analysis, social representations

Introduction

On January 7th 2015, the Kouachi brothers opened fire in the editorial office of the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. After killing a dozen people, they fled but were cornered two days later by the French authorities. A third man, Ahmed Coulibaly killed and took hostages in a kosher supermarket, the *Hypercacher*; demanding the release of the Kouachis. After a siege at both locations, all three men were eventually taken down during shootouts. In the course of the events, the Kouachi brothers had admitted their allegiance to the Al Qaeda terrorist organization, whereas Coulibaly was allegedly part of the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). On November 13th of the same year, three groups conducted a wave of coordinated attacks in several crowded public places in Paris. Over a hundred people were killed and many more injured. Most attackers killed themselves or were killed on scene, and ISIL also eventually claimed those attacks. The January and November attacks were covered extensively in domestic and foreign media. Notably, the media coverage often prominently featured comparisons to past events; in particular to the attacks in New York on September 11th 2001, or 9/11 (e.g., Friedersdorf, 2015; Timm, 2015).

Such comparisons between a present situation and a past one, or *historical analogies*, are indeed prevalent in public and political discourse—especially in times of crisis (Brändström, Bynander & Hart, 2004). Despite the voluminous literature on this topic (see Ghilani et al., 2017 for a review), most studies focus on the production and use of historical analogies by political elites and journalists. When the topic is examined among ordinary individuals, they are typically asked about preselected analogies: Participants are not given the opportunity to generate their own analogies or to explain what these analogies mean to them. The production of historical analogies and their use by ordinary individuals therefore has remained relatively unexplored. We argue that only a portion of the phenomenon has

been considered. This perpetuates a narrative that portrays political reasoning as restricted to elites who seek to gain the favor of an ultimately passive and unthinking audience. This paper addresses this gap by examining how individuals in different European countries (France, Belgium and Germany) produced historical analogies in the context of the two 2015 terrorist attacks in France.

Social representations of history and historical analogies

A voluminous literature has shown that specific representations of historical events shape individuals' current worldviews and attitudes in many different ways (Hirst, Yamashiro & Coman, 2018). The general conclusion that can be drawn from this literature is that, "the past is not dead, it is isn't even past", as writer William Faulkner put it. History is very much alive, and not just amongst historians. It is present in our everyday lives where we all act at times as "lay historians" (Klein, 2013), attempting to elaborate representations of the past. This process does not take place individually, in a social vacuum. Instead, these representations of history are socially constructed, maintained and communicated within meaningful collectivities (Liu & Hilton, 2005). Such social representations of history are both descriptive, referring to past events and people considered important, and prescriptive, i.e. prescribing social norms and defining the boundaries of acceptable actions and behavior within the group (Liu & Hilton, 2005). Thus, they are integral to claims of political legitimacy and constructions of collective identities (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001).

For instance, regarding historical experience of war, Liu and his colleagues (Liu & Hilton, 2005; Liu & Sibley, 2009) showed that social representations of history predict important differences between countries. One main finding was the prominence of wars in people's representations of history (especially-World War II)—though recent surveys found that the attacks of September 11th, 2001 have gained prominence in world history (Liu et al., 2009).

In this sense, representations of history are a particular type of social representation (Bar-Tal, 2014), i.e. collective sense-making of particular social objects (events, people and groups) constructed by positioning these objects in relation to an existing web of knowledge (Moscovici, 1981). Social representations of history can be seen as the result of the process by which historical events, as social objects, become part of lay common sense and fulfill social and political functions in the present.

Historical analogies can be viewed as one process by which representations of history are mobilized in the present. Representations of current situations are anchored in the social representations of specific past events in order to give meaning to the present (Gibson, 2012). Indeed, social representations of history involve at their core "explanatory narratives, which often form *analogies* that guide responses to present situations" (Liu & Hilton, 2005, p. 15; emphasis added). Historical analogies are an instance of more general analogical, or case-based, reasoning, where selected elements of a current situation—the *target*—are compared to selected elements of one or more past events—the *source* (Gentner, 1983). This comparison process involves an "inference that if two or more events agree in one respect, then they may also agree in another" (Khong, 1992, p. 6-7). Thus, making a historical analogy implies the past and present share some meaningful similarities that can be used to make further inferences about the target.

Invoking historical analogies can result in various effects: constructing a specific representation of the current situation, defining the roles of the actors involved and their identities (e.g., who is with "us" or with "them"), planning and making decisions, as well as persuading others of the legitimacy of a given course of action (see Ghilani et al., 2017).

While previous research has shown how important historical events are remembered, constructed and used in the present (for reviews, see Hilton & Liu, 2017; Hirst et al., 2018), they often focus on *history* and how it retains general relevance in the present. Here, we study

the reverse process in focusing on historical analogies *per se*: How will people faced with new situations in the *present* invoke representations of specific historical events, which ones, and why. In doing so, we also examine social representations of history but from a different perspective. We zoom in on the particular process that actively mobilizes representations of past events to anchor the representations of specific current events; thereby giving them meaning.

Selection of analogies

In the process of drawing a historical analogy, at least one particular past event has been selected among all other possible alternatives. Accordingly, source selection and retrievability in memory are typically regarded as the earliest steps in analogical reasoning, be it historical (Shimko, 1994) or otherwise (Gentner & Forbus, 2011). In general, (non-historical) analogical reasoning, source selection has been found to rely mostly on the presence of *surface* similarities (Holyoak & Koh, 1987): Sources sharing higher superficial similarity with the target are more likely to be salient and accessible in memory. For historical analogies, additional factors have been suggested, such as recency (Brunk, 2008) and the importance of an event to one's life or group (Khong, 1992; Schuman & Corning 2006). The latter factor stresses that some events are seen as constitutive of a group's identity (Liu & Hilton, 2005) and may therefore become chronically salient as a potential analogical source.

However, making a historical analogy involves also the selection of a particular *interpretation* of that event and how it is said to relate to the present (Paris, 2002). Even an event significant to a given group (e.g., the Vietnam War in US contexts) can result in widely diverging interpretations of what its "lessons" ought to be for the present—partly in line with variations in political conceptions (Holsti & Rosenau, 1979; Tetlock, 1998). Accordingly, "lessons" of the Vietnam War have been used both to advocate *for* and *against* the use of

military force abroad (Bartkowski, 1992; Lawrence, 2016)—impossible if past events had fixed meanings. Indeed, the very possibility for the past to be of continued relevance to new situations requires its meaning to never be entirely settled. For historical analogies, which mobilize not just particular past events but also a particular interpretation of those events (and of the present), such flexibility is both a source of their meaning making power and a source of argument (Gibson, 2012)—resulting in "metaphor wars" as people argue about the 'appropriate' analogy and its meaning (Paris, 2002).

This is congruent with a rhetorical approach to social representations (Billig, 1996; chap. 8). Billig proposes that contrary themes are integral to the fabric of lay common sense. This "dilemmatic nature" is precisely what allows people to argue with one another, even (or especially) when they rely on shared knowledge (see Gibson, 2012; Voelklein & Howarth, 2005). For example, the importance of a historical figure (Robert the Bruce) for Scottish identity turned it into a valuable rhetorical resource recruited by political leaders in support for opposite political projects (Reicher & Hopkins 2001).

Yet, such interpretative flexibility of history and its consequences has often been disregarded in studies focusing specifically on the use of historical analogies by lay people. Indeed, in both experimental (Gilovich, 1981; Smeekes et al., 2014) and survey studies (Michelson, 1998; Schuman & Corning, 2006; Schuman & Rieger, 1992), respondents are asked to choose from preselected analogies and cannot explain what meaning they give to those analogies. For instance, one survey study conducted during the 1991 Gulf war found that more than fifty percent of Americans who thought the Vietnam analogy applied to the current case expressed *support* towards US military involvement (Schuman & Rieger, 1992)—against the typical meaning given to this analogy. This paradox suggests that those respondents, if asked, may have justified their analogical choices in different, even contrasting, ways.

Thus, by using mainly *reception* paradigms (Blanchette & Dunbar, 2000), where participants are exposed to preselected analogies, scholars adopt a research posture that reduces people's uses of historical analogies and their entire political reasoning to a matter of *external* influence. As a result, people are only portrayed as passive recipients of externally imposed analogies and wend up with a partial understanding of the phenomenon (see Bougher, 2012, for a similar argument about political metaphors). We address this gap by considering people as active sense-makers (Moscovici, 1981; Elcheroth, Doise & Reicher, 2011), and by using a *production* instead of a reception paradigm (see Blanchette & Dunbar, 2000), where participants are asked to choose and explain their own analogies.

Present research

This paper examines the historical analogies produced by three samples of participants in the immediate aftermath of the two 2015 terrorist attacks in France. The data from the first sample were collected among French and French-speaking Belgian participants shortly after the *Charlie Hebdo* and *Hypercacher* attacks in January[i] (Jan-FR), while the data from the other two were collected following the 13 November attacks among (2) French and French-speaking Belgian participants (Nov-FR), and (3) among German participants (Nov-GE).

The two series of attacks in 2015 provided a particularly suitable ground for our research; first, because they gave rise to a host of historical analogies in public discourse (e.g., Friedersdorf, 2015; Timm, 2015). Second, terrorist events feature several characteristics associated with analogical reasoning (Tetlock, 1998; Vertzberger, 1986): They are relatively unfamiliar, typically surprising, highly uncertain, and involve high perceived stakes. In other words, they often involve *crisis*-like features, which are believed to increase reliance on historical analogies (Brändström et al., 2004).

Moreover, social representational processes (such as historical analogies) are best seen at work when social issues are threatening or controversial (Moscovici, 1981), resulting in

their increased prevalence in public, media, and political communications (see also Joffe, 2003). Such a situation was observed in the aftermath of both terrorist attacks in Belgium (Crijns, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2016), France (Ernst-Vintila & Macovei, 2016) and Germany (Vollmer & Karakayali, 2018). Focusing on citizens in these three countries was therefore relevant to our investigation.

Overview of the analysis

We asked participants to report in open-ended questions (1) which past event(s), if any, those terrorist attacks reminded them of, and (2) why. Only complete responses were considered in this paper. The answers to both questions were coded to identify the *specific sources* that they selected, and the *comparison categories* they used to explain their selection. The analysis proceeded in three steps: (1) We examined and compared the sources selected across all three samples based on their frequency and their similarities to the 2015 terrorist attacks. (2) We conducted a multiple correspondence analysis (MCA; Husson, Lê & Pagès, 2017) on the comparison categories to explore how the current attacks were related to past ones. Open-ended questions, like the ones we used, produce qualitative data that can often be coded in more than one category. MCA has the advantage of handling non-independent categorical variables (Hwang, Tomiuk, & Takane, 2009). MCA also allowed us to remain true to the exploratory nature of our research, relevant for the third and final step of the analysis. (3) Via this MCA, we examined whether people's particular ways of relating the past to the present aligned with other socio-political variables, such as their reactions to the current attacks and their political views. We had no *a priori* hypothesis about the pattern of those relationships. Past studies have found a relationship between people's political preferences (e.g., support for military intervention) and their analogical preferences (e.g., World War II vs. Vietnam War; Michelson, 1998; Schuman & Rieger, 1992). However, participants could not generate their own analogies, nor justify them. In our study, we decided

to examine if participants' freely generated analogies would also align with sociopolitical variables. For comparability purposes, we only selected the variables that had been collected in all three samples (see Table Sup1 for the list of all other collected variables). These variables related to three dimensions: how participants reacted to the attacks (negative emotions, online and offline engagement with the events), how they viewed Muslims especially in the context of terrorism (Islamophobia), and how supportive they were toward the kind of counterterrorist policies implemented both in the past (after the 9/11 attacks in the US) and in the present (after the 2015 attacks in France). The questionnaires, data, code for reproducing the reported analyses, and supporting material are provided online on the Open Science Framework.

Method

Procedure

The questionnaire was created in French after the January 2015 attacks with some added changes after the November 2015 attacks. For the German sample, the questionnaire was translated to English and then to German by our local collaborators (see acknowledgements). The questionnaire was distributed online on social media (Facebook, Twitter) as well as via the university networks (e.g., students) of the researchers involved in data collection. We presented the survey as part of a research project that investigated how people reacted and made sense of highly emotional and mediatized events. Participants completed the questionnaire on a voluntary basis. Data collection was started two weeks after each terrorist attack and lasted 1 to 2 months, until participation waned down considerably. The Jan-FR sample was collected between January 22nd and February 17th 2015; the Nov-FR and Nov-GE samples were collected between November 25th 2015 and the end of January 2016.

Samples characteristics (N_{Total} = 831; $N_{9/11}$ = 518)

In the originally collected samples, this study focuses on participants who answered "yes" to the question "Do the [current attacks] remind you of a past event?" and also answered the two following questions about which event(s) the current attacks reminded them of and why. 29 participants were excluded *a priori* from the originally collected samples ($N_{Jan\text{-}FR}$ = 501; $N_{Nov\text{-}FR}$ = 430; $N_{Nov\text{-}GE}$ = 376), for being underage and/or missing attention checks. An additional 81 ($N_{Jan\text{-}FR}$ = 5; $N_{Nov\text{-}FR}$ = 7; $N_{Nov\text{-}GE}$ = 69) were dropped for answering only one of the two relevant questions. Table 1 shows the characteristics of the final samples, and the 9/11 subsamples.

Table 1

Participants' Characteristics in Each of the Three Samples

	January FR sample		**November FR sample**		**November GE sample**	
	Total Sample	**9/11 subsample**	**Total Sample**	**9/11 subsample**	**Total Sample**	**9/11 subsample**
Mean age (SD)	28.4 (10.68)	27.11 (9.77)	25.81 (9.06)	25.63 (9.13)	27.34 (8.79)	26.16 (7.61)
Gender						
Women	189	122	246	139	178	134
Men	75	43	58	30	82	47
Other / No answer	0	0	0	0	3	3
Nationality						
French	138	91	257	141	-	-
Belgians	103	60	38	21	-	-
Germans	-	-	-	-	242	170
Other[a] / No answer	23	14	9	7	21	14
Professional Status						
Students	125	86	205	118	181	134
Employees	75	40	54	27	54	33
Other[b]/ No answer	64	39	45	24	28	17
Total	**264**	**165**	**304**	**169**	**263**	**184**

Note. Total samples = participants who answered all three questions about whether, which and why the current attacks reminded them of a past event. The 9/11 subsamples = only participants who mentioned being reminded of the 11 September 2001 attacks. SD = standard deviation.

[a] Other nationality includes holders of multiple nationalities (e.g., French and Belgian).

[b] Other professional status includes self-employed, unemployed and (pre-)pensioned.

Coding open answers

Participants answered open-ended questions on (1) which event(s) the target attacks reminded them of, and (2) why. We used the same coding procedure in all three samples.

Source selection. Answers to the question which event(s) participants were reminded of were categorized into either specific sources (bearing the name of a past event or group), countries/non-specific events or general statements. We identified specific sources by attributing the same code (e.g., "9/11") to different references to the same event (e.g., "attack on the Twin Towers", "attack in New York 2001"). Some recurrent ambiguous references ("attacks in London", "attacks in Madrid") were coded as the best-known related events (2005 London bombings, 2004 Madrid bombings). Despite our asking for *events* specifically, participants also mentioned individuals and groups (e.g., the Nigerian terrorist group Boko Haram), which we also coded as instances of specific sources.

General references to countries (e.g., "Mali" or "Afghanistan"), broad and non-specific events (e.g., "Syrian War", "attacks in Pakistan") and unrecognizable events (e.g., "subway attack") were coded as "countries/non-specific events". In this category, we also included ambiguous responses (e.g., "attacks in Tunisia" could refer to at least three different attacks in the year 2015 alone).

Finally, broad instances ("all attacks that happen in the world", "all attacks against journalists") were categorized as "General statements". We coded multiple general statements by the same participant only once.

We focused in this paper only on specific sources. After establishing a list of specific sources mentioned at least once, each answer was dummy coded on this list (1 = mentioned; 0 = not mentioned). Participants produced on average 2 specific sources (*Ms* = 2.07, 2.19 & 2.7; *SDs* = 1.48, 1.31 & 1.49; respectively for the Jan-FR, Nov-FR and Nov-GE samples), with a range of answers that varied between 6 (for the Jan-FR and Nov-FR samples) and 8

(for the Nov-GE sample). Table 2 shows the most frequent sources (for all sources, see Table Sup2).

We coded specific sources into the following categories: (a) Terrorism, (b) (civil) wars and state violence, (c) attacks on specific targeted groups (journalists, activists—including censorship attempts and attacks on media outlets), (d) assassinations (attempts) on politicians and (e) other or non-specific type (see Table 3).

Finally, we categorized the sources according to geographical location based on Liu et al. (2009)—but singled out sources specifically located in Belgium, France and Germany because of their relevance to our participants (see Table Sup4).

Comparison Categories. We manually coded participants' reasons for choosing those analogical sources and identified different comparison categories between the past and target attacks in four steps: (1) The lead author first coded the Jan-FR and Nov-FR samples. (2) A research assistant fluent in both German and French coded the Nov-GE sample after training on a small sample from the French-speaking datasets. Uncertainties in the coding were resolved during discussions with the first coder. (3) The first coder recoded the entire data again 3 times to ensure coding consistency. Finally (4) a third French-German bilingual (the 5th co-author) independently coded a randomly selected subset of 204 answers (24% of the total). Interrater agreement as measured by Cohen's Kappa ranged from $\kappa = .45$ to $\kappa = .95$ depending on the categories; which represents a "moderate" to "almost perfect" agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977). Three categories had lower agreement but their extremely low frequency ($n < 7$) made this computed statistic unreliable (see supplementary analysis 1).

We coded answers without a recognizable topic as "uncategorized". Between 72% and 85% of participants produced at least partially coded statements (see Table Sup3).

A total of 18 comparison categories were identified excluding "Uncategorized" answers. The final categories selected were present in at least two of the three samples. These

categories were non-independent since each answer could be coded along several categories and the mean number of categories per participant was 1.79 (*SD* = 1.01 in the Jan-FR sample), 2.12 (*SD* = 1.24 in the Nov-FR sample) and 1.98 (*SD* = 1.08 in the Nov-GE sample); The total range of categories across participants varied between 6 (for the Jan-FR & Nov-GE sample) and 7 (for the Nov-FR sample). The content of those categories showed that the 2015 terrorist attacks were compared to past sources on various dimensions: What the attacks were (their nature), who was involved (actors), why it happened (motives), what will happen next (aftermath), who was targeted (targets), but also how (modus operandi), when (temporal) and where (location) those attacks happened (see Table Sup3).

Socio-political variables[ii]

Descriptive statistics and correlations between the socio-political variables in each sample appear in Tables Sup5-Sup7. Here, only items collected in all samples were used (see full list in Table Sup1). All items were measured with 7-point scales.

Online and offline engagement.

Four items measured engagement online (e.g., "*liked, retweeted or shared a content related to [the current attacks]*") and offline ("*exchanged with family and friends*" about the attacks; $\alpha_{\text{Jan-FR}} = .71$; $\alpha_{\text{Nov-FR}} = .62$; $\alpha_{\text{Nov-GE}} = .56$).

Uniqueness of the current attacks.

Participants indicated on four items the extent to which they *"would qualify [the current attacks] as absolutely unique / incomparable / comparable to others* (reverse coded)" ($\alpha_{\text{Jan-FR}} = .81$; $\alpha_{\text{Nov-FR}} = .79$; $\alpha_{\text{Nov-GE}} = .79$).

Negative emotions.

Participants reported to what extent they had felt each emotion (anger, fear, sadness, contempt, disgust and surprise) following the 2015 attacks ($\alpha_{\text{Jan-FR}} = .71$; $\alpha_{\text{Nov-FR}} = .60$; $\alpha_{\text{Nov-GE}} = .81$).

Islamophobia (adapted from Imhoff & Recker, 2012).

Ten items measured support for a negative view of Muslims (e.g., "*In general Muslims are intolerant*"; "*Muslim dignitaries don't do enough to fight terrorism*") and Islam in general ("*Islam is a retrograde religion*

which encourages violence"). All ten items were averaged in a single scale ($\alpha_{Jan\text{-}FR}$ = .75; $\alpha_{Nov\text{-}FR}$ = .76; $\alpha_{Nov\text{-}GE}$ = .76).

Support for counterterrorist policies (self-designed scale). Participants were asked to what extent they believed the French government should implement twelve policies following the attacks. Eight items related to **restrictive** policies (e.g., "*Use physical and/or psychological torture against presumed terrorists if it allows to save lives*"; $\alpha_{Jan\text{-}FR}$ = .90; $\alpha_{Nov\text{-}FR}$ = .85; $\alpha_{Nov\text{-}GE}$ = .86). Four items tapped into **preventive** policies (e.g., *Encourage discussions and debates around democratic values in schools*"; $\alpha_{Jan\text{-}FR}$ = .55; $\alpha_{Nov\text{-}FR}$ = .54; $\alpha_{Nov\text{-}GE}$ = .55).

Support for US Patriot Act (adapted from Abdolian & Takooshian, 2002). Participants indicated how legitimate they found seven policies among those implemented by the US following the 9/11 attacks (e.g., "*Increase measures allowing detection, prevention and legal pursuits of terrorists*"; $\alpha_{Jan\text{-}FR}$ = .86; $\alpha_{Nov\text{-}FR}$ = .81; $\alpha_{Nov\text{-}GE}$ = .81).

Political orientation. Participants reported their political orientation on one item, ranging from 1 "*extreme-left*" to 7 "*extreme-right*".

Table 2

Most Frequently Mentioned Analogical Sources by Sample

Analogical Sources	Type	Location	Number of mentions			
			January-FR	November-FR	November-GE	Total
11 September 2001	Terrorism	North America	165 (63%)	169 (56%)	184 (70%)	518 (62%)
2015 Charlie Hebdo & Hypercasher Attacks	Terrorism	France		168 (55%)	97 (37%)	265 (32%)
2004 Madrid Bombings	Terrorism	Europe	24 (9%)	21 (7%)	79 (30%)	124 (15%)
2005 London Bombings	Terrorism	Europe	19 (7%)	26 (9%)	73 (28%)	118 (14%)
2012 Attack in Toulouse and Montauban	Terrorism	France	50 (19%)	14 (5%)		64 (8%)
2014 Jewish Museum of Brussels	Terrorism	Belgium	35 (13%)	7 (2%)	2 (0.8%)	44 (5%)
1995 Paris RER Bombings	Terrorism	France	14 (5%)	16 (5%)	1 (0.4%)	31 (4%)
2015 Beirut Bombing	Terrorism	Middle East		13 (4%)	17 (6%)	30 (4%)
2013 Boston Marathon Bombing	Terrorism	North America	8 (3%)	2 (0.7%)	15 (6%)	25 (3%)
2011 Attacks by Anders Breivik	Terrorism	Europe	7 (3%)	7 (2%)	10 (4%)	24 (3%)
Nigerian terrorist group Boko Haram	Terrorism	Africa	9 (3%)	7 (2%)	8 (3%)	24 (3%)
2015 Sousse Attack	Terrorism	Africa		7 (2%)	8 (3%)	15 (2%)
2015 Ankara Attack	Terrorism	Middle East		4 (1%)	9 (3%)	13 (2%)
2015 Crash of Russian Flight 9268	Terrorism	Europe		5 (2%)	8 (3%)	13 (2%)
2015 Attack on Garissa University in Kenya	Terrorism	Africa		7 (2%)	5 (2%)	12 (1%)

WWII / Nazism / Holocaust	Wars[a]	Uncategorized	6 (2%)	6 (2%)		12 (1%)
2011 Attack in Liège	Terrorism	Belgium	6 (2%)	3 (1%)	1 (0.4%)	10 (1%)
2015 Thalys Train Attack	Terrorism	France		6 (2%)	2 (0.8%)	8 (1%)
2011 Fire at Charlie Hebdo HQ	Attacks on Media[b]	France	6 (2%)	1 (0.3%)		7 (0.8%)
German Baader-Meinhof Group (RAF)	Terrorism	Germany	2 (0.8%)		5 (2%)	7 (0.8%)
Personal Event	Other	Uncategorized	3 (1%)	2 (0.7%)	1 (0.4%)	6 (0.7%)
1982 Attack on Jewish Restaurant at Rue des Rosiers	Terrorism	France	3 (1%)	2 (0.7%)		5 (0.6%)
2002 Russian Theatre Attack	Terrorism	Europe			5 (2%)	5 (0.6%)
2008 Mumbai Attack	Terrorism	Indian subcontinent		1 (0.3%)	4 (2%)	5 (0.6%)
2013 Attack against newspaper Libération	Attacks on Media[b]	France	5 (2%)			5 (0.6%)
2015 Bardo Museum of Tunis	Terrorism	Africa		4 (1%)	1 (0.4%)	5 (0.6%)
2005 Danish cartoons controversy	Attacks on Media[b]	Europe	4 (2%)			4 (0.5%)
2014 Chibok Schoolgirls Kidnapping	Terrorism	Africa	1 (0.4%)	2 (0.7%)	1 (0.4%)	4 (0.5%)
British Indian writer Salman Rushdie	Attacks on Media[b]	Uncategorized	4 (2%)			4 (0.5%)
Dutch filmmaker Van Gogh	Attacks on Media[b]	Europe	4 (2%)			4 (0.5%)
German National Socialist Underground (NSU)	Terrorism	Germany			4 (2%)	4 (0.5%)
1986 Berlin Nightclub Attack	Terrorism	Germany			3 (1%)	3 (0.4%)
1990s Algerian "Dark decade"	Wars[a]	Africa	3 (1%)			3 (0.4%)

2004 Beslan School Siege	Terrorism	Europe			3 (1%)	3 (0.4%)
2014 Mass Kidnapping in Ayotzinapa, Mexico	Other	Latin America	1 (0.4%)		2 (0.8%)	3 (0.4%)
2015 Bamako Attack	Terrorism	Africa		2 (0.7%)	1 (0.4%)	3 (0.4%)
Algerian War of Independence	Wars[a]	Africa		3 (1%)		3 (0.4%)
Controversy around French comedian Dieudonné	Attacks on Media[b]	France	3 (1%)			3 (0.4%)
Crusades	Wars[a]	Uncategorized	1 (0.4%)	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.4%)	3 (0.4%)
Inquisition	Other	Uncategorized	3 (1%)			3 (0.4%)
Saudi blogger Badawi	Attacks on Media[b]	Middle East	3 (1%)			3 (0.4%)
Other specific sources	/	/	60	25	30	115
Countries / Non-specific sources	/	/	56	76	85	217
General Statements	/	/	39	62	44	145

Note. Only sources with a frequency >= 3 appear in this table. There were multiple mentions per participants (Total N = 831). "Countries / Non-specific sources" refers to answers like "Mali", "Syrian War" and "Subway attack". "General statements" refers to answers like "all attacks against journalists". Numbers in parentheses indicate percentages relative to the total of each column.

[a] Wars = (Civil) Wars and State violence.

[b] Attacks on Media = Attacks on Media / Journalists & Activists.

Table 3

Types of Specific Analogical Sources and Their Frequencies Across Samples

Source Type	January-FR Sample			November-FR Sample			November-GE Sample		
	N° of sources	**N° of mentions**	**N° of respondents**	**N° of sources**	**N° of mentions**	**N° of respondents**	**N° of sources**	**N° of mentions**	**N° of respondents**
Terrorism	21 (28%)	353 (79%)	219 (83%)	34 (67%)	505 (95%)	268 (88%)	42 (76%)	565 (97%)	263 (95%)
(Civil) Wars and State violence	10 (13%)	20 (4%)	14 (5%)	4 (8%)	11 (2%)	11 (4%)	6 (11%)	7 (1%)	7 (3%)
Attacks on media / journalists & activists	26 (34%)	50 (11%)	30 (11%)	1 (2%)	1 (0.2%)	1 (0.3%)	1 (2%)	1 (0.2%)	1 (0.4%)
Assassinations (attempts) of politicians	4 (5%)	5 (1%)	4 (2%)	2 (4%)	2 (0.4%)	2 (1%)	1 (2%)	1 (0.2%)	1 (0.4%)
Other	13 (17%)	19 (4%)	16 (6%)	10 (20%)	12 (2%)	9 (3%)	5 (9%)	6 (1%)	6 (2%)
TOTAL	**76 (100%)**	**449 (100%)**	**264 (100%)**	**51 (100%)**	**531 (100%)**	**304 (100%)**	**55 (100%)**	**580 (100%)**	**263 (100%)**

Note. The numbers in this table do not take into account responses referring to countries/non-specific sources (e.g., "Mali", "Subway attack") or to general statements (e.g., "all attacks against journalists"). Because of multiple mentions of sources per participants, the arithmetic sum of respondents across types exceeds the actual sample size in each sample. Percentages in parentheses correspond to the value in the cell divided by the total of the corresponding column.

Results

Source Selection

In each sample, between 17% and 20% of all answers were coded as referring to either countries, non-specific events or general statements. Less than 1% consisted of autobiographical events (e.g., the intrusion of an armed man in a participant's workplace or the death of a loved one); suggesting that the 2015 terrorist attacks were a matter of collective, rather than individual, sense making (see also Pelletier & Drozda-Senkowska, 2016).

For specific sources, we identified in total 76 (Jan-FR), 51 (Nov-FR) and 55 (Nov-GE) distinct ones but most (between 69% and 79%) were mentioned only 3 times or less; resulting in a "long tail"-shaped frequency distribution (see Table 2). All three samples were dominated by references to the 9/11 attacks (mentioned by 55% to 70% of participants). However, after the November attacks, the previous January attacks became a second favorite (mentioned by 37% to 55% of participants). This was especially true in the Nov-FR sample which consisted mostly of French participants.

Temporal and geographical proximity.

Overall, the sources mentioned were recent. Most sources that could be dated took place post-2001 (Jan-FR = 48%; Nov-FR = 60%; Nov-GE = 71%). This skewness was even more pronounced after the November attacks: between 21% (Nov-FR) and 24% (Nov-GE) of the sources had taken place the previous year (2015). The common perpetrator (ISIL) of many of those 2015 attacks and the temporal proximity with the Paris attacks have likely increased their salience.

A Eurocentric/Western-centric tendency was observed in the geographical location of sources selected (Table Sup4). Sources located in Europe and North America constituted only between 47% and 59% of all specific sources mentioned (depending on the samples) but received the highest consensus among our participants (see N° of sources *vs.* N° mentions in

Table Sup4). Even discounting the 9/11 attacks, European sources represented 50% to 56% of the total mentions.

An event's location is also meaningful for group identities that are rooted in territorial claims, such as national identities. Accordingly, in the Jan-FR sample, composed of an almost equal number of French and Belgian nationals, 40 participants mentioned sources located in Belgium (Table Sup4). Among those, 82% were Belgian nationals (vs. 17% of French). Among participants who mentioned sources located in France, 65% were French (vs. 33% of Belgians). While the German sample did feature overall more references to German events and groups (n = 8) than the other two samples, those references constituted only 2.9% of the total mentions. Overall, source choices tended to overestimate one's ingroup (national, European or 'Westerner'), with sources located in or closest to one's home (geographically or culturally) being the most frequent.

Types of sources. Even though comparisons to different types of events were found (e.g., wars and state violence, assassinations of politicians), between 83% and 95% of participants across samples mentioned at least one terrorism-related source (see Table 3). References to religious, specifically "Islamist", type of terrorism were by far the most frequent—though fewer mentions also related to far-right and far-left terrorism. However, the Jan-FR sample was notable in that more than a third (34%) of the cited sources referred to attacks (including censorship attempts) on journalists, media outlets, activists and public figures of various kinds—though a few participants (11%) were responsible for this variety. In the Nov-FR and Nov-GE sample, only 2% of the cited sources fell in this category.

Source interpretation

Given that several comparison categories could be mobilized by a single participant, we needed a way to examine whether the meanings attributed to a given analogical source varied across participants. Thus, we selected the most frequent source across samples, the

9/11 attacks; which mobilized almost every comparison category (with one exception; see Table Sup3). We then conducted a multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) on the subgroup of participants who had mentioned the 9/11 attacks in all three samples (total N = 518).

Multiple correspondence analysis (MCA)

MCA is an exploratory multivariate method that summarizes the relationship between multiple categorical variables via a set of dimensions (or factors), based on their co-occurrences (Husson et al., 2017). Its output provides a dimensional space on which both variables and participants are projected. In this space, the relative position of these points can be interpreted as a measure of their association. Given the number of categories to consider, their binary nature and their non-independence, MCA allowed us to explore both the association between the categories of comparison themselves and with the (quantitative) socio-political variables.

Because low frequency variables can bias MCA results, three of the comparison categories (western responsibility, impact for Muslims and escalation; see Table Sup3 for descriptions) were defined as supplementary variables in the MCA[iii]. Supplementary variables can be projected upon the constructed dimensional space. This neutralizes their influence while still allowing their interpretation in association with the main active variables. Demographic (age and country of residence) and the (quantitative) socio-political variables were also included as supplementary variables.

The final MCA analysis included 14 active and 16 supplementary variables and was conducted using the packages "FactoMineR" (Lê, Josse & Husson, 2008) and "factoextra" (Kassambara & Mundt, 2017) available for R (version 3.3.3; R Core Team, 2017). The two first dimensions extracted had eigenvalues of respectively .105 and .097, and together explained 20.25% of the total inertia. In MCA, low variance is a direct function of the number

of included variables and their respective levels (i.e., the more variables there are, the less variance each of them can explain on its own; Husson et al., 2017).

To interpret the dimensions, we selected the variables that were (1) best represented on each dimension (i.e., whose position on the dimensional plane can be reliably interpreted; Husson et al. 2017) and (2) contributed most to the total variance of each dimension (see supplementary analysis 2). The dimensional plane displaying the comparison categories used for interpretation appears in Figure 1. The analysis suggested the presence of three distinct clusters (see circles in Figure 1; for a full analysis see supplementary analysis 2).

In the MCA, each participant is described by their coordinates on each dimension. We then applied a hierarchical, agglomerative clustering (HCPC) on the first two MCA dimensions. The HCPC was applied using the Ward's method with Euclidian distance matrix, followed by K-means consolidation to increase the quality of the partition (Husson et al., 2017). As in the MCA, the three-cluster solution also emerged in HCPC as relatively 'optimal', i.e., a solution that minimizes the inter-cluster inertia gain (see Figure Sup3 in supplementary analysis 2). Since the dimension-based interpretation was congruent with the cluster-based interpretation, we only present the latter (Figure 2). Table 5 shows which supplementary (sociopolitical) variables were most associated with each cluster.

Finally, we identified representative participants of each cluster. We selected participants who had the best quality of representation and contributed most to the overall variance of the two MCA dimensions, and used their answers to illustrate the analysis provided in the next section.

[Insert Figure 1 approximately here]

Figure 1.

Dimensional Space Extracted by a Multiple Correspondence Analysis Showing the Most Representative Comparison Categories Used to Compare the 2015 Paris Attacks and the 11 September 2001 Attacks

Note. The labels of the comparison categories are colored based on their quality of representation (cos^2) on the dimensional plane, with lighter blue representing a higher quality of representation compared to the deeper shade of blue, as represented by the color gradient on the right. The circles correspond to the three clusters that emerge after analyzing the comparison categories most associated with the opposite poles of each dimension (i.e., the two axes).

[Insert Figure 2 approximately here]

Figure 2.

The Three Clusters of Participants Identified on the Basis of the First two Dimensions of the Multiple Correspondence Analysis

Note. The three clusters can be distinguished by the color and shapes of the points: Green cluster = circles; Red cluster = triangles; Purple cluster = squares.

Description of the clusters

Cluster 1 – Focus on terrorism and (religious/ideological) motives (in green in Figures 1 & 2).

The first cluster (N = 307; 59% of the MCA sample) was characterized by references to the "terrorist" nature of the attacks (9/11 and the current ones), their "religious and ideological motives", and the "random targets" they involved. "Random target" included references to the general death toll and casualties, but also to the notion that the targets—either human or countries—were innocent and did not fit a particular "profile".

Consider these two representative answers from the Jan-FR sample on why they thought of 9/11 after the series of attacks in January 2015:

Terrorism, extremists, collateral damage, death of innocents, wrong interpretation of Islam

(Extract 1, participant Jan-FR-151)

An attack that terrorizes a whole nation, political grievances and innocent victims

(Extract 2, participant Jan-FR-521)

Both 9/11 and the January attacks embodied "terrorism" and "terrorizing" events, for the direct targets and the "whole nation"; and were underpinned by religious or political motives. In both cases, references to the targets emphasized their innocence ("innocent victims", "deaths of innocents"), and their killing was portrayed as a mere strategic mean ("collateral damage") in the pursuit of (political or religious) objectives.

Others construed the indisputable innocence of the victims and their unwarranted targeting by highlighting specific elements in the profiles of the victims like their age; as illustrated by this extract from the Nov-FR sample:

It is about the premeditated murder of children, teenagers or innocent adults, perpetrated under the influence of an ideology

(Extract 3, participant Nov-FR-1554)

The victims' innocence was emphasized by reference to categories of people whose innocence was deemed indisputable and therefore went unqualified ("children", "teenagers"), or to people whose innocence was explicitly asserted ("*innocent* adults").

Some answers pointed to the similarities in target *locations* (rather than populations), as in the following extract from a German participant:

Because all of them were probably terrorist attacks [committed] by Islamist groups on the western world (Europe & USA)

(Extract 4, participant Nov-GE-804)

The 9/11 analogy here construed Europe and the US as part of a specific category ("the Western world"), whose commonality was constituted by their targeting at the hand of specific perpetrators ("Islamist groups"). A similar take was found after the January attacks:

> Because it is an Islamist terrorist attack with the purpose of attacking democracy-related values
>
> *(Extract 5, participant Jan-286)*

Terrorism was portrayed as a conflict of "values" relating to Islam ("Islamist") and to democracy ("democracy-related"). Others emphasized the opposition of values by referring to the distinct ethnic or religious profile of the perpetrators:

> Arabs/Muslims, demands stemming from their religion
>
> *(Extract 6, participant Jan-446)*

Here, the terrorist impulse was explicitly located in religion, within Islam specifically; with an emphasis on the 'otherness' of the perpetrators ("*their* religion") who were constituted as a distinct outgroup.

In summary, this first cluster of participants put forth a specific type of narrative about the 9/11 attacks, and by analogy, about the current ones. They embodied "mainstream" views, highlighting the terrorist nature of the attacks, their religious and ideological motives as well as the targeting of innocent and randomly selected victims. When examining the quantitative variables most associated with this first cluster and compared to the whole sample means (see Table 5), these participants tended to score higher on Islamophobia, supported more restrictive counterterrorist policies by the French government, and perceived the set of counterterrorist policies implemented by the US after the 9/11 attacks (i.e., Patriot Act) as more legitimate. They also leaned more to the right politically and showed less support for preventive counterterrorist policies by the French government—although these associations were weaker.

Cluster 2 – Focus on collective and personal impact (in red in Figures 1 & 2). The second cluster (N = 160; 31% of the sample) was dominated by references to the "collective" and "personal impacts" of the attacks, and the use of negative, value-laden—and sometimes emotional—descriptors for them ("negative evaluation" category, see Table Sup3). The "collective" and "personal impacts" categories included answers where events were compared because they were perceived as equally impactful—especially emotionally—either in a collective or in a personalized fashion. They also included references to the unexpectedness of the attacks (past and present) and the sense of vulnerability or powerlessness they induced, as one participant stated in reference to the comparison between 9/11 and the January attacks:

> It's a matter of violence and of surprise of the events that have affected many people
>
> *(Extract 7, participant Jan-FR-487)*

While the differences between the two events were sometimes recognized, the emotional and personal impacts were deemed equivalent and central to the meaning of the analogy:

> [It is] as heinous even though [there were] less deaths, unsettling, with the fear and anxiety for the future, therefore for our children and grandchildren!
>
> *(Extract 8, participant Jan-FR-311)*

The collective (emotional) impact, and the strong sense of identification with the victims was also a recurrent theme on this dimensional pole:

> They attacked a democratic country and targeted a population similar to us. They surprised us and have terrified an entire country
>
> *(Extract 9, participant Nov-FR-1467)*

In summary, this second cluster was formed by participants who used the 9/11 analogy to highlight the impact (both personal and collective) of the attacks and their negative

evaluations. Moreover, two supplementary variables were most associated with this cluster (see Table 5): These participants tended to portray the 2015 attacks as more unique and incomparable to other events, and to search and exchange more information about the attacks both in online and offline settings[iv].

Cluster 3 – Focus on disproportional reactions, political instrumentalization and conspiracy (in purple in Figures 1 & 2). The third cluster (N = 51; 10% of the sample) was characterized by references to the "instrumentalization of the attacks" (past and present), to the "excessive or unequal impact" they generated and to the (potential) "conspiracy" surrounding them. For one representative participant on this pole, the January attacks shared with 9/11 the following similarities:

> The movement of fear and the security measures that ensued. The fact that attacks in the West are deemed of crucial importance on the international scale whereas similar tragedies elsewhere go unnoticed. The fact of using shock to put in place security measures and establish [one's] power
>
> *(Extract 10, participant Jan-FR-1016)*

The January attacks and 9/11 were both depicted here as events noticeable for their collective displays of emotions ("movement of fear") and their policy impacts ("security measures"); where the latter instrumentalized the former ("using shock to put in place security measures"). The account therefore presented emotions not just as reactions to events, but also as entities that can be manipulated to "establish power". Moreover, an implicit criticism was raised of the special treatment reserved for "attacks in the West" compared with "similar tragedies elsewhere" that "go unnoticed".

Political instrumentalization sometimes carried a hint of conspiracy:

> Having unfolded in circumstances that are still very mysterious, they serve as pretext to launch previously planned wars against Afghanistan and Iraq

(Extract 11, participant Jan-FR-703)

The account sheds doubt on the official 9/11 narrative because of its "still very mysterious" circumstances, and because the Afghanistan/Iraq wars were said to have been "previously-planned"; suggesting that instrumentalization, or even a conspiracy was involved.

Likewise, after the 13 November attacks:

> The event was experienced almost live and made accessible through the media, similar to 9/11, and the political reactions to it were just as similar and quick as they were then, the solution should be retaliation, violence and war. The attacks were once again used as a pretext for pursuing further military, power politics and economic goals, which will, however, only fuel further terror and completely destroy the attacked countries
>
> *(Extract 12, participant Nov-GE-400)*

More than a "pretext" for other military, political and economic goals, instrumentalization of the attacks constituted a reinforcing element for perpetuating "further terror". Thus, terrorism was portrayed here not only as the product of religious or ideological forces (as in the first cluster) but also as a consequence of specific (foreign or domestic) policies.

In summary, this last cluster took a more "critical" stance on the attacks (past and present): emphasizing their political instrumentalization, the excessive and/or unequal amount of attention and reactions they generated, as well as the "mysterious" (or even conspiratorial) circumstances of the attacks. Participants on this "critical" cluster (compared to the whole sample mean; see Table 5) tended to lean more to the left politically, to perceive the current attacks as less unique, to score lower on Islamophobia, to support the implementation of less restrictive—and more preventive—counterterrorist policies by the French government, and to deem the 2001 US Patriot Act as less legitimate. Participants in this cluster were also slightly more often from the January sample (*v-test* = 2.37, $p = .018$).

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations of the Sociopolitical Variables Most Associated With Each Clusters of Participants who Mentioned the Analogy With the 11 September 2001 Attacks

		Mean in cluster [a]	Overall mean [b]	SD in cluster [a]	Overall SD [b]	v-test [c]	p-value
Cluster 1	Support for restrictive policies	4.16	3.97	1.43	1.47	3.68	<.001
	Islamophobia	3.51	3.40	0.96	0.95	3.25	.001
	Support for Patriot Act	5.79	5.66	1.05	1.17	2.98	.002
	Political orientation	3.46	3.36	1.35	1.46	1.97	.048
	Support for preventive policies	5.50	5.58	1.14	1.14	-2.09	.037
Cluster 2	Uniqueness of the attacks	3.31	2.93	1.60	1.60	3.62	<.001
	Offline & Online engagement	4.63	4.44	1.22	1.24	2.35	.019
Cluster 3	Support for preventive policies	5.96	5.59	1.02	1.14	2.44	.014
	Political orientation	2.92	3.36	2.08	1.46	-2.23	.025
	Uniqueness of the attacks	2.16	2.93	1.75	1.60	-3.62	<.001
	Islamophobia	2.90	3.40	0.87	0.95	-3.95	<.001
	Support for restrictive policies	2.71	3.97	1.31	1.47	-6.41	<.001

Support for Patriot Act	4.61	5.66	1.43	1.17	-6.73	<.001

Note. All scales were measured on 1 (low/not at all/extreme left) to 7 (high/strongly/extreme right) scales.

[a] Mean [SD] in cluster refers to the mean [standard deviation] value taken by the variable when only participants of the cluster are taken into account.

[b] Overall mean [SD] is the mean [standard deviation] of the variable across all 518 participants.

[c] The test value (v-test) is considered statistically significant when its absolute value is bigger than 2. Its sign indicates the direction of the association.

Discussion

The purpose of this paper is to examine how ordinary people in three European countries (Belgium, France, Germany) generated their own historical analogies and justified them in the aftermath of the two series of terrorist attacks that hit France in in January and November of 2015. Overall, most participants mention a relatively small cluster of past events, characterized by similarities in time (recent), space (geographically close) and type (terrorist attacks) with the current situations. While sources located in Europe and North America gather the highest consensus across samples (see Liu et al., 2009 for a similar finding), this tendency seems especially pronounced in the German sample, which mentions fewer German-located sources in comparison with the two other French-speaking samples. This might relate to the fact that, at the time of the study, Germany had experienced few major and recent terrorist attacks so participants had to fall back on "foreign" analogies[v]. Thus, when relevant national events are unavailable, people seem to rely on past events

meaningful to a larger ingroup, like Europeans (e.g., the 2004 Madrid bombings, the 2004 London bombings), or 'Westerners' (the 9/11 attacks).

The 9/11 analogy in particular is the most prevalent across all three samples, even though mentions of the previous January attacks come close to challenging that dominance after the November attacks, especially in the French-speaking sample. Liu et al. (2009) suggested that the 9/11 attacks had become "a new anchor for world opinion" (p. 679). This is vividly illustrated in our samples where the largest cluster of participants (Cluster 1) justify their 9/11 analogy simply by the fact that "this is terrorism". Thus, the September 11th attacks do seem to constitute an anchor for European citizens' representations of the Paris attacks (see also Truc, 2016); echoing Kilby (2015)'s claim that '9/11' has become synonymous with terrorism itself, guiding the sense-making of contemporary terrorist attacks in Europe.

The general patterns observed in source selection fit both with research on analogical cognition (Holyoak & Koh, 1987) and with the policymaking literature on historical analogies (Jervis, 1976; Khong, 1992) showing that the selection of analogical sources is sensitive to the presence of surface similarities with the target. It also fits with the type of historical analogies that are most featured in newspapers (Axelrod & Forster, 2017). The correspondence in the patterns of analogical selection between newspapers and citizens' responses may suggest that citizens are simply reproducing the historical analogies to which they were exposed in the media. Conversely, journalists might select analogical sources that they expect to resonate with their audience, because these events happened recently or close by. Moreover, to the extent that recent, European and terrorist events are generally overrepresented in social representations of history (Liu et al., 2009), the correspondence in analogy selection between media and lay people might also be the product of collective sense-making attempts in which the meaning of current events is derived by mobilizing those shared representations. In any case, the dominance of such a small cluster of events in our

study suggests a relative consensus regarding which past events are deemed relevant to the Paris attacks by citizens of different European countries (France, Belgium and Germany).

Notably, the January sample produced an overall larger number of sources compared to the two November samples. In line with "symbolic coping" (Wagner, Kronberger & Seifert, 2002), the November attacks—as opposed to the January ones—might have generated fewer analogical sources because people had become by then somewhat familiarized to this kind of events given that ISIL had claimed dozens of other terrorist attacks in the year 2015[vi]. As collective sense-making tools, the breadth of historical sources produced might therefore indicate a familiarization process in the public sphere.

However, the January sample is also distinctive in the *type* of sources produced: A third of sources relate to past events in which people had been specifically targeted for what they said and/or what they did (attacks on journalists, media outlets, and activists). In contrast, this type of sources is practically absent in both samples surveyed after the November attacks. In other words, according to a particular subsample of participants, the relevant type of categorization for the January attacks was not in terms of terrorism but rather as a targeted, physical or symbolic, attack against specific categories of people.

We believe that this difference has to do with the particularities of the two attacks. The January attacks consisted of a series of attacks targeting the headquarters of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, a police officer, and a Jewish supermarket, the *Hypercacher*. Public discourse revolved heavily around the definition and boundaries of liberal democratic values (freedom of speech and of the press, secularism), including outside of France (Castelli Gattinara, 2017). Arguably, the salience of these themes at the time made previous targeted attacks against specific categories of people (like journalists and activists) particularly relevant anchors for the January attacks. In contrast, the targets of the November attacks were public places not associated with a particular category of people. Accordingly, our findings

suggest that there was less consensus regarding the categorization of the January attacks and their defining features than there was for the November attacks.

But these "metaphor wars" (Paris, 2002) do not lie only at the source *selection* level (about which past event constitutes the most applicable analogy) but also at the source *interpretation* level (about what a given past event means for the present; Elcheroth et al., 2011). Even when people agree about the relevance of a particular past event (like 9/11) for the present, they can relate this "same" event to the present in diverse—sometimes even conflicting—ways, which align somewhat with their current concerns. While some evoke 9/11 mainly to emphasize the analogous terrorist nature and the religious or ideological underpinnings of the Paris attacks (Cluster 1), others point to how both 9/11 and the Paris attacks have affected them and/or the world around them in various ways (emotionally, socially, politically; Cluster 2). A third cluster of people uses the analogy to question the excessive or unfair amount of reactions that those events (9/11 and the 2015 attacks) generate, their political instrumentalization, and even to challenge the official narrative about the attacks in favor of conspiratorial ones.

Thus participants who draw analogies between the Paris and 9/11 attacks seem to do so for different reasons, with each cluster mobilizing different representations not only of the present, but also of the past. Furthermore, these representations seem to form implicit arguments about specific issues surrounding the attacks. For instance, implicit arguments are raised about who deserves 'our' empathy and grief, with. Those pointing to the collective and personal impacts of the attacks (Cluster 2) stress the role of (cultural and geographical) proximity in generating a greater sense of identification with the victims. Interviews after the Paris attacks found a similar emphasis on personal connections and cultural proximity when people discussed expressions of online solidarity (e.g., displaying the French flag on Facebook; Tóth, 2017). In our case, we find that participants drawing these analogies also

tend to report more engagement with current events (both online and offline), and to portray the current attacks as more unique and incomparable to other events—a remarkable stance given that this cluster, like all participants included in this study, does in fact draw analogies with other past events, and to 9/11 in particular. They appear to simultaneously proclaim the uniqueness of their experience while comparing it to how they, and others, have felt and reacted after 9/11. For some, emphasizing the similarities between the populations targeted in 2001 and 2015 (e.g., "a population similar to us") may have helped derive a sense of uniqueness precisely *through* the analogy. Indeed, one of the common stances against the use of historical analogies is that the comparison downplays the uniqueness of either event (see Todorov, 2004). Here, it is the opposite, as the association with a better-established event like the 9/11 attacks—one that epitomizes contemporary terrorism (Kilby, 2015)—seems to magnify the importance of the present situation; lending further credibility to the uniqueness of one's experience.

As if in reply to this 'exceptionalist' argument for who deserves "our" grief, Cluster 3 questions the 'excessive' reactions to events that take place in the 'West', as opposed to events that happen elsewhere in the world, maintaining that reactions should be equivalent for similar events regardless of their location. The argument is taken further at times to portray those 'excessive' emotional reactions as the very instrument of political control, expressed both domestically (e.g., increased security measures) and abroad (military interventions in the Middle-East)—with political consequences that can themselves perpetuate the cycle of terror (for a similar narrative in the media, see Friedersdorf, 2015; Timm, 2015). In keeping with this view, Cluster 3 tends to be less supportive of the restrictive counterterrorist policies implemented by both the French government, and the US (Patriot Act after 9/11). It also scores lower on the Islamophobia scale, thus lending less support to portrayals of Muslims as retrograde, terrorist sympathizers whose values are incompatible with 'Western' ones.

In contrast, Cluster 1 stresses the "terrorist" nature of past and present attacks, and their religiously or ideologically, often supposedly Islam-inspired, motives. Some of these participants point to the commonality of values between the populations targeted by 9/11 and the Paris attacks—just as those in the Cluster 2 who highlighted how exceptional these attacks are (in terms of impact and reactions). However, in this case, the commonality of values is presented as the cause, rather than the consequence, for being attacked: "We" were both targeted *because* "our" values are similar ("democratic", "Western"). "Our" difference with the perpetrators, and "their" ideology or religion further reinforces the sense of shared values among the American population in 2001 and the French one in 2015. Accordingly, participants in Cluster 1, in contrast with those of Cluster 3, tend to show *more* support for restrictive counterterrorist policies, both in the present and in the past, and to score higher on the Islamophobia scale. This is in line with experimental evidence showing that using the "terrorist" and "Islamist" labels—as was the case for many answers in Cluster 1—changes how an event is construed and how people think it should be dealt with (Baele, Sterck, Slingeneyer & Lits, 2017). The narrative in Cluster 1 also maps with the narrative found in the media coverage of the 2015 Paris attacks, where those attacks were construed as an "outsider" phenomenon, perpetrated by domestic or foreign Muslims pictured as a hostile 'Other' (see Ernst-Vintila & Klar, 2016; Polońska-Kimunguyi & Gillespie, 2016).

Thus, we see here how commonalities between the past and the present are also used to define the boundaries of social identities (Ghilani et al., 2017): By constructing who is part of "us" vs. "them", delineating who deserves "our" grief and attention, and by labeling the perpetrators in ways that emphasize their otherness. Indeed, social identities are central to social representations of history (Elcheroth et al., 2011; Liu & Hilton, 2005). And those categorizations in turn are action oriented (Leudar, Marsland & Nekvapil, 2004), (de)legitimizing past (Patriot Act) and present actions (counterterrorist measures to be

implemented by the French government). Thus, when using historical analogies, "speakers are not simply representing *history*, but they are also using the analogy to construct other entities" (Gibson, p. 23, 2012; emphasis in the original).

Thus, through the 9/11 analogy, participants are not simply emphasizing various sets of similarities between the past and the present attacks. Instead, just like the politicians in the televised debate studied by Gibson (2012), our participants use constructions of the past and the present to advance various positions on salient public and political issues surrounding the 2015 Paris attacks (e.g., why were 'we' attacked, who deserves to be grieved, how should the government respond). These findings are reminiscent of Billig's (1991) view that people's attitudes constitute "stances taken in matters of controversy: They are positions in arguments" (p. 143; see also Billig, 1996). The implicit argumentative nature of our respondents' answers remains mostly implicit, but is revealed when examining their collective production: We find then the 'seed' needed to both justify their own position and (more or less explicitly) criticize the opposite stance. Had participants been directly exposed with someone voicing that opposite stance, those seeds would likely have bloomed into an explicit, full-fledged argument. This suggests that historical analogies can be regarded not just as the product of externally imposed influence on a passive audience, but also as a rhetorical resource that people can wield to construct—and argue—the meanings of the past, and by analogy, of the present.

To conclude, we have argued that historical analogies, as meaning-making tools, are part of the broader process of collective sense-making, which helps explain their continued prevalence in public and political discourses (Ghilani et al., 2017) and the fierce "metaphor wars" that often erupt around them (Paris, 2002)—given that they carry implications for the meaning of the present and how best it should be dealt with. Thus, historical analogies allow to study how people construct representations of new events (by anchoring them in existing

social representations of history); but also how, in doing so, people simultaneously reconstruct, re-assert and even challenge, the social representations of past events—whose meaning is therefore never entirely settled. In this sense, studying historical analogies could help shed light on the complex, dynamic interplay of consensus and disagreements in social representations (see Voelklein & Howarth, 2005).

Limitations and future directions

While considering the findings of this study, it is important to keep in mind some of its limitations. The most important is the representativity of the three clusters of participants who used the 9/11 analogy: Cluster 3 was smaller compared to the other two. In an MCA, categories with low frequency can disproportionately contribute to the variance of a dimension. This effect is less of a concern when the focus of the researchers is on the social relevance of a phenomenon rather than on its numerical importance (Cibois, 1997). To address this issue nonetheless, we ran several MCAs where less frequent categories were alternatively included as active and supplementary variables (see supplementary analysis 2). The overall pattern of results remained unchanged.

However, we do not expect that every terrorist attack would yield analogies to the same sources identified here or that they will result in the same comparison categories. The content of those answers and the patterns of correlations will likely differ. But we *do* expect that the observed variations between specific past events and the meanings attributed to them will hold across contexts—especially since similar flexibility has been found even for older past events, whose meanings appear better established than 9/11 (like WWII; see Spellman & Holyoak, 1992).

In addition, the generalizability of our findings is restricted by the relatively young age of our participants; a consequence of relying on student and social media sampling. This offered us crucial comparability given that we set out to study different events in time (the

January and November attacks) and their representations across national contexts (Belgium, France and Germany). Indeed, cross-cultural research on social representations of history has often explicitly sought out university students, precisely because they tend to have equivalent educational backgrounds and to be similarly exposed to a "globalized culture" (Liu et al., 2009), minimizing cultural differences. However, the relatively small range of ages represented in our samples did limit our ability to investigate generational-effects in the production of historical analogies (e.g., Schuman & Corning, 2006). This calls for a conceptual replication of our study with more representative samples.

Finally, it is worth noting that the small size of the associations found in the MCA between comparison categories and socio-political variables might relate to the richer content of open answers (that were coded to extract comparison categories) compared to the restrictiveness of close-ended variables (used to measure socio-political variables). Indeed, open questions, while particularly adapted to exploring novel facets of a phenomenon without unduly restricting participants' answers, often result in a variability that can prove challenging to interpretation (see Doise, Clemence & Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1992, chap. 2). Future studies could alleviate this issue by asking participants to generate historical analogies for a particular aspect of the target situation (e.g., "which past event reminds you of the way the government responded to the terrorist attacks?") rather than for the situation on a whole as we did here. This strategy, by eliminating some of the variability, might result in clearer patterns and stronger links between freely generated historical analogies and sociopolitical attitudes.

Notes

I. The questionnaire referred specifically the "Charlie Hebdo attack", because it was the first event in the series of attacks in January 2015, and was connected to the subsequent attacks. Participants also seemed to assume that the label "Charlie Hebdo

attack" included the whole series of January attacks, as illustrated by the fact that several drew analogies to anti-Semitic events; suggesting that the Charlie Hebdo and subsequent Hypercacher attacks were viewed as a single event.

II. Reliability indicators are only reported for the 9/11 subsamples.

III. Several MCA's were run on top of the final analysis reported here and the first included all comparison categories as active variables. The overall pattern of results remained unchanged (see supplementary analysis 2). The final selection of the active vs. supplementary variables was based on the purpose of reducing the dependence of the plane on low-frequency categories while keeping the highest number of categories in order to meaningfully distinguish groups of participants from one another (see Cibois, 2014).

IV. Negative emotions also tended to be more associated with the negative side of dimension 2 (i.e., where Cluster 2 is located; see supplementary analysis 2). However, this association did not emerge in the cluster analysis and was thus left aside.

V. We are grateful to Gerôme Truc for this insight.

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Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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Supplementary Materials

The Supplementary Materials provide supplementary analyses (the computation of interrater agreement and the comparison of three MCAs with different parameters), the full list of collected variables as well as Tables Sup1-Sup7 referenced in the Method and Results sections (see Index below for access).

Index of Supplementary Materials

Ghilani, D., Luminet, O., Ernst-Vintila, A., Van der Linden, N., Klein, O., & Klein, P. P. L. E. (2020, August 16). Supporting Material. Retrieved from osf.io/hcqpb.

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