

How the World's NEWS MEDIA Reacted to 9/11

Essays from
Around the Globe

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Chapter 20

HOW U.S. TV JOURNALISTS TALK ABOUT OBJECTIVITY IN 9/11 COVERAGE

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Watching CNN on September 11, 2001, in the United States I noticed that all the American sources involved in the discussions during the first 24 hours were people expressing mainstream American views. The sources were witnesses, intellectuals, experts, and present or former government officials from the Democratic Party as well as the Republican Party, but there were no sources expressing views considered politically incorrect. We know from other media that there were extremist views among Americans, but the supporters of such views were not allowed to express themselves on CNN or on the major networks.

The extremist views can be divided into two major groups. The first consisted of views that Muslims in general were a threat to the social fabric of American society. These people expressed anger against American Muslims in local radio talk or call-in programs and in interpersonal conversations. In Louisiana, where I lived at the time, an owner of a local sandwich bar was harassed as a result of such a radio show. Fortunately, in this case a group of responsible people concerned about the possible backlash against Muslims helped stop the harassment.

The other group of extremist views came from Americans who, to some degree, expressed sympathy for the terrorists. Easterbrook (2001) mentions as examples a talk show host who said the September terrorists were brave; a professor who called the United States a terrorist nation; another professor who, on September 11, told his university class that anyone who would blow up the Pentagon would have his vote; a composer who called the World Trade Center destruction "the greatest work of art ever"; and a novelist who said that George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden were interchangeable. According to the law, people are allowed to express

such views if they are willing to risk being unpopular, and in a crises situation the public may react aggressively. However, while citizens have a right to speak, the media have no obligation to present extremist views, and on 9/11 major American news networks allowed only people outside the United States, such as Palestinians, to express support for the terrorists.

But why were extremist views excluded from CNN and other major networks? After all, the influential journalists at these news networks subscribe to ethical standards such as those expressed by the Society of Professional Journalists (Day 2002: 445-446). They included statements like: "Journalists should ... tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even when it is unpopular to do so ... examine their own cultural values and avoid imposing those values on others ... support the open exchange of views, even views they find repugnant ... give voice to the voiceless; official and unofficial sources of information can be equally valid" in the name of public enlightenment, justice and democracy.

American journalists often talk about "objectivity" as an ideal, meaning that they "strive to keep their personal preferences and opinions out of the news stories, to achieve balance in coverage, and to rely on credible and responsible news sources. According to this traditional view, the ethics of news writing is concerned with facts and impartiality in the presentation of those facts" (Day 2002: 36).

In contrast, Merrill, who is an advocate of existential journalism, argues that "all reporters must be selective, and this selectivity involves being subjective — selecting and using information that fits their existing ideas as to what constitute news" (Merrill 1997: 121). He adds: "All productive thinking, observing and communicating are driven by the observer's interest and respect for the essence of what is being observed and reported." As an ideal, "good and ethical reports are truthful, unbiased, full and fair" (Merrill 1997: 174). Some people assume that the reason CNN and American network journalists chose not to be objective in their coverage of 9/11 was that their viewers were in a state of shock and crisis (Greenberg 2002), where the combination of sadness and anger easily could result in violence or other forms of unacceptable behavior (Schramm 1965; Minkdak & Hursh 1965; Neal 1998). But this study asks the journalists who covered these events how they interpreted the journalism norm of objectivity during the first hours when their nation was the victim of a seemingly ongoing terror attack.

METHOD

This article is part of an ongoing project for the Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs at The Manship School of Mass Communication, Louisiana

State University, about how CNN and the networks covered the September 11 crisis. A content analysis of the first eight hours was published in Greenberg's *Communication and Terrorism: Public and Media Responses to 9/11* (Mogensen, Lindsay, Li, Perkins and Beardsley 2002). The project also includes a narrative analysis of the first 24 hours on CNN (Mogensen 2003). Even though there were differences in the coverage at the various TV networks and CNN, the overall narrative was pretty much the same given the nature of the events. An overview of CNN's coverage is provided below.

This article is based on personal interviews with 37 journalists who covered the events on 9/11 for ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN, MSNBC and FOX News. The interviews were conducted in the interviewee's own newsroom between January and March 2002 using a flexible, semi-structured questionnaire containing eight open-ended questions. Seven members of the LSU faculty did the interviews working alone or in groups. Five of them had a background in practical journalism, so they were familiar with journalistic norms.¹

Interviewees — including reporters, producers, editors, anchors, and vice presidents of news operations — were asked to describe how they reacted initially and how they worked through the 24 hours that followed. The interviewees were allowed to talk freely about anything that they found important with respect to coverage during the first couple of days. When they described situations of special interest to us, the interviewers would ask them to elaborate more on the topic, and a few times a discussion developed between an interviewer and an interviewee. The interviews lasted between 20 and 80 minutes. All interviews were recorded, transcribed by secretaries, and analyzed for themes and issues using the computer program Atlas.ti.

Based on analysis of the interviews, the following presentation will focus on five aspects of objective and balanced reporting:

1. Balanced sourcing
2. Legitimate views
3. Patriotism
4. Conformity to reality
5. Concern about viewers' reactions

FIVE STAGES

The media coverage can be divided into five distinct stages. There were, of course, overlapping themes and sources as well as a replay of footage from one stage to the next, but the stages differed with in two important ways: major events and types of sources interviewed or giving public statements.

The stages were:

1. *The catastrophe*. Chaos and horror. 8:49 a.m. to approx. 6:40 p.m.
2. *Control and national unity*. Approx. 6:40 p.m. to 9:10 p.m.
3. *Rescue work*. Approx. 9:10 p.m. to 12:30 a.m.
4. *International*. Approx. 12:30 a.m. to 6 a.m.
5. *Mourning begins*. Approx. 6 a.m. to 8:49 a.m.

The terrorist attacks were staged events that monopolized the agenda on 9/11, but the influence on the coverage of that agenda changed through the five stages.

During the first stage, news was constantly breaking, and government officials left their offices in fear. Journalists saw it as their primary task to inform the American public and the rest of the world about what happened and to find sources that could provide interpretations.

The second stage had important symbolic messages in which political communicators reassured the public that the social system had not collapsed, that the legal government was in control, and that people could count on their neighbors because Americans behaved in a civilized manner and helped one another during a difficult time. They also told the public that the United States was the best place in the world with its freedom and justice and that nobody would succeed in destroying the American way of life because the United States is a strong military nation.

In the third stage, CNN to a large degree served as a channel for information from the rescue officials to the public — especially to the relatives of victims but also to other citizens who wanted to help.

In the fourth stage, most of the national political communicators left the spotlight, and CNN presented news from around the globe. Some journalists used these nightly hours to experiment with longer and more narrative formats than those from breaking news stories.

The fifth stage marked a new day, and when the format suggested that the situation was under control and government officials were able to tell the public what to expect next.

Tables 20.1 shows that who was interviewed or who gave statements to reporters or anchors on CNN. Within each stage, the unit of analysis is one clock-hour, meaning that one interviewee may be counted more than one time in a stage, but only once within a clock-hour. The table does not include replays, and it does not include eyewitnesses or relatives of victims (Mogensen 2003).

Overall, the results show that U.S. government and political officials are quoted much more often than ordinary people, whose role is usually limited

Table 20.1
Title of Persons Interviewed on CNN
(Number of Persons)

Title	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Total 24 Hours
Former government officials, including former NATO commander	20	8	5	1	3	37
Rescue officials and NYC mayor and NY governor (including spokespersons for hospitals, firefighters, police officers, volunteer organizations and Pentagon, when the focus of the interview or statement is the rescue effort)	11	3	8	4	11	37
U.S. political leadership: Congress and President Bush and his spokespersons	11	9	5	1	0	26
International leaders	4	0	0	9	2	15
U.S. Administration: Current government officials (except the President, the NY top leadership, rescue officials and members of Congress)	0	5	0	2	1	8
Terrorism expert	3	0	1	4	0	7
Airline officials and aviation safety experts	2	0	1	1	0	4
Other official	3	1	2	3	0	8
Eyewitnesses and relatives of victims*	22	0	14	13	6	55
TOTAL**	76	26	36	38	23	199

*The estimates for eyewitnesses and relative are from the Vanderbilt archives.

**Table excludes replays.

to talking about how the tragedy affected them or their families. Sources that might offer views or opinions that conflict with U.S. official sources were rarely interviewed.

The table also shows that eyewitnesses played an important role in the first stage, when viewers were eager to hear what had happened. In the second period the national leaders staged a massive demonstration of their leadership, control and unity, and they received full attention from CNN.

When the rescue work came into focus, officials responsible for this work naturally were interviewed together with eyewitnesses and relatives of victims. International leaders were more prominently covered during the evening hours and expressed their support for the United States. Many international leaders expressed support for the United States. In fact, according to CNN's Tom Fenton, vice president and deputy managing editor of International Newsgathering, some of them contacted CNN and asked to have statements broadcast because they wanted to distance their countries from terrorism.

The next morning, officials connected to the rescue operation were more frequently interviewed. As expected, the use of interviewees and public statements generally mirrored the focus of attention. However, somewhat surprising is the finding that former government officials played a major role during the first stage. One might have expected eyewitnesses and current leaders to dominate. One possible explanation for this finding is that current leaders were too busy assessing the situation to participate in interviews, so the media turned to former government officials, at least initially. Not surprisingly, the research shows that most of the officials are also established, consensus-seeking politicians, diplomats and former governments officials.

FINDINGS OF THE INTERVIEWS

Balanced Sourcing

Since the days of Daniel Defoe and James Franklin, liberal journalists have fought for their right to present provoking information and opinions to the public. With the development of professionalism and social responsibility in the 20th century, it became a norm for many journalists to balance such opinions. As Hamilton and Krimsky put it (1996: 13):

One of the fundamental journalistic rituals is "balance." Journalists do not report what one person purports to be the truth, however compelling that truth may seem. They gather varying opinions. So when it comes to reporting their mother's love, journalists quote the views of others who agree or disagree. In this way they earn the status of impartial observer.

The concept of balance nicely fits the adversarial nature of the American democratic system.

The tendency in many news stories is to find "duelling experts" who have staked out views at distant poles" (Hamilton and Krimsky 1996: 14). However, as every child has learned on the playground, the seesaw can be

brought into balance not only by placing equally heavy weight on each end, but also by placing all the weight in the center. Balanced news reports presenting distinct opinions staked at distant poles are fundamentally different from balanced news reports relying on only mainstream opinions. Usually, the first type of balanced news reporting is common in liberal democracies, while the latter have similarities with the one sided news reporting in more authoritarian systems.

Interviewed on their 9/11 coverage, our informants generally insisted on being fair and balanced, and, when asked to elaborate, they explained how instead of creating balance between opposing views they chose to interview well-informed sources with balanced views. Five journalists working in CNN's booking department in Atlanta provided us with an insight into the procedures for selection of sources to be interviewed on the air. The booking department has a database that at the time contained information about about 50,000 potential interviewees. Right after the first attack on the World Trade Center, the group started brainstorming about relevant information and analyses needed. The first requirement to the sources was that they had the knowledge needed and that they would not speculate.

We don't want to put somebody on the air that says something that's premature or that somebody that doesn't have all the facts ... In breaking news like that, the inclination is to speculate. And we like to stay as far away from speculating ... I heard that over and over again in the first few days.

As a rule, one of the journalists in the booking department will do a pre-interview with guests before they go on air. During this pre-interview, each source is asked questions that the journalist expects the anchor to ask, and the interviewee's reactions are typed into the computer. When news is breaking, it's sometimes difficult to pre-interview, but if sources are on air for the first time, CNN will pre-interview. The staff also searches in the databases to see if the credibility of the sources has ever been challenged.

I might think, I've booked this great guest and then Gail does the pre-interview and does a dead body search and finds out that the guest isn't legitimate ... Or in talking to him, he or she comes up with a comment out of left field we weren't expecting. We thought they were objective analysts which turns out they're not so that we do need to bring somebody else.

In its ordinary news coverage, the booking department seeks to balance views and is especially careful about balance between major political groups.

[We are] carefully looking at who we're booking and what their background is and where they fall on issues, and even if someone is Democrat, you know they may fall one way on an issue that most Democrats don't fall. We're aware of all of that and we listen, and if somebody says one thing and it's cleared up, you can put the other side on, you know ... We won't just sort of let a one-sided opinion stand ... We sort of check and balance ourselves [but in] breaking news it's just getting, finding, you know, the right people and just the daily day-to-day.

This balance check on ordinary news coverage is carried out in connection with each show, and the fact that there is no time for such balance checks during breaking news may be a reason for concentrating on "balanced sources." One of the extreme viewpoints that were seemingly not allowed to be aired on the major TV networks on 9/11 was blaming Islam for the terrorism, which would easily lead to anger and backlash against the American Muslims. Here's another comment from a CNN booking department spokesperson:

You were asking, if we would book somebody who's angry at Muslims? Well that's not balanced, that's not what we do

Major TV networks had a similar policy. NBC's host on the "Today Show," Matt Lauer, said:

I mean you have to be balanced. ... I'll give you an example of being not balanced. It would be easy on that day to say ... look what they have done to us! Now we are going to go get the bastards. You know, that we are going to go find them, and we are going to get them. ... That's what you can say on talk radio and you can say that on ... some cable news networks, but we can't say that. Fair and balanced, you know.

A few Americans who could not get on the air in a regular way tried to cheat. According to Executive Producer and Director Al Ortiz of CBS Special Events:

There was a call from one fellow who ... was giving a description of what he was supposedly seeing and then started a rant about how the CIA had done this and ... Assad had done this, and he thought, he was on the air, but he was being pre-interviewed by one of my producers.

However, it was only American sources that had to be balanced. When it came to foreign sources, CNN was back to balancing between opponents

such as the fighting groups within Afghanistan. According to Tom Fenton:

We were in the northern alliance territory. We were also in the Taliban territory. You know we were balanced.

When it came to showing international reactions to the events, American television covered a more open exchange of views — even views they found repugnant, such as pictures of celebrating Palestinians. Some viewers felt that the news networks should not have shown those pictures, because they provoked anger against the Palestinians. But the journalists argued that it was necessary to provide the viewers with a trustworthy account of the international reactions. One of them was Bill Shine, network executive producer of FOX News:

That tape, I think ... gave Americans another aspect that, you know, there are people out there that don't like us ... There are people out there who think today is a great day.

In short, the American TV journalists definition of "balance" on 9/11 excludes controversial opinions or extreme views from Americans, but that practice does not apply to non-Americans. This practice of distinguishing between national and foreign sources has interesting consequences. TV coverage managed to place the most disturbing viewpoints outside the United States, where they were not threatening to national cohesion but created an image of "we" versus "them."

Legitimate Views

The findings for how TV journalists define "balanced" led us to look closer at what they considered were appropriate ways for Americans to respond to the terror. The anchors at the main TV networks wanted to tell the viewers what happened in a calm way. Around them in the studios and control rooms, camera people and producers broke down in tears when the second plane hit World Trade Center; others were screaming when the Pentagon was hit, and most were stunned when the towers fell apart. As Matt Lauer put it:

When we ... started to see the pictures of people running as the building was collapsing behind them, it was very easy to realize that this was a feeling of panic that was going to sweep the nation. It was also personally the hardest moment for me.

Several journalists spontaneously referred to the old fairy tale about

Chicken Little as a symbol of the role they didn't want to play. FOX News Anchor Jon Scott said he just wanted to crawl under the desk, but

At some point ... it occurred to me that if everybody did play Chicken Little, then the terrorist won and that was exactly what they were trying to do. Hence the name. They want to instill terror in people.

As indicated, the anchors did not see themselves as detached journalists reporting the facts neutrally. They interpreted the events as a fight between the terrorists and the United States, and in that fight they felt loyal to the nation. They would not let the terrorists win, and they felt no obligation to talk to American supporters of terrorism. Many of them were personally touched by the events. MSNBC Anchor Lester Holt experienced for the first time in his more than 20 years as a journalist that half of his brain was not focused on the coverage because he was concerned about the safety of his children, who went to school near World Trade Center:

This was a story that didn't have two sides to it. You didn't have to worry about being impartial.

Anchor Shepard Smith of FOX News also did not find the viewpoints of the terrorists legitimate:

Every story you cover has two sides; this one didn't ... There is nothing I could think of that we, as a people or ours as a government, could have done to make anyone be able to shape the argument that it would have been OK to retaliate in such a manner. Therefore, this conflict in my mind didn't have two sides.

Matt Lauer agreed:

There was nothing partisan about this story. ... This was black and white ... This was evil.

What those comments indicate and what was supported by the content analyses was that viewpoints supporting terrorist were considered unfair and evil with no legitimate right to be voiced in the broadcasts during the first day and night. However, one may argue that the terrorists got their message across (Deppa 2001). They set the media agenda in form of attacks, according to. Senior Executive Producer Steve Friedman of CBS.

I believe they attacked at a time when they knew all three network

morning shows were going to be on live. So they knew they would get live coverage right away... They wanted the pictures of those towers on fire.

Question: Do you think that they (the terrorists) are good communicators in their own way?

Yeah, I think they are masters of impact ... I think you are going to see more and more spectacular attacks ... if they make it. For I do believe that our job is to kill them before they kill us ... Our job is to ask questions; our job is to tell people what is going on. But we don't have to be down the middle on everything. That's ridiculous.

Patriotism

The coverage of 9/11 has been widely criticized for being too patriotic. This patriotism revealed itself through the naming of programs (e.g., *America Attacked*, *Attack on America* and *America Under Attack*) and graphic images (e.g., wrapping the programs in white, blue and red colors, using flags as decorations and so on). Do journalists think they can be objective and patriotic at the same time? Robert Dembo, director of National News, Assignment Desk, at NBC thinks they can.

I did not drape my desk with American flags even though it is on camera. I did not do those things; it is not appropriate. Even though the United States may be attacked, it is our role to remain as objective as we possibly can, and I think we did ... If you slap a flag on your vest, it is making it very difficult to certainly appear to be objective, let alone to be objective.

However, Dembo found that journalists as a whole are patriotic and sees it as a fundamental part of being a journalist.

The journalist's job is a critical part of the democratic process, so I think it would be right for us to bristle at the suggestion that one should be surprised that a journalist is a patriot.

Similar views were expressed by our informants on the other major TV networks. Paul Friedman, executive vice president at ABC, said patriotism became part of the story because Americans instantly started waving the flag and singing "God Bless America." ABC made it a policy for its staff not to wear pins or buttons with flags on air because the network did not want the individual members of the staff to be seen as more or less patriotic

depending on whether they were wearing a flag. Friedman said:

[The coverage was] certainly more patriotic than usual. I don't know if it was less objective ... I don't think we at least were guilty of any being non-objective because of any patriotic issues. I think it was more ... in the case of not going hard on the story.

Bill Felling, national editor at CBS, commented on the naming of coverage:

The facts are the facts. We are under attack. This is a country; we are citizens of this country. There is a *we*. I mean we are part of the *we* ... It's patriotic ... but is also accurate. If it were patriotic and inaccurate, that would be jingoistic, but it's not. It was accurate and ancillary patriotic in the same sense. Although I ... don't think we should be wearing flag [on our] lapels and all of that. I mean I don't want to be in a position *where* I somehow don't feel as though I should be questioning the government. I am here to be an adversary.

In general, the journalists saw themselves as part of a society that had been attacked. They felt that they provided a public service to that society, that seeking and reporting the truth were a critical part of the democracy, and that their role as watchdogs in relation to the government was a sign of this loyalty to the nation and its people. Objectivity to these journalists did not imply detachment from the nation.

Conform to Reality

According to Merrill, "Journalistic objectivity connotes a relationship between symbol and reality with virtual correspondence of meaning, or harmonizing, being the result." Merrill also says that journalists should want their stories to "be as thorough and accurate as possible, to conform maximally to reality" (Merrill 1997: 117). All reporters must be selective in their choice of facts for their stories, but the "reporter's attitude basically determines objectivity" (Merrill 1997: 119).

Does the reporter diligently attempt to convey reality in words or pictures? Does he demand of himself to be as thorough, accurate, disinterested, fair and balanced as humanly possible? On 9/11 the reporters at Ground Zero were faced with grim realities. What was their attitude to presenting the full story?

ABC Correspondent Don Dahler told us about two cases where he deliberately chose not to tell the public newsworthy facts because he was

concerned about the consequences. When interviewed six months after 9/11, he was satisfied with his choice in one of the cases, while he was still bothered by the other.

Dahler lived near the World Trade Center. He was watching "Good Morning America," when he heard the loud noise of an airplane and shortly after the huge explosion from American Airlines Flight 11 crashing into the North Tower. He called ABC, was put on the air almost immediately and reported from his fire escape via the telephone most of that morning. He described what he saw:

In reporting, objectivity is more ... a function of not putting forth a personal agenda ... Objectivity was not an issue because all I was doing was reporting what I was seeing ... I would try to just give it as succinct and clear a description as possible.

However, he decided not to include in his description the fact that people jumped from the World Trade Center.

I knew that there were viewers who had loved ones in those buildings so ... I made the decision to not report that. And the way I justified that to myself was [that] I couldn't confirm ... that these were people jumping ... It was only my eyes telling me this. So I opted not to mention it ... It was a decision I made at the time for my own personal standards.

Six months later and after having received positive responses from his bosses and the viewers, Dahler was satisfied with this decision. The viewers were told by others about the people jumping, but ABC chose not to show pictures of people leaping to death from the burning towers. Dahler felt more uncertain about not having reported another event that happened later that day when he was at Ground Zero.

In the company of a federal agent, he took refuge in a technology store that had been heavily damaged by dust and water. While he was there, he saw firefighters reaching through the bars taking cameras off the shelves. Dahler found that distasteful. When he asked a fireman for his opinion on the looting, the source said that the cameras would be thrown away anyway and the insurance would pay for it, so the firefighters might as well use them to document their own experience.

Dahler did not think the public would like to hear that the firefighters, who were seen as heroes, looted the shops. He knew it was not a story the first day when everybody was choked up because of the enormity of what happened, but a few days later he discussed the story with his producer, who

said that there were too many larger stories to do and that with thousands of firefighters those looting were just a few bad apples. In fact, some firefighters were later sentenced for looting. Dahler did not report the story, but six months later he talked about self-censorship.

It bothered me personally; just my sense of integrity was kind of offended by it ... So that was a moment of censorship, and it was a real struggle for me ... To this day ... there's a part of me that says, 'I'm a little bothered by glossing over that.' And even my justification now, I'm not sure what I would have done with it ... I've heard from the producers that I've talked to, that there was a real sense of what the public needed to hear, and a part of that was reassurance.

Reporters from all the major TV networks and CNN made similar decisions regarding the appropriateness of certain information while covering the events on Ground Zero. Gary Tuchman of CNN did not talk about body parts like a foot or a hand from a victim but preferred to talk about "remains." Molly Falconer of FOX News would not show people screaming at the hospital but focused on the treatment and help they received. Photographers chose not to film suffering people burning to death, and, even if they did, the major networks would not show those pictures. Journalists at all the major news networks were concerned about "tone" and "taste" and about the feelings of the viewers when they explained why they did not report the full story.

Concern About Viewers' Reactions

Our informants generally supported the norm of objectivity. As Executive Producer Paul Slavin of ABC World News Tonight put it:

You can never be totally objective. All you can do is recognize what your biases are and where and try and minimize them as best you can.

However, as this article has pointed out, there were in fact points at which journalists consciously choose not to be objective, neutral, or impartial, and they often explained their actions by referring to the feelings of the viewers. Jim Murphy, executive producer on CBS Evening News, said:

People are so strongly moved by what happened that you know there is a lot of irrational reaction to what we do. And you have to think about that.

Question: Well, what do you think about that? Do you think about it, or do you try to say, "I have to be objective?"

Well, I am pretty much past thinking about it now. In the beginning you have to think about it because part of your job is to serve your audience. You are trying to just beat objective journalism ... but we are not robots. You have to be concerned about how the whole country is reacting and what they are dealing with. I mean it was a huge trauma. So you couldn't just [say] on the first day: Good evening, this was probably your fault! The history of Western civilization has led to a complete dismissal of the Islamic world and its culture, and it decided to strike back. ... It wouldn't be right. It also wouldn't be objective either ... We didn't consciously sit here and say, "Damn it! I love my country, and this is what the news is going to look like." I think that that was just a purely visceral natural reaction of a group of people who felt like everyone else here that they were attacked. We also live here ... It is difficult under those circumstances to just say I am going to be completely deliberate.

CONCLUSION

American journalists in their everyday reporting seek to be objective in their reporting. They want to tell the full story and they strive to be impartial, fair and balanced. However, they also value democracy, and when these two values collide, the journalists would often forego neutrality in reporting. By condemning the terror on civilians, they reminded their viewers of the norms shared by the United States and most of the international community.

The loyalty of the American journalists toward their nation and its people lead them to make editorial decisions that helped create a "we" different from the criminals and their supporters. In order to create such a "we," they chose to focus on mainstream American opinions and neglected to a large extent extremist views as well as unacceptable behavior among Americans. Such unacceptable opinions and behavior became part of "them."

These findings support many theories of mass media, particularly social system theories, which see the mass media as producing content that helps support and maintain a social system (Demers 1996; Donohue, Tichenor and Olien 1973). A interesting question for future research is whether such findings can be applied during the first 24 hours of other crises, when viewers are in a state of shock and fear.

CHAPTER ENDNOTE

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