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Television journalism during terror attacks

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ABSTRACT

This article views television news coverage of ongoing terrorist attacks and their immediate aftermath as a special genre within journalism, and describes norms connected with the genre. The description is based on qualitative analyses of the coverage on the major American networks in the first 24 hours after the events on September 11, 2001, and on semi-structured personal interviews with 37 journalists who covered the events for ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, MSNBC and FOX News. In accordance with legal and moral philosopher Alf Ross, each of the norms was expressed as a directive in the interviews and also reflected in the journalistic practices. The described norms form a coherent pattern if safeguarding the existing democracy and the general public is considered to be the main purpose. A coverage based on this pattern of norms can be compared to other forms of crisis management following attacks because it counteracts well known symptoms of national crisis.

KEY WORDS • 9/11 • crisis manager • genre • journalism • professional norms • Alf Ross • television • terror

Introduction

Transnational terrorism networks such as the one formed by Al Qaida-related groups seem to target people randomly. The public has no idea where in the world and when in the near future terrorists will strike, and post-2000 global terrorists seemingly do not care about the personal conduct of their victims. People are blown into pieces only because they happen to be at certain places at the time of the attacks. As a result, civilians in large parts of the world have reason to fear terrorism.

Government agencies around the world try their best to prevent terrorism and to prepare citizens as well as rescue teams for the disaster created by terror attacks (OECD, 2003). Scholars investigate and describe the best practices (e.g. CSTPV, 2007; Harvard University, 2002; Tierney et al., 2001), and universities offer courses in crisis management (e.g. INSCT, 2008;

LSU, 2007; Medill, 2006). Media traditionally play an important role in providing people with much-needed information during a national crisis (Graber, 1980; Schramm, 1965; Stempel and Hargrove, 2002), and within the field of journalism and mass communication research more scholars have focused their attention on the role of mass media before, during and after a terror attack. Simultaneously, television journalists have gained experience from serving their shattered audiences during terror-related national crises, and some of the best practices have been described in professional publications (e.g. Anderson and McGaughy, 2004; Hight and Smyth, 2003; Watson, 2001).

The recognition of a special terror-related genre within journalism seems to be emerging. The purpose of the genre is to provide television news coverage of ongoing terror attacks and their immediate aftermath to viewers in a state of crisis. It consists of a number of practices and of a pattern of norms that can help to minimize harm to the basic structure of the society and its core values during the crisis. In the following, I will outline the pattern of norms connected to the genre.

National crises are by definition very important from a journalism perspective. Serious journalism deals with threats against or changes in the basic structure and core values of a society (Mogensen, 2000) and, according to some definitions, national crisis involves 'threats to the basic structure and core values of a social system' (Kruke and Olsen, 2005; see also Rosenthal et al., 2001). Neal (1998: 9–10) writes:

An extraordinary event becomes a national trauma under circumstances in which the social system is disrupted to such a magnitude that it commands the attention of all major subgroups of the population. Even those who are usually apathetic and indifferent to national affairs are drawn into the public arena of discussion and debate. The social fabric is under attack, and people pay attention because the consequences appear to be so great that they cannot be ignored.

Coverage of national crises has for centuries been a cornerstone in journalism. An early example is Daniel Defoe's *The Storm*, which describes the impact of a hurricane that hit the southern part of England in 1703. More recent examples of national crises caused by nature are the tsunami in Asia in 2004 and Hurricane Katrina in America in 2005. Natural disasters bring people together in an effort to overcome the consequences. The same is true when national crises are caused by technological failures and traditional wars (Helsloot and Ruitenbergh, 2004; Neal, 1998; OECD, 2003).

However, terrorism attacks killing random civilians result not only in a wish to unite against the threat but also in a fear of the unknown terrorists. It is impossible for most citizens to recognize a potential terrorist, so a natural response is to be careful and be suspicious toward pretty much everyone

who looks or behaves in certain ways. Following terror attacks there is not an immediate consensus about the 'meaning on the core of the event' (Bouvier, 2007) as is generally the case with natural disasters. Some people may publicly sympathize with the causes of the terrorists or find the attacks self-inflicted (Easterbrook, 2001; McNair, 2007). Contradictory discourses and opinions contribute to a feeling of uncertainty. Following the events on September 11, 2001, many American citizens reacted with depression, fear, sleep disturbances and tears (Greenberg et al., 2002; Pew Research Center, 2001; Stempel and Hargrove, 2002).

The professional norms for television coverage of terror-related national crises presented in this article may be seen as a response to the special social situation outlined previously. They all played an important role for journalists who covered the events on September 11, 2001, and the resulting coverage received high marks from the audiences (Pew Research Center, 2001; WestGroup Research, 2001) as well as intellectuals (Carey, 2002: 73; Consoli and Larson, 2001; Feighery, 2005; Gardner, 2001; Real and Beeson, 2002; Schudson, 2002). The journalists themselves were generally proud of the performance of the profession on September 11–12, 2001 (Capus, 2002; Dembo, 2002; S. Friedman, 2002; Holt, 2002; Kennedy, 2002; Lauer, 2002; McGinnis, 2002; Murray, 2002; Rosen, 2002; Shine, 2002; Slavin, 2002; Wheatley, 2002).

Methods

This article describes professional norms. Even though journalism is not a profession in traditional sociological terms (Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947; Singer, 2003), several studies have suggested that leading journalists across different types of news media in elective democracies have similar norms and values in relation to their role as journalists (Deuze, 2005a, 2005b; Gardner et al., 2001; Singer, 2003, 2006; Zandberg and Neiger, 2005). A number of institutions provide information about the norms and performance standards that can be expected of professional journalists in a democracy. In America, these include professional organizations such as the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) and Radio-Television News Directors Association (RTNDA) and their codes of ethics. It also includes university programs in journalism such as those accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC). On the transnational front, journalists have united in professional networks such as the International Federation of Journalists and Global Investigative Journalism:

Journalism's strongest claim to professional status may lie on the normative dimension ... US journalists have long claimed to provide a public service – not just to help individuals but to help democratic society as a whole. (Singer, 2003: 144)

Professional ethics discusses moral solutions to professional problems:

Professionals' problems by their very nature are problems specific to professional practice, i.e., ethical problems that arise in the course of carrying out the tasks for which one has been professionally trained (although they are not *exclusively* the problems of professionals) ... professional ethics is more a matter of the *interpretation* of problems than of the application of moral theories; it is much more a matter of *hermeneutics* than it is of value systems. (Janik, 1994: 199–200, emphasis in original)

Often professions will try to find solutions through moral reasoning (Day, 2003), a process that draws on previous experiences within the profession (Janik, 1994) as well as concern for all the stakeholders (Day, 2003). Ethical solutions can become norms when members of a profession feel an obligation or a duty to act in a certain way, even though it may be harmful to their personal interests. As an example, several journalists suffered considerable inconvenience when covering the events on September 11, 2001, but they felt a duty to do their job, because the public relied on them (Berg, 2002; Dahler, 2002; McGinnis, 2002; Wheatley, 2002).

According to Ross, 'Norms must be intrinsically connected with directives, and ... the explanation given of the concept must make it possible to say that certain norms usually *exist*, or *are in force*' (1968: 78–9; emphasis in original). However, it does not imply that the norms are followed by all members of the profession.

We need the concept 'norm' to express the social fact, which is independent of how any individual reacts, that is *generally* effective among members of a social group. If the norms are in force, the journalists will feel a special 'prompting or impulse' to act. (Ross, 1968: 99, emphasis in original)

Such a prompting was felt by most top television journalists in New York on September 11, 2001.

Following Ross, we require at least two sets of data in order to point out the existence of professional norms related to the coverage of national crisis following a terror attack: (1) that members of the profession express feelings of obligation to conform to certain norms in such a situation, e.g. expressed with words like 'ought to do it', 'it is our duty' or 'it is the right way to behave'; and (2) that members of the profession generally behave in accordance with the norms in the specified type of situation. For that reason, this article is based on interviews with journalists as well as analyses of the coverage and literature review.

Based on the assumption that journalists in general must master the norms of the profession to reach the highest positions within the industry, top

journalists were chosen as informants for the study. Thirty-seven journalists who covered the events on September 11, 2001, for ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN, FOX News and MSNBC¹ were interviewed in their newsrooms using a semi-structured questionnaire. The journalists, who included vice presidents of news operations, anchors, producers, correspondents and editors, were asked to describe where they were when American Airlines Flight 11 crashed into the north tower at 8:45 a.m. and what happened then. The interviews took place in the beginning of 2002 and were carried out by seven faculty members from Manship School of Mass Communication at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, working individually or in groups. The interviews were taped, transcribed by secretaries and then analyzed and coded sentence by sentence by this author. The computer program Atlas.ti developed for qualitative research was used to organize the data.

For analyses of the coverage, tapes with recordings of the first 24 hours following the events on September 11, 2001, were rented from Vanderbilt Television News Archive. The tapes were analyzed using quantitative as well as qualitative methods. Some results of these analyses have been published (Li, 2005; Li and Izard, 2003; Li et al., 2002; Lindsay et al., 2002; Mogensen, 2003, 2007; Mogensen et al., 2002) and will not be repeated in this article. Several other research project have analyzed the coverage following the attacks (Jha-Nambiar and Izard, 2005; Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2002; Reeves, 2002; Reynolds and Barnett, 2003), and all these studies have been helpful for the interpretation of data.

Pattern of norms

Moral values indicate that something is good or bad, and they can be organized in a hierarchy, as described by Ross (1968: 67):

Moral values and principles may often be organized in a hierarchy, so that values or principles at one level may be derived from those at a higher level together with factual premises. If, for example, liberty is valued (higher level principle) and democracy is believed to be the form of government which best furthers liberty (factual premises) it follows that democracy must be valued as the best form of government, unless the conclusion is neutralized by considerations based on other values and other factual premises.

The preamble for the SPJ Code of Ethics (1996) starts like this:

Members of the Society of Professional Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and

comprehensive account of events and issues. Conscientious journalists from all media and specialities strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty.

According to the preamble, justice and democracy are the values that the SPJ principles and standards of practice are meant to support. Moral principles such as 'truth' and a 'fair and comprehensive account' are not the highest values by themselves but are intended to support justice and democracy. In everyday life, we do in fact consider public enlightenment to be a forerunner for justice and a foundation for democracy. However, during terror attacks such as those on September 11, 2001, democracy may paradoxically be better protected by socially responsible moral principles and standards of practice even though this could mean that the public will not be presented with all the inflammatory statements and graphic visuals that are available to the networks. The reason for this is that sad, fearful and angry people might turn to violence (Neal, 1998), which again could be harmful to democracy.

The pattern of professional norms described in the following sections can be understood as a form of 'first aid' during a national emergency. As with other forms of first aid, the treatment that is helpful in an emergency situation may be felt as an offense during normal times. For this reason, it is important to distinguish an audience in an acute state of crisis from a normal audience.

Previous research has shown that Americans were glued to their TV screens during the first days after the terror attacks on September 11, 2001, and that many reacted to the events with strong negative feelings such as fear, depression and anger (Greenberg et al., 2002; Pew Research Center, 2001; WestGroup Research, 2001). In other words, the senses were highly stimulated and the feelings were overloaded.

However, during a national crisis it is extremely important that each individual is able to make rational decisions regarding his or her own security (Helsloot and Ruitenberg, 2004; Lowrey, 2004; Mindak and Hursh, 1965; OECD, 2003; Singer, 2003). From a first-aid perspective, the challenge for national television is to provide coverage that at the same time stimulates rational thinking and limits the negative stimulus of the feelings and senses. A number of professional norms related to crisis coverage can be seen in this light, as shown in Figure 1.

In the following sections, some of the professional norms included in the pattern will be outlined. Underlying the pattern is a feeling of duty to serve the society during the crisis, to respect national security, and to use moral reasoning in order to determine what good moral conduct is in the given situation.

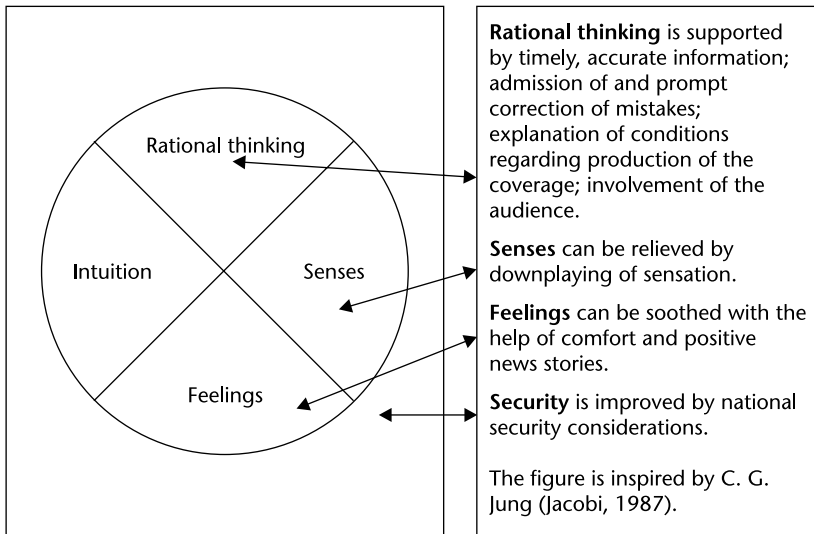


Figure 1 First aid to audience members during a national emergency (The circle illustrates one audience member)

Rational behaviour

Timely and accurate information is essential for people during a terror attack because they feel in personal danger (Lowrey, 2004). Immediate and correct information is a foundation for rational behavior. Lack of accurate information may lead to panic and other forms of suboptimal behavior (OECD, 2003) and rumors (Schramm, 1965) that might lead to unwanted behavior such as violence, hoarding, and looting. However, if people are given correct and timely information, they tend to be constructively and socially responsible in a crisis situation (Helsloot and Ruitenber, 2004). According to the OECD's International Futures Programme (2003: 176):

The challenge in generating and maintaining responsible behaviour among populations in times of disaster is to ensure timely and credible information, reduce uncertainties to the extent possible, and engender citizens' trust and confidence not only in the emergency management services and relevant authorities, but also in their own capacities to cope and contribute.

Journalists are more than willing to provide timely information. On September 11, the major television networks all reported directly from the World Trade Center within 15 minutes after American Airlines Flight 11 crashed into the north tower. Host Matt Lauer, NBC, said about the first hours in general:

'At that moment everybody needs information.' Vice President William O. Wheatley, NBC, said: 'It is almost always reassuring when you present people with information that keeps up to the minute as to what's going on.'

Journalists have professional standards for the truth and accuracy of information (RTNDA, 2000; SPJ, 1996). However, during a terror attack events happen so quickly that there is hardly time to check the information. On September 11, 2001, major television networks chose to transmit from the World Trade Center even though their anchors did not know what had happened. The viewers saw the pictures on the screen at the same time as the anchors did. Such conditions require professional methods to secure continued trust in the media. One of these methods is to tell the audiences bluntly about the uncertainty of facts and to correct misinformation as soon as it is recognized.

The most important thing is to be accurate ... be honest and explain that there's a lot of commotion and chaos. And while you're staying calm, explain we're trying to gather the information the best we can. We are going to give it to you as it comes. But if we're not sure about it, we'll make it clear to you. (National Correspondent Gary Tuchman, CNN)

Other professional norms related to the truth include a willingness to draw on the knowledge of the viewers. On September 11, all major American networks had phone contact with eyewitnesses when United Airlines Flight 175 crashed into the south tower at 9.03 a.m. These eyewitnesses provided the information that viewers needed but could not get from professional reporters on the spot because they had not yet arrived.

It is also seen as important to allow citizens to view the disaster in order to limit rumors and to give people the best possible understanding about the events so that they can make judgments about their own security.

We don't want to be a bunch of censors who want to protect the American people from the news ... Sometimes I get a little bit angry with people who, you know [say]: you better not show this and you better not show that and the American people can't take it, but meanwhile we are all crowded around the set watching it ... You have to give the American people a little credit for being able to understand what they are watching ... Our job is to inform them, not to protect them from that stuff. (Senior Vice President Marcy McGinnis, CBS News Coverage)

Finally, it is important to avoid stereotyping of groups in society, such as people belonging to certain races and religions, because such stereotypes provide the viewers with an incorrect foundation for the decisions that they make during the crisis.

It was an attempt to make sure that accurate information was out there. That going after Arab Americans was akin to going after Japanese Americans in World War II you know, wrong approach. No indications that there's any connection

between them. You don't want to ever inflame obviously. (Executive Producer Paul Slavin, ABC)

Content analyses of the broadcast showed that approximately eight in ten news items were considered facts (Li, 2005). A number of rumors were reported to the viewers and clearly expressed as such (*Broadcasting & Cable*, 2001; Reynolds and Barnett, 2003; Zelizer and Allan, 2002). Based on qualitative analyses of the coverage, the impression was that rumors in general were checked and corrected as soon as possible.

The immediate transmission on September 11, 2001, increased viewer satisfaction (WestGroup Research, 2001), and so did the impression of accuracy in the coverage (Greenberg et al., 2002; WestGroup Research, 2001).

Sensing the horror

While American journalists said that they wanted to let people watch the disaster, television networks did in fact censor the images on September 11, 2001. Journalists called it taste. This author perceived it as the downplay of sensation because the techniques typically used for dramatizing an event were used the other way round. This in effect limited the impact on the senses. The first two hours of the footage on CNN, for example, consisted primarily of long-distance pictures in light blue and gray and contained relatively little action. What television did show was frightening enough, but the coverage could have been much more sensational.

Among the visuals not shown on national television on September 11, 2001, were people burning to death or hitting the ground after jumping from the towers. Journalists told their viewers that Ground Zero looked like a war zone, but they did not show pictures of body parts or of people in great physical pain. Executive Producer Jim Murphy, CBS, described a French cameraman who was filming in the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001:

He looked over and saw a person in flames come down and hit the ground and another person in flames come running out of a building, and his camera was rolling and he said: 'I decided not to point the camera at those people because no human being needs to see this.'

The reporters were also careful in the way they behaved on the screen. Business News Correspondent Molly Falconer, FOX News, explained how she downplayed sensation:

I had a paper mask on for a couple of shots and the gas mask on for a couple of shots, but the majority of time I didn't have it on. Because, I felt like, that looks kind of sensational.

National Correspondent Gary Tuchman, CNN, commented:

We didn't want to describe [that] we saw a hand or we saw a foot, that's not entirely necessary. We used the word remains and that's okay. That makes it clear what's going on. So you want to tell the truth, but you don't want to make people so sick they can't watch it.

Even though national television applied professional taste, among the viewers one in ten would have preferred less sensational coverage (WestGroup Research, 2001). Visuals of flights crashing into the towers and of the towers collapsing stood out strongest in the minds of the viewers (Greenberg et al., 2002). Studies found that there was a connection between the amount of television viewing and negative reactions to the attacks (Cho et al., 2003; Greenberg et al., 2002); however, it is not clear if an extensive amount of television viewing raised the level of psychological anxiety symptoms (Graber, 2002) or if extensive television helped people handle their anxiety through information and as a kind of therapy (Lowrey, 2004; Schramm, 1965; Stempel and Hargrove, 2002). In the days and months after the acute crisis, photography may help members of a society work through the trauma together (Zelizer, 2002).

According to Fahmy and Johnson (2005), American viewers are more sensitive to disturbing pictures than viewers in some other parts of the world. The viewers on the Arab television network Al Jazeera wanted, to a larger extent than American viewers, to view the suffering of people in connection with reports from wars and other violent conflicts. They conclude:

Al Jazeera viewers believe that in wartime the media should not soft-pedal the events in a conflict. ... What Americans consider sensational and graphic, people in the Arab world believe is the reality they live in. For *Al Jazeera* viewers, the graphic visuals are facts and showing them the footage is not a matter of taste but an obligation to give viewers full and complete coverage. (2005: 18–19)

The study by Fahmy and Johnson seems to indicate that 'good taste' with regard to television coverage of terror-related events depends on the culture. However, we may also compare the limited cases of street violence and backlashes in America following September 11, 2001, with the cases that have been reported from other parts of the world following terror attacks and other forms of humiliation. Graphic pictures showing people in great pain can create anger and, according to Neal (1998), anger easily results in violence if combined with sadness, as was the case in America on September 11, 2001 (Greenberg et al., 2002; Pew Research Center, 2001). Further research is needed in order to understand the role of disturbing visuals in relation to national crisis.

Feeling the pain

During a national crisis in which many viewers are upset and to some extent might have lost confidence in fellow citizens and social norms (Neal, 1998), national television can provide information that helps re-create trust and calm the viewers (Graber, 2002). The need to bring comfort to people in an emergency situation is well known from first aid programs and also acknowledged by some network journalists.

By the time I saw those buildings down ... it just became so painfully clear that we didn't know where we were or where we were going. We had no idea how much of an attack was left. ... All I wanted to do was hug somebody I loved. ... In the public interest we had to be calming. (Anchor Shepard Smith, FOX News)

People were very thankful for the fact that we tried to keep them comforted in knowing that, OK, this probably isn't the end of the world. (Host Matt Lauer, NBC)

Executive Vice President Paul Friedman, ABC, explained what the viewers needed:

They needed as many facts as we could give them as quickly as we could give them. They needed to be told what was known. And they needed to be reassured that the country wasn't collapsing.

It is difficult to comfort viewers if the anchors and reporters on the screen are in panic, so professional norms require of them that they stay calm even if people working around them in the studio and control room are crying. Senior Vice President Marcy McGinnis, CBS News Coverage, talked about the role of anchors at the major networks:

I think that they sort of see themselves in a time of national crisis as someone who people can turn to and they are not going to be panicking.

Anchor Jon Scott, FOX News, said:

There was a time when I just wanted to throw up my hands and say you know this is terrible! I just want to crawl under the desk now. But that's what the terrorists wanted. ... I determined that we weren't going to do that.

Viewers were in general pleased with the professional behavior of the anchors (WestGroup Research, 2001). According to Host Matt Lauer, NBC, viewers made their appreciation clear to the networks:

We got an enormous amount of e-mail and letters and phone calls following the event that were very complimentary of the tone we maintained. ... People were very impressed by the fact that we did not start Chicken Little, it is not the end of the world. Even though we may have thought that way.

Viewers can be inspired following a terror attack by seeing that their leadership and fellow citizens behave in accordance with the moral norms of the society (Graber, 2002). On September 11, 2001, CNN showed very few Americans who did not behave according to the best moral standards and who could not function as a role model. National leaders, rescue workers and ordinary citizens reinforced social norms through their own examples, and that is no surprise. According to Helsloot and Ruitenberg (2004: 103–4; see also Dynes and Quarantelli, 1968; Stallings and Quarantelli, 1985): ‘Situational altruism can be seen as a special kind of *emergent norms* that are guiding citizens (and responders) in times of disasters’ (original emphasis).

Network journalists reflected those norms in their coverage.

It fairly quickly got inspiring in terms of the way the city and the nation was reacting. And at that spot it was reassuring as anything. And, of course, we were all cognizant of the incredible bravery of the people that went into the building to do the rescuing, you know. It just [was a] truly remarkable reminder of something that we take for granted day in and day out. (Vice President William O. Wheatley, NBC News)

Hard news is more often negative than positive (Galtung and Ruge, 1965). However, professional news values emphasize the unusual and unexpected, and although a disaster is unusual in comparison with normal daily life, stories about good moral conduct seem unusual in comparison with the disaster. Correspondent Don Dahler, ABC News, told us about his news evaluation when he reported from Ground Zero:

You’re walking through a darkened street, and there’s a house with the light on. That’s what you notice. So you might say there are other things going on in the dark, but what catches your attention and what focuses you is that light in that house. ... My job was to report on the scene on Ground Zero. And in the light of Ground Zero, the predominant story was the people, not just the firemen and the rescue workers and the policemen who ran into the buildings and then lost their lives because of those acts of heroism, but the rescue workers who worked the debris pile and were constantly injured.

While stories about supportive fellow citizens can calm negative feelings, inflammatory statements can increase anger, and in fact professional network journalists try to avoid extremist views during an acute crisis or to present them in a less provocative form. At least two forms were used to limit the negative impact of hate speech on September 11, 2001. One was to have the anchors give a short presentation of the viewpoints in connection with statements from, for example, government officials expressing contradicting viewpoints. Another was to let people in other parts of the world express their viewpoints (Mogensen, 2007). Both methods signified detachment from the viewpoints.

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 immediately [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. ... You can't do that. You wouldn't want to do that. It wouldn't be right. (Executive Producer Jim Murphy, CBS Evening News)

Public interest

It is generally recognized that during a national crisis in America family and friends meet in front of their television sets and that the television coverage in effect unites members of society (Robertson, 2001). However, network journalists did not consider it their duty to create national unity and to wave the flag. Instead, most of our informants considered it their duty to deliver information as a form of public service and to act in the public interest during a national crisis, as expressed in the following short quotes from the transcripts:

We were fulfilling in a very fundamental way a *national service*. (Slavin, 2002)

You were doing an important *public service*. (Rosen, 2002)

It hits home what a *public service* it really is. (Wald, 2002)

We worked together in the sense of *public interest*. (Dembo, 2002)

It was very *public service* oriented. (Falconer, 2002)

We really could act in the *public interest*. (Smith, 2002)

We were really a part of the fabric of *the society*. (Murphy, 2002)

Conclusion

This study indicates that the broadcast provided by major American networks during and right after the terror attacks on September 11, 2001, reflected a set of professional norms that supported the social structure and core values of society. In relation to September 11, 2001, the norms were in effect for at least the first 24 hours, and while the norms can be seen as highly valuable in a crisis situation, it will probably not be in accordance with libertarian or socially responsible press theory to apply the full packet of norms beyond the hours of acute national crisis. The pattern of norms is relevant for broadcast to the affected nation, and there is no reason to believe that the same norms should be applied to coverage of terror attacks to audiences that are not in a crisis mood.

More studies are needed to determine whether the described norms are intrinsically connected to American society. Research has shown that 'citizens, at least in Western societies, act as rationally in a disaster situation as they do in everyday life'; however, more research is needed to clarify the way that members of other cultures react (Helsloot and Ruitenberg, 2004). Similarly, more research is needed on the cultural differences in journalistic norms and values for coverage of terror-related national crises.

It would be useful to know how journalists in other cultures interpret their roles during terror-related national crises. Differences in norms can be related to a number of factors, including an interpretation of the needs of the local audience and cultural norms for crisis response. Such an international outlook has become increasingly relevant due to the growing market for transnational news channels that serve audiences in distinctly different cultures.

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Note

- 1 In this article the term 'network' will be used for the traditional television networks (ABC, NBC and CBS) as well as cable networks (CNN, FOX News and MSNBC).

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