

Military Metaphors, Masculine Modes, and Critical Commentary

Deconstructing Journalists' Inner Tales of September 11

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This article analyzes the rhetoric that surrounded September 11 in trade publications that cater to journalism professionals. Approaching journalists as an interpretive community, the author examines the ways in which reporters and editors narrate their experiences of producing news about the events of September 11, 2001. The analysis shows that journalists' public memories of their work relied on masculine metaphors of military and sport, privileged empiricist tasks of news production over complex processes of internal reflection, and elevated the work of male anchors. Stories aimed at improving journalists' skills in covering crises bolster their sense of competence, fragment the community along the axis of technology, teach lessons about the profession's responsibilities, and reproduce orientalist tropes of Muslim men. In conclusion, the article considers the implications of the author's analysis of September 11 in trade media for journalists' collective identities.

Keywords: journalism; interpretive community; September 11; gender; trade media; orientalism

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the ensuing effects of these attacks on global geopolitics have become crucial arenas of concern across a number of disciplines in the academy. Some scholars have explored the ramifications of September 11 for questions of gender, national security, and citizenship; others have analyzed the contours of news and popular culture representations of death and destruction at the World Trade Center (Brisson, 2002; Cooke, 2002; Reynolds & Barnett, 2003; Zelizer & Allan, 2002). The edited book *Journalism After September 11*, for instance, is one of the first comprehensive accounts to offer multidisciplinary insights into the news media's pivotal role in interpreting the crises of September 11 for audiences in the United States and the United Kingdom (Zelizer & Allan, 2002). Authors of chapters in this book contemplate the different ways in which September 11 turned into an occasion for tabloid and mainstream news media to engage with broader issues of U.S. foreign policy, national identity, religious freedom, free speech, and patriotism.

Stepping aside from the emphasis of such critical scrutiny of public news representations of September 11, this article ventures into the private backstage arena of the

news profession in the United States. My article examines essays in the less visible discursive space of the news industry's trade publications to shed light on U.S. journalists' responses to the crises of September 11. The columns and stories I analyze here were published in the trade magazines *American Journalism Review*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, *RTNDA Communicator*, *Broadcast and Cable*, and *Quill*. Authors who write for these trade journals are typically working journalists or former journalists (editors, reporters, anchors, station managers, columnists, and freelance writers), business executives and media managers from the news industry, and journalism educators and independent scholars. It is not surprising that the chaotic moments of September 11, the challenges the terrorist attacks posed for journalists, and the ripple effects of "Ground Zero" for national and international politics became intense areas of debate in these trade publications.

Journalism as an Interpretive Community

My qualitative textual analysis of September 11–related stories in trade magazines explores the following questions: What are the gendered metaphors and terminologies that journalists employ when they write about their experiences of working on and after September 11? What tasks and modes of knowledge production do news workers privilege in published essays that convey their memories of producing stories on September 11? While imparting lessons to their peers through the discursive forum of the trade press, how do journalists evaluate and frame the profession's successes and failures in representing the tragedy of September 11? Identifying themes of gender, labor, news technologies, and international news that emerged in trade media narratives, this article argues that journalists' reflections on the crises of September 11 reveal the continued investment of this interpretive community in constructs of traditional masculinity, technological determinism, and orientalism.

My article's approach to news writers and producers as an interpretive community is based in Zelizer's pioneering work on journalism as cultural and historical practice. Numerous media scholars have studied journalists' demographic profiles, reporters' work routines, and the institutional structures of news organizations in the United States; however, Zelizer's research on public memory, popular history, and journalism takes a uniquely cultural approach to journalists as members of a modern storytelling community (Zelizer, 1990; Zelizer, 1992; Zelizer, 1993; Zelizer, 1998; Zelizer, 2002). Emphasizing the informal and subterranean channels of socialization through which journalists absorb norms and ideologies about their profession, Zelizer (1993) writes that scholars must study "journalism not only as a profession but as an interpretive community that is united through its shared discourse and collective interpretations of key events" (p. 219). Zelizer (1993) also argues persuasively for the value of foregrounding crises in studies of journalists as an interpretive community. She notes that journalists may converse about their profession in significant ways when they are immersed in routine work, but it is during critical incidents that debates about professional freedom, journalists' agency, and the relations between the press and democracy take on deeper meaning and urgency:

When employed discursively, critical incidents are chosen by people to air, challenge, and negotiate their own boundaries of practice. . . . Discourse about critical incidents offers a way of attending to concerns at issue for the journalistic community, and professional consciousness emerges at least in part around ruptures where the borders of appropriate practice need renegotiation. (p. 224)

Drawing on Zelizer's approach, this article treats September 11 as a critical incident, a fertile discursive moment that precipitated debates on journalists' identities, roles, and responsibilities.

The trade publications that circulate among reporters, editors, and managers in the news business and among media educators are compelling and insightful cultural material to study. Firstly, trade media serve as important historical markers of modern journalism's effort to position itself as a bona fide profession. Unlike other classic professions (medicine or law) that offer well-defined paths of education, training, and licensing, careers in mass communication—journalism, advertising, and public relations—are still more open-ended avenues and allow individuals with varied backgrounds the opportunities to gain access and upward mobility. The interpretive community constituted through trade publications along with other institutional practices, such as membership in professional associations and distribution of awards for excellence, thus symbolizes journalism's bid to create a shared culture of professional values. Second, in the absence of a formal professional structure or rigidly enforced codes of ethics, trade publications act as a key public forum for journalists to exchange ideas about norms, controversial issues, ethical boundaries, and trends in their field. Finally, and on a more minor note, trade media play a more formal pedagogic role when media educators and trainers use these publications as instructional material to illustrate current developments in the news industry. Although trade publications in journalism may be limited in their ability to capture the complexities of everyday newsroom operations or the nuances of journalists' actual conversations, from an anthropological perspective, these public documents can be viewed as cultural artifacts that contain traces of the profession's collective imagination.

Other scholars have relied similarly on trade media in journalism and advertising as archival material that references a profession's collective response to internal and external crises (Eason, 1986; Fakazis, 2002; Zelizer, 1992). Eason's (1986) study of news discourses probes journalists' reflections on race and on changes in reporting conventions in the aftermath of the Janet Cooke scandal—Cooke, a young Black reporter, returned the Pulitzer prize after it was discovered she had fabricated her poignant story of an 8-year-old heroin user. Eason examines stories in trade media and national newspapers to argue that Cooke became a symbolic vehicle for an older generation of journalists in the profession to reinforce the sanctity of the boundaries that separate fact from fiction. Using the same methodology, Zelizer's (1992) study of CNN's ascendance during the Gulf War mines trade publications (*Columbia Journalism Review*, *Washington Journalism Review*, *Quill*, and *Electronic Media*) to consider

the challenges that live war reporting and satellite technology posed to the news industry.

Methodology: Textual Analysis

My textual analysis of trade media articles borrows methodological and analytical insights from the work of scholars who have examined the different ways in which the institutions and texts of journalism are embedded within larger symbolic myths and cultural narratives (Bird & Dardenne, 1988; Carter, Branston, & Allan, 1998; Fair, 1996; Lule, 2001; Polunbaum & Wieting, 1999). Linking media texts to their social and historical contexts in her study of African women's representations on television news, Fair (1996) writes that scholars must use textual analysis to "explore more fully the relations among knowledge, organizational practice, consciousness, and cultural contexts in which news circulates" (p. 3). Lule (2001) suggests that qualitative explorations of the media's repertoire of myths can bring to the foreground "societal narratives with shared values and beliefs, with lessons and themes, and with exemplary models that instruct and inform" (p. 18). Analyzing news coverage of golf star Tiger Woods, Polunbaum and Wieting (1999) argue that analysis of "nuance, background, contradiction, and complication" in texts is a productive endeavor to understand the metaphoric embodiments of a community's social norms and racial order (p. 70). Applying these insights to trade media stories on September 11, this textual analysis explores the social construction of journalism—a community that constructs a collective identity through discourse—in the midst of a significant political and historical crisis in the United States.

Textual analysis was used to discover the "latent meaning of the text" and to understand "why-the-content-is-like-that" (Hall, 1975, p. 16). The time period of the trade media stories examined here begins with September 2001, the month when the terrorist attacks occurred, and ends with August 2002, a year after the terrorist attacks took place, to study two categories of stories: texts that dealt with the news media's immediate response to the crisis and texts that were more analytical treatments of the media's performance after the crisis. The first stage of the analysis involved a "long preliminary soak" (Hall, 1975, p. 15) in the initial pool of 52 items that were collected from the time period September 2001 to August 2002. The sample of 52 trade publication items was narrowed down to 32 articles to include only longer and more substantive texts that were stand-alone pieces. Authors of the 32 articles studied here represent a wide variety of careers and occupations in journalism and in journalism education: newspaper reporters (Gellman, 2001), freelance writers (Tugend, 2001), newspaper columnists (Fisher, 2001), university faculty (Ricchiardi, 2001a), media trainers at nonprofit organizations (Geisler, 2001), full-time staff of trade publications (Robertson, 2001), and former journalists (Easton, 2001). The texts that were closely examined include magazine editorials, reports based on interviews with journalists,

personal columns, analytical commentaries, and photographs and graphic illustrations accompanying written stories. Within these texts, quotes from sources, headlines of stories, and captions to the photographs were also analyzed.

Research Questions

What words and phrases do reporters use to describe their work in the midst of September 11's crisis? Who are the different actors—individual journalists, specific news technologies, and news institutions—that trade media explicitly name as deserving of praise or censure? What topics and issues did writers emphasize, address, or neglect in their assessments of the media's effectiveness in covering September 11's crisis? How did the visual illustrations support, complement, or contradict the written discourse of the essays? How are the individuals featured in photographs of September 11 portrayed? These questions probing the textual practices of trade media stories guided this article's elaboration of recurring thematic patterns and the larger symbolic meanings of words and images; however, at certain relevant points, the analysis also considers the intertextual relations between journalism's internal trade media and its external news representations of September 11 in mainstream media (e.g., on CNN and in *Newsweek*). I do not claim that the essays analyzed here represent a random sample or an exhaustive compilation of the trade press archive. My intent in this article is not to argue that trade media discourse can faithfully represent all the intricacies of journalists' interpretations but to extract selectively the dominant discourses that underlie journalists' recollections of September 11 for their professional peers.

Roadmap to the Article

The first section of the article undertakes two analytical tasks. I analyze the metaphors that authors of essays and the journalists they interview invoke to describe the work of news production on and immediately after September 11. I then examine the modes of professional labor that reporters prioritize and authors praise in their memories of how journalism unfolded during the crisis. The second section explores how trade media's evaluative discourses on early news coverage, news technologies, professional responsibilities, and international news contributed to this community's construction of its interpretive boundaries. The concluding section considers the implications of my analysis for questions of nationalism, gender, and journalists' collective identities.

Masculine Visions of Journalism: Military Metaphors, Eyewitness Accounts, and Male Healers

Acting Tough and Risking Danger: Journalists as Soldiers and Heroes

Predominantly, journalists' narrative renderings of September 11 in trade publications reveal a vision of journalism as a profession whose practices are intertwined with the military's modes of combat and conflict. The cultural canvas of journalism in these first-person narrative accounts is brushed with symbolic colors that mirror the epistemology of war and endorse heroic models of masculine bravery. Soon after September 11, a number of stories focus on journalists' sense of surprise and shock when they first became conscious of the horrific news of the attacks. For example, one editor of a midwestern newspaper writes that he watched the airplanes colliding with the towers of the World Trade Center on his television screen the morning of September 11 when he was getting dressed for work. Readers learn that his "adrenaline kicked in when he realized that the biggest story of his life was unfolding. . . . Grabbing a telephone, he called his heavy-hitters" (Robertson, 2001, p. 18). Echoing this editor's reaction, the proud wife of one Associated Press photographer muses that when her husband called her after a narrow escape at ground zero, she could sense that he was immersed in the emotional whirlpool of a "battlefield high" (Robertson, 2001, p. 19).

Replaying anthropology's historical fascination for the adventurous Western male's travel to remote Third World locations, many journalists' early accounts highlight their risky passage toward the World Trade Center on September 11. Journalists employ a vocabulary that draws on popular-culture representations of superheroes, tough war veterans, and ubiquitous "good" cops to authenticate their graphic descriptions of triumphal arrival at their destination on that day. In Hollywood's staple diet of war films and television's endless supply of crime dramas, brave and strong men often narrate their grisly memories of how they pulled off risky entries into dangerous enemy territory. For instance, one television news photographer recounts that he "barreled down to Canal Road where traffic was backed up . . . hence, he decided to drive down the wrong side of the road . . . then he roared down George Washington Parkway at 85 miles an hour when a police officer stopped him" (Wenner, 2001, p. 32). A *Washington Post* reporter's description of traveling to ground zero also derives its symbolic force from pervasive images of soldiers getting ready in haste for the dangerous confrontation that lies ahead. Recreating the tense moments before he set out for work that day, this reporter uses pithy word bites to convey his mental inventory of the essential "war" equipment he would need the morning of the disaster—"boots, jeans, cash . . . no notebook damn it . . . all right, index cards"—and just as the reader's tension mounts, he barely remembers to get his binoculars and flashlight (Gellman, 2001, p. 23).

In the November issue of *RTNDA Communicator*, a WABC reporter's breathless and surprisingly precise rendering of his commute to the World Trade Center that morning beckons readers to inhabit the subject position of a viewer who has familiar-

ity with scenes of police car chases on television: “It was total chaos trying to drive through midtown Manhattan. We made the trip, about 85 blocks in 22 minutes. We were careening through the streets in an unmarked Ford Explorer—driving around cars, through intersections” (Moffet, 2001, pp. 7-8). More script resurrecting the archetype of the intrepid soldier peppers these stories, including an account of one entrepreneurial reporter who recalls his sense of victory when he paid a yachtsman \$1,000 to get across the Hudson River.

Masculine discourses of frantic and reckless activity, fatigue, and danger animate vividly journalists’ detailed stories about organizing and accomplishing their work on the day of September 11. The failure of unreliable equipment and technology, a frustrating obstacle that hinders journalists’ attempts to file their stories, emerges as a distinctive theme in some of these fraught memories. Two television reporters for WABC describe their hurried search for a telephone and their serendipitous discovery of a working phone line in a construction trailer (Moffet, 2001). Several reporters lament the fickle betrayal of their cell phones. Three paragraphs of one story in *RTNDA Communicator* capture the panicked emotions of a WNBC producer’s frenzied search to find an open phone line. Other journalists harness directly the semantics of war to explain the challenges and difficulties they endured that day. One editor of a newspaper reminisces, “I wondered, what is our portal into the story? How do we attack it?” (Ricchiardi, 2001a, p. 29) and a reporter comments, “Frustrated and perspiring, I pumped my hunches into the computer” (Ricchiardi, 2001a, p. 30). A student reporter for a campus newspaper writes, “I kept pounding my hunches into the hostile territory of the Internet—too many false leads” (“Horned Frog,” 2001). Praising journalists’ calm and composure, one writer argues that we knew we had to “report the hell out of a story” (Ricchiardi, 2001a, p. 30), and another remarks that when he found a focus for the story, he “zeroed in with laser beam precision” (Ricchiardi, 2001a, p. 30).

Writers for these publications use phrases such as *commanding lieutenants* and *rallying the troops* to describe newspaper editors’ efforts to communicate with their staff on September 11. One newspaper’s attempt to cope with the speed of storytelling on that day is labeled a *rapid fire response*, and reporters with many years of professional experience are referred to as *veterans*. Conflating seamlessly the grim ambience at her workplace with the carnage at ground zero, one editor at *The Washington Post* recalls, “Our conference room was a ghoulish exhibit site for bloody images of terror and scenes of mass destruction” (Ricchiardi, 2001a, p. 31).

The military and sport metaphors that are scattered throughout journalists’ memories of their work on September 11 have larger implications for the collective identity of the profession and eventually for the stories that appear on our television screens and newspapers. Cognitive linguist Lakoff (1996) argues that the informal categories individuals and institutions rely on to make sense of their everyday experiences reveal larger stories about the culture’s moral order; that is, our routine “common sense” language emerges as a hegemonic manifestation of the underlying hierarchical power relations that we accept, legitimize, or reject. Noting that moral systems and their emerging social and political realities unfold and gain solidity through the quotidian metaphors and analogies we employ, Lakoff writes, “Much of moral reasoning is met-

aphorical reasoning” (p. 5). In Lakoff’s view, the representational choices we veer toward are not merely random words and images but deeply structuring mechanisms for how we think about, organize, and construct reality. Metaphors ultimately “sanction actions, justify inferences, and help us set goals” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 142).

Journalists’ choices of metaphors to describe their work when they address their peers illustrate how these individuals may subconsciously align their identities and their labor with the patriotic mission of the military. Such a deeply embedded nationalist imagining of the profession during times of international crises may be more problematic than concerns that have been expressed regarding the practice of physically “embedding” journalists within the military during the United States’ recent incursion in Iraq. Reporters’ and editors’ symbolic linking of their tasks and activities with warfare can also be traced to the canonic status accorded to “patriotic” war reporting in journalism’s educational apparatus and the celebrated enshrining of war correspondents in histories of journalism. Journalists’ subtle reproduction of their nationalist identities in these discourses points to the ways in which the culture of the military-industrial complex in the United States seeps into the lives of citizens and workers. As Meyerowitz (2001) demonstrates in her historical research, even progressive movements have not been immune from deploying the semiotics of war in pursuit of their objectives. During the height of the Cold War in the 1950s, the public campaigns of the women’s movement and the movement for sexual freedom reproduced the ideological frames of conflict, war, and national superiority in making demands for legal reforms and equal rights.

Moreover, such an inner conceptualization of journalistic work as soldierlike labor that is executed in service of the nation has consequences for the representations that journalists produce. Breaking news coverage framed the terrorist attacks unequivocally as an act of war. In CNN’s breaking news of September 11, for instance, certain keywords were used frequently to frame and contextualize events in New York. In Reynolds and Barnett’s (2003) research on the first 12 hours of CNN’s television coverage, they found that the word *war* was used 234 times to describe the attacks and that the United States was more frequently referred to as *America* rather than as *U.S.* or *United States*. Enumerating the symbolic frames that reinforced U.S. nationalism, Reynolds and Barnett argue that the patriotic war theme also arose more implicitly through the prominent coverage given to officials and experts who compared the attacks on the World Trade Center to Pearl Harbor (Reynolds & Barnett, 2003).

Journalism, Fieldwork, and Masculine Labor

The imagination of journalism as a masculine profession also emerges in a more subtle fashion when journalists’ reports focus exclusively on the perils of fieldwork at ground zero in recounting the process of news production. Many of these early accounts elevate the masculine vigor of the empirical process of information gathering in the field—traveling to the physical location, wrestling with equipment, making detailed observations, and interviewing sources—over the more sedentary, less visi-

ble, and feminized tasks of writing, editorial framing, editing, and designing stories and visual elements (Fisher, 2001; Geisler, 2001; Moffet, 2001; Spangler, 2001). Privileging the excitement of proximity and the sanctity of risking danger to secure personal and firsthand observations, the *Columbia Journalism Review's* special 40th anniversary issue carries a cover story titled "Witness," which begins with a sensational account of a former journalist's brush with terror and confusion at ground zero on September 11 (Spangler, 2001). The first lead paragraph of Spangler's (2001) narrative of witnessing is splashed in large type across a gripping visual image, a black and white photograph spread across two pages that documents vividly the panicked faces of people fleeing the site of ground zero. Spangler's first-person script invites readers to experience the tumultuous moments of his morning on the day when tragedy struck:

I was outside P.S. 89 tailing a city council candidate on election day when I heard the plane. It made a heavy rasping sound. That was at 8:46 a.m. I watched it fly above my head and into the north side of WTC 1. I could see only smoke and a hole. I started running toward it. It took me perhaps two minutes to get to the great square off Church Street that was then still bounded by those two massive towers. (pp. 6-7)

In the rest of the story, Spangler (2001) uses the momentum of a chronological narrative structure (9:00 a.m., 9:21 a.m., 10:00 a.m., etc.) to describe his difficult passage through the crowds of running people, debris, and police forces. Toward the end of his essay, he reveals that he managed to carry home with him three souvenirs—a memo, a report, and a photograph—from the site. Reflecting on the perception of journalists as greedy opportunists who profit from disaster, Spangler writes that a journalist's impulse to rush to location does not spring from the vulture syndrome but from the higher goals of obtaining exhaustive and accurate information: "I cannot altogether refute this charge. I felt an intense passion in those hours, an exaltation. . . . All details became iconic and crucial. I tried to record everything" (p. 9). Asserting the necessity of "being there" as a sacred prerequisite for uncovering the truth, Reider (2002), the editor of *American Journalism Review*, notes that journalists who are committed to the higher values of their profession often risk their lives to be present at the sites of conflict and danger. The emphasis in these representations of journalistic work on physical presence and on the process of gathering news in the field also permeates popular-culture narratives of heroic and principled reporters. Filmic narratives like *All the President's Men* (1976) and *Pelican Brief* (1993) have capitalized on the dramatic appeal of reporters venturing into dangerous locations to observe events and interview sources rather than show their struggles with more sedentary yet mentally challenging tasks (aside from the melodrama of writer's block), such as analyzing data, framing stories, positioning images, or providing historical, political, and economic context for events.

On one hand, such narratives of journalists being there to witness the ravages of the attacks solidifies the construction of journalists' professional identities as hard-working and brave entrepreneurs, but on the other hand, these very same narratives

may also serve a more hidden collective therapeutic function. Zelizer (2002) defines the experience of “bearing witness” as a physical and emotional act that “brings individuals together on their way to collective recovery” and as a cathartic expression that “moves individuals from the personal act of ‘seeing’ to the adoption of a public stance by which they become part of a collective working through trauma together” (p. 52). Analyzing the social meanings of the abundant photographs of ground zero that saturated the public sphere after September 11, Zelizer argues that poignant images of public crises point to a function of journalism’s texts that goes well beyond the utilitarian and instrumental purpose of providing news: “Photography is well suited to take individuals and collectives on the journey to a post-traumatic space. . . . Frozen images of the still photographic visual record are a helpful way of mobilizing a collective’s post-traumatic response” (p. 49). Although Zelizer’s analysis of news images of September 11 and World War II refers to the role that visual testimonies of bearing witness play within the larger political context of a nation’s citizenry, personal narratives of media professionals rushing to witness Ground Zero may also work as a collective inner discourse for journalists to make sense of the enormous challenges that war and terrorism can pose for news production.

Healing Power of Male Vulnerability

Although many personal narratives in trade publications maneuver journalism into the discursive fabric of traditional masculine authority, a more subdued strain of commentary links the profession to feminized metaphors of nurturing and caring. Such positive emotional qualities of vulnerability, care, and concern are, however, mapped predominantly onto celebrity male anchors rather than onto female anchors with similar professional reputations. Borrowing analogies from the semiotic spheres of religion and spirituality, *American Journalism Review* portrays male journalists as trustworthy, prophetlike leaders who possess the power to heal their flock, unlike bumbling and incompetent politicians: “We [journalists and their audiences] counted on Peter, Tom, and Dan to be steady and straight, qualities that President Bush, in his disturbing darting around the country failed to communicate” (Fisher, 2001, p. 18). Fellow journalists around the nation—the most likely readers of this reputable publication—are also invited to empathize with these strong and patriotic messengers of tragedy, who were so moved that they dared to reveal their well-concealed emotions:

We watched Peter Jennings’ beard grow, and we are somehow reassured that he did not shave, that through the morning, afternoon, evening, and on into the night, he did not leave the desk, that he confided in us his uncertainties, that he shared the confusions of each hour. He grew more pale and more vulnerable, as if he knew that we needed him to be human, so that we could be together. We saw Tom Brokaw grow teary, we saw him put on his glasses (Fisher, 2001, p. 18).

Similarly, although NBC’s Katie Couric and local female anchor Kim Hendrix earn brief praise from the author of another essay, most of the positive endorsement for

calming the nation is reserved for male figures: Dan Rather, Peter Jennings, Matt Lauer, Tom Brokaw, and a few other local male anchors (Geisler, 2001).

Foregrounding the novelty of male anchors sharing their vulnerability on screen, Tugend (2001) devotes an entire paragraph to CBS anchor Dan Rather's tearful outburst on the *Late Night With David Letterman* show when he attempted to explain the reasons for the terrorist attacks. Cooper (2001) praises briefly CNN's Judy Woodruff for selflessly narrating news with "hair awry and make-up long gone" (p. 10) and NBC's Katie Couric for her honest and embarrassed confession about the *Today* show's history of covering trivia. However, even Cooper reserves her most warm and lengthy accolades for Dan Rather's sentimental patriotism:

Here was Dan Rather, standing in, it seemed, for countless less visible colleagues when, during a late night talk show interview, his controlled passion for the story he felt destined to cover gave way to tears of anguish. No one doubted for a moment he'd be back tomorrow, tight-jawed as ever, "reporting on part of our world." (p. 10)

Women anchors are thus not accorded an equal status with male anchors for playing their heroic part in community and national healing. Furthermore, when television anchors receive criticism for their poor performance, a female anchor is selected as an example of how some anchors transgressed professional boundaries on September 11. Fisher (2001) describes ABC's Diane Sawyer's emotional excess on September 11 as a regrettable exception to the otherwise stellar honesty of television networks: "But for an over-the-top wallop of saccharine over-writing in a breathless Diane Sawyer narration, the networks stuck to what was known, told it straight, and stripped away the artifice" (p. 18). Although she does not directly address the contributions of female television anchors, Overholser (2002), a former editor of the *Des Moines Register*, raises a similar question about the subtle marginalization of women journalists' contributions in her column "After 9/11: Where Are the Voices of Women?" She points out that despite the seemingly visible power of a handful of women in leadership positions in the newspaper and television industries, women's voices, achievements, and capabilities have yet to receive appropriate recognition in a field that has turned into a "pink ghetto."

The subtle marginalization of women journalists juxtaposed with the praise for male anchors as role models for strong and controlled yet sensitive journalism—men who balance their tasks as emotional messengers of tragedy and rational disseminators of information—highlights the social construction of hegemonic masculinity within the profession during times of national crises. Hegemonic masculinity refers to the superficial shifts and accommodations that take place within the terrain of traditional masculinity when patriarchal structures confront challenges to their authority (Connell, 1995; Hanke, 1990; Trujillo, 1991; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2000). Hanke (1990) argues that the boundaries of traditional masculinity in the contemporary West remain relatively intact, although it may appear that gender hierarchies are genuinely being eroded. He writes that media manifestations of strong men's occasional and selective expressions of feminine sensitivity during crises only strengthen and reinforce the

value system of traditional masculinity (Hanke, 1990). Praise for male anchors' spontaneous outbursts of sadness and vulnerability during the crisis of September 11 points to the cultural production of hegemonic masculinity as a source for articulating the exemplary qualities of good journalism. Although these celebrity men exhibit feminine qualities momentarily—qualities they had not displayed earlier—they return quickly to their calm and composed straight White male identities and thus to the important mission of delivering the news.

Analysis of journalism's everyday practices—reporting on site, news gathering, and anchoring—in the immediate aftermath of September 11 in trade media reveals the projection of a militarized and masculine vision of professional identity. The next section of analysis focuses on essays that assess the efficacy of news technologies and media organizations in delivering timely and comprehensive news rather than journalists' private and public practices of labor. This section will explore how trade media critics' evaluations of news organizations' successes and failures contribute to the construction of a collective identity for the profession.

Measuring Journalism's Performance: Patriotism, Technology, and Orientalism

Glowing Approval for Journalism's Early Efforts: News Regains Legitimacy During Crises

Reflecting the wider post-September 11 climate in which state officials and law enforcement workers received an outpouring of praise for their efforts, early commentaries in trade publications award glowing approval for the media's early performance in covering Ground Zero. One headline declares that print coverage of the unprecedented tragedy of September 11 showcases how national newspapers rose to meet the most challenging standards: "Under wrenching circumstances, the American news media covered the horrific events of September 11 impressively and valiantly" (Fisher, 2001, p. 18). A number of images of newspapers' front pages dated September 12 decorate the right and left margins of the text of the essay—these illustrations with bold headlines and pictures of exploding towers renew the tense climate of anxiety and dread that prevailed on September 11. Hennessy's (2001) essay celebrates the innovative work of small hometown dailies (Shreveport, Louisiana; Mesa, Arizona; Fayetteville, North Carolina; Portland, Maine; and Boca Raton, Florida) whose staff pursued local angles to national stories on hate crimes, security concerns, and anthrax scares.

Taking a similar approach, authors of *Columbia Journalism Review's* summary of 10 mid-sized regional newspapers' local coverage argue that September 11 boosted journalists' morale as news workers:

Across the land, a new sense of vigor and purpose is spurring regional dailies since September 11. . . . No matter whom we spoke to, one theme repeatedly emerged: September

11 re-energized journalists and re-instilled in them the sense that what they do matters. (Guiffo & Lipton, 2002, p. 44)

On the Poynter Institute's September 12, 2001, Web site, a number of journalists who were invited to act as "tough graders" of media reports on September 11 express admiration for their colleagues' work. McBride, a religion and ethics reporter for *The Spokesman-Review*, compliments journalists for narrating sensitive stories of grief and for minimizing backlash against innocent Arabs: "I don't think it is an overstatement to say that American journalism was at its finest yesterday (Steele, 2001).

Continuing to play the role of cheerleader for her peers while deflecting attention from print toward television news, one writer urges her colleagues in broadcast journalism to offer a round of applause for television's powerful pictures: "On September 11, 2001, when life in the United States was at its worst, broadcast journalism was at its best. The story was chaotic, the storytellers were calm" (Geisler, 2001). This writer asserts that decision makers in television news organizations consistently disavowed bottom-line profit goals—abandoned competitive breaking news strategies and rejected commercials—to pursue the more noble and supportive task of bringing communities together. Citing data that demonstrated American citizens' positive assessment of the news media, the writer of another essay titled "The Press Shines at a Dark Moment" states that a mid-November poll "showed a major increase in favorable opinions of the press for accuracy of reporting, professionalism, morality, patriotism, and caring about the people it covers" (Kohut, 2002, p. 54).

Quill magazine, the official newsletter of the Society of Professional Journalists, exalts the professional skills of the staff of the Associated Press (winner of the Sigma Delta Chi Award for deadline reporting) for supplying most of the on-site ground zero news reports and images that saturated local newspapers across the country ("Deadline Reporting, 2002). Finally, Hoyt, the executive editor of *Columbia Journalism Review*, points to news coverage of September 11 as irrefutable evidence that the work of journalism is indispensable to build a healthy democratic public sphere:

At a time when the media are held in low esteem, journalists rarely get the credit they deserve as a pillar of the republic. That pillar held up well after the towers collapsed. In the days following the attacks, the U.S. press rose to its full stature, informing the country when the information was so needed. (Hoyt, 2001, p. 4)

Hoyt's positive references to the resurgence of respect for the news media and other authors' comments on the reenergizing of journalism in post-September 11 America suggest that September 11's tragedy gave the profession and its members a renewed sense of legitimacy and authority, attributes of professional identity that have suffered erosion since the mid-'80s because of economic and social trends. Newspaper circulations have steadily declined since 1984, with the steepest declines occurring in the mid- to late '90s, the period prior to September 11, 2001 (Sutel, 2005).

Although television news has fared better than the newspaper industry in the last decade, the networks have raced to offer more lifestyle and entertainment news to off-

set audiences' diminishing appetite for traditional hard news. Nightly news suffered the worst declines since 1980 during the past decade, yet ratings peaked slightly in 2001 to fall again in 2002 and 2003 ("State of the News Media 2004," n.d.). Although a host of complex factors, including the proliferation of cable channels, changes in work patterns and commuting, attrition in families' leisure time, and changing tastes for news may account for traditional journalism's decreasing prestige, journalists themselves have also reported lower morale because of economic pressures, the increasing shallowness of news, and eroding confidence in the public's abilities to comprehend hard news ("State of the News Media 2004," n.d.). Crises such as September 11, the Gulf War, or the Kennedy assassination, which provoke audiences to seek out traditional news, can thus bolster journalists' identities as compelling storytellers of hard-hitting reality (Zelizer, 1992).

Old Technology Is Gold Technology: Print Journalism Wins the Prize for Excellence

Although journalists construct a cohesive identity based in professional pride for the rising currency of news during political tragedies, my analysis of writers' critical assessments of the media's performance also shows that this community's collective identity can be fragmented by struggles among competing news technologies to establish superiority. Trade-media debates on the efficiency of print (newspapers), broadcast (television and radio), and online journalism ultimately award the prize for excellence to the old-fashioned technology of print media for disseminating accurate, timely, and firsthand news about September 11, with television news receiving a close second place and online news the last place.

Such September 11-related trade media discourses that construct professional identities based in competing technologies—discourses that created fissures within the community—have prior antecedents in other crises. The Gulf War, for instance, marked the ascendancy of television over print and the superior capacity of cable networks like CNN to provide 24-hr live coverage with the use of satellite-fed images and stories. In her analysis of journalists' commentary on media technologies, Zelizer (1992) notes that CNN's prestige during the Gulf War was also linked strongly to the war reporting of CNN's star correspondent and archetypal figure, Peter Arnett. Arnett was often shown on CNN standing next to satellite technology, thus humanizing impersonal instruments of transmission and establishing the journalist's mastery of new technological advances. Since the Gulf War, a number of news organizations, television networks, and CNN have invested in the production of online news. September 11 was the first major critical incident after the Gulf War to test the Internet's capability as a channel for news delivery in the United States.

How did the competitive boundaries within journalism's collective identity unfold along the axis of different media technologies? Fisher (2001), a writer for *American Journalism Review*, dismisses outright the ability of the oldest broadcast technology, mainstream radio (with the exception of National Public Radio), to function as a medium of news during crises of the magnitude of September 11. He categorizes the

Internet, the most recent news medium, as a juvenile and immature rookie whose inadequate performance suggests that new media technology could not compete with the older and more reliable technology of television:

The day America joined the rest of the world in daily life with terror and death was also a test for the newest of media, the Internet and its myriad news sites. For the most part, the medium showed that it is simply not ready for prime time. Through no fault of programmers, most web sites were just not available throughout the first day, and those that were could not compete with the instant video and non-stop updates on TV. (p. 19)

Although this *Washington Post* columnist concedes that television news maintained its supremacy as audiences' preferred choice of news technology the day of September 11, he also insists that it was old-fashioned print media that brought interpretive complexity and clarity to readers in the following days:

By the dawn of the day after, however, it was clear that the new-media revolution would be neither televised nor streamed. It was left to the nation's newspapers. . . . From the banner headlines to the gut-wrenching photographs . . . papers delivered page upon page of stories that brought readers the news, the background, the context. (p. 19)

Reinforcing Fisher's assessment of the Internet's failure as a dependable medium, the writer of another report, titled aptly "The Web Fails First Big Test," also confirms that online news had to accept defeat from television: "When the unexpected met the unimaginable in Tuesday's terrorist attacks, newspaper Web sites were no match for the numbing pictures of the catastrophe broadcast on TV" (Robins, 2001, p. 4). A Poynter story headlined "Overloaded Internet Fails Info-Starved Americans" (Wendland, 2001) castigates online news portals for their lackluster performance during the crisis of September 11 when a large number of first-time users, who had hitherto avoided Internet news channels, logged on to get the latest news. Journalists' discourses on technology and September 11 reveal that although television journalists maintained their winning position for high-quality breaking news coverage, in contrast to the Gulf War, they had to share the arena of success with their counterparts in print journalism.

Ultimately, though, it is newspaper journalism that wins the high ground for superb professional practice that can be achieved through the gathering of primary data in distant locations even in the face of danger. Print journalists' consolidation of their superior position in the hierarchy of news technologies takes place through the figure of Daniel Pearl. Unlike in the Gulf War, the archetypal male figure in the representational terrain of September 11 in trade media was hence not conjoined to television technology. After his unexpected kidnapping and death in Pakistan, newspaper journalist Pearl, a staff writer for the *Wall Street Journal*, was commemorated in *American Journalism Review* and *Quill* magazine more than any others as a heroic symbol of excellent journalism (O'Brien, 2002; Reider, 2002). Similarly, on the South Asian Journalists Association's Web site (www.saja.org), Pearl's colleagues and friends praise him for his quiet, persistent, thorough, and behind-the-scenes style of working, a profes-

sional style that is typically associated with the traditions of old-fashioned print reporting. In the April 2002 issues of trade magazines, full-page advertisements sponsored by the Committee to Protect Journalists express “heartfelt condolences” to Pearl’s family and his colleagues at the *Wall Street Journal*. One advertisement, featuring a passport-size image of a gently smiling Pearl, mourns the loss of a skilled and ethical journalist: “Danny was skeptical, critical, and courageous in his reporting. He believed firmly in the truth, and he died searching for it.”

Teaching Important Professional Lessons: Addressing Journalists as a Learning Community

Attempting to play a similar role to journals in law and medicine—the educational role of helping professionals stay up-to-date with current issues in their fields—journalism’s trade media also embrace the pedagogic task of examining the profession’s ongoing struggles in covering crises so readers can learn useful lessons (Eason, 1986; Zelizer, 1992). Taking on a more analytical and didactic tone (unlike reports that recounted journalists’ early work in covering September 11), these long essays construct journalists’ identities as vigilant pupils who should monitor current developments surrounding crises in their profession so they can continually improve their craft.

Helping readers understand how the news media coped with the unexpected onslaught of anthrax threats in 2001, Ricchiardi (2001b) asks at the beginning of her essay, “As they struggled to cover the bio-terror scare, the news media had no precedents, no blueprints. Neither did their often-disagreeing sources. Did news outlets keep their audiences informed without unduly heightening fear?” (p. 18). At the end of this extended article, based in interviews with journalists, scholars, and political commentators, Ricchiardi concludes that the profession fared quite well in reporting on the new frontier of bio-terrorism, even though journalists themselves were targets of these attacks. Rejecting the patriotic flavor of early reports for a more cautious and scientific approach, Ricchiardi’s essay ensures that her readers can construct their identities as judicious and competent news professionals.

Adopting a sharper tone, other essays urge members of this interpretive community to remember the profession’s avowed ethical mandate to serve as a watchdog of democracy and as a channel of unbiased and enlightening information for citizens. Easton’s (2002) essay lamenting the Bush administration’s strict controls on military information urges journalists to call on their identities as careful critics, not partners or advocates, of the government during war. Warning journalists about Donald Rumsfeld’s deceptively “open” style of media relations, she urges Pentagon correspondents to probe and question the Department of Defense’s handouts to the press (Easton, 2002). Massing (2001) encourages talk show hosts on television to adopt an entrepreneurial identity when they interview on-camera sources to provide perspective on September 11, that is, to resist the easy route of finding elite or official talking heads, because these “exercises in enforced conformity” produce an empty “babble” of opinions (p. 23). This author writes that the endless parade of state officials and

experts on *Capital Gang* and *Crossfire*—Powell, Daschle, Lott, Hastert, Gephardt, Hawley—peddling their rapid sound bites could not educate U.S. citizens about the nuances of foreign policy or ordinary Muslims' conditions in different parts of the world. Finally, the article "Thunder on the Right," which urges journalists to be more open-minded and pay more respectful attention to the spectrum of opinions on September 11 in the right-wing press, clearly responds to conservatives' construction of journalists' identities as biased and knee-jerk liberals (Easton, 2001).

Although the above essays do point to the community's willingness to question practices that may support structures of power, the absence of certain topics indicates the limits of the community's internal interrogation of its collective identity (Eason, 1986). Although Easton (2002) and Massing (2001) find fault with the government's public relations machinery and talk show hosts, respectively, there were no critiques of the media's subtle endorsements of the government agenda or of routine cable and network news reports' active reliance on military sources. For instance, trade publications do not include any in-depth analyses of subtle patriotic television coverage that featured the American flag. In the case of newscasts, Reynolds and Barnett (2003) have argued in their research that CNN's frequent and prominent displays of military representatives whose agendas were aligned with the Bush administration rendered a military response to the terrorist attacks as a justifiable strategy.

Becoming Cosmopolitan Messengers: International News, Religion, and Visual Orientalism

The most sustained and detailed trade media discourse on the challenges that American journalism faced in the days following September 11 encourages the community—news workers, managers, and top-level executives—to shed its provincial collective identity, which had led to the neglect of the outside world, and to become cosmopolitan messengers of information on global economics and politics. These essays focus on international news and on the news media's responsibilities to educate U.S. citizens about global relations, foreign policy, and cultural diversity. Even prior to the trade media essays cited here, barely 2 weeks after the attacks of September 11, CNN's chairman Walter Isaacson declared that the news media, in search of quick profits, had abandoned their responsibility to inform and enlighten citizens about the complexities of the United States' relations with the rest of the world: "I think this has been a wake-up call to the public and to all of us in the news business that there are certain things that really matter more than the latest trivial thing that can cause a ratings boost" (Rutenberg, 2001, p. 8). Other media executives and experts from CBS and MSNBC have also predicted that news sources in the United States will shed the "national fog of materialism and disinterest and avoidance" for a more serious and committed approach toward foreign news coverage (Rutenberg, 2001, p. 8).

Reproducing these industry leaders' sentiments, *Columbia Journalism Review's* January-February 2002 issue features a comprehensive analysis of mainstream news media's orientation toward foreign news prior to September 11. The author of this essay, Michael Parks (2002), a former editor of *Los Angeles Times*, voices his unequiv-

ocal disapproval for the scant and intermittent international news content in U.S. media:

Simply put, most news organizations failed to cover what a substantial number of their viewers and readers believed was vitally important—the danger posed to the United States by global terrorism. . . . The reduction in international news coverage has brought complaints from policy analysts who argue that the decline fueled a new isolationism in the United States and that, as a result the country failed to exercise appropriate leadership in the world. (p. 53, 56)

Parks interviews a wide range of news directors and editors and provides a chart displaying the low number of overseas bureaus and foreign correspondents to make his case for an increase in international news coverage in many areas, including politics, the environment, health and disease, food shortage, and child labor. Reminding journalists to immerse themselves in other nations' news media, a few other essays compare U.S. news coverage of the war in Afghanistan with news coverage of the same war in the Middle East, Britain, Pakistan, Canada, and India (Hickey, 2002; Kennedy, 2002; Krimsby, 2002; Zednik, 2002).

Taking on a more sensitive topic, two authors assess the quality of television, radio, and newspaper coverage of religious fundamentalism and Middle Eastern and Asian citizens' rising hostility toward the U.S. (McClellan, 2001; Tugend, 2001). Tugend (2001) praises National Public Radio and ABC for their balanced reporting and historical context on Muslim communities' reactions to the attacks of September 11: "NPR and ABC News excelled, media watchers and academics say, both by including a greater range of experts and avoiding stereotyping" (p. 26). Pointing out the steady improvement in U.S. news coverage of the Islamic world during the past three decades, Tugend notes that in their analyses of September 11's terrorism, media commentators have blamed Islamic religious fundamentalism for fostering deep resentment of the West whereas others have condemned U.S. foreign policy as the culprit. A shorter second essay on media coverage of Islamic nations suggests that U.S. citizens' surprised and shocked reactions to the attacks may in part be traced to the media's scarce and low-quality reporting on political events in Afghanistan and the Middle East. These reflections on religious tensions call on journalists to include the coverage of religious diversity in their interpretive community's identity as an institution that seeks to promote multiculturalism. News organizations relying on domestic U.S.-based paradigms of diversity for improving employment and content have tried to address racial difference (Mellinger, 2003), but have neglected the growing significance of religious and ethnic difference.

These essays' instructional intent to urge journalists to expand their identity's provincial boundaries is, however, undermined seriously by the headlines and by visual framing that draw on orientalist images of Muslim men and Islamic nations. Both these essays are headlined in capital letters with the dubious phrase that has dominated the coverage of September 11 in mainstream media: "Why Do They Hate Us?" For example, *Newsweek* magazine used the very same phrase in its October 15, 2001,

issue's cover page to call attention to its story on Muslims' attitudes toward the United States. Mapping hatred for America onto the Muslim male child and biologizing such hatred, the *Newsweek* cover features an intimate, close-up photograph of a young Muslim boy's face.

Ironically, the headline "Why Do They Hate Us?" in trade media essays that reflect on journalism's treatment of the Muslim world reproduces orientalist stereotypes of non-Western citizens in three ways. First, the phrase encourages journalists to assume (without subjecting themselves to a process of reasoning or research) that the global Muslim community is a vast and homogeneous mass of alien and threatening outsiders whose subjectivity can be signaled by the monolithic word *they*. Second, through its use of the word *hate*, the question reduces the complexity and variance among Muslims' attitudes toward the West—attitudes that may be calibrated along a continuum of hatred, disapproval, mild dislike, indifference, and qualified approval. The word *hate* communicates only the most extreme negative emotion. In his essay on news representations of Islam in Western media, Karim (2002) argues that one of the main problems that arises in the context of U.S. journalism's tendency to report on Islam only during global crises is the "failure to acknowledge diversity" (p. 108) in the religious beliefs and behaviors of the world's billions of Muslim citizens. Third, this phrase, which relies on the oppositional binary of *us* and *they* presumes the innocence of an *us* on the part of journalists in the United States—educated and enlightened citizens of the West who are interpellated always as vulnerable objects of hatred.

Furthermore, the large images that greet readers on the first page of these two stories on religious fundamentalism also regurgitate binary and orientalist tropes of Muslim men as subjects who are irrational and inflamed by religious rhetoric. Photographs of bearded Muslim men screaming, with their mouths open and angry eyes peering into the camera, complement the text in these stories. On one level, visual images of poor and working class bearded Muslim men dressed in long kurtas and pajamas, walking on the streets and shouting slogans, could be justified if the articles were discussing extreme religious fundamentalism in Muslim communities (even such stories presume the absence of fundamentalism among Western citizens). However, such a reductionist portrayal of Muslim men is inappropriate and arbitrary in self-reflective stories that attempt to discuss the improvements that U.S. journalists could make in their coverage of the Muslim world. The marked absence of images of U.S. newspapers or Western journalists in stories on the inadequacy of U.S. media's foreign news coverage contrasts conspicuously with many of the positive stories of U.S. journalism's successes, which showcase prominently journalists in action and newspapers' front pages. The silent erasure of the West in discourses of failure coupled with the dramatic orientalist presence of manic Muslim men diminishes the constructive intent of these stories.

Reflecting on failure in the arena of writing about a social group that has long been demonized as the "other" necessitates a more fundamental questioning of journalists' cultural, professional, religious, and political identities. An example from another part of the world illustrates a more deeply critical perspective of journalists as a profes-

sional community that must acquire basic knowledge of other cultures to achieve genuine cultural sensitivity.

In the Indian context, when faced with a similar problem of covering the Muslim world, Hindu journalists cast the journalist's identity as a student of Islam. After the horrific riots in Gujarat, India, in February 2002, when extreme right-wing Hindu fundamentalists attacked Muslims, the professional association of Indian journalists produced a flier that shows a puzzled Hindu reporter holding the Koran. The headline proclaims, "Isn't It Time You Bothered To Read This Book and Learn?" This flier portrays the Hindu journalist, a member of India's dominant religious community, as a beginner who should try to understand another religion from its primary texts instead of relying on popular-culture interpretations or on mainstream Indian history's regressive discourses on Islam. Karim (2002) writes eloquently about the need for journalists to recognize the influence of orientalism:

Collective cultural memories play a large part in our views about Islam, as do our society's fundamental myths. Recognizing the fundamentally cultural nature of journalism enables journalists to uncover and utilize the cultural tools of understanding that makes possible genuine insights into human nature. (p. 114)

Masculine Bravery, Cultural Diversity, and Professional Identity

This article approached trade media articles on September 11 as semiotic windows that provided a glimpse into how the interpretive community of U.S. journalists constituted their profession during a time of crisis. My textual analysis identifies the dominant discursive strains that shape news professionals' identities, their vision of journalistic labor, and the potential of self-reflective critiques to encourage journalists to consider the profession's shortcomings. The analysis shows that at a time when a major terrorist crisis struck the nation, undoubtedly also a time when news media acquired legitimacy and authority, journalists produced a more masculine vision of their profession that was aligned with other public discourses of heroic masculine patriotism. An idealized version of Western masculinity—the brave, rugged, tough, and rational fieldworker—surfaces as a normative construct for the heroic journalist, who can remain productive and responsive even when others may fail to function. Narrative recollections of journalistic labor on and immediately after September 11 valorize the process of data gathering versus the equally important tasks of news framing and interpretation.

Such a vision of the journalist's identity points to the male-centered frame that continues to prevail in the news industry despite women's entry into the journalism workforce. Lehrman, a writer for the Knight Foundation, a nonprofit educational and training organization, addresses the implications of journalism's male-centered mental vision for improving diversity among news workers (Lehrman, 2004). Examining the unconscious pressures in the news industry that have helped to keep newsrooms mostly White and male, even in 2004, Lehrman (2004) contemplates the qualities of the desirable journalist in her online report:

Consider the journalist every editor wants to hire. Few people any more would describe that person in terms of gender. But the most desirable characteristics in a reporter—hard-driving, independent, and aggressive—are stereotypically heterosexual male. An equally relevant skill set—compassionate, persistent, verbally talented, good at developing relationships—is not typically part of the job description. These also happen to fit a more feminine stereotype.

Deeply entrenched stereotypes of gender in the news profession, as Lehrman notes, might explain why “it has been so difficult for females to snare the political beat, become the lead writer on a big, breaking story or win a top executive spot in the editorial department.”

Journalists’ evaluations of different news media’s performances—print, television, and online news—shows that hierarchies based in media technologies fragmented their collective identity. Representatives of print media organizations argued that newspapers provided the best coverage of September 11, and Daniel Pearl’s unexpected death contributed to the profession’s early celebration of the print journalist as a symbol of the community’s unwavering dedication to bringing news to readers. Although trade press critiques of news coverage in September and October 2001 mirrored the public chorus of praise accorded to rescue and relief efforts at ground zero, authors of essays published in 2002 offered thoughtful and constructive critique of journalism’s shortcomings. Using September 11 as a critical incident, journalists urged their professional peers to be cautious about endorsing government agendas and to be vigilant of the dangers of marginalizing foreign news in a globalized world. A few trade media articles offer constructive criticism of the profession in relation to global diversity, yet the orientalist visual framing of two important essays analyzing religion and foreign news points to the limits of this interpretive community’s quest to improve U.S. journalism’s coverage of Islam.

In the end, this article’s analysis of the meanings of September 11 that circulated within the interpretive community of U.S. journalists raises questions about gender, nationalism, and journalists’ collective professional identity. Should journalists don the subjectivity of the patriotic soldier as a means to legitimize the profession’s authority during crises? How can the profession begin the process of emphasizing research, writing, and framing as tasks that are just as important as fieldwork to produce good journalism? How can visual images and headlines drawn from mainstream media hinder thoughtful and candid reflection by journalists? Although there are no easy answers to these difficult questions of journalists’ gendered identity and productive self-reflection, the profession could begin considering alternative possibilities for imagining the work of journalism.

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