

## Television Journalism During Terror Attacks

Mogensen, Kirsten

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# Television Journalism

During Terror Attacks

# Public Service

- How can journalists help society through a terror related acute national crisis that may threaten the basic structure and core values of the social system?
- The case of September 11, 2001.
- ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN, Fox News.

# Professional Norms

- Professional ethics discusses moral solutions to professional problems. Janik (1994):
- 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...

# Methods

- Personal interviews with 37 journalists that covered the events for ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, FOX News and MSNBC.
- Content analysis of the coverage the first 24 hours.



# First aid to audience members

- **Rational thinking** is supported by timely, accurate information; admission of and promptly correction of mistakes; explanation of conditions regarding production of the coverage; involvement of the audience.



**Senses** can be relieved by downplaying of sensation.

**Feelings** can be soothed with the help of comfort and positive news stories.

**Security** is improved by national security considerations.

The figure is inspired by C.G. Jung (Jacobi 1987).

# Information as soon as possible



Honesty is the best policy





# We're all in this together



# We cannot show emotion



# Reassurance is a by-product of journalism



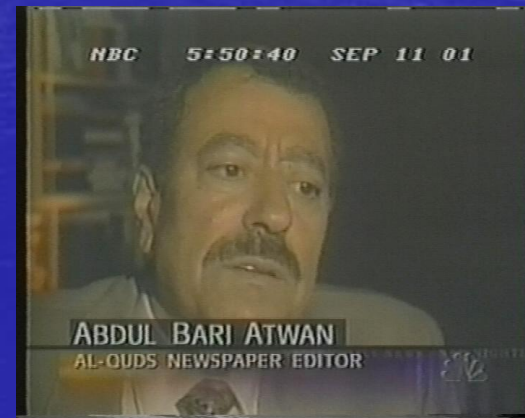
# Sensationalism the normal; downplay the sensational



# Avoid stereotypes



# Avoid *national* sources with extremist views



# Find the good among the bad

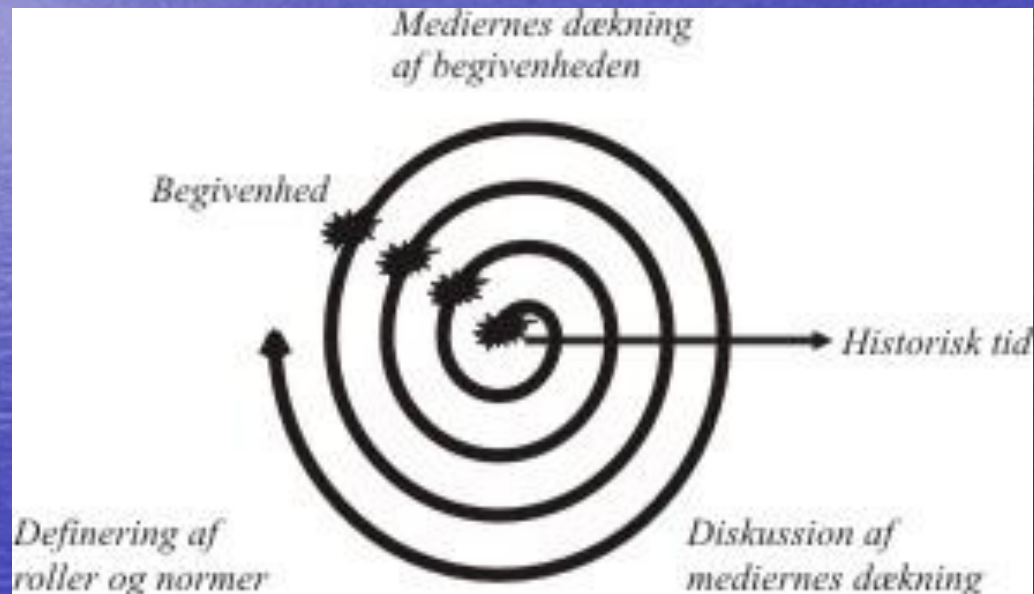


# Journalism is a public service





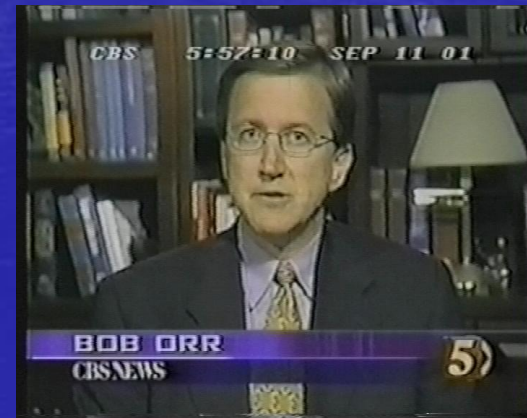
# Development of professional norms



# Viewers' satisfaction?

- 9 out of 10 watched the coverage on television.
- Most were satisfied with the coverage.
- Praise: Accuracy, immediacy, commitment to continuous coverage, professionalism of anchors, video footage.
- Complaints: Repetition of information and pictures, too sensational.
- (WestGroup Research 2001).

# Watchdog for democracy

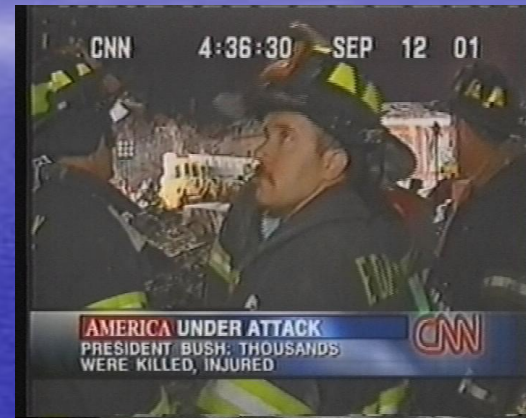


# Moral reasoning



# Government officials as sources

- National leadership
- Rescue workers



# Respect for national security

