

Media and Psychology Can Partner to Counter Terrorism

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Abstract

How can the media best report terrorist incidents responsibly without becoming a tool of the perpetrators to spread terror more widely? Surely the goal of a free press is to accurately and objectively report news of important events to as large an audience as possible. Yet in covering the wrenching event of 9/11/01, journalists were deeply aware that the tone of their coverage was important in shaping public reactions. This article briefly pulls together relevant behavioral research on the impact of journalism on the public psyche, as well as what we still need to know about this process---including such concepts as repetition, context, vulnerability, control, self-esteem, and stress.

For Americans, terrorism (Cordesman, 2002; Hoffman, 1998) used to be overseas, or in Mexico. Oklahoma City changed all that when a disaffected American bombed the Murray Federal Building there. Now terrorism laces tangibly through these times and through this country, most recently in epicenters like New York City and Washington, DC (Hodge & Rose, 2001; Prados, 2002; Talbott & Chanda, 2001). The level of media exposure to reports on terrorism has been associated with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms, especially for those somehow directly affected (Gurwitch, Sitterle, Young, Pfefferbaum, 2002; Pfefferbaum, Call & Sconzo, 1999; Pfefferbaum, Gurwitch, McDonald, Leftwich, Sconzo, Messenbaugh & Schultz, 2000; Pfefferbaum, Nixon, Tivis, Doughty, Pynoos, Gurwitch, & Foy, 2001; Pfefferbaum, Nixon, Tucker, Tivis, Moore, Gurwitch, Pynoos, & Geis, 1999; Pfefferbaum, Seale, McDonald, Brandt, Rainwater, Maynard, Meierhoefer, & Miller, 2000).

The tendrils of terror, though, reach farther than these American epicenters (LeShan, 2002; Scurfield, 2002). The media and other communication channels indirectly tune people outside the epicenters into a taste of the terror that epicenter inhabitants experience directly (Morgan, 2001; Nacos, 1996). The media may purvey terror, unwittingly facilitating the spread of this psychological warfare, as well as escalating the psychological toll on victims and surviving family members and friends (Gurwith et al., 2002; Shaw, 2003).

Psychology and Media Exposure

Terrorism, like the evening or morning newspaper, is delivered in common people's living rooms and on their front doorsteps. For instance, the constant mass media barrage made intimate for everyone the barbaric acts of 11 September 2001 (Halliday, 2001). These specific terrorist atrocities occurred not only in New York City, at the Pentagon, and in a Pennsylvania farmer's field, but the media also conveyed them into viewer's homes, offices, public places, and

methods of transport. Distal viewers came closer by viewing media images. And, images of these atrocities continued to occur and reoccur in distal locales, although the actual terrorism sites had been terror-free ever since the first and only instance. Ironically, the media invaded the “safe” places of home and hearth with terror-producing images.

Some research on violence in an American high school (Curry, 2002) distinguished between emotional and distal proximity to either the material or human losses of terrorism. Distal proximity predicted posttraumatic distress levels of hyperarousal, intrusive images, and avoidance. Controlling for distal proximity, emotional proximity predicted the peritrauma response and alexithymia. In other words, after nullifying the ubiquitous adverse effects of physical proximity to the event, those students who were emotionally involved via connectedness to school, victims, or the perpetrators, showed the greatest distress.

Other research (Thaet, Abed, & Vostanis, 2002) of children subjected to the Al Aqsa Intifada revealed distinctly different responses in children proximal to the bombardment and in those exposed through the media and adults’ reports. Although PTSD was associated with direct exposure, anticipatory anxiety and cognitive expressions of distress characterized the children indirectly exposed. So, although levels of distress may be different, media exposure, even though indirect, appears to produce adverse psychological experiences, especially for those with some personal stake in the outcome.

In the Washington, DC area the same reverberations from the epicenter occurred with the immediately subsequent anthrax scare and, a year later, with the sniper spree. Such pervasive trauma, like the sniper scare, can dramatically increase media watching (Norwood, 2003). Without the media, those outside the epicenter would surely have been less informed. The question arises whether being informed means being more armed and protected, or less so.

According to one study (Ahern, Galea, Resnick, Kilpatrick, Bucuvalas, Gold, & Vlahov, 2002) not only directness of the trauma experience itself, but also the disturbing level of the media image made a difference for Manhattanites in New York after 11 September 2001. To wit, whether or not a direct experience, those only viewing media images of buildings collapsing did not report adverse psychological symptoms, whereas those most often reporting viewing media

images of people jumping or falling from the World Trade Centers reported higher levels of posttraumatic stress symptoms. This research, though, cannot determine whether these retrospective self-reports were accurate or perhaps confabulated when those with the most intense distress might have misremembered intrusive memories as actual viewing.

Although much of this treatise examines the potential adverse impact of the media reporting on terrorists acts, instances of the media countering terrorism and its destruction form the motivation for this treatise. For instance, treatment of the Sarin Attack victims in the 1995 Tokoyo, Japan subway attack were treated effectively within 2 hours because a physician experienced with Sarin contacted authorities after seeing media images of the suffering of the victims (Schreiber, 2003). The media can do good battling terrorism.

The power of the media makes it either an aiding perpetrator or a protector (Klingman, 2002) from terrorism emanating from violent acts (see Cicirelli, 2002; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 2000; Shepperd, 2000; Smith & Wilson, 2002; Smyth, 2001; Stoppelbein & Greening, 2000). The choice is clearcut for media decision-makers (Putnam, 2002), although the means may still be murky. In addition to the responsibility to report, either the media seriously applies psychological principles to minimize rather than accentuate distress by its mode and content of news delivery, or the media itself may become an instrument of terror (Schuman, 2002).

One study (Ahern et al., 2002) in the second month after the 9/11/01 terrorist attacks examined New Yorkers' retrospective self-reports of their televiewing habits as well as symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder and depression. Those directly affected by loss (i.e., loss of friends or family members, possessions, job, or home) or those participating in the rescue/relief efforts and who also witnessed most frequently media images of the most harrowing events (i.e., people jumping or falling from the World Trade Centers) reported more depression and PTSD. No matter what amount or kind of television images, those not directly involved did report depression or PTSD. Not only the type of media image but also the interaction of the directness of the exposure and the amount of televiewing predicted psychological problems. As noted previously, the question of direction of causality still needs determination. In other words, does PTSD and/or depression result in more televiewing, or does more televiewing create PTSD?

Furthermore, media analysts have pondered whether terrorists may actually use the media to achieve their ends. To continue with the example from the 2001 terrorists' attacks, subsequent debate among media pundits hotly considered whether airing Osama Bin Laden's response to these events actually fostered communication between him and his followers elsewhere in the world (Nye, 2001; Sullivan, 2001). In the veil of news, was a free forum for future terrorist directives being supplied? Such potential diabolical reversal of cultural mechanisms into weapons of terrorist intent cautions the media against a cavalier "business as usual" attitude.

During the current Iraqi War called the Liberation of Iraq, the NBC/MSNBC firing of correspondent Peter Arnett after an Iraqi television interview in which he made disparaging personal observations about the U.S. military war plan "failure" and President George W. Bush; as an aside, Mr. Arnett was hired by the London, England Daily Mirror newspaper less than 24 hours after this firing. This swift, decisive action on American media establishment's part indicates a serious consideration of ethics as well as effectiveness. Likewise the almost simultaneous military expulsion of Fox correspondent Geraldo Rivera after he revealed troops' locale, reveals the military's sophistication of the power of the media to be used against American aims. A more cautious, conscientiously discriminating approach is emerging in this era when enemies may destructively reinvent constructive mechanisms like the news (Putnam, 2002).

The Media and Terrorism

Several realistic issues relate directly to the interplay between the media and terrorism. Freedom of the press, the profits motive, and pro-social ethics, in particular, form the framework for discussion. These realistic concerns interact and compete with each other when the media determines whether and how to use psychology to counter terrorism.

First, the First Amendment assures freedom of the press. A free press means unfettered access to all information. Governmental control and interference are forbidden. A psychological conundrum concerns enforcing this freedom versus restricting it, even for good ends such as promoting national security. Where governmental control cannot rule, perhaps good judgment and conscience can rule for the private administrators in the media (Putnam, 2002).

Second, the “business” of media concerns the psychology of the profit motive. Media is not considered non-profit nor government funded, for the most part. Do profits drive mass appeal as the only “standard” for presentation? For instance, whether PTSD sufferers are drawn to higher frequency of viewing terrorist-related media coverage or the reverse is true, does the media have a responsibility to constrain such exposure? Should the media offer such coverage which indulges and capitalizes upon the audiences’ propensities with no consideration for a different bottom line, that is, audience beneficence/disturbance rather than \$\$\$? Moreover, some researchers (e.g., Shapiro, 2002) question the social ethics of the media images presented.

The crux of drawing larger audiences by whatever means presents another ethical dilemma of another end less savory than national security---that is, profit---justifying the means. Whether an end is good or not, ethical purists still purport that the ends does not justify the means. The media could also turn to the Greeks who championed the Golden Mean, that is, everything in moderation, and that could include profit. How much profit is greed and how much necessity? Preliminary research indicates that violent programming may interfere with viewers remembering sponsors’ products (Bushman & Bonnaci, 2002). Perhaps the profits motive attached to violent televiewing is a myth. These professional values need consideration at every level of media production.

Third, and, finally, the psychology of pro-social values in the media needs consideration. A pro-social approach would advocate national security and psychological welfare above profits when these values clash. The privatization of media creates tension between profits motive and security as well as mental health concerns. Media decisions are not public although the public is directly affected. If the public votes with its pocketbook indicated by viewing minutes or by commercial sponsor product recognition for full disclosure of terrorism regardless of security or mental health consequences, what should the media do?

Can those directly involved or those with PTSD regulate their own viewing habits? Or, should the media establishment, in a benign Big Brother manner, regulate on behalf of viewers who may be impaired in their judgment and impulse control? Will short-term profits eked from “reality terror” follow the current trend of “reality romance” and “reality competition” shows? Can

those viewing minutes be attracted with material less potent for diabolical misuse? Can any reality gap (Thabet, et al., 2002) between a media image either “gentler” or “harsher” than its actuality have either, respectively, positive or adverse effects on viewers, and which viewers?

Psychology research is sparse at best on these questions. As noted above, some research (Ahern, et al., 2002) connects the amount and types of televiewing with psychological disturbance, at least for those directly affected and other research examines commercial sponsor recall interference from violence (Bushman & Bonnaci, 2002). Moreover, as noted below (Pyszczynski et al., 2000), some research indicates the necessity of balancing terrorism reporting with other more constructive news. Whether this balancing attracts more or enough viewers to be fiscally sound has yet to be determined.

Importantly, psychology (Brookhart, 2001; deJong, 2002; Gardener & Herbert, 2002) from the fields of stress and cognitive psychology may offer the media power to counter terrorism rather let terrorism use the media to promote its own ends (Gerecht, 2001; Wade & Tavis, 2000). Stress psychology particularly pertains to posttraumatic stress. Cognitive psychology areas like persuasion, influence, and message framing have great relevance for media buffering the effects of terrorism and its reporting. HOW and WHETHER the news is reported are the questions to ask. For the moment, brushing aside the HOW of reporting and focusing upon the WHETHER of reporting cuts to the chase.

Journalistic Restraint

After terrorist acts like 11 September 2001 and the Oklahoma City bombing, media reportage provides equal opportunity for trauma (Dunkel, 2002). Regardless of race, creed, nation, region, religion, lifestyle, gender, ethnic group, and occupation/profession, one voice cried in alarm to both these events. Differences melted into the background as a nation’s and the world’s unified horror took the foreground (Deschesne, Janssen & van Knippenberg, 2000).

To illustrate the power of the media, the example of the 9/11/01 terrorists attacks shows how the media molds the national conscious. In the aftermath, how many only thought mainly of New York City when thinking of the terrorist attacks? No research has really tested this hypothesis. Ground Zero, a military term indicating the concentrated center of destruction that

radiates outward in lessening ripples of devastation, could have applied appropriately to any of the three points of attack. If the media mainly had spotlighted civilian heroism and not the destructive enormity of the loss, conjecture that later recall of the terrorist attacks would probably have brought to mind a Pennsylvania farm. Only at the one year anniversary was Pennsylvania added to the media mix. Still, is the Pennsylvania drama in the air remote in the reader's thinking about terrorism? If so, then this point is well taken.

Media can truly mold the national consciousness through omission and commission. Omission undercuts the implicit import imbued into an event. Commission uses exposure to implicitly emphasize the attention worthiness of an event. For example, although audience share may determine whether a program stays on the air, the initial thrust into the spotlight appears journalistically ruled, not government or politically ruled. (Some disillusioned critics would also cry not artistically ruled either.) This journalistic truism is both the media's responsibility and its power.

Journalistic restraint can rein responsibility into bounds of taste, decency, effectiveness, and even entertainment. Although a sensitive topic like death from a terrorist act may receive air and print time, what is included and excluded in these reports can make all the difference. Good, psychologically sound media portrayals of provocative real events like 11 September 2001 do exist. Although psychological research on this point is lacking, content analysis of personal viewing and media pundit reports provides evidence this assertion is so.

For instance, in September 2001 the French documentarians Jules and Gideon Naudet serendipitously were producing a documentary of a rookie New York City firefighter who happened to be called to the terrorist disaster at the World Trade Center. Even under the immediacy of this disaster's duress Jules Naudet chose not to film people burning in the South Tower lobby of the World Trade Center. The resulting documentary *9/11* was shown by CBS on 10 March 2002 and again on the 11 September 2003 one-year anniversary when the largest viewing audience chose it over all other televised anniversary commemorations.

Audience share did vote with its pocketbook indicated by viewing minutes for immediacy and sensitivity, two aspects not mutually exclusive. If future rigorous psychological research

determined that such quality really did attract more viewers, would daily newscasters be convinced? Not only do archival and laboratory investigations need to be conducted, but also field investigations need to definitively show the effects of generalization and application. Already a connection between amount of televiewing and PTSD or depression underscores the urgency and import of these types of investigations (Ahern et al., 2002; Pfeffenbaum, et al., 1999 a, b, & c, 2000 a & b, 2001). Surely this scientific means of persuasion is but one method of proof, but one that psychologists can offer if they choose to investigate these urgent questions.

During the editing phase of their documentary *9/11* both Naudet brothers chose psychologically sound decisions. They expurgated from the final documentary most of the continuous deafening sounds of crashing "jumpers," as the firefighters called those who leapt to escape the inferno on the upper floors. Viewers of *9/11* will never forget that sound; once was enough to indelibly imprint it. Nor will the vision of destruction fade; one viewing etched deeply enough. Recall thought, that the image of property destruction was not related to adverse psychological outcome whereas the repetition of person destruction was (Ahern et al., 2002). This subsequent empirical research (Ahern et al., 2002) supports the proposed beneficence of the Naudets' sensibilities and judicious restraint.

Investigations need to determine if "reality" might move the imprinting too far into the depths of the viewer's psychology. Research needs to uncover whether accuracy, and at what level of repetition, might have engendered, to no useful end, post-traumatic stress in viewers. Viewers, remote from the site, the date, and the event, had no control to change this infamous history (Strauch, 2001). On the other hand, perhaps these trauma scenes have conflicting useful purposes. That is, for some viewers education may occur whereas other viewers might be offended. Investigations into audience characteristics and the range of purposes of such viewing need to be conducted.

Such non-exploitative "reality TV" filmmakers like Jules and Gideon Naudet deserve acknowledgment and even an award for psychologically sound media work. Likewise, in Washington, DC, Pentagon officials refused to allow any pictures of discovery and the removal of remains. Would research show that restraint in exposure can contain, perhaps even diminish, the

distress, or exacerbate it in the news recipients? Preliminary reports (Ahern et al., 2002) indicate so. On the other hand, perhaps “not knowing” might be more harmful than exposure. Surely these competing hypotheses are ripe for psychological investigation.

Restraint not only refers to the content but also to the process of communication. At a state psychology conference, some older psychology colleagues requested of this treatise’s author that media psychology attempt to influence television news programs toward simplifying their disaster pictures for older viewers. It may be that the screen bottom tickertape, the inserted windows, and the quickly sequenced images may exacerbate media trauma for older viewers. Research needs to determine if for MTV-entrained young adults, these features may make the viewing more attractive. Again, audience characteristics as well as multiple outcomes need investigation.

Yet even some young adults who are not psychologists have seconded anecdotally to this paper’s author the “distract”-iveness of ticker tape. MacLuhan’s now famous phrase “the medium is the message” can remind media to design the medium specific for the message’s audience and to scientifically test the appropriateness to minimize adverse effects and maximize benefits. Perhaps more generation specific programming like M-TV will address the audience diversity concerns. Yet the division of opinions even within age groups challenges the media to identify the tastes and preferences of its audience rather than cavalierly relying upon sometimes trite and sometimes misleading characteristics like demographics.

The face of America is changing and researchers need to supply information to news editors about what formats work best with which audience elements. A problem also is diversity within any audience. News editors need to determine which audience elements have the most priority.

Moreover, disruption of media input can actually become a stressor. In one investigation (Lewis, 2003), older New Yorkers in the Red Zone surrounding Ground Zero where the World Trade Center had collapsed reported communications breakdowns led to isolation, which was one of their most immediate problems. The media access kept some measure of loneliness at

bay. Furthermore, no access to basic information via mass media impeded dissemination of disaster relief and information.

Psychologists need to investigate and communicate to the media scientific findings on these various concerns. A systematic approach could add objectivity and definition to elevate these aesthetics more into the realm of science. The question of WHETHER to provide media coverage could benefit from science as well as the market analyses currently guiding media decisions.

The Craft of Journalism

The question of HOW to provide media coverage concerns the craft of reportage. Journalism is not hit or miss, but rather a highly crafted, designed approach to deliver news. This delivery designs to capture and hold audience attention.

One delivery method decreases the distance between topic and audience. In this approach journalists seek to heighten identification between item and reader. In some instances, this tact responsibly and effectively captures and holds interest. Investigation should determine when and how this approach works.

On the other hand, prurient ends, too, hold and capture attention. Charges of sensationalism point to identification-enhancing reportage that exacerbates trauma. The too easy route of sensationalism lacks responsibility, lacks awareness of the opportunity of the news purveyor to either elevate or debase the human condition, lacks creativity, and lacks sustaining power. This too general and too vague criticism needs to be refined by research documenting specific guidelines of efficacy and ethics.

Responsible Journalism. Responsible journalism seeks a means consistent with the end of good, effective news. What defines good? What defines effective? The following commentary is very general since the relevant empirical work allowing more specificity does not exist to my knowledge. Still, this critique may guide which questions are important to investigate.

Good journalism informs. Effective journalism clearly, concisely communicates. Does good, effective journalism also motivate? A responsible journalist must admit the power to move people to action. In this admission comes the ability to more responsibly wield this power.

Could psychologically sound journalism become a type of social support. Such support buffers from rather than increases stress. One report after 11 September 2001 (Lewis, 2003) highlighted the adversity from disruption of the social connectiveness that the media provides. Could journalism actually buffer stress?

For some direction, research findings do exist relevant to mitigation of trauma. Responses to trauma, and its eventual integration in order to return to a normal life, depend upon a number of mitigating circumstances. Research (Williams & Poijula, 2002) has pinpointed trauma determinants like the amount of social support, the trauma meaning, psychological reactions, personality, and previous life experiences.

Responsible journalism understands and conscientiously contours meaning, provides stimuli, and models the “tenor” of viewers’ experience with the life events and with their reporting. Research needs to determine if the meaning of the trauma is affected, say, by the context created by commentary or by preceding and following stories or by choice of probes. These choices may determine the stimuli presented to readers. Finally, research needs to determine if the journalist’s own reactions may guide the viewers’ responses in helpful or harmful ways.

The Media Countering Terrorism

Posttraumatic Stress. Psychologists term lingering terror posttraumatic stress. Research shows that people exposed to a traumatic event experience intense fear, helplessness, or horror that can result in depression, suicidal ideation and increased alcohol and drugs usage (Williams & Poijula, 2002). In milder form, post-traumatic stress means overpowering terror and mental distress that result in troubling memories, arousal, and avoidance. Real changes in brain function with resultant consequences on muscles, digestion, blood pressure, and many other bodily systems concomitantly occur with these psychological trauma experiences (Arndt, Allen, & Greenberg, 2001; Goldenberg, McCoy, Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 2000; Scaer, 2001; Goldenberg, Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 2000).

The degree of post-traumatic stress is determined by a host of factors. Environmental factors like severity of the stressor and social support are important. Demographic factors include gender, genetic predisposition, and developmental phase. Personal factors include historical

factors like prior traumatization and preexisting personality characteristics, like attachment mode (Arndt, Greenberg, Schimel, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 2002; Mikulincer & Florian, 2002) in addition to the psychological defense called denial of the shadow side of human nature (Schimel, Pyszczynski, Greenberg, O'Mahen, & Arndt, 2000).

Certainly some of these factors are not the province of the media. Individual differences like gender are purely the province of psychology (Arndt et al., 2002; Simon, Arndt, Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1998; Simon, Harmon-Jones, Greenberg, Solomon, & Pyszczynski, 1996). Yet even one personality characteristic, that is, hardiness, which offsets trauma (Florian, Mikulincer & Hirschberger, 2001), can be fostered by media reports that promote the tripartite sense of control, commitment, and challenge inherent in hardiness. How to do this is another paper entirely.

Environmental Factors. Other factors determining posttraumatic stress, surprisingly, may also be amenable to media input. For instance, specifically severity of the stressor (Simon, Greenberg, Arndt, Pyszczynski, Clement, & Solomon, 1997) and social support (Benjamin, 2002; Mikulincer et al., 2002)) can be modulated by media. Timing may be important to mitigate the severity of the stressor (Greenberg, Arndt, Simon, Pyszczynski, Solomon, 2000). An interaction between type of person (that is, extroverted or introverted) and the quality of social interaction may determine whether social relationships like those of journalist-viewer are considered debilitating and stress inducing or supportive and stress buffering. Could a more abrasive journalist of the Geraldo Rivera type actually create undirected stress and arousal in viewers whereas a more even-handed commentator like Peter Jennings calms viewers' emotions while stimulating their minds?

Moreover, the media may be able to invoke psychological processes almost as a psychological defense against terrorism. For example, social psychology research (Arndt, Schimel & Goldenberg, in press) has found that, initial defense against the threat is termed proximal defense while the later defense using a symbolic cultural world view is termed distal defense. Thus, the media may counter terrorism by utilizing this psychological principle of proximal/distal defense in three ways:

1. In the initial reporting, that is, proximal defense appears mobilized (Eriksson, 2001)
2. In subsequent reports, commentators' risk assessments (Eriksson, 2001) may determine viewers' trauma from the report itself, whether or not a viewer is in actual danger.
3. In the repetition (Ahern et al., 2002; Norwood, Holloway, & Ursano, 2001) or number of times the topic is presented, viewers may be flooded by trauma.

Both the latter ways are distal defenses.

To minimize anxiety, the journalist's first report must ring true and find the means to foster viewers' self-esteem (Harmon-Jones, Simon, Greenberg, Pyszczynski, Solomon, & McGregor, 1997; Strachan, Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 2001). The former need of "trueness" concerns plausibility. The latter need of fostering viewers' self-esteem concerns what other content besides the traumatic event is included in the reportage.

First, would an initial reading that eschews sensationalism for a minimalist report—"Just the facts"—contain viewers' arousal and minimize their avoidance? Research needs to determine if such a judicious exercise of selective omissions could soften the mode of expression, or the "medium," without detracting from its impact, its "message." Can trauma be reported without creating trauma sensitivity?

Next, investigation needs to determine whether effective and accurate risk communication can anchor the implications of the traumatic event in viewers' own lives. For instance, "How does this affect me?" (McCoy, Pyszczynski, et al., 2000). Social psychology can determine if some redeeming value exists why the viewer or reader should experience full throttle what the by-stander does (Gordillo, 2002). Is there some purpose to making more "victims?"

Finally, interminable repetition of a trauma-inducing story may undermine the creation of a health promoting recovery environment (Ahern et al., 2002; Smyth, 2001). Such a healthy environment would restore effective social roles and return viewers to their usual sources of social support, answering the question "When will it end?" For specific example, children's sense of immediate security can be undermined by presenting distal dangers which can exaggerate the

sense of peril in their own communities (Shepperd, 2000; Smith & Wilson, 2002; Stoppelbein & Greening, 2000).

Furthermore, Terror Management Theory suggests highlighting culture may enhance stress buffering self-esteem (Pyszczynski, et al., 2000; Salzman, 2001). Journalists may want to balance reportage of the trauma-inducing events with events providing positive cultural outlets, like community celebrations or alternatives to risky behavior. A journalistic excess of focus on the terror may appeal to short term prurient ends, which could undermine viewers' esteem of media in the longer term. On the other hand, in a devil's advocate approach, does titillation from vicarious viewing of trauma have a positive social function?

The answers to the questions of HOW and WHETHER are not always easy for the psychologically sophisticated media journalist. For instance, in the recent sniper spree in Washington, DC area, accurate risk assessment seemed impossible, given the randomness and unpredictability of the killings. In such instances, confronting directly the issue of chance may be the only recourse. Under such circumstances, though, any means to boost the self-esteem of viewers, like interviewing courageous shoppers at the site of a recent sniper attack, may counter the intensity of the traumatic feelings of death threat (Cicirelli, 2002).

Stress Management and Cognitive Psychology

If responsible journalists turn to psychology, the "how" of responsible journalism may become easier. Stress management (Silver & Rogers, 2002; William & Pojuila, 2002) as well as the principles of cognitive psychology (Pfau, Holbert, Zubric, Pasha, & Lin, 2000) can teach how to maximize the effectiveness and salubriousness of their message. Both these psychological approaches offer key components to "psy-journalism," or psychologically crafted journalism.

Stress management may focus upon compartmentalization, predictability, and centering, all aspects of how the message is conveyed. Compartmentalization could mean creating time and place boundaries around the trauma. Predictability could mean analysis of precedent and antecedent factors. Centering uses compartmentalization to create predictability.

Furthermore, persuasion and influence principles involved in effective and healthy media coverage of traumatic events may mainly concern: content and method of delivery, a

realism/optimism balance, and self-presentation. The cognitive psychology concept relevant to content is framing and relevant to method of delivery is restraint. Realism/optimism pertains to accuracy as well as interpretation of events. Self-presentation personally concerns the journalist.

Stress Management. Crisis intervention models have been deemed insufficient (Gurwith et al., 2002). Therefore, on-going assistance from professionals trained to assist traumatized individuals and communities are necessary to manage this stress. Vernberg (2002) distinguishes between interventions appropriate before, during, and after trauma.

Already predictability has been discussed as a means to reduce terrorism. Moreover, the remaining two aspects, compartmentalization and centering intertwine. Compartmentalization allows one to maintain a balanced center.

Compartmentalization means a cognitive information processing that separates events and experiences in temporal and spatial terms. In essence, stressful events are isolated and not experienced vicariously in anticipation or in memory. In order to do so, thought needs to be specific and flexible (Linville & Clarke, 1989; Linville & Fischer, 1991) as well as totally present in the now (Tolle, 1999). Moreover, other research (Linville, 1987) has documented that self-complexity, that is, a greater number of highly distinct self-aspects, buffers from physical and psychological adversity those experiencing high stress levels.

In terrorism, "You are there" becomes not the intended intimate brush with history but rather a nerve jangling, fear inducing loss of boundaries, or "de-compartmentalization." The boundary diminishes between what happens to you and what happens to others, between what happens "here" and "there," as well as between "yesterday," "now," and "tomorrow." As a clinical concept, compartmentalization needs empirical investigation to determine its active components. Perhaps, compassion overrides separation. Moreover, it could be that exposing viewers to traumas they can only passively witness but not actively effect creates a type of vicarious learned helplessness. Research cited before (Thabet et al., 2002) found that children indirectly exposed to war bombardment exhibited less intense cognitive and anxiety symptomatology than those with direct exposure.

Even though you were not there, it feels like you were, and it might just happen to you any time. The distinction between what is “me” and what is “not me,” what is “now” and what is not “now,” and what is “here” and “not here” may become blurred. Research needs to determine exactly what is this healthy division between your and others’ experiences and between the past, present, and future as well as between an immediate and distal environment, that is, compartmentalization.

As a clinical technique, compartmentalization clearly distinguishes between people, places, and times. What happened to me? What happened to someone else? Did it happen here, or there? Is it happening now? Did it happen yesterday? Could it happen tomorrow?

Compartmentalization centers one directly inside one’s own experience. The Eastern psychology concept of centering is found in many transpersonal psychology approaches (see Scotton, Chinen, Battista, Chinen, & Chunen, 1996). Centering means to focus one’s inner (mind) and outer (body) balance at one’s core, or the center of one’s being as well as being fully present in the now. Many Eastern warriors like the Japanese samurai base their pugilism on a centered posture. For scientific investigation, transpersonal psychology research on the mitigating effects of compartmentalization and centering on trauma requires special methodological considerations (Anderson & Braud, 1998).

Cognitive Psychology. Certain aspects of cognitive psychology have already been discussed. Media message content and method of delivery, specifically, were covered earlier, with the sole exception of the concept of framing. The work of Peter Salovey and colleagues (e.g., Rothman & Salovey, 1997; Schneider, Salovey, Apanovitch, Pizarro, McCarthy, Zullo & Rothman, 2001) demonstrates that the content of the message can motivate reader to either DO something or NOT DO something. In the first instance, information concerning benefits, enhance the likelihood that readers will do something, like use seatbelts. In the second instance, information on negative consequences is more likely to keep readers from doing something, like drinking and driving. Journalists need to consider whether their message frame has the subtext of motivating their audience the either act or not act.

The realism/optimism dimension concerns the work of social psychologist Nancy Adler and colleagues (e.g., Adler, Horowitz, Garcia, & Moyer, 1998; Coriell & Adler, 2001; Park, Moore, Turner, & Adler, 1997), who have studied pessimistic realism and rosy-eyed optimism. When choosing to delete certain realistic aspects such as the sounds of jumpers off the World Trade Centers, journalists may depart from total reality into a stylized presentation designed specifically to assist readers to maintain psychological equilibrium, as noted earlier. To reiterate once again, factually, preliminary research (Ahern et al., 2002) has shown that the type of televiewing images does predict the level of disturbance in reactions.

What is gained, really, from stark, brutal reality if the audience is made less able later? The goal should always be to empower the audience toward ends serving them rather than toward more dysfunction and distress. Yet, sometimes even this laudable goal may be missed. One reason is the diversity of the audience.

Other personal characteristics like multicultural considerations (Rabalais, Ruggiero, & Scotti, 2002) as well as prior trauma history, and environmental concerns like the post-recovery environment have been addressed elsewhere (Silverman & La Grecia, 2002). Finally, the magnitude of the trauma is the best single predictor of psychological outcome (Norwood, 2003). The real threat of weapons of mass destruction should propel psychologists scrambling to provide scientific answers to these questions.

Self-Presentation

Finally, what of media professionals themselves? Self-presentation concerns how the journalists present themselves. Were they immune to the shock? The surreal picture of Katie Couric and Matt Lauer's *Today* outdoor concert interrupted by the smoke plumes in the two towers of the World Trade Center shows the struggle to maintain professionalism in the face of deeply riveting events. The *Today* hosts blasély glanced at the downtown activity, briefly musing what could have possibly happened. Then Katie and Matt gamely attempt to keep attention focused on the concert. Their nonchalance punctuates how "un-real" the terrorists events were. Even seasoned, highly respected reporters did not surmise immediately the tragic proportions of the "fire."

What of those reporters who knew the gravity of the situation? A number publicly commented that the world would never be the same again. As mentioned earlier, French documentarian Jules Gideon concluded his serendipitously secured documentary *9/11* by facing the camera and blinking back tears; Jules said that every day now was the same as the day he filmed. He relived over and over the terror he experienced filming at Ground Zero that day.

On 14 October 2001, the Washington Post's Joel Garbeau questioned whether this terrorist attack was an historical hinge. Such momentous occurrences pivot our experience from one consciousness into another. For instance, on the day of John Kennedy's assassination almost forty years ago, many of us can still recall in vivid detail where we were, how we learned of it, and how we responded.

Was the world ever the same again? No. A hinge had occurred. In 1963 the leading television nightly news anchor Walter Cronkite tearfully reported the aftermath events of this historical hinge. Being visibly moved at a very human level, allowing a throat catch and bowing his head to convey his personal sorrow, Mr. Cronkite brought each of us more fully into our own humanity.

Publisher Stuart Rosenthal in the October 2001 issue of the Washington Senior Beacon titled his column "Where Were You?" The planned front page news of this edition had been World War II and Pearl Harbor, an apt parallel to what Mr. Rosenthal now faced in his own adult lifetime. As he listened to his radio the afternoon of 11 September 2001, Mr. Rosenthal sensed how "the American people are coming together as one." He then apologized for the upbeat tone of the rest of this edition and promised more relevant gravitas in following issues.

For those losing loved ones, certainly their lives will never be the same (see <http://www.holdthedor.com/>). A personal hinge occurred. Did a national/global hinge accentuate this personal fulcrum like the proverbial ripples from throwing a stone into a pond? Trauma spreads in a wake of ever widening and lessening ripples of devastation and distress.

To conclude, both psychologist and journalist colleagues sharing experiences emphasize a common bond and aim: To alchemically transforming horror into strength, anxiety into action, crisis into opportunity. For example, in conjunction with the Discovery Channel, the American

Psychological Association produced a documentary on resiliency after trauma. Applications of psychology for public good, like the disaster aftermath rescue and recovery efforts, will hopefully continue to expand and receive appropriate media coverage. This is psychology's responsibility and its power.

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