

**Media Frames in September 11 Coverage:  
Therapeutic or Inflammatory?  
A Case Study of Four American Newspapers from  
Sept. 12, 2001-Sept. 19, 2001**

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*This paper examines American newspaper coverage of the September 11, 2001 attacks and how media framing of catastrophic events affects the public. I first explore the concept of media framing and apply it to times of national crisis, such as war, natural disasters, or terrorist attacks. Having established a theoretical framework, I conduct a content analysis on four newspapers' coverage to learn more about frames used to cover September 11 and how these frames affected the public's perception of safety and security. In order to achieve a balanced perspective, this content analysis utilizes a combination of larger publications and smaller-market publications, with a variety of ideological views. The purpose of this paper is to explore the power of the media in times of crisis and reinforce the importance for American leaders to recognize the impact of framing on public perceptions.*

America changed on September 11, 2001. After the end of the Cold War and the relative tranquility of the 1990s, the American public had, in many circles, adopted the belief that we were immune from enemy attack; the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the collateral impact on Shanksville, Pa. shattered this belief. As a result of September 11, President Bush refocused his presidential agenda toward national security, proposing and adopting controversial legislation, such as the USA PATRIOT Act and the domestic surveillance program, the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, as well as entering two wars in far away lands. Throughout these monumental changes, the public relied on the media to interpret and contextualize the effects of these initiatives on our country, as well as to evaluate the threat of a repeat attack on American soil. Although scholars disagree on how information is disseminated from government officials to the public, they agree that the media are a crucial (and unavoidable) transmitter of information and have a significant impact on public perception. Regardless of whether one follows the hegemony, indexing, or cascading models of political

communication, all place the media in the powerful position of interpreting government actions and framing them for the public.

This raises an interesting analytical question. Given that the media are the gatekeepers of information, able to pick and choose what they include to provide a certain framing of events, how did the media behave during one of the more difficult crises in American history? Was there at least one dominant frame presented in the direct aftermath of September 11? If so, did this frame or frames reassure a victimized public of the abnormality of September 11, or did the frame or frames focus on our vulnerabilities? How was President Bush framed in this time of national tragedy? In order to begin to understand these questions, I conducted a content analysis of American media directly following September 11. However, I will first take a slight methodological and theoretical detour, establishing the concepts of media framing, as well as providing some of the previous scholarship on framing of September 11.

## MEDIA FRAMING

Arguably the most important and influential media theory of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century is framing. Framing finds its roots in sociology and psychology research of the 1970s and 1980s. Sociologists and psychologists were interested in understanding how a particular representation of events may influence an audience. For example, in 1984, psychologists Kahneman and Tversky conducted one of the first tests of “equivalency framing,” or the framing of two identical ideas. Subjects were asked to preference government responses to a hypothetical flu outbreak in a population of 600 people. Subjects were given two possible proposals to choose from: in the first proposal, 400 people in the population would die; in the second, 200 people in the population would live. Mathematically, these are identical scenarios; however, Kahneman and Tversky found that subjects overwhelmingly preferred the scenario in which 200 people would live, even though the actual effects of the two scenarios were the same (Kahneman and Tversky, 341-350). Although rooted in psychology, these results clearly have implications for media coverage, as the media are often the primary, or only, vehicle through which the public gains information about a topic. Kahneman and Tversky’s study gave evidence to the idea that the particular presentation of an event could color a population’s perception of that event.

In 1991, Entman decided to test the concept of framing within the media. Through a content analysis of magazine coverage of the Korean Air Lines (KAL) and the Iran Air attacks of the 1980s, Entman concluded that framing does exist in media coverage and that it significantly impacts the way that the public perceives a particular incident. While the facts surrounding the KAL and Iran Air disasters were similar, American media presented the events in vastly different ways: the media demonized the Soviets for the KAL incident, fostering sympathy for the American victims, while justifying Reagan’s actions in the Iran Air incident as necessary and appropriate. For example, while the *Newsweek* cover headline after

KAL was “Murder in the Air,” the headline after Iran Air read “The Gulf War Tragedy: Why It Happened.” Public opinion polls conducted during each incident reflected this difference of perception, as the public was far more supportive of the Iran Air incident than the KAL event (Entman *Framing United* 6-27).

In this study, Entman not only provided evidence for framing but reinforced an idea originally introduced by Graber in 1984: “schemas.” Schemas are the clusters of information that each of us has in our own heads that we use to understand and contextualize information. Because it is difficult to remember every piece of information that we learn, we must cluster information so as to make it both comprehensible and accessible. Thus, at least in reference to media coverage, framing has a two-step effect; first, in the initial frame presented, and second, in the frames audiences place on the incident themselves through schemas.

In other words, framing has a two step-effect: the first is the initial frame presented by the media; the second is the frame individuals place on the incident themselves, based on the information that the media have presented. Therefore, if the media continually present a frame of fear for a particular event, the public will most likely associate that event with other “fearful” experiences. The ramification of this on media coverage of national crises is enormous; it indicates that the media may be able to determine the public’s mood and reaction to an event.

The second development is the introduction of “issue framing.” Issue framing differs significantly from equivalency framing and has a much more direct connection to media coverage. Unlike equivalency framing, which looks at the same information presented differently to the same public (i.e. Kahneman and Tversky), issue framing discusses how media can choose to specifically highlight information to support a particular interpretation. As Entman famously declared in 1993, issue framing is “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (Entman *Framing: Towards* 52).

In other words, does a loyal reader of the *New York Times* have a different interpretation of an event than a loyal reader of the *Washington Post*, simply because of how these publications differ in their coverage of that event? Do they quote different people? Do they highlight different facts? Do they present different images for the same story? Such is the essence of framing research.

#### PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

Many have studied the psychological and political effects of September 11; however, surprisingly little research has been done on the effect of media coverage on the event. Most studies on media coverage either focus solely on coverage on September 11 itself (i.e. how the television media reacted immediately to the crisis) or on how media coverage differed in the weeks and months after September 11. Few studies bother to examine how the media framed the event in the week after September 11, arguably the most important time period, given that it laid the

framework for further policy actions, namely the War in Afghanistan and the War in Iraq. However, a review of the more relevant studies previously conducted on this topic provides useful context.

In 2005, Jiwani was interested in how Canada's national daily, *The Globe and Mail*, covered September 11, particularly in relation to race and gender (Jiwani 50-68). Using a content analysis of articles including terms such as "Taliban," "World Trade Center," "terror," "Afghanistan" and others, Jiwani examined 108 articles that appeared in the *Globe and Mail* between September 11, 2001 and September 30, 2001. Through her study, Jiwani concluded, "the preferred interpretation to emerge from the stories examined in this corpus suggests the framing of Muslim women as passive victims who can also be devious and callous" (63), while Muslim men were depicted as ruthless and opportunistic. Jiwani concluded that given these frames, Canada was more willing to accept the frame of condemnation and horror of the September 11 attacks. Although not directly related to my experiment, Jiwani's study shows the impact that framing of September 11 can have on public perceptions.

Also in 2005, Scheufele, Nisbet and Ostman explored the impact of mass media on public support for civil liberties restrictions in the months following September 11, 2001 (Scheufele, Nisbet and Ostman 197-218). After collecting data on media coverage between September 11, 2001 and October 15, 2001, Scheufele, Nisbet and Ostman conducted a telephone interview of 800 residents of Tompkins County, NY and determined that newspaper readers were less likely to support limits on civil liberties than those who watched television. This study, although not directly related, reinforces the prevalence of newspaper frames in the September 11 coverage.

In 2006, Belkhodja and Richard examined French-language newspapers in Canada and their framing of September 11 (Belkhodja and Richard 119-143). Using *Biblio Branchée* and other French-language databases, Belkhodja and Richard located a sample of 158 articles containing "September 11" that occurred from September 11, 2001 to September 12, 2002. They found that French-language media treated coverage of September 11 very similarly to other Western media, highlighting Canada's support of the Afghanistan war effort, though "English newspapers in Canada focussed [sic] more on Canada's role in the aftermath of that day" than did the French sources. (132). This research, too, suggests that dominant frames did occur in the media coverage after September 11. However, this study focuses on one year's worth of coverage, rather than focusing on the coverage directly after the attack.

Probably the best precursor to my study occurred in 2003; in this study, Li and Izard conducted a content analysis of ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, and Fox News, as well as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, the *Denver Post*, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, the *Houston Chronicle*, and the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* (Li and Izard 204-219). Using Lexis-Nexis, Li and Izard searched for news articles that contained "World Trade Center" or "Pentagon" and appeared on September 12, 2001. Of the 355

newspaper articles studied, Li and Izard found that the newspapers and television networks covered significantly different aspects of September 11, with newspapers focusing more on business and air safety while television focused more on the World Trade Center and the President. Also, the frame of September 11 being a “disaster” appeared repeatedly in the sources. However, unlike the previous sources, which generally focused on longer time periods, Li and Izard only looked at September 12, 2001 coverage. My study will expand on Li and Izard’s foundation and examine coverage throughout the week of September 12, 2001-September 19, 2001.

## METHODOLOGY AND JUSTIFICATION

To examine how American newspapers framed September 11, I conducted a content analysis of newspaper articles published in two national newspapers, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, and in two smaller-market papers, the *San Diego Union-Tribune* and the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*. I chose newspapers because, although the Internet, CNN, Fox News, et al. are arguably more influential media sources, their material is still often influenced by newspaper coverage. The *Times* and the *Post* were chosen due to their predominance as the “authority” in American news. However, one common (and legitimate) criticism of political communication research is scholars’ willingness to overlook local newspaper coverage, as many Americans are more likely to get their news from local sources than from national outlets. This is the role of the *Union-Tribune* and the *Star Tribune*. I chose these papers because they represent two distinctly different geographic regions (the West Coast and the Midwest), two distinctly different ideological bents (conservative versus liberal), two similarly sized populations (the San Diego metropolitan area is roughly 2.9 million people, while the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area is roughly 2.3 million people) (U.S. Census Bureau), and because these papers represent two regions uniquely affected by September 11: the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport is one of the busier airports in the Midwest and the headquarters for Northwest Airlines; San Diego is home to a major military community, due to the Coronado Naval Base.

Due to time and research limitations, this study required that I institute preconditions for a story to be coded. Using Lexis-Nexis and Factiva, I searched for articles from each paper with the following conditions:

- Each article must have appeared in their respective paper between September 12, 2001 and September 19, 2001.
- Each article must contain at least one of the following terms: “Pentagon,” “World Trade Center,” “Shanksville” or “Attack.”
- Each article must have appeared in the front section of the paper and must have originated from that paper’s national news desk.
- Speeches, passenger lists, columns, editorials, memorial and funeral information, and obituaries were eliminated.

With these restrictions, there were 415 articles from the *New York Times* that qualified for study; 298 from the *Washington Post*; 138 from the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*; and 288 from the *San Diego Union-Tribune*. Given time constraints, random sampling was instituted on each of these lists. To have similar sample sizes, I coded 42 articles for the *New York Times*, 30 articles for the *Washington Post*, 35 for the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* and 36 for the *San Diego Union Tribune*; this gives a total of 143 articles coded.<sup>1</sup>

There are a number of inherent limitations to this study. First is the need to use a random sample. Although it would be ideal to code all 1,139 articles eligible under my conditions, such a study was simply not feasible. Second is the already mentioned focus on front section stories. Given that front section stories are generally the most important stories of the day, it seems likely that the overall frame of the newspaper will be captured using only these sources. A third limitation is that the southern United States is not represented. Again, further research should reasonably include a newspaper from the South. Related to this is the fourth problem; these four papers can in no way accurately represent the frame of the entire United States media. However, they do represent the two regions most seriously affected, New York City and Washington, DC, as well as two populations important to this study: “middle America” and “military America.” Therefore, I feel that this study provides meaningful insight as to how September 11 was framed in the week after the attack.

Because I am predominantly interested in two factors, first, whether the newspapers’ frame was therapeutic or inflammatory, and second, how President Bush was framed, I focused particularly on language that depicted the mood of the event, the country, and the President. Thus, when coding, I counted the number of mentions of words such as “united,” “calm,” “togetherness,” etc. to represent therapeutic; I also counted the number of mentions of words such as “fear,” “vulnerable,” “scared,” etc. to represent inflammatory. Based on these mentions, I made a determination of whether the story was overall therapeutic, inflammatory or neutral. Neutral articles either lacked the necessary vocabulary to be coded therapeutic or inflammatory or contained both frames in roughly equal amounts, therefore countering each other. All stories focusing on charities, blood donations, etc. were counted as therapeutic while all stories focusing on security weaknesses were counted as inflammatory. I also counted the number of quotes from President Bush; this was defined as complete sentences. A newspaper did not have to quote an entire paragraph from a speech in order for it to count for this study; the paper did need to quote the President in complete sentences. With regard to these quotes,

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<sup>1</sup> In this study I used a random number generator and used 10 percent of the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* articles, 25 percent of the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* articles and 12.5 percent of the *San Diego Union-Tribune* articles. The number of articles was then rounded. These numbers were chosen so as to have roughly an equal number of articles from each paper and to realistically limit the number of articles so as to have a feasible project and yet one that provides helpful and relevant information.

I am primarily interested in testing how the media chose to use to frame the President's role and whether his quotes were therapeutic, inflammatory or neutral.

### CONTENT ANALYSIS TABLE

The following table summarizes my results from my content analysis. A discussion of these results follows:

Table 1: Coding Sheet from Content Analysis

	<u>NYT (n=42)</u>	<u>WP (n=30)</u>	<u>SDUT (n=36)</u>	<u>MST (n=35)</u>
Number of uses of "therapeutic" language	29 (avg. of .69 per article)	35 (avg. of 1.17 per article)	34 (avg. of .94 per article)	22 (avg. of .63 per article)
Number of uses of "inflammatory" language	36 (avg. of .86 per article)	22 (avg. of .73 per article)	21 (avg. of .58 per article)	9 (avg. of .26 per article)
Number of "therapeutic" articles	10 (24 percent)	9 (30 percent)	18 (50 percent)	12 (34 percent)
Number of "inflammatory" articles	11 (26 percent)	7 (23 percent)	5 (14 percent)	7 (20 percent)
Number of "neutral" articles	21 (50 percent)	14 (47 percent)	13 (36 percent)	16 (46 percent)
Number of Bush quotes	11 quotes (avg. of .26 per article)	5 quotes (avg. of .17 per article)	23 quotes (avg. of .64 per article)	0 (avg. of 0 per article)
Number of "therapeutic" Bush quotes	9 quotes (82 percent)	3 quotes (60 percent)	16 quotes (70 percent)	0 (0 percent)
Number of "inflammatory" Bush quotes	1 quote (9 percent)	0 (0 percent)	2 quotes (7 percent)	0 (0 percent)
Number of "neutral" Bush quotes	1 quote (9 percent)	2 quotes (40 percent)	5 quotes (23 percent)	0 (0 percent)

## OVERALL FINDINGS

After reviewing all 143 articles, three major trends emerge. First, in all four newspapers' coverage, the inflammatory frame appeared the least often among the three possibilities; newspapers instead chose to focus on neutral coverage, often providing factual information or analysis of the economic and social impact of the attacks, or focusing on rallying their publics towards a united cause. For example, the words "united," "resolve," "strength," and "vigilance" appeared repeatedly in each of the four papers' stories.

A second trend can be found in the quoting of President Bush. Although Bush was (surprisingly) rarely quoted, when quotes did appear, they were overwhelmingly positive and therapeutic. One frequently used quote came from President Bush's visit to Ground Zero on September 15. Armed with a megaphone, Bush told the crowd that, "I can hear you. The rest of the world hears you. And the people who knocked down these buildings will hear all of us soon!" (Bush qtd. *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *San Diego Union-Tribune*).

A third trend is that, although the four newspapers' differed in the particular use of the inflammatory or therapeutic frames, all four followed a consistent pattern throughout the week. In all four, coverage followed three stages:

Stage 1 – National/Incident Based Coverage: In all four publications, articles published early in the week tended to focus on the tragedy and national impact of the story. Stories overwhelmingly focused on uniting the country, easing tensions and highlighting American resolve. Numerous stories highlighted the shock value of the event, using eyewitnesses and personal accounts. President Bush tended to be quoted in this stage.

Stage 2 – Reflection/Impact Based Coverage and Local Contribution: In all four publications, articles published mid-week tended to focus on whether the tragedies of September 11 could have been prevented. Several stories noted airline security issues. These stories tended to contain more inflammatory language, such as the words, "vulnerable," "fear," "susceptibility" and "doubt." However, impact based stories also tended to focus on charity work, vigils, or the rise in blood donations after the attacks; these stories tended to be more therapeutic in nature. All publications also focused heavily on the economic impact of the attacks, both nationally and locally. It is interesting to note that both *Union-Tribune* and *Star Tribune* focused significantly on potential local connections to the tragedies. Evidence that terrorists may have lived or received training in San Diego and Minneapolis-St. Paul appeared repeatedly in news stories throughout September 16 and 17. In New York and Washington, stories tended to focus on local impact in terms of infrastructure, the economy and international relations.

Stage 3 – Preparing for War: In all four publications, articles published near the end of the week tended to focus on upcoming actions in Afghanistan. However, the larger-market papers differed from the smaller-market papers in how this was covered. The *Times* and the *Post* focused on national impact of war, public opinion polls and foreign correspondents in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The *Union-Tribune*

and the *Star Tribune* focused on the potential reinstatement of the draft, peace protests and the impact that a potential war could have on military families. President Bush also tended to be quoted in this stage.

I will now compare and contrast the *Times* and the *Post*'s coverage with that of the smaller-market papers.

#### THE NEW YORK TIMES AND THE WASHINGTON POST

As the statistics suggest, the *Times*' coverage was by far the most somber and critical of the four publications. This could potentially be due to the fact that New York was the most personally impacted by the September 11 attacks. Nevertheless, coverage tended to follow the three stages previously described. Labeling their early coverage "A Day of Terror," the *Times*' focused heavily on the human tragedy of the September 11 events. Personal accounts and eyewitnesses were used heavily in their pieces entitled, "The Voices." When President Bush was quoted, his statements emphasized resolve and the pursuit of justice. For example, in one September 12 story, Bush's September 11 speech was excerpted to emphasize America's ability to rebuild from tragedy: "Our country is strong. Terrorist acts can shake the foundation of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America" (Bush qtd. in *New York Times*). This trend to nationalize and universalize the effects continued into September 13, with their coverage entitled "After the Attacks." One story recounted the experience of Florence Rogers, a survivor of the Oklahoma City bombings: "I'm watching these families who are looking for their loved ones, and it makes me think of my kids looking for me at the hospital, to see if I was alive. This brings it all back, to all of us" (Rogers qtd. in *New York Times*).

Additionally, the *Times*' coverage reflected a city in shock, devoting large amounts of coverage to personal accounts of the Twin Towers' collapse. By the late edition of September 13, stories began to appear questioning security and containing more inflammatory language. This leads into the second stage. By September 14 and September 15, this coverage had shifted to the impact of the attacks, both economically and logistically. Stories discussed the lack of mail delivery and the growing number of lower Manhattan businesses moving to Jersey City in light of the attacks. Language began to be more critical. As New York resident Michael Pecoriello told the *Times* on September 14, "Some people can't deal with this ... it's scary" (Pecoriello qtd. in *New York Times*). Similarly, a September 14 story highlighted the weaknesses of America's airport security, paraphrased an airport screener. As the *Times* reported, "he knew that the airport screening system was failing badly" (Greenhouse and Drew).

Yet this coverage shifted again later in the week. From late editions on September 15 until the end of the week, the *Times*' coverage focused predominantly on the move to war. On September 18, the *Times* quoted President Bush's speech at the Pentagon, in which he emphasized the move to war: "We will win the war, and there will be costs" (Bush qtd. in *New York Times*).

Overall, the *Times* coverage highlights a victimized public. Although readers would feel encouraged by the city's ability to rally together, the coverage shows a newsroom and a city still reeling from the death of 3,000 of its citizens.

As expected, the *Post's* coverage generally resembles the *Times's* coverage in many ways. On September 12, the *Post's* coverage exemplified a shocked yet united public. Personal accounts of the Pentagon attacks were used frequently in early stories, often highlighting "heroes," "strength" and "resistance." Stories profiled particular victims or rescue workers who risked their lives to help others. Unlike the other papers, the *Post* does not quote President Bush in its early coverage, potentially due to its frequent coverage of the President in other situations.

It is also interesting to note that although the *Post* does appear to go through all three stages, it goes at a faster pace than the other publications. By September 12, the *Post* had already moved into Stage 2, publishing an article entitled, "Security Experts Knew a Major Attack Was Possible; Lax Measures at Airports Cited Often Over Years" and discussed numerous weaknesses at Dulles, Reagan National and Baltimore-Washington airports (Slevin and Warrick).

By September 15, the *Post* had refocused towards local contributions, particularly Washington, DC metro area residents in the Army Reserve. The *Post* also paid special attention to Congressional action in relation to the attacks, which too represents their local audience. However, similarly to the other publications, the *Post's* mid-week coverage focused heavily on vigils and solidarity; on September 16, President Bush was quoted from a service at the National Cathedral, reinforcing America's resolve: "Yes, our nation has been attacked ... But now we have a choice whether to implode and disintegrate emotionally and spiritually as a people and a nation, or whether we choose to become stronger through all of the struggle" (Bush qtd. in *Washington Post*).

By September 19, the *Post's* coverage had moved to Stage 3, focusing on the war effort, with several stories from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Pentagon. Unlike the *Times*, which turned to President Bush for words of guidance, the *Post* quoted then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld about the war effort.

#### THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE AND THE MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE

Although the *Union-Tribune* and *Star Tribune's* coverage differed somewhat from that of the *Times* and the *Post*, the two papers still generally followed in three stages; these papers also tended to mimic each other, despite their geographic, demographic and ideological differences. This perhaps gives insight into how smaller-market papers handled the September 11 attacks.

The *Union-Tribune's* coverage was the most therapeutic and patriotic of the four newspapers. From early on, the *Union-Tribune* exemplified the frame of "unity" and "resolve." Much like the *Times*, the *Union-Tribune* entitled its coverage "Attack on America" and quoted President Bush's September 11 speech. Although the early coverage recognized the tragedy of the situation, it also profiled

America's strength; one article highlighted the "rare snippets of good news" found in the New York wreckage (Cantlupe and Eckert, *San Diego Union-Tribune*).

It is interesting to note that the *Union-Tribune* repeatedly ties the attacks to the local community; by mid-week, the paper had published several stories on San Diegans killed or injured in the attacks. The *Union-Tribune* began an investigation of September 11 associated terrorists who had lived in San Diego, criticizing federal and local authorities for their inability to catch these persons before the September 11 attacks. On September 17, the *Union-Tribune* criticized America's airline security, particularly the ineffectiveness of airport screeners. Much like the other publications, articles from the end of the week focused on the war effort. One story discussed local Navy officers and enlisted men and women coping with informing their children of impending war. Discussion of a potential draft appeared repeatedly as did coverage of peace protests throughout the city. By September 18, the *Union-Tribune* returned to quoting Bush, reinforcing America's resolve: "Out of our tears and sadness, we saw the best of America," Bush said. "We saw a great country rise up to help" (Bush qtd. in *San Diego Union-Tribune*).

Similarly to the *Union-Tribune*, the *Star Tribune*'s coverage followed all three stages while reinforcing the local impact of the tragedy; however, their coverage was more solemn than that of the *Union-Tribune*. From September 12, the *Star Tribune* emphasized the impact on Minnesotans, highlighting vigils at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities and in downtown Minneapolis-St. Paul. Although the *Star Tribune* never quotes President Bush, they utilize quotes from then-Governor Jesse Ventura in a similar way to the use of Bush quotes in other publications. On September 12, Gov. Ventura is quoted as saying: "This is a time of great shock, of great sorrow and great concern ... This is truly a time of extraordinary apprehension. But I would ask that people remain calm and alert" (Ventura qtd. in *Minneapolis Star Tribune*). The *Star Tribune* emphasizes the need to be "united," "to come together" and to offer "support" to New York, Washington, DC and Pennsylvania.

Given that Northwest Airlines is headquartered in Minneapolis, the *Star Tribune*'s coverage turned quickly to Stage 2: the economic impact of the tragedy. Stories published in the middle of the week discussed Northwest employees' fears of massive layoffs and the backups at Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport. Similar to the coverage of the *Union-Tribune*, the *Star Tribune* is highly critical of local and federal law enforcement's inability to prevent the tragedy, highlighting September 11 terrorist Zacharias Moussaoui's relationship to the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area. By September 18 and September 19, the coverage had again shifted to the war effort, discussing the potential of a draft and whether members of the Minnesota National Guard will be heading to Afghanistan. Although somewhat afraid of the days to come, the coverage emphasizes the improvements made since the attacks, noting an improvement in safety throughout the Minneapolis area. Overall, the coverage is solemn yet therapeutic.

## CONCLUSION

What can we draw from this research? First, it is clear from even this small snippet of post September 11 coverage that there was a dominant frame in the newspaper coverage. Despite differences in region, economics, demographics and political ideology, both national and local newspapers followed three distinct stages of coverage; the first highlighting the need to heal a victimized nation, the second criticizing the government for allowing the public to be vulnerable, and the third refocusing America's efforts towards war. President Bush, although rarely used in newspaper coverage, was generally implemented to improve the mood of a saddened public; this allowed President Bush to appear calm, resolute and determined to seek justice in the face of evil. Given these facts, it would be interesting to connect this research with studies by Entman and others, who contend that the media frames following September 11 enabled the Bush Administration to find nearly universal support for his controversial foreign policy. More research would need to be done, integrating public opinion polls and a greater variety of sources, in order to draw any definite conclusions.

When conducting this study, I had anticipated that all four publications, especially at the beginning of the week, would have a relatively unified response. This turned out to be true. However, I did not expect to see the rapid localization of the events that was evident in all four publications. While it seems reasonable to have assumed that the *Times* and the *Post* would have focused extensively on their own relief efforts, it was fascinating to see both the *Union-Tribune* and the *Star Tribune* react similarly, in relation to their own communities. The level to which each newspaper presented therapeutic or inflammatory coverage was influenced in part by the particular community they represent. In many ways, this project is a reminder that even in an event where the level of impact is national, the specifics of that impact remain local.

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