

## CHAPTER 13

# Work First, Feel Later: How News Workers Reflect on Subjective Choices During a Terror Attack

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*In journalism studies, the discussion of objectivity as a strategic ritual is long standing, while the impact of subjectivity and emotion upon journalism has received much less attention. During terror events, journalists' notion of objectivity as a strategy is likely to be challenged due to unexpected autonomy. In order to explore how this unfolds, we have interviewed 24 journalists in three different news organisations shortly after the Norwegian terror attack in 2011, where 77 people were killed. Studies of what journalists experience during a terror attack, and how they reflect upon their experiences, are scarce. The present study addresses this gap, and in particular looks at how news workers deal with dilemmas where their perceptions of professionalism are challenged.*

**Keywords:** 22 July terrorism, Norway, subjectivity, journalists

## Introduction

In 2011, Norway experienced a lone wolf terrorist attack. It was the worst event in the country since World War II. The terrorist first placed a car bomb close to the government building in downtown Oslo, where Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg had his office. The explosion killed eight people and wounded 209 others. Just less than two hours later, the terrorist went on to massacre 69 people, mostly youths, at a Labour Party (AP) summer camp.

Five years later, there is no lack of research on this terror event. Yet, few researchers have focused on how journalists experienced the tension between the need for informing the audience objectively and in a balanced way, on one hand, while on the other having to deal with a reality that might have appeared surreal at the moment. An important issue in understanding journalism is the notion of professionalism. Örnebring frames the notion of professionalism as a “bulwark against both excessive partisanship and rampant commercialization, or a tool used to achieve societal power without accountability and to ensure a steady supply of docile employees” (Örnebring, 2016, p. 20). In journalism, as well as in other professions, there is an ongoing debate on how “professionalism” may be understood. When it is applied to journalism, Örnebring contends that “manager and managed very likely have different ideas about what professionalism means” (Ibid., p. 21). According to Evetts (2003, p. 407ff, 2006, p.140f), the notion of journalistic professionalism can be divided into two competing forms: organizational professionalism and occupational professionalism. While Örnebring (2016) examines the financially failing models of legacy media, and the introduction of new short-term staff, few studies look at how journalism-as-work takes place during large crises, or as in the case in this article, during a terror attack. An important part of being a professional journalist is the application of journalistic practices and routines. Gaye Tuchman was the first to emphasise that news workers’ insistence upon “objectivity” had very practical motivations behind it. These include an enhanced ability to negotiate deadlines, relief from potential libel suits, and a riposte to any internal reprimands based on one’s content or delivery (Tuchman 1972, p. 660). Tuchman’s article launched a discussion that is still ongoing (Sjøvaag 2011, p. 23), because the journalistic notion of objectivity is closely linked to the emergence of professionalism in the field (Schudson and Anderson 2009, p. 92). As pointed out by Riegert and Olsson (2007), media research on crises,

disasters and extraordinary events has focused mostly upon the interactions among the media, state authorities and citizens, and less upon the “informational flow of the media” (2007, p. 137). Consequently, we are often left with questions as to why and how journalists act as they do during crises (see for example Jarlbro, 2004, p. 64).

Few scholars have looked at whether journalists experience a break with objectivity as a strategic ritual during an event like a terror attack, when family members or friends might be part of the tragedy or when they might even know the terrorist personally. If, under these (extremely subjective) conditions, journalists try to hold onto objectivity as a strategic priority, how do they do so? Karin Wahl-Jorgensen (2013) recently played on Tuchman’s famous 1972 article titled “Objectivity as a Strategic Ritual” in her own work titled “The Strategic Ritual of Emotionality”, which she describes as “an institutionalized and systematic practice of journalists of infusing their reporting with emotion” (2013, p. 129). The present study seeks to compare these two “ritual” modes of journalism at those times when everyday habits and norms are disrupted by decidedly emotional developments. In doing so, we ask if the “manager” and the “managed” handle the situation differently or similarly? How do, for example, journalists handle unexpected autonomy during a terror attack? And finally, when a large scale terror attack occurs, can we even talk about journalism as an institution in the same sense as before the incident took place, or does decision making during such unsettling events rest more on the subjective ability of the individual journalist?

## **Objective and impartial reporting during breaking news**

Tuchman (1972, p. 661) defined ritual as a “routine procedure which has relatively little or only tangential relevance to the end sought” and pointed to the fact that the eighteenth-century practice of bleeding patients to “cure” fever may also be viewed as a ritual. She understood strategy as informing the steps one takes to produce something. Schudson and Anderson (2009, p. 93) also look at the ways in which the profession’s norms relating to objectivity are negotiated and constructed. They cite Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 34), who link professionalism to objectivity. The two scholars point to Walter Lippman

to explain the emergence of objectivity as an ideal. Lippmann argued that journalists needed to develop a sense of evidence and “acknowledge the limits of available information” (Schudson and Anderson 2009, p. 92). Objectivity was strongly linked to professionalism as well as to truth seeking. In fact, according to these scholars “understanding the emergence of objectivity would, in short, provide the key to understanding the emergence of professionalism” (ibid.). Rosalind Coward (2013, p. 8) uses the term subjectivity to characterise the shift from a reporter-constructed objectivity to an audience-driven attraction to subjectivity. When journalists start out as trainees, she explains, they will “learn conventions and techniques about reporting ‘impartially’ and communicating ‘objectively’”. Subjective reporting, she contends, often departs in content and style from the common-sense notion of journalism. Coward is not the only scholar to describe this division in the context of the huge increase in personal reporting and subjective journalism that appears to have accompanied the rise of social media (see Steensen, 2011; Hornmoen, 2015).

This article argues that journalists tend to be depicted simply as an extension of the media industry for which they work, rather than as creative individuals who might be socially aware. As Cottle points out, journalists “are more consciously and knowingly involved with, and purposefully productive of, news texts and output than they are often theoretically given credit for” (2000, p. 22). Analyses have shown that TV journalists and producers are very aware of the subjective strategic rituals of their daily practices. Rather than falling in line with Coward’s (2013, p. 8) claim that they always aim for “impartial” and “objective” reporting, they know how to organise their work so as to impact the final product as they see fit. In other words, as this chapter will demonstrate, the reporters interviewed for this article not only knew how to handle professional rituals and accommodate the needs of their sponsoring institutions, but also actively pursued their own ends and agendas. As they performed their roles as anchors, live reporters or investigative journalists, they applied various strategies with new-found autonomy.

Tuchman (1978, p. 47) distinguished between five categories of news: hard, soft, spot, developing, and continuing. While journalists had a hard time defining exactly what hard news was in her study, she concluded that a hard-news story was “interesting to human beings”, whereas a soft-news story was “interesting because it deals with the life of human beings” (1978, p. 48). She also emphasised that hard news was “a depletable consumer product” (1978, p. 51).

Although Gaye Tuchman's study took place in the 1970s, her findings and distinctions between various types of news are still pertinent. Journalists continue to be aware that hard news comes with a time limit and could expire, so that the first phase of hard-news coverage, in turn, is intensely competitive, as journalists race to acquire the most exclusive material.

Breaking news, such as terror events, is hard news, and part of what Tuchman called developing stories. Occasionally, a story simply grows as more facts are gathered, until they become what in her days was known as "what-a-story" (1978, p. 59; for later labels, see also Berkowitz 1992). Using the 22 July terror attack as the main study, this chapter investigates how reporters viewed their role in content production during this pivotal historical event on Norwegian soil. In the case of the 22 July terror event in Norway, reporters experienced a feeling of absurdity, and during interviews they would sometimes have problems expressing their experience. They could, for example, state: "I cannot describe it, it is too big"; it was "the biggest story in my lifetime"; "I did not believe anything like this would happen in Norway". Others more soberly categorised it as a big breaking-news story, but likewise acknowledged its profound impact on their lives and practice. This is discussed in more detail in the Discussion and Analysis section.

## Methodology

For this article, we interviewed twenty-four journalists in a semi-structured, qualitative manner between July and October 2011, including reporters, photographers, editors, middle managers and news editors. Our point of departure was a seminar at Norwegian TV2 during which journalists discussed dilemmas regarding the ways in which reporting on their own cultural context was sometimes "too close for comfort". This seminar inspired us to look more closely at those dilemmas, especially in relation to the abiding tradition of objectivity in journalism. In this chapter, the sample includes interviews from personnel representing three media organisations geographically situated close to the terror event.

The first is NRK (Norwegian Broadcasting Cooperation), the public broadcasting service in Norway that creates content for TV, radio and the web. The organisation consists of a central main office (located close to the city centre in Oslo) and several regional offices all over Norway (Erdal, 2008, p. 27–28).

NRK is funded by a license fee and is mandated by the Norwegian government through the Ministry of Culture. NRK is thus a government owned public service broadcaster. According to Trine Syvertsen (2008), all the Norwegian political parties except *Fremskrittspartiet* (Party of Progress) agree that NRK is the most important means of obtaining quality, diversity and national culture, and at the time of that study, politicians were less critical of NRK's content than of competing commercial channels such as TV2 and the radio channel P4. While NRK might have less freedom of action and more commitment as to what to broadcast, they have a more secure financial situation and do not have to depend on advertising and commercials like the other cases in this study, VG and TV2 (Syvertsen, 2008, p. 221–222).

The second organisation is the commercial counterpart to NRK: TV2 News. It was first established in 1992, and was created on the condition that TV2 would produce alternate TV news (Waldahl et al. 2006, p. 67). Since 2000, TV2 News has: had an increased focus on breaking news and live production; more focus on the presenters; developed new technology, speedier production, and more production of news content in less time with less resources. In 2007, TV2 established a 24/7 news channel, although as part of the already existing news production (Lund 2013, p. 110).

The third organisation in this study is the newspaper VG's online edition, which was established in 1995 (Lund and Puijk 2012, p. 71). The newspaper itself has an important place in Norwegian history as it was established by members of the Norwegian Resistance right after World War II. It is presently owned by the Schibsted Group. The newspaper has grown to be the biggest tabloid newspaper in Norway, and launched its online edition in 1995. This is the most popular Internet news site in Norway.

As mentioned earlier, as an illustrative case study in journalistic adaptation during a crisis event, we chose the lone-wolf terror attack in Norway on 22 July 2011. It remains one of the few terror attacks committed by a domestic right-wing individual, and it suited our study because it forced journalists to think "outside the box". There was nothing in Norwegian history nor in the Norwegian cultural psyche that could have prepared the populace for comprehending what was happening in their normally peaceful country on 22 July 2011, and journalists experienced the same lack of emotional and general coping mechanisms.

## Discussion and Analysis

### The “Managers”: Editors and reporters in the newsroom

Right after the bomb exploded at the main government building in downtown Oslo, a peculiar situation occurred in front of the VG building, a media house, across the street. The blast from the bomb blew out the front windows of the media building. Reporters were told to evacuate the building, and they then walked down the staircase before entering the street where there were wounded and dead people lying on the ground. Several informants noted that some of their colleagues started to run *away* from the situation. Likewise, during those initial chaotic moments outside the VG building, security guards began to restrict re-entry. However, several news workers decided that they did not want to comply with this restriction and forced their way into the staircase over the protests of the security guard. A senior reporter explained why he chose to return to the closed newsroom:

But I am used to working with breaking news and sudden events. [...] I felt like I should contribute. I expected that of myself and I am sure others expected this of me as well. And in comparison to a summer temp . . . I should contribute. And it was summer and not a lot of people were at work. There were a lot of summer temps, and I think they did a very good job that evening. But you can't expect them to run upstairs. And then maybe it is OK that . . . we'll have to do it then, sort of. (Senior Reporter VG Nett, 30.09.11)

The decision to disobey orders of the security guards as well as the police was hard but necessary, some felt. A younger reporter even said that he was willing to die for the newspaper in order to get information out to the audience (Online Reporter VG Nett). Reporters felt that objective, balanced reporting would help the public to be better informed in this most crucial phase and, at least in the very beginning of the event, did not focus on social media. According to these journalists, the only way to take control of the situation was to return to the one place they *could* control: the VG newsdesk. At the time, nobody knew whether a second attack would occur, but for four hours, these journalists remained in the newsroom. When asked if they thought they were in danger, several staff members recalled the example set

by their team leader, an experienced news editor who told them to make their own decisions:

He [the editor] sort of said, “You are here of your own free will. You are here voluntarily. I cannot vouch for your safety in being here”. (Senior Reporter VG Nett, 30.09.11)

In his own interview, the editor switches between sympathy for anyone who might want to leave and admiration for those who stayed (as all of them did):

There were perhaps one or two of those [reporters] who joined us later, who were uncertain whether or not it was a good idea, whether or not it was safe, but who chose to do it anyway. On their *own* initiative. But we had a strong team feeling. Maybe we thought that . . . We are located here, together, and doing this very important job. And there is a reason why we’re here. I believe everyone was motivated by the fact that we were located where we could get the job done. And that we had this incredibly important job to do. It had never felt more important than at that moment to get information out to the citizens. (Editing Manager VG, 16.09.2011)

Several of the staff members of this team who forced their way back into the newsroom emphasised that the job came first, and then came the personal realisation of the extent of the tragedy and its resonance. The leader of this group explained his approach to all of the day’s subjective experiences and emotions from a different angle, seeing them almost as valuable resources for the objective professional. He noted that it was, oddly, a dream for a journalist to be working so close to a breaking news event, even one as horrific as this. When asked to elaborate, he explained that he had long worked with people who had been through major events, and now felt he could identify with them and understand or even share in their strength: “To experience yourself what you have looked for in others . . . is interesting” (*ibid.*).

In contrast to the example above, the editors at TV2 had a slightly different challenge. TV2’s main office is located in Bergen, on the west coast of Norway, and another office is located in downtown Oslo, not far from the government building. Until the attack on 22 July 2011, this split arrangement had been frequently discussed internally at TV2. In October 1990, the Norwegian parliament had decided that TV2’s main office had to be located in Bergen (Syvertsen, 1997, p. 33) in order for the broadcaster to receive the concession to produce news in a commercial public service manner. As time went on, several staff members in the Oslo office felt that it was unfair that the Bergen office was

prioritised, because the Oslo office was the busiest part of the organisation. On 22 July, of course, several informants actually applauded the split arrangement, because TV2 Oslo was evacuated later in the evening, whereas TV2 Bergen could go on producing live coverage from its studio. When the bomb exploded, the Oslo news editor recalled being on the phone with the Bergen news editor:

I was sitting at my place at the newsdesk on the fifth floor in the newsroom and talking to [the evening news editor in Bergen] [...] We were brainstorming ideas to improve the 9 pm news broadcast. [...] which is quite ironic to think about afterwards. As we exchanged ideas aloud, there was an explosion. (Desk Editor, TV2, 25.08.2011)

At that moment, the Oslo news editor thought the sound of the explosion might have come from some of the technical production equipment on TV2's rooftop. The whole building trembled, and parts of the plastic lamps in the ceiling fell to the floor. About thirty people were in the newsroom, the editor recalled, and some screamed aloud, and ran back and forth. A couple of team members were sent to the government building, and then the phones started ringing everywhere and e-mails began to arrive. The news editor recalled that after two or three minutes, he knew it was a bomb attack, and that the bomb had exploded in the government quarters (Desk Editor, 25.08.2011).

From this point on, the news editor had to field various incoming inquiries, including calls from staff members in the field:

There was a lot of shouting and screaming . . . of course when you arrive at the government quarter and see the situation there, many reacted strongly. [...] You hear it on the phone. It is not difficult to hear that. (Desk Editor 25.08.2011)

This news editor explained that he understood the staff members' dramatic reactions, but then went on to advocate the ideal of objective and balanced media coverage by emphasising that when "you are at work, you *are* at work". He noted, for example, that one reporter had to go live on air with a victim's dead body behind her. He also said that he needed to send out a team of people who were not only colleagues, but also colleagues who were friends, to cover reports of shots being fired with an automatic rifle. This happened during the first phase when the massacre at Utøya was still going on. At that time, of course, TV2 Oslo was evacuating the building, and it was not possible to get hold of bulletproof vests. While the editor warned the group not to take any risks, he still chose to send them.

This news editor, then, clearly privileges capturing the event on camera at any cost. By using words like “shouting and screaming” to describe the reactions of his offsite colleagues, he distances himself from their emotional involvement and represents the ideal of the distant observer, someone who is cool and balanced and in control, with no emotional attachment. This editor’s behaviour is in marked contrast to the way in which the top news editor of TV2 News talked about his experience that evening. We held this interview three weeks after the event, and he displayed both an editor’s professional distance and an attitude of acceptance towards the subjective and emotional reactions of his colleagues:

We are used to covering the worst incidents in the world and we take on a role. Often the reaction comes afterwards, but you need to do your job. You reflect upon your work: “Okay, I need to hurry, hurry, if I am going to be able to produce this within the deadline. I need to fix this and that. This is shit but . . .” [...] then reactions follow. I also have the same reaction as many reporters speak about. I have covered the tsunami, and I have walked among dead bodies in Thailand. I have talked to the victims’ relatives and all that. However, this was different, because it happened at home. It did something to us. Also, as a reporter you understand that earthquakes happen. It is understandable that a bus full of kids might hit a rock wall. Of course it is a tragedy, but tragedies do happen. That a twisted person among our own people walks around and executes children, that should not be allowed to be understood. It is not possible to accept. The fear he spread around for about one and a half hours out there [on Utøya], the damage he caused, it is not possible to grasp. It awakens a different kind of feeling in you than during natural disasters or a huge traffic accident. [ ] Then I thought: “It is OK. Why should I be unaffected? Why should I be balanced now when so many people are experiencing an indescribable hell?” (News editor TV2 News, 11.08.2011)

This high-ranking manager at TV2 recognises the importance of showing empathy, compassion and emotion during an event such as this. He was also comfortable talking about it in our interview a couple of weeks later. His openness concerning his emotional state was clearly different from how our other informants explained their feelings. The reporters from all the other organisations emphasised that they prioritised the job, and dismissed their emotional responses in the name of their professionalism. In other words, the manager clearly expressed and processed feelings, while the news workers chose to

focus on routines and practices, and did not identify emotions as part of the journalistic profession, even during extreme events.

## The Managed: Reporters in the field

The situation in the newsroom may not have been significantly different in terms of news production and content management, but the situation in the field was creating new challenges.

NRK was headquartered further from where the bomb exploded than either TV2 or VG. One journalist informant recalled being notified by a flash message from the Norwegian News Agency (NTB) at about 3.40 pm. While he quickly grasped the magnitude of the event, the photographer he took with him was new to the job and slower to understand what was happening. When they arrived at the site, both saw that it was even bigger than they had imagined:

[At first] I am focused on not speculating on who was behind the attack. First of all, we did not know if this was terror. We observed huge damage, but did not know the motive. I remember keeping the options open, but concluding that we did not know what it is. It might be a gas explosion; it might be a bomb. We did not know. We needed to wait to hear what the police would say. Then, some of the experts in the studio, whom I heard talking through my earpiece, started talking about Al-Qaida. [...] I reacted to that, standing at the location, because in my experience it was too early [to make this statement]. [Senior Reporter NRK, 9.10.2011]

It is clear that the reporter on site saw things that made him gauge the situation differently from those journalists who remained in-house. Still, the experts in the studio were being encouraged to analyse in a vacuum, while the reporter had not been asked to do the same. Later, the police confirmed that a bomb had exploded, and the reporter realised that this invited such speculation. The NRK informants all remarked upon the gap between the news workers who were located safely indoors, and those who worked more independently outside. One technician who was immersed in work at the site lamented the fact that the indoor staff workers were better accommodated, and that the desk editors often lacked the competence to organise or allocate the right resources to the right person:

There were simple things, like the fact that we have some equipment that can be used in the city where we do not need a satellite, and we have some equipment that requires one. We can only use that if we can make contact with the satellite. But the satellite is not straight above; it is sort of to the side. So if a house blocks it, it won't work. So, downtown in Oslo, sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. The editors didn't understand this. I tried to explain it a hundred times and how this is very important.

This statement notes the chaos of the initial phase of the event and highlights the problems associated with not having access to the right person with the right competence at the right moment. He then described the situation when he was working closer to Utøya:<sup>1</sup>

No one thought about us, and when you're sitting there and have been working twenty hours straight and haven't eaten in about twenty hours, uh . . . you get really provoked when you receive an email about how dinner is served and dessert, and I don't know what the fuck they are getting, you know. [...] All the organising for those out in the field was not good. [ Technician NRK, 9.10.2011 ]

In addition to concerns about organisational constraints, this quote shows how distance to the main office affects working conditions. Although the technicians do not have an editor looking over their shoulder, they were also affected by lack of resources. Here the technician shows how isolating it can be to work in the field. In this instance, the indoor environment appeared safer, more comfortable and more team-oriented. In other words, to be able to use their given autonomy and have more control over the work, they need to have the possibility to do so.

Even though reporters and technicians are assigned to certain missions when working outdoors and away from the newsroom, such work comes with dilemmas that require decision making without having to contact the editor. At TV2 for example, a team consisting of a reporter and a photographer arrived at the TV2 newsdesk from an assignment on Utøya, ironically, just as the event unfolded in Oslo, while the terrorist was making his way to where they had been. The experienced news reporter from this team ran straight to the government building, because he and his photographer had heard the blast in their

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1 The massacre took place on an island, Utøya, in the county of Buskerud, Norway.

car. The photographer followed and recalled how she just let her camera record everything, except for about five minutes as she crossed over from the street (Grubbegata) behind the government building and experienced a complete loss of memory (Photographer/ Reporter, 5.8.2011). She explained that she needed to take control of herself and make her own choice whether or not to continue filming: “Everyone becomes their own news editor, in a way,” she said. Ethical considerations were particularly individual: “You need to make some serious choices concerning what length you can go to”. This was true of the aforementioned, high-ranking TV2 editor as well, who described in great detail his own struggle to reconcile himself to his work, however difficult:

So this did a lot more to me as a human than as a journalist. . . I thought this was horrible. And I barely ate and slept. So I thought, “It is okay. Because why should I have . . . Why should I not be affected by this? Why should I be okay when so many people are feeling extremely bad?” So it is, it is manageable. But what I also said to myself is, “Now I am emotionally affected. I have to be more democratic, listen more, and have more meetings than usual, because I cannot trust 100 per cent in my own judgment”. So I just had to admit that I can’t . . . make a decision like “Yes! Let’s do it!” as I can do more easily when things are more distant. So I went for more of a . . . opened it up more, went for a more democratic style. And I hope that does not make me look insecure, but that it was seen as inclusive and . . . that better decisions were made because of it. (News Editor, TV2, 17.08.11)

Another reporter on 22 July went in a different direction and decided to rely on her own instincts and decisions. She was broadcasting live from the hotel where both survivors and their family members were being given shelter. She was among those reporters who were interviewing the people there, and had to decide who could manage it and who could not. She also described a dual role as both a professional journalist and a caring fellow human being.

Yes. Like those people I talked about and what I became the most aware of by being out there was “You have to be an empathic person”. That came quite intuitively to me. Later, I reflected upon the fact that this is part of my regular personality. I am frequently “out to get” politicians. Then, empathy is not part of my job. Then my style is very tough, you know. While the job I did here, it was . . . There was the professional part of me, but I also needed to use that part of my personality which I do not really use at work. It became sort of a dual role – which worked. (TV2 Reporter, TV2 19.08.11)

Unlike the previous informant, who felt that he would not be able to trust himself because he was emotionally affected by what had happened, this informant used emotions such as empathy, warmth and caring as part of her professional work. Compassion was even more important in this example, where the reporter witnessed a survivor in shock who was being surrounded by a horde of journalists:

A girl [survivor from Utøya, our comment] walks out from the hotel. She's going to the store. Journalists are flocking around her and she is standing up against a fence, that type of iron fence you can find on a pedestrian – you know, a high fence. And journalists are flocking around her [...] I am asking her questions as well. [...] And I look at her during the interview, and at all of the journalists surrounding her, pressing her up against the fence. And I turn to the photographer and say, "We are cutting this off. I can't be a part of this". I can tell that she is in shock. And I can tell from her answers and facial expressions that this is too much. But she . . . she is in a situation she can't get out of. She gets questions in English and in Norwegian and it is not a good situation. So we pull out and walk away and I say, "Just delete that interview, we're not sending it home. Remove it from the tape so that it doesn't . . . so that it won't come out in any sort of way". The photographer agrees. He was thinking the same thing almost before I was. Then I see a policeman and I go up to him and say to him: "Listen. You have to prepare these kids who come out here, that there is a lot of press here. Look up there. There is a young girl there. It looks to me as if she is in a situation she does not want to be in. I don't know for sure but someone should go up there and take responsibility". (Reporter TV2, 19.08.11)

These examples demonstrate a profound awareness of and ability to reflect on the ways in which subjectivity matters when individuals are confronted with ethical and other dilemmas during a terror situation. During times of terror, it turns out that the "managed" are less managed than usual, and rather find themselves in a position where they must rely on their own interpretation of what constitutes news, and what is in the best interest of the people affected and the audience watching/ reading/ listening. During terror and crises the "managed" are required to rise to the occasion, grasp the challenge inherent in not being managed and enter into the role of self-managers. As seen above, this requires journalists to be capable of managing their roles as professionals, but also to rely upon their subjective judgements and individual resources. This point is illustrated in the quote above where the reporter stepped out of

her role as a professional, even though it risked limiting her task as reporter, and rather used her personal judgement as a human. Interestingly, when the reporter was asked to verify her quote, she worried that she would get criticised for being unprofessional. Back in her everyday professional life she wanted an institutional confirmation to legitimise her behavior, and chose to disclose her identity as informant to the management when asking them to decide whether or not she should permit this quote to be published. Interestingly, when interviewed and reflecting back upon the event, the reporter wondered if that moment of humanity in fact could be viewed as a breach of professionalism. In other words, even if the managed appear to gain autonomy during crises and terror, actions may later be re-evaluated in light of existing journalistic norms and codes.

## The Affected: Reporters as sources

Many reporters felt that personal and subjective feelings had to be controlled. Journalists' reflections upon subjectivity versus objectivity, and upon their emotions during their coverage of a terror attack, clearly demonstrate that they remained well aware of their humanity despite the veneer of neutrality. This is especially so during big crises or terror events which affect entire communities, and thus increase the probability that journalists know victims personally. During the 22 July attack, reporters felt the importance of "the job first". Some reporters were faced with the challenge of how to handle professionally the fact that the attacker was a childhood acquaintance. A journalist who grew up geographically near the terrorist, in the same community, expressed sadness about not having been able to participate in the national grieving process, because he had to put that all aside and work:

I was born and raised in Oslo, and as it turns out, I was the same age and from the same borough as the perpetrator. Childhood friends of mine even remember him from when we were young. Personally, I think it is a shame that you [as a reporter] had to push these things aside. On the other hand, I felt it was rewarding to be able to communicate to hundreds of thousands or more readers. There are mixed emotions. But I . . . for my part the emotions were cast aside. I have considered taking a few moments to myself to go through all of this stuff, but as of now have not bothered to do so. 22 July was first of all work. The tragedy came next (VG Nett Online Reporter 2011).

This autonomy may also be extended to how reporters choose to be sources of information. The NRK reporter who grew up near where the terrorist lived, decided to handle this shock by writing a commentary for BBC online rather than agreeing to any interviews with his peers:

I did not want to be quoted as an interviewee in a talk-show or be “sound-bited” from that. But I understood that the information was going to be published, so I preferred to turn it into a narrative and state that this is my story. This is it! Bam! Here you go! Here it is! Then people can use it if they want, but I have told the story in my own words. [...] It was important for me to do it in such a way that I could control the quality, the way the words were uttered. [...] There were newspapers in Norway and in Sweden that used parts of it. And that was fine. It was better to do that than to do one hundred interviews with journalists asking trick questions. (Senior Reporter NRK, 9.11.2011)

In this way, this reporter took control of an unexpected finding: he actually knew the terrorist he had speculated about throughout his coverage. Instead of letting himself be turned into an interviewee, and thereby become part of the bigger story, he chose to engage differently with the news in order to protect himself. In other words, he chose his own strategy when it came to handling requests from his colleagues in the media and in the press.

A rising numbers of terror incidents affecting entire communities, including both big and small towns and countries, where reporters are challenged by the proximity of relations illustrate the difficulty for news workers to hold on to a professional role. Rather we see how this forces journalists to look for strategies elsewhere than in their professional role.

## Conclusions

This study has looked at whether and how journalists cope with, and reflect upon, subjective and individual choices during their coverage of a terror attack. Through an examination of the roles and perspectives of news personnel from three different institutions, TV2, VG and NRK, we found that journalists working in teams tended to modify their choices according to some overall personal and individual aim or goal of their coverage. Reporters assigned to work in the field had more latitude in making their own choices

and decisions — for example, the TV2 news reporter who alerted the police about her concerns for a young victim being crowded by the press demonstrated a high degree of self-awareness in doing so. Yet all of the journalists in the field who were confronted with emotional proximity to this tragedy explicitly emphasised that they retreated to the habits and norms of their professionalism in order to focus solely on their tasks. Later, they would try to dwell more on the event for personal and subjective reasons, though this was not always easy.

Editors and managers seemed better able to handle such situations in tandem with their personal and subjective emotional reactions. One contributing factor might be that the managers and editors stayed within the newsrooms and worked as teams, whereas the reporters in the field were more directly interacting with victims and ordinary people on the streets away from other journalists. On the other hand, some of the interviewed editors also shared the experience of the reporter out in the streets facing despair in terms of emotional upheaval. This raises the question as to whether news editors and managers atop the newsroom hierarchy allow themselves more latitude for their feelings than the regular workers “on the floor”. It is also important to note that journalists in the field are also often senior reporters with a higher status, particularly in television, and they may have more latitude in this regard as well.

Ultimately, it remains uncertain how much awareness journalists have of their personal investment in the news events they cover. While both journalists and managers rise to the occasion decisions often take place intuitively more than reflectively. Since some of the interviews took place several months after the incident, the reporters would have had time to reflect upon the fact that they needed to act and think outside the boundaries of how they on an everyday basis would have defined professionalism, and how this affected them during the coverage. This study finds that reflections on a deeper level turned out to be difficult for the informants. However, this only proves how important it is to aim for a better understanding of how journalists and reporters experience emotion during traumatic events. Moments of terror and tragedy bring such considerations to the fore, and further study would do well to engage with both the workers and the workplace to determine the nature of the negotiations that are required.

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