

Title:

Covering Terrorism: 911 Versus 311 in American and Spanish Newspaper Front Pages

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1. Introduction

In our paper we analyze the differences in the front page coverage of the terrorist attacks in New York and Madrid in US and Spanish daily newspapers, focusing on the photograph's selection. In terms of comparative studies, events of enough relevance can be difficult to find (Killebrew, 1999). Unfortunately September 11 is not the case: the magnitude of the 11 September terrorist act does not need any explanation. On the other side of the Atlantic, the international prominence of the attack in Madrid grew due to its authorship by the same terrorist group.

Although political considerations are unavoidable, we will focus on the media treatment given to the victims, as we firmly believe they should be the priority of the information about terrorism. If front of pain we are all the same, the way media inform about it is one of the main differences around the world, specially regarding the selection and treatment of pictures. Some cultures accept violent images better than others, which means that, a fact would be illustrated in a very different way in newspapers in Indonesia or Europe. In words of Ray Rivera, reporter at the Seattle Times:

“as someone with feet in both the U.S. and Hispanic cultures, I would say the U.S. does tend to shy away from violent news images more readily than Latin cultures. Geography may have a great deal to do with that. Until the 9/11 bombings, those images were seldom on our doorstep” (Rivera, 2004a).

2. Methodology

This is not a comprehensive analysis of all the US and Spanish newspapers: we have studied front pages from 74 American newspapers¹ whose editions were available through the web site of the Newseum, the covers printed by the 5 national Spanish dailies and the valencian regional papers (no availability of other regional papers back to that date). In the case study of the coverage of March 11² we compare the 5 national Spanish dailies, the valencian press and 35 regional newspapers with 45³ American papers.

Our paper only refers to front pages because, not only they are the easiest to access a bigger number of papers, but they also concentrate the spirit of a publication: according to the Poynter Institute, they are the most debated and competitive space in any publication and serve as a billboard to the rest of the paper, and when talking about September 11 they “codified the magnitude of what happened” (Naughton, 2001).

¹ *The Examiner, Anchorage Daily News, The Anniston Star, The Birmingham News, Arkansas Democrat Gazette, The Arizona Republic, Los Angeles Times, The Oakland Tribune, The San Diego Union-Tribune, San Jose Mercury News, National Post, The Globe and Mail, The Denver Post, Rocky Mountain News (March 12), Rocky Mountain News (11 S Extra Edition), Hartford Courant, Norwich Bulletin, The Washington Post, El Nuevo Herald, The Miami Herald, Orlando Sentinel (12 S), Orlando Sentinel (extra edition), The Atlanta Constitution, The Honolulu Advertiser, West Hawaii Today, The Des Moines Register, The Idaho Statesman, International Herald Tribune, Chicago Tribune, Rockford, Register Star, The Indianapolis Star, USA Today Special Edition, USA Today, The Wichita Eagle, The Courier-Journal, American Press, The Advocate, The Boston Globe. The Sun, Portland Press Herald, Sun Journal, Detroit Free Press, The Detroit News, Star Tribune, The Kansas City Star, St Louis Post-Dispatch, The Clarion-Ledger, The Sun Herald, The Charlotte Observer, The News & Observer, The Forum, Lincoln Journal Star, Concord Monitor, The Star-Ledger, Albuquerque Journal, New York Post, The New York Times, The Post-Standard, Democrat and Chronicle, Syracuse Herald-Journal, Times Unión, Akron Beacon Journal, The Plain Dealer, Dayton Daily News, The Daily Oklahoman, Tulsa World, The Oregonian, Statesman Journal, The Philadelphia Inquirer, The Dallas Morning News, The Daily Telegraph, The Seattle Times (extra edition), Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, The Wall Street Journal.*

² For the study of the March 11 attacks in the Spanish press, we have taken information from two previous studies (Castanos, 2004) that measured the increase in type and photographs and considered the content of the pictures selected by the 5 national Spanish newspapers.

³ *Anchorage Daily News, The Anniston Star, The Arizona Republic, Los Angeles Times, The Oakland Tribune, San Jose Mercury News, The Globe and Mail, The Denver Post, Rocky Mountain News, Hartford Courant, The Washington Post, The Miami Herald, Orlando Sentinel, The Atlanta Constitution, The Honolulu Advertiser, The Des Moines Register, International Herald Tribune, Chicago Tribune, The Indianapolis Star, USA Today, American Press, The Advocate, The Boston Globe, Portland Press Herald, Detroit Free Press, The Detroit News, Star Tribune, The Kansas City Star, St Louis Post-Dispatch, The Clarion-Ledger, The News & Observer, Concord Monitor, The Star-Ledger, Albuquerque Journal, The New York Times, Times Unión, Akron Beacon Journal, The Plain Dealer, Dayton Daily News, Tulsa World, The Oregonian, The Philadelphia Inquirer, The Seattle Times Extra Edition, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, The Wall Street Journal.*

We have focused on the selection of pictures, as front pages after exceptional events give them the bigger space. Due to the visual dimension of both attacks, specially in the case of September 11, the informative impact of the images was necessary to understand the real dimension of what was happening (Edo, 2002). In a short reference we have not forget the headlines, the other key element in the covers.

We have classified the pictures ran by every newspaper cover after both attacks in a database according to their content in order to be able to evaluate the percentage of every category: presence of the Twin Towers, no persons on the scenario, presence of injured victims, death bodies shown, death bodies covered... We have repeated the same operation to study the headlines, categorizing the terms in use in the database.

3. Hypothesis

To start our comparative study we made two hypothesis:

H1. In quantitative terms, the coverage given to the attacks in Manhattan is the same both in US and Spanish newspapers: the impact of the attack, number of victims and cultural proximity make of it an event of maximum relevance also for the Spanish press. The information about the Madrid bombings is wider in the Spanish newspapers, due to the geographical proximity of the events, although its possible connections with the same terrorist group authorship and the number of victims gave it international coverage.

H2. American press would not print disturbing images of any of the attacks. Spanish newspapers showed violent images of the attack in Madrid because the audience is more used to be exposed to that kind of pictures and they would not react in a negative way due to our visual background and culture.

Before presenting our analysis of the front pages we need to introduce a background about the situation of Spain in front of terrorism, and we have make a comparison with that in the US, before September 11. We also make a reference to our visual history, as a key to understand the way society accepts the visual representation of pain.

4. Some differences between Spain and US regarding terrorism and terrorism information until September 11

Until March 11, terrorist actions had killed in Spain more than 900 persons since the 60's (not only ETA, but also other groups that fortunately seem to be dismantled at the present moment). In front of this situation media have acted in different ways through the times, not only when talking about picture selection but regarding their informative role in general. Everybody agrees nowadays that silence is not an option under a democratic society: not only is not possible on a globalized world but it could lead to bigger terrorist acts whose results would not be possible to be minimized.

In Spain, both, legally (specially under Jose María Aznar's government) and journalistically, terrorism is being treated as criminal act, taking out the term "political" to consider its violence (even though, terrorism continues to be featured on the politics section of the newspaper). Specially after the assassination of politician Miguel Angel Blanco, most media have opted to treat terrorists just as criminals and they have focused on the victims to show that being one is not anymore something to be ashamed of. Most media (obviously not those on the part of the terrorists) agree that neutral information is not possible when covering terrorism: victims and terrorists do not deserve the same coverage.

On the other side, modern acts of terrorism have been relatively few in the US (Killebrew, 1999) until September 11. That is maybe why, most formal agreements and legislation concerning terrorism focused on the illegality of the action taken not on the group or its motive (Combs and Martin, 2002): prevention of terrorist acts, not designation of terrorist groups⁴ is the states focus of law enforcement today (the despersonalisation we will be talking later about, is also found here). Most coverage of terrorist acts until September 11 have a majority of political terms (Killebrew, 1999) and western media allege to be objective when covering terrorism (Zeng, 2003).

⁴ Although the main terrorist group in Spain, ETA, is considered nowadays by the US Department of State as a terrorist group, some media (like CNN for instance) still mention them as vasque separatist group or even guerrilla while undoubtedly al Qaeda it is considered terrorist group.

5. Death and destruction representation in Spanish and American visual culture

If the history of Spanish painting is represented by Ribera or Zurbaran, and specially



“San Felipe’s martyrdom” by Ribera and “Aparición del apóstol San Pedro a San Pedro Nolasco” by Zurbarán, show in their open eyes all the intensity of the pain (Museo del Prado, Madrid)

Goya whose “*The shootings of May 3*” is a referent for the interpretation of “*Falling soldier*” by Robert Capa, the American War of Independence is symbolized by E. Gottlieb Leutze in “*George Washington crossing the Delaware*” where the protagonist is not death but victory, represented in the American flag, as in Joe Rosenthal’s photograph, “*Iwo Jima flag raising*”, and in some of the pictures after September 11⁵.

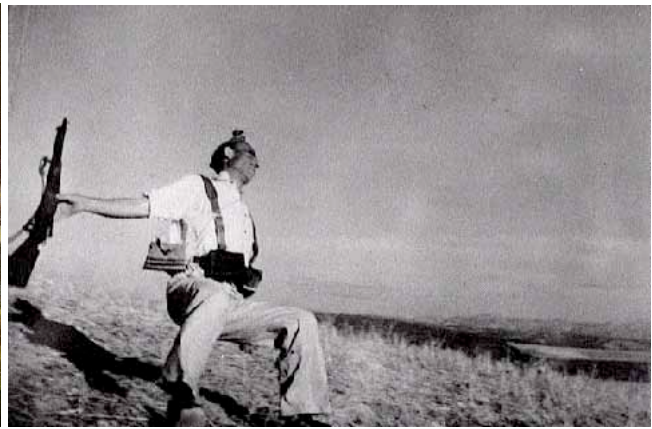
Such different interpretations of war, that of Goya and Gottlieb, give as a result two versions of the modern representation of violence: the Spanish one, where dead victims are the protagonists, and the American one, where, more frequently a message of victory is given and hope is a constant, avoiding the images of corpses or injured victims.

This absence of bodies in the newspapers is due in terms of David Cambell to

“the intersection of three economies: the economy of indifference to others, the economy of ‘taste and decency’ whereby the media itself regulates de

⁵ The use of the flag in the American culture (that we don’t find so commonly in Spain mainly due to its relationship with the dictatorship of Franco) it is well accepted by most of the American population, also after September 11 according to the research “Americans struggle with religion’s role at home and abroad” conducted by Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (2002).

representation of death and atrocity, and the economy of display governing the details of an image's production” (Cambell, 2004).



Goya's "Shootings of May 3" (Museo del Prado, Madrid), Capa's "Falling soldier" (Cornell Capa Photos/Magnum Photos), "George Washington crossing the Delaware" by E. Gottlieb Leutze (Metropolitan

This antivisualist coverage of pain, dominant in most American media, recovers according to Paschalidis the iconoclast tradition of the Reform and represents an opposite to the Spanish catholic roots, where so deeply lay images of bleeding Jesuschrist on the cross (Paschalidis, 2004). If "the meaning given to the pictures depends to a large extent on the viewer providing the picture with context, to give it a past, and promises of the future [...]" (Ryan, 2004) it is no coincidence that Spanish visual culture portraying pain not only does not frighten



Semana Santa de Zamora

audiences but also helps to put the victims under a context of martyrdom and heaven's promise.

Before finishing this reference to the visual tradition, both in painting and photography, we can't forget to mention that the attraction felt towards the destroyed buildings is not something new: the fallen column, a symbol of strength since Sanson won the philistines destroying their temple, is also found in paintings by Bellini, Mantegna or Giorgione. Otherwise, the motive of the ruins in a belicous context, like in "The Battle of Alexander" by Altdorfer, in Poussin's "The Conquest of Jerusalem" and in "The Surrender of Breda" by Velázquez, is never the protagonist, just the battlefield (even in one of the better exponents of the ruins theme, Hubert Robert, his landscapes include also human beings or animals).

The controversial publication of violent images is so old as the history of photojournalism. From the first photographed war, the Paris Commune, pictures of ruins were very popular due to technical limitations that did not allow to take photos of the battle front and because of the influence of the painting tradition. According to Alisa Luxenberg, French photographers:

"focused on architectural ruins in Paris after the Commune, using the technique of redescription, transferring and transforming the war "wounds" from bodies to buildings, skin to stone" (Luxenberg, 1988).

In a similar way in Crimea, Roger Fenton avoided the image of dead soldiers (due to censorship –to avoid frightening their families– technical limitations and the restrictions imposed by sponsors) and once again the image of war that of the emptiness in "The valley of the shadow of death", although in this very war, James Robertson photographed for the first time in history dead soldiers in the battlefield (Sousa, 2003).

In her study of the photographic treatment of ETA attacks, Nekane Parejo has also pointed how in the first stages, the presence of the dead victim is avoided, being later substituted by the use of objects or sceneries used as a symbol (Parejo, 2004). In the case

of Ground Zero photographs by Meyerowitz, Liam Kennedy recalls Piranesi's ruins of Rome, "referring us to a loss of empire" (Kennedy, 2003).

4. September 11 front page analysis

a. U.S. newspapers

According to its magnitude, the coverage of the terrorist plane crashes against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, was exceptional, and that was shown by all front pages with headlines and pictures bigger than ever, even displaying all caps headlines. Obviously no other story occupied an inch in the front pages, that also eliminated advertisements.

Out of the 74 American dailies studied, 63 (an 84 per cent) showed in their front page the image of the Twin Towers (including those that gave them the protagonism and some that put them in second term). In the rest dailies (16 per cent) 8 showed the ruins of the towers: two of them (*Syracuse Herald-Journal* and *Statesman Journal*) chose the picture in which fire brigades raise a flag, a clear reference to Iwo Jima. The three left gave the protagonism to people running out of the zone (*Democrat and Chronicle* and *The Des Moines Register*, that chose the photograph with a bigger human presence, the same one selected as a protagonist by the *Idaho Statesman*, that although smaller also included the image of the towers). On the other side, the *Atlanta Constitution* chose the image of the emptiness left by the towers on the skyline of Manhattan. Only one of the dailies of the sample (already included in those that showed the images of the towers) *Arkansas Democrat*, selected the pictures of the towers with people over the Brooklyn Bridge as a background.

The protagonism of the majority of front pages was given to the towers of the World Trade Center. Only 20 of the newspapers of the sample chose a different image: 17 of them portrayed the ruins of the towers and only 3 showed people running away.

We can confirm that the presence of victims in the front pages is very limited: if we include the secondary images, only 20 of the dailies (about the 25 per cent of the sample) showed injured victims, 12 portrayed people escaping from the area (only 3 as protagonist, as mentioned above), 16 newspapers (about the 20 per cent) coincided in

the selection of pictures depicting people giving comfort to each others, and, finally, 10 of the papers (about the 13 per cent) showed frightened people or panic scenes in different spots to that the affected area. Other secondary images were 13 of President Bush, only 8 of the damages of Pentagon and 2 of Bin Laden. One of the only pictures showing injured persons, possibly bleeding, is found in the *Rockford Register Star*, very small, at the bottom part and the only one in the page printed in black and white (we think this option minimizes the impact of the blood presence). As an exceptional case, *The Wall Street Journal*, that due to its location near the Twin Towers had its production altered, printed its front page (before the redesign of Mario Garcia) with the only image of a small map. Although the discrete depiction because some editors believe they must protect the public from disturbing photos (Blue, 2001), controversia arose when *The Daily News* published pictures of people falling from the World Trade Center and (in the inside) a severed hand.

On the other side a picture depicting a woman comforting a man was present although in different places and crops, was printed by several papers (in *The Indianapolis Star*, *The Anniston Star*, *The Detroit News*, *The Washington Post*, *Orlando Sentinel*, *The Miami Herald* o *The Sun* de Baltimore). *The Times* of Los Angeles with the picture of two women embracing each other, gave the same idea of solidarity that is shown also in some headlines (“United We Stand”). As pointed out by Carlos Soria, one of the objectives of the information against terrorism should be to “show precisely the thing that terrorists don’t want to be known” and, of course, to “transmit hope” (Soria, 2002) and in the study by David Ryan

“there was a simultaneous move towards closure and an attempt to promote certain interpretations and impose a certain framework through the pictures of September 11, that echoed the sentiment of resolve and national values that were being developed in official rhetoric and through the choice of depiction in the mainstream media” (Ryan, 2004).

There were hard images that were not printed⁶: as pointed by Kenneth F. Irby “hard decisions are being made about what photographs to publish or to hold from public view” (Irby, 2001) and specially photographer Patt Blue

“Editors have seen the most gruesome pictures and their decisions to be sensitive, i.e., withhold them from the public, cannot but be influenced by this cumulative exposure” (Blue, 2001).

As in Roger Fenton’s “The valley of the shadow of death”, it is the portrait of “death without dead bodies” (Sontag, 2002). This absence of the victims and the use of the World Trade Center towers provoked a depersonalization of the attack, due not only to the media’s own censorship about violent images, but also as a way to create a framework that permits take the Western civilization under as the target. According to Ramoneda:

“the absence of images depersonalized the victims, making of ther an only big victim” (Ramoneda, 2004).

None of the American papers printed the images of people falling down or any others that arrived to the newsrooms in their front pages, and by doing it, the Towers became the symbol of the material and personal destruction. The victims families, that not only were not concern about privacy, but they asked the media to be able to access details to identify their loved ones (Kratzer, 2003), also suffered the absence when not having a body to mourn and even complaining because the memorial in Ground Zero is going to be more an homage to the buildings and not the persons” (El Pais, 2002).

On the headlines we find more emotive than informative expressions, except *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post* and *Herald Tribune*. Even *The New York Times* used the subhead to give the information about the attack, below the headline “U.S. ATTACKED”. Most titles were written in terms of “America”, “nation” o

⁶ Renee Martin Kratzer and Brian Kratzer conducted a research about “How Newspaper Decided to Run Disturbing 9/11 Photos” where they afirm that the debate about picture selection centered around three issues “reader response, victim’s privacy and the ability of the photographs to communicate the story” (Kratzer and Kratzer, 2003).

“home” (except, for instance, *Florida Today*, *The Morning Call* o *Times Union* that focused on freedom under menace. Most headlines were single or double worded set in all caps, with expressions we have classified in four categories according to their content: warlike (attack, siege, revenge, war, defense...); fear (terror, terrorism, fear, evil, anguish, dark hours, devastation, infamy, ...); bloody (death, dead, bloody, mass murder, ...) and exclamative (bastards, who, the day after). Most of them coincide in terms of “terror” and “terrorism” (17 of them), followed in number by those using the word “attack” (12 headlines), while only 8 of the newspapers chose the word “evil” and 7 opted for “war”. Few of them mentioned the number of casualties in the main headline giving the text the same role that the one chosen for the pictures.

b. Spanish newspapers

In Spain, the newspapers of September 12 also offered exceptional covers, with titles using the page width, big pictures and no advertisements. No other story was printed on the front pages.

The more used image was that of the towers (being attacked in *El Mundo* and falling down in *El País*, both of them taken from TV⁷; topped by a black cloud just before the crash of the second plane in *La Vanguardia* or just its remains in *ABC*). The attacks of the Pentagon and the other hijacked plane, like in the American covers, were reduced to a second term. The only human (no injured or dead victims) presence was that of Bin Laden in *ABC* and in some regional papers, like *Diario de Navarra* that printed the picture showing people running away.

Titles in most cases focused on the number of victims, a very different approach to the one given in the US, and they coincided in the use of the term “attack”. The only non informative headline was the one in *La Vanguardia*, “Guerra a EE.UU” (“War to US”), *ABC* also run a bellicose one, widening the space under menace to the western world (“Occidente”).

⁷ We have to consider that the amount and selection of the images was limited in most cases to the ones served by the international agencies.

5. March 11 front page analysis

a. Spanish newspapers

Every newspaper printed its cover with just this story, according to the magnitude of the biggest terrorist attack in Spain. Type and picture grew, and most newspapers showed hard images of the scene and its victims like *La Razón*, *El País* or *El Mundo*. Most front pages were mainly photographic and they showed completely the savagery of terrorism, which immediately make appear the polemics about the graphic treatment (Castanos, 2004). We need to point here that although its compact format and the physical appearance of the Spanish newspapers printed on March 12, none of them would enter the status of tabloid or sensationalist newspaper (specially *El País* or *El Mundo*, reference papers not only in Spain but also in Europe).

Victims were the protagonists in most of the front pages (the trains were kept in the background but were present in most of the pictures): even those that did not print images of them, focused their headlines on the number of casualties. On the photographs, most of the dailies hide the identity of the victims, (*ABC* and *La Vanguardia* among the national papers) running pictures with victims under a blanket or the ones of the black bags. From the total number of 40 front pages, 12 of them showed identifiable killed victims, but the more discussed image was the one run by *El País*, showing a femur. Some international media also chose this photograph by Pablo Torres Guerrero, but either crop it or photoshopped it opening the debate about picture manipulation (*The Washington Post* was one of the few American papers that publish it in the front page). Three of the Spanish covers chose a different approach with a very close photograph of a woman crying or just set with type.

PICTURE CONTENT ON SPANISH NEWSPAPERS ON MARCH 12

	Human parts	Uncovered corpses	Covered corpses	Black bags	Trains	Other	Injured
Number of newspapers (total of 40)	1	12	14	8	21	3	5

Although in Spanish media is not strange to see violent images, those of the attacks of Madrid (and some from Iraq) had been discussed arguing if it is necessary to show bloody scenes. It is the difficulty to act respecting the victim's right to privacy and the right of the people to know, which leads to so many different positions as number of

newspapers we can find at the newsagents. Most of the papers agreed to show the real aspect of the attacked area, and although the images printed were in many cases nearly unbearable to look at, they were not the worst ones (Casaña, 2004).

This attitude reflects the situation of Spain in front of terrorism: to show its real face, not minimizing the attacks to reduce its symbolic or even romantic halo. As pointed by Brian Michel Jenkins regarding to the media role

“terrorists want a lot of people looking and a lot of people giving them their attention but not a lot of dead people” (Jenkins, 1975).

Even the victims of the March 11 attack, represented by the mother of one of the victims realize that “images are instruments of information” and that “they have the power to unite and sensibilize the public opinion” although they ask to avoid the repetition of the images once they are no news anymore (El País, 2004).



Headlines, except *El País* and *ABC*, were emotive, with terms like “massacre”, “carnage” and “hell”. Some of the newspapers opted for expressions used by other papers after September 11 like *El Mundo* “El día de la infamia” (“A day of infamy” by *The Globe and Mail*; *Cinco Días* wrote “La matanza de Madrid conmociona al mundo”, similar to “Conmoción mundial por el masivo ataque contra EE. UU” in *La Nación* of Buenos Aires). Some American and Spanish papers coincided in the headlines on 12 March: *The Hartford Courant* and *El Correo Gallego* wrote “¿ETA o Al Qaeda?” while

Avui and *Rocky Mountains News* chose “Barbarie” and “Barbaric” respectively. Between the Spanish press we find more coincidences: “Masacre en Madrid” in *El Faro de Vigo*, *El Norte de Castilla*, *La Rioja*, *Diario de Navarra* and *Granada Hoy*; “Todos unidos contra el terror” in *La Razón* and *Expansión*). The text “11-M” and the parallelism with “11-S” is found in *La Vanguardia*, *El Periódico*, *La Razón*, *Heraldo de Aragón*, *Levante-EMV*, *Diario de Sevilla*, *Granada Hoy* and *Deia*.

PICTURES CONTENT ON SPANISH NATIONAL FRONT PAGES

	ABC	El País	El Mundo	La Razón	La Vanguardia	El Periódico	Las Provincias	Levante	Diario de Valencia
Injured victims	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N
Dead victims uncovered	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y
Covered dead victims	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Human body parts	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Blood	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N
Rests of the trains	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Graphics	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Black background	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N
Black lines	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N

b. *US newspapers*

We have studied 45 American newspapers and their coverage after 11 March. About an 80 per cent of them offered the story in a relevant place in the front page. Of them, more than the 62 per cent ran pictures showing one of the trains, covered victims and emergency teams. None of them chose a photograph without persons. More than a 35 per cent printed the image of the corpses in black bags near the railway, although not as the main picture. In no picture could victims be identified. Only the *International Herald Tribune* and *The Washington Post* printed the photograph taken by Pablo Torres, showing human parts on the railway (*The Virginian-Pilot* cropped it taking out the femur).

More than a 70 per cent of the papers of the sample wrote informative headlines, focusing on the number of deaths, although others talked about the authorship. Terms like “massacre”, “carnage” and “mass murder” (words used by former president Aznar) are the most common, and there is a scarce use of warlike terminology (except the

“attack” in *Albuquerque Journal*). A few papers opted for emotive heads, like “Barbaric” by *Rocky Mountains News* or “Terror and Tears in Madrid” by *Star-Ledger*. Most of the titles include the geographical reference “Madrid” or “Spain”, with the exception in *The Anniston Star*, that explained the “where” only in the subhead.

One of the more relevant aspects regarding picture selection made by US press on the 12 March newspapers is that most do show corpses. In our hypothesis 2, we stated that due to the restrictions made by “family papers” about disturbing images (Nesbitt, 2003), most American front pages would not show them. But it seem that the measurement of the level of violence is different when the victims are not American citizens. As expressed by Luxenberg: “shootings and other maimings of bodies may be recorded if the subjects are “them”; if “us”, the audience would wonder why the camera operator had not stopped to help his or her comrades” (Luxenberg, 1988) and by Irby when talking about September 11 picture selection

“this is a difficult process, and the graphic natures of these images –captured on US soil– taken in the most emotional environment, has obscured matters [...] Over time we have had little trouble showing ‘the exotic’ catastrophe...” (Irby, 2001).

Something similar thinks Ray Rivera about the controversy on the publication of the pictures of coffins of soldiers coming back from Iraq:

“Americans have long struggled with the morality of showing images of war dead, especially fellow Americans” (Rivera, 2004b).

At this point we should not forget that war are also fought on media sceneries, and that

“the nature and the status of images in modern Western culture –and in any culture at that– is, above all, a political issue” (Paschalidis, 2004).

We need to make here an exception: when comparing the *The New York Times* front pages of both attacks, we find a close approach: both printed the scene, the rescue teams

and victims (this paper was on the only ones that showed victims after the New York crashes). The only difference would be that in the case of the Madrid bombings, the front page gave other stories and that the images showing victims was bigger in terms or the total number of casualties in both cases. Cecilia Bohan, foreign picture editor of this paper explains that

“we think that there isn’t a difference between a local life and a foreign life. We draw the line at news value on the foreign desk. A bus crash with no political activity involved we would see as gratuitous. There was news value in showing the world the results of the terrorist, a hit of this magnitude” (Irby, 2004).

"All the News That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

Vol. CCLXXIV, No. 15,159 NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 \$5.00

U.S. ATTACKED

HIJACKED JETS DESTROY TWIN TOWERS AND HIT PENTAGON IN DAY OF TERROR

A CREEPING HORROR
Buildings Burn and Fall as Evildoer's Search for Elusive Safety

President Vows to Exact Punishment for 'Evil'

A Somber Bush Says Terrorists Cannot Prevail

San Francisco Forced to Halt Gay Marriages

At Shell, New Accounting and Rosier Oil Outlook

In Science's Name, Lucrative Trade in Body Parts

Former U.S. Aide Accused of Working With Iraq

Missile System Questioned

Asbestos Link to Habitat

State Overhaul Kicks In

South Korea Moves on Chief

NEW YORK

WASHINGTON

SAFETY

ASBESTOS

STATE

SOUTH KOREA

NEW YORK

WASHINGTON

SAFETY

ASBESTOS

STATE

SOUTH KOREA

"All the News That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

Vol. CCLXXIV, No. 15,296 NEW YORK, FRIDAY, MARCH 11, 2004 \$5.00

10 Bombs Shatter Trains in Madrid, Killing 192

1,400 Are Hurt - Top Suspects Are Basques and Al Qaeda

Carnage Yields Conflicting Clues As Officials Search for Culprits

San Francisco Forced to Halt Gay Marriages

At Shell, New Accounting and Rosier Oil Outlook

In Science's Name, Lucrative Trade in Body Parts

Former U.S. Aide Accused of Working With Iraq

Missile System Questioned

Asbestos Link to Habitat

State Overhaul Kicks In

South Korea Moves on Chief

NEW YORK

WASHINGTON

SAFETY

ASBESTOS

STATE

SOUTH KOREA

NEW YORK

WASHINGTON

SAFETY

ASBESTOS

STATE

SOUTH KOREA

In the headlines, American newspapers also focused on the number of victims, although this was smaller than that of September 11, an attitude that reflects American society rejection of death (Ruby, 1995).

5. Conclusions

1. Confirming H1, every newspaper gave the whole front page to the 11 September attack, while in the case of the Madrid bombings, except in the Spanish press, it shared space with different stories (for example *The Boston Globe* and *The Detroit News* took it to the bottom of the cover and *American Press* only printed a small square on the upper right corner).
2. Most papers chose the picture of the World Trade Center to inform about September 11. The amount of images of the Towers from any perspective and its cinematographic value, contributed to this selection. The selection was not so unanimous in the March 11.
3. American dailies avoided the presence of harsh images of the attacks in New York, like the ones of people falling or those of recovered bodies. Spanish dailies did not printed them either in the front pages. On the contrary, after the Madrid bombings, most papers printed images showing injured or dead victims, both in Spain and the US (although any of the American papers revealed victim's identity). In our opinion this shows that proximity is a determinant factor for the American public to reject bloody content. Furthermore, the photograph of the black bags near the railway selected by many American newspapers was not so criticized as the similar one showing the coffins of US soldiers killed in Iraq. This conclusion does not confirm the statement made in H2 as we thought no hard images on any of the attacks were going to be printed by the American press. We mention the exception of *The New York Times* that offered a similar coverage of both events, showing injured victims in both cases.
4. Although some of the front pages depicted victims after September 11, they did not showed dead or injured persons, but images of people running away and specially the ones with people giving comfort to each other, showing solidarity to face adversity. This kind of comforting images did not appeared in the Spanish national press, only in two of the regional (*Diario de Sevilla* and *Granada Hoy*) and in a few in the US after March 11.

5. The scarce presence of victims in September 11 covers leads to conclude that there was a depersonalization of pain, that also permitted to globalize the menace. The idea that the objective of the attacks was the whole western society more than just the American people is reinforced by the absence of victims. This is shown also in some headlines abroad, like “Máxima alerta Mundial” in *El País* (“Maximum world alert”). Behind this restrictive picture selection (related to the Protestant culture of the American society) after what was mainly considered as a “war”, hides the same rule that applies to all armed conflicts: not to print your own casualties. After the attacks in Madrid there was not such a depersonalisation, first of all because the area wasn’t so symbolic, but also because most papers showed victims. In geographical terms, headlines pointed that the attack had happened in Madrid or Spain, so there was no globalization here either. The Catholic culture where blood and suffering is not only present, but a symbol of faith, permitted the publication (not without controversy) of hard images. In this case, Spain’s fight against terrorism has lately make newspapers opt for showing the results of the attacks instead of hiding them, as a way to delegitimize the terrorists.

6. On the September 12 front pages, headlines unanimously focused on “terror” and “attack”, without reporting the number of victims. But on the March 12 covers, most of them started with the number of casualties both in informative and emotive headlines that use the terms “carnage” and “massacre” not frequently used by the American press to talk about the number of victims of the attacks in the US, although the number was bigger.

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