



UNIVERSIDADE
CATÓLICA
PORTUGUESA

#NEVER FORGET: THE SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS, AMERICAN
MEDIA AND THE CULTIVATION OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Dissertation to Universidade Católica Portuguesa to obtain a Master's
Degree in Communication Studies with specialization in Strategic
Communication and Leadership

By

Anna Wagner

Faculdade de Ciências Humanas

November 2024



UNIVERSIDADE
CATÓLICA
PORTUGUESA

#NEVER FORGET: THE SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS, AMERICAN
MEDIA AND THE CULTIVATION OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Dissertation to Universidade Católica Portuguesa to obtain a Master's
Degree in Communication Studies with specialization in Strategic
Communication and Leadership

Anna Wagner

Faculdade de Ciências Humanas

Under the supervision of Professor Dr. Nelson Ribeiro

November 2024

Abstract

The shift in media to online and digital has transformed the way audiences receive their news. This research explores how digital media outlets in the United States covered and portrayed the collective memory of the September 11 attacks in 2001. It has now been 23 years since the infamous day and political tensions have been high since, especially with the retreat of American troops in Afghanistan in 2021. Drawing data from 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2021, the analysis identifies and analyzes the main themes, language used and overall tone of the anniversary issues through the years and by outlet. Data is drawn from the following popular American media outlets: *The New York Times*, *CNN*, *Fox News* and *The Washington Post*.

Using a discourse analysis thematic approach, the research explores if and how the collective memory of the September 11 attacks has shifted in Americans' national identity. In using a set structure for the analysis of each of the 16 articles, the study identifies common themes and differing perspectives across the discourses, especially among years and by media outlet. In doing so, the research sheds light on how collective memory is shifted by the American media and journalists, especially in differing political climates.

Keywords: September 11, anniversary journalism, collective memory

Resumo

A mudança dos meios de comunicação para o mundo digital e online transformou a forma como as audiências recebem as notícias. Esta pesquisa explora como os meios de comunicação social digitais nos Estados Unidos da América cobriram e retrataram a memória coletiva dos ataques de 11 de setembro de 2001. Passaram já 23 anos desde esse infame dia e as tensões políticas têm estado altas, especialmente com a retirada das tropas Americanas do Afeganistão em 2021. Através de dados de 2006, 2011, 2016 e 2021, esta análise identifica e analisa os principais temas, linguagem usada e o tom geral das publicações de cada aniversário da tragédia, avaliando por ano e jornal. Dados foram retirados dos principais jornais americanos: *The New York Times*, *CNN*, *Fox News* e *The Washington Post*.

Utilizando uma abordagem de análise de discurso, esta pesquisa explora se e como a memória coletiva dos ataques de 11 de setembro alterou a identidade nacional dos americanos. Uma estrutura pré-definida para a análise de cada um dos 16 artigos, este estudo identifica os temas principais e diferentes perspectivas através do discurso, especialmente entre diferentes anos e diferentes jornais. Deste modo, este trabalho mostra como a memória coletiva é mudada pelos média e jornalistas americanos em climas políticos diferentes.

Palavras-chave: 11 de setembro, jornalismo aniversario, memórias coletivas

Table of Contents

Introduction	7
Part I: Theoretical Framework.....	11
1. The September 11 attacks	12
1.1 Events of the day	12
1.2 Surrounding politics	14
1.3 Media and the creation of a national event.....	17
2. Collective Memory	21
2.1 Maurice Halbwachs	21
2.2 Philippe Ariès	25
2.3 Pierre Nora.....	26
2.4 Henri Bergson.....	27
2.5 Émile Durkheim	28
2.6 Collective memory of September 11	29
3. Anniversary Journalism	31
Part II: Empirical Study.....	37
4. Methodology	38
4.1 The New York Times	40
4.1.1 2006	40
4.1.2 2011	44
4.1.3 2016	46
4.1.4 2021	51
4.2 CNN.....	52
4.2.1 2006	53
4.2.2 2011	54
4.2.3 2016	59
4.2.4 2021	60
4.3 Fox News.....	64
4.3.1 2006	64
4.3.2 2011	65
4.3.3 2016	66
4.3.4 2021	73
4.4 The Washington Post	76
4.4.1 2006	76
4.4.2 2011	77
4.4.3 2016	78
4.4.4 2021	79
5. Data Presentation and Discussion	83
5.1. Results	83
5.1.1. Memory.....	84
5.1.2. Resilience and unity.....	88
5.1.3. War on terror	91
5.2. Discussion	95
Conclusion	100
References.....	104

List of figures

Figure 1	42
Figure 2	43
Figure 3	43
Figure 4	44
Figure 5	46
Figure 6	46
Figure 7	48
Figure 8	49
Figure 9	49
Figure 10	49
Figure 11	50
Figure 12	51
Figure 13	56
Figure 14	56
Figure 15	57
Figure 16	57
Figure 17	58
Figure 18	58
Figure 19	59
Figure 20	62
Figure 21	62
Figure 22	63
Figure 23	63
Figure 24	63
Figure 25	66
Figure 26	69
Figure 27	69
Figure 28	70
Figure 29	70
Figure 30	71
Figure 31	71
Figure 32	72
Figure 33	72
Figure 34	73
Figure 35	75
Figure 36	75
Figure 37	81
Figure 38	81
Figure 39	82
Figure 40	83

Introduction

Media has become a focal point in today's society, affecting and changing the way humans perceive the world and events including the way we reflect on events in the past. As generations change and replace older ones, new memories are brought forth and built on previously existing ones (Schwartz, 1982). Meaning is ascribed differently or passed down by each generation to preserve events related to specific groups. Memory and history have always been used to appreciate and commemorate the past (Hutton, 1988), and the advancement of media is continuously being used to connect people directly in these phenomena. Works and research of Henri Bergson, Philippe Ariès, Maurice Halbwachs, Émile Durkheim and others, we can now identify these phenomena as 'collective memory'. Durkheim was the mentor of Halbwachs and helped to set the minimal foundation of the conceptualization of collective memory and is often overshadowed by the works of Halbwachs.

While there were previously scholars studying the theory, Halbwachs identified a seminal three-fold research, looking at the relativity of time within memory's perspectives (Hutton, 1988), most importantly stating that our understanding of past events is crucial to solving present problems (Schwartz, 1982). Halbwachs' work was published in the early twentieth century and later translated to English towards the start of the new millenia; however, his seminal works continue to have as many definitions as researchers over time as the field of memory studies expands (Wertsch & Roediger III, 2008). However, it is mutually agreed by scholars that collective memory serves as a transcendent memory between individuals and is shared by groups of similar people. These events that relate to collective memory, such as September 11, establish the theory when the particular events are deemed by society together to be essential to the narrative being pushed (Leavy, 2007). There is also the role that politics and consensus play at the time. This, in the end, has a very large influence on how national identity is conceived.

Also in hand with collective memory, media and this research is anniversary journalism which can be defined as the “current press remembrances and coverage of milestone anniversaries of historical events” (Hume, 2010, 189). The year 2001 was a very political year filled with a vast increase in American patriotism, thus giving great pressure on individual journalists and news outlets alike to follow a homogenic model in their reporting. The specific cases of anniversary issues that I will cover serve as a reminder and permanent recollection of events in ways that adhere to specific opinions and ideas of what occurred. They are able to recall something a population was once a part of, serving as forever memory objects that one is able to continue to go back to and reflect upon. In some cases even, the physical copies become relics of the past that are treasured as a remembrance tokens within society and homes. The idea of anniversary journalism stems from both journalists, media and readers alike, who together construct a shared collective memory based on a shared and grouped national identity (Lowenthal 1985). In order for them to be able to recall these events and news permanently, the group must band together and retell the story to take on new meanings.

The September 11 attacks are a prime example of how collective memory can relate intertwined with anniversary journalism, becoming a day in infamy; ‘a day we will never forget’. Even fifteen years later in 2016, a study conducted by Pew Research Center showed that 76 percent of adults named September 11 as one of the ten historical events of their lifetime, transcending age and political differences (Hartig & Doherty, 2021). This phrase instantly brings forth memories of New York City covered in a layer of ash, families crying and frantically calling for news about loved ones, the two buildings that represented the city and innovation destroyed in a pile of rubble as firefighters desperately tried to uncover bodies.

Media outlets at the time immediately ran stories, interviews, video footage and infamous photographs to the public, forever memorializing the day in journalism. Videos of the planes approaching the buildings, the collapsing of the buildings, search teams sifting through rubble,

loved ones crying on sight with no or bad news, people jumping to their deaths from the towers and photos of the few reunited families serve as a time capsule of the day and representation of the city and nation's strength. The events of September 11 and the annual memorialization each anniversary have played a crucial role in forming the national identity of Americans, especially for those who do not have any personal memory.

As generations age, the more Americans will associate the September 11 attacks with collective memories rather than what they experienced, these powerful memories of the 'day in infamy' where they can utilize media to adopt the day and memories as their own (Neiger, 2020), whether consciously or not. For my generation, Gen Z, most of us do not have any sort of memory of the day; therefore relying on what has been passed down to us verbally or personally, and what we have observed through media and texts. Some of this younger generation that were alive but do not have a memory are able to picture one through the storytelling of family about our previous whereabouts. From that day on, the anniversary of September 11 became a day of honor, remembrance and the recalling of personal memories. It is well-observed by many that the day caused the rise to a United States national security state that would prevail for the next decades.

As the September 11 attacks have moved from memory to history over the years, media outlets have shifted their coverage of the event in the days leading up to and the actual day of the annual anniversaries. Aforementioned pictures and videos are shared all over social media sites and in news articles, moments of silence are shared from radio stations to sporting events and community candle-light vigils are heavily attended to commemorate and honor the American lives that were lost that day and in the wars thereafter. The media recollects memories and repaints the days, almost as if a retelling and reliving of the day through dramatic storytelling and witness accounts. Social media becomes flooded with personal stories, photos of

the former World Trade Center and the hashtag ‘#neverforget’ is prominent on all platforms, and articles plastered with words of fear. This leads to the question:

“What role does the American online media coverage play in the cultivation of collective memory for the anniversary dates of the September 11 attacks?”

In order to investigate the question, a study will be performed by utilizing a qualitative approach, analyzing the media coverage in major American newspapers and online databases the day of September 11 during the following milestone anniversaries: fifth, tenth, fifteenth and twentieth. This includes 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2021, respectively. It can be inferred through observations on online news sources, the media will ramp up on September 11 news coverage. In order to narrow down my search, I will be referring to the following online databases: *The New York Times* (NYT), *CNN*, *Fox News*, and *The Washington Post*. This is to obtain sources from different political biases through journalism and American politics. More specifically, a discourse analysis will be performed to study conversational codes, vocabulary, structure, and any shifts that may have occurred over time in media coverage, especially within the context of the United States’ military withdrawal from Afghanistan earlier in 2021.

Part I: Theoretical Framework

1. The September 11 attacks

1.1 Events of the day

On September 11, 2001, nineteen people associated with the Al-Qaeda terrorist group hijacked four commercial planes flying from Boston, Washington D.C., and New York on continental flights. Soon after takeoff from Boston, one American Airlines flight was hijacked by smuggled box cutters and flown into the north tower of the World Trade Center in New York City at 0846 AM local time (Bergen, 2023). 17 minutes later, a United Airlines flight struck the south tower, signaling to Americans and the world that the United States was under attack, and this was not a freak accident. The planes flying into the iconic New York City buildings that represented success were deliberate and for a reason. Due to the impact, both towers immediately became engulfed in flames and office workers were met with the decision to leap to their deaths or face a fiery death, creating arguably the most infamous pictures in journalism in modern American history. At 0937 AM, a second American Airlines flight struck the southwest side of the Pentagon outside Washington DC, creating a localized fire in the structure (Bergen, 2023).

The United States proceeded to ground all flights, domestic and international, established a state of emergency, and at 1003 AM the fourth hijacked plane crashed in the Pennsylvania countryside after passengers were warned ahead of time through cell phone intervention (Bergen, 2023). Less than 15 minutes after the Pentagon was attacked, the south tower of the World Trade Center collapsed to the ground in a large cloud of smoke and debris, signaling a recovery mission for the numerous bodies that were still trapped inside. At 1030 AM, the north tower followed suit and collapsed in dust and smoke, with just 18 survivors from both buildings' demise (September 11 attacks: facts, background & impact, 2010). Buildings near and around the collapsed World Trade Center met similar fate and fires brewed for more than three months on site. Local businesses still standing or buildings with safe enough structural

sound became the temporary ‘headquarters’ for the New York Police Department of the area and for search and rescue teams. The September 11 attacks in total killed 2,977 people spanning from all over the globe, including 78 different countries. There are still lasting effects on the survivors and those who helped with rescue operations: cancer, lung problems, post-traumatic stress disorder, loss of limbs and other smoke inhalation related diseases. The events transpired to become the single most deadly foreign attacks on American soil, with 441 first responders perishing and resulted in the greatest loss of emergency responders on a single day (Module 1: Events of the Day).

The morning of September 11, former President George W. Bush had been visiting a second-grade class in Florida when he learned the news that the country was under attack. At 0830 PM, Bush addressed the nation with the infamous speech and words, “We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them.”, signaling the start of the ‘war on terror’ in the Middle East (Bergen, 2023). The administration’s foreign policy would then focus on attempting to eliminate terror and on the subsequent invasion of Middle Eastern countries. In the days following the September 11 attacks, the media would repeatedly play footage from the events, adding salt to a fresh wound for many people as they desperately searched ‘Ground Zero’ and surrounding areas for any information regarding missing loved ones.

The direct aftermath of the attacks proved to be a temporary tactical success for al-Qaeda, as world markets and economies were rocked, and tens of thousands of people were stranded all over the nation due to all aviation grounding. The strikes hit multiple targets and garnered worldwide media coverage and were magnified on a global scale, with the United States the center of news in most countries across the globe. From that day on, al-Qaeda became a household name and the attention they desired (Bergen, 2023). A desperate search started to find the infamous Osama bin Laden, who is considered to be a critical part of the attacks. Only

ten years later in May of 2011 was bin Laden tracked down and killed in a remote part of Pakistan after the years of careful hiding. However, the United States reacted in ways that surely blindsided the radical group, with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) enacting Article 5 for the first time in history, with the U.S. and allied forces invading Afghanistan and within months, thousands of enemy militants were killed or captured, with al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders driven into hiding. Al-Qaeda substantially underestimated the power and response of the United States and its allies, with the Taliban-ruling government in Afghanistan being overthrown and the losing of a 'safe haven' that Afghanistan once was for the terrorist organization (Bergen, 2023). From then on, American troops were routinely stationed and involved in local politics.

1.2 Surrounding politics

Hartig and Doherty (2021) found that patriotic sentiment soared following the September 11 attacks, with not only feelings of nationalism and identity, but as well as an increase in the trust of the federal government, with 60 percent of Americans trusting leaders. This was a statistic not seen in more than three decades. More Americans were proud of their country and shared a patriotic sentiment, with an increase in the display of American flags on properties and businesses, and seven in ten Americans stating that they 'stand for America' (Hartig & Doherty, 2021). The event caused communities to come together and mourn over a collective traumatic event, something that al-Qaeda had likely not anticipated. Americans, especially New Yorkers, proved to be resilient through research from Pazzanese and Parsons (2023), with the elevated rates of PTSD found to be mistaken for normal anxious responses directly after the event transpired.

Unlike many disasters in American and even world-wide history, September 11 proved to be a communal event, with the victims having been engaged in a part of everyday activities such as going to work, eating lunch, or taking a flight (Pazzanese & Parsons, 2023). A stark 93

percent of Americans over the age of 30 remember exactly where they were and exactly what they were doing when the attacks occurred (Hartig & Doherty, 2021). For those of the younger generation like me, we are told what we were doing then as most parents or adults remember for us. It is easy for us to construct a fake ‘memory’ of the day as the tales are told on a minute-by-minute frame that was enveloped by fear and worry. Travel and living in the U.S. changed with the passing of the Homeland Security Act of 2002, establishing the Department of Homeland Security that focused on immigration and national security (September 11 attacks: facts, background & impact, 2010). Airports and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) became significantly more strict with passengers with more enforced security measures such as metal detectors and denial of entering certain points without a flight already booked.

The political climate that followed the September 11 attacks is significant in of itself. In August of 2002, half of American adults said they considered the attacks a day that changed the country in a major way, and it even increased to 61 percent within a decade in 2011 (Hartig & Doherty 2021). It became a collective trauma as the events were livestreamed on television for all to watch, and most Americans knew someone somehow who had been affected by the attack. Media replayed the events for weeks following, repeatedly showing the vulnerability the nation had to terroristic life events. As a result, the field of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) became more researched and researchers found that the September 11 attacks proved that the trauma could happen to lay people, not just veterans as was previously believed (Pazzanese & Parsons, 2023). To aid grieving families and those who have life-long effects from the day, through the years of 2001-2004, the U.S. government gave over seven billion dollars in compensation to victims’ families and continued doing so in the early 2010’s under the Obama administration (September 11 attacks: facts, background & impact, 2010).

Decades later, with no end in sight of the war in Afghanistan, President Joe Biden pulled out American troops and the former Taliban ruling was restored within the Afghani

government. Pazzanese and Parsons (2023) agreed that the quick withdrawal might be viewed as a Taliban victory in parts of the Arab world. The retreat was a largely divided strategic move in the eyes of the American population, with 54 percent agreeing that the pulling out of American military presence was the right decision (Pew Research Center & Schaeffer, 2022). During the time of the announcement, news blasted photos and videos of the troops leaving on the last planes and desperate Afghan civilians clinging on to leave. Many believe that this decision not only affected the government but put millions of innocent Afghans at risk with this restored oppressive government. 59 percent of Americans agreed that the cost to benefit ratio of keeping troops in Afghanistan was not worth it, as 2.2 trillion USD was already spent and at the expense of thousands of innocent Afghan lives (Pew Research Center & Schaeffer, 2022). According to data from Hartig & Doherty (2021), Muslim Americans in the United States faced some level of increased discrimination after the attacks and even in 2021, 72 percent of American Republicans believe the religion of Islam is more likely and inclined to incite violence. Directly after the attacks in the late fall of 2001, 36 percent of American adults grew more suspicious of Muslim and other Americans of Middle Eastern descent (Hartig & Doherty, 2021). The invasion and consequent decades war in Afghanistan caused the loss of thousands of innocent lives, a world-wide refugee crisis, increased tension in the Middle East and trillions of dollars spent by the United States' government that left the country they invaded back to square one, yielding a negative impact on United States' counterterrorism efforts. Many nationalistic or patriotic Americans believed this showed a failure of the U.S. military's strength and efforts to maintain the idea of being a world superpower.

Terrorist recruitment was only strengthened, and many American soldiers were sent to fight a never-ending war to come back with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and dwindling, underfunded resources to support their reintroduction to society (Pazzanese & Parsons, 2023). This caused some push back from younger generations regarding support and

eagerness to be involved in missions. Finally, according to Pazzanese & Parsons (2023) it is too soon to say if the war on terror was a failure, but when considering the details and effects, the picture is pretty grim.

1.3 Media and the creation of a national event

The American media has played a large role in the cultivation of culture across the nation as well as development into the political parties. The journalism and media around events such as September 11 tend to echo the consensus of everyday people that defines pre-enacted ideology and the general interests of abroad surrounding American politics (Li & Lee, 2013). Former President George W. Bush and his administration significantly contributed to the way that journalists would cover the news by their original response to the attacks. During his state of the union address in the evening of September 11, Bush labeled the attacks as an ‘act of evil’ carried out by ‘evil doers’ and marking an importance on eradicating the evil (Leavy, 2007). Choosing these phrases demonstrated fighting words and created a collective entity to point fingers at. During his speech, perhaps the biggest fighting words from his newly published campaign on terrorism announced that the United States, ‘will make no distinction between terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them’. This is perhaps the most significant moment of the day, as the administration created an ‘us versus them’ narrative that will stop at nothing to demonize an enemy that threatened the democracy of a Western nation. Through his verbiage and choice of adjectives, Bush effectively created the idea of Americans as a group bound by trauma of an event and that we, together, must respond together as an undifferentiated group (Leavy, 2007). His agenda was meant to represent the good American that had unwavering patriotism through public sentiment, coercing journalists and the media to cover the news in a certain way otherwise public outcry would ensue due to not following an unofficial narrative. ABC news, a large news station in the United States, refused to allow their on-air anchors to wear US flag pins as they believed that their journalists were

there to simply provide information and not participate in the patriotism and nationalism on the rise (Leavy, 2007). Due to the strong stance that the Bush administration placed, the station was forced to apologize as there was a large public outcry.

The press and government, especially in the case of September 11, can be seen as complicit in the construction of a collective memory and national identity (Leavy, 2007), even referred to as ‘the government’s little helper’ (Zaller & Chiu, 1996). According to Li & Lee (2013), within foreign policy and events, the current president and his advisors dominate media visibility, and the media tend to endorse foreign policies as well as demonizing the enemies of the nation. Journalists and news outlets alike shared a common sentiment that there was simply no other news for an indefinite time from September 11 and the next few days, thereby creating a historic memory by establishing a ‘before’ and ‘after’ life. The representation that journalists publish has the ability to later serve as documentary ‘evidence’ of a specific event, and we can see this especially in the case of the September 11 attacks. The non-stop playing of the planes crashing into the buildings, the infamous pictures of people jumping to their inevitable deaths, the city of New York in a cloud of smoke and the pictures of American flags poised in the rubble of the buildings all became heavily associated with the events and are still circulated to this day, almost 23 years later. The construction of collective memory and national identity of this day can be observed to be from the framing of pictures and stories published by the media.

According to Leavy (2007), there are four actions of the media in regard to events: 1. Naming, 2. Saturation coverage, 3. Press’s use of superlatives and 4. Press’s selective use of historical metaphors. Collectively naming the event by its date ignores anything else that may have occurred on that day, as we have typically named notable events by who, what, or where. For example, many world-wide events that affected the masses such as D-day are referred to as a name or place, not a date. Phrases came to represent the event, ‘never forget’, ‘a day in infamy’, and ‘the city changed forever’ captured the attention of audiences and ascribed greater

meaning to the day. For days, weeks, and months after the attacks the media was still very saturated in the coverage of the day. News stations on both television and newspapers were updating with news and statistics for months after. The media also used historical metaphors to compare September 11 to past national tragedies, such as the attack on Pearl Harbor. This was thereby used to justify entering a war on terrorism and the invasion of the Middle East. Similar to the time surrounding the Pearl Harbor attack, the US flag came to represent patriotism and as a symbol of the attacks, thereby stripping the nation's flag of its historical significance and how it came to be what it is today. Heroes were then quickly constructed, such as the firefighters who perished, those who died trying to save themselves from the collapsing building and subsequent flames, those on the airlines, and especially those on board Flight 93. Flight 93 was one of the planes involved in the hijacking and was intended to hit Washington, D.C. The passengers on board were able to take over and instead crash into somewhere where minimal additional injuries or fatalities would occur, which resulted in the crash site being in a field in rural Pennsylvania.

The memorialization of the September 11 attacks is typically imagined as a quiet, intimate ceremony with candles and speeches from prominent figures or by those who had been affected. On the twentieth anniversary, 2011, former President Barack Obama delivered a speech to the nation with moments of silence and powerful words. However, Bodnar (2021) observed the complete opposite in downtown New York City where just a few blocks away citizens had gathered to remember and recognize those who died in Iraq and Afghanistan as a direct cause from the war on terror. Instead of photos of the World Trade Center in flames or patriotic American flags on display, they displayed photos of dead women and children from these Middle Eastern countries to show the side of another group of victims. This shows the spectrum of the different victim stories and display of remembrances. Through the words and testimonies from two ends of the spectrum, the same can be applied to personal stories. Lisa

Beamer was the wife of a passenger who perished on Flight 93, and her approach to remembering was to display pride in his actions as a hero as he and the others made sure not to crash into more people (Bodnar, 2021). On the other hand, Lyz Glick also lost her partner on the same flight but has staunchly refused to portray him as patriotic, stating that his efforts to stop the hijacking were solely to save his life and return to his family rather than dying in vain for his country (Bodnar, 2021).

An important note to the study of the media is the United States' shift from print to digital media for the consumption of news. During the earlier anniversaries, much of the media I will be observing will be transformed in print form to online archives. According to the data collected by Trends and Facts on Newspapers | State of the News Media (2023), between the years of 2011 and 2021, the estimated circulation of daily newspapers declined 40.8 percent. While it is easier to track print media usage through the payments, it can be unreliable to compare to digital news as not everyone that clicks on a link follows through reading. However, research shows that the highest circulation of daily papers still used to this day are *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Washington Post* (Trends and Facts on Newspapers | State of the News Media, 2023), which is part of the reasoning for including these media outlets in my research.

2. Collective Memory

2.1 Maurice Halbwachs

History is a remembered past that we no longer have first-hand experience or relations to, a past that no longer serves a direct purpose in our lives, while collective memory is the active past that serves as a direct source in the forming of our own identities as humans (Olick, 1999). Every historical event, as it transforms into a memory, transcribes into a lesson or symbol of the past, therefore ascribing meaning to the event. The theory is a sociopolitical construct and cannot be seen as an authentic representation of the past or past events (Meyers, 2021). Maurice Halbwachs emerged as a revolutionary French sociologist in the 20th century, with among his most popular work *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (On Collective Memory) and *La mémoire collective* (The Collective Memory), advancing on the idea that we have collective memories, and they are influenced by ingroups and their ideas (Hutton, 1988). Halbwachs was already in his sixties when he began his work *On Collective Memory*, and was published unedited incompletely in 1950 (Llobera, 1995). Due to the open-ended publication, much of Halbwachs' work can be left up in the air as far as interpretation, so research and analysis may vary by person.

His work alone has made him a major figure in the field of sociology, and most of his research came from sources such as reports from pilgrims and travelers ranging between the fourth and 20th centuries. He was a student at the Lycée Henri IV school in Paris where he was influenced by Henri Bergson. After the completion of his dissertation at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, he began working with François Simiand, Lucien Lévy-Burhl, and Emilie Durkheim (Llobera, 1995). According to Halbwachs, collective memory is based upon the idea that "individual memory" does not exist, and the only memories we as humans possess are collective (Gedi & Elam, 1996). Collective memory draws strength from sentient bodies of

people, but ‘it is the members of these groups who remember’ (Halbwachs, 1980, 25), and that keep memories alive together. He introduces collective memory as a memory that is firstly relational in terms of close ingroups (i.e family and friends) and secondly societal and collective in the aspect of social frameworks (Garde-Hansen, 2011). This means that when remembering events from the past, we are preconceived to all, as an ingroup, sharing the same memory due to the inability to form individually. Each separate in-group has differing collective memories (Llobera, 1995), and we can see this with how different cultures remember the September 11 events, especially in the case of Americans and those of Middle Eastern descent. Halbwachs alluded to history serving as a remembered past that we have no first-hand experience or memory of, therefore being irrelevant in our lives, while collective memory is active and on-going that serves as a form of identity for us within societies (Olick, 1999).

Much of Halbwachs’ conceptualization can be attributed to Émilie Durkheim’s view of the past as a playing factor in collective solidarity, and to the argument that society is a complex being of ideas and sentiments, the senses, and to the specific intellectual mind that is shared or singular to the entire group (Misztal, 2003). The ‘individual image’ that Halbwachs discusses cannot be independent of the general ideas that make up ‘family memory’, as there are customs and ways of thinking within individual families that can have an influence on the way opinions are formed (Neiger, 2020). Through this theory, society remains very abstract whereas the individual stays concrete. This means that society functions as a location or framework and the individual is capable of constructing their ideas and images into concepts that are clear to the individual and society (Neiger, 2020). This shows the power and capability of manipulation that society is able to influence individuals’ subconscious minds as well as, and more importantly, their memories, of events.

An important note of Halbwachs’ research regarding this thesis is his argument that memory does not serve as a storage of all past experiences, rather, over time they become more

generalized into ‘imagos’ and these images that are created require a social context to stay relevant (Olick, 1999). As more memory and history research have emerged in the past decade, the more the theory of collective memory is reinterpreted as the theory transcends academia. However, scholars agree that the concept cannot be defined through one singular neat definition and can be broken down into smaller concepts when observing memories within these ingroups (Wertsch & Roediger III, 2008).

Halbwachs’ theory inclines towards a sort of literary description of how one recollects the past, specifically within the framework of family, social class or religion playing a large role (Gedi & Elam, 1996). An important note in Halbwachs’ work is the influence of socialism that can be observed to have been reflected in his famous works (Llobera, 1995). The psychological theory of ingroups identifies a social group in which individuals feel loyalty and respect and typically include members from similar cultural backgrounds and interests (Howard & Rothbart, 1980). Society and its function perhaps plays the largest role in the theory and the development of collective memory as a whole, especially within individuals. Halbwachs’ works on memory were an ongoing dialogue based upon Henri Bergson’s previous works, changing the notion that memory derives from individual psyches as Bergson stated, but that memories of the self are not whole until they are put into social contexts (Hutton, 1988). This can be understood as community forming and assigning a mutually agreed meaning to past events and how they memorialize them in the present day (Neiger, 2020). In the case of September 11, most Americans memorialize the events each anniversary through acts of remembrance and storytelling to “never forget” what transcribed that day. Communities all over the United States come together assigning a meaning that memorializes the event as something that can never happen again, and that must be spoken about until the end of time to keep the memory alive. The meaning of the day is one that shows the importance of community

and gave rise to a nationalistic state, with communities stating believing that the reason the event happened was due to the country letting its guard down.

There are two ways to interpret Halbwachs' work as he left his theory up to readers and the lay man to decide. For Gedi and Elam (1996) the act of conceptualization Halbwachs discusses does take place in the individual minds within this 'society' and is going through socialization through exchanging views and ideas, forming common thoughts and ideas. Society then elevates into a contest of rival ideas and opinions, where people from differing views compete to win the fields. This is all in play due to social dynamics and whichever 'group' is powerful enough will assign themselves as the spokesperson of this 'society' (Gedi & Elam, 1996). A second interpretation of Halbwachs work explores the idea that society does not serve as the sum of individual input but can be reduced to individual components (Gedi & Elam, 1996). The existence of 'collective memory' gives the idea that society is not a framework, but an entity that is real.

Collective memory thrives with 'critical incidents' such as tragedies, political monuments or cultural moments becoming turning points within society, therefore advancing as makers of change. The way that daily lives are disrupted by such events or revolutions create chaos and unbalance to the general public, deeming newsworthiness as such more authentic (Leavy, 2007). The shared narratives that are published throughout these media sources help audiences and victims cope together, generally becoming politicalized in support of one idea or another. Halbwachs accepted and grew upon Durkheim's critique of philosophy within collective memory and argues that studying memory is not simply reflecting on the subjective mind, as Henri Bergson theorized, but rather memory is the way and how minds work together collectively within a society. More specifically, how their internal operations are structured by social settings and norms (Olick, 1999). There are several other revolutionary philosophers in

the field of memory and history regarding collective memory: Philippe Ariès, Pierre Nora, Henri Bergson and Émile Durkeim.

2.2 Philippe Ariès

Maurice Halbwachs and Philippe Ariès can be observed to represent two opposite ends of the spectrum on understanding and conceptualizing the past, specifically within the area of memory and history. Ariès' work viewed collective memory to be more related to history while Halbwachs focused on the individual or group and their purpose. However, both agreed that memory is equal to and represents a point of departure in the study of collective memory, history, and ingroups. Ariès published his work *Le temps de l'histoire*, blending his personal reminiscence on history and memories with historiographical reconstruction. His main argument and difference with Halbwachs' works and theories was that he believed history and memory are not mutually exclusive as previously suggested by Halbwachs, and that there is no history that is not a direct result of previous history. Everything has a domino effect, and to put it in simpler terms and summarize lightly, that all history is connected.

Through his works he drew parallels between his own personal study of history and the historiographical studies around him. Ariès maintained and researched one essential point: history emerges out of memory. On the topic of recollection, Ariès conceptualized that the relationship between recollection and historical reconstruction of events within the scope of comprehending the past is always one of inverse proportions (Hutton, 1988). On the topic of understanding the Western culture and collective memory, his research revealed how a use of memory as a process of socialization explained by Halbwachs, had been refined as one of individualization and focus on self, as societal norms developed into a way that expected individuals and them as sentient beings to follow a pattern of personal growth (Hutton, 1988).

2.3 Pierre Nora

The works of Pierre Nora such as *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (Realms of Memory) are another relevant example of the era of French freethinkers in the field of sociology. However, the works and conceptualizations from Nora continue into the current century within the realm of media studies and cover so called ‘sites of memories’. In his earlier twentieth century works, Nora made a clear distinction between collective and historical memory. For him, collective memory means what is left from the past in experience within groups (Llobera, 1995). Nora’s work was unique as he studied and researched the development of a French national identity through niche memory sites such as street signs, recipes, and everyday behavior (Garde-Hansen, 2011). Examples can be the shapes and colors of street signs such as yields and stops, national dishes such as Ratatouille and everyday behavior such as mannerisms when driving down the street or walking within crowds. It can be as specific as cultural hand gestures or as broad as which side of the road to drive on.

This approach represented a shift in memory and history studies as his focus was on everyday mundane things, rather than major events or obvious cultural virtues. The purpose of focusing on the details is to produce ‘a history in multiple voices’ (Nora, 1996, vol. 1, xxiv). His main argument states that real memory has been eradicated by implementing historical accounts of everything, and that memories are just self-serving (Wertsch & Roediger III, 2008). Like Halbwachs’, Nora’s work can be condensed to an emphasis on living experiences dependent on group identity. One significant aspect of Nora’s work is his acknowledgement of the ‘fundamental opposition’ between memory and history (Gedi & Elam, 1996). His approach to the intermingling of memory and history theorizes that memory is no longer an aspect of history, but is equal to history (Gedi & Elam, 1996). To Nora, memory remains in a permanent changing evolution while history remains in a contrast representing something. In simpler

terms, memory serves as a continuous anomaly and history simply represents past events or the past as a whole (Nora, 1996).

2.4 Henri Bergson

Henri Bergson's work is also often compared to the works and ideas of Halbwachs and his works were published during the same time of this French sociological revolution. He was awarded the 1927 Nobel Prize in literature to honor his ideas. Among his most popular works are *Matière et mémoire* (Matter and Memory), *L'Évolution créatrice* (Creative Evolution), and *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion* (The Two Sources of Morality and Religion). The works of Halbwachs can be read as a Durkheimian critique of Bergson's concepts and theories (Llobera, 1995). His works, similar to Nora's, also emphasize creativity in memory and history studies. Bergson was an example of another French philosopher whose approach to collective memory focused more on the individual memory as a perspective and function (Garde-Hansen, 2011). In the introduction of *Matter and Memory*, Bergson states that the aim of this work is 'to overcome the theoretical difficulties which have always beset dualism' (*Matter and Memory*, 1990, 9).

Bergson was a product of the turn of the century into the 1900's and the intellectual revolution taking place in the fields of philosophy and sociology. His major contribution was to make those aware of the connection between time and memory (Hutton, 1988). Bergson's research and works argued that the time of memory does not exist in any sort of measurable unit, rather is expanded in stored recollections by the emotions and imagery that are associated and felt (Hutton, 1988).

In his most popular work, *Matière et mémoire* (*Matter and Memory*), Bergson theorizes that an individual serves as a center of action, selecting experiences that possess immediate value to self (Garde-Hansen, 2011). His works considered memory to be of a spiritual nature

and assumed the brain to be serving as a present orientation through creating and storing relevant memories. Bergson's *Matière et mémoire* theorizes two forms of memory with the first regarding habits. This is an automatic memory that replays past actions to serve purpose to a present action (Matter and Memory, 1990).

2.5 Émile Durkheim

While Halbwachs coined the idea of collective memory, his mentor Émile Durkheim started the original idea and framework for the theory. It is important to note that the research on collective memory was pioneered and thoroughly studied by mostly French philosophers, potentially due to the 'nouvelle histoire' movement that took place in French academia during this era (Garde-Hansen, 2011). Through 'Durkheimian' research and orientations, the discourse surrounding memory is used to explain past events and history as well as transform it into an identity source of the now (Misztal, 2003). Even though Durkheim did not carry the concept of collective memory, that has coined by Halbwachs (Llobera, 1995), his understanding of the concept was more perceptive as he saw history as a continuity rather than as a series of photos (Llobera, 1995). Therefore, his approach would be more suited for groups and societies that maintain an elevated level of development such as France or Norway.

The conceptualization and theory of collective memory was based upon Durkheim's belief that every society displays and continually requires a sense of continuity with the past (Misztal, 2003). At the core of Durkheim's theory is the importance of the establishment of a sense of collective identity, thereby being reinforced through direct or indirect links to past people, life and events. Establishing this created some critics of his work that state Durkheim's concepts are too vague and especially lack individual dimension of memory through social interactions (Misztal, 2003). Through the analysis of Durkheim's works, it can be understood that 'social phenomena' are equally externalized and independent of individuals themselves and the mental representations that they hold (Gedi & Elam, 1996).

2.6 Collective memory of September 11

As collective memory continues to evolve in meaning and interpretation, Lincoln (2023) outlines the importance of the evolution of the process of forgetting within theory and work based upon the research of Aleida Assmann. Within collective memory, there are processes of remembering and forgetting. According to Assmann (2010), memory scholars should take the acts of forgetting seriously as, “in order to remember some things, other things must be forgotten” (97). For society to make place for new information and ideas, certain aspects must be forgotten and abandoned to keep progressing (Lincoln, 2023). Assmann (2010) defines two forms of societal forgetting: (1) active forgetting, society purposefully forgets in a targeted manner and (2) passive forgetting, in which forgetting is unintentional as a neglectfulness. In the instances of passive forgetting, the ideas fall out of society’s attention and mind, therefore can be recovered later (Assmann, 2010). These two main forms of forgetting morph together to shape a large aspect of collective memory when considering media and society.

Edy (1999) argues that one of the critical elements and backbone of collective memory is communication, transcending psychological aspects of memory within the theory, transforming it to a sociological concept. One form of communication that has been a catalyst for preserving collective memories has been journalism and the media. Stories and recollections of major events such as Watergate, the John F. Kennedy assassination and many others have been presented in many media from newspapers to television to online articles. Journalism and the use of online publications has preserved the story and victims of the September 11 attacks for anyone to access and are largely shared each anniversary. The media can interject personal and emotional connections associated with the theory of collective memory, personalizing events in a way that brings communities closer. Edy (1999) identified three ways in which journalists invoke the past: historical analogies, historical contexts and

commemorations. Based upon this, collective memory in journalism can be used to set an agenda or assert authority over specific stories or history (Lincoln, 2023).

Kitsch (2014) framed the use of collective memory as a response to a competitive field in journalism. The strategy is applied by legacy news organizations who turn to history to confirm their lasting self-bias. Knowing this, collective memory use in journalism can then be understood as a response to establish authority or importance in an industry that is driven by competitiveness and legacies of those institutions (Lincoln, 2023). A very important collective memory was formed around the events of September 11 and the American public's understanding of the attacks. According to Hartig & Doherty, 2021 and Leavy, 2006, a shocking 66 percent of American adults erroneously believed that Saddam Hussein, former dictator of Iraq, helped orchestrate the day. A concerning number of people had created this false collective memory, showing the importance of the media and ingroups in the formation of memories. Many people that still believe this, despite being incorrect, have formed a false memory of learning about it on the news, in class or through word of mouth.

3. Anniversary Journalism

The media and historically remarkable events are inseparable in life. Journalism is continually undergoing transformational changes within the industry, and anniversary journalism is a way collective memory is invoked and shared across numerous platforms (Lincoln, 2023). Mass media and journalism serve as a vessel for shared recollections and memorials, creating a space where remembrance and social connections are honed (Neiger, 2020). The world of journalism in an expanded sense is made up of clear and knowledgeable contents of memory (Kitch, 2006) that serve as a connection transcending differences. Edy (1999) discussed the social inertia building up behind events that create commemoration and remembrance events. Examples may include wreath laying, speeches, personal testimonies, or candlelight vigils. This serves as a way to collectively congregate and keep a memory of an event alive. Kitch (2014) argues that historical significance and events helped the organizations establish their credibility and authority to begin.

Journalism is always going through transformational changes and collective memory is always being negotiated and renegotiated and can be perceived as a work in progress. Garde-Hansen (2011) points out the pop culture effect within the realm of media and memory, how society focuses on issues such as evidence, ethics, and authenticity of the past. This in turn affects how media is presented to audiences and molds the way we remember and reflect upon events (Garde-Hansen, 2011). Pop culture has an effect on media as some opinions or coverage might be seen as taboo, and pop culture is a main column of modern society. Pop culture is something that is constantly changing and shifting with the times, therefore influences the way we consume media and the way media presents information to us. Media and journalism have a substantial influence on collective memory within societies as the journalists' recollections of the past are to be true accounts of what truly occurred, and the documentary style of narratives give them a sort of unique authority of recounting past events (Edy, 1999). For most

people, the media is where information is spread and serves as a reliable source to keep up to date with events and learn more about past events. This is especially the case for younger generations who have quick access to thousands of online articles covering past events. Zelizer (1993) argues that the authority of journalism is dependent on the concept of collective memory as it comes from memory systems or ways of remembering events in a shared manner.

Anniversary journalism makes the past its main focus and subject (Edy, 1999), and can be defined as “current press remembrances and coverage of milestone anniversaries of historical events (Hume, 2010, 189). Li & Lee (2013) state that there are recurring themes regarding the past within anniversary coverage: ‘individualism, democracy, moral order and the survival of the small town’ (37). Chu (2008) states that if collective memory’s most important aspect is the agreed upon desired identities within society, then anniversary journalism can be understood as a vehicle to produce the desired output. Anniversary journalism gives a story to momentous events of the past within groups, while applying a modern-day lens regarding perceptions and insights. There is an ever-changing political climate, especially within the media, that affects the way anniversary journalistic pieces are written as social opinions and norms revolutionize. Therefore, in this coverage the past takes precedence while the future and present are a second thought (Meyers, 2021). The field is still very new and niche, therefore offering limited scholars well versed in the area and new research being published. However, the modern works of Kitch, Edy and Zelizer offer in-depth analyses applied to real situations and research.

Mass media is central to us as Americans and our understanding of past events, and marking the anniversaries of dates such as Pearl Harbor or September 11 establish a lasting meaning for the country as a whole and as a way to discuss identity. News and media re-use journalistic tactics and stories from previous times in order to create a context around events happening in the present, to produce ‘special reports’ (Kitch, 2006). An example of this would

be the stark comparisons in the media with the attacks on Pearl Harbor to September 11 in the way journalism was created and the anecdotes practiced. Many organizations and journalists compared the two by bringing back the memory of Pearl Harbor to September 11 by stating that the nation was ‘under attack’ again.

Media, through story-telling style in journalism, create a common recollection of past events, serving as a primary forum for public reminiscence (Kitch, 2003). The media and journalism itself serve as a primary influence, telling their audiences and society in general what exactly is worth remembering by their coverage, and the results themselves reveal common assumptions of what society should pay their attention to (Chu, 2021). Online news sites offer quick and easy access to articles, allowing anyone with the internet the ability to stay connected to fellow ingroups. Specifically, to Americans, they tend to measure how the nation is doing by how well the commemoration of memories is shown. When looking through published articles during anniversaries of major events, there seems to be an unconscious thought that the more the coverage, the better we are doing as a nation as there is still a sense of patriotism and nationalism in the case of the September 11 attacks. Note that coverage of momentous events on anniversaries varies based on the year after the event. The most important years for anniversary journalism are the milestone examples: five, ten, twenty, and so on. Many of these anniversary journalism releases become a ‘collectible’ within society. Some media outlets will not cover events on these ‘off’ years as they do not serve as a great important reminder to their audience.

The narrative style of online news allows for the individual journalist and the site to express opinions and connect with readers who share collective ideas and opinions. Anniversary issues of online media serve as a reminder and recollection of events in ways that serve their opinion and ideas. They serve as memory objects to recall something they collectively were once part of (Kitch, 2003). The choice to commemorate a specific event

within anniversary journalism serves in of itself significance to the field of study around the idea and the research on connection between the media and memory. Even the act of sharing specific images from past events serves a purpose as journalists must tap in to pre-existing cultural norms and history to ascribe meanings to specific images (Watson & Chen, 2016). The images shared within anniversary editions of September 11 coverage typically share the same infamous images as the media can ascribe a patriotic meaning that is important to society, and most of us as Americans remember the day in a painful way.

According to Lowenthal (1985), this anniversary journalism phenomenon is a creation of both journalists and readers alike, who construct a collective memory together based on a shared national identity. In order for these groups to not forget said past events, the group must continue to retell the story with each retelling a story from the past that takes on new meanings. Journalism can republish reminders of these events such as photos and videos in order to explain their lasting significance (Kitch, 2003), as we see with the burning World Trade Center buildings and voicemail calls of loved ones on the planes brought back to circulation every September. Thus, it can be noted that journalism serves as a particular framework within social groups able to construct their sense of public time in stark comparison with the concepts of Henri Bergson. As Li & Lee (2013) found in their research, the U.S. media's portrayal of Hong Kong's independency showed the U.S. as a 'self-appointed guardian of democracy' against the evil throws of communism (22). We can draw a parallel to how the U.S. media covered September 11: the U.S. was again outlined as a powerhouse of freedom that had been terribly attacked by evil terrorists that wanted freedom eradicated.

An analysis conducted by Lincoln (2023) identified four main themes throughout commemorative, or anniversary journalism: 'the archive, nostalgia, democracy, and the public' (2). According to these themes, there can also be distinct taglines associated with events and anniversary journalism, as we can observe with September 11 and the aforementioned

#neverforget and a ‘day that lives in infamy’. The archival editions of September 11 news became a commodity that many Americans continuously keep to this day. The editions invoke a feeling of nostalgia that lures readers in and keeps them engaged in the content. In summary, anniversary journalism serves as a fair opportunity to observe the continuation of dominant ideas and perspectives from which the media represents significant ‘national others’ (Li & Lee, 2013).

3.1 Commemorative and anniversary journalism

Commemorative journalism is similarly related to anniversary journalism and its main function is to conform and follow societal values in order to enhance a shared identity (Li & Lee, 2013). Similar to anniversary coverage, commemorative issues create an impact on audiences through creating a unified national community that transcends time (Meyers, 2021). However, anniversary journalism is just one component of the larger concept of commemorative journalism. Both concepts reinforce memories in a social setting that bring people together to make meaning of past events. There are some limitations to the concept of anniversary journalism and commemorative journalism studies. Edy (1999) argues that commemorative journalism fails to provide a historical context that is needed in news by media experts. Other journalism experts counter this argument with the notion that commemorative journalism is important as the media encourages us to investigate our past (Edy, 1999).

Commemorative journalism constructs narratives out of past events, proving audiences with shared purpose that emphasizes rituals of journalism (Meyers, 2021). It emerges as a sort of social inertia building up in the background of major events that provide latest ideas for journalists (Edy, 1999). Previous studies on commemorative journalism shows the integrations of Durkheimian ideals of collective memory, wherein the making of commemorative journalism creates rituals within media that enables typically national communities to recount reaffirming stories surrounding collective pasts (Meyers, 2021). As Kitch (2002) theorizes, the

stories and news presented through anniversary journalism are portrayed as factual historical accounts, but in reality, they are narrative visions that are neither factual nor fiction. American past, through anniversary journalism, is united in a way that the past was in fact not (Kitch, 2002). Analyses conducted regarding commemorative journalism have shown that it is seen as the provider of cursory telling of the past to build upon social cohesion within society and nations (Meyers, 2021).

The media aims to recount ‘objective’ and unbiased coverage of the past in commemorative styles (Watson & Chen, 2016). Inadvertently, journalists within the media then practice a ‘news judgement’ in which they analyze which aspects of events within history to retell based on how removed they are from an event. Most events that happened further in the past have little press coverage due to the phenomenon of news judgement, as there are few people who are personally connected to events from further back still working in the media. Journalists act on a ‘similar set of cultural tools’ (Wertsch & Roediger, 2008, 324) when understanding the past in order to construct the collective memory that is repeated in commemorative journalism pieces.

Part II: Empirical Study

4. Methodology

The research presented will utilize qualitative research to carry out a discourse analysis, more specifically with a narrative approach, covering media articles and their language on the anniversary of September 11 on the following milestones: fifth, tenth, fifteenth and twentieth. I carried out my discourse analysis through an inductive process by going through the articles and texts that I chose to use and decided a framework and created categories to use to analyze the works. The content analyzed will be a part of anniversary journalism editions of the September 11 attacks from various media companies. This will include online articles published on the anniversary dates of September 11, 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2021 respectively. The choice to analyze data from online media is that it reaches a much larger audience, especially as dependence on online journalism increased in later years and up until today. Also, the online media database stores all articles therefore utilizing the online sites of these news outlets ensures access to all articles, whether they were exclusively printed or online.

The purpose of the narrative analysis is to explore the role that journalists in American media play in modern society and collective memory and the way they shape how we remember mediated events such as September 11, including how meaning was ascribed to the day and if anything, such as approach or public opinion has shifted over the years. Many forces such as politics, global crises and international relations can factor into the way events that were heavily politicalized are covered by the media. Therefore, the content produced by the following media outlets will be analyzed: *The New York Times* (NYT), *CNN*, *Fox News* and *The Washington Post*. This is to collect a range of expected political biases and neutral sources to compare with a fair set of data, as there are many expected outside factors that could possibly affect the way these media outlets cover the anniversaries. As part of the discourse analysis, I will also observe the photographs utilized in each article and try to understand why it was specifically placed. I have identified a specific framework to analyze in each article:

1. Observe the language used. What is the overall tone, what kind of words are used, who is the intended audience? What kind of quotes are included, if there are?
2. What is the framework of the article? Do the subchapters or layout have any effect on the overall information provided?
3. Is the war in Iraq or on terrorism mentioned or discussed? How?
4. Does the author discuss Al Qaeda or the terrorists? In which way are they portrayed?
5. What are the main themes established?
6. Photos: what purpose do they serve?

An important note to this data and analysis is the United States' military withdrawal of troops in Afghanistan just a mere few weeks before the 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks in August 2021, so there is an expectation of skewed results from the 2021 edition.

The discourse analysis itself will focus on the purpose and effects of the language used, vocabulary, grammar, structure. This may include images, videos or snippets of objects such as newspapers or personal photographs. These are typically used within media to allow the power of images and media to represent words, as a 'picture is worth a thousand words'. More specifically in discourse analysis, I will focus on the narrative. The subset of narrative analysis is to study how stories are told through story structure, content and function (Politz, 2023). This might include how language use relates to the political and historical context, and how media beliefs and assumptions are communicated with the readers. I will be narrowing down the specifics of the study such as the use of passive versus active verbiage, and what emphasis the respective articles are trying to structure and home in on.

A discourse analysis can be defined in linguistics as a method of analyzing the structure of texts to consider linguistic and sociolinguistic context. It can be viewed as a way to analyze the language that is tailored within social contexts, to understand what is said in situations to persuade audiences. This process goes beyond analyzing just simply words and sentences but

goes deeper into exactly how the language is utilized to engage and form social identity (Politz, 2023). The focus is put on what is presented in the content and how language is used to give meaning to readers. This can either be in a purposeful way to try to coerce readers, or subconsciously by journalists. The key concepts identified by discourse analyses are context, power and identity. The context observes a ‘how’ within events, how they affect meanings of content (Politz, 2023). The power aspect will identify how relations between positions of power are reflected in the content, and identity analyzes the construction of different identities within content (Politz, 2023).

4.1 The New York Times

The first subset of data I will be analyzing is from *The New York Times*, which is typically known as a neutral news providing site, with some opinion pieces to be shown from the left to the right on the American political spectrum. I am specifically choosing to include *The New York Times* as it is considered a local news organization, and one that saw the direct effects of September 11 firsthand as the news organization represents the city and its people.

4.1.1 2006

The fifth anniversary article from *The New York Times* I am analyzing is titled ‘The Hole in the City’s Heart’ published by Deborah Sontag. Spanning across almost 46 pages, this article goes deep into the events and the direct effects afterwards on the city of New York and what the city will be doing with the area in the future, specifically the Freedom Tower. The text goes on to look at September 11 and Ground Zero from differing perspectives, focusing on former Governor Pataki and his journey with the city to find a way to memorialize the site of the attacks and interviews with many people, politicians and their ideas of what to do with the site.

Sonntag utilizes very descriptive language to paint pictures within the readers mind with phrases such as '[ground zero] remains a 16-acre, 70-foot-deep hole', 'contaminated during the attack, hulks like a metal skeleton, waiting endlessly to be razed' (Sonntag, 2006) to emphasize the still lingering devastation from the attack. Sonntag utilizes many metaphors and symbols in her narrative for the political sphere at the time, juxtaposing the difference between the public ceremonies memorializing a people and the actual progress of the area and work done by local political leaders. The article that Sonntag presents to readers is rich in metaphors, stories, irony and contrast. She paints a picture of unfulfilled promises and political struggles that surrounded Manhattan at the time, still ongoing five years after the initial event.

The text is divided into the following different sections: 'Correction Appended', 'I. The Brass Ring', 'Grabbing the Trophy', 'Determination to Rebuild', 'II. A Sense of Mission', 'Feeling Out of Place', 'An Early Plan Goes Nowhere', 'The Power of Grief', 'It Looks Like Albany', 'A Swap is Considered', 'III. Architect vs. Architect', 'Artiste vs. Money Man', 'From a Desktop Fountain', '"Less is More"', 'An Expensive Vision', 'A Winner, and a Compromise', 'A Toxic Rebuilding', 'IV. Coming Undone', 'A Handful of M&M's', 'Objections From the Police', 'A Museum is Derailed', 'Names and Numbers', 'V. Sorting out the Future', 'The Memorial Under Attack' and '"Maybe Sad is a Better Word"'. It is set up in a chronological order that goes between interviews and subjects, with the timeline spanning the progression of an updated construction of Ground Zero over five years, ending with a final reflection on the leadership surrounding these decisions and their roles.

There is only one reference to terrorism in the article and no reference to Al Qaeda, as Sonntag focuses on the political sphere at the time in New York City and regarding rebuilding Ground Zero. There are several themes that can be examined throughout the article. Perhaps the most significant is the struggle between memory and memorialization that compares the struggle to rebuild and due to politics and commercialization with the need to establish a

memorial for the day of the attacks. In this, Sonntag includes many examples of New Yorkers and those involved in the stories scrutinizing political leaders and their actions or lack thereof that created delays in reconstruction and memorialization.

Despite the amount of content, there are only three pictures used in the entire article, below from Figure 1 to Figure 4. The color hue of Figure 1 can be relevant as it focuses on the blue tones, possibly setting a mood that shows sadness and remembrance, with the lights of ground zero on, showing perseverance and something that once was. Figures 2 through 4 show construction, rubble and mourning sites for family members of the victims. These all serve importance for the main themes of the article and paint a story through pictures.

Figure 1

An aerial view of ground zero on Aug. 16, 2006



An aerial view of ground zero on Aug.
16, 2006.
Vincent Laforet for The New York Times

Note. From “The hole in the city’s heart” by Deborah Sontag, *The New York Times*.

(<https://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/11/nyregion/nyregionspecial3/11groundzero.html>)

Figure 2

Construction in progress at ground zero on Aug. 16, 2006



Construction in progress at ground zero on Aug. 16, 2006.
This photograph was made with a tilt-shift lens on a Speed Graphic large format film camera, narrowing the field of focus.
Fred. R. Conrad/The New York Times

Note. From “The hole in the city’s heart” by Deborah Sontag, *The New York Times*.

(<https://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/11/nyregion/nyregionspecial3/11groundzero.html>)

Figure 3

Four floors from the collapsed towers were compressed and fused into one mass. This is among the pieces of debris being stored at a hangar at Kennedy Airport, off limits to the public.



Four floors from the collapsed towers were compressed and fused into one mass. This is among the pieces of debris being stored at a hangar at Kennedy Airport, off limits to the public.
James Estrin/The New York Times

Note. From “The hole in the city’s heart” by Deborah Sontag, *The New York Times*.

(<https://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/11/nyregion/nyregionspecial3/11groundzero.html>)

Figure 4

The Family Room at One Liberty Plaza has been the only designated place near ground zero where victims' families can go to grieve.



The Family Room at One Liberty Plaza has been the only designated place near ground zero where victims' families can go to grieve.
Michael Falco for the New York Times

Note. From “The hole in the city’s heart” by Deborah Sontag, *The New York Times*.
(<https://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/11/nyregion/nyregionspecial3/11groundzero.html>)

4.1.2 2011

The tenth September 11 anniversary edition of *The New York Times* is titled ‘On 9/11, Vows of Remembrance’ by author Robert D McFadden. This article serves as a memorialization of the attacks and recalls and reflects on emotions. McFadden uses a formal and somber tone and includes imagery in his language, with phrases ‘panorama of resurrection’, ‘sunken granite pools set in the footprints of the fallen towers’ and ‘indelible images of the twin towers smoking and disintegrating’ stated to paint a picture for the audience. The introduction to the article is descriptive in a way to establish somberness by setting the scene through descriptions of bagpipes blasting, mourners crying and moments of silence. It seems McFadden is catering to an audience of mourners and those with personal ties to the September 11 attacks, really focusing on the tragedy and loss that Americans faced. He reaches his audience through setting up the article by setting a very descriptive, intense scene and then moving to include personal stories and experiences by normal people the narrate the article.

McFadden mentions the war in Iraq and the thousands of lives lost in a war, but it is not a focus throughout the article. However, he does start the introduction to the September 11 attacks with ‘that infamous morning...new age of terrorism was born’ (McFadden, 2011). The international leaders and world political sphere are discussed by mentioning the memorials that

were taking place across the globe for the tenth anniversary, showing the theme of resilience that can be observed throughout the text.

There are a few running themes that are seen throughout the article. Perhaps the two most important are the themes of national identity and remembrance and of national and international unity through world-wide memorial services. There are phrases such as ‘America looked back’, ‘families gathered’, ‘national outpouring’ while using American national symbols such as the Statue of Liberty, the new One World Trade Center, the American flags at the memorials all serve as a nationalistic point of view. Through these symbols, there is a deep focus on loss, resilience and collective memory of those who cannot and will not forget.

There are only two photos included in the article, one of which is Figure 5 that shows former President Barack Obama and first lady, Michelle Obama walking around the memorial grounds of the World Trade Center and Figure 6 showing a sunrise at Ground Zero. The photo of the Obamas casts a somber shadow on the day and one of remembrance, while the photo of Ground Zero shows a sense of rebirth and resilience.

Figure 5

President Obama and the first lady, Michelle Obama, walked past the north fountain at the World Trade Center complex on Sunday.

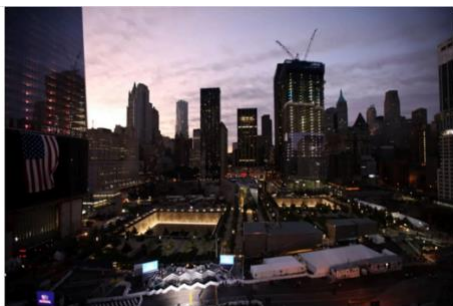


President Obama and the first lady, Michelle Obama, walked past the north fountain at the World Trade Center complex on Sunday. Damon Winter/The New York Times

Note. From “On 9/11, vows of remembrance” by Robert McFadden, *The New York Times*. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/12/nyregion/september-11anniversary.html?searchResultPosition=8>)

Figure 6

Ground zero at daybreak on Sunday.



Ground zero at daybreak on Sunday. James Estrin/The New York Times

Note. From “On 9/11, vows of remembrance” by Robert McFadden, *The New York Times*. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/12/nyregion/september-11anniversary.html?searchResultPosition=8>)

4.1.3 2016

I am analyzing ‘On 9/11 Anniversary, Somber Reflections on Lives, and a World, Changed’ by Samantha Schmidt for the 15th anniversary of the September 11 attacks. The article follows a narrative structure by covering the memorial events of the day and providing

an array of personal experiences and thoughts. Most of the text and content in the article are direct quotes and conversations by those who attended the memorial and had a personal experience with September 11, illustrating the individual emotional resonance of Americans. The tone set by Schmidt is one of somber mourning with deep reflections, with phrases such as, 'But for the family members of the victims, it was another year of grief, and the pain was as raw as ever' (Schmidt, 2016). She is descriptive in her text covering the day of commemoration with details of the One World Trade Center site, painting a picture for the audience '...the thousands who gathered in Lower Manhattan fell silent on Sunday, and all that could be heard was the water cascading in the reflecting pools where the World Trade Center towers once stood' (Schmidt, 2016). While there is no clear audience that the author is catering to, the descriptive text and personal recollections that Schmidt includes in the article provide a somber illustration of the day for readers to picture.

Schmidt brings in important information and background to the political climate at the time of the 15th anniversary memorial. By bringing in some of the quotes made by Obama, it sets the political scene surrounding the time of year, namely the 2016 presidential election which was a close call and tense time. By bringing in the words of Obama, it leads Schmidt to discuss the national values and identities that arose post-September 11 such as the differences in race, ethnic background and religion that makes up Americans.

There is no mention of the war in Iraq or the war on terrorism by Schmidt, but the author does briefly mention Al-Qaeda through a speech made by former President Obama. Schmidt discusses a snippet of Obama's speech that states that groups similar to Al Qaeda and the Islamic State 'know that they cannot defeat a nation such as the United States, so their attacks are intended to cause fear that leads Americans to turn on one another and 'change who we are or how we live'' (Schmidt, 2016).

The main theme of the text is personal loss and collective memory through impact on the nation. The theme of collective memory is tied into the coverage of the annual memorial that includes a reading of the names of those who died on September 11, and with the younger generation that speaks about their experiences and losses while transferring the collective memory onto them by means of personal and national reflection. The article and its coverage blend personal grief by quotes of those who were at the memorial with collective memory and national identity.

There are six photos included in the article, shown in Figures 7-12. They all adhere to the main theme of the article in a way that blends personal grief with national identity and memory. The way they are shot, positioned and the people photographed paints a somber picture of remembrance and grief from the day.

Figure 7

Mourners at the National September 11 Memorial in Lower Manhattan on the 15th anniversary of the terrorist attacks on Sunday



Mourners at the National September 11 Memorial in Lower Manhattan on the 15th anniversary of the terrorist attacks on Sunday. Damon Winter/The New York Times

Note. From “On 9/11 anniversary, somber reflections on lives, and a world, changed” by Samantha Schmidt, *The New York Times*. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/12/nyregion/15th-anniversary-9-11-september-11.html?searchResultPosition=2>)

Figure 8

A worker clearing water off nameplates that surround a reflecting pool at the memorial.



A worker clearing water off nameplates that surround a reflecting pool at the memorial. Damon Winter/The New York Times

Note. From “On 9/11 anniversary, somber reflections on lives, and a world, changed” by Samantha Schmidt, *The New York Times*. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/12/nyregion/15th-anniversary-9-11-september-11.html?searchResultPosition=2>)

Figure 9

At the Pentagon, guests listened as President Obama delivered his last address commemorating the 184 victims there



At the Pentagon, guests listened as President Obama delivered his last address commemorating the 184 victims there. Al Drago/The New York Times

Note. From “On 9/11 anniversary, somber reflections on lives, and a world, changed” by Samantha Schmidt, *The New York Times*. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/12/nyregion/15th-anniversary-9-11-september-11.html?searchResultPosition=2>)

Figure 10

Mr. Obama at the ceremony at the Pentagon



Mr. Obama at the ceremony at the Pentagon. He said that after the attacks, it was important for the country to not only defend its territory, "but also our ideals." Al Drago/The New York Times

Note. From "On 9/11 anniversary, somber reflections on lives, and a world, changed" by Samantha Schmidt, *The New York Times*.
(<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/12/nyregion/15th-anniversary-9-11-september-11.html?searchResultPosition=2>)

Figure 11

Larger crowds than in past years showed up in Lower Manhattan and at other sites attacked on Sept. 11



Larger crowds than in past years showed up in Lower Manhattan and at other sites attacked on Sept. 11. Damon Winter/The New York Times

Note. From "On 9/11 anniversary, somber reflections on lives, and a world, changed" by Samantha Schmidt, *The New York Times*.
(<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/12/nyregion/15th-anniversary-9-11-september-11.html?searchResultPosition=2>)

Figure 12

The American flag was lowered to half-staff at the White House on Sunday



The American flag was lowered to half-staff at the White House on Sunday. Al Drago/The New York Times

Note. From “On 9/11 anniversary, somber reflections on lives, and a world, changed” by Samantha Schmidt, *The New York Times*. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/12/nyregion/15th-anniversary-9-11-september-11.html?searchResultPosition=2>)

4.1.4 2021

The article observed for the 20th anniversary is titled ‘At 9/11 Ceremonies, Moments of Silence, Tributes and Tears’ coauthored by Michael Gold and Katie Rogers. There are no pictures included in this article, and it follows a narrative structure, moving from one commemorative event to another while briefly stating their significance. The authors use emotionally charged language with a formal tone with words and phrases such as ‘tearful’, ‘ultimate sacrifice’ and ‘horrific day’. The coverage is very formal, so it does not seem to cater to one specific audience.

The authors briefly mention both the war in Iraq and the occupation of Afghanistan by American troops. They state, [20-year occupation in Afghanistan] ‘...that began as a hunt for the terrorists who oversaw the attacks and ultimately ended with 170,000 lives lost...with the same Taliban militants in power there’ (Gold & Rogers, 2021) and also state that ‘More than 100,000 Iraqis and 4,400 Americans were killed in the war in Iraq’ (Gold & Rogers, 2021). The article mentions the war on terrorism and in Iraq as a devastating political move that ultimately

sacrificed so many lives that did not change anything they had set out to from the get-go. They represent a critical tone of the government in doing so and framing them as a smaller part of the large framework of the United States' war on terrorism.

Al-Qaeda is only mentioned once in the text to provide a remembrance of what happened on that day, 'The ceremonies were part of a full day of tearful commemoration across the United States and the world, which watched in shock 20 years ago as passenger jets hijacked by Qaeda terrorists slammed into the towers of the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a field near Shanksville, Pa., the deadliest attack ever on American soil.' (Gold & Rogers, 2021). The authors also mention former President George W. Bush's' speech that used Al-Qaeda to compare extreme terrorism to domestic terrorism that the United States was facing following the January 6 storming of the Capitol.

There are several themes that can be observed throughout the text, with one of the most interesting being the shift of the September attacks to a legacy rather than first-hand accounts of memory in Americans. The authors mention many younger Americans who are not able to remember the events who speak on it in a way of stories, "...her son is part of an entire generation that has been born in the shadow of that day and has only received its legacy secondhand." (Gold & Rogers, 2021). This focus on the collective memory of September 11 discusses the importance and significance of newer generations remembering the day as a secondhand account rather than a personal experience, and that the 'wounds [from 9/11] have remained fresh' (Gold & Rogers, 2021) across the globe and highlight the lasting impact of the event on American collective memory.

4.2 CNN

The second subset of data I will be analyzing is from *CNN*, a typically left-leaning American media outlet that specializes in television and online media. Short for Cable News

Network, *CNN* mostly caters to the democratic party and their supporters. The media station was founded in Atlanta, Georgia with almost 4,000 journalists spanning the globe.

4.2.1 2006

The article I will be analyzing for the fifth anniversary of the attacks in *CNN* is titled '9/11 trauma persists five years later' by Manav Tanneeru. No photos were used in this edition, as it was originally a print issue uploaded to the *CNN* online database. The article reflects the September 11 attacks and through the lens of a New Yorker speaking with the author about his experience and memories. By choosing to have a personal narrative about the cab driver Henry Pitkin sets a heavy, humanizing tone for the article. Tanneeru introduces the article by reflecting on the day five years later in 2006, 'the country's mood is awash in emotions, balancing resolve with vulnerability, a need to remember with a desire to move on' (Tanneeru, 2006).

The text spans about four pages and is split into three subsections that cover different topics regarding September 11. Included are: 'The politics of national security', 'How secure is the country?' and 'Who owns 9/11?'. Looking at the text from a broad point of view, the collective experience of September 11 is framed through personal and symbolic narratives. There is a discourse constructed by Tanneeru that considers the short and long-term responses and effects of the attacks, discussing ongoing conversations about the issues and tribulations that followed. He briefly discusses the statistics around the emotional trauma that many Americans faced afterwards, establishing the vulnerability vs. resolve theme.

The paper's overall themes adheres to the expected one of this anniversary issue (the first milestone) which are resilience, reflection, trauma and memory. The emotional sense that the author sets is one of vulnerability and resilience. The issue was the first anniversary milestone of the attacks and still carries the overall concerns of national security and preventing any possible future attacks by providing statistics, and vigilance as Americans.

Tanneeru mentions the war in the Middle East/Iraq and Al-Qaeda, discussing the world-wide presence of Al-Qaeda and the attacks they have carried out since the September 11 attacks. The author only briefly covers the war in Iraq, connecting partisanship and public support of the actions overseas. He takes the words of the associate director of Pew Research, stating that Americans are already split on whether the war in Iraq is truly against terror and if it is worth the hefty cost. It is interesting how after only five years, the author discusses this and brings statistics to bring an anti-war sentiment into the text.

4.2.2 2011

The article to be analyzed is titled, 'Nation looks ahead with hope after remembering 9/11 victims' by David Ariosto and Laura Dolan published as an anniversary edition. It was first published on September 11 but had updates on September 13, 2011. The article covers the memorials that occurred in New York, Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C. Most of the article covers snippets of various speeches from political leaders, and it is important to note and analyze what was said and the significance of the authors' choice to include certain phrases.

The overall tone of the article is reflective upon the events and of the nation, emphasizing on resilience and remembrance as the United States. It follows a narrative structure. The authors introduce the article with a quote from former President Obama, 'These past 10 years underscore the bonds between all Americans. We have not succumbed to suspicion and mistrust' (Ariosto & Dolan, 2011) to set a tone and expectation from the article. The authors also personalize the text greatly by including personal narratives and interviews of both civilians with stories from September 11 and some first responders with a direct link to the day. There are many different quotes and words that the authors used from different politicians, from Barack Obama to George W. Bush. The intended audience of the article is not specified.

There are some mentions of terrorism and the war in Iraq, and it is very noteworthy that when the authors include the death toll from the attacks, they do not include the members of Al-Qaeda in the tally, showing the unity that is persistent throughout the text. There is also an important quote from former Vice-President Joe Biden regarding the attacks, 'It was a declaration of war by stateless actors bent on changing our way of life, who believed these horrible acts, these horrible acts of terror directed against innocents could buckle our knees, could bend our will, could begin to break us and break our resolve. But they did not know us' (Ariosto & Dolan, 2011) showing the resilience and nationalist pride that was cultivated in memorial.

There are several ongoing themes present in this article, perhaps the most important collective memory through resilience and unity. The collective memory is seen through the many different personal narratives through those interviewed, and the resilience that is observed by honoring the past together as well as looking ahead to a brighter future despite what occurred. The authors choose to include coverage of moments of silence to mark the exact time the planes hit, and the towers collapsed, portraying the shared experience of tragedy through those affected.

The photos displayed in the article show strong connections and of American identity. Almost every photo has an American flag displayed, and most pictures show those in service uniform. These adhere to the themes of resilience, unity and looking forward at a future of the United States.

Figure 13

America remembers 9/11 a decade later



Note. From “Nation looks ahead with hope after remembering 9/11 victims” by David Ariosto and Laura Dolan, *CNN*.
(<http://edition.cnn.com/2011/US/09/11/911.commemoration/index.html>)

Figure 14

9/11 tributes around the world



Note. From “Nation looks ahead with hope after remembering 9/11 victims” by David Ariosto and Laura Dolan, *CNN*.
(<http://edition.cnn.com/2011/US/09/11/911.commemoration/index.html>)

Figure 15

Pres. Obama, Bush visit 9/11 memorial



Note. From “Nation looks ahead with hope after remembering 9/11 victims” by David Ariosto and Laura Dolan, CNN. (<http://edition.cnn.com/2011/US/09/11/911.commemoration/index.html>)

Figure 16

9/11 families remember loved ones



Note. From “Nation looks ahead with hope after remembering 9/11 victims” by David Ariosto and Laura Dolan, CNN. (<http://edition.cnn.com/2011/US/09/11/911.commemoration/index.html>)

Figure 17

Singer's emotional salute to FDNY dad



Note. From “Nation looks ahead with hope after remembering 9/11 victims” by David Ariosto and Laura Dolan, *CNN*.
(<http://edition.cnn.com/2011/US/09/11/911.commemoration/index.html>)

Figure 18

Joplin remembers 9/11



Note. From “Nation looks ahead with hope after remembering 9/11 victims” by David Ariosto and Laura Dolan, *CNN*.
(<http://edition.cnn.com/2011/US/09/11/911.commemoration/index.html>)

Figure 19

9/11 ceremony in Afghanistan



Note. From “Nation looks ahead with hope after remembering 9/11 victims” by David Ariosto and Laura Dolan, *CNN*. (<http://edition.cnn.com/2011/US/09/11/911.commemoration/index.html>)

4.2.3 2016

The 15th anniversary article is an interactive page published titled “Inside 9/11: The day that never ends” which was made with the help of filmmaker Gédéon Naudet and his video footage from September 11. This interactive blog including video snippets was published for the anniversary, before the release of a documentary.

With each scroll through the interactive page, you as the viewer are taken to different times throughout the day with a video that shows in real time, as well as quotes from various people. The mix of journalistic reporting and digital storytelling evokes a strong emotional response from readers through immersion. The themes that can be observed are those of traumatic memories and national identity that was cultivated through the images and quotes.

The interactive story and real time effects allows for the memory of September 11 to be kept alive for the future generations and reiterates the idea that the attacks were not just a one-time event but an influence on American identity and security. The authors left the sound from all the video clips attached to truly make the reader understand and remember the day. Although this article does not have much text, the piece truly evokes a strong emotion and feeling of loss as well as inclusion in the panic and confusion surrounding the day.

4.2.4 2021

The article I am analyzing for the 20th anniversary, 2021, is titled, 'America's response to 9/11 was as damaging as the attack. It's not too late to change course' (Amanpour, 2021). This article is an analysis and personal experience by Chief International Anchor Christiane Amanpour. It is important to note that the 20th anniversary issues are opinion pieces, and there is no official *CNN* anniversary issue about reflections or memorials.

The most important note about Amanpour's article is her reflection of the United States as a world superpower and what the consequences are of not only the direct response to September 11, but also the eventual retreatment of troops in 2020. The article brings together many examples of American political intervention leading up to the September 11 attacks and how they, along with the Middle Eastern occupation, led the United States to be an isolationist nation. It is divided into three sections: the introduction, 'A third way?' and 'Maintaining world values'.

The vocabulary utilized in this article clearly paints a picture and shows the author's opinions. When reflecting upon this article and the content, it is recognizable that the political opinion surrounding the Taliban and the September 11 attacks had shifted when in comparison to past articles. The structure of the article goes from a reflection of September 11 and the attacks to asking controversial questions and discussing wrongdoings on the side of the United States, building upon itself to share a narrative. In older issues, the focus was to portray the United States as a victim that reacted in an appropriate manner. The typical running theme of '#neverforget' that is seen throughout the anniversary texts is lightly brushed upon in the beginning of the text where Amanpour reflects on the tragedy and follows by changing the narrative to never forget in the way the United States responded to the events and the aftermath.

However, the main themes included that are seen throughout the text are the transformation of American foreign policy, more specifically reflecting on American interventions in the

Middle East, and the effects of September 11 not only on Americans, but on international relations worldwide and journalistic responsibility in the media. Amanpour mostly focuses on the effects of the attacks on the ‘American empire’ and what socio-political ramifications followed afterwards. While she still focuses on the brutalism of the Taliban, unlike in many articles before, she discusses how the attacks have reshaped the United States as a global superpower and draws in on other events such as foreign invasions to compare. There is a clear audience that the article is trying to reach. Amanpour asks a very polarizing question in page two, ‘Was 9/11 a day, a moment, or a whole era-defining shift in America’s understanding and vision of itself at home and abroad? Did the response to 9/11 do as much damage as the attack itself?’ (Amanpour, 2021). This question posed alone shows a clear stance on the September 11 attacks and shifts from the focus on terrorism to the focus on how the United States responded to the attack and the ramifications that followed. This is in line with the overall theme of the aftermath of September 11 and the impact on American foreign policy.

There are five images displayed in this article, as seen below Figure 20 to Figure 24. The photos that Amanpour included represent the struggle and fight that the United States had in the Middle East, specifically Afghanistan.

Figure 20

Al Jazeera airs footage of Osama bin Laden praising the attacks of September 11



Note. From “America’s response to 9/11 was as damaging as the attack. It’s not too late to change course” by Christiane Amanpour, *CNN*. (<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/09/11/world/amanpour-reflection-9-11-20th-anniversary-cmd-intl/index.html>)

Figure 21

US soldiers deploy to a base in Afghanistan’s Zabul province to fight Taliban militants in June 2006



Note. From “America’s response to 9/11 was as damaging as the attack. It’s not too late to change course” by Christiane Amanpour, *CNN*. (<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/09/11/world/amanpour-reflection-9-11-20th-anniversary-cmd-intl/index.html>)

Figure 22

Taliban militants battle the Northern Alliance in Charikar, Afghanistan in October 1996, a month after seizing Kabul



Taliban militants battle the Northern Alliance in Charikar, Afghanistan in October 1996, a month after seizing Kabul. Robert Nickelsberg/Archive Photos/Getty Images

Note. From “America’s response to 9/11 was as damaging as the attack. It’s not too late to change course” by Christiane Amanpour, *CNN*. (<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/09/11/world/amanpour-reflection-9-11-20th-anniversary-cmd-intl/index.html>)

Figure 23

Then US President George H.W. Bush greets Somali women while visiting US troops in Somalia in January 1993



Then US President George H.W. Bush greets Somali women while visiting US troops in Somalia in January 1993. Rick Wilking/Reuters

Note. From “America’s response to 9/11 was as damaging as the attack. It’s not too late to change course” by Christiane Amanpour, *CNN*. (<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/09/11/world/amanpour-reflection-9-11-20th-anniversary-cmd-intl/index.html>)

Figure 24

Christiane Amanpour is seen reporting from Afghanistan for CNN in the 1990s



Note. From “America’s response to 9/11 was as damaging as the attack. It’s not too late to change course” by Christiane Amanpour, *CNN*. (<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/09/11/world/amanpour-reflection-9-11-20th-anniversary-cmd-intl/index.html>)

4.3 Fox News

Fox News is a right-wing daily news outlet based out of New York City that reaches nearly 200 million people monthly. They are known to take a right-wing stance on issues and are popular among Republican Americans, often giving polarizing opinions. The purpose of analyzing articles from *Fox News* is to obtain a point of view of people that are openly more biased and have a much stronger sense of nationality and pride in the United States, therefore I expect the content to be more patriotic.

4.3.1 2006

The fifth anniversary edition from *Fox News* to be analyzed is titled ‘Sept. 11 creates new lexicon’ by Michael Park. The article is analyzing and discussing the effects of the war on terrorism and the September 11 attacks had on linguistics and language surrounding the date and the religion of Islam in the United States. The article is very racy and ahead of its time in the coverage, especially analyzing the linguistics that appeared over just five short years. There are no pictures included in the article.

This article is important as the September 11 attacks are one of the few days in history that became known by the date of the tragedy rather than where, who or what. This is important as mentioned in the literature review under Leavy 2007 and the four actions of media regarding events.

Park highlights the importance that language had on the United States' national identity and a new reality that was established from hence forth. He states that the 10th of September as a day representing the naivety of those still hoping for a return to normalcy and the 12th of September adopting new words that would have completely new meanings such as "jihad, Ground Zero, burqa, Islamist" (Park, 2006). There are no direct conversations or references to Al-Qaeda, but Park discusses directly the effect that the war on terrorism had in American English and the plethora of new words that became conversational. Park references the invasion of Iraq and the United States' war in Afghanistan as events that immediately followed and were caused by the September 11 attacks.

4.3.2 2011

The tenth anniversary issue from *Fox News* is titled "9/11 Emergency responders were heroes long before fateful day" by Wil Cruz. The language used is emotionally charged that paints victims as heroes and includes personal narratives to outline themes of heroism and memory. Phrases and words such as "pivotal day", "[first responders] heroes", "sacrifice" and "crashing down" paint a picture of the day and evoke an emotional response. This article is an example of one with all main running themes and serves as a non-politicalized example. Cruz does not include any references to Al Qaeda, terrorism, or the war on terrorism. He keeps the focus on the heroes of the day, keeping the memory of first responders and volunteers alive.

The main themes in this article are memory, unity and heroism. Heroism is seen through phrases as "Heroism manifests itself in subtle ways" and the opening line "Their collective heroism has been well documented" (Cruz, 2011). Memory is also observed in this article in

the first paragraph “The valor of the first responders...will never be forgotten – not on this 10th anniversary, the 11th, the 20th or beyond” (Cruz 2011) and seen throughout as the author includes personal testimonies and stories of the day.

There is one photo included in the article, pictured Figure 25 that shows New York City firefighters heading towards the collapsed Twin Towers early afternoon of September 11. It evokes an emotion of resilience and dismay with onlookers looking helplessly as the buildings in the foreground continue to burn and information is scarce.

Figure 25

Firemen heading south on the West Side Highway towards the remains of the World Trade Center where smoke continued hours after the collapse



Fireman heading south on the West Side Highway towards the remains of the World Trade Center where smoke continued hours after the collapse. Streets of lower Manhattan with fireman, police, and rescue crews after the collapse of the World Trade Center after being hit by two airplanes on September 11, 2001. photo by Gabe Palacio/ImageDirect

Note. From “9/11 Emergency responders were heroes long before fateful day” by Will Cruz, *Fox News*. (<https://www.foxnews.com/world/9-11-emergency-responders-were-heroes-long-before-fateful-day>)

4.3.3 2016

The article that I am analyzing for the 15th anniversary of the September 11 attacks is titled ‘9/11 after 15 years: Those who were there to remember’ written by in-house *Fox News* author Hollie McKay with contributions from Jamie Brennan. The article serves as an anniversary issue that includes a personal reflection from various people, such as doctors, firefighters, policemen and politicians regarding the day of the attack and effects following.

McKay separated the piece into different sections to categorize each person's stories: 'The Governor', 'The Healer', 'The Fire Commissioner', 'The Police Commissioner', 'The Major General', 'The Survivors' and 'The Masterminds'. It is interesting to note that McKay decided to include 'The Masterminds' at all, as they are detained as criminals directly linked to the September 11 attacks and general terrorism in the United States. The audience the text is intended for are Americans, most likely people that have been directly affected by the attacks and those who can relate to the content. McKay utilizes strong language and vocabulary and does take a clear stance on her personal emotions toward the September 11 attacks. However, unlike some other *Fox News* articles covered and analyzed, McKay does not bring up politics or bring unrelated content into the text.

The first sentence of this article, 'Ask an American where he or she was when the Towers fell, and you'll most likely get a reply with no hesitation' (McKay & Brennan, 2016) opens the content in a way that shows how impactful the September 11 attacks were and continue to be in American culture and everyday life. They open the article by giving an insight into what the article will contain, placing importance on the question for the audience. The authors highlight the day's lifelong impact in a single sentence, keeping with the years-long rhetoric of 'never forget' that is utilized throughout anniversary issues and media year after year.

It is clear by the outline, vocabulary and structure of the text that the authors' purpose of publishing this article is to memorialize the tragedy of the September 11 attacks and remember with personal accounts, possibly to connect with their audience more intimately. While a large portion of the article is personal reflections and direct quotes, the content that they are writing is very strong and thought evoking. The vocabulary utilized portrays stark and elicit direct emotions, with words such as 'somber', 'anguish', 'evil men' [the attackers], and phrases such as 'one of America's darkest days' and 'heroism, loss, pain'. The article really

focuses on keeping the theme to resilience and reflection, with personal narrative stories being the most important part.

This article includes photos of each person that contributed their recount of personal stories, giving a much more personal touch to the article and creating a relatability with the audience. Each section represents a different purpose served on the day of the attacks, from doctors to firefighters to workers in the World Trade Center. Figures 26 to 34 below display the photos throughout the article. It is important to note that under the 'The Healers' section of the article that includes photos of doctors and firefighters, specifically in black and white formats (Figures 26-28). The photos also portray each person in powerful poses that exude confidence and safety, reflecting upon their jobs and important role in the day. Figure 32 is grouped under the section 'The Survivors' and shows the old ID card from Brian Branco who was working in the World Trade Center on the day of the attack. The section titled 'The Masterminds' shows two photos of three assailants that were connected to the attack. Figures 33-34 are both mugshots, with one missing their picture, which is not clear if it was intentional or not. However, this shows that they are there to merely serve as a face to the crime rather than a positive important role in the day.

Figure 26

Dr. Antonio Dajer remembers triaging patients as they flooded into the emergency room, then it slowed into a trickle



Dr. Antonio Dajer remembers triaging patients as they flooded into the emergency room, then it slowed to a trickle. (Connor Hadley/NewYork-Presbyterian)

Note. From “9/11 after 15 years: Those who were there remember” by Hollie McKay and Jamie McBrennan, *Fox News*. (<https://www.foxnews.com/us/9-11-after-15-years-those-who-were-there-remember>)

Figure 27

John Episcopo was an EMT who treated patients on the scene. Two of his co-workers died that day



John Episcopo was an EMT who treated patients on the scene. Two of his co-workers died that day. (Alexander Massac/NewYork-Presbyterian EMS)

Note. From “9/11 after 15 years: Those who were there remember” by Hollie McKay and Jamie McBrennan, *Fox News*. (<https://www.foxnews.com/us/9-11-after-15-years-those-who-were-there-remember>)

Figure 28

Dr. JoAnn Difede at first wondered why the emergency room was empty, but soon it was full



Dr. JoAnn Difede at first wondered why the emergency room was empty, but soon it was full. (Connor Hadley/NewYork-Presbyterian)

Note. From “9/11 after 15 years: Those who were there remember” by Hollie McKay and Jamie McBrennan, *Fox News*. (<https://www.foxnews.com/us/9-11-after-15-years-those-who-were-there-remember>)

Figure 29

Von Essen, shown here with then-Mayor Rudy Giuliani



Von Essen, shown here with then-Mayor Rudy Giuliani. (Associated Press)

Note. From “9/11 after 15 years: Those who were there remember” by Hollie McKay and Jamie McBrennan, *Fox News*. (<https://www.foxnews.com/us/9-11-after-15-years-those-who-were-there-remember>)

Figure 30

Fine, shown here with photographer Stan Honda, whose iconic picture of Fine on 9/11 made him known as “The Dustman”



Fine, shown here with photographer Stan Honda, whose iconic picture of Fine on 9/11 made him known as “The Dustman.”

Note. From “9/11 after 15 years: Those who were there remember” by Hollie McKay and Jamie McBrennan, *Fox News*. (<https://www.foxnews.com/us/9-11-after-15-years-those-who-were-there-remember>)

Figure 31

Rebecca Lazinger’s first anniversary at investment bank Morgan Stanley was on the fateful day



Rebecca Lazinger's first anniversary at investment bank Morgan Stanley was on the fateful day. (Courtesy: Rebecca Lazinger)

Note. From “9/11 after 15 years: Those who were there remember” by Hollie McKay and Jamie McBrennan, *Fox News*. (<https://www.foxnews.com/us/9-11-after-15-years-those-who-were-there-remember>)

Figure 32

Branco still has his building pass-and his painful memories from 9/11



Branco still has his building pass - and his painful memories from 9/11. (Courtesy: Brian Branco)

Note. From “9/11 after 15 years: Those who were there remember” by Hollie McKay and Jamie McBrennan, *Fox News*. (<https://www.foxnews.com/us/9-11-after-15-years-those-who-were-there-remember>)

Figure 33

Khalid Sheikh Mohammed is shown in this file photograph during his arrest on March 1, 2003



Khalid Sheikh Mohammed is shown in this file photograph during his arrest on March 1, 2003. (Reuters Photo)

Note. From “9/11 after 15 years: Those who were there remember” by Hollie McKay and Jamie McBrennan, *Fox News*. (<https://www.foxnews.com/us/9-11-after-15-years-those-who-were-there-remember>)

Figure 34

Moussaoui will spend the rest of his life in prison, confined for 23 hours to a cement cell



Moussaoui will spend the rest of his life in prison, confined for 23 hours to a cement cell.

Note. From “9/11 after 15 years: Those who were there remember” by Hollie McKay and Jamie McBrennan, *Fox News*. (<https://www.foxnews.com/us/9-11-after-15-years-those-who-were-there-remember>)

4.3.4 2021

The 20th anniversary edition from *Fox News* I will be analyzing is titled, “Gen. Jack Keane describes being inside the Pentagon on 9/11: ‘I knew it was a terrorist attack’” by in-house author Audrey Conklin. Similar to the 15th anniversary edition of *Fox News*, this article is a story-telling piece. An important note to add is the lack of anniversary issues that *Fox News* posted for the 20th anniversary. The article is an interview with retired General Jack Keane, who was inside the Pentagon during the attacks in 2001, and most of the text are direct quotes from him.

The language that Keane uses is highly emotionally charged, stating that the challenge with Al Qaeda is whether the United States military will be able to “keep watch on the development of these radical Islamist groups inside of Afghanistan and also impact them so that they don’t grow to a status where they could attack us again” (Conklin, 2021). Keane and Conklin evoke a patriotic tone and sense in the readers through language through personal experience and storytelling.

The article is set up in a chronological, storytelling format that focuses on impactful moments. There does seem to be an intended audience, one of American nationalists and specifically stark supporters of the war on terror. There is a large focus on eliminating terrorism and the wars in the Middle East. Keane references Al Qaeda and extremist groups many times throughout the text, emphasizing that we as Americans need to eliminate it and focus on not letting the extremism grow further.

The article frames the September 11 attacks as a pivotal event in United States' history that changed the course of history. Former General Keane and the author Conkin both emphasize the shift in national security and foreign affairs that occurred and the beginning of a long set of wars on terrorism in the Middle East. The quotes and narration throughout also paint a theme of heroism and sacrifice, much like many other articles. In one section, Keane states, "we honor [the victims that we lost] them and we also honor the 9/11 generation who stood up and wanted to go out to protect America, and protect America, they did" (Conklin, 2021). He focuses on remembering the sacrifices that people who joined the fight made and to not forget that.

There are two photos included in the article, as seen from Figure 35 to Figure 36. Figure 35 shows former General Keane with a focused, somber look while he listens to a hearing. Figure 36 gives the audience an insight into what the day looked like for former General Keane and shows the destruction of the Pentagon. It provides context for the reader.

Figure 35

Ret. Gen. Jack Keane, Chariman of the Board of the Institute for the Study of War, listens during a Homeland Security and Foreign Affairs Committee hearing



Ret. Gen. Jack Keane, Chairman of the Board of the Institute for the Study of War, listens during a House Homeland Security and Foreign Affairs Committee hearing. (Photo By Al Drago/CQ Roll Call)

Note. From “Gen. Jack Keane describes being inside the Pentagon on 9/11: “I knew it was a terrorist attack.” by Audrey Conklin, *Fox News*. (<https://www.foxnews.com/us/gen-jack-keane-pentagon-9-11>)

Figure 36

Smoke comes out from the Southwest E-ring of the pentagon building September 11, 2001 in Arlington, Va., after a plane crashed into the building and set off a huge explosion



394262 07: Smoke comes out from the Southwest E-ring of the Pentagon building September 11, 2001 in Arlington, Va., after a plane crashed into the building and set off a huge explosion. (Photo by Alex Wong/Getty Images)

Note. From “Gen. Jack Keane describes being inside the Pentagon on 9/11: “I knew it was a terrorist attack.” by Audrey Conklin, *Fox News*. (<https://www.foxnews.com/us/gen-jack-keane-pentagon-9-11>)

4.4 The Washington Post

The Washington Post is a daily news publisher based out of Washington, D.C. and is moderate centrist leaning in American politics. This media outlet is included in my analysis to serve unbiased central articles for the research.

4.4.1 2006

The article, 'Nation Marks Fifth Anniversary of 9/11 Attacks' was published on September 11, 2006, by William Branigin and serves as the fifth anniversary edition for *The Washington Post*. There are no photos included in this article. The author keeps a formal, reflective tone through narrative storytelling and personal recounts. Branigin seems to rally an audience around support for eliminating terrorism through personal narratives and a call for patriotism.

The article is set up in a narrative way, with introducing the content discussing the memorials in place for the fifth anniversary of September 11, switching to important takeaways from former President George W. Bush's speeches, jumping to some statements from other political leaders such as former Mayor Rudy Giuliani, to personal reflections and finally some history surrounding the day of the attacks and the aftermath that followed.

The text is very focused on the war on terrorism and events going on in the Middle East. Similar to the tenth anniversary article from *CNN*, the author does not include the members of Al-Qaeda that died in the attacks into the total death toll. Branigin reinforces the former narrative that the war on terror was of a democracy versus the extremist beliefs to justify the United States' actions in the Middle East and responses that followed. In order to discuss and make statements on terrorism, Branigin includes quotes such as from former Vice President Dick Cheney 'We have shown that Americans are a resolute people, clear in our purposes, steady in difficult tasks. We have answered violence with patient justice...our cause is right, our will is strong; this great nation will prevail.' and from former President George W. Bush

regarding the flight that was diverted from hitting the Capitol Building and crashed into a field in Shanksville, '[the United States]' first victory in the war on terrorism' (Brainigin, 2006).

The main themes in the text are those found in many previous texts analyzed such as remembrance, resilience and the ongoing fight against terrorism. Similar to some other analyzed texts, the author discusses the importance of announcing the names of those that died on the day of the attacks as a way for the United States and its citizens to keep a collective memory.

4.4.2 2011

The tenth anniversary article is a blog post titled, "Ted Olson on loss and love in the decade since 9/11" and is a much shorter article than previously analyzed. It is a personal testimony and remembrance of his late wife who perished in the attacks ten years earlier. The article serves as a personal narrative and national reflection. The layout of the article is a narrative story that goes in a timeline and gives background information behind those included in the story. There are no photos published in this article. There is no mention of the politics surrounding the September 11 attacks or the terrorists, as the article focuses on the narrative storytelling of Ted Olson.

The language used is reflective and intimate, acting as a humble hero with phrases such as "I'm not unique...unfortunate things happen to all of us...You're not the only one that experienced a terrible tragedy, as thousands of other people did that day" (The Reliable Source, 2011). The author includes quotes evoking strong emotions of pity and personalism in Ted Olson but also portrays him as a symbol of September 11 and strength.

Strong themes can be observed: resilience, loss and memory. Not only is the theme of loss collective, but also personal to Ted Olson in his reflection on his late wife and the other victims of the attacks. The quotes included from Olson serve as a testimony to the national resilience of the nation post-September 11.

4.4.3 2016

The 15th anniversary edition for *The Washington Post* is titled ‘Washington and the nation mark 15th anniversary of 9/11 with service and prayer’ by Fredrick Kunkle, Kayla Epstein and T. Rees Shapiro, all formerly or current in-house *The Washington Post* writers. There are no photos included in the article and it is presented in a storytelling narrative, including quotes and stories from the general population. Based on the language and themes, the authors do not seem to have an intended audience as it is information based.

The language used is emotionally charged and paints a picture of life post-September 11 fifteen years later. The tone shifts from somber when reflecting the events to a hopeful tone when discussing the community events and unity. The authors also choose specific parts of political speeches to adhere to the tone and language such as from Obama, “In the end, the most enduring memorial to those we lost is ensuring the America we continue to be...that we stay true to ourselves. That we stay true to what’s best in us.” (Kunkle et. Al, 2016).

The authors take a stance and give their opinions on the war on terrorism and the United States’ occupation in the Middle East when interviewing Washington D.C. residents stating, “[the residents] spent part of Sunday reflecting on the day 15 years ago that pitched the United States into a stubborn and ruthless war in Afghanistan, and became the prelude to a broader conflict that has touched almost an entire generation and still seems to have no end in sight” (Kunkle et al., 2016). They go on to discuss the plight of being Muslim-American in a post September 11 world through personal testimonies.

There are a few themes that can be observed throughout the text including remembrance, reflection and resilience. The authors make a point of focusing on remembering September 11 and the effects while also pointing out to a brighter future ahead for Americans through resilience. They highlight commemorative acts and their importance in society to preserve the collective memory in preserving national identity. Through the text and

storytelling, Kunkle et. Al reflect on societal themes of memory and unity when undergoing a tragedy.

4.4.4 2021

The article I am analyzing for the 20th anniversary edition from *The Washington Post* is titled ‘After 9/11, a rush of national unity. Then, quickly, more and new divisions.’ by Chief Correspondent Dan Balz. This article serves as an analysis of the state of affairs surrounding the United States in 2021 and the impact on the anniversary of the attacks, also comparing to the COVID-19 pandemic and the January 6 insurrection. It is important to note this is an opinionated anniversary edition that discusses the political sphere 20 years later.

The language used by Balz is emotionally charged and has outright political tones. He questions the state of American politics 20 years later and the state of the union, bringing in examples of divisions and effects of the war on terrorism and overall events of the September 11 attacks. The article is written in a narrative style that tells a story and gives background to Balz’s concerns and opinions, while referencing political leaders and their involvement in post-September 11 policies. Balz uses charged quotes such as “[the ceremony] but it will come not as expression of a united America but simply as a momentary cessation in political wars that rage and have deepened in the years since those attacks” (Balz, 2021) to take a stance for the audience.

He discusses the United States’ decision to invade Iraq as a “misguided” effort to establish a democracy similar to those in the West (Balz, 2021). Balz references the American occupation in Afghanistan several times, clearly giving a stance on the topic. Speaking about the Bush administration, “Afghanistan was never enough. The Bush administration quickly shifted its focus to a wider war on terrorism.” (Balz, 2021), criticizing Bush and his government's decision to continue to fight an unwinnable war. In his discussions about the war on terrorism, there is a heavy focus on the war and how they impacted politics overseas and on

national soil, questioning whether they were worth the lives lost and money spent. Balz also references to the long-believed conspiracy that Sadaam Hussein was the mastermind behind the attacks, and that using this false information to invade Iraq again caused unnecessary destruction abroad and was a rash decision. The author uses the COVID pandemic and 20-year anniversary of September 11 to analyze and give commentary on modern politics, namely the “with us or against us” that has created political battles in which no middle ground exists. The article references Al Qaeda numerous times and the change that has occurred in these 20 years, namely the return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan.

The theme of war on terror, vulnerability and division can be observed throughout the article. Balz parallels the state of the United States directly after the attacks to the year of 2021 and the 20th anniversary, and the deep political divide present. He compares the divisions that came from September 11 to that of COVID-19 epidemic, stating, “If 9/11 could not sustain American unity for long, there were other events that tested whether the nation could break out of its divisions” (Balz, 2021). The United States is portrayed as a very vulnerable union that faces division through internal politics and did not learn from the original lessons that were taught post-September 11.

There are four photos displayed throughout the article, as seen below from Figure 37 to Figure 40. The photos serve as reflections of the attacks and portrays the state of the United States at the time during COVID, showing Congress members (Figure 37) together holding a moment of silence and as a stark contrast, shows American citizens physically fighting at a protest following the January 6 insurrection (Figure 40). Figures 37 and 39 radiate a feeling of unity and reflection through impactful photos that arose surrounding the attacks. Figure 38 is a screengrab of Bush’s presidential speech following the attacks and is in black in white, evoking a sense of reflection and shows the former president in a vulnerable position.

Figure 37



Note. From “After 9/11, a rush of national unity. Then, quickly, more and new divisions” by Dan Balz, *The Washington Post*. (https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/after-911-a-rush-of-national-unity-then-quickly-more-and-new-divisions/2021/09/11/8f6f7d8e-12a9-11ec-bc8a-8d9a5b534194_story.html)

Figure 38

President George W. Bush addressed the nation on Sept. 11, 2001, after returning to the White House



Note. From “After 9/11, a rush of national unity. Then, quickly, more and new divisions” by Dan Balz, *The Washington Post*. (https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/after-911-a-rush-of-national-unity-then-quickly-more-and-new-divisions/2021/09/11/8f6f7d8e-12a9-11ec-bc8a-8d9a5b534194_story.html)

Figure 39

As Capt. Ron Hopkins, 27, left, of Honolulu, looks on, Capt. Erik Schutz, 26, right, of Medina, Minn., and Capt. Matt Schachman, 28, of Wilmette, Ill., raise a new American flag on Sept. 11, 2011, at Forward Operating Base Bostick in Konar province, Afghanistan, to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks



As Capt. Ron Hopkins, 27, left, of Honolulu, looks on, Capt. Erik Schutz, 26, right, of Medina, Minn., and Capt. Matt Schachman, 28, of Wilmette, Ill., raise a new American flag on Sept. 11, 2011, at Forward Operating Base Bostick in Konar province, Afghanistan, to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. (David Goldman/AP)

Note. From “After 9/11, a rush of national unity. Then, quickly, more and new divisions” by Dan Balz, *The Washington Post*. (https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/after-911-a-rush-of-national-unity-then-quickly-more-and-new-divisions/2021/09/11/8f6f7d8e-12a9-11ec-bc8a-8d9a5b534194_story.html)

Figure 40

Pro- and anti-Trump activists scuffle on July 27, 2021, outside the Justice Department in Washington over the treatment of people jailed on charges related to the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol



Pro- and anti-Trump activists scuffle on July 27, 2021, outside the Justice Department in Washington over the treatment of people jailed on charges related to the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol. (Amanda Andrade-Rhoades/for The Washington Post)

Note. From “After 9/11, a rush of national unity. Then, quickly, more and new divisions” by Dan Balz, *The Washington Post*. (https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/after-911-a-rush-of-national-unity-then-quickly-more-and-new-divisions/2021/09/11/8f6f7d8e-12a9-11ec-bc8a-8d9a5b534194_story.html)

5. Data Presentation and Discussion

5.1. Results

The research question that guided this research was “What role does the American online media coverage play in the cultivation of collective memory for the anniversary dates of the September 11 attacks?” and the purpose of my research was to explore and analyze anniversary issues of the day of the attacks published by specifically chosen major American news outlets. These outlets included *The New York Times*, *CNN*, *Fox News* and *The Washington Post*. The discourse analysis was carried out to observe the way American media portrayed and spoke

about September 11 and to see if there is a shift as the event becomes a memory, and as the global political climate shifts. There was a set outline of questions and points to look for in my analyses that are as follows: language, framework, war on terrorism, Al-Qaeda mentions, themes and photos.

The most important themes that became recurring are as follows: resilience/unity, memory and the war on terror. These three themes are observed in almost every article from every media outlet and serve as important reminders of the day. These main themes and articles serve as a mold that shapes our collective memory of the event and what ensued in the years after, as well as still today and the global effect. They serve a very important purpose for understanding how the September 11 attacks continue to influence the United States on a national and international scale from politics to society. An important note to the analysis is all articles were interpreted to have more than one theme but will be focusing on the overarching main theme.

5.1.1. Memory

The theme of memory was observed throughout the articles six times and is the most common theme throughout the analysis. The following years and editions were observed: *The New York Times* 2006, 2016, 2021-with a heavy emphasis on collective memory specifically, *CNN* 2006 and 2016 and *Fox News* 2016. Words that were repeated and seen to be associated with the theme of memory were memorial (96), never forget (24), honor (10), legacy (3), loss (18), monuments (3), reflect (2), remember (16), with the amount of times each word appeared in parentheses. The theme of memory was observed in three of the four analyzed articles in *The New York Times*, twice in *CNN*, once in *Fox News* and none in *The Washington Post*.

The New York Times 2006 focuses on the struggle between memory and politics, as New York City politicians were at a standstill of what to do with the hole where the towers once stood, and how to honor the day appropriately:

The wreck that still stands tall and the pit that still sinks deep sum up the troubled history of ground zero. A site of horrific tragedy whose rescue and cleanup operation was a model of valiant efficiency, ground zero turned into a sinkhole of good intentions where it was as difficult to demolish a building as to construct one...The combination of big money, prime real estate, bottomless grief, artistic ego and dreams of legacy transformed ground zero into a mosh pit of stakeholders banging heads over billions in federal aid, tax breaks and insurance proceeds. (Sontag, 2006)

Sontag utilizes descriptive language to paint a picture and set the scene for the audience as seen in the above quotes, as well as many metaphors relating to September 11 and the city of New York. In the article, Ground Zero became a metaphor for the political tension in New York City and the struggle for politicians to come to an agreement regarding the best way to memorialize the holes in the ground that were once the Twin Towers.

The article includes several photos that encapsulate the emptiness and rubble that was left after the collapse of the towers, showing a scene of destruction and using angles that makes the job seem not doable. Sontag also includes in the last photo the “Family Room” that was erected near the rubble for those who lost loved ones, alluding to the need to figure out a permanent solution for commemoration and remembrance.

The New York Times 2016 and 2021, and *Fox News* 2016 editions focus on the collective memory of the day of the attacks and the traditions that are held to honor and remember those as to keep the memory alive. *The New York Times* 2016 capitalized off direct quotes and conversations with memorial attendees for the 15th anniversary, stating “But for the family members of the victims, it was another year of grief, and the pain was as raw as ever” (Schmidt, 2016). Schmidt references to quotes from former President Barack Obama, focusing on his parts of the speech that discuss a rise in new national values, namely differences in race, ethnic and background that makes the United States special. The article includes emotional images of

the audience such as families crying and hugging, Mr. Obama and servicemen somberly reflecting.

The 20th anniversary edition of *The New York Times* focus and discuss the transition into a ‘lost’ generation that has no first-hand accounts of the attacks:

For two decades, Americans have mourned the attacks of Sept. 11 that killed early 3,000 people, a loss so deep it shook the United States to its core. But even as time has passed, and the horrific day has moved from fresh memory into the chronicles of history, the people who gathered across the country and the globe said the wounds from 9/11 have remained fresh. (Gold & Rogers, 2021).

The article’s focus is to stress the importance of keeping a first-hand memory of September 11 alive and making sure the new generations receive the legacy of the day and the turmoil afterwards, “Her son is part of an entire generation that has been born in the shadow of that day and has only received its legacy secondhand” (Gold & Rogers, 2021). The authors use an emotional tone with descriptive language such as ‘wounds from 9/11 have remained fresh’ to convey the effect that the day had and to keep the raw emotions alive in writing for time to come. Within the theme of memory, the authors also focus on the memorialization of the attacks. They strategically quote past and then-current presidents with phrases that contrast of post September 11 unity and the political divide that was rampant in the United States in 2021 with the COVID pandemic and aftermath of the January 6 insurrection. The article overall constructs a narrative to the audience that remembers and honors the past while simultaneously reflecting on the present day and the future challenges that may arise to the American society related to the September 11 attacks.

The *Fox News* 2016 article focused solely on real stories and recounts of the day of the attacks and starts the article out as, “Ask an American where he or she was when the Towers fell, and you’ll most likely get a reply with no hesitation” (McKay & Brennan, 2016). This quote highlights the “never forget” rhetoric surrounding September 11, showing the lifelong

and historical impact that the day had in just one sentence. The article heavily focuses on telling the stories of the people from September 11, from doctors to firefighters to laymen and sparing no details when including stories from witnesses:

Those memories will remain with us until the day we die,” Kerik said. “I watched innocent civilians jump – one, two, and three at a time. With each generation after the attacks, our citizens become less vigilant. It is imperative every American knows what happened that day and realizes the overall threat against us.” (McKay & Brennan, 2016).

The photos included are ways that the author exude the theme of the emotion and psychological impacts of the September 11 attacks on American society, focusing on seemingly normal people. They put an emphasis on how clear the memories of those who survived and were bystanders are on the day, even though 15 years had passed at that point. The theme of more specifically collective memory and the focus on keeping it alive is reinforced through the story-telling method, photos and witness accounts.

CNN 2006 revolves around the storytelling of a New York City cab driver and others in the city, who puts a strong emphasis of the degree of memory still lingering and the emotions that have not changed:

"People still talk about 9/11 as they did the first few months," said the Rev. Dr. Stuart Hoke of New York's Trinity Church. "It is one of the conversation topics at every event we attend -- every dinner party, every church gathering, it's still talked about with a great deal of intensity." (Tanneer, 2006)

The introduction to the article includes a strong symbolic metaphor: the St. Paul's chapel near the former World Trade Center. It was stated it became a 'pilgrimage' for Ground Zero, symbolizing the resilience, sanctuary and the light side of humanity in contrast to the 'carnage' that was caused by the people that caused the September 11 attacks. The word 'loss' is repeatedly used throughout the whole of text, using emotionally charged language to adhere to this theme, as well as phrases such as 'hole in my soul' and 'never recovered', making it

known to the audience this memory is still quite fresh and will continue to be. This article is one of the first early editions of anniversary issues to make statements regarding the wars in the Middle East:

Partisanship, however, has played a role in the debate over the Iraq war and over methods used in the fight against terror, including warrantless wiretaps and allegations of torture and secret renditions and prisons, Dimock said...Americans are also split over whether the war in Iraq is part of the war on terror and whether it's worth the cost. (Tanneeru, 2006)

The *CNN* 2016 edition is not an article, rather an interactive web page that shadowed a film about September 11 that came out that year. The page encapsulates the day through video and photo coverage with quotes from a filmmaker that happened to be on site:

Everyone had a story to tell on 9/11 -- where they were, who they lost. Lives forever changed, with that day echoing into the weeks, months and years that followed. (*Inside 9/11: The day that never ends*, 2016)

This web page serves as a permanent recollection of September 11 through raw video, photo and audio footage and gathers all the emotions and memories into one page. This page is very important as it is solely about memorializing the day and giving first-hand accounts rather than speaking about politics.

5.1.2. Resilience and unity

The theme of resilience and unity appeared five times in the analysis, all of the 10th anniversary editions (2011) for *The New York Times*, *CNN*, *Fox News*, and *The Washington Post*, as well as the 2016 edition. Words and phrases such as persistence, perseverance, courage (3), commemorations (8), together (2), heroes (6). There are not many repeated words in the article, but the following excerpts support the theme with detailed descriptions and encouraging phrases. The situational background and political references are also observed.

Both *The New York Times* and *CNN* tenth anniversary edition (2011) focused largely on the resilience that New Yorkers, Americans and world-wide displayed following the attacks. Both articles utilized excerpts of speeches from politicians such as former President and Vice President Barack Obama and Joe Biden to show the theme of resilience and unity within the articles. *The New York Times* 2011 article more specifically focuses on the international and national unity through world-wide memorial services, portraying unity as something that transcends politics and McFadden includes discussions on differing political leaders' speeches, connecting these acts of remembrance within the broader political context surrounding September 11.

"Yes, we are more vigilant against those who threaten us, and there are inconveniences that come with our common defense," Mr. Obama said Sunday night during a commemoration at the Kennedy Center in Washington. "Debates about war and peace, about security and civil liberties, have often been fierce these last 10 years. But it is precisely the rigor of these debates, and our ability to resolve them in a way that honors our values and our democracy, that is a measure of our strength." (McFadden, 2011)

The article discusses and focuses on the symbols around September 11 as well such as the Statue of Liberty, the new One World Trade Center and the display of American flags outside homes to paint a picture of hope and national identity that perseveres through the tragedy.

The *CNN* 2011 article is similar to the one published by *The New York Times* as it follows a narrative tone and focuses on political speeches of the nation's leaders. The following excerpt is from a speech quoted by former President Barack Obama, establishing the notion of resilience, pride and unity in two sentences.

"It was a declaration of war by stateless actors bent on changing our way of life, who believed these horrible acts, these horrible acts of terror directed against innocents could buckle our knees, could bend our will, could begin to break us and break our resolve. But

they did not know us. Instead, that same American instinct that send all of you into the breach between the fourth and fifth corridors galvanized a new generation of patriots, the 9/11 generation." (Aristo & Dolan, 2011).

This along with the photos presented show the American identity in a resilient way. Almost all the photos contain the American flag in plain sight or as a focal point, and every photo was taken at a memorial service where the audience have their heads held high while still grieving. The collective memory of September 11 is portrayed through resilience and unity in a way that honors the past while simultaneously looking forward to a brighter future.

Fox News 2011 edition captures the theme of unity and resilience through the context of memory, blending the two themes together seamlessly. The theme of resilience is portrayed through emotionally charged language such as ‘pivotal day’, ‘sacrifices’ and ‘heroes’:

Their collective heroism has been well documented, becoming in the last decade the standard by which true courage is measured. The valor of the first responders of September 11, the men and women who carried out their ordinary jobs under the most extraordinary circumstances, will never be forgotten – not on this 10th anniversary, the 11th, the 20th or beyond. (Cruz, 2011)

Cruz includes one picture in the article that displays New York Fire Department employees in full gear heading towards the scene of the collapsed towers in the background, as onlookers observe helplessly.

The Washington Post 2011 covered an interview with the face of September 11, Ted Olson, whose wife called from one of the airplanes before the crash. He had become world-famous for his story and a symbol of resilience and unity through remembrance.

"When I appeared in public, I had to stress that I'm not unique . . . unfortunate, tragic things happen to all of us," he said. "It's very important to put that in perspective: You're not the

only one that has experienced a terrible tragedy, as thousands of other people did that day.

(The Reliable Source, 2011)

Through his interview and the coverage by The Reliable Source, the article emphasizes the importance of coming together in the light of tragedy to grieve as one. Resilience is the strongest theme seen throughout, with the article ending in the phrase from Olson “Horrible things can happen to you, and horrible things happened to us on September 11...but if we look for love and happiness and fulfillment, we will find it” (The Reliable Source, 2011).

The Washington Post 2016 edition is the only article under the theme of resilience and unity that was not from 2011. The language used is somber when reflecting the events and switches to a hopeful tone when discussing community and follows a story-telling narrative through testimonies “I think, nationally, what we’ve done to come together after 9/11 — to really, on a solemn occasion, pay tribute and honor by coming together in service to others — is really important,” she said” (Kunkle et. Al, 2016). The authors focus on remembering the events and the after-effects, even to the victims of the war on terror, while also emphasizing a brighter, resilient future.

5.1.3. War on terror

The theme of war on terror and the Middle East is observed five times in the following outlets: *CNN* 2021, *Fox News* 2006 and 2021 and *The Washington Post* 2006 and 2021. Language that was associated with the theme were words such as Al Qaeda (used 2 times), terror (36), war (64), Iraq (21), Afghanistan (50), threat (8), attacks (73), fight (9). The theme of war on terror appeared in three of the four 2021 editions, the 20th anniversary and twice within the *Fox News* (2006, 2021) and *The Washington Post* (2006, 2021) articles. Also, the reference to the invasion of the Middle East, consequences and overall theme are especially

prominent in the 2021 articles of every media outlet but are not the overarching theme only in *The New York Times* 2021. Of the 16 total articles analyzed, 11 referenced the war on terror, invasion of the Middle East and the actions of Al Qaeda. This theme, while not the most frequent, was the most impactful through words, language and coverage and by its appearance in later editions shows the shift in collective memory in the way that media outlets frame September 11 as a whole. September 11 was no longer seen as one singular day that focused on Americans, but a decades long war that claimed the lives of innocent people in an impossible-to-win war.

The *CNN* 2021 article by Christiane Amanpour is a very politicalized edition that heavily focused on the war on terror and the ramifications that followed still (at the time) 20 years later. Amanpour starts the article by reflecting on September 11 attacks in the American frame, then switching to a narrative criticizing the United States government and their reactions to the attacks. The article frames the “never forget” narrative as never forget the damage that followed the attacks on a worldwide scale and how it permanently affected global relations.

Did the response to 9/11 do as much damage as the attack itself? I have concluded the answer is yes. My own question is if 20 years on this can be recalibrated, or whether bin Laden’s attack was actually the beginning of the end of American empire. (Amanpour, 2021)

The article goes on to recognize that the invasion of Afghanistan after September 11 and other conflicts in the Middle East proved to be ‘an expensive, difficult, barely successful US intervention’ (Amanpour, 2021), shifting a previous narrative that supported ending terrorism worldwide no matter the cost. She calls on a modern-day reflection of the September 11 attacks and its legacy, and how to move forward in our memories internationally and within the nation.

The *Fox News* 2006 article focuses on the language that emerged from the September attacks and follows Leavy's four media actions regarding events, specifically naming (Leavy, 2007). An example of the naming action:

The one phrase that nearly everyone agrees will be a permanent addition to the dictionary is the very term we use to refer to the 2001 terrorist attacks — 9/11, pronounced “nine-eleven,” along with its permutations, like “Sept. 11,” post-9/11” and “pre-9/11.”...And yet if you need to define '9/11' you can briefly say 'the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001,' but there's so much more there.” (Park, 2006)

This quote and the article in general show the importance that journalism has in the cultivation of our memories as a society and how we collectively remember events. There is a large focus on the before and after of September 11, the before representing a hope for normalcy and the after as a new generation of language that emerged through the attacks, war on terrorism and military invasions in the Middle East.

Another *Fox News* article that showed the theme of war on terror is the 2021 edition. Retired General Jack Keane gives his unfiltered opinion on the war on terror, and it is the opposite of any of the other ones analyzed. Keane references the day of the September 11 attacks as the first battle of the war on terror and reiterates the importance of the war on terror to “eliminate” the radicals.

Keane commanded the U.S. on keeping al Qaeda from attacking on American soil again, boosting its defenses and ensuring that Afghanistan did not become a "safe haven" for terrorists for years. He does fear, however, that the risk in Afghanistan has "gone up" since the Biden administration ordered a complete withdrawal of the military before Aug. 31. (Keane, 2021)

Keane and the article portray the war on terror as a necessary event to protect the United States' freedom and focus on the shift in national security and foreign affairs post-September 11.

Similar to the *Fox News* 2021 article, *The Washington Post* 2006 portrays the war on terror as justified and fair reaction to September 11. The author, William Branigin quotes excerpts from former President George W. Bush's speech to the nation on the commemoration event:

"The war is not over -- and it will not be over until either we or the extremists emerge victorious," the president will say, according to excerpts of the speech released by the defeat these enemies now, we will leave our children to face a Middle East overrun by terrorist states and radical dictators armed with nuclear weapons." (Branigin, 2006)

There is also an importance in the balancing act of mourning that must take place along with an emphasis on the commitment of fighting against terrorism, including continually reinforcing the idea that the war on terrorism and its effects are justified because Americans need to protect their democracy.

The Washington Post 2021 discusses the war on terrorism and in Iraq many times throughout the article, stating that "the war on terrorism, which had first united the country, turned into a political wedge" (Balz, 2021). Balz uses a narrative style of writing to convey emotion, criticizing the United States and the Bush administration's invasion of Middle Eastern countries and the continuation of an unfightable war on terror. The article discusses the ramifications that followed the war on terror and still exist 20 years later, such as political tensions world-wide and nationwide.

There is also a parallel between the January 6th storming of the Capitol and the aftermath of September 11, citing the internal political terrorism:

On a day for somber tribute, the man who was president on 9/11, George W. Bush, spoke most directly of those new divisions — and threats — in a speech in Shanksville, Pa., where Flight 93 went down on the day of the attacks. Bush warned that dangers to the country now come not only across borders "but from violence that gathers from within." It was an apparent but obvious reference to the attack on the Capitol on Jan. 6. (Balz, 2021)

An important note is Balz's reference and acknowledgement of the false collective memory formed that Saddam Hussein was behind the September 11 attacks that led to a rash and unnecessary invading of Iraq and destruction in the Middle East. On the hunt for terrorism and the retreat of troops in Afghanistan:

The mission in Afghanistan morphed from hunting terrorists, subduing the Taliban and bringing Osama bin Laden to justice to one of nation building and a 20-year commitment of U.S. forces that ended last month, amid controversy over Biden's handling of the exit and a public conclusion that the war had not been worth fighting. On the night of 9/11, George Tenet, then the CIA director, told Bush and other senior officials as they contemplated how to respond: It was time to tell the Taliban we're finished with them. Today, the Taliban once again control Afghanistan. (Balz, 2021)

5.2. Discussion

Analysis of the narratives in the anniversary issues from the four media outlets show the clear shift in collective memory of September 11, especially as memory studies have shown that as each generation replaces its predecessors' new memories are established that build on or replace the former (Schwartz, 1982). The recurring themes, language used and overall analysis of the articles observed show a shifting change in the memory and public perception surrounding the September 11 attacks varying by year and media outlets.

The theme of resilience and unity showed in all 2011 editions and can be attributed to it being the 10th anniversary of September 11, perhaps one of the most important anniversaries and a time of more calmness in the internal political sphere. During the other years, political tensions were high, and the United States were very divided on the left and right. This is the only theme that did not include many repeated words that were seen throughout all articles, like in the other two themes. Instead, the theme was presented through phrases and charged

language. This is interesting as it shows that the media outlets did not have one uniform way to present the theme, but rather focused on how and what they wrote.

It is also important to note that the number one factor that determines the memory is political climate and is observed to mostly affect the years 2016 and 2021, with the 15th anniversary being a monumental election year between candidates Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump with a very divided America and the 20th anniversary being after the retreat of American troops in Afghanistan and the reinstatement of the Taliban in government. In the years of political tension, there was a rise in articles showing the theme of war on terror and memory, with *The New York Times* being the only outlet whose article on 9/11 in 2021 that did not show as so, and with *The Washington Post* being the only outlet to publish an article in 2016 that did not show as the theme of memory.

War on terror was observed in three of the 20th anniversary issues, and two of the fifth anniversary issues and is perhaps the most impactful theme observed throughout. The official declaration of the war on terror was announced by former President George W. Bush in a presidential address to the nation later in the day of September 11, 2001 (Bergen, 2023). 2021 was a year of insurrection, economic decline, health crisis and a retreat of American military troops from Afghanistan leading to the reinstalment of the Taliban regime. The political climate was unstable, and the country was divided on whether the retreat was a wise choice. While some issues had the overarching theme of war on terror, all of the 2021 articles discuss the war on terror. The issues in 2021 were mostly opinion pieces rather than news coverage. It is very important to recognize as it shows a shift in the media and their coverage of September 11 as a day of sadness that led to countless innocent lives lost by the military's reaction and invasions, rather than a singular day that focuses on solely the loss of American lives. The 2021 versions of the articles all mention the United States' military withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan

and the reinstatement of the Taliban government as a way to give a statement on President Joe Biden and his government's decision.

The results showed a stark difference in coverage by *Fox News*, with the articles displaying a more patriotic tone that portrayed the war on terror as a just and necessary reaction to September 11. *Fox News* portrayed the 20th anniversary as a disappointment, but heavily supported and idolized the “heroes” that were the American soldiers that fought in the wars in the Middle East that followed the September 11 attacks. This result is not surprising as *Fox News* is a well-established right-wing media outlet, but it is important to note as it is the only news outlet that portrayed the war on terror as positive. The romanticization of the invasion of the Iraq and Afghanistan by *Fox News* is fully expected, as they are known to be a right-wing news site that shows patriotic views. It can be observed a very sharp shift in collective memory from *Fox News* as the 2006 article focuses on nuances like language in the United States and internationally to the 2011 and 2016 articles that frame first responders as heroes to a drastic turn to demonizing the Middle East, defending and reasoning all the military action the United States carried out and criticizing the government's choice to pull out of Afghanistan.

CNN's coverage was, as expected, presented in a more leftist view with earlier criticism of the American government's involvement in the Middle East, but there was no pattern in the themes as it varied greatly. The 2006 article was the first to reference anti-war statistics among Americans as a means to back up their opinion. The language and tone of each article followed a similar pattern that honored the victims of September 11 from the direct attacks and the United States' military actions after and follow a uniform idea. *CNN* portrayed the war on terror as a poor, impulsive decision that caused unnecessary disaster and deaths abroad and at home through the military actions. The collective memory presented by *CNN* did not shift much as the 2006 article focused on the collective memory but alluded to anti-war rhetoric and

continued to cover through memory until 2021 when the article was based around the war on terror and its negative ramifications.

The New York Times editions follow a language and tone that honors the victims, emphasizes the importance of never forgetting September 11 and highlights the resilience that New Yorkers and survivors showed. Of the four articles analyzed, three had the overarching theme of memory, more specifically of collective memory. There was a strong emphasis on retelling the stories of September 11, especially to newer generations to not forget the attacks and the effect it had on American identity and nationality, especially as the collective trauma develops into collective memory (Hartig & Doherty, 2021). This result could be expected, as *The New York Times* is based in New York City and represents the city in a way, therefore holding more value in the “never forget”, experience and memory of the day. The collective memory that was formed through *The New York Times* did not change throughout the years as it emphasizes collective memory itself and keeping the stories of September 11 alive through commemoration, media and storytelling.

The Washington Post showed no theme of memory but rather focused on the war on terror and resilience themes. The absence of the theme of memory is surprising in *The Washington Post* as Washington, D.C. was directly affected by September 11 as the Pentagon was hit. The theme of war on terror was observed in the 2006 and 2021 editions and the theme of resilience showed in 2011 and 2016. The fifth anniversary issue focusing on the war on terror and its criticism was a surprising find with *The Washington Post* as I expected the scrutiny of the United States’ government to come from left-leaning news instead of a neutral outlet.

The results presented serve as an important reminder of the role that the American media plays in portraying events in history, and the way they present data and frame events. This is an important topic to explore, especially in modern times when the press and news are shifting to almost exclusively online media and allow for personal narratives and opinions.

There are more and more outlets being established that cater to specific thoughts and beliefs which can greatly affect the way collective memory is presented in groups. The results show that there is a difference in the way that the memory of the September 11 attacks is collectivized through news outlets and through the years. This shows the importance and influence that the media has on American identity and memory, especially as newer generations emerge with no memory of September 11.

Conclusion

The dissertation was designed in order to answer the question: “What role does the American online media coverage play in the cultivation of collective memory for the anniversary dates of the September 11 attacks?”. The research aimed to identify the collective memory of September 11 through various media outlets and observe any shifts in the coverage over the years as the day becomes a distant memory and the political climate in the United States became more divided. Over time and as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan raged on, the media’s shift in a focus on eliminating terrorism slowly changed to a focus on the ramifications of the operations the United States military were carrying out. It is evident that the American media shapes our collective memories and is especially important now as we as society shift to online media consumption. Scholars agree that collective memory serves as a transcendent memory between individuals and is shared by groups of similar people, whether by ethnicity, country, race, gender, political stance and more. This and the theory that politics, consensus and events are deemed by society to be essential to a narrative being pushed (Leavy, 2007) play a large influence in how national identity is formed and viewed. The articles analyzed serve as a permanent recollection of each major anniversary edition of the September 11 attacks and allow the media outlet and journalists alike to frame the day in a unique way that influences audiences through coverage.

By analyzing anniversary issues of September 11 attacks through *CNN*, *The New York Times*, *Fox News* and *The Washington Post*, the thesis has shown that mainstream American media has shown a shift in the collective memory of September 11 and continues to shape the way the day of the attacks and consequences afterwards are viewed by the American audience. Specified components were observed in the research such as the language, themes, pictures and framework to come to the conclusion and results. Through almost all the media outlets, excluding *Fox News*, the shift has changed the view of post-September 11 actions to criticizing

the United States and framing the event as not only tragic within the U.S. but also in Middle Eastern countries. There is a focus on the lives lost abroad and the terror the United States' military inflicted in Middle Eastern countries, as well as the trillions of dollars seemingly wasted to eliminate the Taliban and their officials only to be back at square one with them in power again in 2021. Most of the media outlets showed an emphasis on the theme of memory and resilience in the first few anniversaries and made a sharp turn towards the theme of war on terror and the rise of a national security state.

The results showed how much of an impact the unstable political climate in the United States had on the media. Our analysis also demonstrated how *Fox News* was an outlier in many aspects, as the representation of a right-leaning news outlet. While most of the outlets were focusing and covering on the tragedy as a whole, *Fox News* from a very early stage politicalized the event and discussed terrorism. As aforementioned, the political climate on the 20th anniversary was unstable with the retreat of American troops in Afghanistan, COVID-19 pandemic and the storming of the Capitol building in Washington D.C. by far-right activists in January of 2021. Of course, there is the potential that each American will adhere to their opinions and political leaning by only consuming news from the left-wing outlet *CNN* or the right-wing outlet *Fox News*. However, these are important to include in research as they do serve as an ingroup that directly correlated with collective memory and show all sides of the very divided political spectrum in the United States.

For further research on this topic and on media in September 11 attacks, it would be interesting to examine frequency of the articles surrounding the dates or even social media sites of the media outlets and observe the comments left by the public. The frequency of the articles published could study the possible loss of importance or impact that the September 11 attacks has as generations grow. Or by observing public comments, it could be utilized through social media platforms such as Facebook, Reddit, X (formerly Twitter) or simply by the news sites

comment sections themselves. Another interesting similar study would be to analyze how Middle Eastern countries covered the September 11 attacks and the collective memory of people in countries directly affected such as Iraq or Afghanistan. The topic of media and September 11 can be very broad or narrow, depending on what is studied, and have many opportunities of research especially as digital media grows and generations age.

It is important to recognize that this study has potential limitations. The discourse analysis performed is subject to biases brought by myself as the individual and the way that I personally read and interpret the language and content present. The process of identifying the themes observed in the articles could be dependent on my personal interpretations and perspectives that someone else might see differently. The discourse analysis performed in data is more flexible within research than other methods such as data collection. As well, the political discourse surrounding the later anniversary issues of the September 11 attacks may influence the style and way that journalists and media alike presented information and coverage.

The topic and research of collective memory spans years and has been used to “refer to aggregated individual recollections, to official commemorations, to collective representations, and to disembodied constitutive features of shared identities; it is said to be located in dreamy reminiscence, personal testimony, oral history, tradition, myth, style, language, art, popular culture, and the built world” (Olick, 1999). One of the most important arguments that Halbwachs made and is clearly prevalent in this research is the fact that memories are not stagnant, consistently going through reconstructions and reinterpretations over time (Halbwachs, 1950). This is clearly shown through the research of the anniversary issues of the day of the attacks, as there was a sharp rewrite of collective memories just between the years of 2016 to 2021. The media’s immediate publishing of video footage, photos, stories, and interviews to the public has permanently memorialized the September 11 attacks, but with

immediate access to new sources and new perspectives to the public has shown different sides to the collective memory of the day.

References

- Amanpour, C. (2021, September 11). America's response to 9/11 was as damaging as the attack. It's not too late to change course. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/09/11/world/amanpour-reflection-9-11-20th-anniversary-cmd-intl/index.html>
- Ariosto, D., & Dolan, L. (2011, September 11). Nation looks ahead with hope after remembering 9/11 victims. CNN. <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/US/09/11/911.commemoration/index.html>
- Assmann, A. (2010). Canon and Archive. In A. Erll & A. Nünning (Ed.), *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (pp. 97-108). Berlin, New York: De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110207262.2.97>
- Balz, D. (2021, September 11). After 9/11, a rush of national unity. Then, quickly, more and new divisions. *Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/after-911-a-rush-of-national-unity-then-quickly-more-and-new-divisions/2021/09/11/8f6f7d8e-12a9-11ec-bc8a-8d9a5b534194_story.html
- Bergen, P. L. (2023). September 11 attacks. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/September-11-attacks>
- Bodnar, J. (2021, May 28), Twenty years after 9/11, its memorialization remains contested. *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2021/05/28/twenty-years-after-911-its-memorialization-remains-contested/>
- Boyette, C. (2011, September 11). New Yorkers defiant in face of terror threat. CNN. <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/US/09/10/new.york.911.terror/index.html>
- Branigin, W. (2006, September 11). Nation marks fifth anniversary of 9/11 attacks. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/business/technology/2006/09/11/nation-marks-fifth-anniversary-of-911-attacks/a47f15c5-73b2-4318-a607-cd9d0df088de/>
- Chu, D. (2021). Remembering 1989: A case study of anniversary journalism in Hong Kong. *Memory Studies*, 14(4), 819-833. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698020988749>
- Conklin, A. (2021, September 11). Gen. Jack Keane describes being inside the Pentagon on 9/11: "I knew it was a terrorist attack." Fox News. <https://www.foxnews.com/us/gen-jack-keane-pentagon-9-11>

- Cruz, W. (2011, September 11). 9/11 Emergency responders were heroes long before fateful day. *Fox News*. <https://www.foxnews.com/world/9-11-emergency-responders-were-heroes-long-before-fateful-day>
- Dudai, Y. (2002). *Memory From a to Z: Keywords, Concepts, and Beyond*. Oxford University Press.
- Edy, J. A. (1999). "Journalistic Uses of Collective Memory." *Journal of Communication* 49 (2): 71–85. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1999.tb02794>.
- Garde-Hansen, J. (2011). *Media and Memory*. Edinburgh University Press.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1r25r9>
- Gedi, N., & Elam, Y. (1996). Collective Memory — What Is It? *History and Memory*, 8(1), 30–50. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25618696>
- Gold, M., & Rogers, K. (2021, September 11). At 9/11 ceremonies, moments of silence, tributes and tears. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/11/nyregion/9-11-anniversary-ceremonies.html?searchResultPosition=18>
- Halbwachs, M. (1950) *The Collective Memory*. Trans. Francis J. Ditter, Jr., and Vida Yazdi Ditter. New York: Harper & Row.
- Hartig, H., & Doherty, C. (2021). Two decades later, The Enduring Legacy of 9/11. Pew Research Center - U.S. Politics & Policy.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/09/02/two-decades-later-the-enduring-legacy-of-9-11/>
- Howard, J. W., & Rothbart, M. (1980). Social categorization and memory for in-group and out-group behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 38(2), 301
- Hume, J. (2010). Memory Matters: The Evolution of Scholarship in Collective Memory and Mass Communication. *Review of Communication*, 10 (3), 181-196.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15358591003632563>
- Hutton, P. H. (1988). Collective Memory and Collective Mentalities: The Halbwachs-Ariès Connection. *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques*, 15(2), 311–322.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23232416>
- Inside 9/11: The day that never ends*. (2016, September 11.). CNN.
<https://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2016/09/us/inside-9-11-the-day-that-never-ends/>
- Jenkins, S., & Powell, M. (2021, September 11). The day after 9/11: Burning buildings, bodies, bomb scares. *The Washington Post*.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2021/09/11/day-after-9-11-new-york/>
- Kitch, C. (2003). Anniversary Journalism, Collective Memory, and the Cultural Authority

- to Tell the Story of the American Past, *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 36(1) pp 44-67. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-5931.00030>
- Kitch, C. (2008). Placing journalism inside memory — and memory studies. *Memory Studies*, 1(3), 311-320. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698008093796>
- Kunkle, F., Epstein, K., & Shapiro, T. R. (2016, September 11). Washington and the nation mark 15th anniversary of 9/11 with service and prayer. *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/washington-and-the-nation-mark-15th-anniversary-of-911-with-service-and-prayer/2016/09/11/e2394c82-7846-11e6-bd86-b7bbd53d2b5d_story.html
- Leavy, P. (2007). Writing 9/11 Memory: American Journalists and Special Interest Groups As Complicit Partners In 9/11 Political Appropriation. *Journal Of Political & Military Sociology*, 35(1), 85–101. <http://www.Jstor.Org/Stable/45372708>
- Llobera, J. R. (1995). Halbwachs, Nora and “history” versus “collective memory”: a research note. *Durkheimian Studies / Études Durkheimiennes*, 1, 35–44. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44708512>
- Li, H. & Lee, C.C. (2013). Remembering Tiananmen and the Berlin Wall: the elite U.S. press’s anniversary journalism, 1990-2009. *Media, Culture & Society*, 35(7), 830-846. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443713495077>
- Lincoln, L. (2023) 50 Years of NPR: Collective Memory, Anniversary Journalism & Public Media, *Journalism Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2023.2230316
- Lowenthal, D. (1985) *The Past Is a Foreign Country*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Matter and Memory, 1990 (*Matière et Mémoire*, 1896), translators N.M. Paul and W.S. Palmer. Zone Books ISBN 978-0-942299-05-2
- McFadden, R. (2011, September 11). On 9/11, vows of remembrance. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/12/nyregion/september-11-anniversary.html?searchResultPosition=8>
- McKay, H., & Brennan, J. (2016, September 11). 9/11 after 15 years: Those who were there remember. *Fox News*. <https://www.foxnews.com/us/9-11-after-15-years-those-who-were-there-remember>
- Meyers, O. (2021). The critical potential of commemorative journalism. *Journalism*, 22(7), 1682-1701. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884919865717>
- Misztal, B. A. (2003). Durkheim on Collective Memory. *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 3(2), 123-143. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468795X030032002>
- Module 1: Events of the Day | National September 11 Memorial & Museum. (n.d.-b).

- <https://www.911memorial.org/learn/resources/911-primer/module-1-events-day>
- Neiger, M. (2020). Theorizing Media Memory: Six elements defining the role of the media in shaping collective memory in the Digital age. *Sociology Compass*, 14(5).
<https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12782>
- Olick, J.K. (1999). Collective Memory: The Two Cultures. *Sociological Theory*, 17 (3), 333-348. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/370189>
- Park, M. (2006, September 11). *Sept. 11 creates new lexicon*. Fox News.
<https://www.foxnews.com/story/sept-11-creates-new-lexicon>
- Pazzanese, C., & Parsons, L. (2021, September 8). Hard lessons from 9/11. *Harvard Gazette*.
<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2021/09/professors-detail-the-hard-lessons-from-9-11/>
- Pew Research Center, & Schaeffer, K. (2022). 1 year after US military left Afghanistan, look back at public opinion | Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/08/17/a-year-later-a-look-back-at-public-opinion-about-the-u-s-military-exit-from-afghanistan/>
- Politz, D. (2023). What is Discourse Analysis? An Introduction & Guide - Delve. Delve. <https://delvetool.com/blog/discourseanalysis>
- Russell, N. (2006). "Collective Memory before and after Halbwachs." *The French Review*, vol. 79, no. 4, pp. 792–804. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25480359>.
- Schmidt, S. (2016, September 11). On 9/11 anniversary, somber reflections on lives, and a world, changed. *The New York Times*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/12/nyregion/15th-anniversary-9-11-september-11.html?searchResultPosition=2>
- Schwartz, B. (1982). The Social Context of Commemoration: A Study in Collective Memory. *Social Forces*, 61(2), 374–402. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2578232>
- September 11 attacks: facts, background & impact. (2010). *History*.
<https://www.history.com/topics/21st-century/9-11-attacks>
- Sonntag, D. (2006, September 11). The hole in the city's heart. *The New York Times*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/11/nyregion/nyregionspecial3/11groundzero.html>
- Tanneeru, M. (2006, September 11). 9/11 trauma persists five years later. *CNN*.
<https://edition.cnn.com/2006/US/09/08/911.overview/index.html>
- The Reliable Source. (2011, September 11). Ted Olson on loss and love in the decade since 9/11. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/reliable->

source/post/ted-olson-on-loss-and-love-in-the-decade-since-
911/2011/09/09/gIQA1qKDLK_blog.html

- Trends and Facts on Newspapers | State of the News Media. (2023). Pew Research Center's Journalism Project. <https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/fact-sheet/newspapers/>
- Watson, B., & Chen, M. (2016). @Todayin1963, *Journalism Studies*, 17:8, 1010-1029, DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2015.1019549
- Wertsch J. & Roediger III, H. L. (2008) Collective memory: Conceptual foundations and theoretical approaches, *Memory*, 16:3, 318-326, DOI: 10.1080/09658210701801434
- Zaller J. & Chiu D. (1996) Government's little helper: U.S. press coverage of foreign policy crises, 1945–1991, *Political Communication*, 13:4, 385-405, DOI: 10.1080/10584609.1996.9963127
- Zelizer, B. (1993) Journalists as interpretive communities, *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 10:3, 219-237, DOI: 10.1080/15295039309366865