This study helps answer questions about how national security whistleblowers are likely to be treated in the news media. Susan Marx warned that news media may run away with the allegations of whistleblowers, but did not go further to explain when, how, or why. A variety of popular and scholarly theories abound that would predict Edmonds' allegations of widespread corruption at the systemic level would take prominence in coverage, such as the belief that professional standards of newsworthiness determine coverage or the idea that sensationalism drives news production. On the other hand more critical approaches to news production, such as the hegemony model and the theory of indexing, would predict that elements of Edmonds' story that threatened elite power would be distorted or ignored in the news.

An analysis of news representations of Edmonds' allegations finds that her allegations of systemic iniquities were almost completely ignored. Of the stories that did represent her allegations in terms of systemic problems, they were nearly consistent in framing problems as indicative of a failure of the system to meet its stated or assumed aims. The legitimacy of the national security establishment was almost never questioned. Despite the fact that Edmonds emphasized her allegations of systemic iniquity, this component of her allegations were dismissed in favor of characterizing her as a whistleblower who complained of organizational dysfunction within the FBI, espionage among one low-level co-worker, or "shoddy work" produced in the translation department. Government agencies and high-level officials were not portrayed as working against the public interest, as Edmonds had alleged.