

THE STORIES BEHIND THE STORIES: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY REGARDING
THE EXPERIENCES OF JOURNALISTS WHO COVERED THE NEWTOWN
SHOOTING

by

CHARLES DEITZ

A THESIS

Presented to the School of Journalism and Communication
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Science

September 2013

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

Student: Charles Deitz

Title: The Stories Behind the Stories: A Qualitative Inquiry Regarding the Experiences of Journalists Who Covered the Newtown Shooting

This thesis has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science degree in the School of Journalism and Communication by:

Dr. Thomas Bivins	Chairperson
Dr. Julianne Newton	Member
Dr. Peter Laufer	Member

and

Kimberly Andrews Espy	Vice President for Research and Innovation; Dean of the Graduate School
-----------------------	--

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Graduate School.

Degree awarded September 2013

© 2013 Charles Deitz

THESIS ABSTRACT

Charles Deitz

Master of Science

School of Journalism and Communication

September 2013

Title: The Stories Behind the Stories: A Qualitative Inquiry Regarding the Experiences of Journalists Who Covered the Newtown Shooting

The news coverage of the Newtown, Connecticut shooting brought to the fore some of the profession's most glaring deficits. On one hand, many of the published reports in the first days were full of speculation and, in some cases, falsities. On the other hand, the grieving community was invaded by a horde of reporters looking for exclusive content. The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate the Newtown reportage through the experiences of reporters who were assigned to the event, and to discover how to improve the process and whether an ethic-of-care-based approach could be implemented. Through 6 semi-structured interviews, analyzed first through a grounded-theory mechanism and second through an ethic-of-care framework, this study proposes new practices for the handling of trauma coverage, which include maximizing resources and minimizing community invasion going forward. These recommendations point toward a rich area of curriculum development at the academic and professional levels.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Charles Deitz

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene, OR
Mt. Hood Community College, Gresham, OR
Montclair State University, Upper Montclair, NJ

DEGREES AWARDED:

Master of Science, Communication and Society, 2013, University of Oregon
Associate of Applied Science, Broadcasting, 2008, Mt. Hood Community College
Bachelor of Arts, Political Science, 2001, Montclair State University

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Media Ethics
Journalism Innovation

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Berkshire Bureau News Chief, WAMC Northeast Public Radio, 3 years

Overnight News Anchor, 1190 KEX, 1 year

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL APPROACHES	5
The Ethic-of-care and John Dewey’s Community	5
The News Narrative	8
Trauma	11
The Media Horde and Inevitable Errors	13
Proposals	17
III. METHODOLOGY	23
Sampling	23
The Semi-Structured Interview	24
Analysis	25
IV. ANALYSIS	28
CT TV 1	28
Conflicting Reports	28
Media Behavior	29
The Rush to Publish, Self-Doubt and Reflection	31
Content: Tragedy and the Mental Health Narrative	32
Summary	33
Analysis	33

Chapter	Page
Jenn Smith.....	35
Process and Organization	36
Media Commentary.....	37
Anecdotal Experience and a Personal Approach.....	38
Personal Impacts	39
Ethic-of-care and a Culture of Compassion.....	40
Jacky Smith	42
Preparation.....	43
Conflicting Reports	43
Obligation to Report Versus Community Resentment.....	44
Media Behavior.....	45
Content Choices: More Than a Name and the Human Nature to Wonder Why.....	46
Personal Impact.....	46
Summary.....	47
Ethic-of-care Analysis.....	47
Brian Burnell	48
Conflicting Reports	49
Personal Style: Calm, Confidence, Experience and Emotional Impact.....	50
Media Behavior.....	51
Police Control of Media	52
Content Considerations: Paying Tribute and the Shooter Profile.....	52

Chapter	Page
Burnell’s Recommendations: Maximizing Resources and Leaving the Families Alone	53
Analysis	54
Curriculum Development	54
Critical Ethic-of-care Analysis	55
John Voket.....	56
Description.....	57
News Media Behavior and the Impacts on the Community.....	58
The Rush to Publish and the Search for Answers.....	60
Recommendations for the Press.....	61
An Ethic-of-care Analysis	62
General Analysis.....	64
Hari Sreenivasan	65
Market Orientation.....	65
Approach to Coverage.....	66
Media Commentary.....	67
Recommendations.....	68
Personal Impacts.....	69
Analysis	69
V. DISCUSSION	71
Aggregate Analysis and Formulation of Theory.....	71
Structure Versus Instinct	71

Chapter	Page
Location Governing Content	72
An Environment Prone to Mistakes	75
Outcomes	78
Resources and Protocol	80
Lord of the Flies Theory	83
Ethic-of-care Adoption	85
VI. CONCLUSION	91
REFERENCES CITED	96

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“We were trying to provide human support without necessarily making the reporting our number one priority.”¹ John Voket, an editor at the *Newtown Bee*, explained to the staff at the Poynter Institute how he and his colleagues attempted to balance their conflicting roles on December 14th, 2012 after the Newtown, Connecticut shooting. Voket was one of hundreds of reporters, photographers and news producers who converged upon the tattered community to tell the Sandy Hook story to the world. What played out was a news cycle that filled broadsheets and broadcasts for almost an entire week as the grief-stricken community members tried to make sense of the tragedy and move on.

The audience has since come away with an experience of the event, one that includes the pictures and testimonials of grief and shock; one that has many aspects of a great work of literary art where a bucolic setting rife with all of the expected accoutrements of small-town life was torn asunder by the inhumane acts of one troubled gunman, where chaos defeated order. It was this event, in spite of the thousands of gun crimes and other senseless acts of violence that happen through out the United States every year, that has created a national conversation so overwrought that the President and Congress are attempting to tackle the issue of gun legislation in a meaningful way. Not far behind that is the budding conversation about mental health care and its discrepancies. Both of these conversations are, in a sense, continuations of the conversations started by other lone-shooter killings that have occurred in recent years including Columbine,

¹ “How The Newtown Bee Is Covering Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting | Poynter.”

Thurston, Virginia Tech, Tucson and Aurora. The coverage of both Newtown and Aurora in 2012 was so prevalent that the events ranked, respectively, as the 14th and 13th most covered news stories by ABC, CBS and NBC ². Combining the coverage amount of the two events would place them in the top four most covered of 2012, just behind the presidential race and the Syrian rebellion.

But, before journalists pat themselves on the back for covering the hardship in such a way as to stimulate real reform for all citizens, it is important to understand the event more completely—specifically to broaden the scope of the cultural narrative to include the experiences of those who produced the collective memorial that the world has come to view as the Newtown tragedy. The news professionals who covered Newtown were not without fault, airing and printing a number of mistruths. For example, there was no second shooter, Ryan Lanza was not the shooter and Adam Lanza's mother was not a kindergarten teacher. ³ These were all "facts" that filled the news cycle for a period of time before they were disproven by the continuing investigation. The media's rush to find meaning in the event not only produced a number of erroneous claims, but also put an additional stress on a community that was in the throes of tragedy. "The relationship between that agonized community and the media horde is bound to become more tense," the Poynter Institute's media ethics specialist Kelly McBride told the *Connecticut Post* after 4 days of continuous media presence in the rural hamlet. ⁴

What's more is that in spite of creating a string of falsities, and because of

² "Tyndall Report | Year in Review 2012."

³ "Getting Sandy Hook So Wrong."

⁴ "Media Descends on Newtown - Connecticut Post."

professional norms/restraints, many of the on-scene reporters were non-reflexive about their physical and emotional experiences.⁵ However, as Berkshire Eagle reporter Adam Poulisse wrote in a subsequent editorial, "I no longer saw the coverage plastered across websites and TV monitors. I was face-to-tear-stained-face with friends and families of the victims... but I superimposed my parents and grandparents into the image I conjured in my head of the families waiting to hear from their children."⁶

As a journalist, who was working at the time the Tucson shooting happened, I was alarmed at the way my profession responded to the event. Furthermore, I have left the profession in order to devote my time to discovering a more ethical and balanced way the news media can approach these highly sensitive events. Academics and veteran journalists have called for more analysis of the reportorial environment, including the physical space, professional norms and constraints, and emotional experiences of all concerned in order to determine influences on coverage and how it can be improved going forward. My inquiry is not conducted with the intent of lobbying yet another takedown against hardworking news professionals, but is instead intended to offer support to the journalism world by examining the untold stories that need to be included in a news narrative such as Newtown's. Knowlton notes, "Journalists are the most important of a broad array of communicators, voices of the citizenry, who try, to put it most simply, to help us understand us."⁷ By interviewing journalists who covered

⁵ Ashburn, "There's No Crying in Journalism—Even After the Horrifying Connecticut School Shootings."

⁶ "Covering the Massacre in Newtown: Firsthand View of Tragedy - Berkshire Eagle Online."

⁷ Knowlton, *Moral Reasoning for Journalists*.

Newtown, this qualitative and experiential inquiry seeks to discover factors that were largely left out of the aggregate narrative.⁸ After the data had been compiled, and analyzed through an approach informed by grounded theory, they were evaluated using a theoretical model informed by the contemporary ethics of care which is predicated on an approach that involves responding to, and caring for, an individual's needs rather than a right-to-know journalism approach. I hypothesize that a considerable array of content went unreported under the current model of journalistic practice and that this context is essential when examined through ethics-of-care theory. These findings aim to help construct a new ethical approach for journalism during traumatizing events like rampage shootings. The approach will have broad appeal in that it could be potentially applied to journalism school curriculum and journalism profession best practices.

⁸ Moos, "Local Journalists Balance Compassion, Community Service in Coverage of Newtown Shooting Aftermath | Poynter."

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL APPROACHES

In order to approach this section, I have broken down the literature review into five separate, yet interlocking thematic categories. The first section will explicate the two main theoretical themes of this inquiry, the ethic-of-care and its foundations and John Dewey's notion of community. The second section will examine the concept of journalism narrative. The transfer of information from the scene of the event, through the chosen medium and to the audience, is done through the narrative technique. As simple as this concept seems, the real craft is the ability to take a seeming melee of data and distill it into a cohesive and understandable whole. Deconstructing the narrative form is important, as it is generally the only thing that audiences experience. Third, I will examine the concepts of trauma and tragedy focusing on the news profession's compulsion to cover the most painful and shocking of events. Fourth, I will look at what happens once the news force has descended upon a story: the tensions that arise, the errors that materialize, and the competitive rush to publish. Lastly, I will describe a series of analogous recommendations and suggestions from scholars who offer a corrective to an profession that, at times, gets in its own way, especially in the face of highly sensitive and traumatic events.

THE ETHIC-OF-CARE AND JOHN DEWEY'S COMMUNITY

Carol Gilligan developed the ethic-of-care to contrast what she saw as a justice-based ethics approach guided mainly by abstract rules. A care ethic would focus on the

particulars of personal needs based on a “relational and circumstantial morality.”⁹ The approach was expanded by Nel Noddings who called for an ethic that engages with the particular wants and desires of others rather than delineating between people based on a previously established notion of rights.¹⁰ Care holds the ability to help others and ourselves to meet our most basic and vital needs as an end rather than a means, and aims to help individuals in identifying their needs.¹¹

Noddings defines an ideal self in the care approach as one that envisions the actual self and the ethical self, the one that is aware of, and able to act on, personal needs and the needs of others, simultaneously.¹² She argues, “The source of ethical behavior is one that feels directly for the other and one that feels for and with that best self.”¹³ Noddings, who focused much of her work on the field of education, did formulate an idealized version of the story as a tool for moral development saying, “through the poignant grip of story and metaphor we meet ourselves and the other in our mutual quest for goodness and meaning.”¹⁴

The naturalist approach of John Dewey complements the ethic-of-care because he calls for a system that prioritizes the community as the locus of action where meanings

⁹ Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, 164–5.

¹⁰ Noddings, *Caring*, 24.

¹¹ Tronto, *Moral Boundaries*, 137.

¹² Noddings, *Caring*, 26.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹⁴ Noddings, *Stories Lives Tell*, 4.

emerge through interactions between citizens who solve problems in mutuality.¹⁵ Dewey stressed that the particular needs of the community were more important than the superficial and predetermined ends of “society”, and that democracies are not created but emerge out of this mutuality.¹⁶ The crux of Dewey’s “Great Community” is communication, the tool of tools, which, if perfected, “genuinely shared interest in the consequences of interdependent activities may inform desire and effort and thereby direct action.”¹⁷ In contrast to what he saw as a society that created atomistic individuals, Dewey insisted that society existed for the benefit of community.¹⁸

Dewey’s position on communication and its role in fostering the “Great Community” finds common ground with the ethic-of-care in that they both prioritize the particular over the general, the immediate need of the citizen over a deontological notion of justice, and identifying and expressing needs helps to foster a greater community overall. In Dewey’s explanation, a community is forged through open communication between individuals. The ethic-of-care also prioritizes open communication between individuals by locating, expressing and fulfilling needs. The two theoretical frames work in tandem by placing the interrelational human experience as the locus of action. In the next section I will explore the notion of news narrative using Dewey’s stance on the modern news profession as an entry point, and explicate the importance of considering a new approach involving the ethic-of-care to certain events.

¹⁵ Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 35–6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹⁸ Czitrom, *Media and the American Mind*, 92.

THE NEWS NARRATIVE

Human beings are not telepathic, yet we still yearn to understand one another. So we are forced to communicate through imperfect means. John Dewey explains that events cannot, in fact, be passed from one person to another, but that meanings may be shared via signs.¹⁹ Mass communication is necessarily predicated on using proven signs in certain ways to conjure depictions of events and experiences. Complicating the communication of news events is a triangulated interdependence among the press, the elites (newsmakers) and the audience.²⁰ All of these entities rely on signs, arranged in specific ways and contexts, in order to maintain relationships with one another. This process, the placing of signs in a certain order to convey meaning about news event, can be described as a news narrative. Carolyn Kitch operationalizes news narrative by describing it as a device that allows journalists to place the facts of shocking events into a recognizable framework.²¹

The signs used in news narratives are often embedded with prior cultural meanings; Koch notes that the news profession relies on a consistent system of representation in which "symbols (words) have cultural and contextual relevance."²² Koch explains that the narrative model has structural flaws, which render it a faulty vehicle for the "dissemination of unprejudiced information or a force for social

¹⁹ Dewey, *The public and its problems*, 153.

²⁰ Entman, *Democracy Without Citizens*, 30.

²¹ Kitch, "Mourning in America," 214.

²² Koch, *The News as Myth*, 23.

change."²³ In fact, Lippmann makes the case that news, like any other form of information gathering, only cuts out selected slices of the big picture and that "news and truth are not the same thing."²⁴ Koch adds a cultural element to the content that news reporters select for their narratives saying, "The narrative form is an outgrowth of the function of the media to promulgate the social myth of a functioning, effective and progressive democracy in which each member is safeguarded by the vigilance of a potent and consistent autocracy."²⁵ So when the public does get an account of an event through the media, it is not necessarily a factual account as much as it is a stylized account of certain facts.²⁶

Understanding news as a social construct that is informed by history and cultural practice is paramount to understanding the very human and error-prone quality, which pervades the narrative form of breaking news.²⁷ According to Tuchman, it is up to the news reporters to do the hard work of imparting character to certain events and to help "shape the public definition of happenings by selectively attributing to them specific details or 'particulars'."²⁸ Tuchman says the news product comes with an imposed frame for defining and constructing social reality.²⁹ She adds that by refusing to be explicit

²³ Ibid., 14.

²⁴ Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, 226.

²⁵ Koch, *The News as Myth*, 175.

²⁶ Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, 219.

²⁷ Koch, *The News as Myth*, 19.

²⁸ Tuchman, *Making News*, 190.

²⁹ Ibid., 180.

about its manipulation of space and time, news casts an aura of representation.³⁰

So before the product (broadcast, internet or print) even reaches its intended audience, it has been packaged in a particular context to convey a particular meaning through a particular frame. The disconnect from reality is extended by distance as often news is about regions and cultures that are alien to the audience who "have so little knowledge and such weakly anchored beliefs, the news reports they do notice can significantly shape their attitudes."³¹ Without some firsthand knowledge of the region or issue being reported on, the packaged news product will affect what the audience perceives as reality.³² Lippmann, writing more than 90 years ago, indicated that the nature of the objective journalism narrative is a gateway for the audience member to enter into the struggle and feel personally connected to the events, otherwise the product would lose its mass appeal.³³ Inspired by the empirical sciences, professional journalism emerged in the early 20th century as meaning uncensored information updated as often as possible.³⁴ Lippmann's pragmatic contemporary, John Dewey noted that contemporary journalism is merely a vessel that supplies information about events and issues of the day, because it doesn't seek to go deeper into issues than the professional restraints, word count or broadcast length, will permit.³⁵ Tuchman encapsulates the thrust of this section

³⁰ Ibid., 109.

³¹ Entman, *Democracy Without Citizens*, 79.

³² Ibid., 31.

³³ Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, 224.

³⁴ Christians, Ferré, and Fackler, *Good News*, 36.

³⁵ Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 145.

and the importance of delving deeper into the lived experience of reporters at the scene of a traumatic or tragic event saying, "the framing of stories is still determined by the perspective of reporters in the field and in the newsroom."³⁶ The ethic-of-care, if applied to the news coverage of mass shootings, would take into account the personal feelings and needs of the reporters sent to work the events, and possibly alter the product that the audiences consume.

TRAUMA

Understanding the narrative form, with all of its implicit structural flaws and assets, is just one component of the issue at hand. In this section I will explore the reasons that tragedy tends to register very high on the index of newsworthiness. If the typical news fare consists of legislative hearings and updates on the gross national product, the emotional impact available via a tragic event trumps the potential of the typical news diet.³⁷ Furthermore, the audience is titillated by the tragic narrative, as it tends to help remind viewers and readers of their own mortality, but at a safe distance.³⁸ It is from this sterile and safe vantage point that the audience can be compelled to draw on a range of emotions and experiences without the force of real experience to make the drama overwhelming. The story gives the audience the taste of terror without the bite of

³⁶ Tuchman, *Making News*, 121.

³⁷ Moritz and Crapanzano, "We Don't Make the News, We Just Report it: Television Journalism and Narratives of Trauma," 105.

³⁸ Goldenberg et al., "The Appeal of Tragedy," 324.

danger, the pull of pity without the duress of duty.³⁹ The constancy of our mortal awareness draws us, as vicarious experiencers, to the story of someone else's mortality being tested.⁴⁰

News reporters, producers and editors, fully human themselves, can make news choices for their audience based on their own emotional experiences as well as profession norms, and choose often the tragic tale. Thus the tired adage, "If it bleeds, it leads." The potential for a pregnant narrative is rife at a major crime scene. The events can be connected to past events; the signs used can be related to the typical audience member, "News relies on shock, crime and atrocity—all disruptions."⁴¹ The thematic arc that takes place in most news accounts also plays perfectly to these momentary disruptions that we label as tragedies. The momentary rupture in the seemingly stable fabric of life events can be attended to with periodic reportage as opposed to deeper structural flaws in the workings of society.⁴² There is an ease in reporting the horrific according to Carolyn Kitch, who conducted a comprehensive content analysis of three top newsweeklies following the events of September 11, 2001. She found that "Journalists place upsetting and chaotic news into story plots that they have used before and that are part of a grand cultural narrative of American resilience and progress."⁴³ Even with the proven ease of approach that the journalist is afforded when covering a jaw-dropping human trauma,

³⁹ Peters, "Witnessing.," 38–39.

⁴⁰ Goldenberg et al., "The Appeal of Tragedy," 321.

⁴¹ Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 179–180.

⁴² Koch, *The News as Myth*, 168.

⁴³ Kitch, "Mourning in America," 222.

reporters tailor their product in order to resonate in as deep a way as possible with the audience.⁴⁴

However, scholars who write on the ethics of care and virtue dismiss the notion of approaching the tragic episode because it is the news profession's low-hanging fruit. Christians says that audience demands, especially concerning human tragedy, are not enough to warrant coverage, "The fact that readers and viewers are attracted to the intimate details of human misery has no salience."⁴⁵ But when the news does have to cover a traumatic or tragic event, there are guidelines in place to follow. The Radio-Television News Directors Association, in its code of ethics, advises reporters to show particular compassion toward victims of crime or tragedy and to give children greater privacy than adults.⁴⁶ It should be evident that some news reporters only loosely followed these guidelines, and while many reporters behaved with respect and integrity, personal experience dictates that the few outliers do affect the perception people have of all media. This study explores the way that reporters who covered the Newtown shooting responded to the needs of grieving community members, and evaluates it using the care approach.

THE MEDIA HORDE AND INEVITABLE ERRORS

"Perhaps the captivation is because an attack on children is understood unequivocally as a universal atrocity across borders and cultures and religions. That all said I wonder how each of these storytelling teams adds to this story, and ultimately

⁴⁴ Moritz and Crapanzano, "We Don't Make the News, We Just Report it: Television Journalism and Narratives of Trauma," 109.

⁴⁵ Christians, "The Ethics Of Privacy," 210.

⁴⁶ RTDNA, "RTNDA Ethics Code | RJJ."

affects this tiny town they have converged on,"⁴⁷ PBS reporter Hari Sreenivasan discussed his role, and the role of his profession with Poynter editors as the cluster of reporting teams squeezed every last willing resident and public official for details about the Newtown shooting. It only took a day for the media to begin to reproach itself for the extensive and, at times, overboard reporting transpiring in the Connecticut village. Yet in spite of the crossfire of recriminations, the media remained on site until the last "fact" was consumed and regurgitated, or after the last victim's funeral about a week after the event. *The Daily Beast* decided to publish a somewhat terse written exchange between their New York editors and the reporters sent out to cover the Sandy Hook shooting. Harry Siegel, one of the reporters, asked, "How many reporters does it take to document mourning?" The retort came from New York Bureau anchor Jesse Wegman, who characterized the ethical standpoint of so many news bureaus replying, "We are always confronted in this job with people who would rather we go away. The fact that we don't is exactly what makes people keep reading."⁴⁸

So there they were, the row of news vans with satellite towers lined up all the way up the road near Sandy Hook Elementary and beyond. Audience members who watched the events via television news networks rarely saw the throng of reporters except for during occasional public addresses by police officials and elected office-holders. The fact is that Newtown became a city of reporters, who clogged up main street restaurants and rented out the majority of hotel rooms. It is the dynamics between the reporters and associated staff, audiences and community residents, which is worth investigating as part

⁴⁷ "Media, Residents Yearn for Journalists to Leave Newtown | Poynter."

⁴⁸ *Beast*, "Daily Beast Debate."

of this inquiry. Each team has to negotiate with competitors the terms of what information to share and how much. A similar balance has to be struck with willing witnesses.⁴⁹ All of these deals have an impact on the final product.

While many newsrooms have protocol for how to manage these types of situations, the reporter oftentimes has to figure out just how to navigate the frenetic environment. Mistakes are bound to be made, for example, the rushed newsperson might need to fill a segment and will rely on an unvetted witness, making the mistake of taking simplistic opinions and reactions as "being equivalent to complex evidence."⁵⁰ Regarding television coverage specifically, Lipschultz's exhaustive content analysis of a mall shooting in the Omaha area suggested that live television coverage will erode the common foundational principles of normal gate keeping.⁵¹

A common critique brought against the news media during the Newtown coverage was the practice of interviewing recently evacuated children. The logic behind the practice was relatively sound—after a crime occurs, ask witnesses who were there to describe the events. However in this case, reporters used the typical crime-scene coverage approach rather than applying a special filter for unprecedented and highly sensitive environments. Bruce Shapiro, the executive director at the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma says, "Interviewing a small child whose understanding of death itself is limited, never mind who is confused and scared, can only contribute to the public's

⁴⁹ Tuchman, *Making News*, 213.

⁵⁰ Lau, "Re-theorizing News' Construction of Reality," 897.

⁵¹ Lipschultz and Hilt, "Local Television Coverage of a Mall Shooting," 210.

misunderstanding and contribute to the trauma of the child."⁵² It would appear obvious to consult with an expert like Bruce Shapiro before, or at least during, this sort of coverage, yet the profession covered first and asked questions later.

Another flaw that develops in the reportage of such an event is the often-presumptive explanation of an assailant's motives, often based on one or more factors that would place him outside of society's norms. Rather than contextualizing the shooter's profile as accurately as possible, media rush to attribute the cause of the aberrant behavior to the shooter's mental illness.⁵³ In the case of Newtown, Adam Lanza's actions were linked to his diagnosis of Asperger's (a disorder scientists have not definitively connected to violent outbursts); in Aurora, James Holmes was bipolar; in Tucson, Jared Lee Loughner was schizophrenic. Freelance journalist David Levine bristles at the insinuation that mental illness is a sufficient explanation for heinous acts. Levine writes not only as a member of the journalistic community, but also as one who has suffered from occasionally debilitating panic attacks. He reflects on the experience of being almost entirely defined by certain people as the guy who has panic attacks, rather than as the accomplished science journalist and nice person.⁵⁴

Labeling and stereotyping may be structural by-products of the narrative form. Anthony Kolenic explains, after a side-by-side content analysis of the Batman movie *The Dark Knight* and the news coverage of the Virginia Tech Shootings of 2007, "To find

⁵² "Reporters Interviewing Children In Connecticut School Shooting Adds Little News Value, Experts Say."

⁵³ "If Suspect Jared Lee Loughner Has Schizophrenia, Would That Make Him More Likely to Go on a Shooting Spree in Arizona? - Slate Magazine."

⁵⁴ "The Newtown Shootings – The View from 300.01 | Guest Blog, Scientific American Blog Network."

defect, to have something or someone made accountable, becomes paramount in reifying institutional strength, and those tensions are present both in film and the coverage and psychological characterizations of the shooter Sueng-Hui Cho."⁵⁵ Cho was not only characterized as having mental illness but his descriptors continually referred to him as foreign born and as a resident alien, labels that were true though often perceived in pejorative ways, he had lived in the United States since the age of eight.⁵⁶

Mistakes made over the years in covering horrific and unpredictable public shootings can be couched as evidence for widespread censure of the media, or taken as lessons to be learned going forward. While some scholars will argue that these errors are primarily a product of the profit-driven news structure, this study focuses on the personal experiences of the news workers and the impacts on the cultural narrative. Some mistakes may be correctable through a process of reflection and a willingness to learn. The ethic-of-care approach could help to shed light on where the reporters' needs superseded, or ignored, the needs of the audience or community. The next section is a collection of recommendations for journalists and academics informed by an operationalized definition of care.

PROPOSALS

Assembling and reporting of news would be very different if the genuine interests of the reporters were permitted to work freely.⁵⁷ Tuchman is critical of the idea of objective reporting and notes that the attempt to remain objective creates at-times undue

⁵⁵ Kolenic, "Madness in the Making," 1026.

⁵⁶ Moritz and Crapanzano, "We Don't Make the News, We Just Report it: Television Journalism and Narratives of Trauma," 119.

⁵⁷ Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 181–182.

professional constraints adding, "Filming the news-workers-as-mass would show that news workers create views, and so would challenge the credibility of news."⁵⁸ The mere humanness of a more reflexive style of reporting could help forge a new relationship and solidarity among the news producers and their intended audiences. At the University of Oregon Colloquia 2000 on media ethics, scholars Pech and Leibel called for a new ethical approach to the news in which a story's value would be predicated on the idea of connectedness between reporter and audience and how well the news product serves to foster deeper connections among audience members.⁵⁹

Even if most news continues to be produced in certain ways, there should be certain times and environments in which a more vulnerable and personal approach would be more appropriate and more credible. When an unprecedented social ill arises, there should be creative flexibility in order to allow the storytellers to reflect and report on the moral significance of the event or issue.⁶⁰ Opening the doorway to a new set of professional practices that, in certain settings, allow the reporter to exercise some reflexivity like Anderson Cooper did while reporting from the Hurricane Katrina disaster, and to connect with sources and audiences in a more personal way, is one of the first steps in creating an ethic-of-care in journalism.⁶¹ A care-ethic approach doesn't call for a radical and alien new technique for journalists to master, but instead asks that they disarm themselves of clinical professional constraints and act through their impetus to help, to

⁵⁸ Tuchman, *Making News*, 115.

⁵⁹ Pech and Leibel, "Writing in Solidarity," 154.

⁶⁰ Craig and Ferré, "Agape as an Ethic-of-care for Journalism," 135.

⁶¹ *Anderson Cooper at Mary Landrieu over Katrina*.

connect, to work as though their product had impact in producing caring responses.⁶² If the event at hand, for example, a traumatizing mass shooting, was enough to trigger the deployment of a care approach, the news profession might not only lessen chastisement afterward, but also might increase their credibility with the at-large audiences.

There is normally a long list of recommendations for journalists after the coverage cycle has dwindled, but if the virtue of care were applied to those events that warrant a heightened ethical engagement, the coverage may begin to incorporate the recommendations of scholars and professionals. Vanacker and Breslin explicate care ethics for journalism by placing a responsibility for moral development on the journalists.⁶³ For example, based on comprehensive content analysis of three crisis scenarios in Spain, Sorribes and Rovira recommended that photographers and videographers refrain from taking close-up shots of people who are dying, injured or in pain because it tends to add unnecessary trauma to the event. Photographer Maggie Steeber embodied the ethic-of-care when she chose not to take photos of dead bodies during the Haiti earthquake of 2010, but instead chose to photograph people helping one another, in other words, her story of beauty.⁶⁴

A more care-oriented approach to sensitive events may preclude the professional impulse to film human trauma at close range, staving off ill effects or perceptions such behavior might generate. Another example comes from the work of Michelle Ghetti, a Southern University Law Center professor and working lawyer. She published a report in

⁶² Steiner and Okrusch, “Care as a Virtue for Journalists,” 115.

⁶³ Vanacker and Breslin, “Ethics of Care,” 199.

⁶⁴ Gonzales, “Quietly Finding Haiti’s Audacious Beauty.”

1982 calling for the news profession to limit the number of reporters they allow on the scene during publicity-seeking criminal events, namely hostage situations like the 1977 Kiritsis event in Indianapolis, and use technology available 30 years ago to pool their reporters, thus reducing the presence of a media fracas at an already-tense scene. The problem is that the paper seemed to have little to no effect; in fact she republished the paper 25 years after its original issuance because in her opinion the over-coverage of emotionally charged events only increased.⁶⁵ From an ethical care approach, the media might approach a volatile event in a more measured way.

At the heart of my inquiry is an attempt to discover in earnest what feelings, experiences and impressions lay un-broadcast and unwritten for the reporters who had to experience an event that, if care ethics had been adopted, would have incorporated their own personal belief system as part of the final product. For example, a reporter who felt that it was inappropriate to approach grieving family members for comment because they might need some privacy. The reporter would be acting from a more care-oriented approach based on needs as opposed to an approach that holds the right to know as paramount. However, because of professional demands, often from newsroom management, reporters do not have the freedom to execute their own ethical belief system. "Interviews with reporters, producers and news managers would offer insights into the effects from stress, lack of source cultivation and rumor dissemination."⁶⁶ Tuchman points out that there is a vast amount of important information that lies just outside the

⁶⁵ Ghetti, "The Terrorist Is a Star!," 26.

⁶⁶ Lipschultz and Hilt, "Local Television Coverage of a Mall Shooting," 212.

camera's frame and encourages subsequent scholars to evaluate this lost content.⁶⁷ This inquiry aims, through semi-structured journalistic-style interviews with reporters who have done the hard work of covering shootings, to discover what content was lost, omitted or edited out. This content includes the personal feelings or possible objections of the journalists who had to cover the tragedy in spite of their resistance or feelings of resistance. The research also seeks out descriptions of the physical environment, or the media horde, and keys in on the qualitative effect these factors created. Further, the study investigates how the selected reporters established relationships with their sources, how they handled the rejections and the frequent directive to go home and leave the community alone. Banaszynski has crafted a table of preliminary questions that informs the nature and direction of my own questions, including:⁶⁸

What do I know? What do I need to know? What is my journalistic purpose? Who are the moral claimants? What are the possible consequences? What are the alternatives to maximize truth and minimize harm?

Or as Koch suggests starting out with the main question, and the one on which the narrative truly depends:⁶⁹ What was the story really about?

My core research question is:

Q: How can an ethic-of-care be successfully cultivated in journalistic practice?

The primary question is supported by two sub questions that work to guide the nature of the inquiry:

⁶⁷ Tuchman, *Making News*, 107.

⁶⁸ Banaszynski, "Conflicting Loyalties and Personal Choices," 247.

⁶⁹ Koch, *The News as Myth*, 165.

Sub 1: What factors have influenced coverage in the past?

Sub 2: How can coverage be improved going forward?

As my literature and theory review have shown, there is a considerable body of work devoted to bringing a more personal and ethical approach to the craft of journalism. The gap at hand, and one which I intend to help fill, lies between the analyses and the implementation. The value of my report is in its usage of empirically gathered qualitative data generated from interviews with the reporters who create the narrative, and apply the theoretical framework of care to the findings.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The following section will be broken into three brief parts to elucidate the approach of my inquiry. The first part, sampling, will explain the manner in which I recruited volunteers for the study. The second phase, the semi-structured interviews, will highlight the questions I asked and how those questions help to elicit the sorts of responses germane to this inquiry. The last section, analysis, covers the manner in which I make sense of, catalog and present my findings.

SAMPLING

Using my professional relationships, I employed a convenience-snowball technique, meaning I started by interviewing two reporters with whom I worked in Massachusetts who were both assigned to the Newtown event. No conflict of interest is involved because we did not work for the same outlet; yet we interacted often covering news events. I also independently obtained interviews with four journalists who represent regional and national outlets for interviews. The reporters who participated were all given the option of having their identities concealed and using code names in order to protect their identities in the report, only one reporter wanted his identity concealed. I conducted interviews with 6 different reporters, each interview lasting from between 45 and 90 minutes, the average session was one hour. A brief bio of each participant is located in the beginning section of each interview summary section. This thesis inquiry was evaluated, and approved, by University of Oregon's Human Subjects (Protocol 03132013.009) for exemption.

THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

The following questions are informed by the care-ethics approach, and designed to elicit open-ended responses that can lead to more in-depth information.

- Describe the environment (sights, sounds, etc.) when you first arrived at the scene. Describe the environment once you were settled in and busy producing stories.
- Describe the behavior of the news workers?
- Could you tell the difference between the local and non-local reporters? How? Was there a difference in behavior?
- Retrospectively, were there any questions you wish you had asked? Interviewees you wish you had spoken with?
- How did you react to those community members that told the media to go away?
- What was the impact of the media's presence? Could that have been improved/mitigated in any way? While this second question is a leading one, it is important in determining the reporter's news philosophy and challenges them to contrast the actual events with how they would have liked to see the coverage performed.
- What value do you believe you brought to the coverage?
- What was the emotional impact you felt after being there? Again, this question leads the participant but all of the interviewees did indeed feel a deep emotional impact from Newtown.

As I explained, my questions are inspired by the concerns and analyses covered in

the Literature Review section, and constructed to prompt the interviewees into more challenging and enriching responses. The interviews were conducted over the telephone and recorded with a telephone mic pickup and a field recorder. I will transcribe the interviews prior to analysis.

ANALYSIS

This thesis, while rooted in the theoretical approaches of pragmatism and care, employs a grounded theory analytical method. This method was chosen because it serves as an efficient data organization tool. A purely grounded theory approach would call for data generation first, followed by analysis and theory generation. This hybrid method lays out its theoretical cornerstones first, then data collection and analysis. The advantage of this approach is that it allows for the generation of a new explanatory theory that can then be merged with existing theory. This methodological approach is useful in subsequent research because it can be used in conjunction with varying ethical positions such as virtue ethics, utilitarianism or agape, for example.

Using an analytical approach informed by Glaser's constant comparative method, I first edited the responses for material germane to the discussion. From there, I created separate sections for each interviewee, these sections were populated from open-coding the transcripts, then finding for fixed codes and finally arriving at thematic categories. Glaser's model of analysis is chosen because it led me to a theoretical framework that emerged from interacting with the data.⁷⁰ Once the data had been organized and filed, I then reexamined the responses and emergent theory in light of the theoretical model of

⁷⁰ Glaser, "The Constant Comparative Method of Qualitative Analysis," 444.

care, specifically looking at which answers correlate to the recommendations and proposals of the new ethical framework. Brown operationalizes grounded theory for media ethics saying, “In grounded moral theory one waits to see how/if broader ethical theories are linked to emerging substantive theory. Once recommendations have been generated from the concerns of actual people in the substantive area studied, an exploration of the ways such recommendations may be linked to broader moral theory is considered instructive.”⁷¹

Of equal value, however, are those answers that are not necessarily pertinent to care ethics, but do present a valuable area of research which may have not been explored yet. Finally, I created a condensed version of the core findings and present those as a collection of professional recommendations, professional critiques and/or areas of future research. The main thrust of this exploratory study is not to solve all of the news media’s problems at once, but instead to begin a conversation that will help to improve one aspect, however crucial, of the news media’s performance. This material will be critical in constructing academic course material for journalism students, working journalists looking for additional career training and for newsrooms at large as mass shooting events are unfortunately becoming more regular.

Following the grounded theory approach, each interview was analyzed for content and significant pieces of information were marked and noted on the first read. Next, those notations, or open codes, were grouped by relevance into categories. Finally, the categories were grouped by theme. Each interview analysis in this document first features the participant’s journalistic background and role in reporting, then the content is

⁷¹ Brown, “Grounded Moral Theory: A Feminist Way of Doing (Media) Ethics.”

laid out based on the thematic categories. Each interview chapter closes with an analysis that combines a summary of the data and an interpretive reflection.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

CT TV 1

This reporter asked to have his identity concealed in order to avoid any conflicts with his employer.

CT TV 1 hails from a major metropolitan area where he worked for his college news team and worked an event that helped to inform his experience handling the coverage of Newtown. He graduated with his Master's in Journalism from a prestigious journalism school. He now reports for a regional television news station in Connecticut and has worked as a reporter for four years and received a distinguished professional award for a piece of enterprise reporting in Newtown. We spoke during the first week of April when the Connecticut legislature was taking a vote on expanded state gun-control legislation, largely a response to the Newtown shootings. His testimony is characterized by a number of emergent categories including numerous conflicting reports, commentary on media behavior, self-doubt and reflection, the rush to publish, the genesis of the narrative surrounding mental health, the purpose of covering tragedy and the rights and roles of journalists.

Conflicting Reports

CT TV 1 arrived at Newtown at about 2 A.M., Saturday, December 15th, 2012. By this time the media had been corralled to a park about a half-mile from Sandy Hook

Elementary. Before he even arrived he had already been experiencing some doubts because there was a dearth of credible information.

We don't even know the shooter, whether he's dead or whether there was two or one. Initially there was those two reports that it was Adam and Ryan, none of that was confirmed Friday, wasn't confirmed until Saturday afternoon.

CT TV 1 had to do a live report at 5 A.M., just three hours after arriving on scene, and had to structure his first hit around all of the things they didn't know including the shooter's name, specifics about the way the shooting happened, body count etc.

Mind you, it was reported as fact, that his mother had worked at the school either as a teacher or volunteer in some sense, and that's how he knew how to make his way into the school.

Even two days later after the shooting, CT TV 1 recalls the urgency to get information out.

You're running around and doing the phone and doing live coverage and this and that and really breaking the story but there wasn't anything to confirm about it. So I'll never forget one of the reporters from one of the competing stations in Connecticut was doing a live phoner and she was kind of crouched down on the phone kind of running bent over attempting to recreate the scene for the audience, and I couldn't help but think, "Well this is so stupid because we don't know what's going on yet."

Media Behavior

CT TV 1 went into some detail about the news media's presence, their behavior, the impact their presence was perceived to have had on the town and what direction he believes news media will go in the future when handling unprecedented tragedies. CT TV1 says it was the largest news contingent he has seen since Katrina and describes the press corral.

You've got hundreds of satellite trucks, you've got live trucks, lot of backpacks, you've got every news reporter at every news organization on the face of the planet essentially there to cover the story because it was so extreme. This is a small town, why should there be a traffic jam to begin with, yet still you got traffic backed up for 30 or 40 minutes because we for some reason felt that it was our right to go tell this story.

CT TV 1 takes a critical view of the news media's behavior, when asked whether he could differentiate local versus non-local journalists.

We are horrible people... we are horrible people...we are horrible people.

He notes that the people of Newtown didn't want the news media there but indicates that because the people in his viewing area wanted to know what was going on, so the press had to be there. He had the experience of seeing how the foreign press differed from domestic reporters, commenting that the foreign press tends to see a story as something that has to be investigated and uncovered whereas the domestic press, he believes, errs more on the side of being an entertainment source. At one point, he was assigned to go out to a nearby shooting range to do a story on the gun culture in Western Connecticut because it "makes great TV." Looking forward, CT TV 1 notes that the demand for headlines is increasing, which will only make subsequent tragedy coverage worse.

Because as soon as these things happen you gotta be first to tell it and there's gonna be a hash tag that trends and ultimately you wanna be a part of it...it's sickening.

While CT TV 1 maintains a mostly critical view of how the news media handles tragedy because of the competition that drives false reporting and the invasion of grieving communities, he still holds a view of audience member as active citizen which helps to justify the incessant news coverage.

And that's where government, that's where policy comes into play and that's where we've got an opportunity to learn from this story.

The Rush to Publish, Self-Doubt and Reflection

CT TV 1 was sent to the scene with very little guidance on what to report about, and comments that his novice news producer didn't have a very good grasp of the situation so was of little help in pointing CT TV 1 toward valuable stories. The newsroom demands of getting something on air unsettled him and he spent his days at Newtown frequently questioning his own role and value. He had no sources in Newtown, no idea of how to structure his reports back to the station.

The irony here is that you are a reporter and supposed to be the defining voice in letting your audience know or your consumer know what's going on.

He describes how this self-doubt and rush to publish played out in practice.

Every now and then we would swarm, there would be a media gaggle around some random police officer asking them questions trying to get whatever information could be leaked from them, but it really was nothing.

He later comments that most of the reporting he and most of the reporters he worked along side had to resort to was mainly man-on-the-street interviewing, which he calls the lowest form of reporting. Despite this, he says that whenever a reporter managed to hail a community member walking down the street, a group of reporters would swarm that person hoping for some sort of exclusive. CT TV 1 covered the scene for seven days, and each day thought to himself that he didn't want to go back. Asked what he would have done differently if he were his own boss, he says he just wouldn't go and he would leave the people of Newtown alone.

Content: Tragedy And The Mental Health Narrative

After discussing the many factors as to how the event was reported, we moved into the territory of what was being reported focusing on two main narratives that emerged from the general Newtown reporting. The first topic was the appeal of tragedy, and the second was the news value of Adam Lanza's mental health. Both of these news narratives became major themes in coverage threads and were largely developed by the reporters—as opposed to the theme of the investigation, which was largely controlled by the police.

CT TV 1 noted that Newtown became something of a pilgrimage site for people who were either working through their own loss or hoping to give solace to mourning residents and families. CT TV 1 found a man from New Jersey who was there to commiserate because he had lost a loved one recently to violence, and the process of creating a story around him largely became the way CT TV 1 managed to carve out stories every day.

I mean this one guy who was going through his own pain came here to Newtown to ultimately deal with his pain but also helped people here his own way, try to cope...that was that story, after that it just kind of seemed like a blur because it was everyday “let's go to Newtown, I don't know what we're gonna get but we gotta go.”

In another example of the appeal of tragedy, CT TV 1 and his cameraman managed to find a lady who was giving out free hugs, a story that also made for good TV.

Because people just needed free hugs and it was interesting how so many people would just walk up to her and give her a hug and at the point of embrace just kind of break down, and we captured that and we talked to her about why she wanted to do that.

It was through this somewhat loose, man-on-the-street reporting that CT TV 1 says he, and other reporters he observed, developed the narrative surrounding the mental health of Adam Lanza.

Ask people, “Hey did you know this guy?” and you might get a “Well I heard” or “I had this class with him” or “Saw him in the library” and “Oh yeah, he was kind of weird.” “Well how was he weird?” “Well maybe he spent some time away from school” “Oooooohhhhhh, why? What did you hear?”.... It was that which ultimately, I think, began to string together a narrative of someone who had some type of challenge mentally who decided to go do the unthinkable.

Summary

CT TV 1’s experience was characterized by self-doubt in a professional setting, unrealistic demands from the newsroom, wandering around looking for stories, frustration with the amount of unconfirmed facts that were circulating and pity for the people of Newtown who had to bear the news media’s invasiveness. He says the competition among reporters, even though the atmosphere was mostly collegial between news workers, was the element that drove journalists to make mistakes both in reporting false facts and being aggressive with community members. Personally, he feels that he brings a heightened sense of empathy to the scene because of his experience being a resident of, and journalism student in, New Orleans when Hurricane Katrina pummeled the city.

Analysis

CT TV 1 was being asked to come up with solid stories in spite of the fact that the public safety officials were operating under the single voice model where new information would only be let out at official press briefings. This led to CT TV 1 having

to scabble together stories in an unfamiliar town based just on what he was able to gain access to through somewhat superficial encounters. Luckily, he was able to enterprise an award-winning story. He sees the assignment, and others where he has to report tragic events, as the downside of a job he is very lucky to have otherwise.

What emerges from this interview is that CT TV 1 prefers to go to broadcast with a story rooted in fact gathered mainly from authoritative sources. He was unable to execute his own news philosophy because of the urgent nature of the Newtown assignment. The contradiction is evidenced by the fact that many of the reports that were based on hearsay were eventually recanted or corrected after-the-fact.

The experience of CT TV 1, when filtered through a care ethic lens leaves a lot of room for critique. First, the reporter's needs were not addressed or met, the need for a solid plan of action, the need to go on air with credible information and the need to be able to refuse the assignment outright. Second, the needs of CT TV 1's audience were only met in part; they were presented with stories of loss and tragedy, which in CT TV 1's opinion plays into the entertainment needs of the consumer. However, the audience was not always presented with credible and verifiable information. Lastly, the needs of the community were not considered fully: the need for time and space to grieve, the need to conduct business-as-usual and the need to decide whether they wanted to news media to swarm in the first place. A retrospective care critique might call for more dialogue between news media representatives and community members to decide how best to approach the event in a manner that will minimize harm and maximize healing. The argument might be made that the reporters have to be on the scene for a fast-breaking story and wouldn't have time to consult with community members, but the experience of

CT TV 1 shows that the information gathered in between official press briefings was largely anecdotal and didn't serve to create a very meaningful news narrative overall. Given the fact that press briefings were usually done on a daily basis, there could very well have been a large amount of time for news teams to gather off-scene and work toward formulating a more methodical and care-oriented approach.

JENN SMITH

Jenn Smith is a Syracuse University Journalism School graduate who now reports full time for the *Berkshire Eagle* in Western Massachusetts. She's been there for about 7 years. She began working part-time as an obit writer and would work as a substitute in elementary schools as well. When she was brought on full-time she was assigned to the education beat because of her working knowledge of the area's education system. The *Berkshire Eagle* is owned by New England Media, which is partnered with Digital First Media, or DFM, which partners with the *New Haven Register*. When the Newtown shooting happened, Digital First Media brought in reporters from many of its partner agencies to help the *New Haven Register* as the lead coverage outlet for the DFM affiliated news outfits. Through this collaboration, Jenn was asked to help out in New Haven. She arrived in New Haven at approximately 5:30 P.M. the evening of December 14th, 2012. Her primary responsibility was to help generate feature profile stories from within the *New Haven Register's* newsroom, with one assignment that had her going to a nearby town that Sunday to look into a school that was being proposed to house the Sandy Hook students. Therefore, she didn't have to do any reporting from the center of Newtown and had very little interaction with other news organizations. She worked in

New Haven from Friday evening on December 14th until Sunday evening on December 16th. Her testimony is characterized by emergent themes such as process and organization, a culture of compassion, anecdotal experience informing news values and the lasting personal impacts from covering the Newtown shooting.

Process And Organization

Jenn first showed up at the *New Haven Register's* main office on the evening of the shooting, she was immediately impressed with the level of organization.

They had their conference and had whiteboards on the walls and they had started kind of making a written chart about what facts we knew, started organizing and compiling who we had for contacts.

Jenn was assigned to work in tandem with another reporter on creating a profile about Nancy Lanza, Adam Lanza's mother. She says the atmosphere in the newsroom was very calm considering the amount of work they were trying to produce and that she noticed a lot of collaboration and teamwork going on. There wasn't a lot of ego in her experience. When someone was assigned to a story, like President Obama's visit, they just did it, no one fighting to get one story over another. The *Register* broke its workforce into three units: Jenn's unit was working from the New Haven headquarters, a mobile office was set up outside of the Newtown city center, and another unit was assigned to work the city center to cover press conferences and speak with locals.

When the official victim list came out Saturday afternoon, each person on the list was assigned to small teams of reporters who would work together to generate a story. The news directors made it a point to warn their workforce against inappropriate behavior.

They were like “Make as many contacts as you can...don't be a jerk, don't like steal a photo off the mantle, like you know I wouldn't expect you to do anything like that but some people might.” Some reporters might because it's a big national story and they want the best information.

Jenn has very little critique for the news media because of the highly efficient structure she was able to work within:

You know you had editors backing up reporters from making sure they had the technical support they needed, making sure they could connect with reporters from Connecticut who knew the area, whether it was just to get help with geography, navigating yourself around to gathering sources because they know people.

In her assignment, Jenn was given direction as to what to cover, how to cover it, who to cover it with and had numerous resources at hand should she need them.

Media Commentary

Because Jenn's experience was primarily from within a newsroom, she didn't have any first-hand interactions with the media swarm that was buzzing around the city of Newtown. Her co-workers were directed to be respectful of potential interviewees partly as a reaction to real or perceived media behavior. She does think that the structure and style at the *Register* helped to create an environment where factual errors and the general missteps that occur when reporters try to rush a story were largely avoided:

The different number of deaths and injuries were tweeted and posted out, they're all conflicting at some point, other details of the Lanza case, they got out incorrectly. I think Ryan Lanza, Adam's brother, there was some kid by the scene that had a jacket that said Ryan on it and reporters flocked over and said Ryan Lanza is on the scene, but it wasn't him. So you know like those things you have to be careful to not be that person, for me personally I'd rather take a few more minutes or an hour to really think about it and to really verify it, you know try to get some sort of confirmation of what might be a fact or a detail of something than to tweet it first.

Jenn says the *Register* was only going to print with well-vetted stories and should they have needed updating, a more complete version would be released subsequently online. According to Jenn's experience, the *Register* was more inclined to publish smaller bits of vetted information than large amounts of suspect information.

Anecdotal Experience and a Personal Approach

Jenn's background in elementary education helped to guide her in dealing with parents and community members in regards to their loss and hurt following the shooting. This background not only makes her unique as a reporter but also might indicate some training for reporters outside of their day-to-day work that could help them to approach sensitive situations involving children. Additionally, some of her knowledge of how traumatized people operate comes from specific anecdotal experience:

First of all when you're in trauma, you're not in your right mind, there's all these different kinds of chemicals triggering a reaction, even if you were speaking, what you say might not be what you needed to say. So I take that into perspective... and my roommate is a social worker and does therapy with people, so I think maybe my instinct comes from that too.

Although Jenn admits she hated having to contact grieving families, a professional assignment, she says she relied on her own moral compass to guide how she went about it. Her technique consisted of making a call, explaining who she was and why she was calling, expressing condolences and putting out the ask for an interview. She recounts one instance where an interview request was rejected by a police officer stationed at the family's home (police officers were stationed at the homes of victims' families to relay information and to keep the media at bay). She says she got a pretty firm "no" to an immediate interview and another "no" to a request to leave her contact information for a possible interview later on.

When you hear a person repeat themselves like that, it's like just let it go.

Jenn says she tries to embody the Golden Rule, or treating others as you would like to be treated when handling sensitive stories, so the second rejection was enough to get her to move on to finding alternative avenues for getting the information she was after. Later on her tact paid off when she was able to secure a few brief comments via email from a deceased child's father who made sure to thank her for being so respectful in the body of his reply. Jenn believes that she was the first to get a comment from this particular family and attributes that to her Golden Rule in practice.

Personal Impacts

Jenn says that while she was in the newsroom, she was focused on getting the stories out and had little time to think about the magnitude of the events, that is, until she got back to her hotel room late at night.

I remember talking to my grandmother and before I hung up with her I said "I love you," and we never, we never say that, and she said "I love you back" and that was just, you know, exemplary of whatever emotions this brings up.

She says when she got the email back from the grieving father, she fell apart, and it was at that moment when the story became real for her, when she was able to see the humanity of the victims and the pain of their survivors. She also notes that her co-worker, after reporting in Newtown for a few days, reunited with his mother from whom he had been estranged for years.

Jenn got back to her home in Berkshire County late Sunday night, two days after the shooting. She went right back to work Monday and her first assignment, because she

was on the education beat, was to report on a local elementary school that was starting a new music program for troubled children. She says it was surreal to see a school buzzing with happy children after what she had spent the last three days reporting on. She managed to buddy up with a young girl maybe seven or eight years old and talk with her about the program. After the interview, the girl drew a picture of Jenn, making sure to include her hat, her hair, her glasses and her necklace.

...And draws a necklace that said love, and I didn't have a necklace on. So where she came up with that and why she came up with that I don't know why so I took the picture and went in my car and just cried, maybe she knew that I needed a little comfort and I was just like...it gave me chills.

Two months later Jenn was invited to attend a panel on media and the creative economy where she was chosen to represent journalism to a crowd of high school students. The topic of Newtown came up and caught her off guard.

I wasn't expecting to be like this, I was, I had been welling up in front of all these high school juniors and having a couple tears roll down my face talking about it and reminding them when I was talking to them, talking to them about like how, how impactful you can be as a media person, as a kind of story teller or information sharer in your community and how much it means to other people.

Ethic-Of-Care and a Culture of Compassion

For this testimony, the ethic-of-care analysis is merged with the emergent theme of a culture of compassion, because the data demonstrate there were a lot of structural and organizational components that resonate with a care approach. The first aspect is that the newsroom workers were constantly checking in with each other at the *New Haven Register*, from a simple “Hey, are you okay?” to making sure that everybody was eating and getting some time to relax. The newsroom was largely insulated from the melee

going in Newtown and had the time and resources to make sure that the staff was faring well. In fact an email sent from management reminded people to check in with each other. Jenn's testimony does not indicate any instances in which the staff members were pressured to be more aggressive with interviewees, and the management was supportive of the reporters finding alternative ways to get certain pieces of information.

Early on in the next week, DFM had sent an email out to all of their workers reminding them to talk with family and friends about what they were experiencing, and they even created a DFM agency-specific hotline for their workers to call should they feel they needed more professional treatment for their own trauma. Later that week, DFM issued a survey to all of the workers who had handled the Newtown coverage looking for feedback on the entire process. They wanted to know where the problems were, where they did a good job, how the food was, the hotel rooms, etc. Jenn remains impressed with that level of care and attentiveness and explains that the process was basically ideal in her experience.

Because Jenn's experience was mainly isolated to the inner workings of one newsroom, she wasn't able to see any behavior by the news media that she might find questionable. However, based on her experience, it would appear that co-workers and management attended to her individual needs, and she was able to approach her stories without violating her personal ethics. Nonetheless, an ethic-of-care analysis might encourage adoption of mechanisms that better handle attending to the needs of the grieving families. While the news workers operated in a supportive environment, the issue still remains that mourning families had to deflect numerous attempts to get interviews rather than the families being able to determine when it was best to talk.

Given the highly supportive and efficient structure Jenn was fortunate enough to work in, this model could have the institutional strength and staff levels to find news ways to engage with the families and grieving community members. For example, Jenn leveraged the passive communication technology of email in order to get comment from a victim's father. This allowed the interviewee to decide when he was ready to share as opposed to being approached cold by a stranger in person.

JACKY SMITH

Jacky Smith is a veteran newspaper person; she serves as the Managing Editor at the daily *Connecticut News Times* out of Danbury, Connecticut, just two towns over from Newtown. She has served in this capacity for over two decades and considers her paper to be one of the few outlets that cover Newtown regularly. Her job is to direct reporters in the field to various assignments and to handle the task of doing much of the background research for stories. On December 14th, 2012 she had to wrangle one reporter into work because it was his day off and get another to cancel his thesis defense so they could amass five reporters to handle the coverage. Jacky's co-worker, and long time copywriter, is the mother of one of the teachers killed at Sandy Hook. Many of the *News Times* news workers divided their time between reporting on the shootings and visiting with their co-worker. Jacky writes a weekly opinion column, which lately places a focus on advocating for stricter gun control legislation.

Jacky is an ardent defender of the First Amendment and balks at any notion of press regulation. Her testimony is characterized by emergent themes such as the fact that

there was no time to prepare to cover the shootings, conflicting reports, a journalistic obligation to report in the face of community resentment, commentary on the news media's behavior and reasons for choosing certain content.

Preparation

Jacky is of the mind that one trains to report on events through working in the news everyday. She holds two main precepts as fundamental to any approach to newsgathering: the obligation to report, and the obligation to be accurate. In her opinion, the journalists are obliged to their readers. *The News Times* team didn't have any time to gather and strategize how to cover the story in any kind of formalized way, so Jacky was relying on the two main precepts to guide her reporters.

Conflicting Reports

Jacky recounts her experience dealing with one false report that had many news teams scrambling in the first hours after the school shooting.

There were ancillary reports, things coming out that the police were looking for...there was the maroon car and they ended up stopping 20 cars so we heard it was happening in Danbury so we sent somebody out to check on that...turns out to be nothing but you have to check out everything.

Because of the fast moving nature of the story, as it evolved from being about two parents shooting at each other to a lone gunman, the *News Times* team was often tweeting information out to their readers, which was challenging because there was no clear channel for nailing down confirmed facts.

Obligation to Report Versus Community Resentment

Jacky believes the massive media presence was warranted, if not by necessity, then definitely by rights.

It's the job of the journalist to keep focused on what you have to do, you gotta get the news for your readers immediately on line and later in print and you focus on "Alright you know I'm a journalist and I gotta get the story."

She encouraged her staff to not go meekly into the media corral but to give the police some pushback and demand answers. For her, it is about being on the scene, asking questions and talking to people. That's how a reporter generates a story. Even if the method upsets people, Jacky holds that the reporter has to struggle on.

People who are under a lot of stress and a lot of emotion, they call you vultures and they threaten you and you have to remember that you have a job to do and you don't take it personally and try to get it a different way because your obligation is to the readers.

In one instance, a *News Times* reporter called back to the newsroom distraught over a community member's reaction to her presence, Jacky handled it this way.

And I said "They're in anguish right now and our job is to get the truth and get the story and get to make this person more than a name, so go back out there don't go to him go to a different neighbor. If the street is closed go around a different way." And that reporter did it and got details about the person which she was assigned to get. So it was hard, it was not just local versus national and international but it was probably the volume of it.

Jacky says that on the first day people were in shock and were pretty willing to speak with the media, but by the second day the town began to "fold into itself."

Although, Jacky points out, it wasn't just the media that caused Newtown residents to close off, but also the people on grief pilgrimages delivering trinkets and consolations and the "looky-loo's," but the media was the first wave that made residents become

protective of one another. In spite of these sentiments, Jacky maintains that the journalists are there to report a story.

You don't wanna walk away from it, you wanna help the community get on with it, but it's too big of a story and it's not gonna end so you wanna be there and not miss anything, not miss a nuance, not be forgetting it.

Jacky says that she will uphold her obligation to report the story and hopes that “the community understands.”

Media Behavior

Jacky had a limited view of the news media’s behavior on the ground in Newtown because she was mainly working from within the office. She did mention that she heard a rumor about some journalists pretending to be friends of victim’s family members in order to gain access. She also notes that she was fielding numerous calls from national and international news outlets asking how the paper was doing. She says she refused outside media requests to interview her workers because they were so busy covering the unfolding Newtown investigation.

One critique that Jacky made about the media is that celebrity journalists tend to take over.

All of a sudden there's Anderson Cooper on the steps of Old Town Hall on Main Street and people were responding to that, people closest to the tragedies talking to names like Katie Couric and, you know, Rachel Maddow was there. There's kind of an allure like “This is broadcast nationwide and these are people we watch on TV.” I’m not questioning anybody's motives but when news people like that descend in they get it all.

The frustration for Jacky was that people were more willing to talk with national news stars rather than the paper two towns over.

Content Choices: More Than a Name and the Human Nature to Wonder Why

The main focus of the *News Times* following the Newtown shooting was to generate individual profiles for all 27 victims killed on December 14th.

I felt very fervently people need to understand these individual lives, it's something to each child, each educator, some detail that touched the heart. For me that was the personal part and that was my dedication if you will.

Jacky acknowledges that some of that mission may have been motivated by the fact that her co-worker, and long time friend, had lost her daughter in the attack, but she remains optimistic that they would have done just as good a job had that not been the case. As far as the news narrative surrounding Adam Lanza, Jacky cautions her profession against glorifying the shooter, but also acknowledges that natural human curiosity will continue to try and discover why someone would commit such a heinous act— which might explain the amount of attention that Lanza, and his supposed mental health impairment, received.

Personal Impact

December 14th was also Jacky's birthday and she had family in town to celebrate. However, she wasn't able to spend any time with them that weekend because she and her team were inundated with creating 27 unique victim profiles. What she remembers most is coming home late at night on the 14th and seeing the Christmas tree her husband had decorated and just falling apart. She has since opined in her weekly column about the need to create comprehensive gun control legislation, statewide and nationally.

Summary

Jacky Smith is an ardent defender of a free and unregulated press and criticizes the press's behavior only in respect to the celebrity allure of certain big name journalists. She tended to take on her role as a journalist as more of a mission than a job, holding her remorse at bay until she was at home and could start to process the horrifying events she was reporting on. To any reporter who is unfortunate enough to cover an event like a mass shooting in the future, she recommends they hold the two precepts inviolate: the obligation to report and the concurrent obligation to maintain accuracy.

Ethic-Of-Care Analysis

Jacky's testimony demonstrated an unwavering duty to serve the needs of the reader(s). While she acknowledged that the townspeople were resentful of the news media's presence, her advice to her reporter was to go talk to someone who was willing to talk and simply circumvent the unwilling community members. In this setting, it would appear that the aggregate news audience demands, real or perceived, were held in higher regard than any aggregate community sentiments toward the coverage. Within this approach is room for an ethic-of-care to be introduced as an amendment to traditional coverage. While the obligation to report, and to report accurately, are crucial to the livelihood of the newspaper and to the audience's news needs, an ethic-of-care approach would call for more engagement with the needs of the mourning families and town residents. The needs of the individuals in the Newtown community are not necessarily valid just because they are mourning, but because they are being brought into a larger conversation about their experience. Those in mourning might have the need for privacy

as well as the need for time away from reporters in order to process their own emotions and experiences. In this light, placing the needs of the reader over the needs of community members tends to objectify those community members and could run the risk of treating people as means to an end, which could be part of the reason for the community's resentment toward the news media's presence.

BRIAN BURNELL

Brian Burnell is the Connecticut Bureau Chief for Northeast Cable News, or NECN. He is a Connecticut native who went to high school in Danbury, just a few towns to the west of Newtown. He has been in the news business for over 30 years.

Burnell and his cameraman arrived in Sandy Hook about an hour after the shootings. By this time the town was using the nearby firehouse as the staging area for reuniting children with their families. At that point, there were still emergency vehicles arriving and cars were parked all over the road and area parking lots. He reported on the event for the full day Friday, December 14th and part of the following day but had to leave work for the rest of the week due to his own family emergency. He says that the media contingent at Newtown was the largest he had seen since he reported on 9/11. In the early hours the reporting crews were mainly local and regional outfits that had worked together before, so the atmosphere was collegial among journalists. It became a bit more cluttered through out the first day as crews from Boston, New York and elsewhere started coming in 2-3 hours after the shooting.

Burnell's testimony is characterized by a number of emergent categories. He describes the reportorial environment as being rife with conflicting reports, swarming

media and community members telling the media to get out. When discussing the content he created, Burnell described his own approach as offering grieving community members the opportunity to pay tribute to lost loved ones and discusses why he thought it best to name the shooter in spite of other news outlets who had chosen to refer to him as the shooter. In spite of any errors made during the reporting, Burnell holds that the media coverage could be useful in galvanizing lasting policy reform to prevent the type of shooting that befell Newtown from ever happening again. He recommends a code that journalists should follow to leave families alone during the immediate aftermath. This testimony, when analyzed critically, points toward the opportunity for curriculum development meant to guide reporters in covering tragic events as well some ethic-of-care issues, namely the conflicting needs of the news audience versus the needs of the grieving community and family members following the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary.

Conflicting Reports

Burnell explains that the scene in Newtown was chaotic when he first arrived. The first reports, based on rumors, held that there might have been a shootout in the school between two disgruntled parents and a teacher may have been shot in the hand. Nobody really grasped the situation in the early stages, at least not anybody there on the scene. Burnell admits that he erroneously reported on the parent shootout based on information that he could string together.

Sometimes out on the scene is the worst place you get information.

He also says most of his first hits back to the station were composed largely of what they didn't know. They didn't know who the shooter was, how many shooters there were, how many injuries/casualties, etc.

Personal Style: Calm, Confidence, Experience and Emotional Impact

Burnell describes himself as someone who tends to get calmer as the situation gets more tense, a skill that he says he has honed after decades reporting on terrible events. His training comes from being on the job as opposed to any formal training on to handle stories in which the subject matter is highly sensitive and the facts tend to blend with rumors:

You prepare to cover the news, you do what you do everyday, to some extent we're doing the same everyday not on the scale like this but we're always out there trying to get information, make sure that it's accurate, trying to be sensitive to the people we're talking to. And I think we try to do that in any situation we're in, and this one doesn't change because it was such a big event.

In spite of years of on the job training, the Newtown story got to Burnell. He says he often had to hold back tears thinking about the children and their grieving parents. He thought often about his own children while reporting updates back to the station. It is that compassion that helps him to approach grieving family members and get them to talk. His approach, when rooted in compassion, is what can help make sure the story has the power to compel people to act.

So I bring a certain compassion to it that I think is important because, I think that's really what we're trying to get at... trying to get people to understand that even though you're sitting in your living room, you're safe and sound watching TV and if you don't like what you're watching you can flip over to the Simpsons or the ball game, and you're trying to bring that home that this is really, really bad, you really need to pay attention and maybe there's something we need to do as a society to make sure it doesn't happen again.

Media Behavior

Burnell felt that the locals (himself included) did everything they could to be respectful and comforting while in Newtown, but also notes that the New York crews have a tendency to be more aggressive. There were police assigned to each of the victims' homes. Although it was said the police presence was to keep the families informed, Burnell is convinced that it was to keep the media away because, "You know how the media can be." He says the news media descended upon the town like "locusts." He says that for the most part, the news workers were respectful but one rotten apple can ruin it for the rest.

All it takes is one of them knocking on the door of a family of a dead kid and we're all painted with that brush.

He also points out the contradiction inherent in knocking on the family's door, because if another reporter gets an interview with the family, and Burnell doesn't, the other one wins. Approaching the family carries with it personal and professional risks.

I don't know why we feel like we have to push it a little harder, I gotta get this... pushing harder is exactly what's going to get you turned off by these people, it's exactly what's going to make them shut the door in your face.

In past reporting assignments, Burnell has actually tried to act as a delegate for the media by approaching a possible interview and offering to tape it and share the footage with the rest of the media personnel. He says this makes it easier on the interviewee and saves the news workers from having to swarm and compete for sound bites.

Police Control of Media

Burnell says the police were far more protective of information and people during the Newtown investigation. The police not only placed personnel with family members to block the media invasion, but also corralled media to the firehouse parking lot at first and when that got too big, they moved all of the news teams to a park up the road where press conferences would be given on the police's schedule and information would not be repeated away from the podium. For Burnell, who has a working relationship with many of the high-ranking police officers working the scene, this heightened response to the media actually slowed down the flow of information and created an environment where rumors started to emerge.

Content Considerations: Paying Tribute and the Shooter Profile

Moving from the behavior of the news media on the scene and on to the content that he created, Burnell commented on his efforts to try and tell stories that memorialized the victims. Although he says the thing he hates the most in his job is approaching mourning families, he feels there is a need to get those stories told.

You have to go to a family and say hey could you give us a picture, you have to show that these were people, precious little children who would never hurt anybody, who were shot and killed, that has gotta be brought across to the general public and the reason why is because they need to see the consequences of things that happen, and decide as a society how do we deal with this.

Burnell says his approach is a measured and compassionate one, learning from experience that it is better to approach the family with no reporting equipment, speaking with them person-to-person and trying to position the interview request as more of a service that the families can take advantage of:

I say “Look, I’m very sorry for your loss, I don’t want to invade your space at this time but if you would like to say something I want you to know we’re here and if you want to say something, and I’d be happy to put you on camera and pay tribute to your lost loved one.”

Another contentious theme emerged around how to identify the shooter, Adam Lanza, in a developing news story. Some networks chose to use his name while others identified him simply as “the shooter.” Based on personal experience reporting crime in urban areas and advice from his partner, a therapist, Burnell errs on the side of naming the shooter and telling people who he was. The management at NECN wanted to use “the shooter” when describing Adam Lanza but Burnell feels that choice, while helping to suppress notoriety for the killer, is actually a disservice to women and minorities.

Because you’re just kind of leaving it out there with this generic when it’s almost always the white male between the ages of 17 and 30.

Burnell also adds that profiling the shooter can be good for business.

You get the next Charlie Manson and put him in front of your cameras and do a 30 minute documentary you’re gonna get some numbers, that’s the sexy aspect of it.

Beyond the numbers, Burnell says profiling the shooter can help to create the right kind of conversations in society to find out if this act was an anomaly or if it represents more of a trend.

Burnell’s Recommendations: Maximizing Resources and Leaving the Families

Alone

Burnell notes that there are too many people trying to do the same job on the scene. While he thinks pool reporting, news stations sharing one central feed, would be useless when reporters are trying to tell so many different stories, he does think it would be

useful to utilize more newsroom resources to help with research, generating leads and verifying facts before they go to air. Also, he feels that his station could cultivate relationships with other networks in which they could work in tandem and share certain content. Burnell explains that being a step or two removed from the scene of action could yield much better results. For example, people in the newsroom could make contact with police officers in the next town over to get the latest information rather than waiting for the daily press conference.

Additionally, and in regards to media conduct, Burnell feels that news workers and community members would all benefit if there were some code among the reporters to not approach the families and to wait until they are ready to talk. He says he would have liked to have sat down with the families to hear from them how they thought the legal process worked, and then wait until they are a bit more collected before asking them to go on camera with their tributes. Burnell would have liked more time to work his own relationships with people who know community members in order to achieve a higher level of trust with possible interviewees, but instead was often left to approach families cold.

Analysis

Curriculum Development

Brian Burnell comes to this event with three decades of news reporting behind him. Having reported on numerous tragedies, from neighborhood shootings to catastrophic fires to 9/11, he has developed a personal style that simultaneously reflects his own compassion and the station's need to outdo the competition. However, he made

no mention of any formal training, besides knowing the policies at NECN, for handling tragic news stories. It would follow that younger reporters might benefit from a curriculum designed to prepare them for such scenarios, and while the Newtown shooting was unprecedented the coverage could have been guided by cooler heads should the reporters tasked with sorting out the facts on scene have had some preparation for what to expect and how to manage the story.

Critical Ethic-Of-Care Analysis

Brian Burnell approached the Newtown stories with compassion for the people involved, and he reports that it is his compassion that helped to open doors and made people willing to talk about their loss and pain. A critical analysis informed by the ethic-of-care points toward a conflict of needs between the community members and the news network, a conflict that has to be governed by Burnell who is being paid by the station.

So I'm really not in an emotional state, it's very much like what do we need to do? Where do we need to go? How do we need to handle this? What do they want me to do back at the station? How quickly do they need this back on the air?

Balancing the needs of the station with the needs of the individuals is challenging for Burnell, he admits hating to do it, but makes an offer to the grieving families by positioning the interview as an opportunity to pay tribute to the lost loved one. This may not be wrong; however, it could be presumptuous to assume that the individuals are at a point where they would benefit from the interview. In fact, Burnell admits that one of the major changes he would make to the structure of coverage would be to leave the families alone until they were ready to speak. It would follow that Burnell would like to adopt a care-oriented approach, one that considers the needs of the grieving families before the

network's needs, but is mainly governed by newsroom demands. Applying an ethic-of-care approach to Burnell's reporting technique would call for augmenting his compassionate approach to the end of making the experience more of a service to the interviewees. For example, rather than approaching the interviewee with an outcome in mind, paying tribute to their lost loved one, he would make the approach and ascertain what those individuals need and then determine if he is the right person to help fulfill that need.

JOHN VOKET

John Voket has served as the Associate Editor at the *Newtown Bee* for nearly eight years and as Public Affairs Director for the local Cox Radio Network for 22 years. With an office just a little over a mile away from Sandy Hook Elementary, Voket was one of the first reporters on the scene after the shooting. Even though he lives a couple towns over from Newtown, he is an honorary community member taking part in fundraising, parades and volunteer work in Newtown. Voket's testimony is characterized by emergent themes such as community, news media behavior and the impacts on the community, the rush to publish and the search for answers, recommendations for improving the news media coverage process, and the editorial authority to refrain from publishing many details of the Newtown shooting aftermath which, in this summary and analysis, resonates with themes built out of the ethic-of-care.

Description

One of the classic images to come away from December 14th was the one in which a line of students were being led away from the school by law enforcement, each student holding the shoulders of the one in front of them (as they were ordered to keep their eyes closed during the evacuation). Although the photo was republished around the world, *Newtown Bee* reporter Shannon Hicks originally snapped the image. Hicks was also a volunteer EMT for Newtown and shortly after snapping the photo had to switch hats and help with victim recovery. She handed the camera over to John Voket who arrived on scene before many of the emergency responders had even arrived. He made his way into the firehouse nearby, which had been made into a staging area for children and families to be reunited. Voket's roles as community member and reporter were in conflict as he was privy to the most up-to-date information about the investigation and was witness to the reunions between parents and children. He also saw, with his own eyes, the parents that would not be reunited with their little ones.

Many residents called Voket directly on his cell phone to get the latest on what was happening—parents calling to say they were on their way, other residents calling to find out if so-and-so was okay. People in the town had received email blasts from the school administration informing them of a lockdown at Sandy Hook, and instead of waiting for the “news,” they just called their local news man. This is a practice, says Voket, which happens all the time in Newtown. For almost seven hours, Voket stayed with the families and first responders in that firehouse as the story developed from a possible shootout between two parents, to a multiple shooter rampage, to what we all know it to be today. When the anchors at the radio station would call him for updates,

Voket wasn't in the position to have to guess about what was going on or how people were feeling. Instead, he had to refrain from saying all that he knew, a sharp contrast from the news media that had descended upon Newtown and who often had to structure their reports around all of the things they didn't know.

News Media Behavior and the Impacts on the Community

When Voket finally left the firehouse, the scene was transformed. Police had set up barricades outside of the firehouse, and he saw rows of emergency vehicles, onlookers, cars parked all over the place, and dozens of news satellite trucks and hundreds of journalists. He says he saw reporters backed up sometimes two or three deep outside of the barricades.

They were all just standing there shouting out to people, they were trying to wave people over that were coming or going from the scene just to find out who they were and possibly chat them up to get some kind of coverage going.

Given the magnitude of the shooting event, Voket understands why the news media presence was as large as it was, but also sympathizes with the residents who just wanted the media to go away.

I couldn't blame people for telling the media to go away especially if they felt threatened or invaded by media, whether it was because someone, or ten or twenty reporters, walked up on them while they were going into the grocery store, Dunkin Donuts or the general store asking people how they feel about it or asking them sometimes very rudimentary and repetitive questions about their ties to the incident. Do they know anybody? How do they feel about it? Does it change the way they operate? There was a lot of that those first couple of days... every news outlet was looking to present to their audience something exclusive or unique in terms of coverage so everybody was out there you know combing every public area for people who might come and, depending on where they were, they were asking questions that were pertinent to that audience... if they were outside or adjacent to one of the schools asking about children and schools and

things, they were at the grocery store they were asking about how the incident impacted them and their experiences.

Voket also saw what happens when celebrity journalists parachute in and how often times the sought-after exclusives usually end up going to the big name reporters.

I mean it's one thing to be asked by the NBC affiliate from Rochester to do an interview, but when Anderson Cooper sends somebody to seek you out, it's a little bit different... kind of a difference between being in a garage band and being asked to be the replacement guitar player for Bon Jovi.

Voket recalls watching national broadcast news channels at night after his shift had ended and explains that many of the big broadcasters seemed to be going into their reports with bad information, information that he was privy to based on his close relationships with the residents and law enforcement folks in town.

In some respects it was surreal to be privy to some facts that were provided to me off the record and seeing those facts alluded to or plainly stated blatantly wrong by some high level or highly respected news agency.

Voket theorizes that the swarms of reporting teams, representing numerous American and international regions, were there just to put one of their local faces on a non-local event and would pick up and move on as soon as the news wasn't appealing enough to justify the expense of having teams there. However, Voket says his team will be there everyday doing the hard work of telling the story of how the Newtown community puts the pieces back together day by day. It is from this vantage point, which I will elucidate in a later section, that Voket and his team made the choice not to chase after victim's families for exclusives and to reaffirm themselves as a community resource.

The news media's presence in Newtown did have a few more adverse effects on the town according to Voket who says that the *Newtown Bee's* police reporter was not

able to access the police most of the week to deal with other business in town.

Furthermore, many regular patrons of local shops refused to come into town because of the news beehive on Main Street hurting local businesses that are currently appealing to the state and federal governments for grants to help bridge the loss of profits.

The Rush to Publish and the Search for Answers

These two themes are combined into one section in this summary because they operate as two sides of the same coin. Again, Voket was privy to a lot of information because of his connections within the community, but chose not to report much of it because it may have violated his trust with his sources. In contrast, he was surprised to hear respected reporters putting together news packages that were mostly based on hearsay and speculation. It would follow that these reporters weren't intentionally trying to spread misinformation but instead were looking to bring something new to the conversation. This observation can be evidenced by Voket's commentary on how many in the news media developed a concurrent narrative around the shooter's mental health.

It was reported that he was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome and as of yet there's been unattributed sources who said that he was also receiving some sort of mental health counseling or there was some sort of mental health intervention in his life but that hasn't been confirmed through any sources yet, so I truly don't know...certainly it is abnormal, grossly abnormal for someone to do what he did...certainly it would, a person in a normal state of mental health would not do something like that but did he have some kind of a lingering or growing mental health condition like a clinical mental health condition like depression, schizophrenia, bipolar, any accompanying condition with his Asperger's....everybody that I've talked to that knew him or his mother, or had any relationship with the family, there were no incidents, as far as I know there were no repetitive police or EMS responses to the home or crisis intervention for any kind of mental health episodes.

Voket explains that his team had no play book for how to handle the Newtown shooting coverage and that they were all trying to do the best they could with what they had to go on. However, they did manage to coordinate coverage objectives around the idea of being a community resource and acting as a conduit between Newtown and the rest of the world as much of their content during the days following the shooting was structured around presenting to Newtown the thoughts and sentiments of the rest of the world.

Recommendations for the Press

Speaking as a member of the Newtown community and as a representative of the press, Voket's recommendations for the press revolve around alleviating the stress that a news media frenzy can have on a small and traumatized community. Voket was impressed by the efficiency achieved when he saw how pool reporting was utilized during a presidential visit, and how some system like that might help to reduce clutter in the community and prevent redundancies for interviewees and audiences.

There were moments where I would question, "Connecticut has an NBC affiliate so why are there 13 different affiliates from Indiana and Maine all parked with satellite trucks all over town. Why isn't NBC utilizing the Connecticut affiliate to pass their information to the rest of the network?"

As mentioned above, the news media swarm made it hard for Newtown to conduct business-as-usual, with patrons at local shops being accosted by teams of news reporters looking for exclusive angles. A centralized reporting structure could have been deployed to streamline coverage and the physical impact on the town may have been mitigated.

Certainly probably would have opened up the lanes of travel for many more well wishers and curiosity seekers.

In the days and weeks following the shooting, the *Newtown Bee* utilized its media partnerships for coverage, which helped to maximize their resources while still getting information out to their community.

When the President came to University of Hartford last week to commiserate and to bring a bunch of the surviving family members back to DC on Air Force One, we did not go to that. The visit was exclusively involving Newtown for Newtown people and we took reports from that from our state level partner, we didn't send somebody. We did have a couple of reporters who went to a couple of demonstrations at the capitol, but that was the very first posse of busses that bussed people up to the very first public political demonstration in Hartford about 12/14, we had somebody on that bus, we also had somebody embedded with a number of busloads of Newtown people who went down to DC for a demonstration, but after that, we covered it through the national or statewide media partners.

The choice to utilize their media relationships to get coverage of events pertinent to the Newtown story not only allowed the staff at the Bee to keep their local coverage but also meant one less body at events far away from home.

An Ethic-Of-Care Analysis

A number of Voket's responses would indicate that, without necessarily knowing it, he and his news team were operating from a standpoint that was informed by an ethic-of-care approach to news coverage. *The Bee* identified the community's needs and worked to hold those needs above the perceived needs of unknown news consumers:

We really quickly circled our wagons and made a conscious decision that we weren't going to be trying to go after interviews with the victims and the responders, we were going to try and facilitate the flow of information that the community was demanding internally, and needing...and that was to go to places to go and get help, how to immediately help those most affected, how they could get around, obits, funeral notices, presenting to

them in a central clearing house all of the many sentiments that were being projected through and to the *Newtown Bee* from people formerly from Newtown and even those that never even knew Newtown existed who were sending emails to our editor with thoughts and prayers and condolences and support, and we took on that role and that's the role we continue to play today.

This approach is evidence that there are numerous ways to do journalism and that the *Newtown Bee* approached the matter with a very specific community focus in mind. While Voket was witness to other news outlets chasing after victims' families and emergency personnel, the *Bee* was concerned with getting useful information out to the affected community. Personally, Voket made the choice to make reporting secondary to helping.

By 10:30 on the morning of December 14, I deactivated the hardass reporter information gatherer button, I went into community care mode, I became really motivated to help protect the community from information that might be circulating than being motivated to pump as much information, or allegations or hearsay as I could because so much of what I was getting I was getting it off the record or inside sources that I knew I had to depend on going forward for accurate on the record information so I certainly wasn't going to blow all that up on the first opportunity. It was critical for me to prove to some of the sources, that some of the stuff they were giving me early on that it wasn't going to show up somewhere by a source that wasn't authorized. It was part of protecting the sources and preserving the integrity between myself and those sources that also made it easy to fall back on this community protection from what might be a lot of harsh and half baked reporting.

Voket had access to one of the most sought-after locations in the entire Newtown shooting news landscape, the firehouse—command central for the families and emergency workers most deeply affected. What he saw and heard represented the type of material that parachute news teams were struggling to get, yet hardly any of that material was published. Voket's experience was, in a lot of ways, opposite from the aggregate news media. Where news teams were searching for anything that would give them some

sort of edge on their competition or advance the story, Voket had a glut of “newsworthy” content that he had to sift through and ended up leaving a lot of it out.

General Analysis

John Voket had the unfortunate privilege of seeing the aftermath of the Newtown shooting from the same vantage point as community members and emergency personnel. His journalistic actions resonate strongly with foundational ethics of care in that his main objective was to act as a caretaker for his community, and his editorial choices reflected his putting a priority on the community members. As opposed to other reporters who were largely catering to a non-local audience, Voket kept his community in mind through all of his interactions. Months after the shooting, Voket and his team are the ones who are telling the story of how a community rebuilds after such a horrific tragedy. By tending to his community in December, he can now trade on that trust and tell the town’s story long after the throng of news reporters have left and moved on to other issues. Voket’s conduct was governed by the principle that he was not there just to get a few exclusives but instead to offer meaningful information to the community that most needed it after the Newtown shooting.

Voket’s decisions were heavily influenced by his proximity to the people of the Newtown community. He had to evaluate his editorial role based on his ongoing relationships within the community. Non-local reporters would benefit from following an approach guided by the end of creating lasting relationships with their interviewees and audiences as opposed to the practice of going after traumatized community members for a brief encounter. This approach might yield a threefold benefit, better information being

shared by trusting sources, a better report produced by the journalist and a deeper connection between the audience and the community being reported on.

HARI SREENAVASAN

Hari has been working full-time in television news for 18 years and has served as a national correspondent for *PBS Newshour* since 2009. He was assigned to report Newtown the Monday following Friday's shooting, and spent three days reporting from the scene. His testimony is characterized by emergent themes such as market orientation, his personal approach to journalism, media commentary and recommendations for how the press should approach catastrophic events in the future, especially in terms of maximizing resources and minimizing harm.

Market Orientation

Hari explains that the *Newshour* is aware of a stratified news menu and works on providing the types of stories that their loyal audience will appreciate. They know that the breaking news and up-to-the-minute reports are going to be found elsewhere so when the *Newshour* sends a reporter to a scene it's usually not to compete on that level.

So what we were trying to do is to say how do we tell a different story about this tragedy that helps our audience understand the significance of it.

The first story they put together in Newtown was about the Sandy Hook principal and focused on why she was so loved in the community. Hari also says they were able to craft a unique story about Adam Lanza as well. The second story they produced was about a small group of Newtown residents that were already trying to make sure that the world didn't remember Newtown as solely a place of great tragedy, but as a place that

can rebuild. Again, this approach is partly informed by the fact that so many other news outlets were telling stories that the *Newshour* didn't have the resources or inclination to tell.

So the Newshour is not going to have the kinds of details of the ways the bullet went into the body, I don't know the salacious stuff you hear, that's not the kind of descriptions you're going to hear.

Hari says he was able to trade on PBS's credibility when he gathered a group of residents for a long-form group interview about the shooting.

On the one hand you have a long journalism tradition and on the other hand people associate PBS with Big Bird so it's not the first name for news, but I think that members of our audience understand that, members of our audience are clearly more educated, affluent, influential than average TV audiences, we're not talking to a audience that even World News Tonight is talking to.

Approach to Coverage

Hari says that when they produced a story on Adam Lanza, they took a different approach to the coverage by finding, and speaking to, a high school classmate that had an interesting take on the assailant. A story, he explains, that the rest of the news world wasn't getting yet. He notes that the interaction between reporter and interviewee can go a long way when you're trying to get a good story that advances the audience's understanding.

So we had like 5 minute conversations, or maybe 15 minutes, that's much more valuable to our audience because it's letting people finish their sentences, finishing their thoughts, giving it a breath. You can do a lot more substantively than you can in 90 seconds because, again, we're not layering this with tons of tragic footage and the sort of endless wheel that you have in these situations that has a tendency to repeat itself over and over again on every cable channel.

Hari criticizes other news outlets for their choices, not just in terms of Newtown, but overall. He says if he were running a broadcast news show, he wouldn't devote ten percent of it to some trivial Tiger Woods story for example. He says the work culture at PBS allows him time to get the story right, rather than pushing him to get something on the air. In one instance, Hari was interviewing a Newtown community member and at the point she started crying he had his cameraman fade the shot to black. He said this was done out of respect for the mourning woman and heard back later from audience members that they really appreciated that editorial choice.

Media Commentary

Hari explains that other TV outlets choose to show the mourning and grief because viewers won't turn away from that, but he says it also crystallizes the pain and does not help advance the audience's understanding. Furthermore, he says, when there are dozens of reporters all going for the tragic shot, it affects the community's view of the press in general.

When someone comes up to put a teddy bear at a memorial and they have 5 cameras in their faces and all of a sudden they have a very different relationship with the press.

Hari is also critical of what he sees as a waste of resources, especially when the public information officer actually presents some facts from the investigation.

I don't want to be in that scrum with 45 other microphones listening to one sheriff that's being broadcast around the world and, technically speaking, I can get that at my desk. Would I want to sit there unless I have some question that nobody else has? In most of those situations most of the information is governed by the authorities that have access to the information.

One example that Hari refers to is the Chilean miner rescue of 2010, a situation where there was one camera going into the caves, a camera that was owned and operated by the Chilean government and all of the news stations were taking feeds from that source, yet there were 50 cameras set up at the mouth of the mine to capture the drama. In his experience, the media gaggle did negatively affect the Newtown community, as “there is no gentleman’s agreement” to determine conduct, and one overly aggressive or annoying reporter can ruin the opportunity for the rest.

Recommendations

Hari’s first recommendation for how to handle this type of situation should it happen again, is to utilize technology and resources more wisely. That could be done in the form of grabbing user-generated content and surveillance footage for example. Secondly, he would have most of his team working remotely to cover the story, taking care of the investigation and making contacts. All of this, he says, should be done before sending “an armada of reporters” to the scene. He adds that what you want to do is “increase signal and decrease noise.” To do this, news directors should be thinking about multi-platform usage as well, be it print, audio, or video.

What are the levels of access that I have to this community and what mediums are most appropriate to tell the story? Text, multimedia, interactive, quizzes, live shows, audio, video a linear narrative.

On a personal level, he recommends that individual reporters should revisit the Golden Rule.

What if this was your family and a reporter approached you? Approach these people with the same decency and courtesy, don't be so dispassionate that you forget your humanity in the process of getting this story because no story is going to be worth your integrity over time, and

also the pace and urgency to see some of these profoundly dumb errors, and errors in judgment not just errors in fact.

He is referring to some of the errors like the press naming the wrong person as the shooter, or publishing that there were two shooters etc. He says he doesn't remember which outlet broke the shooting first, or which one had the Boston bombing first either, what he remembers are the mistakes that were made in the rush to be first.

Personal Impacts

Although it is a reporter's job to not get overly affected by the story, Hari indicates that, over time, the tragic stories affect him:

I don't like doing those stories partly because it's personally emotionally draining, not like the victims' suffering, but it's really dark and after you've been to a few of these kinds of stories and you surround yourself with this kind of grief, it is absolutely palpable. You can touch the negative energy in the air, and it's not good to be around, I was there post Katrina, it was disastrous, tornadoes and whatever, there is a sad aura. When you go and encounter those people, there's a little bit of it that sticks with you and over time the longer you do that either you have to give up and stop doing this type of story, or, and what I think is worse, you become immune to it, and you just got to one after another after another and you dehumanize yourself in the process to be able to cover this stuff. Because you don't wanna go home to your hotel room and just feel like crap, not to take away from the grief people are feeling.

Analysis

Hari's testimony is unique among the interviewees in this study in that his news outlet represents a national audience yet his coverage choices are governed by offering content that is not being offered by commercial news operations. In other words, he has to be aware of what else is being broadcast before he makes his own choices for coverage. Hari criticizes the news media behavior's at Newtown for their waste of resources, human and technological. By leveraging resources more effectively, the ethic-

of-care approach could be operationalized while still allowing news outlets to get pertinent information to their audiences. For example, by taking general news feeds from the press conferences, there would have been less of a press presence in the town center, which could help the townspeople, many of whom were offended by the massive media presence. Furthermore, Hari indicates that there is no “code” among reporters on scene and the overly aggressive behavior of one ambitious reporter hurts the ability of other reporters to get access to sources. Lastly, Hari’s experience demonstrated what happens when a reporter has ample time to tell a story. It allowed him to interview community members for longer stretches and to be selective about his content choices. The *Newshour* approach to story development, when compared with Hari’s perception of other news outlets, appears to line up with ethic-of-care in that interviewees are given more time to talk, and are not necessarily being pressured to say something really compelling in just a minute or two.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

AGGREGATE ANALYSIS AND FORMULATION OF THEORY

In this section I will discuss the convergent topics from the data as well as put forward a theory that addresses the thematic categories. The open coding process yielded more than 50 initial codes, which were then collapsed into 16 focused codes. Those 16 codes were then evaluated and produced five thematic categories; structure versus instinct, location governing content, mistake-prone environment, content outcomes and resources and protocol. Each one of these thematic categories represents numerous initial and focused codes and will be explicated below. I then propose, and outline reasons for, the “Lord of the Flies Theory” as a new conceptual framework that encapsulates the journalists’ experiences and the data they contributed. Lastly this section will evaluate the data in light of care ethics including critique and recommendations.

Structure Versus Instinct

This thematic category focuses on the individual actors and their preparation for covering the Newtown assignment and the personal aftermath of the experience(s). Each of the participants, except for Jenn Smith who came into a highly organized and well-staffed newsroom, explains that they didn’t have a lot of guidance going into the coverage. In fact, many participants basically arrived on scene and just started reporting what they saw. Jacky Smith explains that the *News Times* had to get to the scene and figure it out when they got there.

You don't have the time to get everyone together and say "Okay, here's what we're facing," we didn't know what we were facing at first, you just go out there and get it and then as the story evolves you respond to it.

This leaves the reporters without the structural support they might have in other scenarios like a press conference or an investigative report where there is more of a predictable pattern to follow and a body of standing knowledge prior to the event or interview. Without the structural support, the individual reporters are largely left to work from instinct. Brian Burnell, speaking to a point all of the reporters I interviewed explained, says it's about the day-to-day training:

We don't prepare to cover people flying planes into buildings or someone shooting up a school, but you prepare to cover the news you do what you do everyday, to some extent we're doing the same everyday not on the scale like this but we're always out there trying to get information make sure that it's accurate, trying to be sensitive to the people we're talking to. And I think we try to do that in any situation we're in and this one doesn't change because it was such a big event.

Furthermore, the reporters I interviewed said that they were also largely governed by their anecdotal experiences to help them navigate Newtown coverage. Hari Sreenivasan and CT TV 1 both covered Hurricane Katrina, Burnell covered 9/11, Jenn Smith covered a shooting at Simon's Rock College. These experiences, they say, helped to structure their performance as reporters when it came to such areas as remaining calm, approaching interviewees and creating content for print or broadcast. They even drew on experiences from their lives from outside of their professional backgrounds; Burnell consulted with his girlfriend about using Adam Lanza's name, Jenn Smith draws guidance from her roommate, who does social work, about talking with families after a tragic event.

With little in the way of structural support, and the reporters often having to rely on personal instinct and anecdotal experience, it comes as no surprise that covering the Newtown shooting would have deep impacts on the participants. Hari Sreenivasan indicates that he doesn't like having to cover these stories because of how bad he feels afterward. Jacky Smith and John Voket are left covering Newtown going forward and the fall out is a recurring topic of their coverage. CT TV 1 says he wouldn't want to go back and do it again. Jenn Smith had recurrent experiences that hit her especially hard in light of the event. And Brian Burnell couldn't help but think of his own children while he was on scene covering the shooting. These reporters will most likely refer to Newtown as one of those events that shaped them as people and as reporters in subsequent events.

Location Governing Content

This thematic category represents the summary of two distinct focused categories, local and non-local. What emerges from the data is that the participants geared their content toward their geographically-defined audiences, whether that be a metropolitan Connecticut city, PBS viewers nationwide, the New England region, Northwestern Connecticut, or Newtown itself. Additionally, the aggregate data suggest that the participants felt that all of the news workers were there to generate content for their local audiences. Half of the participants in this study identify themselves as local to Newtown, Brian Burnell, John Voket and Jacky Smith, while the other three are either regional or national. CT TV 1 was floored when he saw a news van from Houston, Texas, show up the Sunday following the shooting.

And it wasn't about what they were going to report, I realized at that point it was about having your people at the station, because it is going to generate eyeballs or clicks or increase the yield rating of your newspaper.

CT TV 1 also had to generate story ideas that resonated with viewers back in his home area. For example, he was instructed to create a story around a person from the city he works out of who was one of the adult victims in Newtown. John Voket also had to take some time to understand just what so many out-of-towners were doing there in Newtown.

They were only there literally because of the blood in the water... Once they proved to their audience that they had somebody there and tried to localize the trauma for their own audience then they were gonna get reeled back in from their own local place.

The same was true for Voket, who, acting as a local Newtown reporter, had to report on his community and make content choices accordingly. In contrast to all of the other news workers in this study, he chose not to pursue interviews with the grieving family members because he would be accountable for those choices down the road. He wanted to maintain the trust and respect of the community to protect them as well as preserve the viability of the *Newtown Bee*. Hari Sreenivasan acknowledges the advantages that the local news folks have over those that are parachuted in.

In almost every scenario that I've ever parachuted into the local press has a mile long lead ahead of you, because it's their students that are playing soccer in class with these students or it might be their own kids that were hurt.

Sreenivasan also points out that there is an apparent conflict for local news people because they are torn between covering their community while also having to protect it, and that conflict can create a tension in the content.

This section puts a light on one of the main tensions inherent in the Newtown coverage, in which you have hundreds and hundreds of news people, all working to find a story for their community, but there are only so many people in the community. What this creates, for example, is a situation in which residents and family members of the victims are being interviewed, or at least hailed to talk, repeatedly. The next section will explore some of the errors that happened in the Newtown coverage.

An Environment Prone to Mistakes

This thematic category represents five convergent, interrelated, focused categories including unconfirmed reports, speculation, media behavior, talking to families and competition. Building on the previous two sections, when you have a reporter that is equipped mainly with instinct and anecdotal experience assigned to generate content for their specific geographic audience, and do that job better than the hundreds of people trying to do the same thing against a plethora of unconfirmed reports and rumors, you have a setting ripe for mistakes. Those mistakes include disservices to the townspeople in the form of pursuing reluctant community members for interviews, as well as disservices to audiences in the form of reporting falsities and breaching a trust by rushing to report.

Four out of six of the interviewees had the experience of trying to cover the Newtown shooting amid numerous conflicting reports. The two exceptions were Jenn Smith, who had clear assignments from a central news desk, and Hari Sreenivasan, who did not get to Newtown until the Monday following Friday's shooting. CT TV 1 and Brian Burnell both admitted to airing erroneous information because they were under the gun to go to air with something. They were measured in their reports and would offer

addenda to the information saying that the information was unconfirmed, or something to that effect. However, CT TV 1 explained that he was, at times, riddled with doubt as to his role as a newsperson, and he reluctantly went to broadcast with live hits that were based on speculation. This was especially the case in the first 24 hours following the shooting while reporters were awaiting the first official press conference that Saturday. Until that time, the story evolved from completely wrong to half-wrong, and eventually to having confirmed reports about the shooter, his name, the victim count and the focus of the police investigation.

For two hours, the shooter was being identified as Ryan Lanza, who was quickly pursued and threatened by people through Facebook, to the point that he had to take down his Facebook page. There was also a period of time when there were unconfirmed reports of two shooters which had news teams driving all over the area trying to catch the police apprehending a suspect. CT TV 1 and Burnell, who both work for commercial broadcast news outlets, admit that it's largely the competitive nature of the news profession that forces reporters to go to air with half-truths. CT TV 1 speaks to the competition and how it tends to manipulate content.

As soon as these things happen you gotta be first to tell it and there's gonna be a hash tag that trends and ultimately you wanna be a part of it, it's sickening.

Jenn Smith and Brian Burnell concur with CT TV 1's opinion about the ferocious news cycle and the impulse to stay ahead of the other outlets. Sreenivasan harshly criticizes the news outfits that are willing to publish unconfirmed reports.

That's my job, I should have not have to say "We have unconfirmed reports" what the hell does that mean? What am I paying you for? Why am I watching you? An unconfirmed report that people have landed from

another planet on the Burnside Bridge, OK, someone has to verify that in real time.

The publishing of unconfirmed reports and speculative reporting, while serving no real benefit to the audiences, also came at a cost to the community of Newtown. Every participant in this study had some impression, whether real or perceived, about the way the news media tends to behave and how it could have turned the community off. From Jenn Smith who recounts the *Register* editor reminding front line reporters not to steal pictures off people's mantles to Jacky Smith who attests that the town of Newtown folded in on itself because of the media swarms. John Voket noticed that local businesses and their patrons didn't come around for several days because the news media was either blocking up thoroughfares or trying to interview every hapless resident they could convince to give a statement. Sreenivasan said that, after a day or two, the people walking around Sandy Hook and Newtown weren't even community members but "looky-loos" and "grief pilgrims." Brian Burnell said that a month after the shooting he was assigned to do a follow-up piece in Newtown and even then the community was not happy to have the news presence there.

And a woman pulled up to me in a minivan and said, "Look, I'm a teacher at Sandy Hook, I live in this town, and why don't you get out of here, why don't you leave." And I said "Look I understand we are the locals," and I told her what I tried to tell you, locals are trying to be good and understanding and the national and international crews were over the top but you have to understand the reason is because you cannot let these children and these adults pass anonymously.

So the inconvenience to the community is outweighed by the need to be there and report back to local audiences. Jacky Smith, Jenn Smith and CT TV 1 concur with Burnell's main point in this passage, that the news media had to be there to put faces and stories with the names, to make sure that their audiences knew who these victims were

and to embolden the audience to take action as members of a democratic nation to work toward preventing this type of event in the future. In the next section this study will explore the content outcomes as expressed by the interviewees.

Outcomes

This section is not positioned around measuring societal outcomes but more around measuring news worker product outcomes, mainly in the form of the content they ended up broadcasting or printing. This thematic category is built on two separate but related focused categories—tributes and profiles and policy change. What we find in this section is the effort, on behalf of the participants, to use their positions in the news media to actively affect social change or to at least drive understanding forward. What emerges is a conflict with the positioning of the audience between them being consumers and them being citizens. One is empowered to affect political systems while the other is a passive recipient of information.

Jenn Smith says pretty much the whole staff at the *New Haven Register* was assigned, in some way, to start generating profile pieces on the victims.

I say we as a blanket statement like we tried to push out and get everything out all at once, like you needed that many reporters down there because I think if you were really going to go with this idea of bringing the stories home on every single person who was affected, one person couldn't do it alone, it would be impossible.

Brian Burnell took the same approach, by talking about the victims, putting together profiles about who they were, memorializing them. This was the way to make sure they were not forgotten. Jacky Smith had launched her whole newsroom around the same purpose.

For me it was the focus and the goal was to compile the profiles of all 26 victims, 27 actually if you include Nancy Lanza, and to get something out of each person and having it in the paper. And this was over two days and I mentioned the obstacles to doing that but my single focus was doing that and I felt very fervently people need to understand these individual lives, it's something to each child, each educator, some detail that touched the heart.

CT TV 1 was actually assigned to do a story on one of the children, Daniel Barden, who had also been profiled by Jenn Smith and Jacky Smith's team. CT TV 1 says that there's a hope that the story galvanizes some sort of social change.

Another situation whose kid was killed and the dad was a guitar player and the kid was the drummer of the family and you were there and emotions were on during a story hoping that these things don't happen again and I think that ultimately speaks to some potential good one could only hope in doing this. And you are cast with telling this story and you have these people telling their story to help you tell the story, and maybe it will speak to something but you never know.

CT TV 1 explains that the profile pieces on the shooter, Adam Lanza, could also possibly foster some political action, whether mental health improvements or gun control laws or school security. In fact, the day CT TV 1 and I spoke, he had just finished reporting on an omnibus package in the Connecticut legislature covering those three issues. Brian Burnell, although he wanted to tell the stories of the people affected by the shooting, cautions against the public's rush to enact legislation.

There's a part of me that feels, as much as I'm not a gun guy, that we are reacting to an event and making laws based on that.

John Voket and Hari Sreenivasan both chose not to pursue talking to victims' families and instead tended to focus their efforts on community happenings. Sreenivasan says that trying to investigate Adam Lanza and come out with something substantial after just a couple of days is futile.

I think collectively the question gets asked by the press so much because as humans we have no way to answer that. So it's easy to fall back into that question because there is no answer for it so anything you say it could be an answer.

Brian Burnell points out the conflict between airing the shooter profile for the sake of preventing the next one and trying to bring in ratings.

Don't we need to find out what happened with Adam Lanza in order to do this unthinkable thing? To prevent it from happening again? So that's the value of it. But from our point of view in terms of a ratings grabber, if you get the next Charlie Manson and put him in front of your cameras and do a 30 minute documentary you're gonna get some numbers, that's the sexy aspect of it.

While there were numerous news narratives being reported on ranging from the police investigation to the outpouring of support from outside communities, this study has found that most of the participants focused their energies on creating profiles about the shooter and the victims. While there seem to be conflicting ends in mind with what happens with the content once it goes out to the world, the one constant that the reporters who conducted profile reporting agreed on is that the profiles were a way to humanize the individuals involved rather than just letting them become part of a body count. In the next section, this study explores some of the recommendations from the participants as to how to make this type of reporting better should something like the Newtown shooting happen again.

Resources and Protocol

This section aggregates the several ideas that the participants put forward as methods for improving the way that the news media handle events like Newtown. It is important to note that Jenn Smith and Jacky Smith, who worked the event from offices outside of Newtown, really had no criticisms concerning the media response to Newtown.

Jacky Smith advocates for more journalists present and for the police to not be so guarded with their responses to media. Jenn Smith, while she didn't have any critiques for the news media, does say that the way Digital First Media handled the reportage was ideal and should be replicated based on the efficiency and compassion she witnessed in their newsroom. CT TV 1 cynically states that the whole process will only get worse because of the highly competitive nature of the profession. The other three participants seem to be in accord in recommending some way of limiting the number of reporters on scene, maximizing resources and relationships to gain access to information, taking more time to get stories together, and implementing some sort of code concerning decorum for reporters.

From news teams clogging up roadways to grieving family members feeling invaded by the news media's presence, the erroneous reports that were floated as facts to the redundancy of published material, the participants in this study all concur that there were too many people trying to do the same thing. Brian Burnell says that the way to handle this going forward is for his team to work their relationships in the community as well as in neighboring communities in which the police departments might be easier to access rather than try to get substantive material by just driving around town. He says that they might have been better served by increasing news staff back at the main office where producers and reporters could get on the phone and nail down facts before going to air with unconfirmed reports. Hari Sreenivasan points out the massive waste of resources it took to send reporters to an alien town when a large portion of the material they got could have been aggregated from a news desk back in their respective hometowns. John Voket was impressed by the use of pool reporting and centralized feeds he saw when the

president came to visit Newtown. Based on the data in this study, the aggregate recommendation would be to create a market-based content sharing system, and to limit the amount of network redundancies. For example, numerous NBC affiliates don't all have to be present at the event when there is already a team there. Additionally, the press conferences could be broadcast from one camera and picked up by news stations around the world. Limiting the amount of on-scene news teams and increasing the use of back office resources could help to deliver better reporting to audiences while minimizing the impact on the grieving community. Jenn Smith's experience, working from inside the newsroom and having the support of her management to not have to rush her reports out, is a clear example of one news outlet opting to maximize back office resources, and Jenn attests that the experience was as close to ideal as possible.

The next area of concern is *decorum* or behavior in keeping with good taste and propriety. The main takeaway from the data is that reporters should not be talking to families, at least not before they are ready. The real-world expectation of reporters, mainly prompted by the central news desk, is that they will approach the families for comment. Jacky Smith admits that the family members are in anguish and that pursuing interviews with them could cause more anguish. Brian Burnell and CT TV 1 didn't want to talk to the families in the immediate aftermath but felt that they had to keep pace with other news outlets. Hari Sreenivasan chose not to go after mourning family members because, in his opinion, it didn't help advance his audience's understanding. John Voket talked to family members but didn't publish their statements because he knew they were talking to him in confidence. All of the reporters acknowledge that one reporter who takes an interview too far, or acts too aggressively, can ruin the environment for the rest.

So, although there are hundreds of reporters on the scene, each with their own history and personal approach, they are painted with a broad brush by the actions of one. Waiting to talk with families until they are ready could not only help to minimize the impact of news teams on the community but could also yield better information. Brian Burnell says that had they waited a few days or longer to interview family members, they would have been able to get more of an understanding about how the investigation played out, how well the police communicated updates to families and community members. Similar to the previous recommendation of utilizing central reporting and back office resources, this recommendation would have served two purposes, minimizing harm to grieving people and providing more substantive information to audiences.

Lord Of The Flies Theory

Based on my interpretation of the data, the parallels between the Newtown coverage experiences, as reported by the participants in this study, and *The Lord of the Flies*, are powerful enough to use the Nobel-prize winning story as the basis of a grounded theory for this inquiry. *Lord of the Flies* tells the story of a group of school-aged boys who were being evacuated from WWII London when their airplane was shot down, leaving them marooned on a tropical island to fend for themselves. In the early days, the boys were civil and acted to maintain order. They even held a democratic election picking Ralph as their leader. However, after a short time, Ralph's adversary, Jack, was able to convince most of the boys to give into savagery and animalism by going out on dangerous hunting parties. The boys developed their own mythology on the

island, convincing themselves that there was some sort of beast there, a beast that demanded sacrifices from the young castaways. The boys who ended up going over to Jack's side all had the moral choice available to maintain order and civility or to give into animalistic desires. By the end, Jack and his horde decided to kill Ralph and chased him all over the island and eventually lit the forest on fire to smoke Ralph out. In spite of Ralph and his loyal few keeping a signal fire lit on a hilltop during their time there, it was the massive jungle fire that attracted the British Navy and led to their rescue. At the end, all of the boys who were left were remorseful about the way things happened.

Similar to the *Lord of the Flies* scenario, the reporters whom I interviewed were cast into a foreign and chaotic landscape, geographically, situational, or both. The reporters, save for one, really didn't have a playbook or structure to follow and were left working from anecdotal experience and instinct. The participants had to make sure they were staying ahead of the competition while trying to maintain some sort of decorum. Each of the reporters was morally challenged when trying to decide how to approach grieving community members and how to handle that interaction/content. Some were compelled to violate their own moral codes in order to remain relevant in the Newtown coverage, while others chose to focus their reporting on other areas that they thought were more important. What the boys on the island lost, and what most of the reporters I spoke with would like, is a code to go by, not just a personal code of morals but a code of decorum that all reporters would follow in events like the Newtown shooting coverage. The jungle fire is the strongest allegory in the story because had it not been set, the rescue would not have happened. The false reports that went out to the world and the invasion into the grieving community are like the jungle fire that points me, as a researcher, to take

a deep and comprehensive look at the coverage to find out what happened and why. While the analysis in this inquiry bears strong similarities to *Lord of the Flies*, this is not to suggest that the story is a mirror image of the reporters' experiences. The reference is being employed as an explanatory tool to describe the scenario that reporters encounter when charged with covering traumatizing events.

The Lord of the Flies Theory posits that when news workers are faced with covering human tragedy of a mass proportion (natural disasters, school shootings, terrorists acts) without structured and measured institutional support, there is a tendency to regress to a sort of primal state. Within this state, the focus often becomes one of competition, and winning at all costs, which can dull the desire to seek truth and minimize harm. This theory should serve as a reference point when investigating other news events in which there existed a volatile and fast-breaking story, a flurry of unconfirmed reports, and moral dilemmas for the reporters. Most of the reporters I interviewed for this study were later assigned to cover the Boston Marathon Bombings, during which conditions for the reporters held many similarities to those conditions they experienced in Newtown.

ETHIC-OF-CARE ADOPTION

In the previous sections, I presented the six individual reporters' experiences regarding their roles in covering the Newtown shooting. The summaries cover the capacities in which the reporters were employed, the type of reporting they performed, their own personal moral dilemmas and opinions about the state of journalism in the context of Newtown coverage. This section will bring forward the ideas proposed in the

literature review, as well as those points relevant within the interview data, concerning the practical application of care ethics to the Newtown news coverage and will suggest that these findings could be applied to future events of similar magnitude and trauma. The following paragraphs will each identify a core principle of care ethics and compare the precept with my analytical interpretation of the interview data.

As established in the literature review and relevant theoretical section, the ethic-of-care focuses on the particular wants and needs of people, and claims that the particular wants and needs supersede the notion of universal rights in its application. This foundational principle was compromised in certain respects when the reporters that I interviewed, or ones that they observed, chose to prioritize the audience's right to know over the particular needs of grieving family and community members. One example would be Jacky Smith explaining that she hopes the community in anguish understands the press's role in pursuing interviews against the wishes of the families and community members. However, the *Connecticut News Times* was not an outlier concerning this practice as evidenced by the police presence at family members' homes to protect them from media invasiveness. What I interpret from this scenario is a lopsided need balancing, or a scenario in which the universal right-to-know takes precedence over the particular need to grieve or at least retain privacy.

Another end for ethic-of-care is the fostering of deeper connections between people. The news media can play a crucial role in this process by publishing content from one locale to audiences across the globe, creating channels of information and sympathy that otherwise would be inert or nonexistent. Every journalist I spoke with held this goal as one of their own ends. Some were assigned to create profiles of the victims so the

world would know the individual(s) as more than a statistic but as a human person, while others concentrated on how the community sought to heal. In either approach, the intent was to foster connections between the family and community members and the rest of the world. There are a number of dangers associated with this goal however, ranging from the news media's tendency to fixate on grief stories while foregoing other content, to alienating those community members whom the reporter is trying to interview.

Hari Sreenivasan opted to focus his coverage on the community's efforts to heal, a choice informed by speaking with community members to find out how they would like the story to be told. John Voket opted not to publish some of the most grievous things he was privy to seeing or hearing and instead chose to run material that would be helpful to those people living in Newtown, as opposed to gearing his content to a non-local audience. Brian Burnell approached his interviewees without a camera or a microphone in order to create a personal connection with them before asking for a recorded interview. Daniel Barden's father made sure to thank Jenn Smith for her tact and respect when she emailed a request for a statement from the family. This demonstrates that it is certainly possible to approach a very sensitive situation with a heightened sensitivity to people's needs and still deliver meaningful content. Based on the data in this study, the intent to foster deeper connections between people, in this case between the grieving Newtown community and the rest of the world, was the most prevalent ethic expressed by the interviewees and most closely resonates with the recommendations from care ethicists.

The third piece of the ethic-of-care analysis focuses on identifying the moral claimants with respect to maximizing truth and minimizing harm. In identifying moral claimants, a journalist has to weigh the needs of numerous, and often incompatible,

claimants. The newsroom, the audience, the interviewees and the community all have to be taken into account. In a circumstance like Newtown, it would be inappropriate to treat the coverage the same way a journalist would seek to investigate a political scandal or cover a light-hearted feature piece. The reporter has to decide who has moral claims on content and to what degree they can assert those claims. In the case of this study, an ethic-of-care approach would place the victims and their families as primary claimants because they were the ones who had experienced the events most closely, and would most likely have needs that took precedence over others more tangentially affected. Second would be the school community who were also deeply affected by the shooting. Third would be the township and greater community. After that, non-local audiences could be considered as moral claimants, but their needs would also have to be determined by degree, and that factoring would have to weigh what information would best serve the non-local audience given the availability and willingness of those moral claimants whose needs are primary, secondary or tertiary, for example. In practice, what this means is that soliciting conversations with traumatized family members, in the immediate aftermath of the shooting, would be placing the information wants of the audience over the immediate and particular needs of the subjects. In another example, accosting community members at grocery stores would again be placing the perceived wants of the non-local audience over the particular needs, like privacy, of the community members.

All six of the interviewees in this study embodied core elements of care ethics such as meeting needs, fostering connections and minimizing harm, but it would follow that because of professional norms or constraints, they were not able to fully execute their own value systems. To conclude this ethic-of-care approach section, the needs of the

journalist(s) have to be considered in the conversation. Locating the journalist as a conduit between differing groups is in fact impoverishing that journalist's own humanity. CT TV 1 says that he had real doubts as to what he was actually doing on scene in Newtown and says he wouldn't go back if he had his druthers. Brian Burnell hated having to approach the families of Newtown shooting victims, but felt that he had to in order to stay on top of the evolving story. What we have here are numerous conflicts taking place within the moral selves of the reporters, where they are performing the task of working against their own personal convictions for the sake of the news product. In the circumstance of this study, because it focuses on the actions, experiences and reflections of a group of reporters who covered the Newtown shooting, the most important step toward implementing an ethic-of-care approach would be to give these reporters the institutional support to assess and meet their own moral needs. This ethic-of-care approach could improve the experience for all of the moral claimants in the following example: the journalist not feeling compelled to speak with a grieving family or to publish an unconfirmed report, could find a more novel way to get information that would increase understanding for the audience while simultaneously helping to distinguish that reporter's brand from the rest of the news media. This summary example is derived from the lived experiences of the reporters who contributed to this study and speaks to a real-world dilemma faced during the reportage on the Newtown shooting.

In this section, the key concepts of care ethics were elucidated and paired with those experiences as retold by the reporters who participated in the inquiry. If Newtown had been approached from a care ethic perspective, a thorough analysis of the moral claimants and their needs would had to have been executed with the end of maximizing

truth, minimizing harm and fostering deeper connections between groups and individuals.

From a newsroom perspective, this practice would necessitate ascertaining the needs of the journalists, family and community members and the respective audiences in order to determine and implement an authentic care-informed strategy to the coverage. While certain elements of care were executed in the coverage, this analysis indicates several areas where the care ethic approach could be implemented for the dual purpose of maximizing truth (audience experience) and minimizing harm (community experience).

Applying the ethic-of-care approach to real-world journalism will be challenging for two main reasons, training and autonomy. For reporters to be able to execute any type of new ethical approaches to coverage, they would have to be trained on the mechanics of the system(s). The reporters with whom I spoke were operating from their own personal systems, which at times, tended to converge with the ethic-of-care. Formalized training would give a clearer blueprint for governing action in a real-world setting. Secondly, reporters often have to place their own moral inclinations as secondary to the objectives of their management. Further study will be necessary in order to determine a professional balance, which puts more editorial decision-making authority in the hands of the on-scene reporters. Ideally, for those newsrooms that choose to employ new ethical approaches to certain coverage environments, reporters would have structured ethical training combined with the autonomy to execute those approaches. Thus making the adoption of care ethics a practical and useful technique.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This thesis inquiry sought to explore the experiences of news reporters who covered one of the most horrific events that has ever befallen the United States, and to draw from that information a composite analysis that would allow me to first, hermeneutically evaluate the data on its own and secondly, to consider the data in light of the ethic-of-care. This effort was to determine whether it would be possible to apply the ethic-of-care to news coverage by focusing on the news media's response to the Newtown shooting. The findings indicate both a series of recommendations that could have improved the Newtown coverage and a separate but related series of recommendations as to how the ethic-of-care could have been applied to the coverage. The results indicate that the news media, based on the responses of the journalism professionals I interviewed, did not have the appropriate apparatus for handling the coverage of Newtown, and would suggest that the news media won't have the apparatus next time a tragedy of that severity strikes. The findings of this study are presented through a normative and universal application, however in reality the ethic-of-care adoption should be understood as a treatment for those journalists and newsrooms who find that the adoption can add value to their individual product(s).

The aggregate analysis section shows that reporters who worked Newtown immediately following the shooting did not have any sort of context-specific training or direction going into the coverage; therefore, journalists were left reporting hearsay and rumors as the only way to meet print or broadcast deadlines. At the same time, the impact

on the community was largely negative with news teams clogging up main thoroughfares and generally invading a grieving community. Most of the reporters with whom I spoke were remorseful over the impacts the news media had on the town, but were also compelled to follow the herd in order to remain viable. The reporters called for more resources deployed within newsrooms for investigating the numerous story lines coming out of Newtown rather than trying to get substantial information from people that just happened to be around the city center. The reporters all had to struggle with their personal moral quandaries during their assignments, from publishing half-truths or hearsay to invading the personal spaces of grieving families and community members. I suggested a number of improvements that would work to alleviate these issues: a concrete strategy for coverage crafted in the newsroom before sending a reporter, or team of reporters to the scene; a relaxed deadline that would lessen the pressure for reporters to publish hearsay; a code for all reporters to not go after victims' families until they are truly ready to talk with the media; and lastly, maximizing the usage of technology to limit the amount of reporters that have to be on scene. Again, these recommendations would help alleviate the two main issues involved in the Newtown coverage, invading the town and publishing falsities, while still making sure to get a quality news product out to the respective audiences.

The ethic-of-care approach section further analyzed the aggregated data and found areas where care-based principles could be applied. The main areas for improvement are as follows: ascertaining the particular needs of all of the moral claimants including journalists, families, residents and audience(s) and then determining how those needs can be met with the ends-in-mind of maximizing truth, minimizing harm and fostering deeper

connections between people and communities. Similar to the aggregate analysis recommendations, the ethic-of-care recommendations place precedence on the needs of individuals while continuing to keep a focus on creating a meaningful and engaging news product. Future studies will complement this study by bringing forward methods for training journalists on the ethic-of-care approach and its real-world application(s), including guidelines for its execution and the benefits available to the reporters that choose to utilize the model.

This study is significant because it builds on the prior work of journalism and communication scholars like John Dewey, Walter Lippmann, Gaye Tuchman, and Clifford Christians who emphasized the value of talking about journalism with journalists in order to arrive at practical solutions for issues surrounding the practice. Furthermore, the study adhered to the guidelines as set forth by grounded theory in that it focused on the data to arrive at a descriptive theory in order to explain the data based on my interpretation. The ethic-of-care approach was not fully explored until the data had been processed through the constant comparison method. This work adds to the ethic-of-care for journalism framework because it looks to find commonalities among journalists who work for differing news outlets and media that all experienced the same event. The contribution of this work for the ethic-of-care is that it finds application and room for cultivation across work environments. Additionally, because the Newtown shooting was so recent, this work will hopefully engender a conversation about future tragic event coverage because the material is still fresh and culturally relevant.

Although this thesis is significant, in part because of its reach, the breadth of the work is also one of its fundamental limitations. Coordinating six different interviews with

reporters 3000 miles away was a logistical headache when figuring in varying work schedules and time commitments. Thematically, the thesis was limited, at certain points, by trying to find convergent themes in such a varied data set. Also, the line of questioning that looked at how the individual journalists interacted with, or perceived the behavior of, other journalists was not very fruitful, and those points could have been summed up by asking for them to give commentary on general news media behavior. The study could have been better executed in a number of ways: surveying a team of workers from one news outlet in a roundtable discussion setting could have cultivated more spin-off conversations around the issue; and focusing on one medium would have further elucidated the issues specific to that medium rather than approaching the issue with such a broad brush.

One of the main purposes of this study was to cultivate a body of work that would lead to future scholarship in the area of trauma journalism. This study points toward a gap in knowledge around best practices for journalism when handling mass shootings. Because all of my participants were working from anecdotal knowledge and instinct to structure their reportage, it would seem fitting that one future body of scholarship could help construct a curriculum that focuses on equipping reporters with another set of skills specific to events like the Newtown shooting. In another direction, scholarship on the impulsive nature of the news profession around events like Newtown would be fitting as this study demonstrated numerous times how the competitive drive compelled journalists to act against their better nature creating a product that, at times, misinformed audiences and alienated community members. Instead of accepting this reactive and overly urgent news gathering technique as just part of the business, based on the data in this study, it

would appear that there might be room to slow the whole process down and still achieve the desired outcomes in the form of good content.

REFERENCES CITED

- Anderson Cooper at Mary Landrieu over Katrina*, 2006.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KsuRCXiYGO4&feature=youtube_gdata_player.
- Ashburn, Lauren. "There's No Crying in Journalism—Even After the Horrifying Connecticut School Shootings." *The Daily Beast*, December 16, 2012.
<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/12/16/there-s-no-crying-in-journalism-even-after-the-horrifying-connecticut-school-shootings.html>.
- Banaszynski, Jacqui. "Conflicting Loyalties and Personal Choices." In *Journalism Ethics: A Philosophical Approach*, 247. Oxford New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Beast, The Daily. "Daily Beast Debate: Should the Media Leave Grieving Newtown Alone?" *The Daily Beast*, December 20, 2012.
<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/12/20/daily-beast-debate-should-the-media-leave-grieving-newtown-alone.html?account=thedailybeast&medium=twitter>.
- Brown, Cindy. "Grounded Moral Theory: A Feminist Way of Doing (Media) Ethics." Baltimore, MD: AEJMC, 1998. <http://list.msu.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A3=ind9812b&L=AEJMC&E=7BIT&P=2903685&B=--&T=TEXT%2FPLAIN;%20charset=US-ASCII>.
- Christians, Clifford. "The Ethics Of Privacy." In *Journalism Ethics: A Philosophical Approach*, 210. Oxford New York: Oxford University Press, n.d.
- Christians, Clifford G., John P. Ferré, and P. Mark Fackler. *Good News: Social Ethics and the Press*. Oxford University Press, USA, 1993.
- "Covering the Massacre in Newtown: Firsthand View of Tragedy - Berkshire Eagle Online." Accessed February 1, 2013.
http://www.berkshireeagle.com/theaterreviews/ci_22288003.
- Craig, D. A., and J. P. Ferré. "Agape as an Ethic-of-care for Journalism." *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 21, no. 2–3 (2006): 123–140.
- Czitrom, Daniel J. *Media and the American Mind: From Morse to McLuhan*. 2nd Prn Jan 1983. The University of North Carolina Press, 1983.

- Dewey, John. *The Public and Its Problems*,. New York: H. Holt and Company, 1927.
- Entman, Robert M. *Democracy Without Citizens: Media and the Decay of American Politics*. Oxford University Press, USA, 1990.
- “Getting Sandy Hook So Wrong.” Accessed February 4, 2013.
<http://www.buzzfeed.com/nowthisnews/getting-sandy-hook-all-wrong-749g>.
- Ghetti, M. W. “The Terrorist Is a Star!: Regulating Media Coverage of Publicity-seeking Crimes.” *Federal Communications Law Journal* 60, no. 481 (2008).
http://works.bepress.com/michelle_ghetti/1/.
- Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development*. Harvard University Press, 1982.
- Glaser, Barney G. “The Constant Comparative Method of Qualitative Analysis.” *Social Problems* (1965): 436–445.
- Goldenberg, Jamie L., Tom Pyszczynski, Kern D. Johnson, Jeff Greenberg, and Sheldon Solomon. “The Appeal of Tragedy: A Terror Management Perspective.” *Media Psychology* 1, no. 4 (December 1999): 313.
- Gonzales, David. “Quietly Finding Haiti’s Audacious Beauty.” *Lens Blog*. Accessed March 11, 2013. <http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/05/25/quietly-finding-haitis-audacious-beauty/>.
- “How The Newtown Bee Is Covering Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting | Poynter.” Accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.poynter.org/latest-news/top-stories/198433/how-the-newtown-bee-is-covering-community-school-shooting/>.
- “If Suspect Jared Lee Loughner Has Schizophrenia, Would That Make Him More Likely to Go on a Shooting Spree in Arizona? - Slate Magazine.” Accessed February 4, 2013.
http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/science/2011/01/crazy_talk.html.
- Kitch, C. “‘Mourning in America’: Ritual, Redemption, and Recovery in News Narrative after September 11.” *Journalism Studies* 4, no. 2 (2003): 213–224.
- Knowlton, Steven R. *Moral Reasoning for Journalists: Cases and Commentary*. Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1997.
- Koch, Tom. *The News as Myth: Fact and Context in Journalism*. Contributions to the Study of Mass Media and Communications no. 17. New York: Greenwood Press, 1990.

- Kolenic, A. J. "Madness in the Making: Creating and Denying Narratives from Virginia Tech to Gotham City." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 42, no. 6 (2009): 1023–1039.
- Lau, R. W. K. "Re-theorizing News' Construction of Reality: A Realistic-discourse-theoretic Approach." *Journalism* (2012).
<http://jou.sagepub.com/content/early/2012/01/09/1464884911432660.abstract>.
- Lippmann, Walter. *Public Opinion*. Simon and Schuster, 1997.
- Lipschultz, J. H., and M. L. Hilt. "Local Television Coverage of a Mall Shooting." *Electronic News* 5, no. 4 (2011): 197–214.
- "Media Descends on Newtown - Connecticut Post." Accessed February 4, 2013.
<http://www.ctpost.com/local/article/Media-descends-on-Newtown-4121692.php>.
- "Media, Residents Yearn for Journalists to Leave Newtown | Poynter." Accessed February 4, 2013. <http://www.poynter.org/latest-news/mediawire/198691/media-residents-yearn-for-journalists-to-leave-newtown/>.
- Moos, Julie. "Local Journalists Balance Compassion, Community Service in Coverage of Newtown Shooting Aftermath | Poynter." Accessed March 8, 2013.
<http://www.poynter.org/latest-news/top-stories/199096/local-journalists-balance-compassion-community-service-in-coverage-of-newtown-shooting-aftermath/>.
- Moritz, Marguerite, and Theresa Crapanzano. "We don't make the news, we just report it: television journalism and narratives of trauma." *Miscelánea: a Journal of English and American Studies* 42 (2010): 105–124.
- Noddings, Nel. *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education, Second Edition, with a New Preface*. 2nd ed. University of California Press, 2003.
- Pech, Garry, and Rhona Leibel. "Writing in Solidarity: Steps Toward an Ethic-of-care for Journalism." *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 21, no. 2/3 (June 2006): 141–155.
- Peters, J. D. "Witnessing." *Communication Abstracts* 25, no. 4 (2002): 431–586.
- "Reporters Interviewing Children In Connecticut School Shooting Adds Little News Value, Experts Say." Accessed February 1, 2013.
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/12/14/reporters-interviewing-children-connecticut-school-shooting_n_2303656.html.
- RTDNA. "RTNDA Ethics Code | RJI." Accessed March 8, 2013.
<http://rjionline.org/ccj/tools/rtn-da-ethics-code>.
- Steiner, L., and C. M. Okrusch. "Care as a Virtue for Journalists." *Journal of Mass Media*

- Ethics* 21, no. 2–3 (2006): 102–122.
- “The Newtown Shootings – The View from 300.01 | Guest Blog, Scientific American Blog Network.” Accessed February 1, 2013.
<http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/2012/12/20/the-newton-shootings-the-view-from-300-01/>.
- Tronto, Joan C. *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic-of-care*. Psychology Press, 1993.
- Tuchman, Gaye. *Making News: a Study in the Construction of Reality*. New York: Free Press, 1978.
- “Tyndall Report | Year in Review 2012.” Accessed February 1, 2013.
<http://tyndallreport.com/yearinreview2012/>.
- Vanacker, B., and J. Breslin. “Ethics of Care: More Than Just Another Tool to Bash the Media?” *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 21, no. 2–3 (2006): 196–214.
- Wetherell, Carol, and Nel Noddings. *Stories Lives Tell: Narrative and Dialogue in Education*. Teachers College Pr, 1991.