

Journalism and Everyday Trauma: A Grounded Theory of the Impact from Death-knocks and Court Reporting

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Abstract

News is an emotional business (Richards, 2009, p. 308)

Journalists are now often carrying out death-knock interviews early in their careers, whereby they are expected to interview the family or friends of a victim immediately after a tragedy. Soon after graduating, some also cover horrific court stories. In New Zealand there are few guidelines – written or oral – about how to cover death-knock interviews or how to filter out the lurid details in court. Rarely are journalists taught how to deal with the range of emotions they are likely to encounter. This lack of insight includes the emotions of people who are suffering, as well as their own. This study focuses on two sites of secondary or indirect trauma: death-knocks and court reporting, as opposed to direct trauma whereby journalists actually witness the event.

Previous research has shown that the denial of emotions and psychological damage from ongoing trauma coverage can have a cumulative effect on journalists. The effects include exposure to secondary trauma. The repetitive nature of any work, where death or near-death stories now constantly make the news because of the need to maintain audiences and profits, has exacerbated this issue.

The traditional approach to trauma reporting has been to learn on the job, as journalism education has been based on recommendations from the media industry. As a result, journalists can make mistakes as they practise on the public. Because of a traditionally stoic culture and the socialisation process within newsrooms, novice journalists feel the pressure to remain objective and suppress any emotions.

Using grounded theory methodology and taking a social constructivist approach, this study analyses data from in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 20 news professionals – 18 journalists and two former media managers. The outcome is an inside account of what those journalists felt and what they experienced as they repeatedly covered trauma on the job.

Using participant comments, the study identified three theoretical concepts – Attaining balance, Maintaining balance and Losing balance – and developed a grounded theory that supports the investigation of the tension between objectivity and emotionality in trauma reporting. First, novice journalists need to *attain balance*. In this phase, they must learn and accept the professional ideology and implicit rules of the newsroom as

they come to terms with any conflicting emotions. To do so, at this stage, some adopt strategies to help them manage their work. Second, to *maintain balance*, they strive to deliver emotionally laden stories to earn rewards and avoid punishment, and some devise other ways to stay in control. Sometimes that control requires *emotional labour*, or “putting on a mask” and becoming emotionally detached. Third, if they lose the drive to cover trauma and feel they have no control over their work, they may burn out, and *lose balance*. Therefore, for some journalists who cover trauma-related events on a regular basis, these three theoretical concepts can be phases along a trajectory.

The study examines the concept of newsroom socialisation, highlighting the fact that most journalists in New Zealand covering trauma-related incidents are female and most journalism graduates are also female. This scenario can accentuate the existing power imbalance within traditional, male-dominated newsrooms to the point whereby females are undervalued and can become easy targets for bullying. The increasingly competitive nature of newsrooms fosters superficial support among colleagues, and in some cases, encourages the ongoing stigma related to mental health issues.

Based on the findings, this study argues that the current legislation in New Zealand that prevents trauma victims being able to sue for work-related stress, contributes to the inability of the country’s newsrooms to address concerns related to trauma work. As a result, trauma training needs to be mandatory in journalism programmes so that graduates are aware of resources and the importance of self-care.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lyn Barnes". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first name "Lyn" and the last name "Barnes" clearly legible.

Lyn Barnes

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Foreword

Any traumatic event, such as a fatality, is a shock to the system and can affect a person's equilibrium (Newman & Nelson, 2012, p. 19).

A former student inspired this thesis. She came to see me about a year after the Christchurch earthquake in February 2011 that killed 185 people. The 23-year-old had been working on a Sunday newspaper since she graduated two years earlier. We were talking about her fellow graduates who had covered the earthquake, as several did within weeks of their graduation. But what she said haunted me for some time afterwards: "I feel for those journalists who covered Christchurch, but what about the run-of-the-mill trauma we deal with every day?" She explained how she felt constantly covering traumatic events. Her job regularly involved chasing up people immediately after they had experienced a tragedy, asking them to share their story. This is what is known in the industry as a "death-knock" interview. (See Appendix D1 for a sample death-knock story). She sounded cynical and disillusioned. "So much for being a tribute to a lost loved one," she commented. "It's really just about blood and guts and a line or two about how they liked fishing." She had begun to question her career choice, a job she initially thrived on. Covering trauma became too much for this young woman after one particular incident (see Chapter 8.4).

When she initially came to see me, I had been teaching at the university for only a couple of years and I had been out of the newsroom for a long time. For the past two decades I had worked in magazines before joining academia and much had changed in newsrooms since I completed a journalism diploma. Although we as journalism educators touched on trauma coverage as part of a general news reporting course, it was "once over lightly". However, we did discuss death-knock interviews, and as teachers we attempted to do role-plays to prepare our students for these encounters and how people may respond unexpectedly.

As a result of that meeting with my former student I became interested in finding out how New Zealand journalism programmes approached trauma training. I ran a small survey of New Zealand's 10 programmes in 2011 (Barnes, 2013) and found that only two dedicated more than an hour to the topic. Seven of the 10 were one-year courses at polytechnics and three were university-based programmes that ran over three years. The most common reason given for not teaching trauma reporting was shortage of time,

although most noted it was because trauma training was not a compulsory component of the curriculum.

Trauma training involves teaching journalism students to recognise traumatic stress in themselves and stress reactions in people, to make ethical choices about trauma-based news, and how to deal with their own emotional reactions while on the job (Dart Center). Whereas most people cope well with trauma, it is now well documented that if any impact is not acknowledged and dealt with early on there can be long-term consequences, such as burn-out or worse, post-traumatic stress disorder, where the effects can last for years (Centre for Journalism Ethics).

I presented the results of that initial study at the Australian Journalism Education Conference in Adelaide in December 2011. Unbeknown to me at the time, among the audience was Dr Elana Newman, the research director of The Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma. The Dart Center, based at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in New York, was set up to foster informed, innovative and ethical news reporting on violence, conflict and tragedy. Established in 1999, Dart is now a resource base for journalism educators, graduates, working journalists and media managers. Dr Newman approached me after the presentation and commended me for focusing on domestic journalists dealing with trauma. She also suggested I apply for a Dart Fellowship.

Being awarded the fellowship in 2012 – the only person from Australasia to attend the intensive week-long course that year – increased my resolve to explore this issue further. Word spread in New Zealand that I was investigating this topic and soon I began to hear from other young journalists covering trauma with regularity on the job. Also, there was concern among colleagues that students were being sent out to do death-knock interviews as part of their work-experience internships. As journalism educators, we realised we needed to address this issue.

Following my initial study, I decided to look further afield to investigate what was taught in journalism schools in Australia and New Zealand regarding trauma and what pedagogical approaches were being used. An Australasian survey of journalism schools (Barnes, 2015a) drew more than a 50 percent response rate from participants. It was clear from the answers to the survey questions that most journalism educators wanted to include more trauma exercises in their programmes but they felt ill prepared to do so. Of the 16 respondents from the 31 journalism programmes, 13 wrote that they covered

trauma training in a single lecture. Ten of the respondents did not feel enough time was allocated to the topic, but the general feedback related to the confusion about what and how to teach about covering trauma. Another issue that arose from the trans-Tasman survey was the lack of confidence and competence among the educators. The research findings highlighted inconsistencies in journalism programmes and recommended comprehensive guidelines be devised for trauma training in both New Zealand and Australia, based on Dart principles.

At the time, there was serious competition among New Zealand's Sunday papers, and the major national daily newspapers were changing from broadsheet to tabloid format. The editor of *The New Zealand Herald*, the largest metropolitan newspaper, assured readers that the content would not follow suit. But content did change to include considerably more sensational content (Barnes & Edmonds, 2015), reflecting international trends in the media (Machin & Niblock, 2006; Simpson & Coté, 2006) and tabloidisation of newspapers that generally included more sensational stories and used more emotive language (Hanusch, 2008). Journalists working for these newspapers were expected to inject more subjectivity and it created a tension. A more personal take on the stories went against the basic principles of journalism: to remain objective, not to take sides and certainly not to display emotion.

The first court case in Australia related to traumatic stress was also heard in 2012. A journalist endeavoured to sue her employer, *The Age* newspaper, for breaching its duty of care by allegedly failing to provide a safe workplace for her. This photojournalist allegedly suffered from secondary traumatic stress as a result of the 21 stories she produced as part of the anniversary of the 2002 Bali bombings. Secondary trauma, as I will explain later, is opposed to direct trauma and can result from observing other people's suffering. The case was dismissed but more cases are pending.

The New Zealand situation is different and such a case would not arise because of New Zealand's Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) no-fault personal injury system. It is difficult to sue an employer for anything other than exemplary damages and reputational harm. ACC is the sole and compulsory provider of accident insurance in New Zealand for all work and non-work related injuries. Regardless of the way in which a person's injury is incurred, he or she is covered under the scheme and forfeits the right to sue the at-fault party.

Journalists in New Zealand were also beginning to speak out about what they were experiencing as part of dealing with trauma, admitting that it was hard work and emotionally challenging. This challenged the traditional thinking that journalists should not have a personal opinion about an event or issue in the news (Fedler, 2004). For example, in her column “Behind the headlines, a story is told”, published in the *Christchurch Press* in July 2013, Beck Eleven writes about her emotional responses to trauma work:

All too often the journalist is at a traumatic scene: In the past few weeks I have spoken to two women affected by domestic violence. One told me her story, calmly and patiently over five hours. The other could not tell me her story because she had died at the hands of her abuser, so her mother told me the story. Again, over five hours. (para. 9)

Her column, and the subsequent thread of responses from other journalists on a private Facebook page for New Zealand journalists, confirmed that local research was timely. There was widespread support and concern from other journalists throughout the country and acknowledgement that it was time to talk about the issue. What was obvious from the comments was the psychological damage that some journalists had sustained from covering even mundane crimes. Richards (2003) has suggested that when journalists “go public” with self-relevatory articles it is not only indicating to their audience that they are deeply affected by events, but that they need the opportunity to talk to appropriate people and that they may be denied the opportunity because of the “absence of [a] ‘sympathetic ear’ in the newsroom” (p. 166).

This range of factors set the stage for this research and every journalist I have mentioned my topic to, has urged me onwards.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

The aim of this research is to examine how New Zealand journalists are prepared for dealing with day-to-day trauma on the job – and how they deal with their emotions. It is timely in the light of the change in trauma content in the media (Barnes & Edmonds, 2015). In this introduction, I first present the background information relevant to understanding the issue of journalism and trauma. I explain the decision to examine trauma reporting by focusing on death-knock interviews and court reporting. This leads into a discussion about the current state of the media and why human interest stories have become so popular.

This discussion is followed by the Introduction of the research problem in light of the reality that among those covering trauma in New Zealand are more women journalists than men. There has been a dramatic decline in staff numbers and the gender imbalance of newsrooms continues to form the basis for investigations into gender disparity. Gender is not the focus of this inquiry but it is used as an analytical category to register insights into the “social meaning given to biological differences between sexes” (Lawson, 2007, p. 137). Newsrooms have historically been male-dominated, where “men are the norm” and anything feminine or related to women has been considered “the other” (Djerf-Pierre, 2007). The Introduction situates the question of gender within the broader issue of the social interactions within the newsroom. The theoretical and methodological framework is then briefly explained before the structure of the thesis is presented.

1.2 Recognising everyday trauma and who covers it

The topic of journalism and trauma is relatively new and unexplored in New Zealand. James Hollings (2005) addressed the ethical challenges he confronted when he covered the 2004 Asian Boxing Day tsunami and the issues that arose from that experience. But until the Christchurch earthquake, there had been minimal trauma research in New Zealand (Scanlon, 2014). While both Hollings’ and Scanlon’s studies addressed natural disasters, there was no research in New Zealand regarding day-to-day trauma and how journalists were prepared to cover such work, or deal with any potential related stress. International research had focused on the effects of trauma on war correspondents but relatively few studies considered the everyday, domestic journalist,

despite the fact that the effects of traumatic stress have been shown to compound (Keats & Buchanan, 2009; Rees, 2007).

Whereas most journalists who cover trauma on a regular basis will not experience stress-related disorders, a high proportion do (Novak & Davidson, 2013). Trauma exposure, defined as experiencing or witnessing an event that causes intense fear, helplessness or horror (Simpson & Boggs, 1999), is described as direct or primary trauma, whereas indirect or secondary trauma can result from observing other people's suffering. Empirical reports have shown that journalists' experiences of trauma put them at risk of both direct and indirect stress, post-traumatic stress disorder, or more long-term difficulties such as depression, generalised anxiety, or struggles with relationships (Keats, 2012; McMahon, 2001).

Traumatic stress is the result of an emotional injury. Trauma is an experience outside the range of usual human experience that would be markedly distressing to almost anyone (Ward, 2016). Anyone who has regular contact with severely traumatised people is at risk of becoming emotionally injured (Shapiro, 2015). The most chronic form is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The term PTSD originated after the Vietnam War, when veterans displayed specific psychological and physical symptoms, such as hallucinations (Simpson & Coté, 2006). Usually defined as a physical condition caused by mental trauma, PTSD involves a pattern of symptoms that continues for more than a month, including recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of an event; emotional numbing and constriction of normal activities; and a shift in the fear threshold that can affect sleep, concentration and sense of security (p. 25). Ochberg (2016) would prefer the word injury be used instead of disorder. This is because he does not consider the condition is due to any inherent flaw or particular personality. "The body's alarm system gets stuck in 'on' position, causing sensation of fear, anticipation of doom, unwanted recollections of terrible events and a loss of the ability to experience the emotions of love and joy" (para. 2).

Research has shown that it is usually young, inexperienced reporters who carry out trauma-related interviews (Johnson, 1999; Maxson, 2000; Rees, 2007; Simpson & Boggs, 1999; Young 2011). Death-knock interviews may be covered by young journalists who are not prepared for what they might encounter and the mistakes they may make (Amend, Kay, & Reilly, 2012; Dworznik & Grubb, 2007; Maxson, 2000). Journalists throughout New Zealand are dispatched daily to cover trauma-related events

and there is nothing in the journalists' codes of ethics to prevent senior staff sending out inexperienced reporters without proper support, or about providing counselling and/or debriefing afterwards (Hollings, 2005).

International research has demonstrated that graduates are particularly susceptible to strong emotional and psychological reactions (Dworznik & Grubb, 2007, p. 204).

Dworznik and Grubb found it was not unusual for the younger reporters to suffer a loss of conviction about their work or feelings of depression after covering their first violent assignment.

Alongside the increase in younger journalists covering trauma has been the parallel change in trauma-related content in the media. There are daily cases of trauma reporting including spot news events such as car accidents, fatal fires, murders and violent attacks, but it is indirect, emotionally laden stories that are the focus of this study.

Journalists' understanding and experience of emotions including empathy, disgust and fear, feature throughout this thesis. Reporting on the deaths of people or those grieving raises some of the most contentious ethical dilemmas for journalists (Richards, 2005). Often a death-knock can involve invasion of personal privacy, sometimes required to the point of harassment; then there are decisions to be made about which level of detail to publish which may not have been cleared for publication with survivors or relatives. There may also be some discomfort about being in a position of power when dealing with people's feelings and their sense of powerlessness. Such dilemmas often extend to how far does the right to know (the means) extend to meet the demands of editors and essentially the audience (justify the end)?

All journalists display emotional attitudes (Orwell, 2004), and antinomies (Merill, 1989) – the interplay of opposing ideas in regards to how far to go for the “public good”. Orwell argued that emotional attitudes can colour views of news, and following this line of thought Hirst & Patching (2007) specify:

All reporters have an emotional attitude towards what they consider to be ‘news events’. The attitude will vary depending on the experiences of each individual. It will also have to do with their social background, how they were brought up, their education, and their feelings towards other groups in society. (Hirst & Patching, 2007, p. 7)

As this thesis finds, journalists who cover trauma are constantly balancing many aspects of their careers.

1.3 Sites of trauma

The argument for publishing trauma-based stories has been that “raw emotion makes the best copy” (Berrington & Jemphrey, 2003, p. 237). Therefore, the context of this study, or situations for action, to use a grounded theory term, focuses on “death-knocks”, the interviews which journalists carry out immediately after a tragedy when people are often still in shock or a state of disbelief and therefore likely to display extremes of emotions. A second context is court reporting, the source of detailed accounts of pain, suffering and despair.

The news reporting context is affected by conditions under which specific actions or processes emerge or are muted (Charmaz, 2014). For example, it could be a spot news story, where the journalist rushes off to the scene of a fatality. In some situations, the journalist may see and hear images that will be hard to forget, for example, if they arrive at the scene of a car accident before the bodies have been retrieved by the official first responders. Emergency reporting is a special category of routine news reporting. It can involve covering natural disasters, car accidents, or any unexpected event where life is at risk. In these situations, journalists may be exposed to “direct” trauma. This study focuses on journalists and “secondary trauma”, therefore journalists who do not experience the trauma first-hand. The initial focus was to be death-knocks. However, both death-knock interviews and court reporting experiences were among the most frequently recounted by participants. Although journalists who cover death-knocks and court reporting experience trauma indirectly, there are differences. The response from covering a death-knock is different from covering court. Whether in person or by phone, the journalist is in direct line of an unexpected response in approaching someone who is grieving or in shock. In court, they usually observe, out of the direct line of fire. Although, sometimes, journalists are expected to interview people outside court, so in a sense they have a similar experience. Generally, though, the journalist who covers death-knocks needs to be better psychologically prepared than if required to listen to a court case. In New Zealand, journalists often cover all aspects of news. Many of the journalists interviewed in this study have experienced both forms of trauma reporting – death knocks and in court – plus emergency reporting. The study uses the term “trauma reporting” to refer to universal issues that underpin this form of journalistic work.

1.4 The state of the media

Journalism, as a profession, is experiencing traumatic and occupational stress (Newman & Nelson, 2012). This is not new. As a “profession” it has always invited debate. Arguments have been ongoing about whether journalism is a true profession or a trade because it has failed to cultivate certain “professional traits”, such as registration. Plus it has never had the prestige and social status of professions such as medicine or law, nor the salaries (Elsaka, 2005). Even though the New Zealand press was based on the United Kingdom model, the country managed to remain sheltered from the disreputable image of the press in the United States, Britain and Australia in the 19th century. Instead, New Zealand journalism achieved respectability and social status (Elsaka, 2005).

As budgets tighten in newsrooms worldwide, news managers often have to give preference to the news stories that will attract larger audiences, and thereby increase profits (McManus, 2009). Human interest stories which include emotionality, as a result of death-knock interviews or covering court cases, are often referred to as commodity news stories (McManus, 1994). These are market-driven topics or products, as opposed to topics defined by “professional” journalists as newsworthy. News must sell advertising and other products, not just inform readers and viewers as in the past. Human interest stories, which are usually based on emotions, are popular with readers. Today’s analytics (or clicks on electronic news stories or the number of stories forwarded through social media) reveal how well read trauma stories are. If they were not popular, they would no longer feature so frequently (Schaudt & Carpenter, 2009). Some publications are rewarding – and punishing – journalists for click rates (The Times, 2015). Human interest stories are also easily sourced, through regular contact with emergency services. Therefore, they are easier and cheaper to produce and ultimately more lucrative than more quality, in-depth, investigative features, which take time and cost money.

The economic issues are global and have been affected by the increasing demand for diverse media platforms, as traditional forms of media, in particular newspapers, are on the decline. The two major Australian-owned print media companies in New Zealand – Fairfax NZ and NZME – have recently invested heavily in digital content. The result has been a number of redundancies. Current talks regarding the merger of the two companies have increased fears that more jobs will be lost (NZ Listener, 2016).

Already, more news is being produced in newsrooms by fewer people with reduced staff numbers (Thomas, 2008). This has increased pressure on the staff who remain. A study in the mid-90s by Tunstall (1996) indicated that journalists were producing two to three times as much as in the 1960s. Technology has also escalated the speed at which journalists can work. In 2015, Fairfax Media NZ introduced a instant uploading system so that journalists reporting spot news stories, such as accidents or fires, can write and file on the spot.

Rather than “being independent and doing public good” (Jackson, 2009, p. 150), journalism has been privatised and is now profit-driven.

New media technologies and shifting societal dynamics are exerting disruptive and transformative pressures on the news industry. For these reasons, the need to reconceptualise news as a contested commodity and to reconsider its unrestricted subordination to the market has become more urgent than ever. (Jackson, 2009, p. 149)

As a result, journalism is confronting constant change as it strives to reinvent itself (Beckett, 2016). The ubiquitous death-knock narrative could be viewed as a way in which news organisations have adapted to social, economic and political contexts within which they now operate, by supplying more content specifically to meet audience demands (Allan, 2004). Bourdieu (2011), in his book *On Television*, posited that media culture has become driven by audience ratings. As a result, journalists are confronting increasing pressure to meet the demands of their editors and media managers, as well as their audience. Yet there is a definitive gap between the expectations of editors and what journalists are expected to deliver in terms of subjective content. Traditionally, editors advocated objective reporting, which was fact based and feelings free. Therefore, the trend to “accept” subjectivity in news stories has created a tension in newsrooms. As Wahl-Jorgensen (2013b) described it, journalists are caught in the middle of change. This led to a number of questions that supported further investigation: How do these changes affect journalists? How do they respond to them? Is there a difference between editors’ and journalists’ responses to these changes? What is the outcome? More specifically, when a death-knock interview is required, or a sensational court case is being tried, how do journalists deal with trauma and emotions involved, and more importantly, how are they taught to deal with these issues? If they do not, what is the outcome?

As Gans noted (2004), journalists covered less trauma in the past and there were more staff who were rotated to avoid repetition. In New Zealand, the same journalists often cover police or crime rounds for years at a time, with very little preparation.

1.5 Trauma training in New Zealand

Traditionally, journalists in New Zealand learned their craft through cadetships, until the 1960s when most of the training moved into journalism schools and universities. This complicated the situation further by decreasing the amount of practical experience to short-term internships. New Zealand currently offers seven journalism programmes; five based at technical institutes and three at universities. New Zealand followed the United Kingdom model by having industry accreditation of journalism schools (Hannis, 2012; Thomas, 2010, 2008). Whereas journalism education in the Western world has been characterised by a clash between industry and education providers, Thomas (2008) found this was not the case in New Zealand. Instead, she determined it was “unashamedly dominated by the media industry” (p. 137). Senior journalists from industry, who formed the New Zealand Journalist Training Organisation (NZJTO), decided what was taught in journalism programmes, although universities negotiated to decide their own curricula, as long as they did not stray too far from industry guidelines (Hannis, 2012). The polytechnic-based journalism programmes are now moderated by Competenz, the new industry training organisation that has absorbed the former NZJTO. Competenz is responsible for designing and administering journalism qualifications for print, online, radio and television and also runs its own national diploma programme.

Following the introduction of the National Qualifications Framework in the late 1980s, unit standards were developed. Unit standards are statements which specify what a student needs to achieve to a given standard. They are compulsory in the polytechnic institutes, but serve only as guidelines in university journalism programmes. Unit standards have, however, been criticised for being “too prescriptive and too restrictive of curriculum change” (Hirst, 2010, p. 86) and stifling innovative thinking among students (Thomas, 2008).

This background to journalism programmes is important as it may explain why there has been some resistance to introducing trauma training into journalism programmes. Trauma training as a curriculum subject was last discussed at the annual general meeting of the NZJTO in December 2012 but no decisions were made to introduce a

compulsory component to the unit standards. A proposed chapter on trauma literacy, submitted to the NZJTO's journalism handbook, *Intro*, was rejected in favour of more skills-based content. The reluctance to acknowledge the detrimental effects of trauma continues, despite international recommendations that trauma training should be mandatory. Maxson's study (2000) found that all graduates considered trauma training to be a worthwhile exercise, especially the component on dealing with trauma victims appropriately. Other studies since (Rees, 2007; Keats & Buchanan, 2009) have concluded that appropriate training not only helps to detect problems that journalists may experience early on, but can also assist recovery from traumatic stress. Previous research has indicated that there has also been increasing pressure on journalists to act in ways that they may consider unethical (Kay, Reilly, Amend, & Kyle, 2011). Dworznik and Grubb (2007) confirmed that although little could be done to prevent post-traumatic stress or its symptoms, training could help lessen the impact.

It became apparent after the 9/11 terror attacks on New York in 2001 that all journalists needed to be prepared to cover tragedies, not only general news reporters. Much of the coverage of the event was carried out by financial reporters and fashion writers who were on the scene at the time (Lyll, 2012; Newman & Nelson, 2012). In New Zealand, almost a decade later, three disasters in just over a year had a noticeable impact on a number of journalists and alerted some media managers to address issues of safety and the effects of trauma. The first was the Pike River explosion on the West Coast in November 2010, in which 29 miners were killed. The second major event was the Christchurch earthquake in February 2011 which claimed the lives of 185 people. The third disaster was the death of 11 people in a hot-air-ballooning accident in the Wairarapa in January 2012. As a result, some initiatives were taken to address trauma on the job. Fairfax NZ revised its health and safety guidelines to include more information about traumatic stress (the researcher was involved in this process) and mentoring programmes were initiated.

1.6 The New Zealand situation

New Zealand journalists may not cover mass shootings or witness executions as their American counterparts do, but they regularly attend tragedies and are exposed to unpleasant incidents alongside police, fire crews and paramedics who are routinely debriefed afterwards and offered counselling. Road fatalities in New Zealand are relatively high in the 18-20 age group, with a rate that is three times higher than the average compared with other countries (International Transport Forum, 2015).

New Zealand also has one of the highest rates of domestic violence in the world. A 2010-2011 report from UN Women ranked New Zealand second out of 12 for domestic violence, with only Finland recording a higher rate. New Zealand also rates a close second to Finland in suicide rates for male youths (15-24 years). In a comparison with 13 OECD countries between 2002-2007, New Zealand rated fourth highest for males and sixth highest for female suicides (NZ Ministry of Social Development, 2016). Drownings are also common in New Zealand, being the third most common cause of accidental death in the country (Water Safety NZ, 2010) behind vehicle crashes and falls. Most of these fatalities will lead to death-knock stories and often court appearances that can potentially expose journalists to secondary trauma.

Journalists are expected to refer to their code of ethics to guide their work and to clarify norms of practice. There are three codes in New Zealand, which share common professional norms, such as accuracy, fairness and balance. The code of ethics, which acts as guidelines for the majority of New Zealand journalists, is produced by the Engineering, Manufacturing, Print and Media Union (EPMU) (see Appendix D5). Fairfax NZ has its own code of ethics or journalism charter. The New Zealand Press Council addresses complaints made about any editorial content in newspapers, magazines or periodical in circulation in New Zealand as well as digital sites with news content. Radio and television are covered under the Broadcasting Standards Authority (BSA) and the code includes specific standards, which are more detailed than the EPMU code, particularly in regards to privacy (Appendix D6). The EPMU code specifies that journalists will “respect private grief and personal privacy and shall have the right to resist compulsion to intrude on them”. The BSA code is more specific and includes seven standards expected of journalists in relation to privacy.

Although the effects of traumatic stress may not have been openly acknowledged by the media industry, changes in 2003 to the Health and Safety in Employment Act (1992) recognised stress as a workplace hazard. The government made it the responsibility of employers to ensure staff were protected. Most New Zealand companies now offer free confidential employee assistance programmes (EAPs), which include emergency counselling and follow-up counselling sessions. EAPs provide confidential counselling hotlines, although these sessions are limited, usually to four, which means there may be ongoing costs for journalists if they choose to see a psychologist or psychiatrist.

1.7 A case for investigation

This study aims to find out about journalists in New Zealand who have covered trauma, how they learned to do so and if their work affected them. The objective, therefore, is to build up the theoretical framework that will help in understanding what journalists experience when reporting trauma. The study explores the rise of the death-knock narrative and how journalists describe its prominence in the press. This requires examining journalists' reflections on the public perception of death and the implications for the media in meeting audience demands.

To enable me to talk to journalists for research purposes, I applied to the university's ethics committee for ethics approval (Appendix C1) to begin finding journalists to interview and continued to read the literature in the field. Although there were no Maori participants, Te Tiriti o Waitangi requires that researchers consider how the research may impact on Maori. The findings of this research are relevant to Maori in highlighting cultural considerations, especially in regards to how journalists approach bereaved families, especially if the journalists themselves represent the dominant culture.

Traditionally, in Western newsrooms, men have covered hard news, such as politics, business, technology and science (North, 2009) and women have been relegated to the lower status, softer sections, for example, lifestyle, arts and features (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2010). However, data supplied from New Zealand for the worldwide media monitoring, research and advocacy group that monitors gender equality, found 51 percent of crime and violence reported was covered by females. The average international figure was 65 percent men, or 35 percent women (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2010). A survey of metropolitan daily newspapers in New Zealand by the author indicated the figure was higher, with female journalists covering most of the emergency work in the country's newsrooms. Of the seven metropolitan daily newspapers in New Zealand, all but one had a female police reporter in the lead role, namely the *Otago Daily Times*.

The study revealed a discrepancy between the number of young women studying journalism and those employed in newsrooms. The ratio of female-to-male journalists in New Zealand print newsrooms was 50-50 (Statistics New Zealand, 2013), compared with the average international figure of 37 percent female and 63 male. Yet more than three-quarters of New Zealand journalism graduates were female (Barnes, 2015b). Although the 50-50 ratio was comparatively high, there was still a large number of

female journalists that were unaccounted for, considering the number of graduates. An analysis of the enrolment data for the programme at Auckland University of Technology, the largest journalism programme in the country, showed that over the 11-year period from 2005-2015, the average figure for the proportion of females enrolled in the course was 76 percent. So, there existed a pool of young female graduates who, for whatever reason, did not become or remain journalists.¹

Only one gender study of journalism students in New Zealand had been carried out prior to the research discussed above (Densem, 2006). Some national employment studies had touched on gender in the newsroom and found high ratios of female employees. From demographic data, Hollings, Samson, Tilley and Lealand (2007) concluded that the journalism workforce in the country was becoming more feminised, and identified a disproportionate number of young women and older men in the profession. Another survey by Hannis, Hollings, Pajo and Lealand (2014) confirmed that the industry was becoming increasingly feminised and that women were outnumbering men in virtually all age bands, among rank-and-file journalists and in middle management.

Table 1: Gender breakdown in enrolment figures for third-year journalism major in the Bachelor of Communication Studies at AUT University of Technology, the largest journalism programme in New Zealand.

Year	Female	%	Male	%	Total
2015	41	82%	9	18%	50
2014	30	64%	17	36%	47
2013	31	73%	11	26%	42
2012	31	80%	8	21%	39
2011	24	73%	9	27%	33
2010	32	76%	10	24%	42
2009	38	76%	12	24%	50
2008	44	86%	7	14%	51
2007	33	79%	9	22%	42
2006	26	74%	9	26%	35
2005	25	74%	9	27%	34

Source: AUT Communication Studies Department.

¹ There is no clear evidence available to prove there is a direct link between not becoming journalists and the fear of covering trauma. However, feedback from journalism students involved in “death-knock role plays” organised at AUT University and from journalism students in various papers I have taught over the years have expressed dismay that they would have to carry out such work.

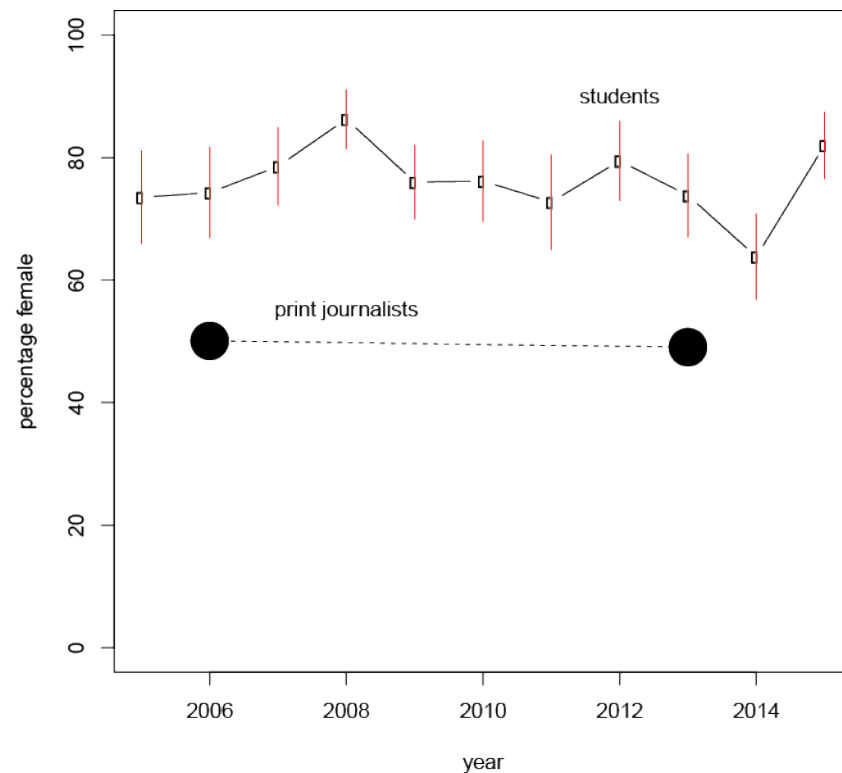


Figure 1: Percentage of female student enrolments in the journalism major at AUT 2005-2015, compared with the percentage of female print journalists in full-time employment in New Zealand.

Source: AUT Communication Studies Department.

However, there was also a high turnover of newsroom staff in New Zealand. In particular, 68 percent of young women left news journalism within two years, which was less time than it took them to complete a requisite degree (Strong, 2011).

These initial findings raised another question: Were females being assigned the role of emergency-role reporters in New Zealand because they were thought to be more empathetic and caring than men, and could extract emotions more readily for their death-knock stories? Scholars have associated emotionality with femininity. Nurmi (2014) suggested that emotionality marks female and feminine, as different from male and masculine. She argued that the boundaries between male and female identities were created and maintained through cultural beliefs about emotions, with both positive and negative connotations. “For example, the stereotype of women as more emotional than men has both positive (women are warm, nurturing) and negative (women are too emotional) meanings” (p. 448). She concluded that it was context that determined whether emotions were considered a strength or a weakness. Perhaps female journalists were in a context where their emotional predisposition would give them an edge on men covering death-knocks and other trauma-related incidents? Or was it because there were

fewer males applying for work as journalists, or pressure from management to hire more females because of a trend towards equal opportunity employment?

GMMP data (2010) found that female journalists approached hard news stories in a similar manner to male journalists, but there had been some evidence in the literature to suggest that women were more attuned to audience needs (Steiner, 2012). A large-scale comparative survey on gender differences in journalists' professional views across 18 countries did not support that hypothesis. Neither did the authors find any evidence that women and men approached their work differently (Hanitzsch & Hanusch, 2012). The authors also tested the hypothesis that male journalists valued the importance of objectivity, facts and evidence more so than their female counterparts but found this hypothesis was not supported. The authors, however, did find that female journalists tended to "appreciate the value of detachment significantly less than their male counterparts" (p. 272) yet concluded that the differences were minor. Unfortunately, the authors did not explain or expand on this finding, nor did they discuss its implications.

This raised further questions: Were young women in newsrooms then being considered as expendable? Were they being given hard-news rounds, such as police and crime, to test their mettle? Because newsrooms must be overwhelmed with female applicants, do editors – who are still predominantly male – have no choice but to employ them, even though there is still a feeling that they will not cope, nor be accepted within the male newspaper culture (Strong, 2011)? This finding is supported by international research, which indicates that women soon become disillusioned and leave the industry (Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, & Wilhoit, 2006).

At the other end of the scale, there is a noticeable and increasingly uneven number of women in management positions in the New Zealand media and thus fewer role models: the number of female editors in metropolitan newspapers has halved from six in 2006 (Strong, 2011) to three in 2015. Census data also showed that females were earning more in 2013 than 2006 but that only one-third of those in the media earning over NZ\$100,000 were women. Therefore, women are still concentrated in the lower income brackets.

A study by Lyall (2012) in Australia inspired a similar investigation in New Zealand. Lyall, who has herself suffered from traumatic stress, found there had been 135 mental health claims lodged with workers compensation authorities in Australia from journalists and related professionals in the 10 years to June 2010. That had resulted in

an average time off work of 26.4 weeks and compensation paid out of \$A4.2 million (p. 33). Unfortunately such figures are not as easy to access in New Zealand. A request to the Accident Compensation Corporation under the Official Information Act to determine the number of journalists who have been affected by traumatic stress or who had left the industry over the past 10 years as a result was declined. The reasons given were that Work Related Mental Injury legislation (WRMI) was only introduced in October 2008. Prior to this date, there was no cover for WRMI when there was no physical injury. ACC also considered journalists to have an extremely low rate of claims for mental injury and because of that, declined “to provide any claim information in order to protect those clients’ privacy” (Appendix D2). The letter of response added that ACC “does not hold specific claim details”. That is because media companies are “accredited employers”.² What this means is that ACC subcontracts to accredited employers, who, in exchange for reduced premiums, take responsibility for personnel. By that stage of the study, research data was emerging which revealed that journalists were reluctant to disclose any signs of stress to their employers for a range of reasons, in particular, the stigma of the condition and the risk of losing their job, so there seemed little point in approaching the media companies directly.

The response from ACC reinforced the need for more transparency in media employment figures. There have been calls in the past for specific data gathering related to the industry. In 2006, Professor Judy McGregor, as Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner with the Human Rights Commission in New Zealand, criticised the lack of data available to monitor gender balance in journalism in the country. In 2006, New Zealand signed a protocol with the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) as a result of the McGregor’s concerns about women’s participation and representation by the media worldwide (Strong, 2011) but inquiries failed to find any follow-up.

1.8 Theoretical and methodological framework

This study is based on 20 in-depth semi-structured interviews with a range of journalists, from novices to media managers. Taking the social constructivist perspective of symbolic interactionism, the data gathered and coded from the interviews was analysed using grounded theory methodology. Rather than starting with a theory

² Deborah Butler, senior adviser, Accident Compensation Corporation, personal communication, October 22, 2014.

and setting out to prove it, this approach allows the theory to emerge or evolve by identifying key concepts. The key concepts, or conceptual categories, are derived from initial coding of all the interviews. These concepts are confirmed, or reconsidered and dismissed by consistently returning to the data, which in turn keeps the theory grounded.

There are strong links between interactionism (the theoretical perspective that focuses on how individuals act within a society) and grounded theory (Bowers, 1989; Schatzman, 1991). The use of grounded theory methodology aims to generate an understanding of social processes of particular groups in society. In this study, one objective was to understand how meanings and actions were interpreted within newsrooms by focusing on social interactions. This involved a conversation about newsroom culture and how norms, routines, rules and ideological values helped to maintain control by focusing on individual journalists and the socialisation process. Symbolic interactionism considers human beings as active, thinking creatures, not as individuals who can be conditioned into one way of thinking. It is a dynamic process (Charon, 2001), as it is the constant search for social interaction that teaches journalists what they can and cannot do. At the same time, journalists converse with themselves as they interact, filtering information and developing different perspectives. Meanings can come from interactions but they are shaped by self-reflections (Blumer, 1969).

The social interactionist approach confirmed that newsrooms function as a sub-culture and interactions and interpretations play critical roles. Journalists form interpretative communities and their interpretations help to establish guidelines and boundaries of behaviour (Zelizer, 2004). Interactions may be symbolic, and those symbols can be both spoken and unspoken. In time, symbolic patterns can become normalised.

Interaction among individuals depends on access to shared symbols, so it is a complex phenomenon. For example, editorial meetings are often exclusive, for senior (often male) staff only. Journalists learn to read the signs and social conventions and understand the power structures without specific details. For example, how journalists learn the concept of impartiality involves a degree of moral calculation:

The notions of the pursuit of objectivity and journalists as moral agents may, on the surface, seem to be conflicting ideals, but these two elements of the craft generally coexist peacefully in the mental models of news workers. For example, pursuing objectivity would require that a journalist maintain impartiality in reporting on the abortion debate, because this debate encompasses conflicting moral and political ideologies in society. However, it would be acceptable for the same journalist to portray a chief executive officer convicted of cooking the books for personal gain as corrupt and deserving of punishment, because such moral judgment would align with uncontested social mores opposing the exploitation of power and position. (Jackson, 2009, p. 152)

Jackson proposed that journalism students learn some basics, however, it was the enculturation process within the newsroom that decided the *degree* of moral calculation. I wondered if this enculturation process worked the same way in determining the co-existence of objectivity and emotionality? Objectivity had been the norm that guided journalists since the 1920s, a moral ideal. Subjectivity, or including emotions in their stories, therefore, challenged accepted normalised behaviour.

However, newsroom ideologies, which allow for the tacit understanding within interpretive communities, sometimes need to be adjusted to allow for a shift in boundaries, for example, to include some subjectivity. Journalists therefore share experiences and react to the responses from other journalists and editors. Sometimes the boundaries may shift in other less direct ways, for example, a story may make it to the front-page one day or be reduced in a News In Brief.

Bourdieu's (2011) discussion of the *journalistic field*, offers an insight into the particular structured social space in which actors or players (in this case, journalists) are encouraged to interpret, adapt, appease and preserve the rules of the game. Meanings are determined by how a person responds to shared symbols under different conditions. By including pertinent participant comments, and using a constructivist lens, this study includes a close examination of the objectivity norm, the cornerstone of journalism, to see how it can create conflict for journalists covering trauma. My next step involved finding out how each journalist managed to work around such conflicts and the outcomes.

For symbolic interactionists, analysis begins with the individual and works up through social groups, organisations and institutions rather than from the system down (Bowers, 1989). Also, gaps and silences are just as important as what is said. This is because

some language is discouraged. For example, by not talking openly about the effects of trauma in the newsroom, the stigma is perpetuated. As Jones (2014) noted, it is acceptable to talk about a broken ankle in the office but if it is depression, it is usually met with silence.

This study addresses two main research questions:

1. How do journalists learn to deal with trauma on the job?
2. How do journalists manage their emotions?

To do this, 20 in-depth interviews were analysed using grounded theory methodology. This began with coding data, by looking for repetition or key words, and actions within different contexts, then looking for recurring actions, characteristics, experiences, phrases and explanations, to find the concepts common to covering trauma.

1.9 Structure of the thesis

Chapter 1, the introduction, orientates the reader to the research topic, and outlines the problem and the case for investigation. It summarises the aims and purpose of the study, based on the background of trauma reporting and training in New Zealand. The chapter outlines the theoretical and methodological approach and states the research questions. This chapter concludes with an outline of the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2 begins with an explanation of the symbolic interactionist theoretical framework that this study employs, and the social constructivist perspective. The first section concentrates on the role of socialisation and professional ideology in journalism, focusing on the concepts of objectivity and emotionality. It also analyses the role of norms, rules, routines and ideology in newsroom culture.

Chapter 3 considers the history of research into trauma journalism and includes an examination of traditional newsrooms. It explores the argument for trauma training and the risks of ignoring traumatic stress. Combined, Chapters 2 and 3 provide a review of the literature related to the study and an examination of seminal works in these areas which support justification for investigating journalism and trauma.

Chapter 4 describes and outlines the reasons for choosing grounded theory methodology and using in-depth interviews for data collection. It explains the process of data gathering and the subsequent coding and categorisation process. It also illustrates how

the researcher worked consistently with the data to develop the theoretical framework for the investigation of trauma journalism.

Chapter 5 provides the context within which the theoretical framework – theory of balance – has been developed. The term balance emerged as a key concept that journalists interviewed in this study used when talking about reporting on trauma. The theory of balance that I develop relates to the level of equilibrium journalists see as desirable in their everyday work. The notion of balance is also a commonly used term in journalism and represents one of the key journalistic norms alongside accuracy, fairness and impartiality. Whereas balance in journalism is related to how presenting all sides of a story is an issue at times for journalists, balance in trauma reporting is often related to ethical and emotional matters, where the journalists feel they have to “balance” out a number of requirements: the needs of an editor; any demands on sources and their own well being. The model of balance in journalism therefore may have evoked the same need for harmony in having to negotiate different aspects in order to resolve any imbalance. This chapter therefore sets the scene for exploring the constant tensions journalists reporting trauma can find themselves experiencing and explains the key conditions that can affect their equilibrium.

Chapters 6 to 8 focus on the findings and results of the study that both created and tested the theory of balance. Each chapter includes a discussion of key findings and an interpretation of those results. The theory of balance involves three core phases, which journalists may move through as a result of their encounters with trauma work. These phases are used as conceptual categories to explore the dynamics of the socialisation process of journalists within the newsroom. Chapter 6 outlines the first phase or core category: Attaining balance and explains its sub-categories – *Being “professional”*, *Confronting emotions* and *Learning the rules*. To attain balance, whereby the journalist seeks to avoid tension in their role, they often adopt the “professional” stance of a journalist by striving to be objective and denying any emotions as they are socialised to adopt the rules of the newsrooms.

Chapter 7 continues to develop the theory, based on the patterns that emerged from the data. This chapter addresses Maintaining balance and its sub-categories. This core category or phase is achieved after some time on the job, when journalists have discovered ways to manage the tension. That stability can be strengthened through *Getting the get*, which is one of the sub-categories. This is when they successfully

secure interviews and stories, often with photographs, which earn them rewards in the newsroom. They have also learned to *Manage their emotions* and *Read the newsroom* or “play the game”, the other two sub-categories identified here.

Chapter 8 addresses the final phase to which some journalists succumb: Losing balance and its sub-categories. Instability can be influenced by the *Lack of control*, often as a result of power imbalances that exist in hierarchically structured newsrooms. The second sub-category – *Juggling emotions* – can further escalate the pressure journalists may be experiencing. Unfortunately, this is when, as one journalist suggested, they can *Hit the limit* from covering too much trauma to the point that it affects them psychologically.

Chapter 9 concludes the study with an overview of the main findings in the light of the participant comments and analysis of the key concepts that were identified in Chapters 6 to 8. It revisits the aims of the research in relation to the research questions. It also reiterates the key points in the study, the importance and significance of the findings and the contribution to knowledge. The chapter includes limitations, practical applications and recommendations for further research.

1.10 Summary

In this chapter I have outlined the research problem and explained how trauma journalism is a relatively unexplored area of research in New Zealand. It also highlights how international research has identified, over the past two decades, the risks of ignoring traumatic stress.

Preliminary research established that trauma training is not a priority in New Zealand journalism schools. It has also found that the gender make-up of journalism programmes and the country’s newsrooms are now predominantly female, and that there is a disproportionate number of female journalism graduates in relation to the total number of women in newsrooms. These dynamics have influenced newsroom structures, which play an important role in this study, against a backdrop of an industry struggling with change and a no-fault support system.

This chapter also explains that by taking a social interactionist perspective for the theoretical framework and using in-depth interviews, participants provide rich insight into their experiences involving trauma work, which has never been recorded before.

Before considering the findings, it is important to consider previous research and the international background to trauma research.

Chapter 2 Theoretical framework and newsroom culture

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with an outline of the symbolic interactionism that is used as the theoretical framework for exploring newsrooms as micro cultures with their own socialisation processes, norms, values, routines and ideologies. The explanation of symbolic interactionism is followed by an introduction to interpretive interactionism, an adaptation of the symbolic approach, and a later variant, social constructivism. Three key concepts and fields of journalism studies research are then introduced to situate the study: socialisation, objectivity and emotionality. The second part of this chapter addresses important aspects affecting interactionism, including power structures in newsrooms and newsroom dynamics. The third part focuses on news values and why they change.

2.2 Symbolic interactionism

Symbolic interactionism, developed by sociologists and social psychologists, focuses on process and change in people and their social worlds (Benzies & Allen, 2001). It proposes that the meanings in life come from interpretations that humans make. These meanings are thought to emerge through interactions.

Symbolic interactionism developed from pragmatism, an approach that originated at the University of Chicago in the early 20th century. It was part of a reaction against scientific theories that objectified and quantified human experience. Pragmatism instead considered how people acted towards things based on the meanings they had for them, and how these meanings were modified through interpretation and social interaction with others (Charon, 2001).

Herbert Blumer (1969) defined the term *symbolic interactionism* by identifying three important components of human action – meaning, language and thought. For the symbolic interactionist, symbols could be both verbal and non-verbal. In his seminal work *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*, Blumer outlined three premises on which he based his theory. First, that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meaning that things have for them, for example, physical objects, other people or institutions. Second, the meaning of such things is derived from or arises out of social interaction with others. Third, these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he or she encounters

(p. 2). Blumer argued that the meaning or the value of an object may differ from one person to another: "... human beings interpret or 'define' each other's actions instead of merely reacting to each other's actions... this mediation is equivalent to inserting a process of interpretation between stimulus and response in the case of human behaviour" (p. 79).

Blumer based his interpretation on work mainly by George Herbert Mead (1910, 1913, 1922) and Mead's theories on language, and John Dewey's theories (1910, 1925, 1938) on environment and learning. However, Blumer rejected some of their ideas because of an emphasis on cognitive processing (Grosz, 1989). Instead of the conventional quantitative approach, based on questionnaires or tests, for example, Blumer (1969) preferred techniques that allowed the researcher to explore what was going on in someone's inner world.

Symbolic interactionism assumes that because people are social creatures they are also reflective. "Our ability to communicate with ourselves as well as with others allows us to think, recast and redirect our views and actions" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 270). Meanings may come from interactions but are shaped by the self-reflections that a person brings to them. Blumer (1969) considered self-interaction to be "interwoven with social interaction and influences that social interaction" (p. 153).

Variants of symbolic interactionism have evolved with the same goal, of trying to understand the complex world of lived experience from those who have lived it. For example, Denzin (1992) reformulated Blumer's version with what he termed *interpretive interactionism*. Interpretive interactionists study personal troubles and turning-point moments in the lives of interacting individuals (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Liao, 2004). Denzin (1992) argued that symbolic interactionists were clinging to pragmatism and still used positivist and post-positivist terms, for example, validity and theory. He was more interested in the "intersections of interaction, biography and social structure, in particular, historical moments" (p. 20).

Although Blumer's respect for the empirical world remained at the heart of Denzin's interpretive reformulation, Denzin incorporated cultural and feminist studies. Cultural studies encouraged the critical appraisal of how "interacting individuals connect their lived experiences to the cultural representation of those experiences" (Denzin, 1992, p. 74). Feminist studies introduced "the notion of considering the gender and class of both inquirer and respondent" (p. 161).

Denzin's earlier studies (1985, 1987, 1989) into areas such as emotions and alcoholism had led him to realise that there were multiple perspectives involved in social and cultural systems. He advocated focusing on what was missing, or "recognising that what subjects are able to say is culturally determined, sensitises the researcher to look for the gaps and silences in the data because what is 'not said' is equally and sometimes more telling of what the underlying social processes are" (Sundin & Fahy, 2008, p.13).

The third variant, *social constructivism*, takes interpretative interactionism a step further. Social constructivists turn their attention outward to the world of shared social constructions of meaning and knowledge (Schwandt, 1994). The social constructivist places priority on the phenomena being studied and considers both the data and analysis to be created from shared experiences and relationships with participants (Bryant, 2002; Charmaz, 2014). Researchers who follow this approach acknowledge the role of subjectivity, as well as their involvement in the construction and interpretation of their data. They also try to locate participants' meanings and actions in larger social structures and discourses of which they may be unaware. "Their meanings may reflect ideologies and their actions may reproduce current ideologies, social conventions, discourses and power relationships" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 241).

This third interpretation of constructivism, which had the most influence on this study, focuses on how and sometimes why participants construct meanings and actions in specific situations, then take a reflexive stance towards the research process, their interpretations and the implications:

What we define as data and how we look at them matters because these acts shape what we can see and learn. Without engaging in reflexivity, researchers may elevate their own tacit assumptions and interpretations to 'objective' status. Our assumptions, interactions – and interpretations – affect the social processes constituting each stage of inquiry. (Charmaz, 2014, p. 238)

A theory, from a social constructivist perspective, is therefore, influenced by the researcher's view because both the research participants as well as the researcher have their own interpretations of meanings and actions.

Having outlined the development of symbolic interactionism and the various ways of trying to explain the social worlds that some people inhabit, there are three key concepts and associated fields of research that are useful for situating this study: socialisation,

objectivity and emotionality. I will introduce appropriate examples, then show how and why each is valuable within the context of trauma journalism research.

2.3 Socialisation within newsrooms

This socialisation process provides a person with the skills necessary to survive in their society. How people are socialised into a newsroom has fascinated researchers for decades. “Journalists are socialized not just to feel part of a particular group but also to do things in a particular way and to that way as natural and desirable” (Singer, 2004, 841). Breed’s seminal study (1955) suggested that the socialisation process in newsrooms takes place by osmosis: instead of being told what or how to write, he proposed that journalists learned how to attain personal goals and avoid punishment by following an unspoken news policy.

First, it is necessary to explain newsroom culture, followed by a definition of norms, rules and routines and the role they play to create an ideology, based on shared values. Culture can be defined in various ways. It is a human creation that both facilitates and constrains human action (Bantz, 1997, p. 125). Cultures are created and maintained by the members who similarly influence how members understand the organisation. As such, organisational cultures involve expectations that define accepted patterns of action or norms. Willis (2010) suggested that norms and ethics are learned through “journalistic inbreeding” (p. 15) and that a journalist learns what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour from other journalists who learned it from other journalists. This can imply that spoken policy may be bypassed at times.

Norms specify what members of the group should do, ought to do and are expected to do, under given circumstances. Schudson (2001) referred to norms in newsrooms as obligations. Most of the norms in newsrooms are unspoken (Allan, 2004).

Rules are learned and understood as “things that journalists do” rather than as explicit rules of behaviour (Ryfe, 2009, p. 209). Sigelman (1973) observed that reporters were socialised into the profession in a “highly diffuse and extremely informal manner” (p. 137). Reporters interact with more experienced co-workers; watch how others gain success or accept criticism from editors; notice what happens to their stories – for example, whether they appear on the front page or not. Over a period of time, reporters learn the rules of journalism and demonstrate this learning by repeatedly doing *the right thing*.

Another important aspect of newsroom culture and the socialisation process is routines. Routines are used to help journalists recognise, produce and justify their selection and treatment of news stories (Cottle, 2007). Routines are often “unconscious” and may help to account for the relatively standardised form of news produced across news outlets (p. 3). Routines create consistency. “Although journalists, much like other professionals in the media industries, like to think of themselves as autonomous and creative individuals, in fact, most of the work at news outlets is based on a set of routine, standardized activities” (Deuze, 2008, p. 14).

2.4 Professional ideology

Norms, rules and routines that are repeated over time constitute a group’s ideology. Journalism ideology defines what is acceptable and what is not allowed in the profession (Rupar, 2006). Berkowitz (2009) has argued that there is often conflict between the spoken and unspoken ideologies (p. 106).

Deuze (2005) described journalistic ideology as a system with several different values that interact and to some degree might also contradict each other. Values are the shared assumptions of the group. Wilkins (2014) considered values to be a necessary building block of journalistic ethical choice. “But all ethical choice takes place in a context and some contexts are more conducive to ethical thinking and doing than others” (p. 49). Journalism as an occupational ideology develops and changes over time. It serves to continuously refine and determine who counts as a *real* journalist, and what parts of news media at any time can be considered to be examples of *real* journalism. These evaluations subtly shift over time, yet always serve to maintain the dominant sense of what is (and should be) journalism (Deuze, 2005). Ideology is a process, therefore, by which other ideas and views are also excluded or marginalised.

Deuze (2008) concluded that, although such a professional self-definition could vary depending on the organisation a journalist worked for, the elements that made up journalism’s ideology could be categorised into five ideal-typical values or traits that are generally shared among (or expected of) all journalists:

- Public service: journalists provide a public service (as watchdogs or ‘newshounds’, active collectors and disseminators of information);
- Objectivity: journalists are impartial, neutral, objective, fair and (thus) credible;
- Autonomy: journalists must be autonomous, free and independent in their work;

- Immediacy: journalists have a sense of immediacy, actuality and speed (inherent in the concept of ‘news’);
- Ethics: journalists have a sense of ethics, validity and legitimacy. (p. 447)

To sum up, professional ideology plays a critical role. But rather than have all the trappings of an institutionalised profession, such as doctors or lawyers, Zelizer (1997) proposed that journalists function as interpretive communities. An interpretive community is a group that develops shared interpretive strategies for making sense of the world.

Journalists feel that their definition of ideal values give legitimacy and credibility to what they do and they constantly reinforce them by talking about them every time they articulate, defend or critique the decisions they and their peers make, or when they are faced with criticisms by their audience, news sources, advertisers, or management. (Zelizer, 2004, p. 101)

Tacit understanding of professional ideology and policy comes from group interactions over time and is “socially learned through everyday life on the job” (Zelizer, 2004, p. 106). Because of these processes, Zelizer (2009) posited that individual preferences, values and attitudes matter little once journalists are socialised within newsrooms. To create and maintain their community, journalists use language or discourse to discuss everyday work and experiences. An interpretive community’s ability to adapt keeps the journalistic community intact and helps it retain its collective and authoritative voice (Zelizer, 2010). Because of changes in the media, Zelizer has proposed that journalists respond to their changing circumstances by doing what they have always done – “crafting adjustments to both their newsmaking routines and their interpretative strategies so as to keep the journalistic community intact” (p. 181). “Doing so maintains the relevance of collective interpretation in shaping what journalists do, the salience of their discourse, narrative and storytelling...”

Socialisation within newsrooms, therefore, is a complex process that involves important interactions through which journalists learn about norms, rules, routines and values that underpin their ideology and work culture. A major influence in how these aspects inter-relate is the social structure in a newsroom, a topic which has also fascinated researchers.

2.5 Power and position in the newsroom

It was Breed (1955) who initially outlined journalism society as a hierarchical social space, where each position is defined by its relationship to the other positions. He saw nothing natural about the social spaces in newsrooms, nor about journalism and argued that social forces within a newsroom shaped and constrained decisions. Breed considered editors to hold the power and that journalists were in the lower ranks of the hierarchy.

Bourdieu (1992, 1998, 2011), who was interested in the dynamics of power and the subtle ways in which it was transferred, proposed that the socialisation process in newsrooms was enhanced by interactions within what he termed the *journalistic field*. A *field* is a structured social space (Bourdieu, 2011), or a sphere that operates like a network which is ultimately responsible for human action. He used the metaphor of a game. “It contains people who dominate and others who are dominated. Constant, permanent relationships of inequality operate inside this space, which at the same time becomes a space in which the various actors struggle for the transformation or preservation of the field” (p. 40). Benson and Neveu (2005) interpreted Bourdieu’s field theory to mean that “Individuals do not simply act to maximise their rational self-interest” (p. 3). Instead, the social field in newsrooms became a source for competition. “Economic competition between networks or newspapers for viewers, readers, or for marketshare, takes place concretely in the form of a contest between journalists. The contest had its own, specific stakes – the scoop, the ‘exclusive’, professional reputations and so on” (Bourdieu, 2011, p. 41).

To advance their position in the *field*, journalists have to earn *capital*. Bourdieu (1992) described different forms of capital: *economic*, *cultural* or *symbolic*. Whereas economic capital referred to material wealth in the form of money or property, cultural capital could include knowledge, skills and other cultural acquisitions such as education. Symbolic capital could be accumulated power or status. Therefore, an important assignment – a journalist being dispatched to cover a disaster – could be interpreted as a symbolic reward because it was considered as a vote of confidence for that particular journalist. Winning awards for articles is similar. Using Bourdieu’s field theory (1998), trauma stories have become *currency*, and securing interviews with people who are grieving earns journalists symbolic capital over a period of time.

Bourdieu (1972) suggested that power was often maintained through the tacit internal industry rules or *doxa*. The term *doxa* is derived from the Greek word meaning common belief or popular opinion. *Doxa* in newsrooms is usually unwritten and often partially hidden from less powerful journalists. Bourdieu argued that *doxa* deliberately set limits to social mobility within a social field, such as a newsroom. Another important concept that Bourdieu (1998) introduced was *habitus*, a socialised subjectivity that gives a feel for the game. Benson and Neveu (2005) defined this as the mastering of a specific professional field.

A reward system, such as Bourdieu (1992) perceived, in turn reinforces professional ideals. Along with rewards and punishments, including admonishments from editors, comes a growing awareness in the minds of journalists as to what constitutes a *good* story (Willis, 2010). Award-winning journalists talk about “how I got that story” or “how I wrote that story and why”. Young journalists listen to stories from senior staff reinforcing how *good* journalists should behave. Willis, who studied journalistic decision-making, hypothesised that this was a very real form of indoctrination, especially for the younger journalists. Zelizer (1997) described this more as a “local mode of interpretation” (p. 409), whereby journalists establish “discursive markers” or recognition of their worth through events where their professional ideology was upheld. “The local mode of discourse displays an initial ‘tightness’ of the interpretive community” (p. 407). Such discourse maintains collective boundaries and teaches journalists what to do and what not to do. “The shared past through which journalists discursively set up and negotiate preferred standards of actions hinge on the recycling of stories about certain key events” (p. 404).

Symbolic patterns ultimately emerge within newsrooms which then become normalised. For example, deadlines and daily conflict are accepted conditions of newsroom culture (Bantz, 1997, p. 133). Such informal social communication creates pressure to conform to the group’s norms and can force a person to change their position in a group (Festinger, 1957). To maintain group membership, contact needs to be frequent. Although journalists have never consisted of highly organised groups such as police or military, camaraderie has been important and necessary to inculcate attitudes and behaviours. If the exchange of information is not face to face in the newsroom, or over a drink in a bar or press club, as was popular in the past, it is now often done online using social media (Barnes, forthcoming).

This section has discussed how journalists function as interpretive communities and how this keeps the group intact and adaptable to change, particularly through the use of shared discourse and local modes of interpretation. It also considered newsrooms as hierarchical social spaces and sites of power. Bourdieu's field theory, the power of *doxa* and symbolic rewards illustrated how layered and profound the cultivation of journalism ideology can be. The next section begins with a critical look at a key professional norm that defines journalism – the concept of objectivity.

2.6 Objectivity as a strategic ritual

One of the most debated and contested concepts in journalism studies is the concept of objectivity (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013a; Skovsgaard, Albaek, Bro, & de Vreese, 2013). Objectivity is a particular form of media practice, and a particular attitude to the task of information collection, processing and dissemination (McQuail, 2000). Objectivity requires allegiance to the principles of accuracy, fairness, balance and impartiality (Rupar & Broesma, 2010). The ideal of objectivity implies that journalists are impartial observers, who are "entirely neutral" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013a). But this ideal of objectivity is generally considered unattainable for a number of reasons "among them the inherent and unavoidable subjectivity of language" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013b, p. 302).

The reporter's voice or subjectivity comes through with their choice of words. Most stories are written through "hidden filters" (Richards, 2005), filters shaped by the culture of the journalist's life experiences, the culture of the media outlet, by things they saw or missed, by information disclosed or withheld by the journalist and the motives for doing so (p. 37). Wahl-Jorgensen (2013b) argues that subjectivity is necessary to engage an audience yet subjective journalism is a direct challenge to the paradigm of objectivity.

The objectivity norm has been *the* means employed by journalists to convince their audience that they produce reliable and valid descriptions of reality (Skovsgaard et al., 2013). "This legitimating function has made objectivity a beacon which guides the work journalists do – when they select, collect, and present the news" (p. 25). However, Skovsgaard et al. contend that the concept of objectivity is so broad that journalists need to interpret it on a daily basis.

The ideal of objective, non-biased reporting became institutionalised within American and British journalism culture throughout the 1920s. During this time, news topics were fact centred, for example, science and agricultural-based stories. Although the process was gradual, it reached the point of “near-obsession” (Allan, 2004, p. 23).

Initially, early journalism did not distinguish between fact and opinion, but by the end of the 19th century, publishers and editors erased the subjective viewpoint (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013b). Part of the drive towards objectivity was profit driven (Hedges, 2010) “to avoid confronting unpleasant truths or angering a power structure on which news organisations depend for access and profits” (para. 2). As the nature of the media industry and its public service role changed, so did the content which was toned down.

Soloski (1989) has argued that “objectivity is the most important professional norm, and from it flows more specific aspects of news professionalism, such as news judgment, the selection of sources and the structure of news beats” (p. 213). However, a number of media scholars (Fishman, 1980; Schudson, 2001; Skovsgaard et al., 2013; Tuchman, 1972, 1997; Zelizer, 1993) have argued that objectivity is an impossible standard for journalists to achieve. “Objectivity is supposed to be cool, rather than emotional, in tone. Objectivity is at once a moral ideal, a set of reporting and editing practices and an observable pattern of news writing” (Schudson, 2001, p. 150). Rupar (2006) perceived objectivity as a three-fold notion: an ideal – a desired mode of practice; a process – a method of newsgathering; and an account – in relation to reality. However, it is the first notion that has lingered. The last meaning of objectivity – an account of reality – is the most contested.

Tuchman (1972) considered objectivity to be a strategic ritual that journalists could use as a survival mechanism. It helped them “accomplish their deadlines, maintain their standing in the eyes of their superiors, and affected the ability of the news organisation to make a profit” (p. 664). Schudson (2001) instead perceived the ritual to be a “means of social control and social identity” (p. 165).

Hallin (1992) has argued that objectivity belongs to a past era of journalism, the serious, “professional” days which no longer exist because of the complex interaction between political, economic, technological and social factors. Richards and Rees (2011) agree. They described objectivity as “a lurking legacy of the 19th-century positivism for journalists” (p. 863). Objectivity implied that journalists were emotionless and could not be affected by their work (Hedges, 2010). Hedges has blamed the objectivity

paradigm for turning journalists into neutral observers who were “permitted to watch but not to feel or to speak their own voices” (para. 2). Instead, they have been expected to function as “professionals” and “see themselves as dispassionate and disinterested social scientists” (para. 2). That was because objectivity has been synonymous with journalists remaining detached.

At its ideal, the emotional work of the journalist is aimed at the erasement [sic] of the individual news-worker through the suppression of emotion – the idea that for objectivity, the ‘I’ is repressed for the journalist to function as a ‘transparent conduit’ for information that will enrich society. (Hopper & Huxford, 2015, p. 29)

But with many Western news outlets including more emotive content, where grief and trauma have become news staples, objectivity has caused confusion and ambivalence for journalists (Côte & Simpson, 2000). Veteran Australian journalist Helen Garner (2014) observed young journalists who covered the trial of a man who drove into a dam with his three young children strapped to the back seat of his vehicle. Her book captured the horrifying evidence and reactions when the verdicts were read out.

They [the journalists] hugged each other and rushed away. One of the young women was six months’ pregnant; her face had turned yellow and she stood still with one hand pressed against her belly. The boy who was covering his first murder trial touched my arm and stared at me, white-eyed and unable to speak. (Garner, 2014, p. 197)

Journalists cannot always be emotionless, detached observers (Massé, 2011). Yet, belonging to the group is important for an interpretive community and that implies adhering to the journalistic principles of objectivity (Tuchman, 1972; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013a). Duncan and Newton (2010) have argued that the death-knock interview is “arguably one of the most challenging tasks a journalist will perform in their career” (p. 440), yet novice journalists are often dispatched to carry them out. Covering court can also be as challenging.

2.7 Emotional labour

Emotional labour is the process of managing feelings and expressions in order to fulfill the requirements of a job (Hochschild, 1979). To cope with trauma, emotional labour can be described as “putting on a mask” to hide one’s true feelings. All relationships and communication itself involve some level of emotional labour, however, the nature of journalists’ work requires constantly engaging in emotional labour, for example, in interactions with sources. Journalists often need “to suppress, fake or enhance emotions

during interactions based on the particular display rules advocated by their organisation” (Hopper & Huxford, 2015, p. 25).

Because professional and organisational norms underpin what journalists should or should not display or feel, they adapt to cope. Hopper and Huxford (2015) referred to this process as the cognitive loop: doing the job helps to suppress emotions, while suppressing emotions helps do the job.

Emotional labour can assist with job satisfaction, especially when emotions are aligned. However Hochschild (1983) warned that emotional labour could be inherently harmful if emotional misalignment always existed. “Emotional labour is often difficult because it requires individuals to manipulate their own naturally occurring feelings that are central to their identity as human beings.”

Emotional labour can involve two levels of behaviour, which Goffman (1959) termed surface acting and deep acting. According to Goffman, surface acting is faking; it involves deceiving others about how they feel, although it is not usually very convincing. Deep acting is more persuasive: “Individuals actually change how they feel to fit the requirements of their work roles” (Hopper & Huxford, 2015, p. 27).

Although emotional labour can benefit some organisations, it can also have negative cognitive effects. Hochschild (1983) linked emotional labour to *emotional dissonance*, the strain caused when someone was faking how they felt and what they were truly feeling. Emotional dissonance is different from *cognitive dissonance*, which is the incompatibility between two cognitions (Festinger, 1957). However, they are linked, especially when something challenges existing knowledge.

Learning is meant to be a gradual and cumulative process. People grow and learn if they challenge their comfort zone, which is part of cognitive development (Piaget, 1977). Piaget argued that the process of accommodation was required to maintain equilibrium or balance. Accommodation is the driving force that impels people to either assimilate new experiences into their existing behaviours or modify existing ways of thinking or acting to include new experiences. What is assimilated or accommodated depends on a person’s needs. Piaget found that when there was any form of cognitive conflict or imbalance, people would seek ways to limit the discomfort or *cognitive dissonance*.

If the experiences were too far out of a person’s normal range of activities to be accommodated cognitively, they could cause confusion, or *cognitive dissonance*

(Festinger, 1957). Festinger's theory assumes that people have an overarching need for cognitive balance or consistency. If the dissonance cannot be resolved, the outcome could be stress, burn-out or an estrangement from self (Hochschild, 1983). Cognitive dissonance theory is based on the premise that people will interpret an experience or event to a point to maintain consistency between their beliefs and actions. When faced with a situation where there is conflict, people may reduce their dissonance or imbalance until mental harmony is restored. If a person is completely outside their comfort zone, they could display physiological responses, such as an increase in heart rate and psychological reactions such as a feeling of panic.

2.8 The death-knock narrative – an axis of change?

Covering trauma presents a challenge to journalists. If journalists connect emotionally, there is a concern that they risk losing their objectivity, which in turn could affect their ability to fulfil their "professional" role (Novak & Davidson, 2013).

The death-knock narrative could be an axis of change. This type of news story makes it an ideal subject for a constructivist grounded theory study, because meanings can change if something becomes problematic (Charmaz, 2006). Wahl-Jorgensen (2013a) has predicted an increasing move towards subjective journalism because she regards emotionality as central to journalistic story-telling. Rather than threatening the institutionalised ideals, she considers them complementary. "Unlike the ideal of objectivity, which is central to journalistic lore, the strategic ritual of emotionality constitutes a form of tacit knowledge, implicit in journalistic socialisation processes and everyday work" (p. 130). She also noted that the use of emotionality earns cultural capital in the journalism field, particularly in Pulitzer prizes (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013b). Because subjective language earns symbolic capital in the field (Bourdieu, 1992), she predicted journalists would work towards using it.

Some journalists would argue that emotionality is vital to a story anyway. Harrington (1997) described emotions as life. But they are also complex. For example, a smile as an observable response to emotion does not have a single meaning; it could mean happiness or anxiety. (This was observed in students practicing death-knocks interviews who did not understand why they smiled when they did not mean to). Anxiety as an emotion can involve a facial expression, physiological responses such as sweating or nausea and observable behavior such as fidgeting. There may be strong emotional

expressions, such as crying or less emotional expressions, for example, long silences (Pantti, 2010).

Emotion in public discourse has historically been denigrated, considered the polar opposite of rationality, where facts and reason pervade (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013b,) but it is gaining ground in news reporting, becoming a new news value (Meyer, 2003; Pantti, 2013). Tumber and Prentoulis (2003) suggest that the 9/11 terrorist attacks on New York accelerated “the trend towards embracing emotion as a legitimate part of the journalistic culture” (Pantti, 2013, p. 170).

Emotions can capture attention therefore they are a central device in all narratives. As Pantti (2010) found, emotions engaged by story-telling can make ‘serious’ news categories more interesting and intelligible. Disasters, accidents, violent episodes, child abuse are all emotional topics which lend themselves to a specific type of narrative.

The narrative construction of death-knock stories invites subjectivity on the part of the journalist. Journalists are expected to set the scene (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013a) or paint a picture with detail and description, which is a different genre from traditional news reporting. Rosen (1996) has suggested that the change in reporting styles and shift in subjectivity is the result of the inability of conventional journalism to “connect” the audience – and that the narrative brings about emotional reactions in audiences (Shapiro, 2006).

The journalist who writes a death-knock narrative, as opposed to the more traditional inverted pyramid style of reporting, tells a story by reordering and reshaping information, facts and events (Matheson, 2000).

By not including emotions in stories, Harrington (1979) affirmed that “readers are being denied a look at much of the world they inhabit” (p. xii). Beckett (2016) considered the role of emotions as critical to journalism, especially as news adapts to become part of social media. First, because competition in the media has become intense, he viewed the inclusion of emotions as an economic necessity, especially when there were many distractions from the news. Second, he argued that emotional cues helped attract attention and prolonged engagement with the reader, listener or viewer. Emotions might also encourage people to share content, which he proposed would become increasingly important for the survival of the media. Third, Beckett argued that people responded more favourably to emotion than to facts. He also predicted the end of objectivity as it

existed because journalism was reinventing itself as a “powerful mix of emotion and relativism”.

In summary, this section has explained the role of objectivity and its influence in newsrooms and how the emotionality has destabilised a traditional mode of practice. The death-knock narrative, which inherently includes emotions, is challenging newsroom norms and increasing the pressure to address the tension between objectivity and emotionality. The existing undercurrent of opposing forces leads to a discussion about the concept of balance and emotions.

2.9 Emotionality as a strategic ritual

Socialisation and newsroom culture have determined how emotions are acknowledged, understood and managed. For example, there is a “general prohibition” on journalists talking about the emotional aspects of their work (Richards & Rees, 2011, p. 863). One way around this, as Wahl-Jorgensen (2013a) suggested, is to view emotionality as a strategic ritual alongside objectivity. She found that emotional story-telling was the driving force behind award-winning journalism by studying Pulitzer Prize-winning articles between 1995-2011 but that there were specific conventions. For example, journalists learn it is not acceptable to express their own emotions as “emotional expression is heavily policed and disciplined” (p. 130). But Wahl-Jorgensen asserts that journalists have found a “neat trick” so that the rituals of objectivity and emotional complement each other. Journalists provide the facts then interject them with quotes, thereby “outsourcing” emotions to the story’s protagonists and other sources.

Journalists who write death-knock stories are expected to capture facts and feelings (Kitch, 2000). This involves retelling the deceased’s story using quotes from sources to infuse emotion. Emotive or eulogistic quotes from close family and friends are a prerequisite for such stories and the “language of the quotes should reflect the pain and suffering of the bereaved” (Duncan, 2012, p. 592). As a result, death-knock narratives have become formulaic and are often written without much thought (Lyall, 2012).

Consequently, journalists often live with tension in the newsroom as they learn to juggle the ideal of objectivity and incorporate emotionality. One way of doing this is for journalists to perpetuate the notion that objectivity is aligned with superior reporting styles and introduce into journalism culture the concept of “closure”, or “wrapping up” (Richards & Rees, 2011, p. 858). (The topic of “closure” will be addressed in the next

section). Also, journalists are “programmed to get the full story immediately” (Walsh-Childers, Lewis, & Neely, 2011, p. 201). This involves covering a story quickly, then moving on to the next one without thinking too much or reflecting on the story they have just completed. This perpetuates the professional ideal of “transience and inconsequentiality” (Richards & Rees, 2011, p. 864).

Journalists have ascribed to themselves the power of interpretation by favouring a certain narrative (Zelizer, 1997). In so doing, they have developed emotion display rules for journalists to follow (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007). Such a change of interpretation involves adjustment to newsroom ideology, as discussed in Chapter 2.4. “A narrative’s repetition in the news may have as much to do with connecting journalists with each other as it does with audience comprehension or message delay” (Zelizer, 1997, p. 404).

2.10 Changing news values

As signalled in Chapter 1, the main goal of any news organisation is to generate profit, especially by targeting audiences that are attractive to advertisers. Determining what is news is up to an editor and his or her interpretation of the most important news elements or *news values* of the day. News values provide editors with a guide for determining newsworthiness. Trauma, death and near-death are newsworthy events because they often combine several news values.

Stories related to death have always been newsworthy (Harrington, 1997; Kitch, 2009) but their reportage and their presentation, has changed. Detailed reports of suicides, hangings and murders were commonplace in the 19th century. They were usually covered by “sob sisters”, women journalists who wrote lurid “sob stories”, to play up the emotional side of a story, such as a court case (Shapiro, 2006). Details were vivid leaving no detail to the imagination.

In 1965, Galtung and Ruge identified 12 factors which had become established news values in the Western media: frequency; threshold (for example, the number of casualties involved in an accident (Harcup & O’Neill, 2001); unambiguity (how easy a story was to understand); meaningfulness (relevance to the readers); consonance (predictability); unexpectedness (or rarity); continuity (topicality); composition (to fill a space in a newspaper, for example, or to balance light and heavy news); reference to elite nations; reference to elite (or famous) people; reference to people (personifying stories); and reference to negativity. Negative events are the basis of “spot” news, such

as accidents or drownings (Harcup, 2009). Generally, the more news values in a story, the more newsworthy it is.

However, news values can change (Allan, 2004) and economic pressures increasingly influence journalistic decisions (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013). Lyall (2012), an Australian journalist who suffered as a result of her trauma work, summed up how she viewed the the current approach to news values: “The most newsworthy story is the most startling, the most unexpected, the most shocking” (p. 29).

Gans (2004) identified the importance of giving a narrative a human interest angle. By personalising an issue or event, the story seems more relevant to the audience. For example, a “hero” story is considered a good way to make a complex story appeal to readers by focusing on the “common man” as the hero of the story. These changes, argued Masterton (1998), were part of evolution in news: the representation of death adapting because of changes in news values. He proposed that the increase in the prominence of human interest stories became a news value in its own right. He defined “human interest” as people wanting to know about other people, which included “almost anything which stirs human emotion in any way” (p. 97).

Because of their wide appeal, human interest articles have become the first read in newspapers (Masterton, 1998) and popular online (Schaudt & Carpenter, 2009). With newspapers moving away from breaking news stories, more narrative-style stories began appearing (Duncan, 2012). These articles were written in a way in which the reporter has become the narrator, or the story-teller, whose job it was to ensure emotional engagement for the reader.

News values have continued to evolve and change with new technology. Harcup and O’Neill (2001) added sub-categories, which were originally labelled as tabloid news values. These began to appear in traditional media, for example, if a story lent itself to a photo opportunity, made reference to sex or animals, included humour or was related to showbiz or television: “A certain combination of news values would almost guarantee coverage in the press” (p. 267).

2.11 Why the increase in trauma content?

There are several arguments as to why death-knock articles and other forms of traumatic content, for example, explicit court hearings, have become popular. Each is outlined and discussed as follows:

2.11.1 Local bonding

First, the increase in the death-knock narrative reflects journalism's changing function within communities (Duncan, 2012; Kitch, 2009). Kitch (2009) has suggested that news now serves a social purpose, by affirming collective identity. Rather than simply reporting the facts of a fatality, such news stories now go beyond that "to making death publicly and nationally meaningful" (p. 30). By doing so, a story can reinforce pride for a nation. Her theory would explain why a former media manager for a national Sunday paper, who participated anonymously in this study, considered the ultimate front-page story would include three distinctly powerful news values. He referred to them as the Holy Trinity: an All Black crashing his car into a house in Auckland – elite person, proximity and negativity. The New Zealand rugby team, the All Blacks, are national icons and heroes and, therefore, fit within the news value category of "elite people", so any story about them is likely to appeal to a majority of readers. Add to that, the location, in the country's largest city, where it would be easy for journalists to attend the scene and secure photographs or video footage. The third element, an accident, preferably involving others, would be guaranteed to sell newspapers.

The example Kitch (2009) used was from the Iraqi war (2003-2011), when American soldiers who were killed became *news characters*, or *symbols*, in the search for the narrative and the need for an ending – the journalistic news construct of *closure*. "Generalised feelings, anchored by national pride, win out over fact or context. Private emotions become presumably public ones, as the audience is encouraged to feel part of the heroism and solidarity" (p. 36).

An All Black may be a hero in New Zealand culture, but a "hero" does not need to have been selected for a national team or to serve their country. The people who died as a result of the 2011 Christchurch earthquake confirmed this as many were not heroes in the usual sense of the word. Such stories "described the victims as typical people with hopes and dreams just like any of us" (Kitch, 2009, p. 31).

But it does not necessarily have to be a celebrity who dies to earn front-page exposure. As Duncan (2012) observed, it can depend on how an ordinary person dies as to whether they attain celebrity-like status in the hands of a journalist. Part of this transition has been the various formats the death-knock narrative takes. Its versatility has been advantageous for the media, as one death can translate into a number of stories. First, there is the initial event story, when the newsworthy death is announced in

the news. “The story leads with the death, its unusualness and some form of public involvement, such as the discovery of the body” (p. 594). By unusualness, she was referring to the unexpected aspect of the death, for example, a stabbing or fall from a high-rise building, that is, something out of the ordinary. The focus at that stage of the death narrative is on who died and how they died. The emphasis is placed on any elements of tragedy and surprise, for example, Four killed after a joy ride on a beach.

The follow-up “tribute-driven” story focuses on the grieving, the bereaved families and the “expression of their devastation at the loss of their loved one” where the journalist “extols the positive characteristics of the deceased, emphasising the loss of potential, their status within the family or community” (Duncan, 2012, p. 594). The details of how the people actually died become secondary at this point. Others stories may be generated from the one death, such as the anniversary of the death or a subsequent court case.

2.11.2 Filling a gap

Second, the death-knock story has become a byproduct of a newsroom routine. As established earlier in this chapter (2.3), news organisations revolve around routines, “those patterned, routinised, repeated practices and forms that media workers use to do those their jobs” (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 105). In the case of the death-knock story, the routine entails being in regular communication with police, ambulance and fire services. Molotch and Lester (1974) identified that some routines were now so entrenched that they have become professional norms of what is considered *good* journalism (p. 255). The death-knock narrative has become a routine response, and routine behaviour, in turn, creates news (Becker & Vlad, 2009).

The ubiquitous death-knock story, therefore, meets the demand of newsroom managers in need of stories with a quick turnaround. But the ritual practice is being increasingly questioned. McKay (2007) opposed the practice because she considered intruding into a family’s grief and shock as a “low-rent way to make a living” and considered the justifications for such stories as spurious “as any journalist knows deep down” (p. 51). Berkowitz (1997), however, argued that trauma-related events were integral to journalism because they were considered newsworthy. “Everyone needs news. In everyday life, news tells us what we do not experience directly and thus renders otherwise remote happenings observable and meaningful” (p. 193).

2.11.3 Private to public

Third, there has been an increase in the number of violent and traumatic events which have become news staples (Coté & Simpson, 2000), to the point at which Kitch (2009) stated that current journalism has been “saturated with tears and trauma” (p. 29). This has particularly been the case in the United States since the terrorist attacks on New York in September 2011. The change of focus, which Kitch termed the “emotional shift” (p. 30), has also been appeared in more conservative media, which is traditionally more objective.

Along with the increased frequency of stories related to death have been changes in the perception of death. Rather than being a taboo and private subject, death is now talked about openly, having moved from the private realm into public discourse in Western societies (Hanusch, 2010). Wouters (1992) has suggested that there has been an emancipation of emotions as part of the informalisation in society, as private becomes more public (p. 231). With the relaxation of social rules, it is now more acceptable to show emotions. Yet, control of emotions can earn status (Gatta, 2002).

The emancipation of emotions has allowed for society to loosen restraints on behaviours for individuals to achieve levels of social status. His/her ability to state and recognise these potentially dangerous emotions and then act on them, has a precarious balance that individuals and not the society maintains. The ability to control these impulses then becomes a measure of the social status of the individual. (Gatta, 2002, p. 18)

As societal rules change, news text must adapt as well. News stories are no longer simple facts or serious scientific discourse (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013b). News has relaxed and is less formal as editors and journalists adjust their perception of their role in society. Part of that adaptation is in deciding what readers want and how they want their news delivered to them.

However, Ochberg (1999) has described current trauma coverage as unbalanced. He envisaged trauma news as three acts, all of which involve stories, he argued, must be told. He described Act 1 as the lurid and alluring traumatic event; Act 2, as the hard but hopeful path from victim to survivor; and finally, Act 3, the struggle to find meaning when there is none, when something evil has occurred, for example, the Holocaust. Ochberg attributed part of the reason for trauma stories in the news as fulfilling a need created from repeated fairy tales about good and evil. But he also considered the move towards more violent images and the coverage of extreme events as necessary in human

survival. Stories about victims could be interpreted as fairy tales for adults with their heroes and villains. He justified the need to hear these types of stories as preparation for unexpected events and the subsequent sensations of shock and fear. He did not consider an appetite for violence as depraved, but as part of the human struggle for survival. He also recognised the need for what he termed mental representation of extreme events. This, Ochberg surmised, is why editors tend to feature images of accidents and disasters. He perceived the media and audience as having a symbiotic relationship, thereby meeting each others' needs. But he noted that when it involves people directly, it is a different matter.

Competition for audience attention is part of media business, and we the audience attend to violence. We always have, always will, and must. Act One of any factual story about crime, cruelty, violence or trauma will create arousal, interest and paradoxical emotion. The only time a trauma story is pure horror is when it is about us. (Ochberg, 1999, Act 1, para. 3)

Ochberg recommended that journalists should wait until Act 2 before they write their stories, that is, once the initial shock for victims' families and friends has passed. Rather than focusing on the victim and all the negative connotations associated with the term, he advocated for stories that focus on the survivors and their recovery. He justified this delayed approach because, after a traumatic event, victims are usually in a "fog" and can be unreliable witnesses. He also proposed that survivor stories should lead the news and that disaster stories be expanded to include reflections by survivors. He argued that Act 2 stories could be just as compelling and newsworthy as Act 1's gruesome articles.

However, Ochberg admitted that survivor stories are harder to find and more difficult to format, so Act 1 stories are often overdone and sensationalised. As a result, he deduced that readers or viewers have become addicted to Act 1 stories and dismissed those in Act 2 as "saccharine or simply not newsworthy" (Balancing Acts section, para. 3).

2.11.4 Death sells

Some scholars have attributed the shift in trauma content to the fact that editors have recognised the selling power of death (Franklin, 2013). Competition among the media has exacerbated that pressure. "The more intense the competition, the more shocking must be the portrayal of violent deaths; and the more used we get to violence in the news, the more explicitly it must be portrayed if we are to take notice" (Walter,

Littlewood, & Pickering, 1995, p. 583). This has led to increasingly sensationalised news coverage, where the adage “when it bleeds, it leads” rules (Hanusch, 2010, p. 13). A study of the number of stories related to death on the front page of the country’s largest metropolitan daily newspaper, *The New Zealand Herald* (Barnes & Edmonds, 2015) over a six-decade time period found increased prominence. Although a statistical analysis was not possible – as the newspaper changed its format from broadsheet to tabloid – the number of stories was estimated to have increased almost four-fold.

2.11.5 Public ritual

Trauma journalism can play an important role in helping a community to heal. For example, in the aftermath of the Christchurch earthquake in 2011, journalists provided much-needed information to the public (Scanlon, 2014), supplying information as well as encouraging solidarity.

Another public ritual of the media has been obituaries. These tributes to people in a community have often filled columns of text towards the back of daily newspapers. But as the media has changed to include more trauma stories, death has been propelled towards the front pages. As a result, trauma coverage has become a form of public mourning, which Kitch (2000) proposed was a logical and useful function of journalism because of the modern attitudes towards death. This is most evident when there has been a death of a celebrity, most recently David Bowie and Prince in 2016. Interviews with grieving fans have become a form of tribute. The death of a celebrity has become an “unstable public moment in which people feel compelled to assess their identities and beliefs” (Kitch, 2000, p. 174).

2.11.6 Education about the inevitable

When death is closer to home, people connect with a story, especially in a small country where the chances of knowing someone involved is likely. By focusing on a relative of a victim and personalising their story, journalists can make even the most unbelievable stories more real – and the audience gets to experience pain at a safe arm’s length (Kitch, 2000). People are eager to know who was affected and how, yet are grateful they were not involved. Kitch sees the positive aspects of such news stories, which is a way of memorialising and paying tribute to such people. The deceased person, therefore, has achieved *fame*, which Kitch has suggested is a kind of secular religion in today’s society. Just as the death of a celebrity unsettles people, she has predicted that people view these ordinary-extraordinary deaths in the same way. These stories appear to

connect readers with death: it becomes a time to reassess and consider their own mortality. Ochberg (1999) has suggested that reading such ritual stories about death at a safe distance may help people come to terms with the inevitability of their own demise, as a form of gentle preparation for what is ahead for everybody.

2.12 Summary

This chapter has established the theoretical framework which underpinned this study. It outlined the background to symbolic interactionism and key variants related to this study including the leading scholars. The contrasting perceptions of the roles of meaning, language and thought provided the basis on which to unravel the complexities of socialisation within newsrooms. An analysis of the subtleties of the socialisation process demonstrated how journalists can function as interpretive communities and how control can be maintained through newsroom culture based on norms, routines, rules and values. By incorporating Bourdieu's concepts of *doxa*, *habitus* and *capital* in the discussion, it permits the researcher to go beyond the explicit and see how firmly fixed newsroom ideology can be.

A detailed analysis of the norm of objectivity added essential background to the argument that the death-knock narrative has become the locus for change between reporting facts and the introduction of emotions into news stories and the challenges that can create for journalists. This chapter also explored the varied reasons for the rise in trauma content in the media and the death-knock narrative by exploring the background to news values and how these change over time. Finally, it was worthwhile outlining how the perception of death has changed and why, as it helped to explain the shift in trauma content in the media. The next chapter examines the history of journalism and trauma and how the newsroom has had to adapt to changes, as well as what can happen if traumatic stress is not monitored or recognised.

Chapter 3 Trauma and journalism

3.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by outlining the history of trauma journalism and explains why New Zealand journalists have become the focus of research. To understand the varied attitudes to the effects of trauma and to trauma training, it is necessary to review the early newsroom culture that considered journalists to be dispensable. This chapter also addresses the changing role of women in some newsrooms, particularly now more women are covering trauma, and how that can affect newsroom dynamics.

It is important to consider gender as an issue in this study of trauma journalism because preliminary research indicated that half of the junior newspaper journalists in New Zealand – who also contribute online material – are female (Barnes, 2015b). Also, more than 75 percent of graduates completing the journalism major as part of their Communication Studies degree at Auckland University of Technology – the largest programme in the country – are female. The trends towards more females in newsrooms are strong (Hannis et al., 2014).

3.2 The history of trauma journalism

Research into trauma journalism is relatively new. It began after the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing and the Columbine mass shooting in the United States, when news organisations began to acknowledge that journalists could suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the most chronic form of traumatic injury that can affect a person. Until the mid 1990s, trauma and journalism had been studied as separate subjects (Simpson & Boggs, 1999). The seminal work on journalism and trauma *Covering violence: A guide to ethical reporting about victims and trauma* (Coté & Simpson, 2000) is still relevant because it addresses topical issues. Initially, the research focused on war correspondents (Feinstein, Owen, & Blair, 2002; Feinstein, 2006). War reporting is now well recognised as a high risk factor for both direct and indirect trauma (Himmelstein & Faithorn, 2002). The effects of indirect trauma on domestic journalists, however, was less explored for many reasons, including its invisibility and that lack of cachet that such a title as foreign correspondent carries with it.

In the past two decades, scholars have moved the spotlight to domestic journalists, to those journalists who deal with trauma on a regular basis (Simpson & Boggs, 1999; Rees, 2007). Ongoing research has demonstrated that journalists who witness traumatic

and disaster events are at risk of physical, emotional and psychological injury (Keats, 2012). Initially, Simpson and Boggs (1999) established that general reporters are at a similar risk to that of uniformed first responders, namely police, paramedics and fire crews who attend traumatic incidents. They found that journalists could suffer as a result of direct exposure to trauma, such as seeing dead bodies, or from indirect or secondary exposure, for example, from listening to witness accounts. This was significant as studies suggested that up to 98 percent of print journalists were exposed to work-related trauma (Rees, 2007). It has also been established that traumatic stress was not always visible and that the effects could be cumulative (Newman & Nelson, 2012; Rees, 2007). “Court reporters, for example, may spend hours listening to minutely documented accounts of abuse, where every act of cruelty, casual or premeditated is dated and referenced. The cumulative effect can start to affect their relationships outside the courtroom” (Rees, 2007, p. 67). For example, a court reporter might write up a news story about the murder of a child, but she or he then needs to act as a censor and select only certain details for print that will have been exposed in the courtroom.

It has also been established that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among journalists is higher than among the general population. A systematic international review of the literature by Aoki, Malcolm, Yamaguchi, Thornicroft and Henderson (2012) found the overall prevalence of PTSD among journalists from 11 studies ranged from 0 percent to 33 percent. The average for the population is 7.9 percent.

Although the research focused on occupation-specific risks for journalists is limited, there has been enough evidence to suggest that there are specific risk factors of increased psychological reaction. Feinstein (2006) highlighted three: identifying with the situation or local people involved; being in potentially life-threatening danger; and witnessing the death of a close friend or colleague. Other established risk factors include previous exposure to potentially traumatic assignments; being exposed to a number of grotesque details during a work assignment and a lack of post-event social support (Backholm & Idås, 2015; Backholm & Björkqvist, 2010; Berrington & Jemphrey, 2003; Pyevich, Newman, & Daleiden, 2003).

To understand why trauma journalism was initially not considered as an area of research, it is necessary to examine traditional newsrooms. I first outline why journalism as a profession became recognised for its hard-drinking, aloof and unflappable men. Then I discuss the divisions that evolved as women joined

newsrooms. The chapter continues with a reflection of international research for both men and women in regards to psychological risks and key factors related to trauma work. It concludes by discussing the argument for trauma training and newsroom support, before outlining the situation in New Zealand.

3.3 Macho image of a journalist

Newsrooms were traditionally full of men who adhered to a culture that denied emotions or self-care (Newman & Ochberg, 2012). The stereotypical American journalist was a man who dressed poorly and drank heavily and who was committed to a life of sacrifice where “the newspaper was everything and the journalist nothing” (Fedler, 2004, p. 83). Long days were routine and usually more suited to men, as women did most of the child-rearing. The life of a journalist was also unpredictable, although part of the appeal was not knowing what job would be covered from day to day, sometimes hour to hour. In those early years, no one had a byline or an opinion, and yelling at staff was the norm (Fedler, 2004).

The industry thrived on insecurity, especially at the turn of the 20th century. “Because they easily could replace even a dozen reporters, editors considered them expendable and interchangeable. Some editors thought shakeups revitalised their staffs [sic], making them more alert and motivating everyone to work harder” (Fedler, 2004, p. 88). As a result, many journalists were burned-out and useless by their mid-20s.

Many journalists used alcohol to help deal with overpowering emotions and numb the pain (Underwood, 2011). In the not so distant past, to be a hard-drinking journalist was considered a badge of honour. “By tradition, journalists are seldom people who are candid about their inner life or confide in each other about their problems when a drink is available as an alternative” (p. 176). Joseph (1983) found reporters were more than twice as likely as the general population to be alcoholics. Feinstein et al. (2002) noted that journalists were heavy drinkers and also identified high rates of substance abuse.

Traditionally, journalists dealt with stress in different ways, which Fedler (2004) systematised into four options, which were mostly dysfunctional. “First, some distanced themselves psychologically from what they saw. Second, some turned to alcohol and tobacco for solace. Third, others broke under the strain. Fourth, still others quit their jobs, or abandoned the newspaper industry altogether” (p. 82). Part of the stress came from the pressure of not admitting their work was affecting them. Even now, journalists

are still generally reluctant to admit to any traumatic effects from their work, even though it is now well recognised that journalists suffer from trauma as a consequence of their work (Dworznic, 2011; Keats & Buchanan, 2009). The traditional culture has resulted in journalists neither being sufficiently informed about risks involved in their work, nor supported in terms of mental health problems (Pieton, 2009; Simpson & Boggs, 1999).

3.4 Women in newsrooms

Women began to enter newsrooms in the late 19th century. Traditionally, in Western newsrooms, there has been a divide between males and females, where men covered the masculine genres of hard news, such as politics, business, technology and science (North, 2009), and women were relegated to the lower status, softer sections, for example, lifestyle, arts and features. “Prestige areas of news production remain largely dominated by men, particularly the high-status category of politics, as well as business and sport” (Chambers & Steiner, 2010).

As discussed in Chapter 2, newsrooms operate as hierarchies, controlled by patriarchal norms and values (Allan, 2004). These practices operated as conformity mechanisms that socialised all journalists, regardless of gender (Rodgers & Thorson, 2003). In time, newsrooms tended to socialise women to accept masculine values and these values were then translated into content that better served the interests of males (Beam & Di Cicco, 2010).

Melin-Higgins (2004) argued that female journalists coped in a masculine culture by adopting one of four tactics: either opting out of mainstream newspapers; taking softer jobs in the industry; creating a parallel environment they could specialise in; or adopting the masculine traits, i.e. “becoming one of the boys” (p. 212). She used the term *tactics*, which implied these women’s actions were less deliberate than strategies. Strategies, to use De Certeau’s (1988) warfare term, were viewed as strong and powerful, whereas the weak tended to use tactics. “Just as a strategy is organised by the holders of power, a tactic is determined by the absence of power and limited by the possibilities of the moment” (p. 198). What Melin-Higgins implied was that deception was necessary at times when gendered power play was in action in newsrooms.

Despite adopting these tactics, there has been a global trend for women to leave newspaper newsrooms at a significant rate, although there has not been agreement over

the reasons why (Melin-Higgins, 2004; North, 2009; Strong, 2011). Whereas men have found it difficult to survive with bosses who could be bullies (Fedler, 2004), women found it even more difficult. They were paid less than men, given less important assignments and sometimes sexually harassed by editors (Fedler, 2004). Some women still experience outright sexism in newsrooms (Chambers & Steiner, 2010).

Workplace bullying has been shown to be a major cause of stress and psychological harm for employees and is a widespread problem in contemporary working life (Bentley et al., 2012). It affects not only the target but also observers. Targets of bullying are likely to have lower self-esteem, more negative emotions, anxiety, stress, fatigue, burn-out and depression than non-targets (p. 352). A lack of intervention in such a situation is evidence of the *bystander effect* (Darley & Latané, 1968). Otherwise known as *bystander apathy*, this social psychological phenomenon prevents others from stepping in to assist when they see someone being bullied or in trouble.

It has not helped the situation of women in newsrooms when previous studies in the wider workforce have consistently indicated that they suffer from higher rates of psychological disorders than men. Reinhardy's (2009) survey of 715 US newspaper journalists revealed that women reported higher levels of exhaustion.

There have been a number of studies that have identified journalists as a high-risk group when covering trauma but few have specifically focussed on women or younger journalists (Aoki et al., 2012). For example, Browne, Evangeli and Greenberg (2012) established that journalists were in a similar high-risk bracket to police or paramedics, although they were more likely to suffer from guilt because journalists often experienced or witnessed traumatic events but were not expected to intervene. "Not having a direct, helping role when attending to traumatic incidents may present journalists with complex ethical dilemmas" (p. 207). The study by Browne et al. was based on 50 British journalists who were mostly male, 40 years old or more with at least 15 years' experience. It neglected younger journalists and females. The authors did determine, however, that contextual factors could increase vulnerability to guilt, such as a lack of social support.

This data suggests that more research is needed into all aspects of trauma reporting. The study now returns to journalists in general and discusses the effects from trauma-related work.

3.5 Risk of burn-out

There is increasing evidence from research that indicates journalists are under increasing pressure because of their work and the new challenges they need to confront. Beam and Spratt (2009) observed how slow change has been in “leading to the demise of the unemotional and always-objective newspaper reporter as the mythic journalistic ideal” (p. 421). Yet some young journalists are being encouraged to talk about their feelings related to their job as a way of processing the unpleasant side of their work (Duncan & Newton, 2010) and to deal with what Rentschler (2010) has described as “the emotional burdens of their work lives” (p. 448). But that outcome can be difficult when journalists have traditionally been discouraged from asking for help or discussing their emotions.

As discussed in Chapter 1, young journalists are also confronting added stresses from an unpredictable and insecure future with changes in the political economy, including contracted media ownership, commercial pressures, job scarcity and weak unions (Berrington & Jemphrey, 2003). There is also the demand for round-the-clock news on multi-platforms, often being produced on tighter budgets (Örnebring, Möller, & Grip, 2015).

Berrington and Jemphrey (2003) studied journalists who covered the 1996 Dunblane Primary School massacre in Scotland and observed the tension these journalists were under. “They were driven by commercial imperatives to produce copy, a pressure that at times overrode ethical considerations and sensitivities” (p. 242). The authors highlighted the fact that many of the journalists were not prepared to deal with such a traumatic incident and queried the lack of protection for those who felt pressured to act unethically. “In a climate of eroded trade union powers and limited opportunities for career progression there is significant conflict between personal and/or professional ethics and occupational demands” (p. 243). The authors concluded that as long as sensational stories relating to intrusions continued to sell newspapers, journalists would remain under such pressure.

3.5.1 Possible damage from guilt

Although young journalists are increasingly being expected to carry out death-knock interviews on a regular basis, they are seldom taught how to cover trauma (Berrington & Jemphrey, 2003). Instead, there is an expectation that journalists will act “professionally” to events as they happen, amid chaos and emotionally charged

circumstances (p. 239). As discussed in the previous chapter, journalists tend to rely on watching experienced journalists and learning along the way (Hopper & Huxford, 2015). That includes learning about how to deal with emotions. Hopper and Huxford interviewed 20 journalists, who indicated that their participants learned rules for appropriate and inappropriate displays of emotions by example. “Many felt suppressing emotions while covering events was simply a requirement of the job” (p. 35).

Novak and Davidson (2013) found that journalists who suppressed their emotions and identified with their “professional” detached role appeared to have a protective factor in difficult situations. The end result, however, could be depersonalisation whereby a person began experiencing events as an observer, disconnected from their body and feelings (De Zulueta, 2006). “While the process of dissociation begins as a protective mechanism for the integrity of the self in the face of catastrophic trauma, it can be a direct threat to the optimal functioning of the self if it becomes a routine response to stress” (p. 344).

Previous research has suggested that suppressing emotions is neither healthy nor normal. The 2015 study by Hopper and Huxford found that there were ongoing risks to emotional suppression or control, and that by deferring emotions journalists might suffer long-term repercussions. They found several of the respondents were still suffering some years later from long-term guilt and self-hatred.

Guilt as a post-traumatic reaction has been defined as an unpleasant feeling with an accompanying belief that one should have thought, felt or acted differently (Kubany et al., 1996). Specific aspects of their job could make journalists more vulnerable to guilt, such as the pressure to sensationalise an article or to pressure distressed people for an interview (Browne et al., 2012). Guilt as a risk factor for psychological impairment was also the focus for research by Backholm and Idås (2015). They identified ethical dilemmas caused by inner conflicts between acting as “good human beings” versus “professional journalists” (p. 143). Their research was based on a survey of 371 journalists who covered the Norwegian terror attacks in Oslo and Utoya in 2011. The authors identified three types of ethical dilemmas: uncertainty about rules of conduct; carrying out tasks incongruent with personal values; and situations beyond one’s control.

3.5.2 Burn-out and compassion fatigue

Although most journalists are resilient (Smith, Newman & Drevo, 2015), burn-out is a psychological risk associated with covering trauma. Burn-out has been described as “the physical, emotional and mental exhaustion that occurs when one can no longer cope with his or her everyday environment” (Dworznik, 2011, p. 23). The term burn-out was first used by Freudenberg (1974) when he was experiencing exhaustion, sleeplessness, fatigue and related symptoms. The three-component Maslach Burn-out Inventory, which has since been developed, measures levels of exhaustion, cynicism and professional efficiency (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leier, 2001). These measurements have been used to determine levels of psychological damage. Emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation have since been identified as two core dimensions of burn-out (Bakker & Heuven, 2006).

It was Kalter (1999) who originally identified that journalists were susceptible to burn-out for a range of reasons. Studies have since indicated that young journalists appear to be more susceptible to burn-out than their older counterparts (Reinhardy, 2011). This has also been attributed to a number of reasons, including economic issues and the decline in job satisfaction (Weaver et al., 2006).

Burn-out can affect job performance, job satisfaction as well as work and family relationships, which in turn can lead to diminished productivity and employee turnover (Reinhardy, 2011). Reinhardy also established that burn-out did not develop in a vacuum, but that there were particular stressors involved. Nor did it occur without warning: “An increase in stressors creates stress and stress paves the way to burn-out” (p. 37). Therefore, there is evidence of potential burn-out well before the condition sets in. That is not the case with compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue is made up of two components: trauma and burn-out (Figley, 1995). Figley describes compassion fatigue as a more user-friendly term for secondary traumatic stress disorder. Secondary trauma or vicarious trauma involves knowing about a traumatising event that has been experienced by a significant other (McMahon, 2001). Figley separated compassion fatigue from the related term burn-out by looking at how the symptoms emerged: burn-out gradually develops and is caused by emotional exhaustion, whereas compassion fatigue can emerge very suddenly without warning, although it has a faster recovery rate (Backholm & Björkqvist, 2010).

3.6 Adding up the costs

There are implications of burn-out and compassion fatigue for both journalists and sources – the people that journalists seek out for story content. If a journalist is suffering as a result of a situation they have covered, they can do damage to the people they are interviewing (Walsh-Childers et al., 2011). Walsh-Childers et al. found journalists often rushed to get stories, to “obtain quotes to fit a preconceived story” (p. 197) but argued that journalists should be taught how to distinguish between people who are emotionally ready to tell their story and those who are still in shock and need to be left alone for a few hours or a few days.

Research into the subject of journalists dealing with emotions has been minimal. What has been done has tended to focus on the aftershock of covering disasters and traumatic events, rather than the actual processes involved in day-to-day reporting. Hopper and Huxford (2015) have recommended that more research is needed because of the potential of ongoing effects to other areas of a person’s life.

Some studies have looked at the inevitable costs. An Australian study investigated the number of journalists who had claimed stress leave. Lyall (2012) found in the 10 years to June 2010 that 135 mental health claims were lodged with workers’ compensation authorities from journalists and related professionals, leading to an average time off work of 26.4 weeks. During that time, around \$A4.2 million was paid out in compensation, according to WorkSafe information (p. 33). In Canada, mental health costs workplaces \$20 billion annually (Jones, 2014). The costs include finding, hiring and training new staff, which take times and money. There are other implications to losing staff to stress: “When experienced reporters leave, they take the knowledge of their communities or beats with them, which can lead to less critical and less informed coverage. If coverage suffers, news organisations may lose their audiences” (Jones, 2014, Discussion section, para. 4).

Such figures are not available in New Zealand. The Accident Compensation Corporation sub-contracts to accredited employers and private companies, such as publishing companies, which are not bound under the Official Information Act to

release such information.³ This makes it difficult to obtain information about cases related to stress and trauma in New Zealand newsrooms.

I will now consider the argument for preventative trauma training and changing attitudes in newsrooms.

3.7 The argument for trauma training and support

Support for journalists may come in various forms. The support can be preparatory, collegial or from management. It has long been argued that journalists who understand the issues around stress at the start of their careers are less likely to be “surprised and disillusioned” by it (Fedler, 2004, p. 77). Richards and Rees (2011) have stressed that understanding trauma is an essential factor in understanding how to work with sources more effectively. As a result, victims are treated appropriately and respectfully.

Currently, many journalists who have no formal understanding of grief and trauma are routinely sent to knock on the doors of the bereaved (Rees, 2013), and often the only preparation they have is the time it takes to reach the scene (Simpson & Coté, 2006).

The implications from possible ongoing effects of trauma are reflected in the argument that preparation will increase confidence and thereby decrease fear and improve performance (Ripley, 2008). One of the first organisations to establish a resource base for trauma training was the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma. The resources are aimed at journalists and journalism students and cover the science and psychology of trauma and the implications for news coverage.⁴ The Dart Center advocates trauma training for all journalists, as do other researchers. This is not only because of the occurrence of natural disasters but because news agendas have narrowed and sensational content has increased (Machin & Niblock, 2006). “Those entering journalism need to be aware of the pressure emotional labour can bring, and the long-term toll that process can exact” (Hopper & Huxford, 2015, p. 39).

Once in the newsroom, collegial support plays an important role. One grounded theory study, based on 10 in-depth interviews, found that journalists do not need, nor seek access to, mental health services (Novak & Davidson, 2013). The role of colleagues

³ Deborah Butler, senior adviser, Accident Compensation Corporation, personal communication, October 28, 2014.

In 2000 the accredited employer scheme (ACC Partnership Programme) was re-introduced with new legislation. Employers who join the programme take responsibility for managing their employees’ work-related injuries, and are given financial incentives to create safer work environments.

⁴ <http://dartcenter.org/about/mission-history>

proved to be important in providing advice and encouragement in the field, during and after events. This study supports earlier work by Figley (1995) who advocated talking on the job to help journalists make sense of their work experiences.

Sharing stories can serve two purposes. Zelizer (1997) found that journalists create a community through their shared discourse when they discuss their everyday work. Discussion about certain incidents can create standards of professional behaviour and maintain collective boundaries. Discourse can be localised and it can change:

“Reporters use discourse to discuss, consider and at times challenge the reigning consensus surrounding journalistic practice, facilitating their adaptation to changing technologies, changing circumstances and the changing stature of newswork” (p. 416).

Being able to share emotional experiences is a key process for building resilience (Walsh, 2007, p. 320). Sharing stories with other journalists who understand their experiences thus appears to be important to younger, less experienced journalists for a number of reasons.

3.8 Management support in the newsroom

A supportive newsroom is a critical factor for journalists dealing with trauma on a regular basis, particularly the role of management in accepting that journalists are vulnerable to trauma (Beam & Spratt, 2009). Where there is a lack of acknowledgement, a journalist can suffer from trauma-related stress that can leave the person feeling isolated and lonely. Some studies have shown that a failure of employers to understand how journalists react to trauma – and not help them deal with it – can adversely affect their work, their health and their relationships (Keats & Buchanan, 2009; Simpson & Côté, 2006).

Along with a lack of recognition of emotional difficulties within organisations, there are other organisational factors that can exacerbate stress levels for staff, including staff shortages and limited access to appropriate support (Badger, Royse, & Craig, 2008; Novak & Davidson, 2013).

Mental health issues in the newsroom can take a number of forms – stress, depression, anxiety or addiction – and it does not help if the newsroom culture is not supportive (Jones, 2014, p. 2). Unfortunately mental health is usually the last thing organisations consider when they are strained for time and money (Reinhardt, 2011). “Too often, the story comes first. Editors, facing their own pressures, seldom pay enough attention to

the psychological well-being of their reporters”... “Without training, managers may also be genuinely unaware of how to deal with burn-out or illness” (Jones, 2014, para. 22).

This suggests appropriate discourse is missing from many newsrooms. “While reporters are learning the language necessary to cover mental health adequately [in the community], they don’t always use it on themselves (Jones, 2014). Some scholars have also called for more in-house training, discussion and support. Hopper and Huxford’s study (2015) concluded that “the need [is] not only for specific training in strategies for emotional labour of journalists who ply their trade in emotionally charged situations, but also for news organisations to be more proactive in providing assistance” (p. 38).

Because of the traditional lack of support in newsrooms, the Dart Center encourages journalists to take responsibility for looking after themselves. This includes being aware of their own needs, knowing their limits and being prepared to tell their managers when issues arise. However, some journalists are reluctant to speak up. “Fear of losing a job, or of being perceived as weak and incapable of taking on big assignments, may prevent some journalists from seeking help, but that doesn’t mean help isn’t available” (Jones, 2014, para. 17).

The problem is exacerbated by the fact that media managers are seldom trained to recognise signs of stress or how to prepare staff for covering trauma. Jones (2014) found only one in three managers in her study reported having had training in how to intervene when employees show signs of depression. Even when they did notice, only 55 percent of supervisors stepped in. She suggested that in organisations where workers felt uncomfortable about disclosing any mental health issues, employees might be reluctant to seek help and as a consequence their conditions could deteriorate.

Cameron (2007), as cited in Novak and Davidson (2013), found that 40 percent of his participants felt some stigma attached to being traumatised and thought it was evidence of weakness. In another study, 40 percent of journalists feared losing the confidence of their employer and colleagues by confessing they had been traumatised (Reed, 2008), as cited in Aoki et al. (2012).

Novak and Davidson (2013) have advocated workshops to promote resourcefulness and to discuss ways of managing experiences to provide opportunities for reflection. They suggested that these workshops might also reduce newsroom stoicism. “Promoting the

importance of social networks and the role they play in mediating levels of distress should be considered within awareness-raising programmes for both journalists themselves and the organisations they work for” (p. 320).

This section has analysed the literature related to the history of journalism and trauma, drawing attention to the influence of the traditional image of a journalist. That image has been challenged as women have entered the newsroom and the dangers of suppressing emotions uncovered. Recent research into long-term effects of trauma reporting has been discussed along with arguments for trauma training and newsroom support from colleagues and management. The next section focuses on the current situation in New Zealand, based on existing research.

3.9 The New Zealand situation

Very little research has been carried out in New Zealand on trauma journalism. A small-scale study by James Hollings (2005) addressed the ethical issues that confronted New Zealand journalists who covered the Boxing Day Tsunami, triggered after an earthquake off the coast of Sumatra in 2004. A search through databases and on the Internet revealed a non-academic article on the topic in New Zealand, written by a former journalist from *The Press*, Janine Bennetts (2007). The report, entitled *Protecting our journalists: Issues of safety and traumatic stress in the media*, followed a hostile environment safety training course in September 2007. It does not appear to have been formally published but it is accessible online. Much of the content reflects current thinking, except that Bennetts’ report was written prior to the Christchurch earthquakes.

The lack of past scholarship in New Zealand suggests the need for research into the effects on journalists who frequently cover incidents involving trauma. This is important because of the increasing number of female journalists and the high proportion of females who are now covering trauma-related events – and why? Considering that 68 percent of females leave newspaper newsrooms within the first two years of employment (Strong, 2011), this situation deserves further exploration (the rate for males is 52 percent). Could there be a link to covering trauma?

Strong (2011) found young women soon became disillusioned with their jobs: 25 percent of the female journalists who left within two years never wanted to return to daily newspapers and 11 percent to journalism in general. Her findings were based on

52 responses to her survey of early career journalists: 38 females and 14 males. Women, she concluded, were not only leaving newsrooms and “shunning their chosen professions”, but they were leaving because they were unhappy (p. 131). “The New Zealand women’s truncated daily newspaper career is even more of a phenomenon when considering the hurdles young journalists face gaining the necessary qualifications to gain entry-level jobs in the first place” (p. 236). This, along with the lack of scholarship, suggest further research is required.

3.10 Summary

This chapter provides a context to this study. It has outlined the history to trauma journalism, which confirmed that journalists who work with trauma are at risk of physical, emotional and psychological injury. Trauma is not always visible but the effects can be cumulative. The introduction explored how male journalists earned a reputation for being staunch heavy drinkers who suppressed their emotions. It also addressed the influx of women into newsrooms and how they often learned to cope with the patriarchal environment by adopting certain tactics. The chapter also highlighted the fact that research into the effects on women and young journalists has generally been neglected, which is surprising considering the increasing number of female journalists and young journalists covering trauma.

The realisation that commercial pressure is increasing ethical dilemmas for journalists also makes this study timely, especially since Backholm and Idås (2015) identified three types of ethical dilemmas: the first relating to uncertainty about rules of conduct; second, the conflict caused from carrying out tasks that were contrary to personal values; and finally, when confronted with situations beyond their control. This led into the discussion about burn-out and the symptoms of the condition, which if recognised can be addressed, unlike compassion fatigue. The cost of ignoring traumatic stress was covered by considering some international mental health statistics. Unfortunately this data is not readily available in New Zealand because of how the ACC operates.

Collectively, this led to the argument for a change of attitudes to trauma in newsrooms and the important roles of colleagues and management in recognising signs of stress and the importance of self-care. Finally, the lack of scholarship in New Zealand supports a need to investigate the situation regarding trauma coverage in New Zealand.

The gaps in the literature addressed in this chapter have provided added motivation for this study. The next chapter outlines the methodological framework used to explore the complexities of journalists and their inner world of newsrooms.

Chapter 4 Methodological framework

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I outline the methodological framework used to explore the complexities of journalists and newsrooms in relation to reporting trauma and how journalists “come to know their inner world” (Shibutani, 1970, p. 7). The aim of the thesis is to generate a universal theoretical framework for analysis of the effects of dead-knocks and related trauma work on journalists. The study is based on the following research questions:

1. How do journalists learn to deal with trauma on the job?
2. How do journalists manage their emotions?

This chapter introduces the methodological framework, grounded theory methodology, its history and main ideas. It then explains the analysis process. The second part of the chapter concentrates on the data collection. Grounded theory can be considered a method as well as a methodology because of the analytic path the researcher takes (Dey, 2007). It is an active process whereby data gathering, data analysis and theory construction all take place concurrently.

Whereas quantitative research aims at counting and measuring things, qualitative research is exploratory and attempts to capture underlying reasons and motivations, people’s creation of meanings, definitions, and descriptions of events (Minichiello, Aroni, & Hays, 2008, p. 8). As opposed to earlier qualitative research, which begins with a hypothesis and then endeavours to confirm it, grounded theory works upwards from the data. Using a theoretical framework, an argument should emerge as the researcher reaches up to construct abstractions, then back to the data to link these abstractions (Charmaz, 2014). Thus the theory is *grounded* in the empirical data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

A key to grounded theory is Glaser’s maxim that *all is data*, whether it is the written word, the spoken word, or even sounds. The data, or raw material, for this study is text from interviews. The text was fractured (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), or analysed line-by-line, then coded to make the information more workable. The next step involved moving up from the detailed description of the codes to the more abstract level, to form conceptual categories. Each step of the process is covered in this chapter.

4.2 Three generations of grounded theory

It is coincidental to this research that grounded theory evolved from studies connected with death, as trauma and tragic death are part of the focus of this study. Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, who founded grounded theory in the 1970s, had each recently lost a close family member (Bryant & Charmaz, 2014). Their seminal study, *Awareness of dying* in 1965, was followed in 1967 with *The discovery of grounded theory*. It was a pivotal point in qualitative research. Publication of *Discovery* established grounded theory as a social science research method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Glaser and Strauss challenged the thinking of the time by showing that positivist quantitative research was not the only legitimate form of inquiry (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). For example, quantifiable observations were fact based and did not allow for any interpretation. Glaser and Strauss preferred to look at the complexity of entire situations rather than reduce data to simple terms or units of analysis. As the founders of grounded theory, they advocated that researchers should begin their research with no previous knowledge of their topic, *tabula rasa*, that is, a blank slate, and remain impartial throughout the process. This was because they argued that doing a literature review could impose preconceived ideas on the data being gathered, which in turn could influence the theoretical outcomes (Glaser, 2001; McCallin, 2003).

The use of literature remains one of the most contentious aspects of grounded theory methodology (Birks & Mills, 2011). There has been concern that an early literature review could stifle creativity, or that the researcher may become side-tracked by existing knowledge. Yet some more recent proponents of grounded theory have questioned whether it is possible to undertake a study without some prior knowledge (Charmaz, 2014; Dey, 1999; Dunne, 2011). Constructivist grounded theorists argue that an ongoing literature review is a crucial part of the process of data gathering. Also, rather than attempting to remain neutral or impartial, the grounded theory researcher should immerse themselves in the world of the research subjects (Bowers, 1989).

These were two of key reasons that Glaser and Strauss went their own theoretical ways in the 1970s (Bryant, 2002). Glaser remained resolute in his positivist approach to grounded theory, whereas Strauss asserted that symbolic interactionism, or social behaviour, should guide grounded theory. Strauss subsequently began to collaborate with Juliet Corbin in the 1980s and established what became known as the second generation of grounded theory methodology (Birks & Mills, 2011). The third generation

– the constructivist approach, led by Kathy Charmaz – evolved as a combination of methodological developments over the past 40 years. Charmaz (2014) proposed that grounded theory should move on from its positivist and scientific origins to become a more reflexive practice. “This version emphasises how data, analysis and methodological strategies become constructed, and takes into account the research contexts and researchers’ positions, perspectives, priorities and interactions” (p. 10).

Constructivist grounded theory adopted the inductive, emergent and open-ended approach of Glaser and Strauss (1967), including the iterative logic that Strauss emphasised, by constantly going back to the data “as well as the dual emphases on action and meaning inherent in the pragmatist tradition” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 13). This “constructivist turn” addressed concerns from critics that the methodology fragmented data and relied on the voice of the researcher. Social constructivism thus views research as constructed rather than discovered.

This study respects the earlier grounded theorists and their contributions to the field but it was Charmaz’s interpretation, the third generation constructivist approach, that appealed because of the background knowledge on trauma journalism I had already acquired. I also appreciated the concept of theory construction and interpretation, as other researchers may have identified different issues in their analysis of the data. For this reason, it is important to step back to the beginning to explain how the process began.

4.3 Data collection and analysis

To come to know the inner world of journalists who have dealt with trauma, it was important to find out about their experiences. The best way to do this was by turning the tables on journalists and interviewing them. Interviews can be invaluable because of the potential to glean rich data. Bourdieu (1992), whose theory of the social field is discussed in Chapter 2, considered the in-depth interview to be a useful way to examine social life, and because of the focus in this study on social interaction, the semi-structured in-depth interview was second nature to me as a former journalist. First, I introduce the scholarship on interviewing and the different forms it can take and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the method. The rest of the chapter is dedicated to a step-by-step breakdown of the core processes of grounded theory.

Interviewing is the most commonly used form of qualitative research (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). As a method it is versatile; interviews may be structured, semi-structured or completely non-structured, such as with oral histories. There may be only one interview required or sometimes repeated interviews. Interviews can also be recorded in various ways: by taking notes, audio-recording or videotaping.

The interview should always be considered as a social encounter (Warren, 2002). For this reason, context, time and place are important. Face-to-face interviews are usually the best but they can be conducted by phone or over the Internet. If in person, attention to details such as establishing a rapport, or how close to sit to the interviewee, are factors that can influence the outcome. Other issues, such as setting an appropriate tone and the amount of self-disclosure, should also be considered. It can take some practice and skill to keep an interview going. Winding up an interview is another challenge for the novice.

There are a few disadvantages with semi-structured interviews. Recruitment is a key issue, or finding the right people. There can also be problems of ensuring the venue is suitable and not noisy – and avoiding interruptions. Appropriate questions need to be carefully formulated so they are not leading. A good interview will extract rich data, whereas one that is poorly conducted will affect the data generated (Roulston, 2012).

The goal of a semi-structured interview is to encourage people to talk about their experiences, perceptions and understandings rather than have prepared responses. In this study, an outline of the types of questions that participants were likely to be asked was emailed or posted to people who responded to the invitation to take part. (More details about this are included in the research process in Chapter 4.7). The six questions (Appendix B1) formed the scaffold of the interview, or the skeleton of it (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). They were carefully selected to ensure that the research questions were thoroughly examined and that each part of the broad topic was explored.

Semi-structured interviews provided the flexibility to depart from the set questions and ask new questions that follow up interviewees' replies. It is important to be alert to responses that require further exploration, and to do this without being intrusive while remaining attuned and responsive to what the interviewee is saying and doing (Bryman, 2004). This often means pausing and waiting, or referring back to a point once the participant has finished speaking.

To ensure clarity and thoroughness, three types of questions were employed in the interviews: main questions, follow-up questions and probing questions. The main objective was to avoid influencing the subjects with leading questions (Kvale, 2009). Follow-up questions were used to explore and expand on issues or themes that arose. For example, when jargon terms were used by participants: *So, what exactly do you mean by green staff?* They were also used to uncover details and attitudes, as well as extract vivid and nuanced answers to provide rich data (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Probe-type questions were used when necessary to help manage the conversation, to keep the interview on topic and to ask for clarification. Probe-type questions also signal the desired level of depth and to ask for examples. Here are three probe-type questions used in this study: *What about afterwards, when you got home? What exactly does that service provide? What do you mean by 'a kind of madness'?*

Rather than collecting all the data and then beginning the analysis, grounded theorists can start their analysis after their first interview. Analysis of data can be word-by-word, line-by-line, sentence-by-sentence, paragraph-by-paragraph or incident-by-incident. The researcher initially looks for repetition or key words, then connections. Most grounded theorists refer to this preliminary breaking down of the data as initial coding or open coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). See Appendix B4 for a sample of initial coding using line-by-line analysis for this study.

Coding is a central analytic procedure in grounded theory and works as a way of summarising the data (Dey, 2007). It should always relate to the research questions. Coding is basically the process of defining what the data is about. Codes are subsequently emergent – they develop as the researcher works through the data. Codes include similar aspects and capture patterns that can be clustered under evocative titles (Lempert, 2007).

The initial open coding, which Charmaz (2006) refers to as action coding, focuses on processes and uses actions to name codes. It also involves “interrogating the data” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). While coding, the researcher should always be asking what is *going on* here, what are people *doing*. The idea is to look for actions within contexts, highlight them and look for how codes might overlap. Charmaz (2014) suggested that a starting point could be to concentrate on what people are *doing*, *saying* and the *context*, because the background is often taken for granted.

4.4 Advanced coding and concepts

The next step is focused coding (Charmaz, 2014). This involves using the most significant and frequent codes to sift through the rest of the data. Focused coding requires the researcher to decide which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorise the data incisively and completely (p. 139). This step in the coding process is necessary to build and clarify concepts, by comparing each segment of data with every other segment and working up to a clear definition of each concept involved. Focused codes are usually given brief, active, incisive names, to reflect what people are doing or what is happening (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). These codes are more conceptual than the initial line-by-line codes and help to advance the theoretical direction (Glaser, 1992). They can also “prompt the researcher to see relationships and patterns between the evolving categories” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 191).

The groups of codes are then subjected to theoretical sensitivity (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which guides the researcher and identifies gaps and weaknesses in the evolving theory. Theoretical sensitivity is defined as “the ability to recognise and extract from the data elements that have relevance for an emerging theory” (Birks & Mills, 2011, p. 59). This may involve reinterviewing participants to fill in gaps or finding new recruits. In this study, it was necessary to return to three participants to clarify points and elaborate on some to ensure the emerging theory was consistent.

It is easy to produce too many codes, so Charmaz (2006) suggests combining or “collapsing” some to form a category that can usually be captured in a word or expression that encapsulates the process. Focused codes can serve as tentative categories, which may prompt the researcher to develop and scrutinise them further. If the codes work as categories, the researcher needs to clarify what they consist of and specify the relationship or connections between them. To generate categories through focused coding, the researcher must compare data, incidents, contexts and categories Charmaz (2014).

The next stage of the process is to create a hierarchy among the categories. Glaser (1992) advocated finding a core category, a concept that encapsulated the process. Charmaz suggested opting for terms that have “grab” or appeal, that is, a high-impact variable, or a particular phenomenon from which the researcher can trace the connections. However, it is not necessary to have only one core category; there can be more than one (Charmaz, 2014).

Grounded theory is not a linear process; it involves constant comparative analysis, whereby the researcher revisits the data and continually questions it, thereby refining the concepts. By moving back and forth between the data, the researcher can test out possible theoretical explanations.

Apart from being a self-checking process, Dey (2007) sees the constant comparison process as a way to protect against the tendency to overinterpret data and find connections where there are none. “The inclination to focus on positive evidence as confirmatory can be challenged through the systematic use of constant comparison” (p. 73). Constant comparative analysis, in turn, drives theoretical sampling, forcing the researcher to think abductively and consider all possible explanations. For example, it may identify the direction for the next stage of data collection, in the search to either confirm, contradict, clarify or expand the evolving theory.

Theoretical sampling is an active and ongoing process that controls and directs data collection and analysis, and provides a disciplined search for patterns and variations (Wiener, 2007). This may involve directing the data search for characteristics or experiences in certain situations to help to define the properties of the developing theory (Stern, 2007). Strauss and Corbin (1998) define a property as a “characteristic of a category”, the delineation or exact description which defines the category and gives it meaning (p. 101). To help to define the properties, it is important to establish the boundaries and attributes of the underlying concept.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe theoretical sampling as a means to “maximize opportunities to discover variations among concepts and to densify categories in terms of their properties and dimensions” (p. 201). Theoretical sampling involves asking what is obvious, what is absent and if something more obscure is being suggested (Charmaz, 2006, 2014).

This section has outlined the initial steps to implementing a grounded theory study, from coding to concepts and eventually identifying categories. There are two important processes that help with this stage: writing memos and drawing diagrams.

4.5 Memo writing and diagramming

Most approaches to grounded theory recommend reading, thinking, reflecting and writing memos (Charmaz, 2014; Birks & Mills, 2011; Clarke, 2005; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Wiener, 2007). Memo writing provided an opportunity

to stop and analyse ideas about codes and emerging categories. Stern (2007) described data as the building blocks of a developing theory, and memos as the mortar, that reinforce each other. Memos can therefore help to conceptualise data in a narrative form and are a pivotal intermediate step between data collection and conceptualising theories (Charmaz, 2014). At this stage, the researcher is looking for recurring actions, characteristics, experiences, phrases and explanations. Memos also record the entire process. Figure 1 illustrates how memos can “lubricate” the cogs in the research process (Birks & Mills, 2011, p. 13). Memos are often coded in a form of shorthand, dated and given names. Listing key words helps the researcher readily identify any recurrences or similarities. (See Appendix B4 for a sample of a memo).

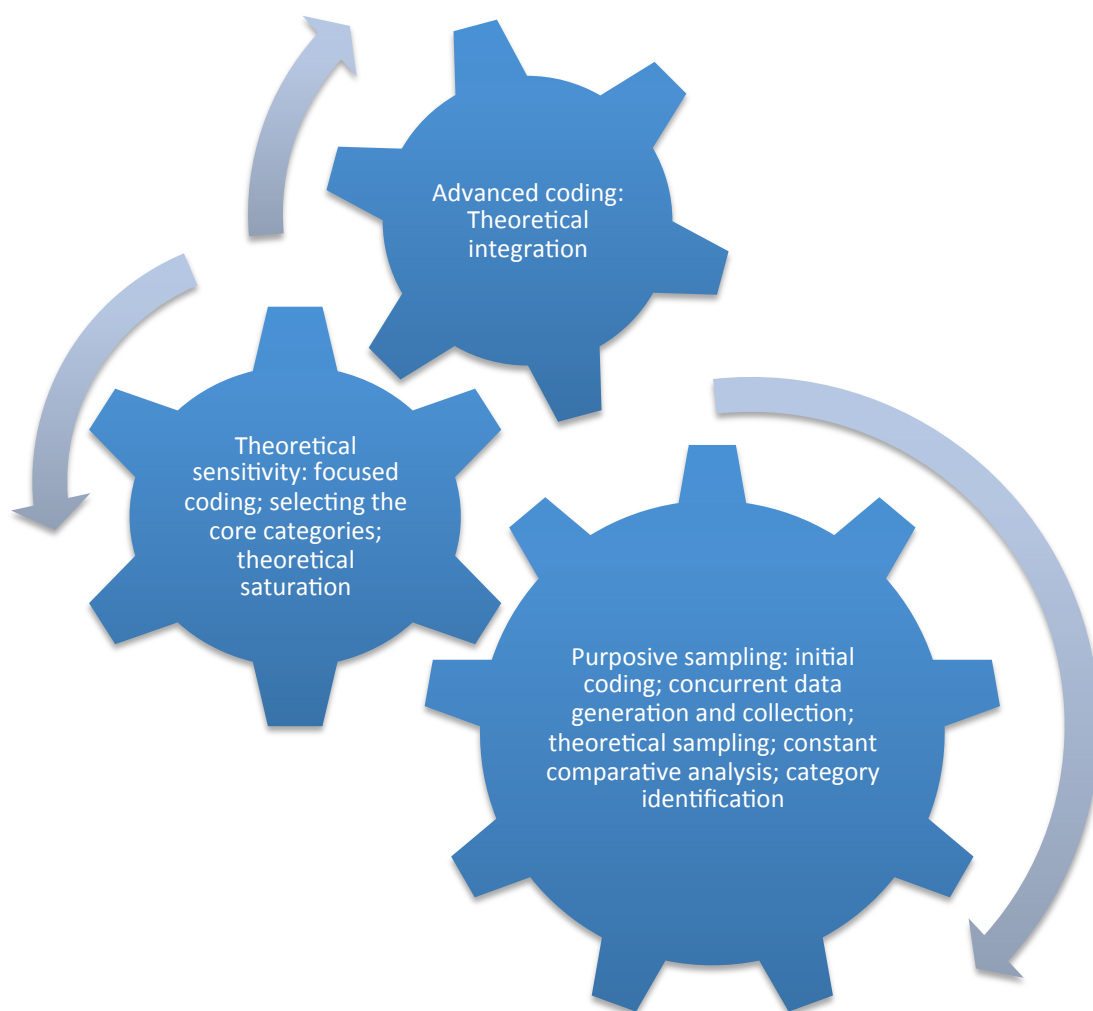


Figure 2: The core processes of grounded theory.
The pale blue arrows indicate the ongoing and pivotal process of memo writing through all the iterative phases of an evolving grounded theory. Source: Birks & Mills (2011, p. 13).

Writing memos during the focused coding stage (Appendix B5) helps to build and clarify categories and address some of the difficult questions. Also, if a particular area is weak or incomplete, memoing indicates where more data is needed (Glaser, 2013).

Whereas memo writing helps to consolidate thoughts and ideas, diagramming provides a way of looking at patterns, or creating paths through what can be a quagmire at times. Often there are too many codes, so cluster diagrams help to sort the material. As with a puzzle, clustering allows easy changes to be made while still keeping the work contained. Charmaz recommends diagrams as a way to “liberate your creativity” (2014, p. 184). Cluster diagrams start with a central idea then spokes are added and smaller shapes to outline the defining properties, their relationships and their relative significance. See Appendix B6 for a sample of a cluster diagram in the early stages of focused coding.

4.6 Sensitising concepts and identifying theoretical categories

Blumer (1969) developed the notion of sensitising concepts, a broad term for something that does not have definitive characteristics but can stimulate thinking about a topic. Sensitising concepts may provide researchers with initial but tentative ideas to pursue and questions to raise about their topics. They may also serve as “points of departure” for further study (Charmaz, 2014, p. 30-31). Sensitising concepts can also help to narrow down questions, highlight what to look for in the data and encourage analytic thinking. Two examples of sensitising concepts that proved to be worthwhile “points of departure” in this study were *emotional labour* in relation to the work that journalists do (see Chapter 2.7) and the *bystander effect* in the newsroom (see Chapter 3.4).

Categories explicate ideas, events or processes in the data: they can be conceptual, abstract, analytical and precise. Assigning the relevant codes to theoretical categories should lead to explanations of the process and predictions concerning these categories (Dey, 2007). Each category needs to be defined and its properties explored. For example, a person’s years of experience as a journalist is a property, because experience influences consequences and outcomes. Properties of categories and sub-categories should be considered in terms of their dimensions: dimensions of properties indicate the range of variation that the property demonstrates, for example, novice (up to two years’ experience), mid-range (three to five years’ experience) or senior (more than five years’ experience). Dimensions of properties can also be linked to conditions. A condition may be the amount of preparation or trauma training a young journalist has had. Conditions

may be related to the situation; they may be social or time related. The consequences also need to be explained as well as their relationship to other categories – for example, the consequences of a lack of training.

Because of the process, grounded theorists cannot anticipate their sample size because they do not know what data they will extract (Bryman, 2012). Data saturation (Glaser, 2001) or theoretical sufficiency (Dey, 1999) is the point at which a decision is made to stop collecting data because of repetition. Once no new properties are revealed within a category, attention then shifts to exploring the emergent theory.

Multi-modal discourse analysis and phenomenology were considered as alternative methodologies, but grounded theory proved to be more appropriate because of the ability to explore how people experience and act within their everyday worlds (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Stern & Porr, 2011). Also, grounded theory is a flexible methodology based on guidelines rather than rules: gathering the data then analysing it to see what emerges, rather than imposing thoughts onto it was more compelling.

This section of the chapter has summarised the process involved in producing a grounded theory. The next section explains the recruitment process, the background to the interviews and some of the issues that arose. It also describes how grounded theory methodology was put into practice.

4.7 Research process begins

Once the invitation to participate in the study (see Appendix C3) was approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee, it was posted on three Facebook pages: Kiwi Journalists Association, Aotearoa News and Young Kiwi Journalists in early February 2014. This purposive or selective sampling (Kvale, 2009) technique was designed to target journalists who might like to share their experiences of everyday trauma. The Facebook groups are private: to belong, approval must be granted by members who host the groups. The Facebook sites allowed the appeal to go nationwide, to reach journalists working in rural areas as well as metropolitan centres.

Within two hours there were three responses from women keen to take part. One mentioned she had already written about how she suffered from anxiety as a result of her work. The following morning there was also an email from a former student working overseas, outlining another form of trauma. He referred to the amount of anonymous online abuse journalists now confront:

Essentially being immersed in a tidal wave of negativity and hatred every day is not good for the soul. This is obviously different from the trauma of seeing a bad road accident or a violent crime scene, but I think it is also part of the mental wear and tear of the job and as such it might be an interesting caveat to your work.

The next day, there were two further responses from well-known journalists, again women. Each participant was interviewed one-on-one. Most interviews were face-to-face, either in an office, in people's homes or at cafés. The distance interviews were by Skype and one by phone.

Most of the interviews were with women, including all four novice journalists (see Table 1); five out of six in the mid-range and seven out of the eight senior journalists. The two former editorial managers, who were invited to take part once the theoretical sampling identified a need for management input, were male.

Because data collection and analysis are carried out simultaneously when using grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), this process in itself became an issue. There was an influx of interest from potential participants when the invitation first went online and each received an email of acknowledgment along with background information on the project (Appendix C4). However, because of the lengthy coding process, it took time to get back to some of the people who had replied and when contact was made again, four did not respond.

Each interview began by outlining the study once again, obtaining written consent, and reminding participants that it would be recorded and the tapes transcribed, and some notes would be taken. They were also informed that a copy of the transcript would be sent to them to check.

Data was gathered over 18 months. In-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out with 20 people: 16 females and four males. Four were novice journalists (graduates with up to two years in the workplace); six mid-range journalists (two to five years' experience), eight senior journalists (more than five years' in the job), and two former editorial managers. (Details of how the participants were solicited is covered in Chapter 4.3).

Table 2: The breakdown of participants based on years of experience as a journalist. Names were not used to ensure anonymity.

Novice journalists (graduates up to two years' experience)	Gender
Participant 1 (P. 1)	Female
Participant 2 (P. 2)	Female
Participant 3 (P. 3)	Female
Participant 4 (P. 4)	Female
Mid-range journalists (two-five years)	
Participant 5 (P. 5)	Female
Participant 6 (P. 6)	Male
Participant 7 (P. 7)	Female
Participant 8 (P. 8)	Female
Participant 9 (P. 9)	Female
Participant 10 (P. 10)	Female
Senior journalists (five years+)	
Participant 11 (P. 11)	Female
Participant 12 (P. 12)	Female
Participant 13 (P. 13)	Male
Participant 14 (P. 14)	Female
Participant 15 (P. 15)	Female
Participant 16 (P. 16)	Female
Participant 17 (P. 17)	Female
Participant 18 (P. 18)	Female
Editorial managers	
Participant 19 (P. 19)	Male
Participant 20 (P. 20)	Male

In total, 23 interviews were conducted: 20 full interviews and three participants were followed up with further questions. Initial interviews varied between 55 minutes and two hours and 15 minutes. Participants were offered a choice of where they would like to meet. Most living in Auckland chose the university. Although my office provided privacy, I was aware that it was probably not the most suitable venue, particularly for former students, as that might affect the dynamics. I did not want then to feel that I was still in a “lecturer” role, where they might feel ill at ease. So I began the interviews with former students by discussing what they were doing now and ensuring they were relaxed, offering them coffee or tea and generally having a chat. Then I usually began with an open invitation, asking participants to explain their encounters with trauma

reporting. This was followed by a series of open-ended questions, follow-up questions and probes where necessary to expand on points, as explained in the previous section.

The core questions had been carefully selected based on reading literature about semi-structured interviews, as well as the direction and the scope of the research questions, but they were not restricted to those. Focused or semi-structured interviews allow flexibility to vary the wording or order of questions to some extent (Minichiello et al., 2008, p. 51). So although the interviews were more systematic and comprehensive than an informal conversation, it was important that the tone remained fairly conversational and informal, because the content of the interviews could be unsettling. Establishing a rapport was a priority, which involved sensitive listening and stretching of pauses (Kvale, 2009). Towards the end of each interview, before turning off the recorder, I would say I had no further questions. But I would ask if there was anything else they would like to mention before we finished the interview.

4.8 Transcriptions and trials

I transcribed the initial interviews but this proved to be time consuming. However, it did help with understanding the process of line-by-line coding. The rest of the interviews were sent to a professional transcriber who had signed a confidentiality agreement (Appendix C7). Memos written after each interview helped to capture the most important issues which arose, to highlight key words and the strongest quotes, and to connect with data already gathered, for example from May 28, 2015, shown below. (A longer memo is included in Appendix B5). Memos also proved invaluable to remind me where I was at when I returned to my research. They also proved to be a good reminder about any flaws in my interviewing, for example, I noted in one: “Interrupting again too much... must note down questions at the back of my pad and ask later!”

Another issue that arose was when a participant made an assumption that I knew what she was talking about. For example, some participants would make statements followed by the rhetorical ‘you know?’. This was either out of habit or from seeking some form of acknowledgement from me, or these “tag questions” could have been a way of seeking approval or affirmation, which are often used by women (Holmes, 1992). In the end, I learned to respond differently by adding a statement which called for them to explain or expand on what they were saying, for example, “No, I’m a bit out of touch with newsrooms so could you please clarify.”

Date: May 28 2015

Key words: conflict; push-pull; internal/external

So where am I? I am analyzing XXXX's interview and drew a diagram as I went, which I entitled **Feeling conflicted/Pressure/Push-Pull**. There seems to be so much going on and what is clear is that there needs to be an internal "switch" to override the pressure. That pressure is **internal and external (expectations)**. The "internal" includes physical pressure (basics such as eating, sleeping, toileting/safety to anxiety/frightened/lonely/no one to talk to/nervous about pulling out) to (own expectations) self-talk: only six months in the job; *needing* to prove herself/*doing* her best; *having* to keep going; first really big story to "external" pressure: editors' expectations/practical implications of replacing her/demands/time pressure/lack of preparation (no knowledge of earthquakes; self-care skills)/long hours/lack of support/lack of security/safety/isolation/alone

Key quote: "No one to see how you're looking."

It also became clear in some of the interviews that participants were relieved to be sharing their feelings about their trauma work. This was particularly the case when a male journalist admitted it was comforting to know his responses were not abnormal. Because of this, I noticed I occasionally stepped out of my role as interviewer and into the role of counsellor by referring him and others to information on the Dart website.

Following grounded theory protocols, I began analysing the transcripts after each interview. I mostly used action analysis, or gerunds as codes, such as "talking with colleagues" or "feeling comfortable". Charmaz (2006) has advocated the use of gerunds, or -ing words when coding as a way to identify processes or actions in the data, as well as focusing on the participant's experiences as a source of conceptual analysis (Birks & Mills, 2011). Sometimes *Invivo* codes were used – terms the interviewees used, for example, "feeling uncomfortable".

I worked through each of the first three transcripts at least three times, coding for actions and processes as well as recurring words. As I completed each new interview I returned to the earlier ones to compare my coding, constantly comparing the codes that were generated and looking for patterns. Consistent codes began to emerge and early

diagrams helped to clarify the process (see Figure 2). “Feeling isolated”; “lacking support” and “feeling uncomfortable” emerged as codes early on and were constantly reinforced as theoretical categories as I proceeded with my analyses. See Appendix B6 for an example of a cluster diagram.

Through the “snowball” effect (Minichiello et al., 2008), two journalists approached me after talking to others who had been interviewed to talk about their experiences with trauma. Also, another call for further participants was made on the Facebook pages, which attracted several more enquiries. After 16 interviews⁵ I realised I needed to interview media managers for their perspective on issues such as training and safety, so I reapplied to the university ethics committee for a variation in my ethics approval (see Appendices C2 and C5) and made personal approaches to people in the industry. As a result, I was able to interview two former editorial managers.

4.9 Constructing a theory

Once saturation had been achieved from 20 interviews, that is, there was enough repetition of material in the interviews to suggest theoretical sufficiency (Dey, 1999), my memos and diagrams were sorted by date. Charmaz (2014) recommends putting the memos together as a first draft, as that helps to integrate and indicate relationships between them (p. 291). A number of sensitising concepts had emerged that required further exploration, therefore, further research was needed to understand those concepts and further theoretical sampling was required to refine the emerging categories. Theoretical memoing at the same time helped clarify the overlapping categories that can happen at this analytical phase.

Bearing in mind that theory development involves a high level of abstraction through explanation (Birks & Mills, 2011), it was important to clarify how to proceed to determine a core category or a conceptual category (see Chapter 4.4). Birks and Mills (2011) have established three key factors necessary for the integration of a grounded theory: the identified core category, theoretical saturation of the categories and a bank of memos. Charmaz (2006) discounted the relevance of the core category. Yet Birks and Mills (2011) have argued that the core category is central to all concepts. Strauss and Corbin (1998) would suggest that the core category should become “the hub of the

⁵ It was at this point that I began exploring other professions involved with trauma. I contacted the NZ Police, NZ Fire Service and St Johns. St Johns rejected my application and the NZ Fire Service did not reply after two requests, however an interview with a team leader of welfare office for the NZ Police proved to be timely and worthwhile (see Appendix D3).

developing theory” (p. 148). They have recommended that in order to identify it, you need to ask yourself what was the main issue or problem these people seemed to be grappling with? What kept striking you over and over again? What comes through, although may not be said? This advice helped me to refine my thinking.

Glaser (1992) argued that the discovery of the core category was automatic. “After sufficient coding and analysis the core category emerges; it just has to, as it is in all the participants’ minds one way or another” (p. 77).

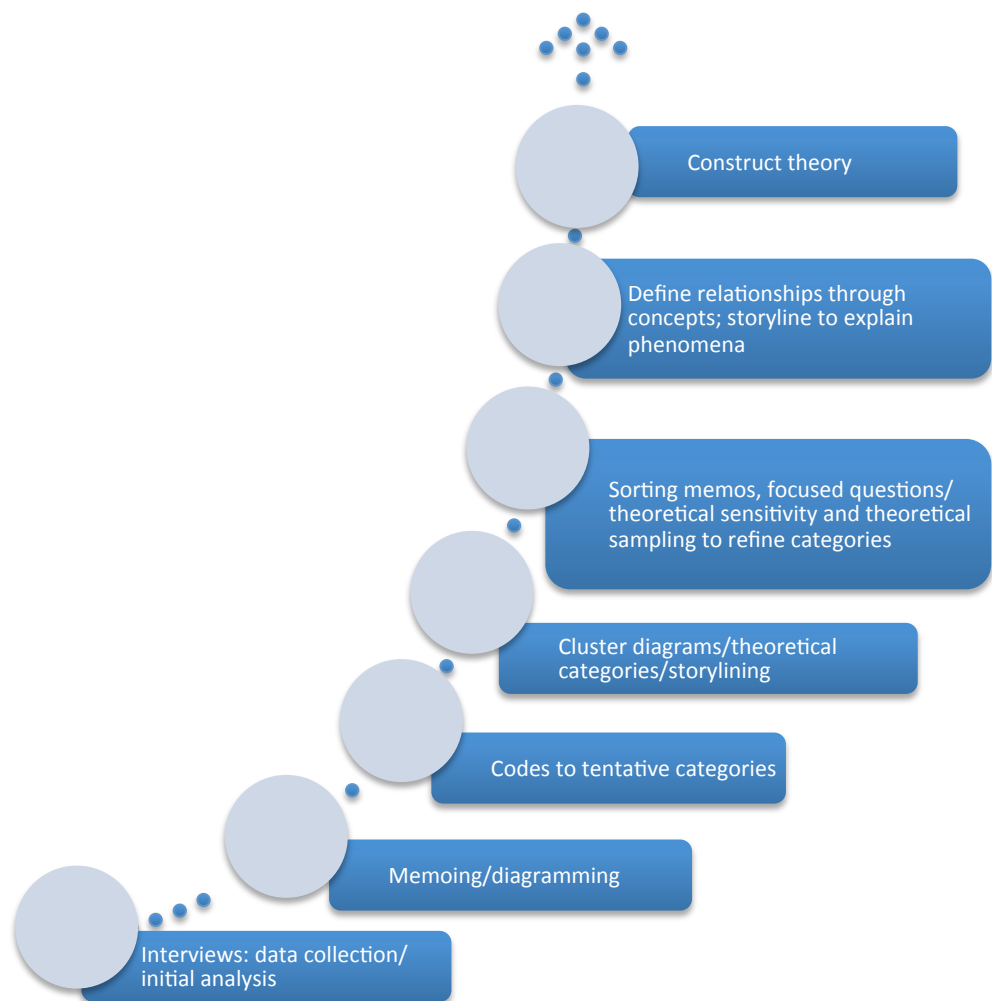


Figure 3: The process in this study from data analysis to developing this grounded theory.

To help with the theory development, I began writing a storyline at this point, a process that proved to be invaluable. Storylining involves telling the narrative, or telling the story, to explain the phenomena succinctly (Birks & Mills, 2011). Storylines have a dual function in grounded theory in that they assist in the production of the final theory and provide a means by which the theory can be conveyed to the reader. As a research strategy, storylines have been “underutilised and undeveloped as a

method of constructing and conveying grounded theory” (Birks, Mills, Francis, & Chapman, 2009, p. 405).

Corbin and Strauss (2008) suggested that an overarching explanatory approach such as storylining helps with theoretical development and gives cohesion to the theory. Storylines can also generate new categories and limit the gaps, by returning to the raw data (Dey, 2007, p. 167). So, once the categories were confirmed they could be defined and theoretical links made between the categories and their properties and the theory emerged (see Figure 2).

To ensure my conceptual categories and theory development made sense on a practical level, I sent off early drafts to one participant in particular, a former senior journalist whose work I had respected for many years. She was encouraging but raised an alert: the way I had used participant numbers before each quote meant she could be identified because of the pattern it established. Now, working as a freelancer, she said she risked jeopardising further employment as she had been so honest and direct in her responses. As an extra precaution she requested that I delete some words and make some changes to avoid that risk. Because of her concern I sent a copy of all the quotes being used to all participants to double-check they were protected from identification as well. Four others asked for changes for similar reasons. As New Zealand has such a small community of journalists, I wanted to avoid any possibility that there would be repercussions as a result of their straightforward, authentic responses.

4.10 Summary

Participant comments proved to be the best way to keep the theory grounded. The voices of the journalists injected rawness, reality and spontaneity and helped to exemplify each category identified as the theory evolved. Many of the participants shared detailed accounts of their experiences that led towards this trajectory. As a result, their terminology and actions played a vital role in this journey and ensured theoretical reach, depth and breadth. At times the questions needed to be included to make sense; this was for clarity and to show the replies were not forced. (Researcher questions and comments in the interview transcripts are indicated by an R.)

Using the step-by-step process of grounded theory methodology, as it has evolved over the past 40 years, to code and categorise the semi-structured interviews led this researcher on an engaging and rewarding experience. Memo writing helped the process,

by reflecting on findings and distilling issues that arose, and keeping the outcomes grounded in the data. Drawing diagrams also assisted with identifying concepts and relationships, and in time, one key umbrella concept, or core category, emerged that provided context for the final theory. Vivid quotes exemplified and supported the identification of the eventual categories, punctuated with terms related to balance and discomfort.

The following chapter, Chapter 5, introduces the concept of balance. This is necessary to provide background to the unfolding theory. The subsequent three chapters – 6, 7 and 8 – unpack the concept of balance by focusing on the core categories or phases of balance: Attaining balance, Maintaining balance and Losing balance. It became clear that each of these phases was influenced by a range of properties, which could be encapsulated within sub-categories. For this reason, each core category is explored in detail. The conditions of each category are explained as well as the consequences. For some journalists, the process of balancing proved to be a bumpy and sometimes battering ride.

Chapter 5 Setting the scene

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, the theoretical and methodological frameworks were outlined, which provided a lens to examine how journalists deal with trauma-related work and manage their emotions. In this chapter, I introduce the concept of balance in journalism and, then, within the context of trauma reporting. I argue that balance in trauma journalism is a psychosocial phenomenon. It is a dynamic interrelationship of social factors and journalists' thoughts and behaviours as they strive to carry out their job and manage their emotions.

I identify some of the key components of the phenomenon of balance in trauma journalism and then discuss the conditions that affect the outcomes or consequences. This discussion leads into the presentation of the first set of data from which the theoretical framework emerged. This initial set of data serves as a stage for developing the balance framework and demonstrates the pressures that journalists confront, the changing conditions of their work and situations that can trigger emotional responses. Three key conditions were identified in the data that influenced the equilibrium in a positive or negative way: preparation, support and cogitation.

The chapter begins with a definition of balance and how it relates to journalism and how tenuous balance can be when trauma is involved. The three conditions, which influence trauma balance, are introduced with participant comments to exemplify the fragility of this phenomenon. A "trauma shake-up" (Barnes, 2013), following three national disasters, is considered as the jolt that has helped to bring this issue to the fore.

5.2 Defining balance

The word "balance" conjures an image of two scales being counterbalanced, where the result is usually harmony or evenness. Balance is a recurring concept in journalism studies: sometimes related to the news story; to ensure a range of different types of stories; in relation to newsroom organisation and hierarchy, and sometimes – as in this study – for journalists' individual negotiation between comfort and discomfort.

"Balanced" journalism dictates that each story has more than one side (Allan, 2004, p. 57). Journalists strive for balance in their articles by including expert witnesses (Boyce, 2006). Journalism is a balance of dark and light: in-depth, serious articles or

“hard news” counterbalanced by lighter, “soft” news. Power balance and gender balance are other concepts related to journalism. On another level, balance can also be associated with emotions and feelings, for example, appropriate and inappropriate emotions. Goffman (1959) asserted that societal rules and practices influenced a person’s behaviour. Death affords a useful example of this socially predetermined set of rules as to balancing appropriate and inappropriate emotions. Whereas someone may feel relieved when a person dies after a terminal illness, it is usually considered inappropriate for the bereaved to demonstrate feelings of relief in public.

How balance relates to trauma journalism is an innate desire to level out the competing pressures between *comfort* and *discomfort*. Words such as “balance” and “comfortable” and “uncomfortable” were often used by the participants, which indicated journalists wished to attain a desired behaviour, or level of comfort, for example:

P. 7: It’s very hard to constantly balance these very delicate emotional situations...

P. 5: And it’s an uncomfortable thing to admit to but I think you know that’s where the balance is always, isn’t it?

Balance in trauma journalism, therefore, is related to the level of comfort or discomfort that a journalist experiences when covering a traumatic event. If the experience is unexpected, and the journalist is forced outside their comfort zone, she or he will seek to make sense of the situation – or redress the balance – through *assimilation* or *accommodation* processes (Piaget, 1977). If she or he cannot process such experiences, the journalist may experience *cognitive dissonance* (Festinger, 1957), as discussed in Chapter 2.

A factor that has influenced that process has been changes in the industry, such as fewer staff, the shift in death-related content and not being able to say no to assignments, as these interviews revealed. Changes have increased tension, which in turn has increased the amount of counterbalancing involved. This tension could come from different directions, for example, pressure from editors, from sources – and from journalists themselves – as they process each new learning experience. Some of the participants in this study displayed evidence of this increasing pressure – for example, changes in technology or moving to multi-platform news production.

For example, in the past, journalists could listen in to the police scanners and be at the scene of an incident soon after police. But with more high-tech scanners and Twitter, journalists are often alerted and may arrive at the scene before police or ambulance crews. This means that journalists are now frequently on the “front line” and confronted by new dilemmas:

P. 5: *I mean, we often get to accidents before the emergency services get there....You know, um, I've been to do death-knocks before the police have been there to, well, not to inform them [of a death]. They've informed them over the phone and then before a victim support person has been there or whatever. So we really can be one of the first ones on the scene.*

The increased immediacy of news can heighten the pressure on journalists in many respects: they have little time to think before they need to make decisions, and they often work alone and can feel isolated. The differences between male and female respondents were noticeable; they also endorsed how the meaning of gender is socially and culturally determined (Djerf-Pierre, 2007).

In any culture, in any society, gender will have an impact on the socialization of the individual, on distribution of work, on responsibilities and rights in the family and in society.... When societies change, so do gender relations and changes in gender relations influence other social relations. (Blom, 1999, p. 2)

As one mid-range male journalist summed it up:

P. 6: *Everyone is so busy. I'm a bit of island.*

Participant 6 was conforming to the gender role inscribed into the newsroom culture, keeping concerns to himself. Whereas most of the female journalists interviewed in this study readily shared any burdens, male journalists used the phrases such as “just get on with the job” to describe their response to covering trauma. A young female journalist found it necessary to discuss her experiences after covering an unsettling court case.

P. 4: *We [other journalists outside the courtroom] were just like, whoa. Like, what happened? And we all kind of had a quick chat about it and, you know, file your story. I think I must have gone home and I've got a good group of friends who are also young journalists or a couple of years older than me so I can be like, 'This just happened, this was like a ridiculous court case.'*

However, the indication of discrepancy in describing experiences softens with the years spent in a newsroom. The older senior females became socialized to accept the ‘button it down’ norms of the newsroom, and the differences of responses between male and female participants became less visible.

The move to online news may also have contributed to the gender-related change. The demand for more commodity news or trauma-related content, as Duncan (2012) has argued, requires developing several stories from an initial tragedy (see Chapter 2.11.1). Balance may be more precarious now than in the past because of the increased frequency with which young journalists cover trauma on a regular basis, as one senior journalist alluded to:

P. 12: And it's a diet of it, it's one after the other, after the other, after the other, or a child backed over in a driveway, go and talk to the family. It's like, "Oh, Jesus, really?" But all those things are front-page news now.

Death and near-death stories are more likely to make front page news now because of a number of factors, including changes in societal attitudes to death, in particular as death moves has moved from being a private matter and into the public arena (Barnes & Edmonds, 2015). Emotions have also become a significant factor in the news process, in audience engagement (Beckett, 2016; Pantti, 2010).

Some participants could recall times when a journalist would occasionally refuse to carry out a death-knock, or was not asked to do so because of their ethnicity or simply because they could become too upset. However, it became apparent from these interviews that the practice of death-knocks is becoming more common, and as a former editorial manager explained, everyone must do their share. First, he objected to them being referred to as death-knocks because more follow-up interviews were carried out now, and sometimes they were not related to death. He gave the example of “door-knocking” someone who had been involved in a court case.

P. 19: So to my mind they are door-knocks rather than death-knocks, Furthermore, if there is a death, and you knock on the door, if you are respectful and you are aware of the boundaries when you go there, and you should know them as a reporter, or you should have at least spoken about them within the office, you should know what you can reasonably expect to gain and have some knowledge of the circumstances. From our own crude analysis then, you are 85 percent likely to get the story. So it's high, if you do it with respect. Furthermore, if they don't want to talk to you, then you respect that too. But you try and leave the door open a little. Sometimes, it is the second or third visit that you will have success.

These comments endorsed the fact that journalists were expected to be persistent if they were pursuing someone to interview. Several participants expressed their concerns at having to go back to people's homes a number of times but acknowledged that there may have been employment consequences for them if they did not do so. In some cases, journalists could not refuse the task:

P. 19: A lot of people don't want to do door knocks and we've had some cases where they refused to do door knocks, but that isn't an option either. They are part of the job of being a journalist in that until you ask the question you don't know what the answer will be. So until you knock on a door and see if they will talk to you, you don't know. To hide behind an ethical belief that you can never intrude on private grief is a cop out... So knock on the door, see how you go and in an overwhelming number of cases you will be greeted in a polite and fair manner. Occasionally you won't, therefore you exit while trying to leave the door open. But don't make the judgment yourself. Do it. In all my 50 years I've only met one person who says they don't mind doing door knocks. Everybody else does but they do them.

This explanation of balance indicated a state of constant movement, implying that a sense of comfort may be almost unattainable because of constant changes in the media industry. The contextual conditions of balance are, therefore, critical factors.

5.3 Conditions of balance

Adaptation to change, which can affect balance, is influenced by three key conditions which were identified in the data analysis: preparation, support and cogitation. All are multi-dimensional and can overlap at times. Corbin and Strauss (2008) described conditions as factors which "shape the nature" of problems or situations by generating actions, interactions or emotional responses (p. 87).

Preparation refers to the level of knowledge about the situation; support can be physical or mental, and cogitation in the sense of trauma reporting, though based on the original

meaning,⁶ the action of thinking deeply about something, is more complex. Whereas preparation and support are external factors, cogitation is internal. All three conditions are affected by various properties, such as time. For example, how much time was allowed for the interview, or how much information a journalist had about an incident before covering a death-knock interview. Support depends on who is around to accompany the journalist or to talk to afterwards. Cogitation may be influenced by how much time the journalist had to consider a decision. These conditions are explored here in more detail and exemplified by participant comments.

Taking into account the level of those three conditions when balancing objectivity and emotionality can affect the journalist's response in any trauma situation, which in turn affects the consequence or outcome.

5.3.1 Preparation

Whether it is carrying out a death-knock interview, or covering a court case, journalists interviewed in this study appeared to maintain balance more readily if they knew as much as possible about the victim, or were familiar with the court procedures. The level of knowledge could affect their response, which in turn could affect their comfort or discomfort levels. If the practical aspects of the court were understood, that could help with *Managing emotions*, for example, the level of description that might have been revealed in a horrific court case. This demonstrated the important role of how much information was shared between the senior staff member assigning the job and guidance given. In many cases, as the literature indicated, most journalists were given little direction and tended to learn on the job (Breed, 1955).

In a memo, after an interview with a young court reporter, I noted: *This [preparation] in turn helps the journalist write a better story, as she is not so distracted by minor details. The same goes with carrying out a death-knock. Finding out as much as possible about the victim, ensuring the facts are correct, appears to make the journalist feel better prepared so more focus can be put into making the person being interviewed feel at ease.*

However, after two more interviews the motivation for being better prepared and being able to put the interviewee more at ease came into question. I noted in a later memo: *Was it to put the source at ease, or a strategy to extricate more information because it*

⁶ <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/cogitation>

became obvious how much mental energy and self-talk – namely emotion work – goes on as these young journalists carry out this work? In time, it became clear that adopting coping strategies supported Hopper and Huxford's contention (2015), that journalists engaged in *emotional labour* (Hochschild, 1979) to perform their job. This is discussed in Chapter 2.

The participants adopted various strategies to prepare themselves emotionally. When one young woman needed to carry out a death-knock interview she would arrive on the doorstep with toilet paper and tea bags, because she had covered so many that she knew people constantly ran out of these basics at a stressful time. As a result, she would be readily welcomed into people's homes. At the other extreme, some learned to manipulate their own emotions and became duplicitous, for example, they found a tear or two often helped in getting people to open up about their experience. As explained in Chapter 2, some of this emotion work is genuine and empathetic, or deep acting (Goffman, 1959), and some more superficial and insincere surface acting (as discussed in Chapter 2.7). The distinction is important because if a journalist is not sincere, it can signal *emotional dissonance*, *compassion fatigue* or deception.

All aspects of preparation involved some form of social interaction and interpretation. Interactions involved in preparation could range from a briefing (or non-briefing) by an editor, to interviewing grieving relatives, to discussing the outcome with colleagues. A range of emotions may have been involved as well, from an encounter with an accommodating police officer who readily supplied the necessary information, to dealing with an irate relative who had no intention of speaking to the media. But a story was always needed, and as was evident from the interviews, all the journalists were reluctant to return to the newsroom without one.

The situation in a courtroom is different. Here, there are fewer interactions apart from gathering the court documents to see who is appearing. Instead, journalists are usually only observers, but they must be attuned to the evidence being presented as their role is to act as a filter in deciding what information to make public. The amount of detail disclosed in a courtroom can be abhorrent, as some participants shared. So, although the journalist did not observe the incident directly, the effects of secondary trauma can be as damaging (see Chapter 1.2).

Before discussing the results that emerged from the interviews with journalists covering trauma in New Zealand, it might be useful to provide some context to their work experiences.

Learning to cover trauma

The traditional approach to becoming a journalist in New Zealand was learning on the job through cadetships (Hannis, 2012), as discussed in Chapter 3. Last century, newsrooms throughout New Zealand were well staffed and often a senior journalist would accompany a cadet reporter, or at least there would be a photographer alongside regularly as support. But as times have changed and newsrooms now operate with minimal staff, novice journalists often cover trauma incidents alone as staff photographers are on the decrease. Journalists are often now expected to take their own photographs, and video preferably, as one of the former editorial managers explained.

This is different from how one former senior journalist recalled her experience in the newsroom:

P. 18: *[Trauma reporting] was never really given to young journalists to do. When I was there, it wasn't at all, but you know I have noticed as anybody has, that the (newspaper) has gone more for those stories now, you know, like a tragedy involving a mother or a child or something like that will always make the front page. It never used to be quite as prominent, that's for sure.*

Journalists in this study learned about covering trauma from a range of sources, including other journalists (see Chapter 2.3). The relationship between small-town police and the police reporter, for example, sometimes was an important link in learning the guidelines for trauma reporting. Interactions with police could thus be influential on a number of levels, from helping young journalists learn what was acceptable behaviour and what was not. Interactions with experienced photographers also helped clarify some boundaries.

P. 12: *I'd already become friendly with the local police, as you do, so when I got there I was quite openly rookie and said, "Hey, XXXX, I'm not quite sure what I'm meant to do in the situation or what's allowed." He was like, "All good. You can go there, just don't go beyond here." That's the benefit of a small community. You can have those conversations and be honest about the position you're in... I just remember the chief photographer saying "Just no bodies in the photos, we don't publish bodies."*

However, there is no direct link between studying journalism and learning about trauma reporting in New Zealand. Regardless of the level of adherence to unit standards – the national guidelines which specify what a student needs to achieve to attain a given standard (see Chapter 1.5) – the study of journalism in New Zealand is based on the ideals of professional detachment and the norm of objectivity. Objectivity in traditional newsrooms and journalism training has always gone hand in hand with emotional distancing. Trauma training, therefore, directly confronts the practice based on traditional principles of objectivity, which may also explain the reluctance that I encountered in the interviews to discussing emotions.

Journalism students are taught how to act “professionally”, how to prepare and conduct an interview, how to keep a distance and how to be objective. They are rarely trained on how to face emotions that surround some of the interviews.

Previous research has shown how both journalists and victims can be affected by trauma, therefore, organisations such as the Dart Center have encouraged journalism educators over the past two decades to incorporate trauma training into their programmes, as discussed in the literature review (Chapter 3.7). Part of that training involves learning about what people experience as part of the grieving process and learning how to talk to them. If novice journalists do not know how to do so, they may try to avoid the situation or struggle to cope with the outcome:

P. 15: *Within the culture, when people do not want to phone someone, they do it [in] such a way that it becomes quite brazen, because they are pushing themselves to do it. Because they have got little support around it, it creates more trauma for the people involved.*

Both parties can suffer if the journalist is not emotionally literate, that is, unaware of the effects that traumatic stress can inflict:

P. 3: *I remember feeling really unprofessional, ringing someone who is grieving and floundering, because it's just not fair. You need to be kind of like in control of the situation, to make it easier for them, if that makes any sense. I've had those interviews in the past and I end up feeling like shit, just added to the confusion or grief or whatever, so I think that [it] helps having a plan, taking a few deep breaths and also being prepared to back out.*

Only one participant in the study had undergone trauma training as part of her journalism course. Others admitted they had not contemplated the fact when they were students that they would be expected to cover death-related events or carry out death-

knocks. The following comments suggested that some graduates were vague about what sort of work they expected to do as news reporters:

P. 5: We got pretty well schooled in it at journalism school [Canterbury postgrad diploma] with Jim Tully, and we got taught about... I think, it's just the first time you approach even the idea, like the practical side of it, you don't really understand it, the reality of doing it. It's actually the first time you discuss that it's something you do for a job, which is quite unusual.

P. 2: It comes as a bit of a surprise when you get into journalism for various reasons that it's part of the job and it really is. Like you can't avoid it, and you get told at journalism school if you do avoid it you won't have a job for very long, or you get told, you can choose to avoid it if you like, because everyone has personal choice but it may not get you many points.

These comments also imply that journalism lecturers are not aware of the policy in some newsrooms that journalists can no longer avoid doing death-knocks (see Chapter 5.2). However, they do endorse the fact that there was generally very little preparation before first trauma encounters.

Newsroom training

Interviews with former editorial managers, one from Fairfax Media and the other from NZME, the country's two largest publishers, revealed that some general newsroom training was offered on a regular basis. However, it was also evident that trauma preparation was not a priority. This could reflect the fact that the traditional newsroom culture encouraged journalists not to dwell on an unpleasant experience but rather to move on to the next story as quickly as possible (Fedler, 2004). The focus in a newsroom is on story production (see Chapter 3.3), which was endorsed by the following comments from two former senior journalists. The second comment suggests that editors may have been aware of the implications of traumatic stress, but that was irrelevant to their primary goal.

P. 16: I didn't think about what I'd done until later. I just went and did it. Well, it was just to get the job done, really. Cover all the angles, yeah.

P. 17: I don't think they [editors] necessarily do know [about the implications of trauma work] because they probably wouldn't take the time to read it. Or be interested in it, it's all about getting the paper out. There's no reason why they wouldn't know some of the research.

5.4 Support

The traditional journalist has been socialised not to need any support, but to remain unflappable and suppress emotions (Underwood, 2011). Support, as a condition of journalism balance, may be physical or psychological. It may also be spoken or unspoken. It also has a number of properties that affect its influence – including employers, colleagues, partners, family or self. The journalists interviewed for this study appeared to expect very little from their editorial managers. A simple “Are you all right?” after returning from covering a traumatic incident, or “knowing that they would take the time to listen to concerns” were two examples of expectations from journalists. But several participants in this study expressed a distinct lack of genuine support from management, from perceiving their concerns as solely “obligatory”, a “gesture”, “only to meet OSH [Occupational Safety and Health] protocols” or “for the ‘HR’ [Human Relations] tick”. One participant suggested that his employers would “fob him off onto counselling” and questioned whether any such help would only be to “get the best out of you”. This suggested that although there was overt support at times, for example, posters on the walls in some newsrooms about counselling, it was often more like tokenism and not genuinely endorsed.

A clear need for more management support was evident from the interviews, as well as more recognition for the changing nature of trauma in the news and increase in death-knock stories. A mid-range reporter summed up her feelings, highlighting the fact that journalists were now in a direct line of fire from the public, as well as editors:

P. 5: *But I think that kind of story, where you know that you should say it but you know it's going to hurt people, that's where you need the support, kind of. That you need to be told you are doing the right thing and when it upsets you afterwards because they ring you and say how dare you, you know, that's when you need the ability, like I was saying your insurance policy. I did everything right. I think that's the best way to manage it. [This journalist preferred to show her finished story to sources to fact-check, as her “insurance policy”.]*

Some of the more senior journalists interviewed did not expect any form of support; instead, they endeavoured to remain staunch like their predecessors, as one former female journalist explained. To protect her identity she is referred to here only as P.

P: *I went to the [Boxing Day] tsunami, but I would never say no. It was incredible. Those are the incredible sides to it. Being part of that kind of history and covering that kind of event. It's extraordinary. It's kind of what you want to do as a journalist. So there's that side of it as well, but certainly the support was lacking.*

R: *Did you ever sort of ask for support?*

P: *No.*

R: *Or seek, not so much help but.....*

P: *No I never did.*

One might wonder if there is a gender element to this response. Scholars have argued that the definition of “good” journalism is gendered; that male and masculine characterise news journalism (van Zoonen, 1998). Bourdieu (2001) would have attributed this response to the traditional model of division between male and female and the “sexually ordered social order” (p.95).

Men continue to dominate the public space and the field of power (especially economic power assigned to the private space (domestic space, the site of reproduction), where the logic of the economy of symbolic goods is perpetuated, or to those quasi-extensions of the domestic space, the welfare services (especially medical services) and education, or to the domains of symbolic production (the literary, artistic or journalistic fields, etc.). (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 93-94)

Therefore to be a “good” journalist covering traditionally male-dominated areas of journalism such as international disasters, meant being staunch, because to complain could jeopardise the chance of continuing to do such prestigious, typically masculine hard news stories which were usually considered ‘off-limits’ for female journalists (North, 2014). “Where femininity has negative symbolic value, a woman may compensate for it by acquiring other forms of capital: professional, cultural, economic or social” (Djerf-Pierre, 2007, p. 82).

5.4.1 Peer support and gender complexities

Rather than openly discuss emotional responses, support from colleagues appeared to be scant and superficial: “*Black humour and bar stories were about as far as it went, glossing over the issues.*” This appeared, from the data, to be how traditional male journalists, would address any after effects of a traumatic incident as a way of deflecting from the internal emotions. Senior female journalists also readily admitted to overindulging in alcohol as well.

However, with the changing gender balance (see Chapter 1.2), it became noticeable from the interviews that there was a reluctance from young female journalists to talk to older male journalists, who were usually their editors. Some senior journalists found senior staff unapproachable and they were intimidated by them. Even though some commented on the increase in the number of women in newsrooms, they felt the culture was still influenced by the “macho” past. Others, rather than feeling threatened by authority, implied a sense of respect for the senior journalists and also some sympathy that they may have missed out on the emotional dimension in their careers. Both responses supported traditional thinking, that sharing emotions went against what journalists should do (Dworznik, 2006).

Rather than adhering to the traditional norm of remaining detached, several of the participants spoke openly about their need to share their experiences as a way of processing what they had encountered. This highlighted a gap that has appeared in the workplace, exacerbating the divide between young females and older males (Hannis et al., 2014).

P. 4: *I feel far more comfortable sort of talking to people who are my own age or around the same age and we are all sitting in the courtroom covering it as opposed to, you know, going back to the office and talking to the boss or a middle-aged man kind of thing. It's just a completely different kind of relationship, yeah.*

two colleagues in the office for most of the time have been middle-aged men. And while they're both lovely it's not like I'm going to necessarily go back to the office and just be like, “Oh, I just, you know, terrible gruesome details out of this murder trial. It was so horrible I felt really crap about it.” That sort of thing. It's not a work environment where you'd go and do that...

R. *What do you think would be the response?*

P. 4: *I think they would just feel uncomfortable if I was talking about the emotional impact of something. They would also feel out of their depth. I don't think they would really know how to deal with that sort of issue, and it's not necessarily that they're bad people. It's just that that's not necessarily something that in their careers they've thought about or considered as actually we should be dealing with this in a different way as opposed to thinking, "Oh yeah, harden up," kind of thing. That sort of thing like, it's their job. I think that's just because they're of that generation where they probably don't read as much about the media or changes in the media, whereas I think I'm probably a lot more engaged with the industry... and I think possibly that's just the thing because we're younger journalists and we've probably studied media studies or politics or that sort of thing. We've done a lot more of that at university and so we're quite probably got more of the critical thinking.*

R. *And you feel they are supportive?*

P. 4: *They're supportive, they're fine. Yeah, they're total sweethearts and they know, you know. I mean one of them, we always laugh that he's on the spectrum. We always say he's, you know, vaguely autistic or something because he has no empathy. You know, he has this total lack of human feeling. We laugh about him but he's the first one to be like "If you're not feeling good, don't come in." or "How many hours did you work today?"*

Yeah, I mean at other times he'll be like, do that. You know? Do more. He'll work you but they are good.

These comments suggested that university-educated journalists were "engaged" and interested in changes in the industry and, because of their education, had been taught to think critically, rather than to just accept the status quo. These attitudes could be seen as a threat to traditional thinking.

Some participants also raised concerns about the decrease in the consumption of alcohol and press clubs. Although drinking was considered to be a maladaptive coping strategy in the past (Buchanan & Keats, 2011), having somewhere to relax or let off steam away from the newsroom provided an outlet for some journalists. One of the participants made the comment that it was not unusual now to have teetotallers in the newsroom or "health nutters". While some of these changes can be viewed in a positive light, a former senior journalist voiced concerns and wondered whether those issues, once discussed over a drink, were probably not addressed or acknowledged at all now.

P. 15: Although there are more women, it's still very blokely, it's black humour, just get over it. But the culture has changed; it was a drinking culture, so how are they dealing with it now? Collegiality, some people dealt with it through self-harming... and the sad and lonely...

5.4.2 Partners, family, friends and Facebook

In many cases, face-to-face interactions, such as having a drink together, have been replaced by digital conversations. Sharing with friends – often other journalists in other places – was the most popular outlet for young journalists in this study. Many emailed friends, posted thoughts on private Facebook pages, or even simply phoned them “for a yack”.

Whereas one participant said having a partner who was a journalist was a bonus, another felt that sharing her experiences with someone in the industry could lead to a negative cycle, if they were both feeling despondent about their work. Some participants said they often shared their feelings with family, but commented that family members did not always appreciate the impact of trauma work.

Feeling “unsupported” could be interpreted as having no outlet, having no one to talk to about “feeling uncomfortable” or “when you feel like you’re the only person who really knows” in the newsroom. This sense of isolation from a lack of support came through repeatedly. One young woman admitted that as a last resort she sought support from victims:

P. 5: You know, I found myself feeling like, you know... which is weird. Seeking kind of solace in some way from your sources or your interview subjects but I mean sometimes it's....yeah.

5.4.3 Entitled to support?

One of the first steps with trauma education is for journalists to acknowledge that they may be at risk of traumatic stress as an outcome of their work. For example, a former police reporter (P. 14), who had covered more than 150 death-knock stories while still in her 20s, did not feel she was entitled to the kind of help offered to police: “*I mean, emergency services obviously deal with that sort of stuff all the time.*”

Because there was often no open acknowledgement in newsrooms that journalists could suffer as a result of their work, many appeared to still be reluctant to accept help, as this former senior journalist explained:

P. 18: *I was contacted after Christchurch [earthquake] about it. They [management] were very good about that. I didn't feel I needed it and I know that all work places now, most of them have counselling services in place. They certainly didn't when I was a younger reporter. I mean, I might have at the time, but I think that counselling was not really considered an option, not something you really thought about much. I always felt like, I knew it would come up occasionally, sort of thing that police officers had gone through far worse, you know, what they see and do and things. So I didn't really have a right. Not a right to it because I hadn't been in the very front, you know?*

It seemed that if there were no direct trauma, for example, witnessing something first-hand, then support was not necessary, which implied a lack of knowledge within the media about the effects of secondary trauma:

P. 16: *Clearly after the earthquake in Christchurch they had really good support in place and that's great. Because they needed to because a person died in their building, people were injured and they saw everything so there was a really good response to that professionally, but I think there is a gap when it comes to day-to-day trauma. Because we don't actually know even what impact it's having on us, or the people we're interviewing.*

This comment implied that the information about the risks of psychological damage from cumulative trauma has not filtered through to journalists, or it had been discounted by management and not passed on to staff. Either way, it demonstrated the power of this interpretive community that reinforced their professional ideology (Zelizer, 1997), as discussed in Chapter 2.4.

5.4.4 Cogitation

The condition of cogitation, a term devised for this study, involves a combination of inner thought processes that appear to affect comfort levels by helping to “rebalance” journalists, including self-talk and reflection (Schön, 1983). These processes, in turn, are influenced by past experiences and emotions, for example, consideration of personal and professional ethics, as well as the need for recognition and self-worth.

Cogitation has a number of properties: for example, time (how much time a journalist has to prepare him or herself to cover a story); the journalist's level of tiredness, emotional intelligence; the range of emotions involved; personal values and moral compass; the level of uncertainty or confidence and the number of risk factors, for example, dogs on the property.

Cogitation operates before, during and after covering an event. At all times, it involves a level of self-talk, as a form of contemplative psychological preparation for self-protection, whereby the journalist engages in rationalising, reasoning and re-establishing oneself before another assignment. On the job, self-talk can include justifying, or even thinking pragmatically. It can be self-directing purposes and for reassurance. After an event, it is more of a reflective process, whereby the journalist reconciles what went well and what did not, as well as rationalising to avoid subsequent unpleasant consequences. It can be punitive but also self-congratulatory, as a way of moving on to the next assignment.

Cogitation plays a major role in the theory of balance framework, particularly when there is an ethical dilemma – where the harm is outweighed by the benefits – and strong contradictory emotions. Backholm and Idås (2015) defined ethical dilemmas as dilemmas caused by inner conflicts experienced by journalists between acting as good human beings as opposed to “professional” journalists. “In other words, we saw dilemmas as discomfort caused by going beyond the individual threshold of acceptable behaviour in the line of work (p. 143). They identified three types of ethical dilemmas: uncertainty about rules of conduct; carrying out tasks incongruent with personal values; and situations beyond one’s control. Examples of these ethical dilemmas were identifiable in the data.

As a condition in the theory of balance, cogitation may also be affected by levels of the stress hormones, adrenaline or cortisol, and how long those hormones have been active in the system. It has been recognised that these hormones affect the functionality of a journalist (Feinstein et al., 2002). Stressed journalists can be compared to someone recovering from a disaster, where they alternate between “emergency mode” and “endurance mode” (Gordon, 2014). Whereas adrenaline helps a person when they are outside their comfort zone and in need of high energy levels for the short term, cortisol takes over to help that person keep going for longer periods of stress. Gordon has shown that overactive adrenaline can lead to cortisol rebounds, causing anxiety that may lead to depression and high levels of exhaustion. Whereas adrenaline can help a person focus and think clearly, cortisol can do the opposite, to the point where a person may become numb and unemotional. This endurance mode can continue until the stress subsides and routines are re-established. As with aftershocks following an earthquake, the endurance mode can continue for several years. Aftershocks create cumulative stress, which journalists endure who cover repeated trauma.

Journalists often function on adrenaline (Ricchardi, 2001) as a selection of comments from participants confirmed. They perceived the role of adrenaline in a positive way, which suggested that in the newsroom an adrenaline rush was considered a badge of honour and may have enhanced their status. But what was implicit was how they deflected some of their negative responses by using the hormonal release to avoid reflecting on their practice, as some comments implied:

P. 13: *You get a buzz out of it [covering trauma stories].*

Stress hormones also worked as a distraction from the unpleasant side of covering a major international incident for this journalist, by helping her to focus on the positive aspects of the job.

P. 12: *You are walking in history and there's a huge adrenaline buzz, you know, racing back.*

This comment demonstrated how adrenaline influenced work performance in a positive manner. All the interviewees spoke about the experience in a positive light, unaware of the risks of long-term effects from stress hormones.

P. 7: *Well, at the time, I mean you are there to do a job and you just hit the ground running and the adrenaline kicks in and you just go, go, go and at night you drink a lot and then you get up incredibly early and you do it all again.*

One male participant described how he enjoyed his first adrenaline “rush”. This claim of enjoyment could have been a way of masking or denying some of the innate responses he may have had to what he witnessed. Because status or *social capital* (Bourdieu, 1992) may be earned from covering trauma-related stories, journalists are unlikely to acknowledge any negative effects – physical or mental – or that they cannot control them.

P. 6: *I'd probably been there a year before I even went to my first car crash or something like that and it all sort of happened quite suddenly. So yeah, it was quite slow to get stuck into anything trauma based. But once I did it I liked the sort of adrenaline that came with it.*

This response from a male mid-range reporter reflects the bravado that is expected in men as a social norm: his choice of words “get stuck in” suggests a keenness to experience an adrenalin rush. Whereas a female participant, who referred to adrenaline,

preferred to keep it under control so she could stay on task, but admitted she needed it to help her do her job because of the stress she experienced:

P. 7: I have a set approach. They may not be direct written-down questions but bullet points for what areas I'm going to ask about. Because I'm panicking when I'm doing a death-knock. I have adrenaline going, always, so I need that to go back to, to steer the conversation and make it a really 'professional' thing.

Her innate response was to panic, so she tried to stabilise herself and perform her job by preparing bullet points and masking distracting feelings with the adrenaline. Underlying this process is a constant form of cogitation, as she rationalised and tried to re-stabilise.

It was clear from the data that unless strategies were in place, particularly for women, that the flow of adrenaline could have serious consequences, as the following anonymous comment confirmed. This is an example from a female journalist who relied on stress hormones to help her with her work in the short-term, but over time, they had debilitating effects (Gordon, 2014).

Whereas now I've gone from at the beginning of the job absolutely loving that adrenaline, all that sort of stuff that I used to enjoy and now having a panic attack every time there is a big story. Getting the shakes, feeling sick, vomiting on the side of the road, proper panic attack.

It was important to address the role of stress hormones and their effects and how they can destabilise journalists covering trauma, especially as recent events in New Zealand have literally and figuratively jolted journalists and media managers out of their complacency.

5.5 Disasters uncork emotions

A series of disasters in New Zealand in less than a decade could be described as “hot moments” (Levi-Strauss, 1968, p. 256), events through which a society or culture assesses its own significance. The first disaster, the Pike River explosion on the West Coast in November 2010, in which 29 miners perished, was covered by some of the journalists in this study. The mining accident attracted international media attention and controversy. A number of journalists wrote first-person pieces about how unsettling the incident was. For example, Kim Knight (2010) was distressed when she was abused by locals calling journalists scum and vultures.⁷ Open displays of emotions by journalists

⁷ <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/pike-river-mine-disaster/4398623/The-longest-time-alone>

were also observed. A former senior female journalist indicated that such behaviour was not acceptable:

P. 12: *It wasn't that new for me, but I've never seen such reaction in the other media. People were openly crying. Journalists were openly crying... Crying in front of people. Crying in the pub at night. To me it felt quite weird. There was a line crossed somewhere in the Pike River coverage.*

“Crossing the line” in this situation is what Richards and Rees (2011) would refer to as the “affective turn” (p. 853), when emotions become more openly expressed. This open display of emotions by journalists could be the result of changes in social rules, which suggest that “professional” behaviour has become more flexible and less coercive (Wouters, 1992). This adaptation of traditional professional behaviour could be attributable to these pivotal moments related to disasters.

The second major event in the recent history of trauma reporting in New Zealand was the Christchurch earthquake in February 2011. A number of journalists covered the disaster, including graduates, and continued to report from the scene for weeks. The fact that a staff member at the *Christchurch Press* was killed and that most of the staff of the local TV station died when their building collapsed saw more columns and articles written by journalists who shared their own experiences. A third disaster was the death of 11 people in a hot-air-ballooning accident in the Wairarapa in January 2012.

Four of the participants in this study covered all three disasters, and others found the pressure on journalists to produce stories that related particularly to Pike River and the Wairarapa accident were particularly gruelling. It is important to mention these three disasters occurred within a short time of each other, and because they had a noticeable impact on New Zealand journalism they alerted some in media management to address issues of safety and the effects of trauma. For example, Fairfax NZ invited representatives of Dart Asia Pacific to Christchurch to talk with journalists. Although no individuals accepted offers of one-on-one counselling sessions, there were several formal and informal group gatherings with Dart representatives (C. McMahon, personal communication, September 1, 2012). Fairfax NZ also revised its health and safety guidelines for staff to incorporate information on trauma work.

5.6 Summary

This chapter has outlined the context for the study and the three conditions which influenced the tension related to trauma reporting: the importance of preparation and the levels of support and cogitation. The section on preparation considered learning in the newsroom as opposed to the classroom and the ongoing influence of traditional professional ideology. Support, as a condition, covers attitudes of both journalists and editors and the wide disparity between the two in some cases. It also indicates that it is not likely to improve while the media undergoes such substantial changes and journalists are more often on the front lines, and while the fascination with death continues to attract readers. The fact that journalists cannot say no to assignments readily confirms that there is a lack of understanding by senior newsroom staff about secondary trauma or a reluctance to acknowledge its effects. The identification of the condition of cogitation, a self-monitoring and self-aligning process, is considered in relation to the stress hormones, adrenaline and cortisol, and the damage from the long-term reliance on them.

Formal instruction in covering trauma, displaying emotions and seeking counselling, are still tacitly discouraged. Some change is evident, however, with the increase of women in newsrooms and following three major disasters in New Zealand, which have seen some journalists speak out about their experiences. This may be evidence of an “affective turn” among some New Zealand journalists, challenging traditional norms of behaviour. This also highlights two other important points related to contemporary journalism: First, journalism students are vague about the realities of trauma work. Secondly, because they have studied at university level, they have been taught critical thinking and that may explain why they do not readily accept traditional tenets.

The next chapter outlines the first core category, or phase, in the theory of journalism balance in relation to trauma reporting – Attaining balance. Attaining balance is what journalists strive to achieve, as they balance the norm of objectivity, while at the same time, managing their emotions in the most effective and adaptive way possible in the field and in the newsroom.

Chapter 6 Attaining balance

6.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the first phase in this concept of journalism balance: Attaining balance. Based on the constructivist grounded theory approach of using gerunds or action words to name categories, all three phases – Attaining balance, Maintaining balance and Losing balance, and their sub-categories, relate to social processes. These categories emerged from the interview data as a complex set of actions that each formed logical clusters or three sub-categories. The three sub-categories to Attaining balance are: *Being “professional”*; *Confronting emotions* and *Learning the rules*, as illustrated in Figure 4. All three sub-categories are influenced by three contextual conditions: preparation, support and cogitation. Preparation can relate to prior knowledge of an incident or court case. Support can relate to having someone to share the experience with or knowing that counselling is available if necessary. Cogitation can be influenced by how much time there is between assignments for the journalist to process each trauma encounter.

Each condition is described and illustrated with pertinent participant comments in relation to the the range of coping skills that trauma journalists sometimes adopt.

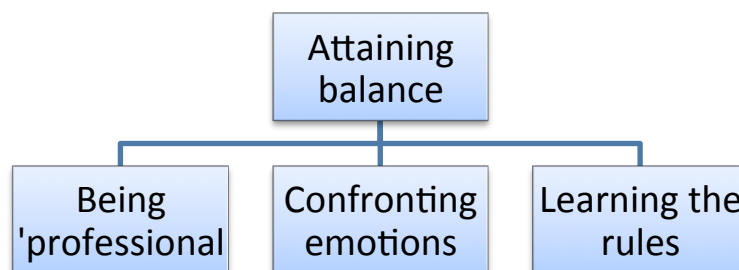


Figure 4: The core category of Attaining balance and its sub-categories.

6.2 Being ‘professional’

Being “professional” encapsulates the desire to project a professional image as a journalist. Learning the “correct” way to perform the job (Berkowitz, 2000, p. 127), usually means adhering to traditional newsroom norms, which foster approaching reality objectively and suppressing any personal emotions. It also serves as the entry point to becoming accepted as a member of a journalism community. From the data, there were four elements involved in *Being “professional”*.

Although journalism graduates may study for three years, or one year as a postgraduate, it is only once they enter the newsroom that the *real* learning takes place. For example, journalists learn that they are expected to react “professionally” early on in their careers, as they are aware they are under scrutiny to see if they have the stamina for the job (Berrington & Jemphrey, 2003): “Survival depends on producing the kind of material editors and proprietors demand” (p. 239).

6.2.1 Learning the hard way

Many of the participants implied that they had to learn “the hard way”. This described the situation they found themselves in early in their career.

P. 4: the reality is you are going to be thrown into the courtroom if you're working in Auckland as a journalist at these places, you can expect that. It's not necessarily a scary thing, but it's kind of like a reality check.

Editors do not expect novice journalists to have any “professional” skills, but rather, as members of an interpretive community, they assume novice journalists will develop meaning from experiences within their work culture (Zelizer, 1993). For example, Allan (2004) suggested that for journalists to learn to be “impartial” meant they needed to be socialised into “obeying certain rituals of naming, describing and framing realities” (p. 121).

6.2.2 Assimilate the rules

Journalists also absorbed implicit rules through language and symbols. For example, for some young journalists, initiations or first encounters with trauma were never to be forgotten and could be traumatising:

P. 12: I don't remember feeling particularly traumatised by this and I should have, probably. My first fatal car crash that I attended, I was this little newbie reporter and we used to have to take our own photos and there was a guy sprawled on the road with bits of brain and stuff everywhere. The cops used to play jokes on us reporters all the time and one of them came up to me and said, “Oh, we've forgotten to bring our camera, can you take the photos for us?” I didn't know what to do, because I knew technically you shouldn't do that but I ended up taking these photos for them; they were just having a big laugh about it. The editor called me aside and said don't do that again.

What is interesting about this recollection by this senior journalist is the word “should” in the first line. This implied there were some implicit guidelines about what should be

considered traumatic and what should not, and that such informal learning and meanings come from interpretative interactions. Zelizer (1997) described such informal learning as a “local mode of interpretation”, whereby journalists established “discursive markers” or recognition of their worth through events where they had upheld their professional ideology (p. 409). “The local mode of discourse displays an initial ‘tightness’ of the interpretive community” (p. 407). The discourse thus maintains collective boundaries and teaches journalists what to do and what not to do. In this case, there was no briefing for the journalist, but the rebuke from her editor established some clear boundaries about covering fatalities.

6.2.3 Lack of written guidelines

The guidance for novice journalists on how to go about carrying out a death-knock interview or covering particular court cases is usually oral rather than written, as this research from the biggest newsrooms in New Zealand reveals. The lack of written guidelines could be an obstacle to quickly becoming “professional”. Rather than following written guidelines, Berkowitz (2000) has suggested that journalists learned the “correct way through indoctrination” (p. 128). Willis (2010) preferred the term “journalistic inbreeding”, implying close relationships and like-mindedness (p. 15).

Informal networking with other journalists is one way novices learn to “absorb rules, boundaries and a sense of appropriateness about their actions without ever actually being informed by their superiors” (Zelizer, 1997, p. 403). This was evident from comments made by a novice journalist following her first experience in covering court:

P. 5: *For reporters it's like, “Can you write?” “Yeah.” “Can you do it quickly on the phone?” “Right, good, learn some shorthand. Off you go.” Go into this extremely stressful and emotional situation. You just work it out, you'll be fine... but we do such stupid things.*

6.2.4 Making mistakes

It was the final comment above, which was most revealing, that young journalists made mistakes in the learning process because they started out with so few skills. For the journalist to realise she has done something “stupid”, she must have “learned” what the “correct” or “professional” behaviours were and what were not. The concern here, however, was that she learned by making mistakes, which may have had devastating effects on traumatised people.

Several participants learned the rules of acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour in terms of grief coverage by getting things wrong. This can be traumatising to both parties (Walsh-Childers et al., 2011). But rules of behaviour in various aspects of journalism are less than clear-cut. What may be acceptable in one newsroom may be unacceptable in another. This became evident with *News of the World* and the 2012 Leveson Inquiry (The National Archives, 2014). The boundaries of acceptability were stretched beyond general acceptability scales to get the scoop. Some editors were implicitly allowing unethical practices to take place, such as phone tapping, and journalists were being socialised to do whatever it took to get the story. There were implicit expectations, which suggested that sometimes a minimal briefing was deliberate, to encourage journalists to sensationalise. For example, one young journalist had no idea how to proceed after going to court and hearing details of torture:

P. 4: *Yeah, I think probably I was ill prepared going into that. I sort of had no expectations in terms of going to the sentencing. You know, your boss calls you up in the morning and says, okay, you're off to the sentencing today. You know, mother, child abuse, yep, just go for it. Here's a bit of background and on those few instructions you never get any idea of how much details about what the children suffered. Like the fact that there are going to be Victim Impact Statements read out and just that level of detail that they were going to go into and you would have to then make judgments as a journalist about what do I print? ...[This particular case] has been called New Zealand's worse case of child abuse where the kids haven't died.*

Being “professional” therefore implies absorbing the rules while learning on the job, mostly by observing other journalists, because the journalism code of ethics (EPMU) stresses the principle of minimising harm but there are few guidelines on how to practically meet these high expectations. Journalistic professional norms are more extensive than the rules articulated in documents such as a code of ethics. Such a code includes shared standards of journalism practice, principles that guide journalists in their everyday work. The norms that are not prescribed but assumed as a part of the everyday routine are the last to be changed in the newsroom (Rupar, 2006).

Being “professional” when reporting on trauma means learning by making mistakes, which can have implications. It can also, therefore, imply that learning the hard way is the only way to learn how to cover trauma, because making mistakes is what is expected as a way of toughening up, because that is how older journalists have learned in the past.

6.3 Confronting emotions

Part of *Being “professional”* in the traditional sense implies performing emotional labour, which in turn involves *Confronting emotions* – or learning to keep emotions in check. This is an example of how the sub-categories can overlap. But by coding and artificially separating them, each aspect can be explored individually to understand the role newsroom culture plays in trauma journalism. As Participant 15 put it: “Tears are a complete no-no; it’s not ‘professional’.” This “professional” stance can require journalists to acquire various guises of *emotional labour*, or to put on a mask (Hochschild, 1979), for example, to distance themselves physically and emotionally from sources. Hochschild (1983) used the example of ever-smiling flight attendants to demonstrate how emotions could be bought and sold as part of labour power, or what she termed the “commoditisation of feelings” (p. 127).

Participants in the study explained how they learned early in their careers to contain their emotions at the scene of an incident and to defer them until later. This is a form of emotional labour. Wouters (1992) proposed that some people deal with emotions by adopting management strategies to actively deal with their feelings. Because of the lack of guidelines in newsrooms about how to deal with emotions, responses allow for individual interpretations. For example, one mid-range journalist recalled that when she needed to get beyond her own emotions, she would try to put herself in the place of the person who was grieving. This could still be considered a form of emotional labour, whereby she was controlling her emotions to carry out her job. She learned to put on her “professional mask”, which helped her carry out her emotion work.

Emotion work is different from emotion “control” or “suppression” (Hochschild, 1979), as discussed in Chapter 2. For Hochschild, emotion work involves a cognitive decision to focus on a desired feeling which was initially absent for a particular reason. Examples she found included active verbs such as “I psyched myself up” or “I tried hard...” Both are examples of self-interactions or cogitation. In the present study, one young journalist, Participant 4, explained below how she would focus on what she envisaged as her “professional” role as a journalist. This implied that she had to shift her cognitive focus to “professional” mode to control emotions that did not fit with that image. This example also demonstrated the overlap of the sub-categories, and how important *Confronting emotions* was in the desire to attain “professional” status. In this example, the novice journalist interpreted a “professional journalist” to be someone who controlled their emotions, as any display was not showing respect to the source.

P. 4: *I have definitely taken the approach now that I'm a journalist, I'm not their friend. I can have empathy, grace and compassion but at the end of the day I don't see ... I've learned not to try and be human as much. I don't think that [approach] is respectful. I'm very clear that I'm a journalist and this is the situation – I'm writing a story. I guess I approach it by being very straight and try and have some prepared questions, not just 'how do you feel?'. Like, 'do you know anything more about what happened'; 'what would you like to know?'*

The same approach could be interpreted from a comment made by a mid-range journalist who learned how to manage her emotions strategically. The literature indicates that resorting to emotional management strategies are implicitly encouraged and explicitly acknowledged in newsrooms. What became apparent from these interviews, as Tuchman (1972) noted, was that journalists not only adopted the strategic ritual of objectivity, (as discussed in Chapter 2.6) to help them do their job, but they also learned to manage and use their emotions strategically. Rather than suppressing emotions, some novice journalists learned how to “work” or manipulate their emotions in order to do their job.

P. 9: *I guess I approach it by having quite a strategic approach, because I hate awkward moments and it's a very awkward situation to be in.*

6.3.1 Emotions at work

The journalists in the study were seldom taught how to deal with emotions, which supports what Richards and Rees found (2011). Instead, journalists endeavoured to attain “professional ideals” by acquiring “a thick skin” to become “insensitive” (p. 858) to sources through interactions with other journalists. But that was not always a healthy response as there could be “ongoing affective and psychological damage when journalists suppressed impulses of sympathy, pity and guilt to avoid being overwhelmed by their feelings” (Hopper & Huxford, 2015, p. 26).

Court reporting also emerged as an area of concern for journalists covering trauma. It soon became clear that journalists adopted a range of strategies to help them do their job. One of the participants explained that trying to focus on the purpose of the interview helped her to control her emotions:

P. 6: *It's pretty cringe worthy. I guess you are so focused on yourself and what you're going through and even if you try and think oh, they've lost XXXX. It's quite hard to get over the hurdle of new feelings. So overawed by it all but now it's kind of a lot easier to think about them, and think about what might make them want to talk to me rather than my increasingly fast heart rate.*

Novice journalists interviewed in this study appeared to test out a range of approaches to help them avoid unpleasant feelings, or what one referred to as “dread”. Some still aspired to the “professional ideal” of detachment:

P. 2: *I wasn't used to being so intrusive and I was probably a bit too apologetic, and a bit too, probably not detached enough so it affected me quite a lot... You always get that dread when you get asked to do any sort of death-knock or whatever.*

Some novice journalists went through noticeable turmoil in their efforts to manage their emotions. They seemed to be aware that repressing their emotions was not good for them but they also wanted to be able to have some control over them:

P. 4: *You want to kind of become as cynical and weathered as the senior reporters as soon as possible, you know? You see them with the kind of with a 'don't give a toss' kind of attitude and that's probably the stereotype of a hardened journalist but it's probably not the healthiest thing to aspire to.*

There were a number of reasons why journalists felt they needed to manage their emotions, which was mainly for practical purposes:

P. 18: *I always try and retain the mood that you felt in the place and things like that to make your story better. So you come back and try to retain that. I wouldn't normally talk to others [colleagues] before I wrote my story because I wanted to remember and kind of write my story based on feelings that were at the time, but then after that I'd need something [to snap her out of that mood].*

Coping strategies can be categorised under three key areas: emotion-focused, avoidance-focused or problem-focused (Buchanan & Keats, 2011). Exercise and other physical activities are also popular coping strategies, often necessary to counteract the stress of the job (p. 132). These categories were all identifiable among the participants in this study, particularly the first three which are discussed in detail.

6.3.2 Emotion-focused strategies

These coping strategies relate to dealing with emotional distress by expressing emotions, disengaging from emotions, or seeking emotional support. Many of the participants expressed their need to share their experiences. Sharing the narrative is an emotion-focused strategy because talking, emailing or blogging helps to deal with emotions. Talking it out or sharing the story was the strategy most often used by participants after a traumatic encounter, whether it was with colleagues, other journalists elsewhere in the country, partners, flatmates or family. For example, a mid-range journalist found talking helped her debrief and at the same time alleviate her stress levels:

P. 10: *I like to talk, I think I'm quite good at not bottling things up. So I will talk; I like to debrief. Unfortunately, I don't get the opportunity to do that with anyone at work so I do that at home. So I do that with my husband, he'll happily let me chat it out and ask questions and all that sort of stuff, so personally that's how I do that, and once I've got a lot of it off my chest I tend to feel better quite quickly.*

For another mid-range journalist, she found it helped to share what she witnessed with a colleague when she got back to newsroom. She felt reassured that her emotional reaction was not inappropriate when she saw how her colleague reacted to her account:

P. 5: *I remember earlier this year I went to a sentencing for a drink driver who killed a woman and left her young daughter permanently injured, and I hadn't known anything about it before I'd gone there and it just shocked me, and I could see from where I was sitting, there was another reporter and I could see she had the same. I was crying. Like, it was awful and I remember getting back to the office and just being like, to someone who sits next to me. "Jesus Christ." And just told her about it and it kind of just alleviates that and seeing the other reporter was upset made me feel kind of better that I wasn't just having like a private meltdown or something.*

Sometimes talking to other journalists for support before tackling a job, as this junior journalist recalled, helped her prepare herself:

P. 3: *We had a good rapport going amongst the reporters and I'd say "I don't want to ring this guy. What'll I say?" and someone would pep you up: "Look, if they say no, they say no... you just might be one of the lucky ones and they might speak to you."*

However, sharing their thoughts with others in the profession made matters worse for one of the mid-range journalists:

P. 5: *I think we just talk about it amongst ourselves. I dated a reporter. I've dated a couple of other reporters and that's quite good, you can talk about it, but it also becomes like a negative cycle. Where you're thinking about it all the time, like sometimes you just need to switch off. You just need to not think about it and at first I was really bad at that, but I've gotten better.*

Having a photographer alongside on a job helped to alleviate some of the stress and enabled the journalist to strategise, but it could depend on the photographer's attitude to death-knocks.

P. 17: *There would usually be a photographer with me for that whole time. So we would rant and rave and talk about how shit it was [doing death-knocks] and what we would say to the people. That we would apologise very sincerely and that was kind of a form of psyching up, I think.*

Another former senior journalist mentioned that if a photographer had a negative attitude, it made things worse and exacerbated her feelings of guilt.

P. 18: *There was one particular photographer I worked with who was very negative and he didn't help at all. He'd be the one saying, "We're pond scum. You know, if that ever happened to me I've told my family to just say no to reporters if they're at the door," you know, "it's terrible what we're doing to these poor people". You'd have that in your ear; it was really difficult. Because I think it very important who you're working with, with the photographer, if they have the right, attitude, let's just do this. Afterwards, if they said, you did what you could, it was fine, you were sympathetic, I think that it helped a lot, you didn't do anything wrong; they're angry and they're just... And even the chief reporter would say that, they're just using you to take their anger out on.*

To sum up, emotion-focused strategies are dependent on support from others, whether it is in sharing the narrative, seeking reassurance or general collegial support. This suggests that such strategies work well for journalists who feel comfortable sharing their inner thoughts and who acknowledge the demands and stresses of their work. This approach would not sit well with journalists, however, who have been socialised not to express their feelings. As a strategy, it is also dependent on finding a suitable person who is genuinely interested and can offer appropriate feedback.

6.3.3 Avoidance strategies

These were more likely used by journalists who were reluctant to acknowledge or share their encounters. Avoidance strategies usually work in the short term, for example, avoiding the cause of the stress or the reaction to it, by withdrawing, denying, or disengaging from thoughts or feelings about a stressor (Buchanan & Keats, 2011). Black humour can serve as an avoidance strategy, as can drinking or crying. One of the participants in this study always played music loudly on the drive back to work after a death-knock interview as a way of blocking out the immediate emotions.

There was also evidence of journalists who tried to deny or repress their responses and not to dwell on them, which suggested disassociation:

P. 16: No, I was more silent, I think.... I haven't really thought about it in-depth in terms of how I've dealt with it but I presume it's compartmentalised or something.

An avoidance strategy that one journalist employed was trying not to think about what went to print, to avoid dealing with conflicting emotions:

P. 3: I didn't think too much about the family reading the story the next day, which was probably a deliberate thing. I didn't want to think about anybody reading any story the next day.

Others forced themselves into function-only mode as they tried to suppress thoughts:

P. 12: We used to just sit there and be like, "Okay, you've just got to suck it up and do it. Just make the call. Just do it sort of thing. Don't think about it, do it." The more you thought about it the worst it would be.

Buchanan and Keats (2011) listed substance abuse as a separate coping strategy, as a mechanism to numb feelings or self-medicate psychological stress. They recorded several stories of struggles with addiction. This study did not address substance abuse as the topic did not arise. But drinking proved to be a popular temporary escape from reality, especially when journalists were overwhelmed with emotions as one senior journalist experienced when covering the Boxing Day Tsunami in Indonesia. Some others mentioned that drinking "numbed" what they were experiencing. (To protect this person's identity, only P. is used to indicate Participant.)

R. *How did you cope?*

P: *Probably went and had a drink, Lyn. Filed my story and went and had a drink. I mean that didn't happen every night, that you'd burst into tears, but I did that night. I actually heard a lot of people who had covered the tsunami talking about that. I remember hearing one radio journalist who was talking quite openly on the radio, how she had come home and just collapsed on the floor wailing in her hotel, and yet, because you're still human beings. You're still journalists but you still have to process the images that you see, and when people drown, they don't drown pretty. When they start to rot it's not pretty. It stinks to high heaven.*

Drinking and sharing her disillusionment with her career worked in the short term for this journalist, as she weighed up “the good with the bad” aspects of her job:

P. 7: *I usually have a drink... and talk about it with my flatmates or my friends and tell them how I'm going to quit my job, that I need a new industry and it's all bad, and I can't do and I don't want to, that I'm a parasite and a scumbag... But I haven't quit yet. So I get over it because there's the good with the bad. I think alcohol is an unhealthy way of dealing with the stress but I haven't quite discovered an alternative yet.*

Just as the release of adrenaline can temporarily conceal the reality of journalism practice and trauma, drinking seems to have the same effect. But in this case, Participant 7 did analyse her work and could not reconcile what she was doing and the ambiguity of it. Her experience exemplified the push-pull pressures she was enduring, whereby she knew she was doing the job expected of her and obviously doing it well but she did not feel good about how she was going about it.

It was routine in the past to meet up with other journalists and drink excessive amounts of alcohol as a form of collegiality and mutual support, without addressing the issues directly (Underwood, 2011). This culture has continued in some respects as these senior journalists recalled:

P. 17: *Everyone would have a drink at the pub afterwards, after something really big. Just talking to other journos about it or the cops. The cops were sort of the same. It was the same for them.*

P. 18: *Friday drinks, all that kind of stuff, they were you know, just good ways of letting off steam. When you were young, and you know, I remember in the newsroom for some time we had a “Not before 4 club”, every so often you had to go out and you weren't allowed home before 4am, which was dreadful.*

Journalists felt differently about the need for a drink after an accident or disaster, as opposed to after a death-knock. As a mid-range journalist described it, it was often influenced by the amount of adrenaline in his system at the time. It was this reflection of a high adrenaline moment that confirmed that journalists considered coping with trauma reporting in a different light from other reporting and acknowledged a sense of becoming desensitised to it.

P. 6: *I mean, there is always the pub, which is a bit of sanctuary to share bar stories and things like that, but I think that if it's a car crash and you see the blood on the road and stuff like that it's probably different because it's a lot of different feelings coming away from something like that than it is from a death... there is probably not as much of an adrenaline rush in that situation.*

Simply giving into their emotions at times and finding a safe space to let them out was a last resort for some. This is probably because journalists who display emotions in public are considered a liability in the newsroom (Berkowitz, 2000). It implies they lack self-control and may lose the respect of their peers. Or as Wouters (1992) surmised, they lack or lose status. Instead, containing emotions earns prestige.

P. 11: *I would end up just outside the building; I found this little corner on a concrete driveway or something. I just had a little cry and go back up and get on with whatever I was doing. It was ridiculous.*

The choice of the word “ridiculous” is reflective of this interpretive action: to be a good journalist, you do not allow others to see your emotions getting the better of you. But if you cannot contain them, you deal with them discreetly. Looking back, this journalist now considered this behaviour to be bizarre.

To manage their emotions – and get their sleep – some participants sought ways to switch off emotions after writing about something unsettling. One senior writer used what she termed a “circuit breaker”.

P. 18. *I wouldn't normally talk to people before I wrote my story because I wanted to remember and kind of write my story based on feelings that were at the time, but then after that I'd need something. Even if it was just going down to the cafeteria and having a cup of coffee and a joke with someone or walking around or just something that would formally break that kind of mood. You had to move on as well because the story finished.*

Complaining about the job or “having a bitch together”, along with sharing black humour, were popular options under the avoidance category. But as one mid-range male journalist realised, it was only short term and superficial.

P. 6: *And at least that way you can sort of unwind together as well and talk about what you've seen today or not talk about it. Talk about something different. I mean, that's when you crack all the really bad jokes. At night, over a few beers and stuff. Yeah, or do the black humour and just paper over it I suppose.*

Although these journalists are “talking and sharing” on a superficial level, such social interactions are important. Mancini and Bonanno (2006) found people would only usually talk about traumatic events in a safe environment where they felt any disclosure was supported, “when listeners are discreet, non-judgemental or likely to help” (p. 983).

P. 6: *Yeah, I talk about cases with colleagues, but with colleagues it's more sort of black humour you use to deal with it, rather than saying I feel terrible, let's sit down and have a coffee and a biscuit, but it's easier to sort of share with my girlfriend at home.*

Some journalists sought other forms of superficial relief but avoided the issue by “having a laugh” with colleagues. In this situation, emotions become mixed and confused and did not relieve the tension:

P. 5: *We met up with other reporters because we were all staying I think in the same hotel and had dinner and you'd end up just having a laugh, and not really talking about it, I suppose. Yeah, it's a difficult one because you can't really unwind.*

And in the newsroom itself, gallows humour and “having a laugh” could help dissipate the angst at having to pick up the phone, which one senior journalist found helped her when she did not feel good about making a call.

P. 14: *We'd say something to one another before making the death-knock phone call like a mock phone call: "Oh hi, it's X from X here, I know the body's still warm, but we're really wanting to talk to you about x ... and can you send a photo? It would be best if she's really good looking too..." And stuff like that. It wasn't that we thought it was funny as such, I guess just a way of playing it down or pretending to ourselves, or I don't really know what purpose that served. Maybe it just felt better to just laugh, when you know what you were doing was pretty crappy. Not at the situation, but just to laugh.*

6.3.4 Problem-focused strategies

These strategies could involve directly addressing the distress or conflict by seeking information, planning actions, or focusing on one step at a time to manage or resolve the stress. An example was when the participants would position themselves within their “professional” role. Novak and Davidson (2013) found that for journalists “identifying with their professional role appeared to be a protective factor in dealing with hazards” (p. 313). Focusing on their work distracted several participants in this study from what they described as “uncomfortable” feelings. Two of the novice journalists found that it helped them if they dealt with the job at hand, and that distracted them from their emotions. It often meant obeying instructions, as that made life easier and they could reconcile any inner turmoil if they did as they were told. The expectation to simply get the job done was reinforced by an unwritten code among journalists that no assignment, no matter how difficult, could deter a reporter or photographer from getting the story (Dworznik & Grubb, 2007).

P. 1: I mean, in a way having an instruction, like a decree that you will do this, makes you not have to agonise over it. You’ve just got to do it.

P. 7: I just don’t like saying no. I don’t feel any huge sense of loyalty necessarily to them but I think it’s more that I just want to do a good job and it’s probably more for me than for the company as such.

The commitment to the ideals of a “professional journalist”, a loyalty to the profession and acceptance of the unspoken rules of conduct included not refusing to do whatever assignment came their way. This purposeful approach proved to be popular among the participants as one novice journalist explained:

P. 1: Just having a plan in place gives you a structure for what you are thinking so you don’t have to maybe go into the emotional side of it so much. I don’t know. If you feel like you are doing a job you don’t have to feel as much like you’re knocking on the door of a family for the seventh time. Yeah if you have a clear goal and a clear purpose, you know?

Taking a step-by-step approach helped to keep another young journalists focused on the job at hand.

P. 4: *I think how I sort of cover, for example, a child abuse murder case is completely different to how I probably did it, probably a year ago. Now it's like, okay, focus on the story, you know, just get your lead, get the basics in. A few more details and then it's sort of like at the break you can stop and be like, okay, that's what's happened. Sweet, what am I going to do next? Just kind of deal with it in chunks in a way.*

A number of the journalists found they could rationalise and focus more when they had a reason or could justify writing a trauma-based story that could have ongoing benefits for readers. This was especially the case when they were going out into the community to do something helpful.

P. 4: *At the end of the day you can be like, "Huh". Okay number 1, look how many stories I've achieved or how like I've actually done a really good job covering this, and in a way I've started to feel like it's a bit of a noble cause kind of like covering child abuse cases because you don't want to be covering another one. So I've actually just got to the point where I feel like it's kind of my duty to ensure this is covered really and so you know, that doesn't happen to another two-year-old kind of thing.*

The sense of duty extends into the news constructs of "bringing closure" or "validating the victim's death" or "finding a message", reasons which are used to justify a death-knock (see Chapter 2.9). This helps to shift any emotional unease of "being intrusive" to "doing good". It requires emotional labour (Hochschild, 1979) and a mental shift into the "professional" role. If there is deep acting (Goffman, 1959), that is, if the journalist is genuinely empathetic and believes there is a purpose to their work, that approach could be positive for both the journalist and the interviewee.

P. 8: *Sometimes you did help, like sometimes there were questions that had to be answered and I remember a lady in XXXXX who said when I left, "I feel better after talking to you than I did with the funeral director".*

P. 6: *I suppose, in a way, but on the other hand you'd always have a message. We always tried to find a 'message'.*

The main concern here was that the message or the noble issue, for example, road safety, may become the focus of the story, rather than the person. As a result the family's grief may be overlooked and depersonalised by inappropriate questions that related more to the issue.

“Hiding behind the camera” was a metaphor used in the interviews by journalists who literally used a camera, or even a pen and paper, to provide a physical barrier between them and interviewees. It may not be a physical hat, but it created a sense of separation and “professionalism” to keep them in role and help them carry out the job. Taken to another level, the camera acted as a device to help convince a journalist they were only actors in a movie set. This is a form of depersonalisation that De Zulueta (2006) described, whereby a person experiences events as an observer and are disconnected from their body and feelings.

P. 14: *I took photos of that and the body was still there, and the entire time I was telling myself it was just a movie, it's just a movie, keep looking down the lens because then it isn't real. Even though I knew it was.*

Some journalists even found ways to help them avoid interviewing grieving people. One senior female journalist literally avoided any social interaction that could upset her in a situation where she felt uncomfortable. She made up her own rules, rather than comply with general newsroom policy:

P. 18: *My strategy was always to be as unobtrusive as possible. I didn't ever like to talk to people at funerals. I'd rather write just what people said and what I saw around me rather than actually [talk to anyone]... because I didn't think it was necessary.*

The wide range of strategies that these journalists employed indicated how difficult it was to reconcile their trauma work at times. It could cause cognitive and emotional conflict. Coping strategies were, therefore, important to journalists for a number of reasons as they learned to attain balance. They wished to avoid emotions associated with discomfort and guilt, so they employed various strategies. By analysing the strategies, it became obvious that journalists adapted by focusing on more self-protective measures. That was not always easy as *Confronting emotions* overlaps with *Learning the rules*, an integral element in the process of Attaining balance.

6.4 Learning the rules

The newsroom is a moveable feast, if one considers Blumer's (1969) statement that human group life is an ongoing process. Symbolic interaction, he wrote, involved *interpretation*, whereby a person must ascertain the meaning of the actions or remarks of the other person, and *definition*, or conveying indications to another person as to how she or he is meant to act (p. 66). For the novice journalist, interpreting what others want and how to go about it means they live in a state of conflict, because of the many

unspoken rules and conflicting guidelines, so they learn through social encounters. “In the flow of group life there are innumerable points at which the participants are *redefining* each others’ acts”, noted Blumer (p. 67). An important step to Attaining balance and avoiding conflict is learning and accepting newsroom rules and routines, and how newsroom hierarchy operates. Sometimes that may mean accepting what appears unjust, even if it involves safety.

Learning the rules is part of the socialisation process in newsrooms, which includes learning to only object if one’s lives were in danger, as one mid-range reporter discovered. At the same time, she accepted there were good reasons for accepting why those rules were in place, and what was considered *good* and *bad* behaviour in the newsroom. This suggested that she had adopted the values and ways of the dominant culture (Melin-Higgins, 2004):

P. 8: *Another reporter had to door-knock a gang house and there were dogs and a guy chasing her down the driveway and she had felt very unsafe and she had told them [the senior staff] she felt unsafe. But they told her to do it so she did it. You just felt like you couldn't say **no**.*

R. *Why did you feel you couldn't say no?*

P. 8: *I don't know, you just... it wouldn't be good. If you said you didn't want to do a door-knock, then I think they'd be thinking, “then what are you doing here?” It was that attitude that we all had to do it. You just do it.*

I felt it was a good thing, at least we'd talk about it but I think there was a feeling that it wasn't going to make a difference, they were still going to make you go. But I think if any of the reporters had of said it was really dangerous... I felt like if I was seen to make an effort they would accept that it was too dangerous... As long as you weren't saying no to every door-knock that was going, but if you said there was a big dog or a man shaking his fist at the window then they'd say, right, leave it.

The use of the word *good* has multiple meanings in this statement. It could be interpreted as *good*, as in *Being “professional”*. For example, it would not be good to say no to carrying out a death-knock. It is also clear that it might not be a *good* career move, because editors might question a novice’s commitment. *Good* could also mean accepting the rules and only backing out if there were serious risk.

Being “professional”, Confronting emotions and Learning the rules as sub-categories of Attaining balance are separate elements, all influenced by the overarching conditions of preparation, support and cogitation. First, preparation and support are addressed as they can readily overlap, then the role of cogitation is explained.

6.5 Conditions of Attaining balance

Preparation as a condition is multi-dimensional. It can be practical, and it can also involve a cognitive shift from the personal to the “*professional*”, particularly in an emotionally charged situation. This condition includes a number of properties, such as time and location. It could be that a deadline is looming and it may take an hour to get to the destination.

Safety plays an important role in both preparation and support – for example, knowing she or he can opt out if the situation becomes too risky. Both journalists and editors interviewed for this study recalled various stories where journalists were at risk early in their careers and often had to look after themselves. As established in Chapter 5, journalists learned not to expect too much in the way of support in the newsroom. They are socialised to accept the risk factors because that is what journalists do and not to complain because journalism is perceived as an exciting and unpredictable job.

P. 17: I’ve been sent to numerous jobs on my own, to go door knocking. Be it a gang member, or you know, wandering up long driveways sort of feeling, “Shit, I hope this one goes okay.” And the majority has, to be honest, but you know there is very little account taken of people’s personal safety, but I guess you accept that to an extent as a journalist. You just think, “Well, that’s what I bought into. It’s not a normal career.” That’s partly what attracts you to it I think.

Whereas journalists in the study were aware of their code of ethics (see Appendix D5), they appeared to be tightly bound by newsroom traditions and unspoken rules too. Expectations from the newsroom sometimes overrode adherence to any code of ethics. Wilkins (2014) proposed that when it comes to ethics, organisations might espouse one pattern of behaviour and simultaneously promote and reward another. A number of comments from the novice journalists in this study suggested that they had no idea of what they would be expected to do regarding trauma-related stories, or how much risk they would be exposed to until they were out on a job, as one young journalist recalled:

P. 1: It was part of the job: I was expected to jump fences or sneak into hospital wards.

“All reporters have an emotional attitude towards what they consider to be ‘news events’. The attitude will vary depending on the experiences of each individual. It will also have to do with their social background, how they were brought up, their education, and their feelings towards other groups in society” (Hirst & Patching , 2007, p. 7).

Wilkins (2014) implied that contemporary journalistic organisations were out of alignment with reality, as this was reflected in safety policies. For example, although media managers purported to put safety first, several participants in this study were at risk on a regular basis. Within a week of interviewing a former editorial manager with one company who advocated “safety first”, I interviewed a young journalist who had been on the job for around six months. She said she knew nothing of the company’s policy of being required to text a colleague to advise someone in the newsroom when she was going into a risky situation. That week she had covered a house fire and had been inside a P-house. This suggested that safety was not a priority or that journalists may be told one thing yet expected to do another. It also highlighted the gaps between what editors expected and what journalists could deliver. It also suggested that the onus for safety was implicitly transferred from editors to journalists when, in fact, duty of care under the New Zealand Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992⁸ was designated the responsibility of the company. The new Health and Safety at Work Act 2015⁹ has addressed risk management in an effort to decrease fatalities and serious injuries in recognised high-risk industries, but stress has yet to be addressed under new legislation. However, it has established that safety is everyone’s responsibility and that all parties from executives to workers have health and safety responsibilities.

Because journalists now spend a lot of time working alone, especially with being expected to take their own photographs, there was evidence that the participants relied on to help them rationalise and make decisions. As explained in Chapter 5.4.4, cogitation is a term that evolved in this study which comprises self-talk, reflection and other forms of rationalising when confronting trauma-related situations. The importance of self-talk was recognised by Blumer (1969) and how it helped human beings face and deal with their world and guide their actions.

⁸ <http://www.business.govt.nz/worksafe/information-guidance/legal-framework/hse-act-1992>

⁹ <http://www.mbie.govt.nz/info-services/employment-skills/workplace-health-and-safety-reform>

Each of us is familiar with actions of this sort in which the human being gets angry with himself, rebuffs himself, takes pride in himself, argues with himself, tried to bolster his own courage, tells himself that he should ‘do this’ and ‘do that’, set goals for himself, make compromises with himself, and plans what he is going to do. (Blumer, 1969, p. 79)

Cogitation as a condition of Attaining balance was used for a range of reasons. For example, one young woman (**P. 4**) would use self-talk to justify why she was upset when covering a court case: *No, this is my job and it's ok to have feelings*. She explained that she mentally prepared herself for emotions she might encounter, and rather than feel guilty she would simply say to herself: *That was part of my job today*. Another participant referred to self-talk as “team talk”. He talked himself through how to approach a death-knock and also reminded himself what not to say. He had said the wrong things in the past and did not want to repeat those mistakes. It also implied that practice was an important preparatory step. Therefore this contemplative process of cogitation could work as form of psychological self-protection, which involved reflection on previous experiences, consideration of personal and professional ethics, as well as the need for recognition and self-worth. But the ultimate goal of cogitation appeared to be the avoidance of consequences, such as guilt or any other mental discomfort.

Cogitation was affected by two particular properties: the level of “buzz” and the level of commitment to the career. The buzz referred to the thrill of the chase, as one of the interviewees explained it, and adrenaline or cortisol levels (see Chapter 5.4.4). Commitment to the career might go so far as having to give up rights to a private life, which is what was expected of the traditional journalist (Fedler, 2004). As one senior writer summed it up:

P. 14: *you don't mind staying late for that when it's exciting you, you want to be there going hard, doing the work chasing people to get the story, or to get a better story.*

The need for self-direction and reassurance involved in the cogitation process suggested there was a lack of recognition and feedback from senior staff.

P. 6: *I think maybe it's probably a product of the adrenaline but at the same time it possibly allays the feeling of guilt and stuff like that for interrupting someone's grieving, but I don't know, it's kind of in a bit of a sick way, like a pat on the back for plucking up the courage to actually do it because I always have this thing when I'll be walking up the driveway and thinking I can turn back, like I don't have to do this, and I know I could go back to work and say I bottled it [failed]. I didn't do it, but I never have, so it's kind of like a little congratulations, like you did have the balls to do it. Even if they told you to get lost. So there's almost like a mini triumph even if you get nothing out of it.*

P. 5: *Yeah, and then I also try and do, like rather than just reporting on stuff straight, reporting about an incident, I like to try and think how you can, you know, create change or something from that incident... Like meaningful, doing meaningful reporting rather than just titillating your audience or telling what's happened, trying to think why am I reporting on this, why do I want to emphasise this. What's the effect of this going to be?*

Cogitation was often used by the participants to help them prepare themselves for an assignment. For example, as Participant 4 explained, she would use cogitation to rationalise the risks and outcome when she knew she had to deliver a story:

P. 4: *If I'm feeling vulnerable and I don't want to knock on this door... but 'it's your job, you've got to do it' ... it's so much about getting the story.*

Cogitation was more evident and a more complicated process for the younger, less experienced journalists. They appeared to be constantly juggling inner thought processes. Older journalists seemed to readily accept how things were and did not tend to dwell on experiences, which was probably how they were socialised to think. But the younger journalists, particularly novice journalists, appeared to be constantly rationalising, psyching themselves up and preparing themselves as best they could to ameliorate any guilt or discomfort.

6.6 Summary

This chapter explored Attaining balance as the first phase in how journalists learn to cover trauma. It underpins the theory of balance framework by explaining the stage where journalists master the newsroom routines for gathering information and writing formulaic death-knock narratives. Covering trauma in New Zealand is often a trial-and-error process, whereby novice journalists will usually do as they are told to prove to

editors they have the stamina for the job. Their behaviour is reinforced through socialising with others and through a system of rewards and punishments.

Although none of the participants recalled actual instructions on how to carry out a death-knock interview or reasons for featuring such stories, they used terminology such as “paying tribute” or “validating a death” and carried out all the jobs they were assigned to do. This is the local interpretation derived from shared discourse. By accepting the shared understanding, journalists justified why they were covering death-knocks, which is an example of meaning-making preceding action. Through previous interactions, they also learned how to act in certain situations. These common understandings enabled, or encouraged, people to act alike. Through their affiliations, journalists learned and absorbed routine meanings and practices and they were unlikely to change unless problems arose or habitual responses no longer worked for them.

It was evident from the data that a number of the participants felt “uncomfortable” with trauma work. Part of this could be, as several expressed, because they did not expect to have to carry out death-knocks as part of their job. This suggests they were not taught as part of their journalism programmes about the reality of daily life as a journalist. So, to help themselves cope, some shifted into “professional” mode, and endeavoured to attain the traditional journalistic ideals of detachment, neutral observation and objectivity. Their professional ideology therefore both guided and constrained them. It could involve “putting on mask” and engaging in *emotional labour*, or “putting on a hat” to symbolise they were covering a death-knock interview for a valid reason. This exemplified the cognitive loop, whereby doing the job helped to suppress emotions, and suppressing emotions helped to do the job.

These journalists were generally expected to hide their emotions, although there were no guidelines or instructions on how to do this and in spite of research to show this could be psychologically damaging. Instead, they assimilated rules for appropriate and inappropriate displays of emotions, usually through unspoken and informal “professional” norms.

Because today’s young journalists are often sent out on their own to carry out death-knock interviews or to cover court happenings, many have had to learn the hard way. This means novices can confront a range of unexpected emotions – and have to learn to manage their own. This sense of isolation that became evident may have increased with the decrease in the numbers of senior staff in newsrooms who previously acted as

informal advisors, or provided an ear if something upset younger journalists. It was evident from participant comments that as they were striving to attain balance, they often made mistakes or felt guilty if something went wrong.

It became apparent from the interviews, too, that because journalists were provided with minimal information about how to manage traumatic situations, they tended to rely on their own reactions, and as a result, developed strategies to help them cope. Some relied on other first responders or those people who were most vulnerable – their sources – in an effort to alleviate their own levels of discomfort.

Two pertinent observations emerged from the data. Fear of guilt and self-preservation appeared to be motivational factors in their choice of coping strategy once journalists realised there was minimal support in the field but maximum expectations from editors.

Chapter 7 Maintaining balance

7.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines Maintaining balance as the second core category, or phase, in the theory of balance as it relates to covering trauma. Maintaining balance refers to being in a more settled position that journalists find themselves in once they have been accepted into the community and learned how to be a *good* journalist. By this stage they have worked for some time and their efforts are concentrated on maintaining their position. They have learned to successfully negotiate the professional norm of objectivity and emotionality in the face of trauma. To do so, they have usually adopted strategies to help them deal with their work – and any issues in the newsroom – and have accepted the practices for carrying out a successful death-knock. They have also identified their position within the social space of the field (Bourdieu, 1998).

Part of the rite of passage, or formal acceptance into the newsroom, is learning the unwritten but powerful set of internal rules of the game (Bourdieu, 1998) that lead to success. The trauma reporting rules are different from the rules in the newsroom; they are specific to trauma journalism, the trauma *habitus*, or mastering a specific game in a specific professional field. In the case of trauma reporting, one of the rules of the game for a job well done is “getting the get”, or “getting the collect”. These expressions can mean convincing a person to be interviewed, as well as managing to obtain a photograph of the victim – or ideally some video footage of the family if aiming for multi-platform presentations. Essentially, the term implies being accepted by a source and entrusted with their words (Chung, 1998) – and hopefully being the only journalist who gets it.

Maintaining balance can be a constant juggle, however, between keeping editors happy, talking victims’ families into being interviewed and managing a whole gamut of emotions. Along with the climate of change confronting the media industry, as discussed in Chapter 5, there is constant tension between balancing objectivity and emotionality, and the push-pull phenomenon: this is the push from editors to achieve – to get the exclusive stories, to get the best story – and the pull to stay balanced, sensible and levelheaded. This push-pull pressure can keep journalists perpetually on edge. Their ability to maintain balance is affected by the three overarching conditions of balance: preparation, support and cogitation. This chapter discusses the process of Maintaining balance by looking closely at what happens in the newsroom. The data collected was

organised into three sub-categories or sections that illustrate the three most important elements of Maintaining balance: *Getting the get*, *Managing emotions* and *Reading the newsroom*, as illustrated in Figure 5. This chapter outlines these three sub-categories then addresses the conditions and how they can influence balance.

One of the destabilising forces of Maintaining balance is juggling ethical dilemmas, or “finding the line”, the term one of the participants used. The pressure to get a story can *push* some journalists beyond ethical boundaries. *Managing emotions* during this time can be difficult and some journalists have to find ways to regain their equilibrium. Learning to *read the newsroom* and play the game, therefore, becomes an accomplished skill for some.

Again in this chapter, participants P.1-P.4 were novice journalists with up to two years’ experience. P.5-P.10 had two-five years’ experience and P.11-P.18 were senior journalists with more than five years’ experience. P. 19 and P. 20 were editorial managers.

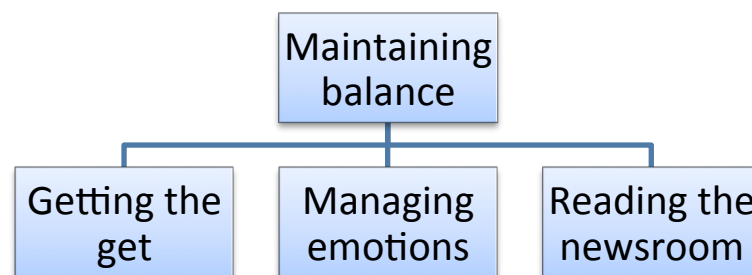


Figure 5: The core category of Maintaining balance and its sub-categories.

7.2 “Getting the get”

Chasing a story can become a competition, something which is tacitly encouraged by media managers and supported and encouraged by colleagues, as comments from participants demonstrated. Maintaining balance is heavily influenced by the ability to *get the get* and to produce cultural “symbolic goods” (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 115), such as respect in the newsroom. As discussed in Chapter 2, unspoken rules sometimes imply there are no rules but there are expectations. The rules and expectations may vary between editors and journalists. They must sometimes play this game at a frenetic pace, usually to beat the opposition with a story, which at times may mean ignoring authorities or even cordons, as a former senior journalist had to do when she covered

the Napier siege in 2009. The offender, Jan Molenaar, had fired at three police officers, killing one. She described what happened:

P. 11: They flew me down and I had to creep in the back and get past the cordon and you could hear the explosions. It was horrible. Tanks rolling past.

The expectations to “get the get” could be relentless for journalists working for competitive Sunday papers, as a mid-range journalist found:

P. 7: Well, it was always so quick because you were usually doing them [death-knocks] on a Saturday and you had to file over the phone or race back to the office and quickly write that thing up. There was no down time. We’d finish at 1am and go out and conk out, wake up and it was Sunday, thank God.

The following comment illustrated the pressure some journalists endured.

P. 7: It’s very hard to constantly balance these very delicate emotional situations in your mind when you’ve got a kind of end goal that you are trying to get to.

These words exemplified the push-pull phenomenon. It was a tenuous position to be in: whether to pursue the story, whatever the risk of further distressing someone and overstepping ethical boundaries, or to remain rational and give up. Some journalists could be influenced by the pressure for recognition or rewards, as this mid-range journalist conceded:

P. 5: I don’t know if many journalists would admit to it but we do do it, you know, because you think the glory or... I mean, I don’t necessarily think like that but you do think there’s a bigger purpose here. And it’s an uncomfortable thing to admit to but I think you know that’s where the balance is always, isn’t it?

Reference to glory as recognition for fulfilling the higher purpose of journalism – an unwritten expectation for those who want to succeed – could increase the internal conflict, as Participant 7 explained:

P. 7: In some ways I think I’m not a very natural journalist in that respect because for me the story isn’t everything. I really believe I’m a compassionate person and I would rather maintain my integrity than cross the lines.

The assumption here is that a *natural* journalist (or “professional”) would not give up until they have got the story, that is, “got the collect”, even if it meant being insensitive or deceptive. The message was reinforced tacitly within the newsroom to go beyond the code of ethics if need be, or “cross the lines”, and young journalists felt the pressure to abide.

7.2.1 Breaking the rules

Some journalists learned to play the game by their own rules, to help them maintain balance. Two of the participants mentioned breaking the golden rules of the profession, the journalism *doxa* (Bourdieu, 1972), unwritten rules of practice, by collaborating and colluding. The first rule outlined here was never to discuss stories with the opposition. However, knowing that there were other young female journalists in the courtroom, who had also heard the same gruesome details, provided one young journalist with a sense of support. So she readily discussed possible angles with them for her story. Also, because she had not been briefed by her editor on what level of detail to disclose in her articles, she found that interacting with journalists from other news outlets, and ascertaining what they thought was publishable, helped to ease her sense of discomfort, as she explained it:

R. *Obviously the talking it through helps?*

P. 4: *Yeah, yeah and just knowing that there are other people in the courtroom also listening to it. That’s comforting. At least you are not there by yourself.*

Working in with interviewees, as opposed to “tricking and deceiving them”, solved two problems for another journalist. She felt better about herself because she knew she was giving the power to her sources. “Collaborating rather than laying traps” was how she described it. She was aware of the golden rule of journalism – not to show the article to people being interviewed.

P. 5: *I think when I first started reporting, I think this is the thing that young reporters don’t do, it’s kind of like laying a trap for your interviewee to get them to say the best thing, or to get them to do this, but I think as I’ve grown as a reporter I’ve learnt to collaborate with my subjects and say this is what we’re looking to do, how do you feel about that? This is what I’ve got you saying. Do you want to say anything about this? You’ve said this sentence, you know, and just let them really make sure that what they’ve said is how they want to sound. Without compromising how they do sound and just making sure that you’ve not misinterpreted anything.*

Collaborating was her way of giving herself “insurance”, a self-protective strategy to ensure facts were correct. It helped to alleviate any possible feelings of guilt, if there was a mistake in the story. By carrying out this process, the journalist acknowledged that people were fragile when they were grieving, which this journalist had obviously learned through past experiences.

P. 5: *They say never show your copy to people. That's one of the golden rules, but there are times when I break that rule because people deserve it, if it's their story. I feel like that's your insurance, you know what I mean? Like, if you get your facts right and you feel like you've been diligent about ensuring that you're quoting them as they said and you've got what they said. You interpret it properly then you are going to feel okay about that story.*

... you've just got to be careful especially when you know, when you are talking about these times are really stressful and emotional times for people on the phone. That you've caught them and [it's] just nice to be able to feel like you've got it right and I think that goes a long way to protecting yourself from like I was saying, the guilt or whatever.

This response acknowledged also that traumatised people are not always reliable witnesses (Muller, 2010), and therefore checking back with them is ethically advisable, as they have a chance to see what they said, or have their comments repeated back to them.

7.2.2 Finding the line

Balance was tested when it came to “crossing the line” or “the fine line”, expressions used by participants. Previous research has found that journalists are confronting a changing ethical landscape, where many feel pressure to act in ways they do not feel are ethical in order to obtain a story (Kay et al., 2011). Richards (1998) attributed blame to the intense commercial pressure to be first with the news that has put journalists under extreme pressure:

As ratings and circulation follow the content of the story rather than the manner in which it is prepared, there has been considerable pressure on individual journalists to ‘bend the rules’ to get the story with the most audience impact. (Richards, 1998, p. 150)

Some of the participants were vague about ethical guidelines regarding grief and intrusion. Or it could have been that they understood the code of ethics but overlooked it because they did not want to go back to the office without a story. Research by

Richards (1994) found that it was only when journalists were operating under the pressures of reporting trauma-related incidents that most journalists were tempted to ignore their code of ethics. Even then the wording could be vague: They shall respect private grief and personal privacy and shall have the right to resist compulsion to intrude on them.

The words *respect* and *privacy* are not clear, and as Richards (1998) noted, “And how does an individual exercise the right to resist compulsion to intrude when a chief of staff, for example, is insisting upon it?” (p. 155).

A mid-range journalist in this study took a couple of years to learn how to maintain her balance. She never refused to carry out a death-knock assignment and considered giving up as failing, but admitted she did some damage along the way. The drive for rewards became greater than her fear of punishment, guilt or concern that she might retraumatise someone. Interactions at work fostered her realisation that her newsroom community considered *getting the get* a priority, no matter the response from victims. The second comment she made (see below) endorsed the contention that journalists are driven by the system of rewards and punishment, and that they must learn to play the game. That can mean persevering to get an interview, no matter what the outcome. “Having a feel for the game is having the game under the skin; it is to master in a practical way the future of the game; it is to have a sense of history of the game (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 81):

P. 5: ... *there's been a couple where I've taken it upon myself probably, past the point of being rational, because you get it in your head that you have failed and you want to get this thing... And I kind of just got worked up about it and ended up going out there with a photographer and, you know, they told me to fuck off and shut the door in my face.*

Saying no is also considered being a failure, especially if the opposition got the scoop. If you say no... but then you've got this thing in your head, what if the XXXXX [newspaper] get it today and you were putting it off. So it's a bit of a vicious circle.

The vicious circle could be considered as irrational thinking, but not questioning it suggests she has accepted the rules of the game. Another example from the data, as one mid-range journalist found, was that the reward system ensured no one spoke up in the office about how they may have upset people they were interviewing. This situation could increase the push-pull tension, whereby the journalist wanted the recognition, but was aware of the incongruity of the situation with having to pressure distressed people to speak:

P. 7: *You're still that hero in the office, you got the story, you got the collect, you got the name so you couldn't then start crying and saying 'but it was really hard and they were grief stricken'...*

This section addressed the challenges of Getting the get and what is involved in accepting the rules of the game to win. There are several important elements involved: first, readily accepting the job being assigned (or not saying no); second, being tenacious, implying that the journalist must try whatever means possible to get an interview, even if it means being devious; third, not returning to the newsroom without an interview that expresses emotions and some visual imagery to complement the story.

Emotions play a critical function, therefore, the next section engages with the issue of *Managing emotions*. I discussed *Managing emotions* in Chapter 2 and argued that journalists are seldom taught about how to deal with their emotions or those of interviewees, and as a result, they will often resort to maladaptive strategies, such as emotional labour and emotional dissonance. Here, I have explained how emotions can often conflict.

7.3 Managing emotions

For many journalists, even senior journalists, their work could entail constantly *Managing emotions*. Female journalists could be under increased pressure to manage emotions because emotionality has commonly been associated with femininity (Nurmi, 2014), as discussed in Chapter 2. Much of the pressure comes from and is related to how females are socialised. Comments from one senior journalist indicated how she went through a full spectrum of emotions when she covered a major international incident in her search to find a local angle to a story. The emotions ranged from elation to guilt, to being totally overwhelmed and almost losing her balance. (No participant number is attached to this quote to protect her identity.)

P: *So you've got these mixed emotions [covering a major incident] about "Oh my God, look at this," and "Shit, are there any Kiwis here? I've got to beat the other media." Which we did actually, and there was this huge sense of elation, because we got this angle that the other media missed. We got our front page with it. So there was this, "Yeah, we've scooped it, we've done it." And you knew you'd done this great job and that the newsroom back home would be pleased with you, etc etc. So there are all these contradictions going on.*

What can affect balance is when there is an ethical dilemma and strong contradictory emotions. Hopper and Huxford (2015) identified this fracture of the professional

detached self of the working journalist and personal emotional self of the individual, exposing a “duality” (p . 37). In their research, the authors found several respondents who felt alienated from themselves, where they were thinking and feeling two entirely contradictory emotions, for example, acknowledging that the story was horrible but also excited because it was a “great” story. Some of their respondents expressed surprise and a degree of disgust at the way they could “lock away” their emotions and hated themselves for it (p. 32), for example, feeling awful and embarrassed but wanting to ask another question all the same. The anonymous comment on the previous page is an example of this fracture.

The degree of contradictory emotions in this study was influenced by levels of preparation, support and cogitation – the three conditions of the theory of balance. For example, the journalist who did not wish to be identified, indicated that there was little preparation or support provided before she headed overseas. For example, there were no emergency supplies in place. She relied heavily on cogitation, to balance emotions of guilt and relief, questioning her ethics of not prioritising the source’s well-being, yet still getting a buzz from reporting on death. Her ability to manage her emotions was therefore constantly being tested because of the fracture of her personal and professional self, or the interplay of opposing views (Merrill, 1989).

This study demonstrated at times that journalists had to make judgement calls to maintain their sense of equilibrium where emotions were involved. What became noticeable throughout the interviews was that journalists often made decisions on their own, rather than consult with an editor, because they knew they would not feel “comfortable” if they had not followed the rules of the game, as one journalist explained:

P.5: ... *I really hurt that family, you know, and I knew I was going to do it and they knew that article wasn't positive when they spoke to me but I felt like they had enough support with them to do that. I weighed it up carefully and there were a couple of other people I talked to, another family – another very high-profile murder victim. They got in contact with us and I thought it was pretty much like if I'd put their names in there it would have really boosted the story but they didn't want their names in there, and I just thought no, I'm not going to do it. Ruining one person's day. But that kind of situation I think is harder to manage than say the earthquake and bodies lying around, and it's a more common experience.*

The repetitiveness of dealing with dilemmas that involve “weighing up” who to keep happy, knowing that further trauma could be inflicted on people who are already distressed or keeping the editor happy, can take its toll and affect a person’s sense of balance.

Maintaining balance is easier if journalists shut emotions out or display emotional dissonance (Hochschild, 1979; Hopper & Huxford, 2015), as one mid-range male reporter found. He admitted it became easier to deal with conflicting emotions but it still took him a day or so to “feel better” after an unsettling experience. He tended to process the situation on his own using cogitation, and even though the unpleasant feelings began to pass when he started a new story, his analogy of “weight” signified how delicate the balance could be at times:

P. 6: *You’ll sit at home and are just generally downcast about things and it’s not necessarily sort of whirling through your mind but it just feels like there’s a weight on you.*

The following scenario illustrated how important time out was to recalibrate. It also highlighted the repetitiveness of some trauma work. The journalist’s level of cynicism also indicated he was having trouble Maintaining balance and that he was becoming burnt out (Reinhardy, 2011). (The pre-requisites to burn-out are addressed in Chapter 8):

P. 6: *Recently there was just a stabbing. A stabbing in South Auckland. I know it sounds awful. It happens all the time but this one I thought, I’ll go to the sentencing. I was there for something else but I thought I’d see what happened and it was two teenage boys. One had stabbed the other one in the neck a few times and paralysed this kid and they were both supposedly young men of great potential and had scholarships to different unis and things like that and potential sporting careers and stuff, and there was a big fight at the end. One of the defendant’s family called the victim a cripple and there was a big fight. It was just really hard. I was sort of trapped in the courtroom with the family of the offender because they called security, sort of ushered everybody out and kept them in two separate groups. You know, hearing the sort of conflicting emotions. They were all obviously in pain, their 18-year-old relative had been jailed for five years, you know, it’s none of their fault. He was drunk and they couldn’t make sense of it and stuff. Yeah that was another one that was just tough and made me think a lot about it.*

His admission that he reflected on the situation and took time out to think about and process the experience goes against the newsroom norm of moving on as quickly as possible in order to “not have time to develop attachment” (Gans, 2004, p. 185). But his subsequent comments, which revealed that he used emotional dissonance to maintain his balance and do his job, were not psychologically healthy. Emotional dissonance such as this can result in stress, burn-out and estrangement from self (Hochschild, 1983). Hopper and Huxford (2015) warned that in trying to maintain the ideals of journalistic objectivity and suppressing emotions, “individual journalists run a substantial risk of traumatising, and estranging, their true nature in ways that can lead to affective and psychological damage” (p. 26).

P. 6: *I guess it's a lot easier in that sort of situation to sort of divorce yourself from the facts of what's going on and at first I think when I was court reporting it really got me down. Like hearing about all the details and people's lives falling apart. Not just the victim's but the offender's as well, but now it's almost scarily easy to disassociate myself from that and kind of be desensitised to all that kind of stuff and just ride it.*

What started out as a protective mechanism became problematic because it became a routine response. The fact that the journalist used the term “ride it out” implied he knew it was not an appropriate response and indicated that he was suffering from *compassion fatigue* (Figley, 1995). *Compassion fatigue* (see Chapter 3.5.2) can result from absorbing too much information about the suffering of others (Simpson & Coté, 2006).

Part of the balancing act for some journalists at the stage of Maintaining Balance resulted from trying to deny or not acknowledge they might be doing more harm to people who were grieving, because the possible risks of interrupting the grieving process was not usually taught or made clear to journalists (Muller, 2010; Walsh-Childers et al., 2011). Denial or lack of acknowledgement was not so easy for younger journalists who would have studied ethics as part of their journalism course and who had been encouraged to reflect on their decisions.

P. 12: *The only other concern is that, which is commonly talked about amongst colleagues I guess, well, amongst more sympathetic colleagues, that people might talk under stress or when in grief and later regret it and I guess that's the reality and we don't really ever know whether they do, unless they tell us they really regretted what they said, maybe a few months down the track, but I don't know.*

7.4 Reading the newsroom

Previous research has shown that journalists are expected to conform to “professional” ideals and to persevere to the point of exhaustion (Fedler, 2004). Because of that ideal, journalists are reluctant to take time off unless they are forced to do so. It is considered a sign of commitment and dedication to their chosen career, as the following comment from a mid-range court reporter suggested:

P. 6: *Recently my boss gave me a couple of days off because I'd been coming in and doing extra days and things like that, but I think I was feeling quite frazzled and I sort of thought that it was more workload than the type of work, but I'm sure it probably contributed to it. It was probably marginally more me putting myself under pressure trying to get stories done rather than the stories themselves.*

Part of his response could be from *Reading the newsroom*, which is a third important element of Maintaining balance. Years of experience may have helped Participant 10 master the game and still “get the get” in the end but she had learned how to *Read the newsroom* and had obviously earned enough *capital* to question the editor:

P. 10: *I always try to remember that this is someone's life and this is someone's loved one and I am quite prepared that I am not going to push it if I try and get an interview with someone, then great, but if I don't get it I'm not going to push it because it's just not appropriate and sometimes it's actually better to walk away and then they might be more likely to come back to you at a later date when they're ready to talk. I always try to think about it, try to make myself feel better about it by thinking that actually a lot of times when people go through bad things, all they want to do is talk about it. I try to think maybe I'm helping them out a little bit as well, but I'm well prepared to face the wrath of a boss over devastating a family even more.*

An important aspect to *Reading the newsroom* is working out how it functions as a social space. The editor has a position of power, which is different from everyone else. The symbolic positions of others are not always so clear. *Reading the newsroom* might not make sense until journalists understand the hierarchical, symbolic divisions in a newsroom:

P. 14: ... there were people that had been there for a long time that just wouldn't be asked to pitch in on big jobs where people stayed late and they'd waltz out at whatever time. I guess they had their niche in the newsroom and they had worked for that. And probably sometimes they did stay late on those jobs too. Some of that newsroom politics would play out anyway, those people I guess had done their time so no one really complained about it, but possibly those rules could have applied to everyone but I guess that's just sort of the younger ones are doing it for the other ones that would probably quit like I did, if they weren't allowed to not do it.

To earn privileges in the newsroom takes time. It also implies that it is not acceptable to question why the rules do not apply to everyone. Along with the fear of possible public humiliation is trying to figure out how the hierarchy works. Most participants did as they were told because they feared the backlash, or they found strategies to circumvent "punishment" from their editors. The range of tactics used to negotiate external expectations and internal beliefs on how the job should be done varied. Older journalists learned to sometimes say yes, then lie or simply ignore the orders. But it took time for them to gain confidence and adopt tactics to help them manage:

P. 14: *There was one that always sits in my mind because they asked me. We knew the family were going to be at the funeral home or something and they were like you've got to like pap them [take a paparazzi shot of them, from a distance where they don't know] I was like, "You want me to pap them at a funeral home? They are going to see their kid's body, you want me to pap them from outside?" "Just get the story, ra, ra, ra." We just kind of hung up and we were like, "Yeah, we're not going to do that."*

However, the following comment from the same senior journalist, indicates that this is not acceptable behaviour for a *good* reporter. It also illustrates how powerful and penetrable the rules of the game can be:

P. 14: ... I'm glad others said the same because I was thinking maybe I wasn't a very good reporter for not doing what I was told that day. We were lucky we got another photo to use instead.

But journalists have not always been encouraged to support each other. Newsroom conflict creates tension among journalists, which Breed (1955) suggests originates from media owners. Tension could be good for management, which in turn could create competition among colleagues. Studies among journalists have consistently demonstrated how social and cultural competition, peer criticism and even conflict within and among news organisations is a vital part of doing newswork (Deuze, 2005).

P. 6: *Stress from competition, like some newsrooms have competition within the newsroom. XXXXXX is a place like that. They're competitive. It's a negative work environment. You should be competitive, you should want to be on the front, but the better work environments are like the ones where within your newsroom is collaborative and you're competing against another outfit.*

This exemplified how Bourdieu's field works as a space and source of competition. "Fields are arenas for struggle" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97). By *Reading the newsroom*, journalists learned their place in the hierarchy and when they had enough respect to earn the right to have a say, as one mid-range journalist found out the hard way:

P. 6: *And even during the week if something happened big on a Saturday, it was this big crash, you know, you might've got half the story but there's probably a story behind that that I would like to follow up and you'd pitch it at the news meeting that I'd like to follow up on these people or whatever it was, and it would be "oh no, move on". And yet it was such a big deal on Saturday and now it's not, and I might have put myself into a situation that I was uncomfortable with, got yelled at by the family, and it was actually, not that important at all.*

To earn the right to be considered as part of the hierarchy and have a say in routines or production could increase stability or balance – but first one had to prove to those further up the line of command that they could control their emotions on the tough assignments. This could be a double bind for female journalists. For example, one senior journalist did not want to be seen as vulnerable, or "not up to the job", as she put it. This implied that she may have had to push herself harder than some of the men.

P. 17: *Just button it down really, or moan about it outside the environment.*

R. *Button it down? What do you mean by that?*

You just get on with your job and you know, do the next one. When I was in the newsroom it was not the done thing to show any impact of trauma and it's still like that to a great extent I think, because it is a very blokey kind of environment. And you didn't want to be the girl who was vulnerable.

R. *Because you were the only female at that time doing this?*

Probably I was one of the main ones. Pretty much... crime, court, child abuse, poverty, and all that sort of stuff.

R. *Why do you think that was?*

Because I put my hand up for it. I had a real desire to write about those things and expose stuff and all that. So I kind of moulded it myself. I never shirked it.

To recapitulate, Maintaining balance involved a combination of *Getting the get*, *Managing emotions* and *Reading the newsroom*, all elements of socialisation. *Getting the get* was influenced by how emotions were managed and sometimes how far the journalist was prepared to go in pushing or manipulating other people's emotions. This, in turn, could be influenced by *Reading the newsroom* and playing the game to achieve symbolic rewards, or simply not being seen as a vulnerable female. Sometimes it meant bending the rules.

7.5 Conditions of Maintaining balance

Just as preparation and support were two key conditions in Attaining balance, they could also affect the ability to Maintain balance. Several situations were described which the participants found confronting. Preparation and support were influential because some journalists did not feel their managers understood the effects of repetitive traumatic stress, nor were interested, as one former senior journalist surmised:

P. 12: *I don't think they [management] necessarily do know [about the effects of trauma] because they probably wouldn't take the time or have the time to read it, or be interested in it. It's all about getting the paper out. I mean, one of the reporters was always covering funerals... you can see that black, that really thick black humour coming through and it's masking. It's masking what's under there. You can't do funeral after funeral, after funeral, after funeral.*

There was an apparent lack of training in newsrooms about the effects of trauma on journalists, and a lack of acknowledgement if anyone did display symptoms of traumatic stress or anxiety and questioned normality:

P. 18: *It's not necessarily acknowledged that it can or should have an impact on you. So you feel like maybe if it is, you are like – Is that normal?*

The lack of acknowledgement could accentuate the push-pull pressure at the Maintaining balance stage. The push came from repetitive trauma work [editor's expectations], whereas the pull came from within, an awareness that something was not right but perpetually trying to deny it. It could involve questioning reactions and a reluctance to admit to others that the work was having an effect. This increased the

sense of isolation and perpetuated the stigma and denial that trauma work affected journalists.

Although the majority of the participants acknowledged counselling was available through Employment Assistance Programmes, they were reluctant to seek help, mainly because of concerns about possible repercussions if they did so. This was endorsed by a lack of trust in the system currently provided by media companies, particularly in regards to guaranteeing anonymity. As one mid-range journalist put it, counselling is a last resort:

P. 6: *Counselling was not considered “unless [you’re] going through a really tough time – [with things] weighing on my mind”.*

The two former editorial managers interviewed for this study felt they kept a close eye on their journalists and would have recognised any signs of stress. But this was not what the journalists perceived. They continued to work, as one mid-range court reporter explained, even when emotional dissonance set in and evidence of it was most likely obvious to others in the newsroom:

P. 6: *Yeah, but even though you’re kind of aware of it metacognitively or whatever they say, it’s still hard to stop doing it or to know that you’re actively doing it or anything. It’s one thing to know you’re doing it but it’s another to either try and stop or to do something else. Yeah, it just happens and it becomes routine I guess.*

There’s some where you go to court and it just goes right over your head. You write the story, file it and forget about it and the next week someone asks you “What happened to that guy?” and you’re like, “Which guy?”

Along with being aware this response was not normal, yet reluctant to seek help, another reason emerged from the data for not speaking up: young journalists were too afraid to talk about their concerns at work for fear of being side-lined and or alienated by colleagues and bosses. Underwood (2011) concluded that the life of journalists now may be “lonelier, more insecure and more stressful than in the recent past” (p. 95). That loneliness could be a result of decreasing numbers of journalists and therefore the increased responsibility on less experienced journalists. For example, one participant was a sole reporter working for an overseas news agency, and another covered an extensive area for a radio station in a sole-charge position.

An important element of feeling supported was feeling safe. At least three journalists recalled stories where they were sent to cover risky situations. One of them, who preferred to remain anonymous, recalled in her early 20s, being sent to interview a paedophile. She felt she was selected because she looked young and innocent. In another situation, a slightly older female was sent out on her own to track down a gang leader. In these situations, both female journalists regarded themselves as “undervalued”.

These findings suggested that preparation or support were often not prioritised. One former editorial manager attributed this to the hierarchical structure in newsrooms.

P. 20: *... you see this replicated and I've seen this replicated in a lot of newsrooms since with middle managers that don't have the time, don't necessarily have the breadth of experience, don't have the room to move as far as the way that they're being managed because they also have editors leaning on them. So, "Hey, I was going to lead a page on this. I can't lead a page on a positive news story about somebody who's got _____ report. Where's the fucking news? You told me this person could work on this all day. Why didn't you get her to work on something better?" And to have the chief then come back and say, "Oh well, they were working on it, that's what they thought the angle was but it turned out to be something different." "Well, why didn't you know that on the onset? Why didn't you get them working on a more sure thing on the onset?" I think from people that I talk to across the industry that happens in every single newsroom.*

Power imbalances and internal struggles in newsrooms tended to detract from the concerns about stress on journalists. Journalists appeared to be expendable, as one senior journalist surmised. But rather than change jobs, as they may have done in the past, young journalists are now often trapped because of fewer job opportunities and therefore had to withstand the pressures or give up.

P. 15: *The younger they are, the cheaper they are. But there is also another stress on young journalists today: they have studied, they have skills, they have student loans but they are kept on the bones of their arse: a no-win situation. I can't lose my job, I can't take a day off because that will look bad... but [they are] not valued by what they are paid. They will do anything just to stay there: this is the way it is and I have to fit into this culture and not be vulnerable.*

Most aspects of Maintaining balance involved some level of cogitation, the third condition in this theory. The contradictory emotions and subsequent internal dialogue played an important role in “finding the line” or establishing ethical boundaries and wondering whether to say no to assignments (see Chapter 6.3.4). Cogitation also helped

to deal with the sense of isolation that journalists experienced if they found their work was affecting them.

7.6 Summary

The core category or phase of Maintaining balance is dependent on finding a compromise between objectivity and emotionality. It comprises three elements of maintaining balance: *Getting the get*, *Managing emotions* and *Reading the newsroom*, all of which afford push-pull factors of their own, and are heightened in a climate of change and the increased number of redundancies. These push-pull factors often involved experiencing two different emotions at the same time, as journalists juggled their professional self and personal self. This constant tension affected journalists as they worked out ethical boundaries, what their levels of stamina were, the damage they could do to victims and how far they were willing to pressure vulnerable people. They also needed to learn how to keep their feelings to themselves and to accept their position in the newsroom. Underlying the need to Maintain balance was the drive to achieve both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards: it could be the desire to win a media award or simply for a female journalist to prove her worth in the newsroom and not appear vulnerable.

With experience came the confidence to sometimes break the rules of the game, especially when ethics were challenging. At the same time, balance was constantly tested because of the reluctance to admit disquiet, and some journalists displayed signs of loneliness, insecurity and stress as they strived to maintain balance in a competitive environment. Others moved towards dissonance to help them survive.

This chapter demonstrated how complex balance is to maintain, and that between detachment and emotions stands a spectrum of challenges. Cynicism and disillusionment became signs of the vicious circle to Maintain balance, particularly if support and safety were neglected.

Chapter 8 Losing balance

8.1 Introduction

If the exhilaration of *Getting the get* began to dissipate, as it did for some of the participants in this study, balance was threatened. The thrill of the chase in *Getting the get* came from managing to talk someone around who may have been reluctant to speak to the media, or finding an exclusive angle. It may also have come from recognition from editors and colleagues, but if that did not sustain the sense of elation, then there were clear warning signs that something was amiss. The repetitiveness of death-knocks could be compared to psychological knocks, until the journalist was almost punch-drunk, and showing signs of damage from repeated blows to their head.

Therefore, the final core category, or phase in the theory of balance as it relates to trauma journalism, is Losing balance. It comprises three sub-categories that emerged from the data: *Lacking control*, *Battling emotions* and *Hitting the limit*. The reason for organising this section into these three sub-sections is because they can be sequential for journalists covering continual suffering or grief: *Lacking control* can intensify the effects of *Battling emotions*, which in turn could hasten someone *Hitting the limit*. But this was not necessarily the case; each sub-category can stand alone, although all three elements can overlap at times. As with Attaining balance and Maintaining balance, Losing balance is influenced by the management of emotions and objectivity on the job.

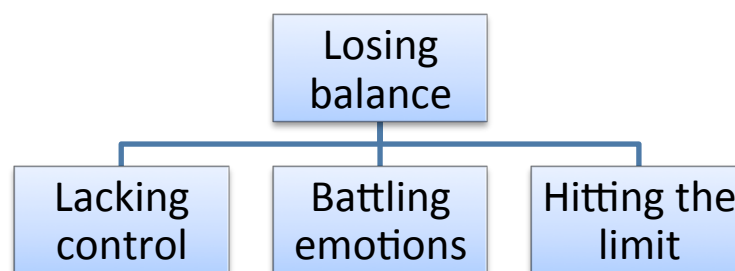


Figure 6: The core category of Losing balance and its sub-categories.

This chapter discusses the sub-categories in detail in relation to participant comments, and the conditions that influenced balance. Rather than address the conditions separately as in the previous chapters, they are integrated here. That is because the conditions which affect the theory of balance – preparation, support and cogitation – are inadequate if a journalist has reached this phase, as illustrated in various participant comments. There was consistently little preparation in most cases, and support was often

negligible. Cogitation became a complex mental struggle as some journalists discovered when they were wavering.

This final stage in the theory of balance highlighted three key issues which are also discussed: newsroom hierarchy, gender and self-responsibility. Although some changes have been made in the media industry towards providing help for stressed journalists, the responsibility to initiate support has been left to journalists. Females appear to be in a more vulnerable position because of their sex and what that represents in newsrooms. The data for this study has focused more on female journalists because of the number of responses from women. Ideally, it would have been better to have more male voices but men did not respond as readily to the call for participants. However, it did highlight areas of concern which had been addressed in the past and deserve follow-up in the future (see Chapter 9). Self-responsibility was highlighted because that is the direction national health and safety guidelines have moved towards and because support and safety issues have been overlooked in newsrooms. But first, it is important to explain the three sub-categories of Losing balance.

8.2 Lacking control

Lack of control begins to play an increasingly important function and ultimately affects a journalist's decision to carry on with trauma reporting. Control can be described as feeling valued, earning a say, or having some input into the news production process, an area of journalism that has traditionally been assigned to men (Allan, 2004). The study drew attention to the adverse role that a lack of control in the newsroom played and how it could have a destabilising effect.

For example, one mid-range journalist said she began to dread reading the newspaper the following morning after covering a death-knock story, because she was worried that her "tribute" piece, where people had "bared their souls", may have been reduced to a news brief "because a better death came along". After spending time with grieving people then writing up a story, the feeling of having no control over what was eventually published became a stressor. Because of how newsroom processes worked, once the story left the journalist's hands they seldom had any input into how it was subbed, cut or headlined. This is beginning to change in some newsrooms, as one novice journalist reported. She has begun signing off the final copy of every story she has written before it is uploaded to the web. But that move only came about after she was subjected to serious online harassment because a headline on one of her stories was

considered insensitive and inappropriate. This change of process was interesting to note, however, as it signified that she had earned enough respect in the newsroom to influence changes in an established routine.

It has not always been that way: journalists traditionally had no control and were often replaced (Fedler, 2004). For that reason, newsrooms could sometimes be just as traumatising and destabilising as in the field, especially if something did go wrong with a story and there was some backlash. As one former editorial manager put it:

P. 20: *You think everyone has your back but when it comes to the crunch, they don't and you are on your own, isolated within the newsroom.*

He attributed this lack of support, which could be considered as a lack of control for journalists, to inadequate management training. He added that often editors lacked experience with trauma work themselves.

P. 20: *What training there is, is pretty thin, so having not had that support and having been sort of prepared basically to go out and do these things and when it does go wrong, all of a sudden that is the person that may have given you the basic support to be able to do the thing that you are doing now, to go out and knock on the door and talk about this, that and the other. Then they're the person that's questioning you. "Why did you do it this way? Would you send me an email telling me what your actions were?"*

... That's where the stress comes from, because all of a sudden you become very insecure in your own workplace and the place where you think everybody has your back, suddenly you don't think that they do. Then the people that are meant to be the ones that are endorsing your practice and assisting your professionalism are now looking at whether or not you failed to meet those professional standards. That's really damaging.

Such "damage" was evident in an interview with a senior journalist who resigned, leaving the job she had wanted to do since she was 14. She mentioned how well she coped with covering her first car accident early in her career in which five young men died, all local boys whose families she knew. Identifying with the situation or local people involved can put a person at an increased risk of psychological reaction (Feinstein, 2006). So she managed to avoid any traumatic stress as a result of that accident, but a mistake she made several years later, after she had covered "dozens" of accidents and death-knocks, destabilised her. Incorrect information from a police sheet following a fatality led her to contact the wrong family. She said she "copped abuse"

from her editor for the mistake. What upset her most, however, was that he did not have the background she had: “The person I was reporting to hadn’t done any kind of death-knocks before himself.”

This sort of environment, which supported such power imbalances, placed young journalists in subordinate positions. As a former senior journalist summed it up after observing a number of “20 somethings” coming and going in the newsroom:

P. 15: *... going to your boss and saying you are really struggling and need some help... what person is actually going to do that? Because it's saying I'm vulnerable, it means I may not get the next job, maybe getting a reputation of being weak. It's a culture that needs to be addressed.*

Evidence of a lack of control and vulnerability supported the finding by Reed (2008), as cited in Aoki et al. (2012), that 40 percent of journalists feared losing the confidence of their employer and colleagues if they confessed to having been traumatised in their work. It also supported the finding in this study that journalists were unlikely to speak out in New Zealand newsrooms if they were having a difficult time emotionally, especially when there have been major cut-backs in staff numbers, as this former senior journalist described:

P. 12: *It's a brutal environment, it's pretty cut throat. Always watching your back and that axe is always swinging as well over people. That redundancy axe, or they [editors/employers] performance issue people out. I think they think that's quite healthy because it keeps people on their toes and it stops them complaining because they don't want to look vulnerable or they'll be axed. They'll be out of there.*

Working in such an insecure environment could explain why journalists may try to ignore signs of stress, in themselves and others. It was obvious from comments made by one journalist that her behaviour was out of character. Yet neither she, nor her colleagues or editors, addressed the issue. The last sentence confirmed her frustrations and suggested that she felt ignored and undervalued.

P. 7: *At work there's little support. I think I make it clear that, maybe not intentionally but maybe intentionally subconsciously, is I get angry and shitty and irritable and then it's obvious that I'm not enjoying myself, but I don't know if it's intentional or not, but it's kind of like a call for help. It's kind of like, I think, maybe it's a subconscious way of saying I'm not enjoying this. And I kind of become a bit difficult, which is a subtle note that I don't agree with certain things.*

A former senior journalist believed that managers did not recognise symptoms of traumatic stress because they had become desensitised, especially those who had previously carried out similar work:

P. 15: *They are closed off because they have been through it; [they are] so shut down, disassociated, that they've lost empathy themselves particularly if they have been through that trajectory.*

It could be a lack of training for media managers, or that they have experienced emotional dissonance themselves, but these comments could suggest that New Zealand newsrooms are not always healthy environments for novice journalists. The responses also implied these newsrooms may not have advanced over time. Fedler (2004) illustrated how insecurity in the industry was rife at the turn of the 20th century and how editors would sometimes replace a dozen or more journalists at a time to revitalise the newsroom. At least they were replaced back then; figures from the last two censuses in New Zealand have shown a dramatic drop in print newsroom staff (Statistics New Zealand, 2013), and both major television and radio newsrooms have also had rounds of redundancies.¹⁰ This has often meant that fewer journalists have been expected to do more work than their predecessors, as well as adapt to technological changes. Although there has been training for staff to upskill, trauma training has not been considered a priority, as this former editorial manager explained:

P. 19: *Yeah, the only thing in terms of our own training, what we used to call our workplace training which was for all our Year One journalists which actually, because of all this other stuff didn't happen this year, but it will happen again, was the workplace training.*

Because, if you ask me to say who were the most stressed people I've seen recently, it wasn't the journalists on the ground... in our case it's restructuring after restructuring.... what about the person who has been in the job for 20 years and suddenly, grew up in those grand days of newspapers and now for the last 10 years have been trying to come to grips with technologies that didn't exist when they started and having to survive now with probably new technologies coming in two years' time that hadn't been thought of now.

This comment signified that management considered the changes in technology to be more distressing for journalists than covering trauma-related incidents. It also highlighted another important finding in the study, the assumption that media managers

¹⁰ <http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/274866/fears-cuts-will-affect-quality-journalism>;
<http://politik.co.nz/en/content/politics/395>

would recognise symptoms of stress, or be able to differentiate different types of stress or abnormal patterns of behaviour. Perhaps more importantly, there was the assumption that they would know how to respond, or would consider traumatic stress worthy of attention. This in itself was a form of control and power imbalance. As a former editorial manager commented, he had never had any training about how to identify the effects of trauma on his staff. Instead, it was assumed that, as a former journalist, he would inherently know and it was up to him whether he chose to do anything about the implications or not.

P. 20: *I think there is probably an implicit expectation that you would spot that anyway, rather than any particular training.*

Having control in a newsroom also meant having the power to decide how the budget was allocated. Some participants in this study suggested that any help in dealing with trauma was deliberately ignored. One senior journalist, who preferred to remain anonymous for these statements, explained how she was upset when she found out Dart Asia-Pacific had run a trauma workshop over a weekend in Wellington in 2012. Dart organisers approached all the major media companies from around the country to alert journalists who may wish to attend (C. McMahon, personal communication, September 1, 2012).

P: *We didn't even get told about it.*

R: *Did you know about Dart then?*

I knew about Dart but I'd done the [Boxing Day] tsunami, I'd done Christchurch, I'd done Pike River, what else? Some fairly major ones... and not even being told about that. There was actually no concept. There was no understanding that maybe that would be good for the reporters, not to go and moan and whinge and complain but just to talk to others in the same boat or have some support and stuff like that.

This comment confirmed the suggestion that some media organisations were not aware of the research into trauma journalism, or were not cognisant of the effects if such stress was ignored. It could also be interpreted as a deliberate move to ignore such findings because, to acknowledge trauma work could do damage to a journalist's psychological health, and could be seen as a threat to an industry that has prided itself on endurance.

The lack of action may help to explain why mental health is usually the last thing that media organisations consider when they are strained for time and money (Reinhardt, 2011). “Too often, the story comes first. Editors, facing their own pressures, seldom pay enough attention to the psychological well-being of their reporters” (p. 3). It may also account for some managers not being aware of – or being concerned about – the implications of ensuring staff who return to work after they take time off due to job-related stress make a healthy transition. Part of it could also be that editors – and journalists – do not appreciate the need for a supportive environment because the traditional culture perpetuates masculine macho attitudes. And it is not always men who have maintained the status quo but the culture, as this comment from a senior female journalist demonstrated:

P. 12: *Now it's all PC and newsrooms aren't PC. Nor should they be.*

From these interviews, it could be deduced that what is happening inside the newsrooms, rather than on the outside, could be more damaging for journalists. Two particular comments confirmed this:

P. 17: *It's those little insults that I was finding over time more traumatic than the assignments. I loved the job, but it was those little insults that were enough to make you think.*

A particular person used to say, “So you failed did you?” So he was not a great person to have in charge. He would say that on a regular basis.

The situation could be worse for females. Some of the participants in this study were subjected to intimidation and bullying from senior males. One woman felt she had no control over her decisions, even after she had decided she should not persist in getting a particular person to talk following a tragedy.

P. 5: *I'd tried to contact her [the widow]. One of the other reporters, a senior reporter, got to the point of driving me out there and making me go in, because he was like, “You've got to do it, you've got to do it once at least.” I was like, “she was polite on the phone. She's told me she doesn't want to do it.” I got out there and talked to her and she still didn't want to do it, and her reasons were logical and I did feel like I didn't want to go back. He was kind of like, if you don't do it, because it was kind of my story, I'm going to do it.*

As discussed in Chapter 3.4, workplace bullying can be a major cause of stress and psychological harm (Bentley et al., 2012). It has been shown to affect not only the target

but also observers. Several female participants recalled newsroom incidents where they were openly bullied by male editors. One former senior reporter vividly recalled behaviour she felt should not have been allowed to occur:

P. 17: *[It was] almost a game for him. He relished sending out young reporters.*

... And he held a lot of sway with the bosses and he would just send you out to the [grieving family] – and just make you go and knock on that door 17 times in a row.

You'd get back in the car after being abused by kind of scary, intimidating people and be called into the office and get told to go and knock again. Sit there for another seven hours. You could never just go and knock and ask if they'd like to talk and leave it at that and that I think is the difference, that is what is upsetting to me. Not having control and that was one of the main reasons I left.

There were other examples as well. Whereas some of the journalists were able to ignore the power play and abuse, others were not, as this comment demonstrated:

P. 17: *But the guy actually does demean people. He's been there a long time now and I feel badly even saying that. I used to get on quite well with him but I was so unimpressed during the earthquake; he swore at people constantly and hung up on them. He was sitting there, you know, nice and safe and sound. He would scream and shout down the phone at people, swear at them and hang up on them. People like XXXX just shook it off sort of like, "Oh, it's just fucken XXXXX." But actually, that's just not acceptable.*

Or as one journalist summed it up:

P. 16: *Bullying is just rife though... it is acceptable because it is accepted.*

The traditional bullying behaviour appeared to have been fostered by the newsroom culture and therefore ultimately endorsed by senior management. Observers must have turned a blind eye, as other people in the office would have heard the screaming and swearing. And those who did, made a deliberate decision to ignore the abusive behaviour, which could be considered a form of *bystander effect*, or *bystander apathy* (Darley & Latané, 1968) as discussed in Chapter 5. It appeared that editors and colleagues, rather than acknowledge when someone was suffering the effects of harassment and bullying, ignored such irrational behaviour and outbursts, perhaps in hopes that it would be contained. Employing managers who fostered the traditional

hierarchical structure of newsrooms could be seen as indirectly endorsing this behaviour:

P. 12: *I'm so glad I did [leave] because colleagues were telling me the other day, there's a new sort of boss and he's very young and he's just being trained up really to be a member of the hierarchy and I couldn't work under him. I just couldn't do it, so it was a good decision I made, just get out of there, but I miss it. I miss it sometimes, like when the Sydney siege was on, I was thinking, I might have got sent to cover that.*

Along with some of the other journalists interviewed for research, this senior journalist left her job rather than have to withstand the way she was being treated, even though she still loved her work and enjoyed the thrill of *Getting the get*. The same happened with another participant who asked for anonymity with the following comment. After being pushed to phone a person several times, she decided to stand up to editors by trying to “appeal to their sensibilities” and questioning their instructions. She was surprised it worked, but by then she said she was ready to leave anyway. The experience reinforced her interpretation of the newsroom socialisation process that she was in an inferior position and only to question procedures if she was prepared to forfeit her job.

P: *But I did, in floods of tears and I referred to Press Council ethics and said, “What is this going to look like if it does have tragic consequences? We're screwed.”*

It was hoped that digital newsrooms would be structured differently to traditional print newsrooms. But research has found that they have recreated many of the same gender imbalances of the old media (Griffin, 2014, p. 4), so the problem is not likely to resolve itself in the near future.

The point at which some journalists lost balance was when they were put on the spot by editors who could be intimidating. In New Zealand, most editors are men, which can put women in a more defenceless position. As indicated in Chapter 1, this appeared to happen when the journalists were exhausted and vulnerable, knowing full well that they may leave. But that has not been a problem, as there has been an increasing supply of graduates who are fresh and eager to prove themselves in newsrooms.

This section has considered the effects of *Lacking control* as an element of losing balance. It has addressed the issues of the news production process and the lack of training for media managers and the disregard for recognition of symptoms of traumatic

stress. It also discussed the issue and implications of newsroom bullying and the *bystander effect* and how these have been perpetuated. The next section considers the role of emotions at this stage of the theory of balance, when instability has set in.

8.3 Battling emotions

It was apparent from the interviews that some of the participants became cynical and disillusioned after a period of time on the job, as the passion that drove them initially began to erode. Add to that, mixed feelings about interviewing people who were grieving and the combination would occasionally tip the scales. Because emotions have been seen as a liability in the newsroom (Berkowitz, 2000), journalists learned to express them in other ways, which were usually negative ways, for example, by using cynicism. Disillusionment and guilt were signs of having to juggle emotions, and evidence that the push-pull phenomena affected equilibrium. If the push from editors became too demanding, and the internal pull was equally as great, the internal struggle became overwhelming. The level of cogitation also increased as a result. A senior journalist exemplified these elements in one statement:

P. 17: It wasn't giving me a thrill anymore. I still wanted to do a really good job and everything, right to the end. I still wanted to like nail the story and do a really good job right to the end but I just think at the start, the thrill of the chase and the good stories, and getting the scoop on other media outlets – I really loved that, but I stopped loving that at the end. And I was kind of like [asking myself] what kind of skill is this anyway? That I could get a grieving person in one of their weakest moments to talk to me. What does that make me?

This woman began questioning her “skills” and the incongruity of the rewards she received. Her disillusionment was obvious. Here is another example, where the battle of emotions got to a point where a journalist found she could not pick up a phone to contact a grieving relative or friend without it affecting her physically and feeling guilty:

P. 7: You put them on the spot and they must feel terrified once I hang up; it's like you're stealing part of their soul.

Rather than ignoring how the interviewee might feel, some journalists stepped out of their shoes and acknowledged how interviewees might feel. In this case, the “pull” factors took precedence if dissonance had not set in. Such a change of perspective could be a tipping point. Cogitation was heavily involved, the mental processing, where negative feelings such as disillusionment and guilt began to override the positive

reasons to pursue a person. It was also at a point where the accumulation of death-knocks appeared to leave some journalists in an almost stupefied and dazed, whereby they lost balance and could no longer function as effectively.

From a symbolic interactionist perspective (Blumer, 1969), Losing balance can occur when there is a change of meaning. In this case, whereas a novice journalist may accept the shared interpretation of the death-knock narrative in the newsroom as a tribute to the dead person, this could change for journalists who have covered a number of them. Some journalists reflected on the ethics death-knocks and began to consider them an intrusion, which would have increased their levels of discomfort. This is when a reconciliation between “freedom” and “responsibility” (Merrill, 1989) or a person’s view of the world and news production collide. As some journalists’ coping strategies began to fail, and the conditions that influenced balance did not function, psychological pressure could intensify. For example, one mid-range journalist could cope only if she had a reason to call a family, but if she was not prepared with appropriate questions, she floundered. This finding also reinforced the emerging argument that there is a widening gap between editors’ expectations and journalists’ experiences, as this comment indicated:

P. 9: *But they [editors] still wanted headlines and I think I was asked to call the family several times when I didn't believe it was necessary as there were no developments in the case and that's when I got upset because my strategy couldn't work because I didn't have anything to ask them. So it was a fishing expedition. If I'd had something I could put to them or I could give them some information that they appreciate or...*

As discussed in Chapter 3.5.1, specific aspects of their job could make journalists more vulnerable to guilt, such as the pressure to sensationalise an article or to pressure distressed people for an interview (Browne et al., 2012). For one mid-range journalist, who left the newsroom to work for a women’s magazine, she felt she regained her balance and integrity by doing so:

P. 7: *I just feel like I am more in line with my values with how to treat people.*

Socialised to carry on, journalists under psychological pressure do not function at full capacity (Bakker & Heuven, 2006). That is because it takes a lot of mental energy to manage their emotions. However, if emotional dissonance set in (Hochschild, 1983),

there was a complete disconnect, as one mid-range journalist discovered after covering court for a couple of years:

P. 6: *I think it's getting easier to deal with cases more coldly but I don't want to. It's not something I'm intentionally trying to do because I want to be in touch with the potential emotions of people that go through it. But it does feel increasingly easy to sort of close myself off from the wider sort of emotional approach.*

Evidence of a possible emotional disconnect was evident in a mid-range journalist who was losing confidence in her ability to cover trauma competently and sensitively. She had begun to question her motivation for interviewing grieving people as she was becoming overwhelmed by guilt.

R. *So what things don't you handle so well when dealing with trauma?*

P. 5: *Um, I think I'm not very good. I mean I don't know where the line is. I know I feel like if it's old trauma you become less sensitive to it and if interviewing a person and possibly causing damage to them is a line between you getting a story and not getting a story, or making your point or winning a Canon award [national media award], sometimes it becomes really difficult to know how much damage you are going to cause and I think sometimes I fail to see where the boundary should be and push people into things and that makes me feel very uncomfortable – when you reflect, because at the time you don't think about it, but upon reflection sometimes I think “Jesus Christ, did I behave properly in that situation?”*

This journalist's admission that she was not sensitive to “old traumas” indicated she was aware she was losing balance. When asked to explain the term, she gave the example of someone having been raped in the past. So, rather than being sensitive to any previous traumatic injury a victim may have suffered, she acknowledged that she was prepared to override any sensitivity to that if it meant getting the story. What had become more important was the chance of winning a Canon award,¹¹ or recognition that would help to advance her career. But what was concerning from this young woman's comment was that she did not realise “how much damage you are going to cause” because she did not realise that she could retraumatise someone through her insensitivity because she had not been taught. Therefore she had to try and figure it out for herself. Nor did she know where the “boundary” was when it came to pushing people, although she was aware she

¹¹ The Canon Media Awards are the New Zealand publishing industry's awards, held annually to encourage, showcase and acknowledge the best of New Zealand's newspapers, magazines and websites, as well as the work of feature writers, columnists, cartoonists, reviewers and photographers. <http://www.canonmediaawards.co.nz/>

could be crossing ethical boundaries of respect. Her equilibrium was therefore threatened because she felt “very uncomfortable”. But what she did do, which goes against newsroom norms, was to reflect on what she has done and, as a result, she felt guilty.

Losing balance then is heavily influenced by a combination of the internal battle of emotions and the tension created from the push-pull phenomenon. The final sub-category in this phase, *Hitting the limit*, is the critical one.

8.4 Hitting the limit

A lack of down-time or time off from covering traumatic events were key factors in *Hitting the limit*. One senior journalist resigned after two years in her position as a sole regional reporter following a miscarriage, which she attributed to pressure of the job:

P. 10: *Just to give me the occasional weekend [off] when I could turn my phone off and not worry, but that was not approved.*

R. *Really?*

P. 10: *Yeah.*

R. *So every weekend you had to have your phone on?*

P. 10: *Every day, 24/7, weekends, nights, anything. And when I spoke to the counsellor about it she said she did not know of any profession which is like that. She thought it was totally ridiculous. I mean, even doctors, midwives, have time off, they have some shifts when they are never on call. Whereas that's not the case with us, the only time I ever felt truly relaxed in this job was when I was on annual leave and overseas. Because even on annual leave, three different occasions when I've been on annual leave and they've known I've been home, I was called in. Even when you've got annual leave you are still expected to be available. They have no idea that we have lives.*

The lack of “down time” not only made this journalist feel undervalued, but she became angry that her sense of privacy was also invaded when she was on holiday. In the end, she weighed up her options and left for a career in public relations.

Rees (2013) recommends that journalists should take time off and switch off from the work at times. The director of the Dart Center Europe for Trauma and Journalism, Rees likens journalists to tightrope walkers:

[They] stay on target, stay on mission and do wonderful, wonderful work and stay balanced for a long time. But you can't carry on walking a tightrope forever. You need to take some rest and you need to get away from the job. (Fitzherbert, 2013, para. 10.)

However, that has not always been a reality. Along with the declining numbers of journalists, a negative attitude still appears to pervade New Zealand newsrooms about taking leave, which means many journalists prefer to leave the job rather than ask for time off. Because they are socialised to consider time out as a weakness, they tend not to take time off until it is necessary. This was evident when this senior journalist considered the options of leaving:

P: 12: I'm saying I've developed a thick hide for it [trauma coverage] but also the accumulated amount of it was part of my decision in leaving, because I needed a break from it. I was pretty typecast. "Send XXXX, XXXX can go and do that one." Much as I actually love doing those jobs, I love the excitement of it and travelling and even just going to Christchurch or wherever it was, I think it just does take a toll in the end and you do want to just cleanse yourself for a while, but you can't take a six-month sabbatical from the newsroom and if you could, I would have taken that.

Looking at it from a broader perspective, the negative attitude of taking leave, suits neoliberal privatisation and economic cutbacks. But it may affect women disproportionately (Peterson, 2015), with 68 percent leaving after an average of two years in New Zealand newsroom, as discussed in Chapter 1.7 (Strong, 2011). Although Strong's focus was on journalists in general, she noted the enthusiasm and love that some of her female research subjects expressed for their work in the adjectives they used. She also commented how unfortunate it was that they ended up spending such a short time in journalism after years of study, which was a minimum of three years in most cases. "The New Zealand woman's truncated daily newspaper career is even more of a phenomenon when considering the hurdles young journalists face gaining the necessary qualifications to gain entry-level jobs in the first place" (p. 236).

It is useful to consider Strong's study because of its New Zealand focus. Also, it not only addressed the actual financial costs involved in the years of study, but it considered personal costs as well. For women to leave work that they obviously enjoyed highlighted there were underlying issues. The New Zealand study by Hollings et al. (2007) found male journalists left the industry for better pay and better hours. Women listed those points but also wanted "better supervisors" or a "better environment".

Previous overseas studies have indicated that a large proportion of female journalists left their jobs rather than having to cope with gendered newsrooms (North, 2009; Melin-Higgins, 2004; de Bruin & Ross, 2004).

So rather than continue to live with “discomfort” and avoid having to ask for time off, most probably from a senior male editor, women are more likely to leave the newsroom. Strong (2011) concluded that: “What seems to be the situation is that female journalists in New Zealand do not feel at home within the daily newspaper newsroom culture and quickly and quietly vote with their feet by simply leaving for another job” (p. 131). Another participant accepted it was not worth asking for leave: *But you can't [take time out] so you sort of have to make a decision to leave.*

Some journalists could withstand the strain for longer periods, but women tended to make the decision to leave journalism more readily than men, as Strong indicated (2011). They may have left because it was more socially acceptable for women to change careers. It could also be because they were willing to acknowledge that a career in journalism was not what they wished to do anymore and they could accept that decision more readily than their male counterparts. Although more data is needed, there is evidence from this research to suggest the turnover is higher for women covering trauma. For some, they may have exhausted other avenues, for example, moving into other areas in the newsroom, but they found the intransigence of the career continued until they *Hit the limit*.

The word “hit” implies it was a sudden, impulsive, uncontrollable action, an unstable moment or point of no return. “Limit” implies a maximum number and finality. Consequently the term *Hit the limit* provides a vivid definition of their experience. For some, it was a snap decision to leave the newsroom, whereby the cumulative experiences or drip-by-drip effect of trauma work took its toll. For example, Participant 14 had carried out more than 450 death-knocks by the time she resigned:

P. 14 *...but after a while you realise, I've had eight or so years of not being able to plan dinners mid-week because I didn't know if I was ever going to be finished on time, and you get to a point where you just want to finish on time and leave... So my life became more important, basically.*

Similarly to P. 14, it was not constant death-knocks that caused one senior journalist to lose balance, but covering one too many funerals:

P. 16: *At that point I just thought this is ridiculous, I'm not going to do this anymore.*

For some journalists who constantly covered trauma, it was their inability to unwind and recognition that they had been living in a state of constant tension, until the point where something gives way. This is what one senior journalist found, so in the end, she sought counselling.

P. 14: *The counsellor's like, "Why do you look at me blankly when I say that about unwinding?" And I was like "I hadn't actually, I didn't really ever stop and just do nothing or really sit down doing nothing, I was always go, go, go, go, go. So I was kind of like burnt out, probably not just from work and overtime and the pressures of the job. Journalism anyway is like that, not just police reporting... The whole job was all adrenaline, weekend partying.*

A pattern emerged from these findings that journalists were reluctant to seek help until almost the point of no return. This suggested the need to ask for help could be interpreted as a sign of weakness.

What wore down one senior journalist finally was not the repetitiveness of the trauma work but frustration when she felt her alternative suggestions to death-knocks were not being acknowledged. She wanted a change from covering death-knocks, or at least trying a different approach. But the editors were not "listening". She attributed their lack of response or lack of time to consider alternative suggestions as a metaphor for being preoccupied with other matters that management considered more important.

P. 14: *They [editors] just hung onto the same thing all the time. I got bored with it and you get sort of pigeon-holed into what you do and you know you try and do different things and you have lots of ideas but at the end of the day no one has any time, so you just have to do what you can do in the time and after a while it just sort of feels like every day is the same, and I was in the job to begin with because every day was different, so it was time to move on. So I moved on to PR, went into comms [communications].*

Those who did take time out, for example, returned to find the stigma was too great, or that they were assigned to jobs that expunged any positive effects. The young woman referred to in the Foreword, who inspired this study, needed some time off after she traumatised a family unintentionally when trying to source a photograph of a victim. She was so distraught when she realised how her request had been interpreted that she took two days' stress leave, only to return to a wall of silence and being assigned the

task of scanning through death notices to look for potential death-related stories. There was no discussion nor acknowledgement by management that she had been through a challenging time, and no follow-up by management. Going through the death-notices involved her psychologically preparing herself before making any phone call, and if a suicide was involved, then trying to extract herself from the promise to “pay tribute” to a loved one, or whatever approach or promise she may have made. This could be conceived as a double “blow” to the journalist (and the bereaved), with having to change psychological and emotional direction suddenly. The New Zealand Coroner’s Amendment Act 2016 now allows a journalist to report a suspected suicide, but still cannot report the method or any details such as the deceased person’s name, address and occupation, until the coroner’s findings are released. Until this amendment, no reporting or public discussion of individual suicides was allowed until the coroner ruled it was a suicide, which can sometimes take months, even years. If journalists breach these conditions they are liable to a \$5000 fine, or \$20,000 for an organisation. They can apply to the chief coroner for an exemption from this provision, who may convene an expert advisory panel to advise on the application (New Zealand Legislation Coroner’s Amendment Act, 2016, No 29). The young woman resigned a short time later and moved into public relations. Either management did not know how to deal with the issue, or it could be construed that her new assignment was a form of power play and punishment in hopes that it would deter others from taking stress leave – and to contain the situation and power play.

These examples confirmed that the stresses associated with covering trauma could compound. If this pressure was not dealt with, for example, through counselling, a journalist may leave, or begin a downward spiral to burn-out (Reinhardt, 2011), where they may inevitably lose balance. At the same time, their level of cynicism, disillusionment and feelings of guilt could escalate. Bakker and Heuven (2006) illustrated the hypothetical emotion work cycle in Figure 7. The authors proposed that because journalists were subjected to emotional demands, emotional dissonance could result, which in turn led to exhaustion and cynicism and eventually burn-out. The end result was that they failed to perform on the job. If burn-out resulted, they would need to be replaced.

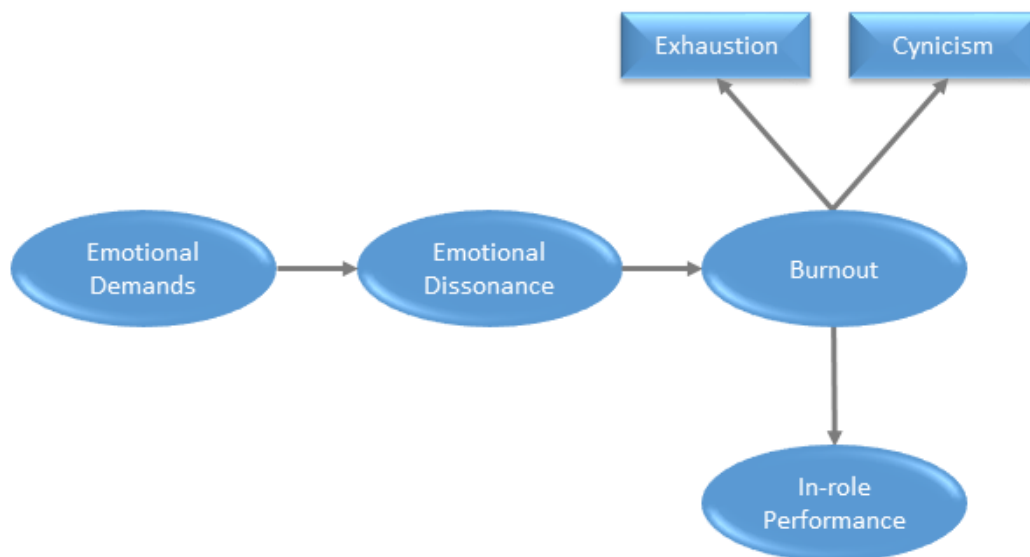


Figure 7: Hypothetical emotion work model (Bakker & Heuven, 2006, p. 427).

8.5 Once the scales have tipped

Prolonged traumatic stress can *tip* a journalist into a state of despair, whereby they can no longer function effectively. New studies are beginning to explore all aspects of their life as journalistic work becomes more mobile, more contingent and more insecure (Örnebring et al., 2015).

In her approach to constructivism, Charmaz (2008) noted that much of social life is routine and thus unlikely to change unless problems or habitual responses no longer work, or new unanticipated situations or opportunities arose. A problematic situation can develop when people find themselves torn between conflict, demands or directions and the current practices do not resolve their situation. For some of the participants in the study, their usual responses failed to work any longer, or situations arose that did not fit within their regular responses, so they lost balance.

A common resolve for women working in news has been to opt out into “soft” journalism, namely magazines (Melin-Higgins, 2004; North, 2014). While it might be frowned upon by traditional “hard” news journalists, for some who have covered many death-knocks, there was a sense of satisfaction on several levels, as one former mid-range journalist explained. Her response supported what Ochberg (1999) also proposed was more appropriate coverage of trauma (see Chapter 2.11.3):

P. 8: ... this is one of the reasons why I actually took the job is because they give a bit of time, you're not ringing the day it happens, and that has made a huge difference to what I'm doing. I don't mind approaching, because it is hard, but it is much better waiting until after the funeral. It makes such a difference. You're not ringing them the day it happened, like your loved one just died three hours ago, tell me about it!

I used to think of the women's mags and you'd look at the person they were chasing and think they've gone to the women's mags now, not that they get paid but it was like, this copy approval and payment and you'd kind of go, oh. But now it's like, there are other reasons why they would go, you give them that time you do it properly, you arrange it, you ring them up and they agree for you to go to the house, sit down and we do the interview and the photographs ... it's so much nicer, so much better than trying to get a few quotes over the phone. We don't give copy approval but I'll say, "you can fact check", and because you might have spent a few hours with this person, you know what they want to say and generally there's not a problem, you're not trying to trick them.

Her loss of balance followed many hours of cogitation. For others, the loss of balance could affect journalists both mentally and physically. Trauma work could become increasingly difficult to perform, even though their behaviour was being reinforced by newsroom norms and they were earning symbolic rewards. But sometimes the endorsement of having a coveted position in a newsroom was not still enough to counterbalance or negate some of the psychological and physical reactions. At the extreme end, the effects of stress could become physical to the point of burn-out (Reinhardy, 2011), as this mid-range journalist experienced:

P. 8: *It got harder, it didn't get easier. After a while, it was like, "this has happened three hours ago and I'm ringing"... I'm like... it actually got harder because initially I was in the hype of the newsroom and this is so exciting, I'm on a national paper, finally I have a job on this Sunday paper, it's amazing, I'm a hero, I got the name and I'll just do it and if they give me a few words, brilliant... and if they don't, they don't. I found it easier to handle at the start... but then you're on to the next, and the next grieving family and it just got harder... because you know then you're a hero for the day but the boss won't even remember that crash next week. They'll be on the next one. Like I said, it just got harder. I'd just feel sick. You know, I'd find the number and I'd just feel sick, and I'd give it a half an hour, delay it. I remember, it wasn't that long before I finished, a young guy who died in a car crash and I'd been all day speaking to his friends and police and eventually I found a number for the dad and I thought, oh God, I can't, I feel sick, I don't want to ring him.*

Whereas for some journalists, if they became detached and disassociation set in, they found they could do their work more easily for a period of time. But inevitably the effects could become physically debilitating. For example, disrupted sleeping patterns were mentioned by several participants:

P. 14: *And I eventually decided a few times, at 4am having been awake for three or so hours that I would go to the gym. I figured if I was physically tired, I would be able to sleep that night. So I went to the gym, went to work for my 9am shift or whatever, and then got home expecting to sleep. It didn't happen. The exercise didn't help at all. I did it a few times. I lost a bit of weight around that time, not that I was fat or anything, if anything I would have been underweight to start with, but I just didn't know what else to do. It was driving me insane lying there unable to sleep.*

Ongoing problems with sleeping can be a symptom of traumatic stress, especially if behaviour becomes irrational (Dworznik, 2011). The lack of acknowledgement of symptoms of traumatic stress by editors or colleagues – or the *bystander effect* (see Chapter 3.4) – appeared to accentuate the effects for some participants:

P. 9: *I had trouble sleeping after the MH370 thing [Malaysian Airlines flight] was at its peak. I had dreams, like I was swimming through the sea, through clothes, no bodies, just clothes from the passengers and I found the plane and I was swimming in the ocean. It's kind of weird because I never have work dreams but after that I had a few dreams that I would find it or something. Yeah, the story really got to me, like, it's incredible and horrendous and I dreamt, not about the Weeks family [Paul Weeks was on board the missing plane] but the plane itself and that sort of thing.*

P. 14: *If I was to describe it, I really feel like my body was in that hyper state of just really being completely wired all the time. I remember wanting to just get up and punch someone who was constantly sniffing. It was just so, so aggravating! I was sort of nervous, jumpy, irritable through that patch. I remember being in the newsroom and the Coke machine wouldn't give me my Coke. And I went up to my best friend/colleague/flatmate at the time and said, "The Coke machine won't give me my can of coke" and my voice was trembling and I was seriously nearing meltdown and I was about to burst into tears and he just jumped up and ran down to the Coke machine trying to do his best to stop me losing the plot completely! But I was just constantly on edge and jittery.*

Such responses to prolonged traumatic stress suggested that the journalists observing this behaviour may also have been on edge and needed to maintain their own sense of

balance, so they were prioritising their wellbeing. From a social interactionist perspective, this could also be an example of how people in a group monitored the behaviour of those around them, which in turn determined how they would act (Berkowitz, 2000). Therefore the lack of acknowledgement would suggest that the behaviour was inappropriate and therefore not acceptable in the newsroom.

P. 14: *I also made a couple of mistakes at work in that period and that fed the nervousness too because you lose your confidence. Neither was totally major, one involved a correction – my first and I think only one I ever had there. It was something that could happen at any time, to any of us because it was a story where the cops were deliberately not trying to give us info and the story involved joining some dots and it just wasn't quite right but that put me on edge even more.*

In this situation, senior staff would have been aware of the errors this journalist was making and her change of behaviour but they chose to ignore the situation, which exacerbated her stress levels.

One senior journalist became completely overwhelmed by anxiety, which is a specific form of emotional exhaustion (Bakker & Heuven, 2006). Bakker and Heuven studied 108 nurses and 101 police officers as two professions that “call for regulation of feelings and expressions as part of the work role” (p. 424).

P. 11: *I don't know whether the stress of the death-knock stuff kind of manifested in this other perfectionism sort of anxiety, but that was certainly what it was about, it was, my name is on the story, is everything right? Have I been fair to everybody? Have I hurt anybody that didn't deserve to be hurt?*

I came home from work one day and just said to my boyfriend that I had this really weird feeling about work. That I really didn't understand what was going on at all. I had no idea but that I felt like I really didn't want to go back and I was really worried about a stupid little story that had no consequence, how that was going to come out the next day and that I was feeling really just wound up and unable to relax. There was something weird going on. He suggested I go to a doctor. I think he came with me, and the doctor immediately was like, “Right, yes you definitely are [suffering from anxiety].” And got me to do, I forget the name of it, it was a diagnostic test. Got me to do that and I was really, really high on it.

Anxiety can lead to further psychological damage, for example, imagining tragedies or the worst scenarios in everyday life situations, as happened to two of the participants who were overwhelmed with conflicting emotions.

P. 11: *Just being around so much emotion again and again and again. So many raw people. I definitely came to expect that terrible things would happen to people around me. Car crashes were top of the list as you can imagine.*

P. 14: *...House fires and stuff, I always get paranoid about the dishwasher. Dishwashers were always causing house fires and I never really looked into why but there were lots of them and even we had someone come around to do a quote for our insulation and talked about the down lights. Then I'm like, "Oh, my God, the house is going to burn down because the down lights can cause fires with insulation over the top". And how many house fires have I been to where the houses had taken the smoke alarm battery out because they were beeping? So many. So when we had a smoke alarm battery wake us up at 3am, I had a sleepless night completely convinced the house would burn down.*

Journalists were reluctant to acknowledge when they were losing balance as some of the examples indicated. Sometimes they were not aware when matters were getting out of perspective. The process of cogitation became erratic. Rather than being able to rationalise, journalists would display unhealthy, aberrant behaviour. For example, some would thrive off others' misfortune. This was particularly noticeable in the line-by-line analysis of interviews with two court reporters. I also noted descriptive words when I was initially analysing the data for coding, such as describing their work as "exciting" and another who loved his job so much that he had become "territorial". Considering the risk of secondary trauma from covering some court cases, such terminology suggested there had been psychologically deleterious effects from over exposure. There was further evidence of the *bystander effect*. This suggested that other journalists who were observing deliberately chose not to intervene, did not comprehend the effects of secondary stress, or felt it was up to management to step in if necessary.

P. 9: *I watch or observe other reporters sometimes, especially the crime and justice reporters, and I think, "You're losing the plot", like they're dealing with so much horrible shit. They love their jobs. It is quite inspiring, but they get so excited about some death or accident or chasing something or trawling Facebook pages to try and find victims. I think, "what's this doing to you?" sometimes and I think they are people who live and breathe their job, more so than I. I think they get given days off, they get told to take days off when they sound like they are losing the plot so it's good. And they do get reasonable support which is good for a newsroom because they are dealing with victims so often and family members and interviewing people about sexual assaults that they've never really talked about before and all sorts of really nasty things and they definitely have an impact on them.*

What is worth noting from this comment is that some newsroom managers were aware of the stress on the journalists and made them take time off. But it also suggests that these journalists needed more than just time out; they needed counselling, especially if they were covering traumatic cases. This type of stress has been recognised by the New Zealand Police and it is now compulsory for police who work in child abuse teams to undergo counselling every three months (N. Hegarty, personal communication, August 11, 2013).

Even though one of the participants chose to leave the newsroom and move into public relations, the psychological effects were ongoing for some time, which could indicate PTSD (see Chapter 1.2).

P. 14: *I couldn't read anything. I remember reading a book and I had read the page six times and I still didn't know what it had said when I got to the end of it. It was like the noise in my head was so loud, I couldn't even hear myself reading. I learned how to slow down and enjoy peace and quiet. To this day I can't stand it if someone has a radio on at the same time as the TV or like there are two noises at once like that, different noises, and I am sure it is because it reminds me of that time.*

This section has examined examples of journalists who have lost balance and how covering trauma has affected them psychologically, causing confusion, anxiety and feelings of being overwhelmed. It also addressed the ongoing effects that traumatic stress could have on other journalists. The next section addresses the subtle way such symptoms could be ignored.

8.6 Lack of discussion?

Unlike a physical illness or injury, journalists were reluctant to talk about trauma in newsrooms. Being stressed, traumatised or needing time out because of work-related issues were topics that were not discussed openly, implying stoicism is still revered and there is still some shame involved. A lack of acknowledgement of such a problem could act as a form of social control (Benson, 2006), as this statement from a former senior journalist illustrates:

P. 13: *They offered us time off [after the earthquake], or we could work in another city for a while afterwards. But few of us took that option; we knew it would be frowned upon.*

Denial, the absence of discourse and tokenism towards time out confirmed that there was still a stigma attached to stress, as a former manager exemplified:

P. 19: *... that sort of case would be immediately dealt with by HR so that it didn't become something that was discussed around the newsroom where the people who don't have the qualifications for that sort of stuff might be making decisions. It goes off-site, and frankly I always thought that was a good way of dealing with it because the last thing people want is their colleagues knowing all sorts of stuff about them.*

Normally what happened was you tried to defuse it in the immediate area where they worked, so that people weren't gossiping about them and you gave it to somebody who would be able to deal with it.

That traumatic stress was considered a weakness was implicitly transmitted to journalists and reinforced through the stigma, as a senior journalist typified:

P. 16: *I think people would probably see it as a bit of slight on them if they were told to sort of go to counselling.*

By not discussing the effects of trauma, the stigma could be perpetuated. As Jones (2014) noted, it is acceptable to talk about a broken ankle in the office but if it is depression, it is another matter entirely. “While reporters are learning the language necessary to cover mental health adequately [in the community], they don't always use it on themselves.” Jones, who studied human development, found that companies often take a hands-off approach to mental health, and only one in three managers reported receiving training in how to intervene when employees showed signs of depression. Even when they noticed signs, only 55 percent of supervisors stepped in. “But in organisations where workers feel uncomfortable disclosing their mental health issues, employees might be reluctant to seek help, and their illnesses are likely to get worse” (para. 14).

There are links between Jones' findings and this study. Most of the participants here were scathing about the counselling services offered through their Employment Assistance Programmes (see Chapter 1.6). But when a journalist had a positive attitude towards counselling and there was a good match with a counsellor, it worked well. For example, one senior journalist found counselling beneficial in working through her decision to leave her job:

P. 10: *I found it really, really helpful actually. I chose someone who it turns out was excellent and really seemed to understand what I was saying. So I did actually get a lot out of it. I think you have to be quite open minded but I think I was, and I actually feel that probably kept me in the job for another six months longer than I...I was very close to resigning last June. And decided to have the sessions, kept going and felt quite a bit better but ultimately that's the entire reason why I'm leaving this job. It's just too stressful.*

Being able to choose a trauma counsellor was also an important factor, rather than having to accept a general counsellor who was available at the time. Another reason for reluctance to accept counselling under the EAP scheme, explained a former journalist, was because only three sessions were offered and that was often not enough. There were also concerns about anonymity; they feared that if their editors knew, their job could be in jeopardy:

P. 15: *To renew sessions, they have to disclose some of what it's about, or to EAP, to get permission to fund it. It can be a loose thing...*

Whereas some professions, including police and some medical professionals, often used debriefings or reflection as a way to deal with difficult encounters (Billings, 2012), there did not appear to be any routine debriefing process for journalists.

P. 20: *No, not officially a debriefing policy, but we understood the need if you were sending someone out on constant door-knocks then you better watch their behaviour.*

But this former editorial manager did not specify what those behaviours might be. What he added, however, implied that there are other more pressing issues in the newsroom:

P. 20: *Speed might not allow that. There may not be the time to sit down and hold hands and say... I say hold hands tongue in cheek, but to sit down and talk about those types of things.*

Following Charmaz's (2014) recommendation to look at what was *not* being said as well as what was said, such a comment could imply that "professional" journalists do not need debriefing as they would be detached and unflappable anyway. Some newsrooms have, however, recognised the need to support novice journalists and have set up mentoring schemes. One mid-range journalist supported the initiative:

P. 5: *I think some of the junior reporters should be partnered up with someone. If they are doing police jobs they should be partnered up with someone who has done police [work] because then they can tell them, you know "Here's a way of helping with this situation."*

But it was the responsibility of journalists to ask for a mentor as they were not assigned, and the focus of the mentoring sessions was not specifically on dealing with trauma:

P. 19: ... we do have a mentoring system through the whole building actually, throughout the whole company where these sort of things are meant to be discussed. It's broader than just health and safety. It's "how's my career going?" That sort of stuff but you know that would also be where we'd expect them to discuss it with staff members and for staff members to talk about it.

This suggested that some initiatives were being introduced in New Zealand newsrooms, but terms such as “meant to be discussed” and “we’d expect them to discuss it” implied the onus was on the journalist to initiate discussions. This in itself could curtail any such development as young journalists would have *learned* their place in the hierarchy and not to disrupt. They could be considered a trouble maker if they did question established practices. However, it appeared that where mentoring had been instituted and there was a good match, and the journalist felt confident they could share their concerns confidentially, the process worked well. One novice journalist found the mentoring sessions invaluable:

P. 2: It's amazing how those sessions are great. But you know the newsroom should do more of that too. It happens at an informal level, people who go off and have a coffee together about various things, but it's not formal.

As noted in Chapter 2.5, the informal debriefings of the past were less likely to take place with the demise of press clubs, more demanding work pressures and increased competition among journalists. The future of mentoring could also be an issue with the decreasing number of journalists in New Zealand newsrooms (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). There are now fewer mid-range or senior journalists for younger staff to turn to, and as one senior journalist summed it up, this has affected previous newsroom stability and support.

P. 20: ...younger reporters might not have that kind of a long-term relationship with an editor or have their own security of their own practice, might not feel that, and so dealing with things in complete isolation from everything else undermines a lot of other things.

There was some evidence that changes in attitudes regarding the effects of trauma journalism were beginning to happen, although they were slow and could be intimidating. As one of the former senior journalists noted, most people still would not

go to the person who assigned them a job and say they were stressed out by their work, especially young people.

P. 15: *They're trying to prove themselves, create a career, all those things and it's very hard for people to learn it's ok to be vulnerable. It's not ok in that culture... It's saying, they can talk to us if they want, but can they really? Would you?*

There could be others reasons for failing to address the effects of trauma on journalists and providing a supportive environment as well. Some former journalists implied it was a manipulative move by the industry to keep costs down. Plus, editors knew that when people were showing signs of stress they were not as productive, so it was better to replace them with fresh faces. This has become a concern with the increasing pool of young women desperate for work after completing a three-year degree who are keen to prove themselves in a traditionally male occupation.

8.7 Summary

This final chapter and a set of findings that underpins the theory of balance framework addressed the issues that journalists confront if they lose balance. The momentum seems to increase with the number of traumatic encounters, whether it is death-knocks or covering unpleasant court cases.

The first sub-category considered was *lack of control*, which introduced elements of frustration that journalists encounter, which could make them feel undervalued in their newsroom encounters. These feelings of exclusion, isolation and inevitable insecurity appeared to undermine the stressed journalist to the breaking point. The lack of discourse, appropriate counselling, ongoing stigmatisation towards counselling and support could accelerate the problem.

This chapter also addressed how difficult it could be for journalists when they are *Battling emotions*. If negative feelings became pervasive, for example, cynicism, disillusionment and guilt overrode more positive emotions. Moral and ethical conflicts could intensify those feelings, which in turn could become more troublesome when there were no clear guidelines. More importantly, although journalists may have been openly displaying signs of traumatic stress, colleagues would disregard any manifestations and managers were often not adequately trained to deal with the situation.

The third and final sub-category, *Hitting the limit*, addressed the toll that the demands of the job can take when journalists do not have enough time away from dealing with trauma, for example, being on call 24/7 and not being able to relax. The choice of the expression *Hitting the limit* proved to be fitting, as it encapsulated the sudden almost explosive culmination and realisation that they could no longer deal with trauma work. It was either leave or detach.

Trauma work has become feminised in form and content by incorporating emotions and therefore devalued (North, 2014), whereas there has been structural privileging for men and masculine objectives in the workplace.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

This study is the first investigation into journalists and the stress and anxiety they can experience from reporting everyday trauma in New Zealand. It offers a close look inside some of the country's major newsrooms and at the atmosphere and pressure under which journalists operate. The study documents how novice journalists, and females in particular, can be easy targets for occasional bullying and more subtle forms of control. Although the original focus was "death-knock" interviews, some participants raised the issue of secondary trauma as a consequence of court reporting. This became a second site of trauma, as journalists were exposed to similar unexpected emotions as those journalists who covered death knocks.

The aim of this grounded theory study was to explore how journalists learn to deal with trauma on the job and how they manage their emotions. More specifically, it was guided by two key research questions:

1. How do journalists learn to deal with trauma on the job?
2. How do journalists manage their emotions?

The study used symbolic interactionism as the theoretical framework to interpret the data gleaned from 20 in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The social constructivist perspective allowed a reflexive stance to see how participants constructed meanings and actions in specific situations. It meant going beyond how journalists saw their situation by considering the social context, distinctions between roles within the hierarchies of power and communication – both spoken and unspoken – and how these could be seen as opportunities to maintain, perpetuate and control positions within the newsroom. It also involved identifying, and then being alert to, the conditions under which such differences arose. Socialisation processes were key to the outcomes.

This chapter sums up the salient points from the previous three chapters. It outlines the theory of balance related to trauma journalism that evolved from the data and discusses the implications of imbalance. The study was able to identify how journalists strive for balance in their work to ease the tension between objectivity and emotionality.

Three distinct phases emerged as data analysis and conceptual development were carried out simultaneously: Attaining balance, Maintaining balance and Losing balance.

First, journalists had to learn how to attain balance when dealing with trauma. From the initial coding, three sub-categories emerged as being necessary steps to achieving this level of balance: *Being “professional”*, *Confronting emotions* and *Learning the rules* of the newsroom. If young journalists achieved all three steps, usually by adopting various coping strategies, they moved on to the next phase or sub-category, Maintaining balance. This is where they were regularly covering trauma and felt a sense of satisfaction in *Getting the get*, that is, pursuing people for interviews and imagery, and enjoying the challenge. They had to learn to “play the game” by *Reading the newsroom*; figuring out whether they should share any concerns about their work or keep them to themselves; what the accepted behaviours were; and how to work around them, if necessary. This phase was dependent on learning how to *Control emotions*.

For a few journalists, the three phases could be a trajectory. If their passion for the job began to wane, often from covering too much trauma and not acknowledging or knowing how to deal with the stress in a positive manner, some journalists were at risk of Losing balance. At this stage, some journalists did not feel they were not functioning properly and Lacking control as they were constantly *Juggling emotions*. This phase could be exhausting and in time lead to burn-out or *Hitting the limit*, where they could not confront any further trauma stories without a negative mental and physical response. As a result, they would usually resign if they could not detach emotionally. The reason for their departure was often not openly discussed; instead, they were considered as not being up to the job.

The phases of Attaining, Maintaining and Losing balance are illustrated in Figure 8 (on the following page). Stability or equilibrium at each stage of the theory of balance was dependent on three underlying conditions: preparation, support and cogitation. As with any aspect of life, balance implies a level of movement. For journalists, constant movement or pressure came from the push-pull phenomenon that kept them perpetually on edge. The push was extrinsic, from editors and other external forces. The pull was intrinsic, from the desire to do a good job and work within ethical bounds.

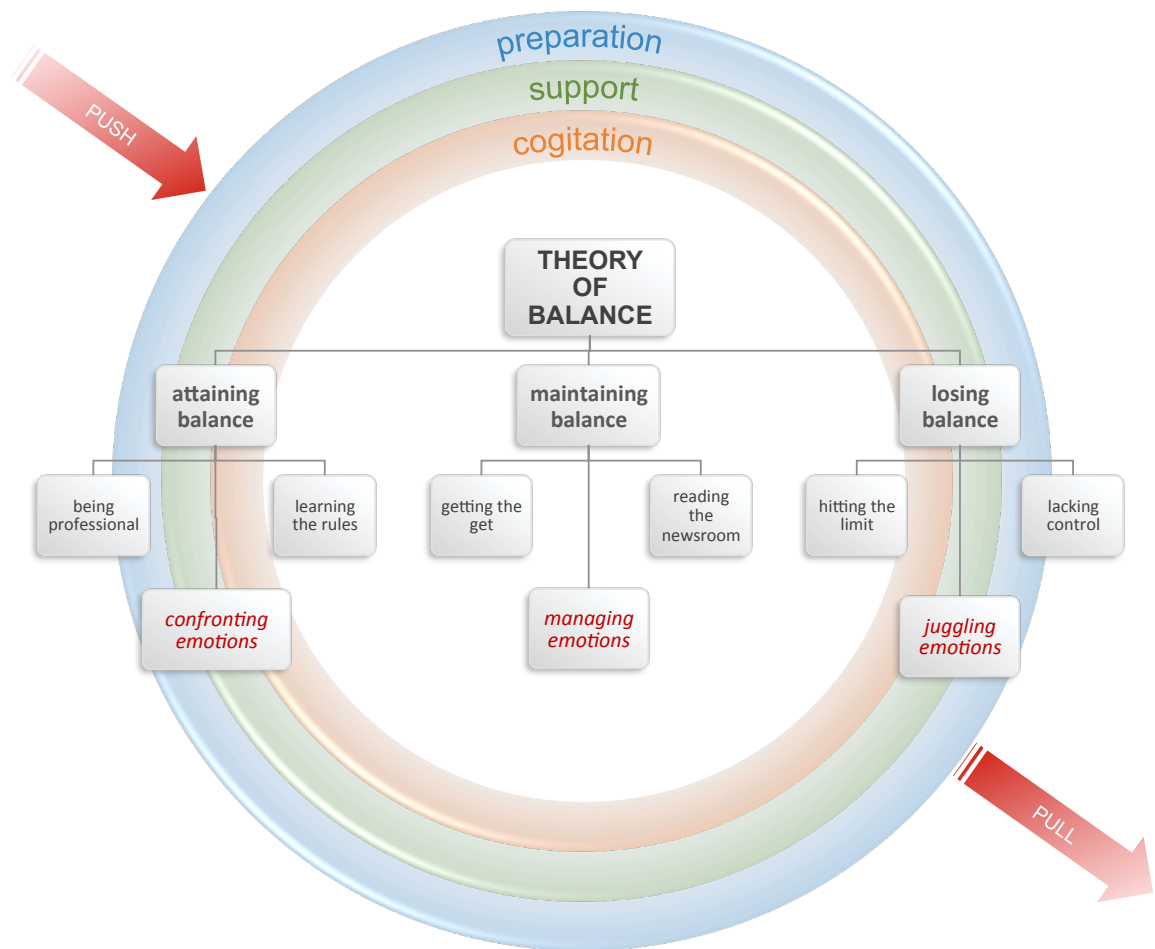


Figure 8: Any phase in the theory of balance is dependent on the conditions of preparation, support and cogitation and constantly threatened by the push/pull phenomenon.

This chapter continues by addressing the consequences of imbalance. It explains how *discomfort* and *guilt* were identified as key consequences, which could ultimately tip the balance. The lack of training for media managers is addressed, followed by a critique of the superficial changes that have been made to redress concerns about traumatic stress in newsrooms. The role of gender is discussed separately. I then reflect on the importance and significance of the study, how it can contribute to existing knowledge and recommend some practical applications. The thesis concludes with suggestions and opportunities for further research.

9.2 Summary of findings

The study found that journalists are seldom formally taught – in the classroom or the newsroom – about how to cover trauma, in particular, death-knocks or court reporting, nor how to deal with the emotions that may be involved. It also found that there are few written guidelines, so journalists tend to learn from colleagues and on the job. The

learning process is dependent on social interactions and feedback from a wide range of players, from interviewees to editors, and the journalists' interpretation of those interactions and observations. The investigation confirmed that journalists created communities through their discourse and shared interpretation (Zelizer, 1997). Actions that were repeated became routinised and predictable, creating a cycle that reinforced the group's culture (Blumer, 1969). This meant young journalists often made mistakes and felt guilty when they did so. The findings revealed that the professional norm of objectivity was still firmly institutionalised in journalism ideology in New Zealand, therefore, journalists were often conflicted by newsroom expectations and their own reactions.

Socialised in the newsroom not to refuse any assignment, and to return with a story no matter what, they soon learn to become tenacious in seeking out sources. For some, that involved manipulating their emotions to "trick" interviewees – a form of *emotional labour* (Hochschild, 1979), where they disengaged emotionally through the process of emotional dissonance.

The study contributes to the scholarship that has already been carried out in emotion work (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2013a; 2013b). Most notably, it identifies the important role of self-processing or cogitation. I used the term cogitation in relation to trauma because it was apparent how much angst some journalists went through, which appeared to be the result of increasingly working in isolation – physically and mentally – where they could not readily share their conflicting emotions. Instead, many internalised the process, which could lead to inner turmoil and ongoing effects similar to post-traumatic stress disorder, especially if guilt became a predominant emotion. The more these negative emotions took hold, the harder it was for journalists to continue their work, especially if it was repetitive trauma work.

Sometimes guilt resulted from overstepping ethical boundaries, although the expectations in doing so were implicit rather than explicit. Rather than speak up about their concerns, if they were upsetting interviewees, or feeling distressed themselves, they learned to suppress their frustrations. These, in turn, were often expressed in other ways, for example, by displaying irritable behaviour or becoming increasingly anxious, which are signs of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Evidence of *bystander effect*, where some journalists observed unusual behaviour in their colleagues associated with traumatic stress but did not intervene, supported

evidence that social control within the newsroom still maintains behavioural boundaries. The rules, condensed in journalism *doxa* that are defined by editors, are still strongly objectivist. Therefore, non-interference indirectly supported the traditional norm of objectivity and kept the community intact. However, the increasing commercialisation and digitisation of news have affected the interpretation and implementation of the objectivity norm. Skovsgaard et al. (2013) have hypothesised that adherence to the commercial ideal will lead journalists to assign less importance to objectivity, as well as less emphasis to supplying balanced and factual stories. Because digitisation has sped up the news process, journalists have less time to consider their decisions, which ultimately could escalate the pressure from conflicting emotions.

9.3 Consequences of imbalance

The consequences of imbalance are far-reaching, as this study demonstrates: it may be that journalists become disillusioned with their chosen career, or imbalance reaches the point of burn-out. At the *Losing balance* stage, imbalance can cause mental anguish for journalists, to the point whereby they do not function without a negative physical or mental response, or have altered perspectives about the world and people. This lack of recognition of such overt symptoms of traumatic stress as a consequence of imbalance was either overlooked by media managers, or they were unaware of the implications. Either way, it was a signifier of the serious need to improve training for senior staff and to encourage more open discussions about a workplace condition that has been recognised in some countries for more than 20 years. The study strengthened the argument, however, that journalists also needed to be more self-reliant and increase their levels of resilience. Another finding highlights the fact that novice journalists and women are more at risk than men, which offers a number of implications for further research.

Four key outcomes of imbalance are discussed in more detail: guilt, which can in turn cause discomfort; the implications of training for media managers in addressing traumatic stress; the importance of self-management; and the significance of gender.

9.3.1 Discomfort and guilt

These two words, commonly used by participants in relation to covering trauma, encapsulated unease and disquiet as well as the feeling of remorse, which usually resulted from doing something wrong. Discomfort, as described by participants, could be physical or psychological. Previous scholarship, which informed this study, showed

that journalists have traditionally worked in a constant state of conflict, tension and insecurity (Fedler, 2004). But the sense of discomfort that emerged from this data came from something less obvious: it was more from the lack of support within the work environment, particularly from editors. The lack of support could be regarded as a form of control, and in some cases, as illustrated in the previous chapters, of bullying. Whether journalists were aware of it or not, the lack of recognition of bullying worked as a test of stamina and meant fresh faces in the newsroom when some journalists who had *hit the limit* resigned. This endorsed another form of traditional newsroom organisation, of only allowing approved “players” into the higher echelons.

Guilt as an emotion affected comfort levels. Inevitably, some journalists began to question their skills at getting grieving people to talk and the ethics of death-knocks. Therefore, some journalists adopted a range of strategies to cope with their mixed emotions, which were not always positive. Some still aspired to emotional detachment, even though there was a level of awareness that this was not a healthy response. This strategy suggested that journalists simply wanted to avoid any negative emotions, but they did not know how to do so in an adaptive way.

9.3.2 Lack of training for media managers

This study determined that media managers are generally not well trained to detect symptoms of stress in their staff, or they do not consider trauma training a priority. A study by Aoki et al. (2012) found that the “professional” culture of journalism can make the disclosure of mental illness difficult. “It is not clear whether employers are reluctant to inform journalists about the potential mental health problems and to provide help, or whether they lack the knowledge and resources to do so” (p. 388).

This neglect could in part be attributed to the fact that no one has been held accountable for mental injury among journalists in New Zealand and no one person or company can be sued as a result of the no-blame ACC philosophy. There is also still a stigma to conditions related to traumatic stress, whereby symptoms are not openly discussed, or journalists are surreptitiously passed on to human relations departments and outcomes are not discussed. By not talking about the effects of trauma, the stigma is perpetuated. As Jones (2014) noted, journalists could write empathetic articles about other people with depression and mental illness, but their newsroom culture tended to keep their own struggles in the dark.

9.3.3 Subtle change and self-help

Change is occurring slowly, as indicated in some of the participant comments. Young journalists appear to be challenging traditional newsroom norms and values at times because they have studied ethics, and this has encouraged them to reflect on their work. However, studying ethics does not guarantee that journalists will act ethically, because as Richards (1998) found, even students who are committed to behaving ethically, “still encounter difficulty in applying principles taught in the classroom to the various ethical dilemmas of working journalism” (p. 151). However, as this study indicated, ethics training does encourage journalists to become reflective critical thinkers who, rather than moving on to the next assignment without a thought, tend to either cogitate and consider how they would approach a similar situation differently the next time. Others may discuss their concerns or angst with other journalists, family or friends. Journalists do not meet face-to-face regularly as their predecessors did because the facilities have gone and increased work demands do not allow the same amount of relaxation time. Instead, they tend to converse online, offering mutual support (Barnes, forthcoming). Fairfax NZ has also introduced mentoring, but as the study uncovered, younger journalists are expected to initiate contact with senior staff. This can be challenging, with the decline in staff numbers and increased workloads on the few remaining senior journalists and editors.

9.3.4 Is it a gender issue?

Early in this study, it became apparent gender plays an important role in trauma reporting. For example, there was a higher proportion of female respondents: 16 of the 20 self-selecting participants were females. That may have suggested women were more open in responding to the call to talk about their experiences but it could also reflect the fact that there are now more women in newsrooms than in the past and that more females are becoming journalists. The self-selected nature of the sample limits the ability to generalise the findings, based on the representativeness. However, journalists' narratives showed the patterns. None of the respondents claimed female respondents were experiencing more traumatic stress on the job than their male counterparts, but described newsrooms as places where females may find socialisation challenging. Previous research has indicated that ‘macho journalism’ can be a problem. Even with the “feminisation of journalism”, when women journalists are in the majority within the profession, they remain vulnerable (Gallagher, 2001). “Women are judged by male standards and performance criteria. Often this means a constant effort to be taken

seriously...” (p. 63). This was evident in examples such as the participant who never complained or asked for help (see Chapter 5.4).

Although the men in this study acknowledged the power structures in newsrooms, they did not say that women are more vulnerable. Some female participants were pointing towards the gender typing in newsrooms: the binaries of male and masculine versus female and feminine in covering trauma.

A high proportion of female journalists are covering trauma in New Zealand compared with other countries, as established from the international study by UN Women (2011). Females are covering more of these previously male-dominated, traditional rounds, such as police and crime, because of the more feminine form and content (North, 2014). The death narrative often uses a human interest angle and includes emotions, areas that women have dominated in journalism. Unfortunately, as North (2009) noted, many women still have to deal with male bosses who often give out sexist orders. This study showed evidence that although there are more females in a newsroom, males are generally in positions of authority. Market forces, or the continued preference for male journalists in newsrooms, can make matters more difficult for women when negotiating the terms of their employment.

Whatever the reasons, women do not tend to stay or achieve proportionate numbers of editorial or management positions in the media. Strong (2011), in her PhD thesis, identified the confining boundaries of what she termed the “glass bubble”, implying that it was more acceptable for women to leave the newsroom than men. This is not to suggest that all female journalists aspire to management level, but it does highlight an anomaly, which could affect newsroom culture and the power structure. It also raises the question of why – why do women leave? This study suggests that many young women are pushed to the limit early in their careers by having to cover trauma on a regular basis. At times they have no choice but to resign when they find they are not managing with the emotional demands of the jobs and the lack of recognition.

9.4 Implications of the findings

There are three key implications of this study. Two are ethical concerns, the third relates to how this theory may help in the future. First, if journalists are caught in the middle of the objectivity-emotionality clash, as Wahl-Jorgensen (2013a; 2013b) noted, then this situation needs addressing. As Masterton (1998) suggested, it is the inevitable evolution

of news. But the study does highlight the fact that young journalists are most at risk of traumatic stress injuries and those who are most vulnerable to burn-out are under 30 (Bentley et al., 2012). Another important finding is that if journalists are not familiar with the details of their code of ethics, that is, the codes are not specific enough, nor respected within the newsroom, it is possible that journalists may adapt their behaviour to ease their discomfort.

A positive outcome from the study is that the theory of balance can be used as an organisational model for investigating where journalists are positioned and what can be done to improve their work conditions. Awareness of the three distinct phases in the theory may alert other journalists: if they detect indicators of stress, such as irritability or reluctance to carry out trauma work, rather than ignore such behaviour, they may step in and offer or organise support for colleagues.

9.5 Importance and significance of the study

Because this study is the first of its kind in New Zealand to look at the micro level of newsroom culture, it has highlighted the hierarchical power structures that can perpetuate the lack of recognition of traumatic stress and its implications. These added theoretical insights are aimed at attaining greater understanding of the complex processes that operate in newsrooms and hopefully will prioritise trauma training. Given the social, economic and commercial realities that have been intensifying the demand for more trauma content in the media, such content is not likely to change without a significant shift in audience demands. As much as people besmirch sensational content, the public seek out these stories, for whatever reason, putting editors in an invidious situation. “Readers and viewers all too often complain about the media’s exploitation of suffering people yet readily join in the country’s gluttony for the violence-filled products of commercial entertainment” (Simpson & Côte, 2006, p. 3). However, there is a bigger picture that needs to be considered: the wider reaching effects of trauma work.

9.5.1 Cultures can change

From these interviews it can be assumed that the New Zealand media industry has not genuinely acknowledged how cumulative trauma can affect journalists, their work or lives in general, including their relationships. But it is encouraging to know that organisations operating in other fields, such as the New Zealand Police for example, have made efforts to change their “macho” culture. It is worth noting that that organisation stresses the importance of home life, because for members of the police

force to do their job well, officers must be “work ready” (R. Lorenzen, personal communication, team leader of police welfare for the Waitemata District in Auckland, April 13, 2015) (See Appendix D3).

Culture change needs to reach beyond the newsroom and address other stresses that may affect journalists. Örnebring et al. (2015) have identified a theoretical bias in journalism research that has focused on the narrow definition of “work”, and a methodological bias that has favoured studying journalism in a workplace setting (“the newsroom”). This means that little attention has been paid to what journalists do outside work (for example, their lifestyles, personal networks, family situations). Nor has it considered how journalists negotiate their work lives or private lives, despite the fact aspects of traumatic stress may also have an impact on the ability of journalists to fulfil their role. The authors have argued that the bigger picture becomes more salient as journalistic work becomes more insecure, more mobile and more contingent.

9.5.2 Looking from the inside out

Trauma reporting has been an underdeveloped area of research in New Zealand. This study provides a valuable insight into New Zealand newsroom practice in relation to trauma journalism. Unlike most countries, where males usually cover hard news, such as police and crime rounds, in New Zealand female journalists are often assigned to trauma-related work. Also, in other Western countries, media managers are accountable and companies can be sued for neglect of duty of care, as in the Australian case referred to in the Foreword to this thesis. This is rarely the case in New Zealand. This study reveals that government legislation makes this virtually impossible. Thus, the publication of this study is aimed at raising awareness of the risks of traumatic stress, improving newsroom dialogue about covering trauma on a regular basis and making management more accountable.

9.6 Contribution to knowledge

This investigation into trauma reporting in New Zealand makes an academic contribution to the field of journalism studies. The theory of balance fits into the larger picture of socialisation in newsrooms and draws attention to the ongoing tension between objectivity and subjectivity. It is the first time that *emotional labour* and the *bystander effect* have been analysed in the context of New Zealand newsrooms. The study supports the argument that cumulative trauma can cause ongoing problems for individuals if it is not addressed.

All the findings confirm the importance of how everyone involved in newsrooms needs to be more aware of the implications of trauma balance, not only for journalists, but for the people they interview, especially if *emotional dissonance* sets in and journalists become impervious to any damage they may inflict, such as, retraumatising traumatised people.

The study also demonstrates the power and influence of newsroom socialisation, not only in regards to trauma but in an industry confronting change internally and externally. It exposes the risks of decreasing staff numbers, mainly senior staff who can act as mentors. It highlights the plight of journalists caught in the middle, in particular, inexperienced, vulnerable female graduates. It endorses the pressure of emotions expressed by journalists, such as Beck Eleven (2013), that along with *Getting the get*, they sometimes “get got” when they become overwhelmed with emotions and then feel guilty because “it is unprofessional” (para. 16) to cry. What this admission demonstrates is that journalists cannot become personally detached because, although they are socialised to think they can or should, they are also independent thinkers who are constantly weighing up situations and conversing with themselves, and thus objectivity simply does not make sense.

Richards (2003) has suggested that articles in which journalists openly express their own feelings and emotions “have wider implications for journalistic practice” (p. 166). He perceived them as “signposts” of dissonance, indicators of the tension between ethical demands of becoming personally involved and the “professional” imperative not to do so. Such signposts are an overt way of juggling objectivity and emotionality and a call for recognition of work-related demands.

9.7 Limitations

This study was limited in that the participants were self-selecting. Rather than approach possible interviewees and risk triggering any unpleasant reminders from the past, journalists were invited to contact the researcher. The study is also restricted by the size and population of New Zealand and the number of journalists who cover trauma reporting. It is only in the larger centres where there are dedicated court reporters or staff allocated to cover emergency stories. In some areas, journalists cover all rounds. This is mostly the case for radio and television reporters in rural areas who cover all aspects of news.

The findings also acknowledge the need for a separate study of journalists involved in other forms of repetitive work which could put them at risk of secondary trauma. This includes editing footage of unpleasant images, or scanning social media looking for content, or as one of the participants mentioned, those journalists who work away in isolation with headphones on all day listening to police scanners. Sometimes they will be exposed to shocking details they do not expect so need to be aware of potential risks.

Employing other research methods may have complemented these findings, such as a survey or ethnographic study. However, surveys can be impersonal although ongoing surveys are advisable and discussed further in 9.8. An ethnographic study on this topic, however, would generate more data on the process of socialisation but would limit the investigation of the diversity of coping strategies, as the journalists may have been less authentic in their responses if they were observed in the newsroom or in the field.

Constructing a grounded theory can be challenging. There is always a concern with grounded theory that the data is fragmented, which suggests it could lose its meaning. Because of the process of analysing line-by-line and coding, phrases and sentences are processed in chunks rather than in complete paragraphs. This issue was addressed by including full participant comments to illustrate the coding process that focused on actions, using gerunds or -ing words and identifying key words. By incorporating a wide selection of participant comments to illustrate various arguments, it gave a voice to journalists and the outline of the theory formed its own narrative. At the same time, as a social constructivist, I acknowledge that it was my selection and interpretation of the comments and that someone else may develop a different theory.

9.8 Recommendations for future research

There are several recommendations for future research that could be considered as a result of this study. Many participants stressed a need for developing trauma reporting training within journalism schools and in newsrooms. They suggested openly discussing the possibility of covering trauma on the job, without scaring the students. This could involve a discussion about why they chose journalism as a career and the death-knock genre. It could also involve more time in court rooms, listening to a murder trial or child abuse hearing and discussing the implications of details that are revealed.

Second, educators who design journalism curricula could establish clear guidelines for trauma training to guide lecturers who lack confidence or who are unsure about how to proceed. Duncan and Newton (2010) acknowledged that lecturers faced great difficulties in trying to recreate intrusive situations as there have been no real guidelines, but with the material now available through the Dart website, it is possible to introduce students to aspects of trauma-related work and to offer the opportunity to share any anxieties through critical reflection. Role-play exercises followed by reflective exercises and discussion provide students with an opportunity to address their reactions to unexpected emotions in victims and in themselves.

The empirical part of this study inspired investigations into ways to teach trauma literacy, that is, to ensure journalists are comfortable in such uncomfortable situations. One way of doing so is through role-playing. Realistic role-plays also give students the opportunity to hone their interview skills, understand the importance of building genuine rapport with sources and learn to listen without being judgemental (Rees, 2007).¹²

Third, regular in-house training sessions could provide an opportunity in newsrooms to distribute information about where to get appropriate help for stress, anxiety or depression. But the message to journalists would need to be genuine. Under New Zealand health and safety laws, there is a requirement for managers to monitor for adverse effects related to stress, however, as this study confirmed, some media managers have not dealt with trauma themselves or have not had any training to help them identify the effects. Rather than trying to suppress emotions as journalists did in the past, media managers need to be aware of how emotions can guide behaviour in a positive way but can also distort reality and affect a person's long-term health. For this reason, there is a need for clear and constructive guidance and for employers to provide a safe environment for staff to disclose any such concerns. It also means that newsrooms need to prioritise trauma training.

¹² Interviews or role-play death-knocks, using professional actors, have proven to be one of the most popular practical exercises for third-year and postgraduate students at Auckland University of Technology. Feedback from students indicated that they not only appreciated the opportunity to check their reactions when confronting unexpected emotions, but also found the reality of the situation provided an invaluable interview experience. Many commented on how they were surprised by their reactions and were pleased they had a chance to practice in the classroom rather than on the public. Colleagues have been equally supportive and have continued to employ the role-play exercises in my absence. Along with a formal lecture on how to cover trauma, the role-play scenarios have prepared a number of graduates for trauma work, as has been evidenced by emails and other feedback from former students. They all endorse the opportunity to practice in a "safe" environment before joining the workforce. For some students, it can be a defining moment, when they realise it is not the sort of work they want to do and reconsider journalism.

Fourth, ideally there would be better access to specialised trauma counsellors rather than general counsellors who volunteer their services under the EAP schemes. Support networks could also be set up within newsrooms or a key person assigned as a contact.

Finally, journalists need to know how to look after their own well-being, ensuring they eat well, get enough sleep and treat themselves occasionally to whatever helps alleviate stress. This involves addressing traditional attitudes that the individual journalist does not matter, and instead, acknowledging that psychological and physical health are essential.

A wider study on journalism and mental health could be useful as it would stimulate more conversation about traumatic stress in newsrooms. However, a number of steps would need to be put in place to ensure absolute confidentiality, based on the concerns raised in this study. Three journalists requested that any identifiable comments be removed as they envisaged ramifications that could affect their livelihoods. A number of scales have been developed to assess trauma exposure. The Journalist Trauma Exposure Scale (JTES) lists 23-items which journalists are asked to indicate whether they have experienced in the previous 12 months, indicating the range of exposure, frequency and intensity. The Trauma History Questionnaire (THQ includes 24 questions covering a range of trauma events). Most trauma scales have emphasised trauma from war and disaster rather than everyday events and have neglected gender and age. For example, the recent study by Browne et al. (2012) focused on 50 British journalists who were predominantly male, 40 years old or more and had at least 15 years' experience.

A scale that is not specific to journalism may be advisable, especially if the focus is on everyday trauma. A random survey such as the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) (see Appendix D4), may be more appropriate as it allows for comparisons with other professions that deal with trauma. This 14-item scale identifies symptoms of anxiety and depression in non-psychiatric hospital patients. It has been used widely, including recently in New Zealand, as a screening programme to identify symptoms of anxiety and depression during the restructuring process for health and safety inspectors employed by Department of Labour after the Pike River mining disaster. A score of <7 is in the normal range, scores between 8-10 are suggestive of an anxiety or mood disorder and a score of >11 indicates a clinical disorder. Such a survey may identify signs of stress that, if dealt with early, would reduce the costs sometimes associated with long-term psychological care if symptoms are ignored.

With support from media companies, future research could consider employment data in newsrooms and investigate how it has changed over time. This would be a way of monitoring gender balance, as McGregor (2006) recommended, and also to monitor turnover in staff and possible reasons for it. Such a study could determine how many journalists leave after a short time, the reasons why they do so and where they go.

9.9 Summary

The development of the theory of balance in reporting trauma has been a research challenge at times, which allowed me as an emerging researcher to explore areas as they arose, and to confirm or exclude directions in which I was heading. It has also provided many opportunities for self-reflection and the logical progression has contributed to the transparency of the process.

This grounded theory study gives a voice to trauma journalists, a profession so closely connected to the death process, yet often overlooked, undervalued and sometimes treated with disdain. These journalists are the forgotten few who regularly experience secondary trauma yet may suffer in silence because they do not feel they have the right to acknowledge what they experience as part of their everyday work. Because there are no real incentives to address traumatic stress in New Zealand – and that training for managers and staff is unlikely because of tight budgets and newsroom stoicism – it becomes the responsibility of journalism educators. This involves preparing students for the day-to-day work they may cover by empowering them with mental and physical skills for self-care and enough genuine experiences that prepare them appropriately for the “real world” of journalism.

Post-script

As a social constructivist, I acknowledge that my background has had an influence on the focus of this study. I come to it as a former journalist who has covered trauma in the past, as a researcher who has had to seek out stories that captured emotions, as a Dart Fellow, a former health counsellor, as a journalism educator and mother. Some of the journalists I knew as friends and former students, therefore I acknowledge that knowing them would have affected the interview process and my interpretation of the data. This subjectivity is unavoidable.

This thesis argued that if traumatic stress related to death-knocks and other emotional work is not acknowledged nor openly discussed, the problems will remain hidden and the damage will continue to go on. As a result, we will lose more and more graduates who had their hearts set on a career that failed them through ignorance and neglect by an industry that should have continued to excite and stimulate them.

As this study was in its final stages, a complaint was upheld by the New Zealand Press Council in February 2016 against *The Press* newspaper in Christchurch (and *Stuff* website) for breaching the New Zealand Press Council's guidelines by invading the privacy of a grieving family.¹³ Two attempts had been made by the press to contact the complainant's son.

The complaint was based on an article published by *The Press* in January 6, 2015 about a tramping accident. The article was accompanied by a photograph of the victim, Isabel Rivett, downloaded from her public Facebook page along with personal information. Although the intrusion complaint was upheld, the newspaper was not required to publish the decision, but the council advised that *The Press* should review any guidance it gives to staff. It also suggested that the Police request for privacy could have been more strongly worded. As Ms Rivett's Facebook page was public, no decision could be made but the Press Council agreed that "At the very least, there should have been a check to determine whether the family had objections to the publication of the photograph".

The ruling generated discussion online and in the media. Currently, journalists do not have a well defined or socially accepted role when contacting the bereaved after a tragedy, unlike the police or clergy (Newton & Duncan, 2012). This lack of role

¹³ <http://www.presscouncil.org.nz/rulings/bob-rivett-and-family-against-the-press>

definition complicates matters for journalists: they are there to do a job as well. They may not be there to help directly but often they can help indirectly, as this study demonstrates, by meeting the needs of public interest and helping others to understand how people cope in times of distress.

This is only the tip of the iceberg of this form of trauma. As journalists can now be targeted directly with anonymous emails (see Chapter 4.2) and others are required to verify user-generated content which may be traumatising, there are other areas of secondary trauma which also deserve recognition.

Finally, a word from the student who inspired this study. I sent her the final draft of this thesis to read. Her response:

Wow... Powerful reading. [Pages 147-148] actually brought me to tears!

Being a freelance comms girl for real estate agents might not be the most impressive way to use my skills, BUT it pays well and allows me to work from anywhere in the world... It's funny how people call PR "the dark side" when journalists are doing much, much darker stuff on a day-to-day basis. Switching to PR was like taking a walk in the sunshine for the first time in years.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Publications based on thesis material

Publications of thesis material

Barnes, L. Tupou, J., & Harrison J. (2016). Rolling with the punches: why it is ethical to practise 'death knocks'. *Asia Media Journalism Educator*, 26(1), 51-64, doi:10.1177/1326365X16640345

Barnes, L. (2015) An inexplicable gap: Journalism and gender in New Zealand, *Journalism*, <http://jou.sagepub.com/content/early/2015/12/20/1464884915620231.full.pdf?ijkey=DHvxhTp3t5iN8vf&keytype=finite> doi:10.1177/1464884915620231.

Barnes, L. (2015). Trauma training in Australia and New Zealand: necessary but confusing. *Australian Journalism Review*, 37(1), 121-131.

Barnes, L. & Edmonds, E. (2015). If it bleeds, it leads?: Changing death coverage in *The New Zealand Herald*. *Pacific Journalism Review*, 21(2), 162-172.

Barnes, L. (2013). A trauma shake-up: Are NZ graduates being prepared for the real world? *Pacific Journalism Review*, 19(1), 292-289.

Barnes, L. (2013). Good grief: The death of the obituary. *TEXT Special Issue 21*, October 2013. doi:www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue21/Barnes.pdf

Due for publication:

Barnes, L. Preparing journalists for the inevitable: ISBN: 978-1-84888-341-3, Oxford: Inter Disciplinary Press, forthcoming 2016.

Barnes, L. The reflective journalist: Making dollars and sense. *Reflections in a Shattered Mirror*; ISBN: 978-1-84888-510-3, Oxford: Inter Disciplinary Press, forthcoming 2016.

Barnes, L. Behind the headlines: New technology's role in stress relief. Accepted for publication in an ebook by Inter-disciplinary Press, forthcoming 2017.

Conference presentations

Barnes, L. *Behind the headlines: New technology's role in stress relief*. 5th Global Conference: Trauma: Theory and Practice, Lisbon, March 2015

Barnes, L. & Tupou, J. *Rolling with the punches*, Journalism Education Association of Australia annual conference, Sydney, Nov 2014

Barnes, L. & Edmonds, E. *If it bleeds, it leads?* Pacific Journalism Conference, Nov, 2014

Barnes, L. *Preparing journalists for the inevitable*. 4th Global Conference: Trauma: Theory and Practice, Prague, March 2014

Barnes, L. *Good grief: The death of the obituary*. Journalism Education Association of Australia annual conference (JEAA), Mooloolaba, Dec 2013

Barnes, L. *Good grief: The death of the obituary*. Journalism Education Association NZ annual conference (JEANZ), Auckland, December 3-4, 2013

Barnes, L. *The good, the bad and the ugly - hard lessons for young journalists coping with trauma*. Journalism Education Association of Australia annual conference (JEAA), Adelaide, Dec 2012

Barnes, L. *The good, the bad and the ugly - hard lessons for young journalists coping with trauma*. Journalism Education Association NZ annual conference (JEANZ), Hamilton, November 29-30, 2012

Appendix B1: Sample questions for journalists



Indicative questions:

The interviews are semi-structured, which means I will have some set questions but there is flexibility to explore topics as they arise.

1. Please tell me about your experiences with covering trauma.
2. How do you prepare yourself to cover a 'death knock'?
3. What do you handle well?
4. What do you not handle so well?
5. How do you unwind after an incident?
6. What sort of support have you had?
7. Do you have any concerns about trauma incidents you have covered?
8. How did you manage that concern?

I will be analyzing each interview as I go so I may refine my questions. For example:

1. 'In my discussion with other journalists, some of them have mentioned [specific topic] or
2. A key concern of some journalists is [specific topic]. Is that how you see things?

Please contact me if you wish to discuss the interview process in more detail.

Lyn Barnes, lyn.barnes@aut.ac.nz, ph: 09-921 9999 ext 6434

Appendix B2: Sample questions for media managers



Indicative questions:

The interviews are semi-structured, which means I will have some set questions but there is flexibility to explore topics as they arise.

1. Does your company have any policies on trauma training for staff?
2. Are journalists prepared and/or debriefed after a traumatic incident? If so, how?
3. Is support available if a staff member is stressed? If so, is this formal or informal?
4. Are senior staff trained to recognise signs of stress or trauma in staff that report to them?
5. Do you know of any staff who have left the profession because of stress and/or the effects of trauma?

I will be analyzing each interview as I go so I may refine my questions. For example:

A key concern of some journalists is [specific topic]. Is that how you see things?

Please contact me if you wish to discuss the interview process in more detail.

Lyn Barnes, lyn.barnes@aut.ac.nz, ph: 09-921 9999 ext 6434/021 407 820.

Appendix B3: Pre-supposition interview

With Dr Maria Carbines, April 2014

Maria asked me three key questions: what is my background, how I got into my topic and why I've chosen grounded theory as my methodology....

The idea behind the presupposition interview is to assess if I have any assumptions, aspects that may influence my data gathering.

I taped the interview but it became clear during our discussion that I clearly assumed the men would be more stoic and not discuss their feelings so openly. This was not the case.

The timing of this interview was ideal. I had just completed my third 'interview' and felt unhappy about it. I felt I talked too much and also took on a counseling role, rather than that of an interviewer. Maria could relate to my dilemma, having interviewed mothers on childcare practices where she witnessed issues that were concerning, some unlawful.

My concern had been the guilt and anguish expressed by my third interviewee, that I felt I had to reassure him that it was normal. I shouldn't have, at least at that stage of the interview. I should have stuck to my questions, probing him on what he does to deal with trauma, why and what he hopes to achieve by it.

She reminded me that it is better to sum up at the end and then say thank you... you might have to clarify, and that anyone I'm talking to I'm giving them details of Dart links or counseling services. In the meantime she said, just keep going. For example, if an interviewee says they often have a drink after interviewing a victim, it's best to ask, 'does that help'? Find out what's the outcome.

She also reminded me that to say that something like: We've talked about some emotional things, and it sounds like to me you need to talk to someone.

Otherwise I could be 'forcing the data' (Glaser).

Other pertinent points which were invaluable were reminding me to put the spotlight back on the person, because of being a journalist interviewing journalists. My first interviewee had used terms such as 'you know' when referring to covering court or other stories, assuming I would know what she meant. Maria gave me the perfect response for 'you know': "Yes, I've been in that situation, but tell me what it's like for you." Or "I'm very interested to know your experience".

Maria summed up the interview by asking me to reflect on it. But she said it was evident that I had a passionate interest and counselling background and suggested I read up on Charmaz and the role of the interviewer.

Appendix B4: Sample memo

Date: 30 April

Topic: Units of analysis

Compare incident with incident

Name apparent phenomena or beginning patterns

Ask four questions as I work through (moving quickly, suggests Charmaz, and assigning **incident by incident** codes)

1. **What is this data a study of?** (At this stage I'm still not so sure!)
2. **What category does the incident indicate?** (Considering I'm only on to coding, this is a bit overwhelming)
3. **What is actually happening in the data?** (I am still concerned that I may presuppose here).
4. **From whose point of view?** (This final question was an addition to the first three by Glaser. But it is pertinent to my study as I am looking from the perspective of the victim and the journalist, which are two distinct points of view.)

Corbin and Strauss (2008) offered a more prescriptive coding paradigm which suggests researchers be aware of:

1. Conditions: why, where, how and what happens
2. Inter/actions & emotions
3. Consequences – of inter/actions & emotions

If I bear in mind the context – death knocks and covering court – which have already emerged as consistent incidents, then there are certainly conditions, eg, preparation; response of victims etc.

The actions and emotions are therefore intertwined as well. So I am consistently asking myself what's happening? What actions are taking place/what processes?

Already my wall is covered in Post-Its! Seems to be so many ways that data can be viewed and analysed. Maybe I should explore dimensional analysis (DA).

Note to self: Need to read up on Schatzman (1991) and Bowers & Schatzman. Need to upskill on different GT variants.

Reviewing this last interview makes me really frustrated with myself, not asking her to clarify when she kept saying, 'you know what I mean'. I've read up more on this (Charmaz) so hopefully this won't happen again. I must review my interview notes before each interviews, tips about starting and ending as well! I might be a journalist but it is quite different doing intensive interviews!

Appendix B5: Coding example

204 Yeah, yeah. Way better at letting a court case go and just be like okay that was part of
 205 my job today. It's not necessarily that I'm uncaring about it but you know it's just dealt
 206 with and that's there.

207
 208 *Like another story?*
 209
 210 Yeah, yeah, it's another story in its place. Yeah, yeah.

211
 212 *And that's what I was going to ask you about. How do you unwind? And that is obviously*
 213 *the process and talking it through.*
 214
 215 Yeah, yeah and I think this part, two years into my job there are a lot more journalists in
 216 Auckland who you know, I'm friendly with. We hang out at court a lot and we're often
 217 covering the same things at various points. So it is kind of about like you know, after a
 218 break or whatever just being like blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. This happened, oh that
 219 sounds terrible. What are you leading with? That sort of thing, because you've all been
 220 there and you've all heard it, it's not like you are going home to your flatmates who
 221 aren't journalists and being like "I covered this murder trial today and this father used to
 222 get you know, his kids stoned with an asthma inhaler kind of thing." And they're just
 223 like, "What?" Whereas if you're talking about it with people who have been there or at
 224 least people who understand you know what happens, you get less of the "Are you
 225 insane? Like how do you cope with that?"

226
 227 *Right, yeah. Is there a competition factor though?*
 228
 229 No I don't actually think there is so much. Especially amongst the people I'm friends
 230 with, like we just kind of all sit there and we know what we all have to do and we're not
 231 necessarily competing for who has the best lead. Like we're all just doing our jobs. Like
 232 we're all here and we all have to file and we're probably all filing the same thing in the
 233 end because you hear one line and you just see us all start typing away and it's kind of
 234 comforting knowing that everyone else is there covering the exact same thing that you are
 235 and you know that they are also processing these things no matter how gruesome they are
 236 and that sort of thing and I kind of feel like I'm at the point where I'm sort of one of the
 237 older journalists now.

*developing a shell;
 protecting shell
 professional*

*theoretical
 sampling? theoretical
 what makes
 you an older j'ist?*

how?

needing to share

Lyn Barnes 28/2/2016 5:21 PM
Comment [59]: coping better

Lyn Barnes 28/2/2016 5:21 PM
Comment [60]: compartmentalising

Lyn Barnes 28/2/2016 5:22 PM
Comment [61]: doing the job

Lyn Barnes 28/2/2016 5:22 PM
Comment [62]: making connections

Lyn Barnes 28/2/2016 5:22 PM
Comment [63]: sharing, talking

Lyn Barnes 28/2/2016 5:23 PM
Comment [64]: empathizing, supporting

Lyn Barnes 28/2/2016 5:31 PM
Comment [65]: implicit understanding

Lyn Barnes 28/2/2016 5:24 PM
Comment [66]: witnessing together

Lyn Barnes 28/2/2016 5:25 PM
Comment [67]: being understood

Lyn Barnes 28/2/2016 5:26 PM
Comment [68]: being confronted

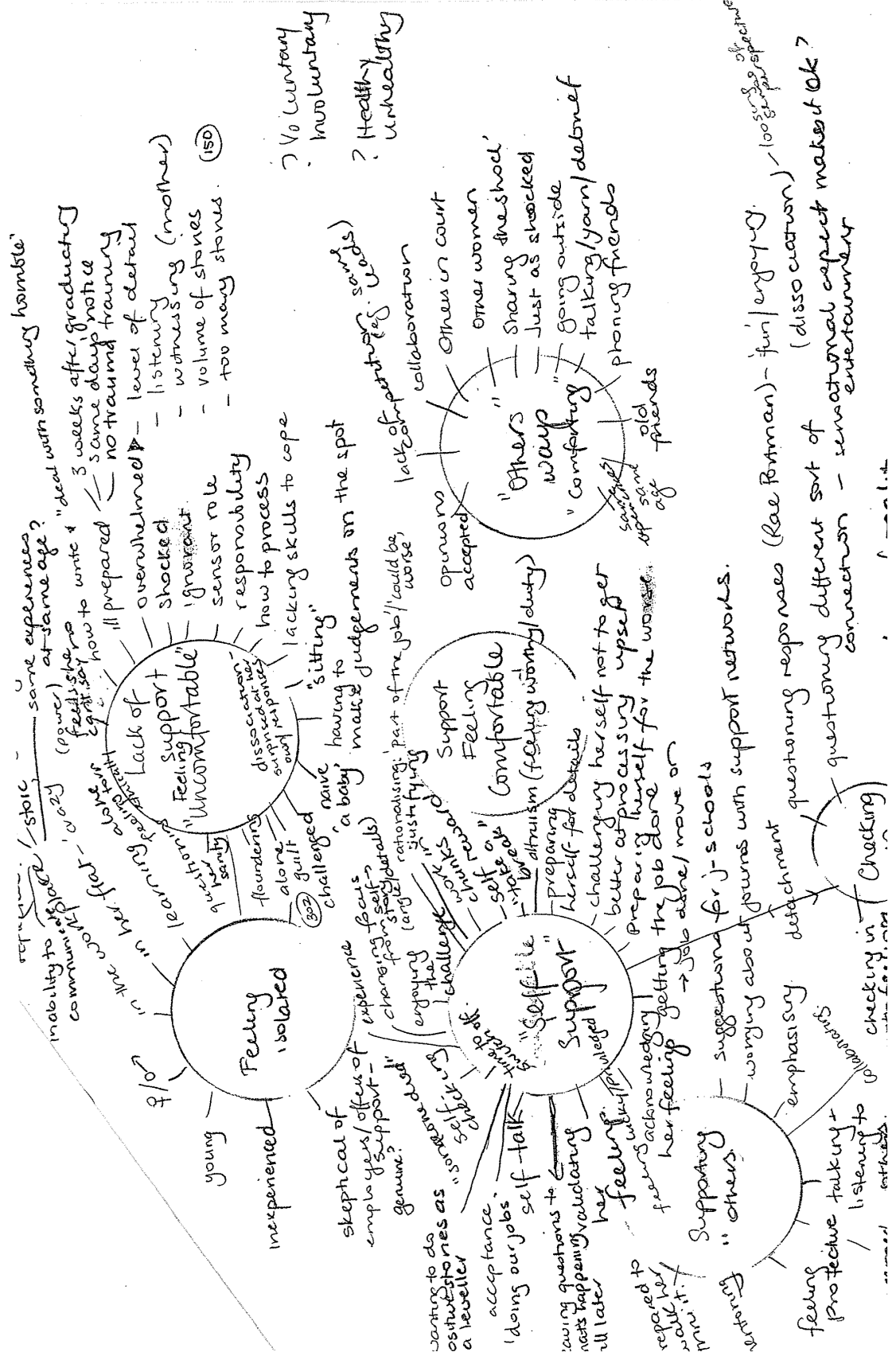
Lyn Barnes 28/2/2016 5:27 PM
Comment [69]: sharing community

Lyn Barnes 28/2/2016 5:28 PM
Comment [70]: being one of a group

Lyn Barnes 28/2/2016 5:29 PM
Comment [71]: affirming

Lyn Barnes 28/2/2016 5:28 PM
Comment [72]: Shifting strategies

Appendix B6: Sample cluster diagram



Appendix B7: Storyline exercise

October 2015

My theory is that young journalists, in particular young women, are being treated as expendable cogs in a big machine, the media. It is not always deliberate, but just the nature of the beast. Because there is an oversupply of graduates (76% on average female), prepared to earn very little but desperate to work as journalists, they are expected to say yes to anything they are told to do by their editors, even though many live in a constant state of anxiety (discomfort) and often put their safety at risk.

Key concepts to arise are cognitive dissonance or cognitive conflict (Festinger, 1956) and emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983); bystander effect (Latané and Darley, 1968), looked at through a symbolic interactionist perspective (Blumer, 1969). This theoretical framework suggests that journalists are constrained and empowered by interactions with others, namely other journalists, and therefore socialized within the organizational setting (Zelizer, 2004).

I have identified three categories for my grounded theory, which follows a trajectory. The core category, or overarching frame, is 'balance'. The first category is 'initiation' or 'attaining balance', which often involves a novice journalist having to cover an horrific scene. It becomes a test to see if she will do as she's told to see how she will handle it (ie, cope with being thrown out of balance/out of her 'comfort zone'). Can she come to terms with what is expected of her?

The second category is 'keeping balance' or 'playing the game': This is where she is expected to cover trauma on regular basis, often doing endless death knocks, and learning to suppress her emotions and put on a 'performance' (emotional labour/emotional dissonance).

Once the young journalists have passed the initiation, they then appear to ride the big wheel, going round and round and round, doing repetitive work and endless door knocks. The highs are high (getting the get) and the lows are low (feeling guilty). They are dealing with extremes, the **push-pull effect**.

- *"There's a horror movie going on around you, and you're looking for the scoop"*
- *You're exploiting people's weaknesses and vulnerabilities at a really difficult time for them and you do that knowingly.*

This push/pull effect kept emerging from the data: being torn between intruding and desire to get a good story. Why do they continue doing work that makes them feel so 'uncomfortable?' What are the drivers, or conditions that keep the journalists

in the role? Social control in the newsroom is powerful, but there is also the adrenalin rush – the thrill of the chase; the drive to get the get – and the recognition from their colleagues, the social interaction and the system of rewards: if they get the name or even better, get an interview, they become hero of the day, ‘the golden girl’, even if it is short-term and they are back to the bottom of the pack the next day.

The third category – ‘Hit the limit’ or ‘**losing balance**’, is the final stage of the trajectory. This is the point where trauma has become cumulative and/or boredom has set in and she becomes cynical and dissatisfied.

Young journalists are caught between a rock and a hard place: they are indoctrinated with the Western norms of objectivity, impartiality, being non bias, as well as adhering to the rules of accuracy and balance. Yet they are expected to behave in a certain way by their bosses by doing these death knocks and extracting emotions by “sensing” policy (Breed, 1955). So the editor, “by prudently rewarding and punishing” (Reese & Ballinger, 2001), maintains a form of control as a way to “bestow status and prestige” (Zelizer, 2004, p. 57).

Working through my data, constantly comparing the codes, I was bearing in mind what Strauss (??) recommends: asking myself what is most striking about this study? What is the main problem, then giving one example and overworking it. Glaser (1999) suggests identifying the basic social process, which in this case is ‘coping’ or the need to ‘maintain balance’.

So there are all these female journalists dealing with emotion work (emotional labour), yet they are expected to continually repressed their emotions, with minimal training and without the discourse within their culture to recognize what they are exposed to regularly, unlike police or paramedics.

Colleagues become the source for solace, because their work, in particular death knocks, are macabre. So they seek reinforcement from each other that the practice is ok, that they are ok as a person and that they are doing a good job, while questioning the ethics of the practice, which is endorsed by management.

Breed (1955) studied social control in the newsroom and isolated “modes” of social control in a democratic environment. He determined that journalist actions were “motivated by their search for a conflict-free environment and their need for reference group information” (Zelizer, 2004, p. 53).

While the adrenalin fuels them on, it also appears to keep them at a level of unreality. To convince themselves they are ok, they develop coping strategies, but when the adrenalin doesn’t work anymore, many come crashing down. By this stage, some are burnt out and disillusioned. For some, they struggle on, becoming desensitized, almost robotic like and sometimes adopting devious/unethical means to ‘get to get’. Others change career.

Appendix C1: Ethics approval



AUTEC
SECRETARIAT

19 November 2013

Jacqueline Harrison
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Jacqueline

Re Ethics Application: **13/324 Death knocks and the novice journalist: A grounded theory of managing exposure to trauma.**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the AUT University Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 18 November 2016.

As part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 18 November 2016;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 18 November 2016 or on completion of the project.

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this. If your research is undertaken within a jurisdiction outside New Zealand, you will need to make the arrangements necessary to meet the legal and ethical requirements that apply there.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at ethics@aut.ac.nz.

All the very best with your research,

Kate O'Connor
Executive Secretary
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: Lyn Barnes

A u c k l a n d U n i v e r s i t y o f T e c h n o l o g y E t h i c s C o m m i t t e e

WA505F Level 5 WA Building City Campus

Private Bag 92006 Auckland 1142 Ph: +64-9-921-9999 ext 8316 email ethics@aut.ac.nz

Appendix C2: Ethics amendment



AUTEC
SECRETARIAT

13 April 2015

Jacqueline Harrison
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Jacqueline

Re: Ethics Application: **13/324 Death knocks and the novice journalist: A grounded theory of managing exposure to trauma.**

Thank you for your request for approval of an amendment to your ethics application.

I have approved the minor amendment to your ethics application allowing changes to the inclusion criteria to include media and emergency service organisations.

I remind you that as part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC):

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 18 November 2016;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 18 November 2016 or on completion of the project.

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at ethics@aut.ac.nz.

All the very best with your research,

Kate O'Connor
Executive Secretary
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: Lyn Barnes

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Appendix C3: Invitation to participate



Covering trauma on the job

(Thank you to the people who responded to my call earlier in the year to help with my research – and apologies that I couldn't talk to everyone at the time. Now teaching has finished for the year, I'm keen to catch up over summer. So if this relates to you, please contact me asap.)

When it comes to trauma and stress, 'everyday' journalists are often forgotten. Much time has been spent on researching the effects on war correspondents who work overseas, whereas my research is focused on journalists who deal with day-to-day trauma in New Zealand, covering car accidents, violent crimes, or child abuse, for example. If you would like to find out more about my study through AUT University and maybe take part in a confidential interview, please contact me and I will send you an information pack.

Lyn Barnes

Senior Lecturer in Journalism

AUT University

Te Wananga Aronui o Tamaki Makau Rau

Auckland

Email: lyn.barnes@aut.ac.nz

Ph: +64-9-9219999 x 6434

Participant Information Sheet



Date Information Sheet Produced:

14 October 2013

Project Title: Death knocks & the novice journalist: A grounded theory of managing exposure to trauma

An Invitation

My name is Lyn Barnes and I am a senior lecturer in the Communication Studies department at AUT University. I am undertaking a PhD that focuses on how journalists deal with trauma in their work and would like to invite you to take part in my research.

What is the purpose of this research?

Although there has been much research into war correspondents and trauma, the “every day” journalist has been overlooked. I wish to redress that balance in New Zealand. Day-to-day trauma, such as doing regular ‘death knocks’, can take their toll, drip by drip. However, it has also been shown that if journalists know how to deal with stress like this, it builds resiliency.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You may have responded to my call for participants, or your name may have been mentioned to me and I have found your details, which are publicly available. Or you may have expressed an interest in my research so I have kept a copy of your name.

What will happen in this research?

I would like to interview you and talk about your experiences with trauma as part of your work. Some indicative questions are attached. I will tape you and then transcribe the tapes for you to check. Then I will analyse the interviews, looking for similarities.

What are the discomforts and risks?

Journalists do experience significant discomfort following traumatic events, as I know from past experience and from the research I have done so far. If you have experienced trauma in the past, the interview may rekindle unpleasant feelings, which may make you feel uncomfortable and reluctant to talk.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

You can ask for the interview to stop at any time. You do not have to answer all the questions and do not need to give a reason why. You may also request a break for a drink at any time. I will be interviewing you as a researcher, not a journalist. Should you feel the need, AUT Counselling Services (Room WB219 on Level 2 in the Te Ara Poutama Building, 55 Wellesley

This version was last edited on 23 April 2013

St East, ph: 921 9992; email stella.mcfarlane@aut.ac.nz) provides three free sessions to help you deal with any distress caused as a result of the interview dredging up the past.

What are the benefits?

The interviews will allow me to look at the situation from a New Zealand perspective. The interviews will be analysed for themes to see if there are any distinctive patterns. The data will then be used to inform the journalism schools and industry if there are specific areas of concern.

How will my privacy be protected?

It is up to you if you wish to be named, otherwise I will do my best to ensure you are not identified. However you will realise that in some events you describe that this may not be easy. To address this issue, you will be sent a copy of the transcribed interview, and you can have anything deleted that you do not wish me to include.

Storage of any data collected will adhere to AUT University regulations and will be kept on university premises in a locked cupboard for six years. The data will be used in my thesis and may also form part of an academic journal article or conference presentation, but individual participants will not be identifiable.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

Each interview is expected to take 60 to 90 minutes. If I need to come back to you to clarify any points, I may also require another 30 minutes of your time.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

I would appreciate hearing back from you within three weeks, by XXX

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Please contact me and arrange an interview time and place to suit you.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

I will send you a summary of finding unless you indicate otherwise on the consent form which you will be required to sign before the interview begins.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Jacqueline Harrison, jaharris@aut.ac.nz, ph: 09-921 9999 ext 6374.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTC, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher Contact Details: Lyn Barnes, lyn.barnes@aut.ac.nz, ph: 09-921 9999 ext 6434

Project Supervisor Contact Details: Dr Jacqueline Harrison, jacqueline.harrison@aut.ac.nz, ph: 09-921 9999 ext 6374.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on November 18, 2013, AUTC Reference number 13/324.

This version was last edited on 23 April 2013

Participant Information Sheet



Date Information Sheet Produced:

14 October 2013

Project Title: Death knocks & the novice journalist: A grounded theory of managing exposure to trauma

An Invitation

My name is Lyn Barnes and I am a senior lecturer in the Communication Studies department at AUT University. I am undertaking a PhD that focuses on how journalists deal with trauma in their work and would like to invite you to take part in my research.

What is the purpose of this research?

Although there has been much research into war correspondents and trauma, the “every day” journalist has been overlooked. I wish to redress that balance in New Zealand. Day-to-day trauma, such as doing regular ‘death knocks’, can take their toll, drip by drip. However, it has also been shown that if journalists know how to deal with stress like this, it builds resiliency.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You may have responded to my call for participants, or your name may have been mentioned to me and I have found your details, which are publicly available. Or you may have expressed an interest in my research so I have kept a copy of your name.

What will happen in this research?

I would like to interview you and talk about your experiences with trauma as part of your work. Some indicative questions are attached. I will tape you and then transcribe the tapes for you to check. Then I will analyse the interviews, looking for similarities.

What are the discomforts and risks?

Journalists do experience significant discomfort following traumatic events, as I know from past experience and from the research I have done so far. If you have experienced trauma in the past, the interview may rekindle unpleasant feelings, which may make you feel uncomfortable and reluctant to talk.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

You can ask for the interview to stop at any time. You do not have to answer all the questions and do not need to give a reason why. You may also request a break for a drink at any time. I will be interviewing you as a researcher, not a journalist. Should you feel the need, AUT Counselling Services (Room WB219 on Level 2 in the Te Ara Poutama Building, 55 Wellesley

This version was last edited on 23 April 2013

St East, ph: 921 9992; email stella.mcfarlane@aut.ac.nz) provides three free sessions to help you deal with any distress caused as a result of the interview dredging up the past.

What are the benefits?

The interviews will allow me to look at the situation from a New Zealand perspective. The interviews will be analysed for themes to see if there are any distinctive patterns. The data will then be used to inform the journalism schools and industry if there are specific areas of concern.

How will my privacy be protected?

It is up to you if you wish to be named, otherwise I will do my best to ensure you are not identified. However you will realise that in some events you describe that this may not be easy. To address this issue, you will be sent a copy of the transcribed interview, and you can have anything deleted that you do not wish me to include.

Storage of any data collected will adhere to AUT University regulations and will be kept on university premises in a locked cupboard for six years. The data will be used in my thesis and may also form part of an academic journal article or conference presentation, but individual participants will not be identifiable.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

Each interview is expected to take 60 to 90 minutes. If I need to come back to you to clarify any points, I may also require another 30 minutes of your time.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

I would appreciate hearing back from you within three weeks, by XXX

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Please contact me and arrange an interview time and place to suit you.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

I will send you a summary of finding unless you indicate otherwise on the consent form which you will be required to sign before the interview begins.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Jacqueline Harrison, jaharris@aut.ac.nz, ph: 09-921 9999 ext 6374.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher Contact Details: Lyn Barnes, lyn.barnes@aut.ac.nz, ph: 09-921 9999 ext 6434

Project Supervisor Contact Details: Dr Jacqueline Harrison, jacqueline.harrison@aut.ac.nz, ph: 09-921 9999 ext 6374.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on November 18, 2013, AUTEK Reference number 13/324.

This version was last edited on 23 April 2013

Consent Form



Project title: Death knocks & the novice journalist: A grounded theory of managing exposure to trauma

Project Supervisor: Dr Jacqueline Harrison

Researcher: Lyn Barnes

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 11 October 2013.
- ☐ I understand that I will be interviewed by the researcher and have seen a list of indicative questions.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be recorded and transcribed. I will see a copy of these transcribed notes to ensure they are factually correct.
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time up until I approve the transcribed notes, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including recordings and transcripts will be destroyed.
- ☐ I agree to my name being used and my being identifiable in any outputs (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐
If no, I understand every effort will be made to de-identify me. Yes ☐
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I am willing to meet with the researcher again if need be to clarify any areas from the initial interview.
- ☐ I wish to receive a summary of the report (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....
.....
.....
.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on November 18, 2013, AUTECH Reference number 13/324.

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

This version was last edited on 13 October 2010

Appendix C7: Transcriber confidentiality agreement

1

Confidentiality Agreement



Project title: **Death knocks & the novice journalist: A grounded theory of managing exposure to trauma**

Project Supervisor: **Dr Jacqueline Harrison**

Researcher: **Lyn Barnes**

- ☐ I understand that all the material I will be asked to transcribe is confidential.
- ☐ I understand that the contents of the audio recordings can only be discussed with the researcher.
- ☐ I will not keep any copies of the transcripts nor allow third parties access to them.

Transcriber's signature:

Transcriber's name:

Transcriber's Contact Details:

.....
.....
.....
.....

Date:

Project Supervisor's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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.....
.....
.....

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on November 18, 2013,
AUTECH Reference number 13/324.**

Note: The transcriber should retain a copy of this form.

This version was last edited on 13 October 2010

Appendix D1: Sample death knock story

This is an example from the front-page of the NZ Herald, published December 7, 2015. It was written by a former graduate who has been on the job for a year. A quick scan of previous stories by the young journalist lists various articles about death or near-death: teen plunges 100m; missing girls; teen's death; mum with cancer; badly burned child; grief-stricken mother speaks out, home attack – and that was only over the past few weeks. I did not interview this graduate but wanted to give an example of a typical death-knock story, whereby the journalist has had to track down the victim's relatives as soon as possible after the event.



The devastated partner of a woman killed when their vehicle crashed head-on with oncoming traffic has tearfully described the moment he tried to swerve to avoid the crash.

Nick Horwood and his partner of seven years, Justine Andersen, were travelling from Cambridge, where they had been visiting her mother, Annette Andersen, to their home in Tauranga when the crash occurred.

Just 20 minutes into their journey, at 6pm on Saturday, Mr Horwood's vehicle and another collided when one apparently crossed the centre line on State Highway 1 just south of Hydro Rd.

The three occupants of the other vehicle - who included a child and a pregnant woman - were taken to hospital.

Mr Horwood was kept in hospital overnight for observation.

He was released yesterday with "bumps and cuts and scratches" but largely unhurt.

He said Ms Andersen had taken "the full impact" of the collision and died at the scene.

"I tried to swerve to miss it, but it was too late," Mr Horwood said.

Ms Andersen, 24, a former Cambridge High School student, had moved to Tauranga for "a different lifestyle" shortly after finishing her schooling, and met Mr Horwood.

The two formed a strong bond and had been inseparable since.

Ms Andersen worked at the Arohanui Art and Education Trust, caring for patients with disabilities.

"She loved her job [and] looking after people and she [loved] caring for them," Mr Horwood said.

Mr Horwood and Ms Andersen shared a love of cars and spent many hours fixing them together.

"She was into cars as well, so she would come with me to car events in Hampton Downs, to watch me," Mr Horwood said.

"She would come with me to get car parts and stuff to build my one up. She would know quite a bit [about the mechanics of cars]."

The couple had also been working together to paint their house and get it ready for the New Year.

Mr Horwood, also 24, said he and Ms Andersen had plans to get married in the coming years.

"[Justine] just cared for me so much and looked after me very well. You will probably never find another person like that again," he said.

Mr Horwood's mother, Caroline Horwood, said Ms Andersen was "like a daughter to me".

"She was a very loving and caring person. We loved her very much.

"She just fitted into our family like she was meant to be there."

Tributes have been pouring in on social media for Ms Andersen.

On the victim's Facebook page, Amber Hardacker wrote of her devastation at the 24-year-old's passing.

"Life is so unfair. I am devastated that you have been taken this way, Justine.

"You were such a kind-hearted and nurturing person who always looked out for others around you.

"I am grateful to have known you the short time that I did, my heart truly hurts today.

"You will be so missed. Much love," the post read.

Another user wrote: "My condolences to both families. Justine was a lovely part of our family many years ago. You will always be remembered."

Ms Andersen's funeral is expected to be held later this week.

Appendix D2: Official Information Act request reply



22 October 2014

Ms Lyn Barnes
Senior Lecturer in Journalism
AUT University
Private Bag 92006
AUCKLAND 1142

Dear Ms Barnes

Official Information Act Request

Thank you for your request of 2 October 2014, asking for the following information under the Official Information Act 1982:

- *How many mental health claims have been lodged with ACC from journalists (and separately, related professionals – editors, photographers, television equipment operators, sound technicians) over the past 10 years?*
- *A breakdown of claims for each year and the gender – how many claims were made by men and how many by women?*
- *How much time each claimant had off work on average, and how much compensation has been paid?*

You have asked for data on mental health claims for the past 10 years. However, Work Related Mental Injury (WRMI) legislation was introduced in October 2008. Prior to this date, there was no cover for WRMI when no physical injury was present. Therefore, ACC declines this part of your request as this information does not exist, or cannot be found. This decision complies with section 18(e) of the Act.

You also asked for a breakdown of claims by occupation and/or related profession. WRMI claims for those clients whose occupation is noted as journalist, or related industry is extremely low (<4). Due to the low number of cases ACC declines to provide any claim information in order to protect those clients' privacy. In doing so ACC has considered whether the public interest in releasing that information outweighs the interest in protecting their privacy, and has decided that it does not. Therefore, ACC declines this part of your request. This decision complies with section 9(2)(a) of the Act.

As many of the employers for these clients are with ACC's Accredited Employer Programme¹, ACC does not hold specific claim details. However you may wish to contact any Media companies who may hold some information to assist with your research.

¹ The Accredited Employer Programme allows an employer, in agreement with ACC, to manage the claims of workplace accidents and to pay for a claimant's treatment, rehabilitation and entitlements. Employers who

Pease contact me at Deborah.butler@acc.co.nz if you have any questions about this letter.

You may make a complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman. You can call them on 0800 802 602, 9am to 5pm weekdays, or write to:

The Office of the Ombudsman
P O Box 10 152
WELLINGTON 6143

Yours sincerely



Deborah Butler
Senior Advisor, Government Services

become accredited, "stand in the shoes of ACC". This means they are required to follow the Accident Compensation Act 2001 to the same standards as the Corporation

Appendix D3: Trauma support for NZ Police

Notes from meeting with Robyn Lorenzen, April 13, 2015

As discussed in Chapter Two, traumatic stress is now well recognized as an occupational threat to some professions, particularly those people who work on the “front lines”. It is approximately 30 years since the New Zealand Police Force acknowledged the harm that trauma can do to its officers and began to make changes to address the issue (Personal communication, Robyn Lorenzen, team leader of police welfare for the Waitemata District in Auckland). Robyn Lorenzen, the team leader of welfare for the Waitemata District in Auckland, believes trauma counselling is now “an accepted part of the job”. Since the older, more conservative officers have left the force, the newer ones have endorsed seeking help when needed, which has meant that counselling is part of the everyday discourse for police.

There are three important facets in the New Zealand police support programme:

1. Sergeants act as supervisors, so have been constables and know what is involved. (This cannot always be guaranteed that an editor in a newsroom has had much experience with trauma so the same system may not work.)
2. Peer learning: a constable usually always start out with another officer.
3. Self-care is an important component. This includes addressing the importance of home life, ensuring there are no family issues that could affect their stress levels, as officers must be “work ready” to be safe.

Appendix D4: Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale

Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS)

Tick the box beside the reply that is closest to how you have been feeling in the past week.
Don't take too long over you replies: your immediate is best.

D	A		D	A	
		I feel tense or 'wound up':			I feel as if I am slowed down:
	3	Most of the time	3		Nearly all the time
	2	A lot of the time	2		Very often
	1	From time to time, occasionally	1		Sometimes
	0	Not at all	0		Not at all
		I still enjoy the things I used to enjoy:			I get a sort of frightened feeling like 'butterflies' in the stomach:
0		Definitely as much	0		Not at all
1		Not quite so much	1		Occasionally
2		Only a little	2		Quite Often
3		Hardly at all	3		Very Often
		I get a sort of frightened feeling as if something awful is about to happen:			I have lost interest in my appearance:
	3	Very definitely and quite badly	3		Definitely
	2	Yes, but not too badly	2		I don't take as much care as I should
	1	A little, but it doesn't worry me	1		I may not take quite as much care
	0	Not at all	0		I take just as much care as ever
		I can laugh and see the funny side of things:			I feel restless as I have to be on the move:
0		As much as I always could	3		Very much indeed
1		Not quite so much now	2		Quite a lot
2		Definitely not so much now	1		Not very much
3		Not at all	0		Not at all
		Worrying thoughts go through my mind:			I look forward with enjoyment to things:
	3	A great deal of the time	0		As much as I ever did
	2	A lot of the time	1		Rather less than I used to
	1	From time to time, but not too often	2		Definitely less than I used to
	0	Only occasionally	3		Hardly at all
		I feel cheerful:			I get sudden feelings of panic:
3		Not at all	3		Very often indeed
2		Not often	2		Quite often
1		Sometimes	1		Not very often
0		Most of the time	0		Not at all
		I can sit at ease and feel relaxed:			I can enjoy a good book or radio or TV program:
	0	Definitely	0		Often
	1	Usually	1		Sometimes
	2	Not Often	2		Not often
	3	Not at all	3		Very seldom

Please check you have answered all the questions

Scoring:

Total score: Depression (D) _____ Anxiety (A) _____

0-7 = Normal

8-10 = Borderline abnormal (borderline case)

11-21 = Abnormal (case)

Appendix D5: New Zealand Engineers Printers and Manufacturers Union Journalists' Code of Ethics

New Zealand Engineering, Manufacturing, Print & Media Union JOURNALIST CODE OF ETHICS

Respect for truth and the public's right to information are overriding principles for all journalists. In pursuance of these principles, journalists commit themselves to ethical and professional standards. All members of the Union engaged in gathering, transmitting, disseminating and commenting on news and information shall observe the following Code of Ethics in their professional activities:

- (a) They shall report and interpret the news with scrupulous honesty by striving to disclose all essential facts and by not suppressing relevant, available facts or distorting by wrong or improper emphasis.
- (b) They shall not place unnecessary emphasis on gender, race, sexual preference, religious belief, marital status or physical or mental disability.
- (c) In all circumstances they shall respect all confidences received in the course of their occupation.
- (d) They shall not allow personal interests to influence them in their professional duties.
- (e) They shall not allow their professional duties to be influenced by any consideration, gift or advantage offered and, where appropriate, shall disclose any such offer.
- (f) They shall not allow advertising or commercial considerations to influence them in their professional duties.
- (g) They shall use fair and honest means to obtain news, pictures, films, tapes and documents.
- (h) They shall identify themselves and their employers before obtaining any interview for publication or broadcast.
- (i) They shall respect private grief and personal privacy and shall have the right to resist compulsion to intrude on them.
- (j) They shall do their utmost to correct any published or broadcast information found to be harmfully inaccurate.

A breach of this Code shall be a breach of the Union's Rules and thus may give rise to disciplinary procedures under the Rules. If a member is dismissed from employment or otherwise disadvantaged by an employer, and a breach of this Code is claimed by the employer as justification for the dismissal or disadvantage, then the Union, following proper and adequate inquiry, and if it is satisfied to a reasonable degree that the employer's actions are justified, may decline to pursue a personal grievance on behalf of the member.

Appendix D6: New Zealand Broadcasting Standards Authority Code Standard 10: privacy

31 / Broadcasting Standards Authority

STANDARD 10 – PRIVACY

Broadcasters should maintain standards consistent with the privacy of the individual.

Guidelines

- 10a The privacy standard applies only to identifiable individuals. In some cases an individual may be identifiable even if they are not named or shown.
- 10b Broadcasters should not disclose private information or material about an individual in a way that is highly offensive to an objective reasonable person in the position of the person affected.
- 10c There must be a reasonable expectation of privacy in relation to the information or material disclosed. Factors to consider include, but are not limited to, whether the information or material is not in the public domain; and/or it is intimate or sensitive in nature; and/or the individual could reasonably expect it would not be disclosed.
- 10d A person will not usually have a reasonable expectation of privacy in relation to matters in the public domain. In some circumstances, there may be a reasonable expectation of privacy in relation to such information or material even though it is in the public domain.
- 10e Broadcasters should not intentionally intrude upon a person's reasonable expectation of solitude or seclusion in a way that is highly offensive to an objective reasonable person in the position of the person affected.
- 10f It is a defence to a privacy complaint to publicly disclose matters of legitimate public interest. The level of public interest must be proportionate to the seriousness of the breach of privacy in order for the defence to apply.
- 10g It is not a breach of privacy where the person concerned has given informed consent to the disclosure or intrusion. A parent or guardian, or other person aged 18 or over in loco parentis (standing in the shoes of the parent or guardian), can consent on behalf of a child under the age of 16 years, but the broadcaster must be satisfied that the broadcast is not contrary to the best interests of the child.

STANDARD 11 – FAIRNESS

Broadcasters should deal fairly with any person or organisation taking part or referred to in any broadcast.

Guidelines

- 11a A consideration of what is fair will depend on the nature of the programme (eg, news and current affairs, factual, dramatic, comedic or satirical). Context should also be considered, for example, the public significance of the broadcast.
- 11b Participants and contributors should be informed, before a broadcast, of the nature of the programme and their proposed contribution, except where justified in the public interest, or where their participation is minor in the context of the programme.
- 11c Whether informed consent was required or has been obtained from a participant or a contributor may be a relevant consideration in determining whether that participant or contributor was treated fairly (guidance on what constitutes 'informed consent' is found in the privacy guidance at the back of this Codebook).
- 11d If a person or organisation referred to or portrayed in a broadcast might be adversely affected, that person or organisation should usually be given a fair and reasonable opportunity to comment for the programme, before the broadcast. What is 'fair and reasonable' will depend on the circumstances.
- 11e Edited excerpts should fairly reflect the tenor of the overall events or views expressed.
- 11f Broadcasters must not broadcast information obtained by misrepresentation or deception (including by hidden recording device), except where justified by the public interest.
- 11g The use of prank calls as a legitimate expression of humour will usually be acceptable, but caution should be exercised to prevent undue harm to unsuspecting parties.
- 11h Individuals, and particularly children and young people, featured in a programme should not be exploited, humiliated or unfairly identified.
- 11i Where programmes deal with distressing circumstances (eg, grief and bereavement) broadcasters should show discretion and sensitivity.

