

Running Head: BRIDGING THE GAP

Bridging the Gap for Educators: Uniting Scholarship and Commentary about
Journalism and Trauma

Elana Newman
Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma Research Laboratory
University of Tulsa

Summer Nelson
Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma Research Laboratory
University of Tulsa

Send correspondence and inquiries to:

Elana Newman, Ph.D.
Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma Research Laboratory
Department of Psychology
University of Tulsa
800 South Tucker Drive
Tulsa, OK 74104
918 631 2836
918 631-3074 (Dart office)
Elana-newman@utulsa.edu

Sincere thanks to our expert consultants, Meg Spratt, and Bruce Shapiro, as well as our coders: Cassie Roby and Stefanie Johnson. The Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma provided support for the online component of this project.

Abstract

Although news coverage of crime, war, and human cruelty is within easy reach, scholarly research about journalism and trauma is not as readily accessible. This poses problems for journalism educators who want to promote innovative, accurate, and ethical portrayals of trauma both in university and industry settings. Several challenges exist in locating such information. First and foremost, scholarship about trauma and journalism is located across disciplines (i.e., psychology, mass communication, public health, psychiatry, and journalism outlets) which each discipline using varying terminology to describe similar phenomenon. Moreover, even within communication studies, journalists and mass communication scholars with overlapping specialty areas tend not to exchange information and ideas in the same forums and same language. This lack of communication is also true among working journalists (e.g., photojournalists who document human rights violations and print journalists who cover the police beat) who share similar concerns when covering trauma. Thus while many exciting scholarly and practice developments are occurring in the field of journalism and trauma, not all constituents are accessing and sharing scholarship and educational tools.

Given these challenges, the described research aimed to integrate the vast scholarship on journalism and trauma published in the English language. Using numerous combinations of key words, which accounted for differences in terminology among fields, 1256 articles were identified in the final sample. The articles were coded across 17 categories such as type of article, major article content and locale, type of publication, publication region, type of practical advice given if any, and media type.

Inter-rater reliability analyses varied substantially depending on the number of choices within each category.

This presentation will focus on trends and gaps in more detail with a focus on any international trends, discrepancies between scholars and journalists, and implications for journalism educators. Further, authors will detail the process of arranging to make this database available online in the future as part of the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma's research initiative to promote research and scholarship on journalism and trauma.

Introduction

Although news coverage about crime, war, and human cruelty is ubiquitous, scholarship about such news coverage is not as readily available. Scholarship about trauma and journalism is located within multiple disciplines (e.g. communications, psychology, criminal justice, ethics, and public policy), in which each discipline uses varying terminology to describe similar phenomenon. Even within communication studies itself, journalists and mass communication scholars with overlapping specialty areas tend not to exchange information in the same forums and same language. Moreover, writers who focus on one type of violence (e.g., crime) tend not to refer to information on other related forms of destruction (e.g., disaster, terrorism). As a result, important findings, questions, and knowledge are not shared which ultimately prevents effective knowledge exchange.

The first practical aim of this study was to compile research in journalism and trauma conducted across different fields of study to create a searchable database to foster scholarship. Because good interdisciplinary research requires a sharing of knowledge across fields (Beer & Bots, 2009), we wanted identified all relevant search terms. Then using content analysis, we examined trends in the field and notable gaps remaining in the literature. In this article, we focus on international trends, discrepancies between scholars and journalists, and implications for journalism educators. Finally we describe the ongoing efforts to make this database available in the future.

Method

A search for articles on journalism and trauma was conducted for articles written between the years of 1975 and 2009. Data collection ended in August 2009, thus not all

of 2009 is represented. In order to access articles from psychology and communication journals, searches were conducted using PsycInfo, Pilots, and Communication and Mass Media Complete bibliographic databases. Databases were searched using numerous combinations of key words to avoid missing articles because of differences in terminology among fields (See Table 1). Using this method, 1308 initial articles were found on the topic.

For the content analysis, we generated a list of possible categories for coding each article. Initial categories and dimensions for coding were listed and defined. After devising the coding system, a journalist and a communication scholar were consulted to evaluate if any dimensions or areas were omitted. Variables were edited and finalized using coding trials during which three researchers coded randomly selected articles on each variable. Problems in inter-rater reliability, clarity, and item overlap were identified in several categories and these variables were either edited or dropped. Researchers specified rules for coding each variable, and these rules were listed in a code book. Researchers completed five rounds of this coding and editing process until a final list of variables and dimensions was derived. Once the system was finalized, 106 (8.8%) of the articles were coded twice so that inter-rater reliability could be determined for each variable.

Results

Of the 1308 initial articles coded, 52 were excluded from the analysis because they were not in English ($n = 4$), not sufficiently journalism related ($n = 40$), not sufficiently trauma related ($n = 6$), or neither journalism nor trauma related ($n = 2$). This left 1256 articles in the final sample.

Categories and Dimensions.

Table 2 indicates the coding scheme, percentage of endorsements of dimensions within each category and inter-rater reliability accounting for chance agreement when applicable. In cases where agreement was high, but the base rates of responses were not equally distributed, percent agreements (not accounting for chance) are presented in the text to more accurately describe the data. As noted in the table, some category responses are not mutually exclusive. Inter-rater reliability, accounting for chance agreement, ranged considerably from .13 - 1.00. Inter-rater reliability was lowest in those variables with multiple items, especially when a non-specific “catch all” option was included.

Overall publishing trends and maturation of the field.

The field of journalism and trauma is gaining attention, especially since 2002 (See Figure 1), when more than 80 published articles appeared. With respect to scholarship specifically, the number of scholarly articles first peaked with over 15 articles in 1991 and then jumped to over 60 scholarly articles in 2002. The ratio of scholarly to non-scholarly articles varied by year; this variation does not appear systematic.

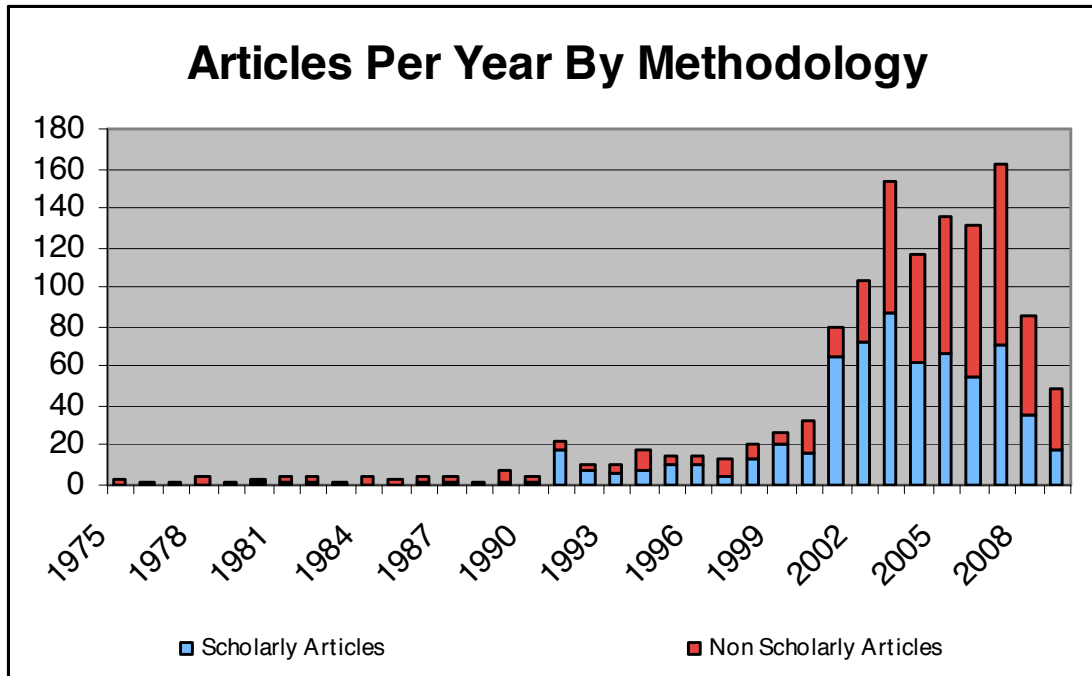


Figure 1. Articles per year by scholarly and non-scholarly methods.

Trends

Commentary and scholarly methods are the most prevalent approach to trauma and journalism. Within scholarship, content analysis is the primary methodology implemented and experimental research is seldom used. The majority of publications are published in communications journals and magazines, followed by medical and psychology journals. Only half of the scholarship is peer reviewed.

Within the published literature, most articles focus on large scale mass events rather than small events which we defined as individually experienced events or events affecting one or two people such as car accidents. The majority of publications focus on covering trauma broadly or the content of news stories. Effects of news stories on the public, occupational health and ethics are less common topics. Nearly half the articles

discuss journalism broadly without elaborating on specific considerations for type of media. When a specific focus is mentioned, the focus is commonly print or television. Cross-media convergence and radio are relatively neglected. Articles mostly focus on North America and then the Middle East. With respect to articles on terrorism ($n = 329$), the majority of articles focused on North America (19%) when compared to the Middle East (2%) or other regions (6%) ($\chi^2 (df = 2, N = 1256) = 59.97, p < .01$, Cramer's $V = .218, p < .01$). On the other hand with respect to articles focusing on war ($n = 401$), the majority of articles focused on the Middle East ($\chi^2 (df = 2, N = 1256) = 332.06, p < .01$, Cramer's $V = .514, p < .01$). Very few articles offer specific professional advice and educational advice to journalists or educators. Finally, few articles discuss mental health reactions to trauma.

Discrepancies between journalists and scholars

As expected, articles in peer-reviewed journals are usually authored by scholars rather than working journalists ($\chi^2 (df = 2, N = 1256) = 517.72, p < .01$, Cramer's $V = .64, p < .01$). Similarly, scholarly methods, especially content analyses, are implemented by researchers and not journalists ($\chi^2 (df = 2, N = 1256) = 454.96, p < .01$, Cramer's $V = .60, p < .01$).

Different professions discuss different aspects of trauma and journalism. Scholars discuss general news choices and framing more than journalists ($\chi^2 (df = 2, N = 1230) = 110.31, p < .01$, Cramer's $V = .30, p < .01$). Scholars also focus upon the effects of news coverage on audiences significantly more than journalists ($\chi^2 (df = 2, N = 1230) = 118.11, p < .01$, Cramer's $V = .31, p < .01$). Journalists discuss issues related to the collection and experience of reporting about trauma more than scholars ($\chi^2 (df = 2, N = 1230) =$

121.65, $p < .01$, Cramer's $V = .31$, $p < .01$). Working journalists also focus and analyze work environments and the effects of trauma-related reported on journalists and organizations with greater frequency than scholars (χ^2 (df = 2, $N = 1230$) = 99.09, $p < .01$, Cramer's $V = .28$, $p < .01$). Across all articles, there is a minimal focus on mental health, but when mental health is covered, it is mostly by scholars.

Advice to educators.

With respect to advice for educators, the two principle coders agreed 98.11% of the time. Within the entire sample of articles, few discussed training students to cover traumatic events, and fewer still included specific, concrete advice for educators. Twelve articles contained advice for educators. As expected, researchers and academics gave advice more frequently than journalists (χ^2 (df = 2, $N = 1256$) = 10.05, $p < .01$, Cramer's $V = .09$, $p < .01$). Within these articles, most articles detailed recent efforts by three university journalism programs to educate students about trauma. Most authors agree that trauma training for students should include: 1) general information on trauma, as well as symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD); 2) techniques for interviewing victims with sensitivity and respect; and 3) opportunities for students to practice interviewing trauma victims through mock-interview exercises (Dufresne, 2004; Johnson, 1999; Maxson, 2000; Simpson, 2004). To provide students additional real-world exposure to traumatic events, educators may ask victims to come into journalism classrooms, and speak about their experiences. Several articles warn of the necessity to monitor students for possible negative emotional responses to traumatic material included in trainings (e.g., Johnson, 1999).

On a broader level Seib (2004) advises that as journalists cover international stories such as the war on terrorism, there is increased need for students to receive education from other fields, including political science, economics, sociology, and foreign policy, to place such global concerns in context.

Advice for Journalists

The sample included 61 articles offering professional advice for journalists. With respect to advice for journalists, the principle coders for agreed 95.28% of the time. Articles containing advice were written at equivalent rates by journalists and scholars (χ^2 (df = 2, $N = 1256$) = 2.51, $p = .29$, Cramer's $V = .05$, $p = .29$). Within the articles, three main categories encompass nearly all of the advice given: 1) general tips for covering trauma; 2) tips for interacting with victims; and 3) tips for coping with the stress of covering traumatic events. Tips for covering trauma are wide-ranging including guidelines on covering suicide (e.g., Etzersdorfer, 1998; Hawton & Williams, 2001), natural disasters (e.g., Hornig, Walters & Templin, 1991; Lenger, 2000), terrorism (e.g., Kingston, 1995) and numerous other traumatic events.

Only 11 articles offered advice on interacting with victims. Among these articles, articles frequently outline steps that should be taken by journalists to minimize the negative impact they could have on victims of traumatic events. For example, one photojournalist (Bryant, 1987) spoke of a checklist he goes through when covering traumatic events. He suggests that before a journalist covers a story, he or she should determine if the story should be told at all, if the victim would be "re-traumatized" if the story was told, and if the event could be covered in an unobtrusive and sensitive way.

Finally, 7 articles contained advice on coping with witnessing traumatic events. For example, one article (Manware, 2008) contains several suggestions for journalists including taking breaks from work, spending time with friends or family, and seeking professional help if emotional reactions to trauma become overwhelming. Another article (Ricchiardi, 2001) suggests journalists should self-monitor for symptoms of PTSD, or for maladaptive attempts to cope with trauma such as use of alcohol or drugs, and to seek help if symptoms persist.

Future database of articles

Currently, the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma is creating an online reference database of bibliographic information for all coded articles to be available in the next year at www.dartcenter.org. Bibliographic information will be merged with each article's coded categories from the content analysis and then organized into searchable categories. This will allow database users to access reference information for articles within categories such as article content, trauma type, and methodology, for example. Though the Dart Center will be unable to provide full text articles at this time, users will be provided with enough information to access the article on their own.

DISCUSSION

Practical implications for training

Clearly, the topic of journalism and trauma is gaining attention by journalists and scholars alike. With over 1200 articles available, educators can access a wide array of articles to inform training from various vantage points in the field. In particular, numerous articles discuss general issues about covering trauma as well as the content and framing of news about violence. There are also over 200 articles about audience effects

of news coverage that may be useful to consult in determining technical training about covering tragedy. Together, these perspectives may help educators identify old and novel ways of representing trauma that accurately represent the experience in ways that are compassionate and compelling to audiences.

With respect to specifics, coverage in North America and the Middle East are most common in this sample of articles written in English. Although there are many articles available on all types of trauma, larger scale traumas are discussed more than individually experienced traumatic events. Comments on journalism in general, print and television are the most common media types discussed.

With respect to self-care, journalists are increasingly discussing the occupational health of journalists. Unfortunately less scholarship is available but journalists elucidate the key issues for training programs to address.

Analysis of Patterns

In examining trends over the years, it is particularly notable that after the terrorism attacks in the U.S. on September 11, 2001, there was an increase in all published articles. The rise in published literature on journalism and trauma has been sustained over most years. The relative dip in number of published articles on trauma and journalism in 2008 and 2009 most likely reflects the fact that data collection stopped two-thirds into the year 2009, and that data collection is incomplete, although it is possible that publication rates are decreasing.

When examining trends in scholarship specifically, scholarship began to reach a critical mass in 1991, probably in response to examining coverage of the Persian Gulf War, which began in 1990. The number of scholarly articles appears to have risen in

2001, likely in response to the terrorism events of 2001 and the overall rise in published articles in the field. Given that the majority of published material appears in communication journals or magazines, and that half are peer reviewed, it is not surprising that the predominance of content analyses, a major methodological approach in communications, was used (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). Quantitative scholarly approaches such as experimental methods, meta-analyses, and quasi-experimental designs are seldom implemented and needed for the field to progress.

Commentary was a very popular method of approaching topics related to journalism and trauma – the most common non-scholarly approach. In fact, the numbers of published commentaries, a subgroup of journalistic approaches, was within close range to the total number of scholarly articles, which is a main category. Reflective of journalistic practice, commentary on journalism and trauma topics was often selected by editors, not peer-reviewed.

Radio is understudied relative to the use of radio internationally. It is unclear if the lack of focus on radio represents a lack of attention to this specific medium or a lack of internationalization of trauma and journalism related publications. Regardless of cause, increased attention to radio is warranted to help trainers.

With respect to types of trauma, large scale events rather than events affecting smaller groups tend to be the focus of published articles. This may not be proportionally representative of the types of trauma-related news presented daily. For example, crimes such as sexual assault, physical assault, and robberies tend to be commonly covered events for community papers more often than larger scale events. Much more attention to these types of events would be desirable.

Other neglected areas of focus are the ethics of trauma-related journalism, the effects of news on the victims and sources, and occupational health of news gatherers. Specific advice on trauma-related news for different news mediums is also needed. Increasing information about these areas may help educators enhance educational approaches. Both the perspectives of working journalists and academics can enhance such training. Once the database is online locating relevant sources should be much easier. Future papers and research will also focus on information from the mental health literature and provide specific summaries of major article content to assist educators. In addition, articles from the latter part of 2009 onward will be added to the database.

References

- Beers, P. J. & Bots, P. W. G. (2009). Eliciting conceptual models to support interdisciplinary research. *Journal of Information Science*, 35, 259-278.
- Behl, L. E., Conyngham, H. A., May, P. F. (2003). Trends in child maltreatment literature. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 27, 215-229.
- Bryant, G. (1987). Ten-fifty P.I.: Emotion and the photographer's role. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 2, 32-39.
- Dufresne, M. (2004). Teaching about trauma. *Quill*, 92, 29.
- Etzersdorfer, E., & Sonneck, G. (1998). Preventing suicide by influencing mass-media reporting: The Viennese experience 1980-1996. *Archives of Suicide Research*, 4, 67-74.
- Hawton, K., & Williams, K. (2001). The connection between media and suicidal behavior warrants serious attention. *Crisis: The Journal of Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention*, 22, 137-140.
- Hornig, S., Walters, L., & Templin, J. (1991). Voices in the news. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 12, 32-45.
- Johnson, M. (1999). Aftershock: Journalists and trauma. *Quill*, 87, 14.
- Kingston, S. (1995). Terrorism, the media, and the Northern Ireland conflict. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 18, 203-231.
- Lenger, J. (2000). Beyond the formula. *American Journalism Review*, 22, 18-19.
- Manware, M. (2008). Overcoming trauma. *Quill*, 96, 18-20.
- Maxson, J. (2000). Training journalism students to deal with trauma. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 55, 79-86.

Ricchiardi, S. (2001). After the adrenaline. *American Journalism Review*, 23, 34-39.

Seib, P. (2004). A broader world view can narrow journalism's shortcomings. *Quill*, 92, 27.

Simpson, R. (2004). Journalism and trauma: A long overdue conjunction. *Nieman Reports*, 58, 77-79.

Wimmer, R. D. & Dominick, J. R. (2006). *Mass Media Research: An Introduction* (8th edition). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Table 1.

Key terms used in literature search

Database	Search terms
CMMC	Media & trauma Journalism & trauma Journalists & trauma Reporters & trauma New & trauma Journalism & disaster Media & disaster Journalism & terrorism Mass media & terrorism Mass media & crime Consequences of news media coverage Journalism & posttraumatic stress disorder Journalism & war Emotional effects of news Media effects & disaster Mass media & public safety Social impact of mass media
PsycInfo	Communications media & emotional trauma Journalism & terrorism Mass media & crime Mass media & terrorism Media & disaster Media & posttraumatic stress disorder Media coverage & trauma Media coverage & victimization Media effects & terrorism Media exposure & mental health Media exposure & trauma Media reporting Reporters & trauma
PILOTS	Journalism & trauma Mass media & terrorism Mass media & trauma Media & disaster Media & distant trauma Media exposure & trauma Media & posttraumatic stress disorder Media coverage

Table 2.

Coding scheme, percentage endorsement of dimensions within each category and inter-rater reliability

Category	N	%	kappa
Type of Article			.53
Journalistic Methods	652	51.9	
Narrative (1 st person)	68	5.4	
Narrative (3 rd person)	21	1.7	
News	13	1.0	
Commentary	499	39.7	
Other	51	4.1	
Scholarly Methods	604	48.1	1.00
Review	37	2.9	
Meta analysis	10	0.8	
Content analysis	261	20.8	
Theoretical	27	2.1	
Quasi-experimental research	181	14.4	
Experimental research	21	1.7	
Scholarly case analysis	51	4.1	
Multiple methods	16	1.3	
Field of Publication			.68
Communication	853	67.9	
General communication journal	177	14.1	
Journalism specific journal	161	12.8	
Public relations journal	5	0.4	
Journalism/communications magazine	510	40.6	
Medicine/Psychology	127	10.1	
Psychology/psychiatry/medical journal	81	6.4	
Trauma specific journal	36	2.9	
Public policy journal	3	0.2	
Psychology/psychiatry magazine	7	0.6	
Other	276	22.0	
Ethics journal	12	1.0	
Other journal	178	14.2	
Unpublished dissertation	1	0.1	
Poster presentation	2	0.2	
Other	83	6.6	
Peer reviewed articles	632	50.3	.89
Trauma/survivor type _{NM}			
Large Scale Traumas	892	71.0	.72
Individual Traumas	372	29.6	.72
Major Article Content _{NM}			
Effects of news stories	234	18.6	.71
Effects of coverage on consumers	224	17.8	
Effects of coverage on victims	10	0.8	
Content of news stories	333	26.5	.59
Amount of traumatic coverage	49	3.9	
Type of specific news content	57	4.5	
Framing of traumatic coverage	255	20.3	
Occupational effects	142	11.3	.66
Occupational health of journalists	104	8.3	
Effects of trauma on news orgs	38	3.0	
Ethical considerations	74	5.9	.68

Censorship	47	3.7	
Ethics	25	2.0	
Policies of news organizations	2	0.2	
Covering trauma	447	35.6	.52
Responsibility of the media to report	32	2.5	
Critiques of coverage	147	11.7	
Discussion of reporting techniques	33	2.6	
Narratives on witnessing trauma	24	1.9	
Barriers to reporting on trauma	49	3.9	
Training of journalists	21	1.7	
Covering trauma	151	12.0	
Other	50	4.0	
Discussed Psychological Disorders	137	10.9	.60
Media type			.13
Print	270	21.5	
Television	184	14.6	
Radio	10	0.8	
Internet/Blogs	30	2.4	
Photojournalism	54	4.3	
Cross media convergence	3	0.2	
Multiple types	156	12.4	
Nonspecific	549	43.7	
Content Region Topic			.30
Australia	27	2.1	
Asia	47	3.7	
Europe	97	7.7	
Africa	24	1.9	
Middle East	226	18.0	
North America	687	54.7	
Latin America	16	1.3	
Multiple regions	98	7.8	
Non specific	34	2.7	
Content Region Publication			.26
Australia	21	1.7	
Asia	7	0.6	
Europe	31	2.5	
Africa	0	0	
Middle East	1	0.1	
North America	1161	92.4	
Latin America	1	0.1	
Multiple regions	24	1.9	
Non specific	10	0.8	
Includes Professional advice for journalists	55	4.4	
Includes Professional advice for clinicians	7	0.6	
Includes Professional advice for educators	10	0.8	
Profession of First Author			.68
Journalist	267	21.3	
Researcher/academic	629	50.1	
Other	360	28.7	

Note: NM = Not mutually exclusive