GOOD STORY, BAD NEWS:

JOURNALISTIC CAPITAL AND OCCUPATIONAL INJURY

by

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Abstract

This narrative inquiry explores Canadian journalists' perspectives and experiences around uncensored User-Generated Content (UGC) and trauma reporting from the digital frontline. Rich experiential data were generated through a series of one-on-one virtual interviews with four Canadian journalists. These discussions focused on topics from everyday emotionally demanding assignments involving uncensored UGC to trauma informed education, training, and practice in the field. The main themes identified were journalistic capital, the ubiquitous nature of trauma in daily news coverage, the structure of work, uncensored UGC, and lack of formal education, training, and supports. This thesis argues that UGC is changing how journalists source news material and interact with the public. With this shift comes new psychosocial hazards that must be addressed by journalism educators, newsroom managers, and occupational health and safety scholars and professionals. Bourdieusian thought was applied to the occupational health and safety of journalism and fills a knowledge gap in the occupational health literature as psychological injury is often studied in war correspondents and less so in relation to journalists exposed to psychosocial hazards while in pursuit of journalistic capital on the digital frontline.

Keywords: User-Generated Content, Eye-Witness Media, Vicarious Trauma, Psychological Injury, Journalism, Citizen Journalism, Journalistic Capital, Newsroom, The Digital Frontline, Narrative Inquiry.

General Summary

User-generated content is a term used to describe photo, video, and written material posted online or submitted to newsrooms by the public. This content often includes images of extreme violence and disturbing or hateful material. Journalists are at risk of developing psychological injury such as Post-Traumatic Stress Injury (PTSI). While there is a growing body of research on psychological injury in journalists working in conflict zones, a systematic review of the occupational health literature shows a gap in qualitative research focused on journalists with web-based duties in a rapidly evolving digital age.

This narrative inquiry collected and analyzed data from individual interviews with four journalists with web-based duties working in Canada. The aim of this research was to better understand the lived experiences of journalists by generating evidence about the impact of exposure to emotionally distressing user-generated content on health and wellbeing. The findings of this study highlight journalist-generated recommendations on newsroom and web-based practice that may improve the quality of working life and reduce the potential of psychological injury. Strategies for supporting journalists in the digital age may also inform journalism curricula at Canadian universities.

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List of Abbreviations

BIPOC	Black, Indigenous and People of Colour
DSM-5	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
PTSI	Post-Traumatic Stress Injury
UGC	User-Generated Content

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Technological and social media advancements such as smartphones, dash-cams, Twitter, and Facebook are changing the field of journalism. Print journalism is becoming less common while new forms of digital media are taking its place. Journalists increasingly rely on photo and video content submitted to newsrooms by members of the public known as citizen or participatory journalists. The occupational health literature defines this digital material as User-Generated Content (UGC). UGC often includes emotionally distressing eyewitness footage surrounding war, crime, traffic accidents, natural disasters, disease, and other forms of human suffering. Online comments, text, and blog posts created by media users and the public are also examples of UGC (Fader & Winer, 2012). Journalistic witnessing is changing as its main source is "increasingly coming from citizens (or victims, or activists) already present at the crisis zone" (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013, p. 8). Journalists rely on uncensored UGC so frequently that the newsroom is sometimes referred to as the "digital frontline" (Dubberley et al., 2015).

For the first time in human history, a large portion of the global population walks the streets with camera phones ready to film the next newsworthy disaster, violent encounter or trauma event. Feinstein et al. (2014) note how people with "nothing more than a cell phone can transmit, in real time, images of great ferocity and violence, much of which is deemed too shocking to be shown to audiences" (p. 1). Images that were once only witnessed by first responders are now ending up on the screens of journalists at home and in newsrooms across the world. From the rare video capture of police brutality against Rodney King in 1991 to the killings of Robert Dziekanski in 2007, Eric Garner in 2014, Walter Scott in 2015, and George Floyd in 2020, there is a steady progression in the recording and transmission of horrific events

by members of the public. Additionally, these events are not limited to police brutality, as images of extreme violence are "sought after by news organizations" (Feinstein et al., 2014, p. 1).

This research was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic which has had a significant impact on the structure of work for many journalists. The pandemic increased journalists' reliance on the web and UGC. Due to health restrictions imposed to halt the spread of the virus, many journalists have been confined to their own homes, often working from makeshift studios and desks, isolated from their peers and formal mental health supports, and unable to attend press conferences in person. Their home office has become the frontline and the computer their primary source for collecting video, text, and audio. Additionally, the pandemic has provided journalists with a steady stream of distressing images and stories on which to report. While the average evening news viewer can switch off the television at the first sight of a toe-tagged body, makeshift morgue, over-crowded intensive care unit, or another needle prick, it is the job of the journalist to make sense of these images and to organize them into meaningful news content. One study found that journalists repeatedly covering the Covid-19 pandemic and its associated consequences had higher levels of psychological distress than journalists who are not reporting on the pandemic (Tyson & Wild, 2021). The volume of UGC increases during times of crisis and so does the prevalence of post-traumatic stress symptoms in newsroom journalists (Idås et al., 2019; Wardle & Williams, 2010).

Educational bodies such as journalism schools are struggling to keep up with this emerging topic and journalists are entering the profession ill prepared to deal with the associated risks around uncensored UGC and online trauma reporting (Cherry, 2021; Specht & Tsilman, 2018). A 2019 survey of 115 Canadian and US journalists found that 85% believed their career had become less safe in the past five years, and less than half had received any safety training

(Westcott, 2019). Online harassment was determined to be the largest threat, as more than 70% of the journalists who participated in the survey said they had experienced safety issues or online threats (Westcott, 2019). Occupational health scholars typically refer to UGC as violent onscreen images submitted to the newsroom by the public (Feinstein et al, 2014). This thesis applies a broader definition of UGC that includes any content (photos, videos, audio, text, blog posts, etc.) created by members of the public and provided to news organizations or posted on social media or the web. This understanding of the phenomenon is consistent with how the term UGC is used in newsroom settings and other fields such as digital marketing (Fader & Winer, 2012). This broad definition also aligns more closely with how study participants understood UGC and some of the psychosocial hazards inherent in the material such as online harassment from media users, hateful blog posts, forum vitriol, and violent images.

Purpose

This narrative inquiry analyzed the interviews of four journalists working in Canadian newsrooms. The first aim of the study was to better understand journalists' lived experiences by generating a meaningful series of narrative summaries illustrating the impact of occupational exposure to uncensored UGC on health and wellbeing. Media organizations need to look inward and consider the degree to which their workplace climate perpetuates mental health stigmas and adds to the emotional distress experienced by those covering crisis and traumatic news events (Smith et al., 2018). This can only be achieved by examining the lived experiences of journalists actively working in the field.

The second aim was to generate participant-informed narratives from which to draw preliminary recommendations for enhancing university curricula and workplace practice around this issue. More training and education around trauma, coping skills/resiliency building, and

safety is needed to better prepare aspiring journalists for their future careers in a rapidly evolving digital world (Smith et al., 2018).

The original research questions were: What are the lived experiences of Canadian journalists working with uncensored UGC on the digital frontline? How well has their formal education prepared them to manage the associated psychosocial hazards?

As is common in qualitative research, the focus of my research evolved in response to the data I collected. I set out to study Canadian journalists' lived experiences around UGC to identify psychosocial hazards that may harm workers. As I got further into the narrative summaries the direction of the project shifted in response to emerging topics most salient to the journalists I interviewed. The participants described aspects of work involving UGC that were emotionally distressing for reasons beyond the obvious violent or graphic onscreen images. For example, they reflected on hateful online comments and harassment from social media users, the rush to contact bereaved family member immediately after a trauma event, and the "toxic culture of journalism." Journalists have a variety of employment relationships that can impact how they experience workplace hazards: part-time or full-time employment; term or permanent; freelance, unionized, or non-unionized. They also work in a variety of settings: in the field, in the newsroom, and as evolved during the Covid-19 pandemic, working from home or a combination of field, newsroom and home. Some journalists are formally educated; others are not. These settings, educational preparation, and the employment relationships play a role in the precarity of work and may make it challenging for journalists to seek help or discuss psychological health and safety issues with their employers. The development of journalists' narrative summaries informed and expanded my focus beyond journalists' exposure to violent or graphic UGC to include many of the professional practices surrounding UGC and online trauma reporting.

Psychosocial Hazards and Psychological Injury

A workplace hazard is defined as any source of potential injury in a workplace (Foster & Barnetson, 2016). Psychosocial hazards are the "social and psychological factors that negatively affect worker health and safety" (p. 117). Psychosocial hazards are difficult to locate in the workplace because they often reside in the forces of social interaction and within the worker's psyche (p. 8). Psychosocial hazards include, but are not limited to, bullying, cyber bullying/harassment, fatigue, violence, working alone, and shiftwork (Foster & Barnetson, 2016). These hazards have real and measurable effects on workers' health and wellbeing and may include fatigue, severe anxiety, acute stress disorder, and major depressive disorder (Foster & Barnetson, 2016). According to the Mental Health Commission of Canada (2013), 47% of working Canadians consider their work to be the most stressful part of daily life.

Journalists are at a high risk of psychological injury such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Idås et al., 2019). PTSD is defined as a mental disorder that is triggered by exposure to a single, acute, or repeated traumatic event or events (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The psychological injury manifests itself with symptoms such as flashbacks or severe anxiety that significantly interfere with day-to-day functioning (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). However, classificatory language like "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder" puts the onus of occupational injury on the injured worker rather than the employer or the hazard that caused the injury.

This research uses the acronym PTSI rather that PTSD to destigmatize psychological occupational injury. Although the acronym PTSD remains in the DSM-5 category of Trauma and Stress Related Disorders, some scholars suggest that it is more appropriate to refer to PTSD as an injury instead of a disorder (Sagalyn, 2012). Therefore, Post-Traumatic Injury (PTSI) possesses

the same set of symptoms such as flashbacks, nightmares, feelings of isolation, or difficulty sleeping, but the definition refers to the biological injury that causes these symptoms rather than the individual that sustains them (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Sagalyn, 2012). The word "disorder" is stigmatizing and discourages victims from seeking care (Ochberg, 2013). For example, war veterans suffering from psychological injury are not often portrayed with the same sense of valor as those who have sustained physical injuries in combat (Ochberg, 2013).

Psychological injuries such as PTSI regularly become the subjects of personal injury litigation, worker's compensation claims, criminal injury compensation and other disability claims and human rights tribunals (Koch, 2006). Emotional distress and psychological injury such as PTSI are often perceived as the individual's response to an event, and that response can vary from person to person. They are viewed as issues of worker resilience rather than workplace safety, and workers are more readily/easily blamed for their health problem (Foster & Barnetson, 2016). If the hazard cannot be easily isolated in the conditions of work, then work-relatedness is questioned, and compensation claims are more often denied or not filed in the first place (Foster & Barnetson, 2016), thus compromising the availability and accuracy of compensation claims data that is used to determine injury prevalence and severity. All of this impedes the recognition of psychosocial hazards and psychological injury in journalism as occupational health and safety concerns. Moreover, injured workers are often stereotyped as being lazy "fraud artists abusing the system" (Lippel, 2007, p. 433). Forty percent of journalists examined in one study feared losing the confidence of their employer and colleagues by confessing they had been traumatized (Reed, 2008). In another study, forty percent of the participants felt some stigma attached to being traumatized and perceived it as evidence of weakness (Cameron, 2007). These

observations reflect a culture of silence surrounding mental health and help-seeking in the field (Greenberg et al., 2009).

While it can be difficult for employers to ignore traditional hazards such as a dangerous physical machinery and environments, psychosocial hazards are less observable and therefore easier to ignore or attribute to non-work-related causes (Foster & Barnetson, 2016). However, this is changing in the digital age of journalism. Journalists rely so heavily on social media for their next big scoop; the hazards inherent in uncensored UGC and online trauma reporting are harder to sweep under the rug. For example, in May of 2020, Facebook agreed to pay 52 million dollars to content moderators working with uncensored UGC for mental health injuries developed on the job (Allyn, 2020). My literature review and additional preparation for this research did not reveal similar cases in Canada. My study participants said they hesitated to report psychological distress to their employers. This may account for the lack of reported cases in Canada. If journalism educators and news organizations are to learn anything from Facebook's treatment of uncensored UGC, it is that upholding a psychologically safe workplace is in the best interest of both the employer and the worker.

Journalistic Capital

Journalistic capital refers to the symbolic capital of journalism or "the resources the agent (media or journalist) can put into the game, resources that are recognized in the field and by the other agents in the field" (Willig, 2013, p. 374). "As field-specific symbolic capital, journalistic capital is connected to peer recognition, respect from colleagues and a favourable position within journalism" (Maares & Hanusch, 2020, p.1). Increasing one's journalistic capital often involves spending hours sifting through potentially emotionally distressing online content submitted to newsrooms and posted online by members of the public. Like football players who

risk sustaining a serious head injury to score a touchdown, journalists face psychosocial hazards in the newsroom in pursuit of journalistic capital and the next big story. Journalistic capital can become economic capital when a journalist gets a pay raise or a promotion (Willig, 2013). While the concept of journalistic capital has been explored in detail in the existing literature on the journalistic field, scholars have yet to discuss the relationship between journalistic capital and the occupational health and safety of the profession.

The more journalists rely on UGC, the greater their occupational health a safety risk (Specht & Tsilman, 2018). Spending time searching for the next big story may result in an increase in journalistic and economic capital, however frequent exposure to images of graphic violence is especially distressing for journalists working with UGC (Feinstein et al., 2014). Journalists' exposure to traumatic UGC can lead to short and unpleasant careers (Idås et al., 2019). The youngest, least experienced journalists suffer the greatest psychological impact of crisis reporting (Verhovnik, 2017). Unfortunately, universities tasked with educating journalists are falling behind in their understanding of how to mitigate these risks (Cherry, 2021; Specht & Tsilman, 2018). Thus, novice journalists are entering the field ill equipped to address this new challenge. A fuller explanation of psychological injury such as PTSI and the links to journalist capital is taken up in the next chapter.

Rationale

There is a large body of research on psychological injury in populations of war veterans and journalists working in conflict zones, but a systematic review of the occupational health literature shows a gap in qualitative research focused on the mental health of newsroom and web-based journalists. Yet, survey data suggests that uncensored UGC is a significant

psychosocial hazard for many journalists with web-based duties (Dubberley et al., 2015; Feinstein et al., 2014; Westcott, 2019).

This research fills a gap in practical knowledge by providing accessible illustrations of participants' lived experiences of exposure to uncensored UGC and online trauma reporting. The digital age of journalism is moving eyewitness footage of trauma events from the field into the newsroom. The frequency of eyewitness content is increased because of the public's role in capturing newsworthy events in real time on their smartphones. A qualitative approach to this phenomenon fills methodological and practical gaps in our understanding and reveals the variations and heterogeneity of the lived experiences of journalists. A more fulsome and richer understanding of the complexities of working on the digital frontier captured through this approach adds to the information garnered from existing qualitative surveys and research.

Conducting individual interviews elicited participants' deep meaning of the phenomenon. Participant generated recommendations on newsroom and educational practice may improve the quality of working life and reduce the potential of emotional distress and psychological injury for newsroom and web-based journalists. Strategies for supporting journalists' health and wellbeing in the digital age may also inform journalism curricula at Canadian universities and better equip journalists for the pervasive nature of trauma in everyday news coverage.

Conceptual Framework

This thesis draws upon a diverse range of research methods and applies Bourdieusian thought to the occupational health and safety of journalism. Bourdieu was one of the most influential sociologists in history. His concepts, theories, essays, and public lectures have greatly impacted the fields of cultural sociology, anthropology, and education. Social scientists have applied his field theory to the study of occupational groups, sports teams, online communities

and much more. Bourdieu's writings on journalism and the media seemed especially relevant to my research. Bourdieusian thought goes beyond this singular context. It reflects more than a single theory and covers a broad range of writing, public lectures, and concepts. This critical theory perspective focused my attention on the underlying institutional and societal mechanisms that generate and reinforce how we make meaning of the world around us (Craig & Bigby, 2015). A critical theory perspective allowed me to look beyond the reality and ideas that appear on the surface of a story to highlight the interaction between structures and human agency as central to understanding social phenomenon (Craig & Bigby, 2015).

Bourdieu's critical perspective challenges the individualistic and victim-blaming tendencies evident in some approaches to occupational health and safety and injured workers. Bourdieusian thought is congruent with the political-economy approach to explaining workplace injury which examines issues of power and financial gain to reveal why some hazards are mitigated while others are ignored (Foster & Barnetson, 2016). For example, employers often adopt a cost-benefit approach to safety where safety concerns are addressed when it costs less to prevent the injury that the cost of the injury itself (Foster & Barnetson, 2016). The onus of occupational injury is often placed on the injured worker rather the structural elements that lead to workplace hazards. Bourdieu's critical perspective allows me to better understand the mechanisms of power that reinforce the careless worker myth and the cost-benefit approach to safety.

Scholars have yet to apply the Bourdieusian thought to the occupational health and safety of journalism (Maares & Hanusch, 2020). My research applies and extends Bourdieusian thought by exploring normative understandings of the occupational health and safety of journalism. Analyzing the narrative summaries constructed from interviews with journalists allowed me to

examine not only the lived experiences of participants but the relations of power that existed between employers, occupational health and safety professionals, newsroom managers, and journalists.

The newsroom is a social space of conflict and competition which is structured by hierarchies of rewards (capital) and disincentives (negative capital) (Chan, 2004). Newsrooms are spaces in which participants are not equal in terms of status, work tasks, or working conditions (Örnebring et al., 2018). In any given newsroom, one may find the intern, the newsroom manager, the news photographer, the online editor, the star reporter, the investigative journalist, the op-ed writer, the foreign correspondent, the sports correspondent, the citizen reporter, or the full-time employee (Örnebring et al., 2018). To contribute to the ongoing theorizing of journalism's boundaries, Örnebring et al. encourage us to acknowledge the field's diverse set of players and to further examine the changing landscape of journalistic practice in a digital age.

Although many researchers have applied Bourdieusian thought to journalistic work, few scholars focus on citizen journalists and their prominence in the field (Örnebring et al., 2018). Citizen journalism occurs when ordinary people employ the press tools they have in their possession such as reporting or posting images of events on the internet to inform one another (Luce et al., 2017; Miller, 2019). Additionally, citizen journalists sometimes submit content to news media organizations despite having no professional or political tie to such organizations (Luce et al., 2017; Miller, 2019). Citizen journalists have historically acted when professional journalists were not fully meeting community needs (Luce et al., 2017). Marginalized individuals often use citizen journalism as a conduit for social change (Luce et al., 2017). These gaps in the literature ignore the overwhelming impact participatory journalism is having on journalistic

practice and the occupational health and safety of journalism. Citizen journalists, like newsroom and frontline journalists, are players in the field of journalism, united by the belief that the game is worth playing (Örnebring et al., 2018). Bourdieu refers to this necessary belief in the worthiness of the game as a player's illusio (Hilgers & Mangez, 2014). He argues that players in a field have a set of "tacitly assumed presuppositions" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 3) or doxa that they bring to the game.

Bourdieu (1977) defines doxa as the "what goes without saying because it comes without saying" (p. 167) of a given field. Schultz (2007) refers to journalistic doxa as "the silent doxic news values" that reflect a universal "journalistic gut feeling" (p. 1). Willig (2013) provides a less ambiguous definition of journalistic doxa as "the unspoken, unquestioned, taken-for granted, understanding of the news game and the basic beliefs guiding journalistic practice" (p. 374).

Journalistic doxa "encompasses all inhabitants of the field, some more explicitly and consciously than others, and they consequently engage in acts of journalism" (Örnebring et al., 2018, p. 418). The same gut feeling that inspires citizen journalists to film an event and submit their footage to the media is indicative of the journalistic doxa that dwells within the individual psyche of the most professionalized journalists. Acknowledging citizen journalists as key players in the field of journalism is an important step in understanding the occupational health and safety of journalism in a digital age.

Journalistic doxa embodies the unquestioned truths or assumptions regarding what is considered newsworthy. Aside from the odd feel-good story, news headlines often reflect an "if it bleeds it leads" (Kilgo et al., 2018) assumption that underpins journalistic doxa. For example, images of extreme violence are "sought after by news organizations" (Feinstein et al., 2014, p.1).

Journalistic capital refers to the symbolic capital of journalism or "the resources the agent (media or journalist) can put into the game, resources that are recognized in the field and by the other agents in the field" (Willig, 2013, p. 374). For example, being first on the scene of a news event, working overtime, and obtaining sought after news scoops are direct sources of journalistic capital.

The journalistic experience is not the same for all journalists. As mentioned earlier, journals work in a variety of settings, have differing levels of education and experience, and different employment relationships. This can affect how they experience psychological hazards and traumatic UGC. However, there are many shared experiences in the profession. In the journalistic field, "the story reigns supreme" (Wizda, 2001, p. 36). If journalists fail to produce quality stories or obtain juicy leads, they fall behind in the "unspoken pecking order in most newsrooms" (Wizda, 2001, p. 37). However, if journalists produce good stories, "the kind that get on the front page, [they are] at the top of the food chain" (Wizda, 2001, p. 36). Power imbalance is in no short supply in the dog-eat-dog newsroom culture as those at the top of the food chain tend to produce the most front-page stories while those down the line yield fluff pieces and local sports coverage (Wizda, 2001). In an age where participatory journalism is on the rise, increasing one's journalistic capital often involves spending hours sifting through potentially traumatic content submitted to newsrooms or posted online by the public.

Bourdieu (1977) defines the habitus as "the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations" (p. 78). He (1977) notes how rules are not necessary in a homogeneous field if they are replayed by the "orchestrated improvisation of common dispositions" (p. 17). Habitus is the unspoken strategy and assumed rules of the game (Bourdieu, 1977). However, even this definition understates the impact of habitus which encompasses these

things and more. For journalists, the habitus translates into an idea of journalistic identity; shaped by experience or education (Eldridge, 2017). Bourdieu notes how it is possible for elements of the habitus to come to consciousness such as when a journalist estimates the chances of landing a big story. Even in such moments of self-awareness, journalists make strategic calculations against a backdrop of "objective potentialities" (p. 78). For example, many journalists simply understand that it is their duty to enter trauma situations to cover what is happening, so that the story of these events can be delivered to the public and the voices of the subjects can be heard (Ehrlich & Saltzman, 2015).

Many journalists view working long hours and beating the competition as being part of their duty as journalists. They do not often view help-seeking as being part of their journalistic identity or habitus. In one study exploring journalists' attitudes towards help-seeking, respondents were most likely to turn to family members for help, rather than their employers (Greenberg et al., 2009). Although the participants held relatively non-stigmatizing attitudes about PTSD, they were hesitant about seeking formal help from their organization around their experiences with trauma in the workplace (Greenberg et al., 2009).

Habitus reflects perceived expectations of journalists and exerts force on the individual (Eldridge, 2017). This notion of force on the individual can be seen in journalists' devotion to shift work and working extended hours from home. For many journalists "time restraints and constant time pressures to produce up-to-date information round the clock has meant varying work patterns including working at night and shift-work" (Giga et al., 2003 p. 3). Foster and Barnetson (2016) define shiftwork as employment requiring workers to work outside of regular weekday hours (p. 144). This can be evening or night work, rotating schedules, irregular shifts, split shifts, or on-call work (Foster & Barnetson, 2016).

Shift work is a growing trend in journalistic practice that has significant health risks (Foster & Barnetson, 2016, p. 145). One of the main concerns about shift work is its potential to disrupt a worker's biological clock or circadian rhythms (p. 145). Moreover, there is extensive research on shift work that shows a wide range of health effects. For workers partaking in short term shift work, "shift work leads to shortened and less restorative sleep and chronic tiredness and lack of alertness, as well as stomach aches, indigestion, and heartburn" (p. 145). Foster and Barnetson also point to how shift work is associated with increased risk of workplace incidents and injury. However, shift work may also be a source of journalistic capital if it leads to beating the competition to the story. Therefore, journalists are faced with a dilemma between journalistic capital and potential occupational injury.

Above is just an example of how Bourdieu's framework allows me to look beyond existing understandings of the occupational health and safety of journalism. However, Bourdieusian thought is not the only thing that has influenced my understanding of journalism. Next, I discuss how my personal background has driven my research and shaped my understanding of the journalistic field and the findings produced in this thesis.

Locating Myself

To ask a research question about the world in which we live, we must first have philosophical assumptions about that world. Beliefs about ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology are linked to different interpretive frameworks that operate throughout the qualitative research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These philosophical assumptions reflect researchers' beliefs about "the types of problems that we need to study, what research questions to ask, or how we go about gathering data" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 114). For instance, it is my belief that asking a journalist to produce survey data based on a complex and nuanced mental

health topic is like asking a pianist to describe what a piano sounds like when she's standing right next to a baby grand. Journalists are excellent storytellers. They tell tales for a living. Therefore, it is my assumption that the best approach to eliciting rich experiential data from journalists is to record their first-hand accounts of the phenomenon under study.

A qualitative researcher's ontological assumption is rooted in their views about the nature of reality. Different types of research are based on different beliefs of our interpretation of reality. Beliefs about ontology are not always written into a study but the ontological assumption of multiple truths is reflected in my decision to conduct qualitative research, and specifically narrative inquiry. I believe that subjective evidence that draws on direct quotations and themes expressed by participants is one way to generate a truth about journalists' lived experiences of viewing UGC. A researcher's epistemological assumption is characterized by what they believe counts as reality and how knowledge claims are justified (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In practice, this philosophical assumption is evident in my desire to reduce the distance between myself as the researcher and those who are the subject/object of my research. Reducing this distance is an effective way to generate a rich understanding of a given experience or phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I chose to lessen the distance between myself and my research participants by conducting one-on-one, in-depth interviews about their experiences around uncensored UGC and other psychosocial hazards in the field.

The ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin narrative inquiry are consistent with the critical theory framework of this research and my philosophical assumptions as a qualitative researcher. Ontology and epistemology refer to a researcher's view of reality and how the researcher knows reality (Creswell & Poth, 2015). It is my belief that people lead storied lives and that our understandings of the stories we tell and hear influence our lives and broader

social discourses. It is also my belief that "both human agency and pre-existing societal structures create the phenomena or social problem under study" (Craig & Bigby, 2015, p. 1). Narrative inquiry is "collaboration between research and participant" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 412) and this relationship is congruent with the methodological postures embraced by critical theory perspectives. Inquirers writing from a critical theory perspective "need to acknowledge their own power, engage in dialogues, and use theory to interpret or illuminate social action" (Creswell & Poth, p. 194). This approach is consistent with narrative inquiry as the inquirer and participant negotiate relationships, smooth transitions, and provide ways to be useful together (Creswell & Poth, 2018; McAlpine, 2016).

Some of my earliest memories involve news media. I started kindergarten in St. John's but after a week I was plucked from the comfort of my small class and placed in a large school of rowdy five-year-olds in downtown Vancouver. The disruption was required because my mother was transferred there to produce radio. I was as unimpressed as any five-year-old would be until one day my mother came home with a signed sketch of Homer Simpson that she was given when she produced an interview with The Simpsons' executive producer. Up until then, I assumed producing radio meant working in a factory that made radios.

The transition away from St. John's was easy on my older brother and me as we soon made friends and adapted to life as children in Vancouver. My brother was the mathematical whiz kid, and I was the creative curious one. I remember overhearing adults talking about current affairs and wanting so badly to understand their verbal gobbledygook. On nights of fitful sleep, I would often wake up and walk toward the glow of the television set coming from downstairs. "Mom, Dad, can I stay up and watch the National?" My parents would kindly invite me to join them. I sometimes asked so many questions that I was marched back to bed. It was from here

that my interest in the media shaped a deeper curiosity that would stay with me for the rest of my life.

When I was seventeen years old, I witnessed my first onscreen homicide after a Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officer shocked a man to death with a Taser at the Vancouver International Airport. Although I was not actually at the airport when the flagrant killing took place, I viewed explicit footage of the Taser death of Robert Dziekanski from the comfort of my home. The footage was broadcast live on CBC news to a national audience (RCMP use taser on Robert Dziekanski, 2007). Dziekanski was involved in an argument with airport staff during customs processing that ended with a group of RCMP officers tackling, handcuffing and 'Tasering' Dziekanski multiple times. Dziekanski died from a heart attack induced by the electrical shocks delivered by one officer (Dziekanski death at hands of RCMP a homicide, 2013). The killing sparked public outrage and unleashed a whirlwind of debate surrounding systemic racism, police brutality and the use of Tasers in Canadian law enforcement (Man dies after police jolt him, 2007).

The idea of witnessing a homicide on national television was new to me. Like most teenage boys who grew up in the 1990s, I had consumed my share of violent content in movies, TV and video games, but to witness real-life footage of an unarmed man die at the hands of a group of armed men shaped my understanding of how the news is generated and disseminated in an encroaching age of camera-phones and social media. In 2007, the footage of Robert Dziekanski's homicide was filmed and sold to the press by Paul Pritchard, an eyewitness and citizen journalist who happened to be in the right place at the right time. Pritchard was honored with the first ever citizen journalism awarded by Canadian Journalists for Free Expression ("Man Who Shot Dziekanski Video Gets Journalism Award", 2008).

On Tuesday May 26, 2020, news audiences around the world viewed high-definition video footage of a Minneapolis police officer suffocating a black man to death in broad daylight. The officer, Derek Chauvin, can be seen pinning his knee against the neck of handcuffed and unarmed George Floyd until he is unresponsive and unconscious. An eyewitness who video-recorded the killing using her smartphone can be heard begging the officer to release his knee from Floyd's neck.

Both the video depicting the Taser death of Dziekanski, and the footage of Floyd's choking death were recorded by eyewitnesses turned citizen journalists. The video of Floyd's death circulated through social media for months and generated millions of views. Floyd's last words, "I can't breathe" will forever be immortalized in the rallying cries of the Black Lives Matter Movement and news headlines around the world.

Sadly, after viewing the video footage of Floyd's death, I was reminded of a similar high-profile video that was filmed in 2014 in which Eric Gardener can be heard repeating the words "I can't breathe" several times as he is shown being choked to death by New York City Police officer, Daniel Pantaleo (Eric Garner: NY officer, 2019). Gardener's death was filmed by a citizen journalist named Ramsey Orta and shared with the press. While this thesis does not focus on police brutality, the unjust killings of Robert Dziekanski, Eric Gardener, and George Floyd were all filmed by citizen journalists and later picked up by newsrooms around the world to be investigated, verified, and broadcast. The UGC ultimately contributed greatly to social mobilization in the form of widespread protests seeking police reform. The three high profile videos illustrate the overwhelming power of citizen journalism and highlight its valuable place in the fight for social justice. However, police brutality is only a small category of eyewitness UGC that is produced by citizen journalists, submitted to newsrooms, and posted online every day.

This narrative inquiry benefits from my previous work and academic experience conducting, recording, and transcribing interviews. As a critical theorist and avid consumer of news media, I disagree with media censorship and wholeheartedly support the freedom of the press. Without the citizen journalists who take it upon themselves to film traumatic events through shaky camera-phones, many of the injustices I have discussed would go unnoticed by the masses. Therefore, censoring media coverage involving potentially emotionally distressing UGC is not something for which I am willing to advocate. This is an axiological or value stance that I feel I must address early in this thesis. I often submit video footage to the media whenever my journalistic gut-feeling kicks in and I witness cases where an injustice is occurring. This silent journalistic doxa makes me an appropriate researcher for constructing participant informed narrative summaries around uncensored UGC and the digital frontline.

Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on UGC and some of the occupational hazards unique to the digital age of journalism. It introduced several key terms and occupational health concepts such as UGC, psychosocial hazards, psychological injury, and journalistic capital. This chapter also highlighted how my research attempts to fill a methodological and practical gap in the literature around the occupational health and safety of journalism in the digital age. It also shed light on how the work of Pierre Bourdieu, and my own personal experiences, have shaped my understanding of journalism and this research endeavour.

Outline of Thesis

The remainder of this thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter 2 expands on the themes covered in this introduction by critically reviewing the literature around uncensored UGC and the occupational health and safety of journalism in the digital age. Chapter 3 focuses on the

methodology and methods of this narrative inquiry. Chapter 4 reports the findings of my interviews by constructing four individual participant-informed narrative summaries. Chapter 5 applies Bourdieusian thought to situate these narrative summaries within the existing literature and emerging survey data in the field of journalism. Chapter 6 lists recommendations for improving education and practice around mental health in the field of journalism, identifies the study strengths and limitations, and points to future directions for research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Covering trauma events is the most widely discussed psychosocial hazard found in the literature surrounding the occupational health and safety of journalism. Some journalists may witness tragic events like the death of child, genocide, or a mass murder; others observe onscreen trauma events from the relative safety of the office or newsroom (Backholm & Idås, 2015; Feinstein et al., 2014; Feinstein et al., 2018). The latter is far less studied as there is a larger body of research focusing on frontline journalists and war correspondents as opposed to newsroom bound journalists and content editors with web-based duties. Nevertheless, uncensored UGC is a psychosocial hazard that can lead to psychological injury and emotional distress in journalists (Dubberley et al., 2015; Feinstein et al., 2014).

The overall volume of UGC increases during times of crisis and so does the prevalence of post-traumatic stress symptoms in newsroom journalists (Idås et al., 2019; Wardle & Williams, 2010). Given that journalists' mental health is shown to be particularly at-risk during times of crisis, further research is needed to explore how the Covid-19 pandemic and the abundance of emotionally distressing UGC revolving around the global health crisis are impacting the health and safety of journalists.

My goal in undertaking a scoping review was to examine the extent, range, and nature of research activity, and to identify research gaps in the existing literature as they pertain to the occupational health and safety of journalists with web-based duties. While I identified an obvious need for more qualitative research focusing on the lived experiences of newsroom journalists, I was unable to answer my original research question relating to the specific needs of journalists working with uncensored UGC. For example: What information about occupational

health and safety and UGC do journalists working within Canada need? What are the lived experiences of Canadian journalists working with uncensored UGC?

The literature highlights important recommendations for preventing and managing psychological injury in the newsroom. However, due to the broad exploratory nature of the existing research, these recommendations do not always focus directly on reducing the risks associated with uncensored UGC. This scoping review serves as a reference for educational bodies, occupational health and safety professionals, and newsroom managers seeking to gain a better understanding of the potential risks associated with uncensored UGC and the digital frontline.

Table 1. Key Search Terms Used for Literature Database Search

Key Concepts	Search Terms
Journalism AND Trauma	'journalism' OR 'journalist' 'newsroom' 'trauma' OR 'moral injury' OR 'post trauma' OR 'PTSD' OR 'PTSI' OR 'vicarious trauma' 'UGC' OR 'user generated content' OR UGC 'citizen journalis*" OR 'participatory journalis*'

Methods

A scoping review is "a form of knowledge synthesis that addresses an exploratory research question aimed at mapping key concepts, types of evidence, and gaps in research related to a defined area or field by systematically searching, selecting, and synthesizing existing

knowledge" (Colquhoun et al., 2014, p. 1292). Whereas a systematic literature review is useful for answering focused research questions like the effectiveness of treatment A versus treatment B, a scoping review is ideal for answering broad exploratory research questions, mapping the literature, and identifying key characteristics and knowledge gaps in a field (Peters et al., 2015). This scoping review does not aim to capture every single piece of evidence that is out there on mental health in journalism; rather it explores the range, characteristics, and limitations of the existing literature on UGC and wellbeing in web-based journalism in a digital age. This review adhered to Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) five-stage framework for selecting and analyzing eligible, academic literature. Qualitative content analysis was conducted using a charting table illustrating key characteristics of the included studies and key information relevant to the review question (Peters et al., 2015).

Identifying the Research Question

The first step of Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) framework is to identify the research question. Two questions guided this review: What information about health and safety and UGC do journalists need to protect their mental health at work? What are the lived experiences of Canadian journalists working with uncensored UGC?

Identifying Relevant Studies

The second stage involved identifying relevant studies. In consultation with health sciences librarian Michelle Swab, a search for relevant original literature published between January 2005 and December 2020 (the month when the search was conducted) was conducted using Memorial University's online library databases. The start date of 2005 was chosen because social media platforms like Facebook had just come into existence and camera-equipped smart phones were filling the pockets of the public. With these technological advancements came the

ability for members of the public to act as citizen journalists by capturing and sharing traumatic newsworthy content with greater ease than ever before. Understanding early research surrounding citizen journalism and UGC during this cultural shift is a crucial part of mapping out how my research problem has evolved over time.

We identified and explored four e-databases that were suitable for my research problem: Medline Complete, Academic Search Complete, PsychInfo, and Scopus. Google Scholar was also used to locate open access articles. We determined several search terms that drew on key concepts surrounding my research problem. These terms included: journalism, trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), user generated content (UGC), and citizen journalism. Variations and synonyms of these terms were applied to ensure that the search results were comprehensive. Search terms were also merged in different combinations using Boolean operators like AND or OR as appropriate.

My research problem is part of an emerging body of literature and thus requires a multidisciplinary literature review approach. Rather than looking primarily at specific journals, forward and backward citation tracing was conducted for all relevant articles retrieved. There is a clear chain of literature surrounding my research problem and this review method enabled me to understand how the links of this chain communicate across interdisciplinary backgrounds.

Study Selection

The third stage involved developing inclusion and exclusion criteria for screening relevant studies. Both qualitative and quantitative research were included. Oftentimes individual voices get lost in quantitative data and it is important to fill these gaps with the voices of journalists found in qualitative studies. Several studies concerning front line journalists such as war correspondents were included but only those that also looked at newsroom and web-based

journalism. It is important to note that not all journalists are office bound. Identifying some of the occupational stressors faced by these journalists when they enter the field is a crucial component to understanding my research problem.

There were no geographic restrictions placed on this scoping review as journalism is an international profession with shared workplace experiences and stressors worldwide. Included were English-language journal articles reporting on original primary research conducted primarily about journalists and their exposure to psychosocial hazards in the newsroom or on the web. Excluded were articles published before 2005, literature reviews and editorials, and articles focusing primarily on frontline journalists and war correspondents. Duplicate sources were removed.

Charting the Data

In the fourth stage, essential information that corresponded with my research question was extracted from eligible full-text articles. To organize data, Arksey and O'Malley (2005) suggest charting the data according to key themes and issues. They recommend that the data charted should include a combination of general information about the study and specific information linked to the study question. Following this framework, I charted ten pieces of general or specific information on each article (general information: citation data, study design, aims of the study, important results; and specific information: study population, nature of exposure, journalists' attitudes and perceptions, education/training, authors' recommendations, and overarching themes).

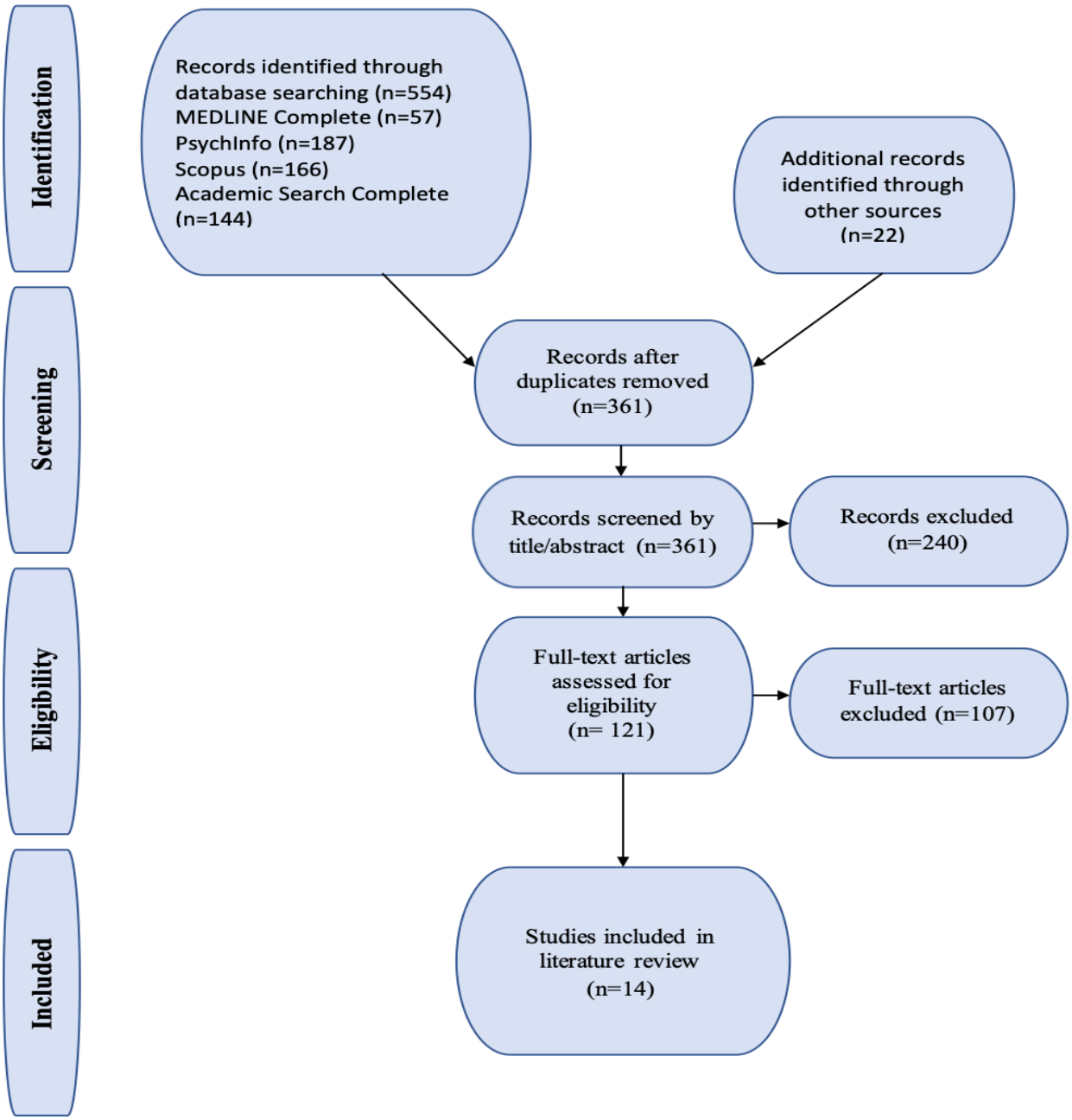
Collating, Summarizing and Reporting the Results

In the fifth stage I used a narrative approach of summarizing the data. This involved recording notes in the data charting form that summarized key themes and findings from the

literature. A content analysis of eligible articles pointed to several shared workplace experiences surrounding trauma reporting and UGC and painted a broad picture of the nature of work for newsroom journalists in a digital age.

Results

Figure 1. Scoping Review Search Strategy



This scoping review set out to discover what has been written about newsroom journalists and their experiences around uncensored UGC and wellbeing. The search yielded 361 articles of which 14 were included in my scoping review. There is a clear content gap in the literature as emotional distress and psychological injury are researched more often in frontline journalists and less so in relation to newsroom journalists working directly but not exclusively with uncensored UGC. Most of the existing research relies on survey data that fails to capture the subtle nuances found only in first-hand accounts of journalists. This review revealed a need for more qualitative research designed to explore journalists' perceptions and experiences around the phenomenon and news organizations need to further explore ways of preventing or offsetting the risks inherent in viewing uncensored UGC (Feinstein et al., 2014). Educational bodies such as journalism schools are struggling to keep up with this emerging topic and there is no clear shared definition of UGC in the literature (Specht & Tsilman, 2018).

The Covid-19 pandemic has provided journalists with a new source of trauma and human suffering on which to report. Public health measures around the pandemic have also forced many journalists to work from home and to therefore rely more heavily on the web and UGC. Journalists are especially susceptible to emotional distress and psychological injury during times of crisis but little research to date explores how the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the abundance of UGC surrounding the global health crisis are impacting the health and safety of journalism. To get a better picture of journalists' experiences and perceptions surrounding uncensored UGC during these unprecedented times the individual voices of journalists must be further explored. While this scoping review only scrapes the surface of this emerging research problem, it serves as a jumping off point for enacting positive change in the field of journalism.

Six main themes were identified: a) a lack of consistency in defining UGC as a concept; b) UGC and psychological injury; c) education, training and supports; d) additional psychosocial hazards in the workplace; e) journalists' attitudes and perceptions; and f) steps in the prevention and management of psychological Injury. Several noteworthy recommendations emerged from the literature focusing on reducing psychological injury and improving journalistic and educational practices around uncensored UGC and trauma reporting.

A Lack of Consistency in Defining UGC as a Concept

There is some ambiguity around how UGC is defined in the literature. The digital material is often referred to as eye-witness media, citizen journalism, participatory journalism, audience material, and sometimes UGC. Wardle and Williams (2010), for example, argue that the label "audience material" captures the range of the phenomena more adequately than UGC. Feinstein et al. (2014), on the other hand, use "UGC" to define photos and videos submitted to the newsroom by the public. Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti (2013) refer to "citizen-created photographs and videos." While all three groups of researchers focus on the same phenomena, they are inconsistent in their definition of UGC.

Despite the potential hazards inherent in working with uncensored UGC, the visual material is often perceived by journalists and newsroom managers as being part of the natural progression of conventional journalistic practice (Feinstein, 2014; Wardle & Williams, 2010) rather than as something new and distinct, warranting special consideration or caution. In a case study examining the attitudes of BBC news workers towards UGC, most journalists perceived the eye-witness material as merely being one of many sources of information to be processed into deliverable news stories (Wardle & Williams, 2010). It is primarily raw material that gets turned into news. The study highlights how there are different types of audience material used

within the BBC and journalists display different attitudes towards these categories. However, the dominant way of understanding UGC among BBC journalists involves "seeing it as little more than a news source" (p. 790). This study serves as a useful starting point for understanding how UGC is handled by employees and managers of major news networks, however it does not touch on the occupational health and safety concerns around the digital material. This may be due to the time in which the research was published as the volume of online UGC has expanded greatly since 2010.

The volume of UGC is rising with spikes in the online content during times of crisis. Before the 2005 London bombing, the BBC News Interactive in London received approximately 300 emails a day containing news tips and media content submitted to the newsroom by the public (Wardle & Williams, 2010). Just five years later that number had risen to 12,000 with a spike around major events like natural disasters and other popular stories (Wardle & Williams, 2010). Today, the BBC has a taskforce in place called the UGC Hub where journalists and content editors verify thousands of stills (i.e., photographs) and video clips a week. Sourcing UGC on Twitter and other social media platforms has also become a common practice worldwide, particularly following the first hours after a terrorist attack or major disaster event (Rauchfleisch et al., 2017). In these hours, journalists around the world race to Twitter to source and verify uncensored UGC (Rauchfleisch et al., 2017).

A qualitative content analysis of interviews with 38 journalists working for prominent newspaper broadcasters in Finland and Sweden reveals how the professional ideology of journalists is negotiated in response to uncensored UGC from global crisis events (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013). The researchers describe how citizen journalists often rely on "blunt shock-effect of graphic images" to achieve their message and therefore capture suffering

without a sense of storytelling. Career journalists, on the other hand, know how to mediate and mitigate suffering in the form of meaningful compositions. Journalists have the power to take shocking images of trauma and human suffering and use them to tell meaningful stories that can diminish the number of natural disasters or political crises that may otherwise go unreported and unnoticed. UGC can increase the capacity of the national media to involve voices of the people (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013).

While it is possible to look at UGC through an occupational health and safety lens as a hazard in need of mitigation, the selected literature highlights how UGC is part of the identity of journalists in the digital age and how it can act as a vehicle for social justice and the democratization of the press. With the travel restrictions imposed by the current pandemic it stands to reason that news agencies rely more heavily on content submitted to them by outside sources such as relief agencies, on the ground human rights workers, and activists. This would be true of international news agencies but even on the local scene the pandemic has confined most journalists to their desk thus increasing the reliance on content submitted to them from the community.

Although the literature largely defines UGC as photo and video content submitted to the newsroom or posted online by members of the public, digital images are not the only psychosocial hazard inherent in content generated by the public and media users alike. For example, journalists are often exposed to a wide range of online user-generated abuse in recent years. A 2019 survey of 115 Canadian and US journalists found that 85% thought their career had become less safe in the past five years, and less than half had received any safety training (Westcott, 2019). More than 70% of the journalists who participated in the study said they had

experienced web-based safety issues and online harassment was determined to be the biggest threat (Westcott, 2019).

UGC and Psychological Injury

It is difficult to establish permissible exposure limits representing the maximum amount of time one can be exposed to UGC in the workplace without suffering psychological injury. Historically, occupational hazards were largely regarded as physical dangers involving a transfer of energy resulting in injury. Examples include a box falling off a shelf and hitting a worker, a worker falling from a ladder and hitting the ground, or chemical hazards that cause obvious harm to human tissue (Foster & Barnetson, 2016). Unlike these hazards, occupation injuries brought on by psychosocial hazards such as those found within uncensored UGC are difficult to isolate and quantify in the workplace. One of the greatest challenges in identifying, isolating, and mitigating psychosocial hazards associated with UGC is that journalists often have no warning around whether the next piece of UGC they encounter will be emotionally distressing. An exposure may occur when a journalist is simply scrolling through social media or opening an email from an eyewitness or media user.

The survey-based research of Feinstein et al. (2014) is the first of its kind to attempt to quantify the amount of onscreen violence journalists can witness without suffering any harmful consequences like anxiety, depression, or PTSI. A group of 115 English-speaking journalists responded to a survey-based study and reported daily, weekly, and monthly exposure to uncensored violent onscreen images. The researchers discovered that 40.9% of participants reported daily exposure to violent UGC and 46.1% and 13% of participants reported weekly and monthly exposure. The mean time of exposure per shift was 3.12 hours (Feinstein et al., 2014).

The main finding to emerge from the study was that frequency of exposure to violent UGC independently and consistently predicted multiple incidences of psychopathology related to anxiety, depression, PTSI, and alcohol consumption (Feinstein et al., 2014). In other words, duration of exposure was found to be less closely related to psychological injury and moral distress apart from independently predicting intrusive, unwanted memories of disturbing events witnessed vicariously. While frequent exposure to extreme on-screen violence may increase emotional distress though a process of sensitization, the opposite may occur as individuals often grow numb to the content they view. Given the high 80% response rate obtained from a large group of English-speaking journalists, the researchers argue that their findings are representative of English-speaking journalists carrying out similar tasks elsewhere in the world (Feinstein et al., 2014).

Journalists working in television newsrooms are exposed to video footage of violent events on a daily basis (Weidman & Papsdorf, 2010). A study of 81 journalists whose job potentially involved exposure to photo and video footage of violent events found that nearly 80% of the sample reported being familiar with recurring intrusive memories. Yet the sample's overall post-traumatic stress symptoms were low (Weidman & Papsdorf, 2010). Regarding general mental health, there were no differences compared with a control group of journalists. The researchers determined that television newsroom journalists are not at a risk of developing psychological injury (Weidman & Papsdorf, 2010). It is important to note, however, that this study emerged during the rise of social media platform like Facebook and Twitter, and these online networks have grown dramatically since then. Thus, journalists' reliance on uncensored UGC has gone up exponentially, as has the quantity and video quality of UGC. Nevertheless, this study is valuable because it provides much-needed context around what constitutes UGC for

journalists in major European broadcast channels. For instance, according to participants, 25.7% of the material viewed was mostly related to war, terrorist attacks, and riots. Natural disasters and accidents constituted 17.5% of material. The remaining video footage focused on sports, entertainment, science, nature and other run-of-the-mill newsworthy events (Weidman & Papsdorf, 2010).

One study explored the impact that viewing traumatic UGC has upon the mental health of staff working for news, human rights and humanitarian organizations (Dubberley et al., 2015). Of the 122 journalists from 48 countries who participated in the study, 90 reported viewing uncensored UGC at least once per week and 27 engage with it for over six hours a day. Over half of the journalists reported viewing distressing UGC several times a week and 40% of the 122 participants reported that the work has had a negative impact on their personal lives. The researchers point to how individuals working with UGC often see more traumatic imagery daily than frontline workers. Notably, several participants reported having resigned because they felt that they had no organizational support for their psychological distress/injury (Dubberley et al., 2015).

Much like the findings of Feinstein et al. (2014), the study of Dubberley et al. (2015) highlights how repeated exposure to uncensored UGC is associated with an increase in emotional distress and the feeling of vicarious trauma. Vicarious trauma is indirect trauma that can occur when a person is exposed to difficult or disturbing images and stories second-hand (McCann & Pearlman, 1990). Participants reported that being open about the impact of traumatic photo and video content may have a negative impact on their career. They expressed deep feelings of guilt and shame and the perception that they had no right to feel traumatized by UGC. According to

one participant, trauma is the by-product of frontline work rather than an exposure to a "fucking picture of someone getting killed" (Dubberley et al., 2015, p. 21).

This sentiment is echoed in a more recent study in which participants also expressed great doubts over the seriousness of vicarious trauma caused by UGC (Specht & Tsilman, 2018). Journalists also expressed the feeling that taking time off was self-indulgent, yet half of the participants surveyed reported that they would feel comfortable approaching their managers if they felt adversely affected by traumatic UGC (Dubberley et al., 2015). Moreover, 60% of journalists felt that their workplace culture was such that they would feel comfortable asking for help in coping with potentially traumatic UGC. However, journalists who suffered from vicarious trauma are less likely to feel comfortable requesting help from their managers (Dubberley et al., 2015).

The volume of UGC increases during times of crisis; so does the prevalence of post-traumatic stress symptoms in newsroom journalists (Idås et al., 2019; Wardle & Williams, 2010). Crisis events such as terrorist attacks and natural disasters act as major stressors for journalists and the addition of eye-witness visual evidence also increases the risk of psychological injury (Feinstein et al., 2014; Garvey, 2009; Idås et al., 2019).

Journalists stumble upon disturbing UGC in their day-to-day work regardless of their assigned responsibilities specifically related to eye-witness material. Feinstein et al. (2014) allude to this idea when they point to how difficult it is to establish a control group of journalists in the same news organization not exposed to violent UGC. They note that not all journalists are designated to work with UGC, but most are nonetheless exposed from time to time. "Such is the ubiquitous nature of violence in daily news coverage" (p. 8).

This implies that all journalists are at risk of emotional distress since it is frequency rather than duration of exposure to images of graphic violence that is most hazardous (Feinstein et al., 2014). Clearly there is a need for further research examining how everyday newsroom journalists experience the phenomenon under study, and not just web-editors and those specifically responsible for curating and verifying uncensored UGC posted online and submitted to newsrooms.

In a more recent study examining journalists' verification practices on Twitter, journalists sourcing material on a major terrorist attack regularly vicariously witness "horrible scenery" (Rauchfleisch et al., 2017, p. 9). Journalists were exposed to "on site" pictures and videos of victims, individuals running and/or crying, smoke, and injured or fatally wounded victims. Processing this violent footage was not just a matter of capturing a quick story idea and moving on. It involved meticulously verifying and coding the material for factors such as whether the faces of the victims depicted could be identified (Rauchfleisch et al., 2017).

Education, Training and Supports

A content analysis of course material from a total of 61 universities and seven interviews with journalism educators/curricula developers and journalists working with uncensored UGC found that many educational bodies are failing to train in vicarious trauma (Specht & Tsilman, 2018). Less than 1% of selected journalism courses and modules teach the risks of vicarious trauma or uncensored UGC (Specht & Tsilman, 2018). Although some educators would like to focus more on vicarious trauma in the newsroom, institutional factors such as a lack of training, time constraints, worries over duty of care, and available resources are impeding the process of improving formal supports and education (Specht & Tsilman, 2018). In another survey-based

study of 115 US and Canadian journalists, less than half of the participants reported receiving any safety training around web-based hazards (Westcott, 2019).

Managers and those not directly working with uncensored UGC viewed trauma predominantly as an issue of war correspondence and foreign reporting, "with great doubts expressed over the seriousness of vicarious trauma caused by UGC and its necessity in university curricula" (Specht & Tsilman, 2018, p. 12). However, participants with "more direct contact with trauma and vicarious trauma were more likely to see this as an issue that may need to be addressed in the classroom" (Specht & Tsilman, 2018, p. 12). When exploring how uncensored UGC might affect journalists' psychological health, Feinstein et al. (2014) found that education levels emerged as the most frequent independent predictor of psychopathology.

Journalism schools are lagging in their understanding of vicarious trauma and UGC (Specht & Tsilman, 2018). In one study examining the experiences of trauma survivors in the media, none of the 22 journalists interviewed recalled receiving any training in covering traumatic events, interacting with victims or survivors, trauma-informed interview techniques or trauma sensitive language (Cherry, 2021). Nevertheless, education emerged as the most frequent independent predictor of psychopathology in the study of Feinstein et al. (2014). This highlights an obvious need for improving education and training around emotionally distressing UGC.

Through a series of interviews with 100 journalists and 87 human rights and humanitarian professionals from 48 different countries, Dubberley et al. (2015) found that many university curricula are not equipping graduates with the skills needed to enter the journalism profession in the digital age. The researchers indicate that employers across sectors "who cannot be excused for not understanding the contemporary work environment" (p. 50) do nearly nothing to ensure new staff members are made aware of the potential traumatic impact of uncensored

UGC. The survey data also illustrates that within most organizations, assistance and awareness is not made available to new recruits or staff who are working for prolonged periods of time with UGC (Dubberley et al., 2015).

Additional Psychosocial Hazards in the Workplace

The study by Feinstein et al. (2014) is the most significant piece of research focusing on violent UGC and psychological injury in journalism. It is the first to explore how frequency and duration of exposure to violent onscreen images impact journalists' mental health. However, the study is a reminder to exercise caution when thinking of UGC as a causal variable, independent of the stories attached to the distressing images under question. For instance, a journalist does not necessarily have to see a photograph of an exploded head, or a dead child washed up on a beach to suffer psychological injury. Oftentimes, what is considered newsworthy is emotionally distressing in nature without the need for visual accompaniments. As a journalist interviewee noted in one study, "you don't need to have a face in agony or a bleeding open wound to show someone's in pain" (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013, p. 16). Violent or disturbing UGC is one aspect of trauma reporting.

Journalists often experience feelings of overwhelming sadness when covering disasters or traumatic events regardless of whether they witness disturbing images vicariously or not. One group of researchers noted that "although experienced journalists may endure more trauma, all journalists who cover violence are at risk of developing vicarious PTSD" (Specht & Tsilman, 2018 p. 4). Several studies look specifically at vicarious trauma and psychological injury in newsroom journalists during times of crisis. For example, a survey-based study examined 371 news journalists' psychological reactions when covering the terror attacks in Norway on July 22, 2011 (Backholm & Idås, 2015). The primary finding to emerge from the study was that being on

the scene or frontline was not related to more exposure to psychosocial hazards than reporting on the crisis from the newsroom (Backholm & Idås, 2015).

Journalists covering the Norway terrorist attack from an organizational office faced ethical dilemmas. They expressed uncertainty about rules of conduct, carrying out tasks that went against their personal values, and exposure to situations beyond their control (Backholm & Idås, 2015). Work-related guilt has a significant indirect effect on the relationship between exposure to ethical dilemmas and severity of post-traumatic stress reactions (Backholm & Idås, 2015). The same researchers conducted a similar study in 2019 describing the prevalence of post-traumatic stress symptoms and post-traumatic growth in the same population of journalists and investigated the association between workplace social support and post-traumatic stress symptoms (Idås et al., 2019). Post-traumatic growth is defined as "a cognitive process whereby negative experiences may initiate reflections on life and result in strengthened self-esteem" (Idås et al., 2019, p. 2).

Of 375 Norwegian journalists surveyed, 9% reported post-traumatic stress symptoms severe enough to be considered as probable PTSI (Idås et al., 2019). Experiencing more ethical dilemmas was associated with more post-traumatic stress symptoms despite three out of four journalists perceiving a strong culture for informal support at work. Four out of five participants had received at least one kind of formal mental health support and two out of three had received an extensive amount of recognition from colleagues and leaders in moral support for their efforts during the crisis. The study did not support the hypothesis that a higher level of social support is associated with a lower level of post-traumatic stress symptoms (Idås et al., 2019). On the contrary, an increased level of mental health support was significantly associated with more post-traumatic stress symptoms. This does not necessarily suggest an association between formal

support and negative mental health outcomes as the researchers note that the relationship might indicate that journalists with more stress participated more in organized debriefing activities in the aftermath of crisis coverage. More than one-third of the journalists experienced post traumatic growth after the coverage relating to their view of others, new possibilities, personal strength, spiritual change, and appreciation of life. Received support and perceived support were not significantly associated with post-traumatic growth however recognition from colleagues and newsroom managers was significantly associated with positive growth (Idås et al., 2019).

Journalists face several organizational stressors that must be considered when developing a thorough understanding of who is most at risk of work-related post-traumatic stress symptoms. One study of 167 U.S journalists examines the factors that place journalists at-risk for post-traumatic stress injury following work-related trauma exposure (Smith et al., 2018). The findings suggest that personal and environmental factors work in tandem with the stressors of trauma reporting, making journalism an at-risk profession. Although 72.5% of participants had four years of college education there was an obvious need for improving education and training around trauma, coping skills, resiliency building, and safety (Smith et al., 2018).

Symptoms of pathology associated with both frontline and online exposure to trauma appear to be exacerbated by organizational stressors. In a mixed methods study, 115 journalists were surveyed and 19 participated in interviews (Dadouch & Lilly, 2020). Participants reported feelings of powerlessness, as if they were stuck in the ever-revolving door of troubling news stories. Several journalists described feeling “like vultures” (p. 9) preying on other people’s trauma and expressed regret about their journalistic work. Others described the desire to be better allies/advocates for those whose suffering was depicted in their stories. Journalists took on pessimistic views of their work questioning, “what’s the fucking point?” and declaring “the

world is a big ugly place that is skewed, and we are adding to the skewness" (p. 8). Moreover, participants reported feeling like journalistic work reinforces ideas about the world being an unjust "blue, black, dark, nasty funk" (p. 8). Unfortunately, most participants felt their bosses were not supportive and that they chose a career with "no soul" (p. 9). Journalists expressed a strong desire to have received training earlier in their careers on how to handle emotionally demanding tasks and potential warnings regarding the high rates of traumatic exposure (Dadouch & Lilly, 2020).

Journalists' Attitudes and Perceptions

Journalists maintain stoic attitudes as a means of progressing in their careers and coping with job stress. Through a series of in-depth interviews with 31 Canadian photojournalists and journalists who covered stories in the context of trauma, conflicts, and disasters, Keats and Buchanan (2013) investigated participants' deep meaning of trauma reporting in and out of the newsroom. The researchers found that there is a distinct culture of silence in journalism that is rooted in how participants speak about specific values, attitudes, behaviors, social nuances, and ways of being. A large majority of participants reported symptoms that were similar to those experienced with secondary traumatic stress and post-traumatic stress injury (Keats & Buchanan, 2013). Journalists often hold progressive beliefs about mental health services but are unlikely to resort to them themselves (Greenberg et al., 2009). Participants from another study reported feeling like taking time off was self-indulgent and that they had no right to be traumatized by user-generated content (Dubberley et al., 2015).

Steps in the Prevention and Management of Psychological Injury

Several important recommendations for preventing and managing psychological injury in the newsroom appear in the literature. However, due to the broad exploratory nature of the

existing research, these recommendations do not always focus directly on reducing the risks associated with uncensored UGC. Instead, they highlight ways of improving the occupational health and safety of journalism concerning emotionally demanding assignments and trauma reporting that may involve exposure to uncensored UGC. I have organized these recommendations into three categories focusing on when they are to be considered in relation to an emotionally demanding assignment or traumatic exposure: before, during or after. For example, several researchers focus on education and pre-employment training around psychological injury while others make recommendations on how newsroom managers can improve their existing work climate to foster a more supportive environment. Other recommendations focus on ways to mitigate psychological injury long after an exposure to a traumatic assignment has taken place. Preparing journalists for working life requires a multifaceted approach that considers the risk before, during, and after an exposure to an emotionally distressing assignment.

Before an emotionally demanding assignment

Education is a key component for both management and journalists as the more people understand burnout and trauma effects, the more equipped they become to recognize and make sense of what is happening to them (Keats & Buchanan, 2013). This can be done through journalism schools, articles prepared specifically for news workers, joint conferences between journalists and professional psychologists, and workshops for journalists in the newsroom as well as courses specifically for managers (Keats & Buchanan, 2013).

It is necessary to teach students how to deal with the continuous coverage of crisis and trauma before they become journalists (Garvey, 2009). More training and education around trauma, coping skills/resiliency building, and psychological health and safety is needed to better

prepare aspiring journalists for their future careers (Smith et al., 2018). Teaching journalists about the risks associated with trauma reporting may require a "cross-curricular, cross-departmental, and in some cases cross-school working environment" (Specht & Tsilman, 2018, p.16). Journalism educators would benefit from using professionals from trauma informed backgrounds such as psychology and other health fields to educate students about the hazards associated with trauma reporting and uncensored UGC (Specht & Tsilman, 2018). Newsroom managers must hold meetings where experienced journalists share how they handled a situation, which can "function as preparation for journalists who are yet to experience their first demanding assignment" (Idås et al., 2019 p. 7).

Focusing on the role of ethical dilemmas in the field of journalism can improve occupational health strategies (Backholm & Idås, 2015; Idås et al., 2019). For example, "Enhancing the understanding of, and preparation for, possible dilemmas can be an easily approachable and cost-effective strategy for media organizations or journalism education to prepare journalists" for covering crisis events (Backholm & Idås, 2015, p. 146). Simply being aware of the nature of a dilemma and its possible health consequences would provide newsrooms and media outlets with "a venue for setting up internal norms and guidelines, and in the ideal case, preventing the dilemma altogether" (Backholm & Idås, 2015, p. 146). Strategies for reducing ethical dilemmas such as work-related guilt may be effective for the prevention of long-term psychological injuries among newsroom employees (Backholm & Idås, 2015).

Several researchers encourage media organizations to look inward and consider the degree to which their workplace climate perpetuates mental health stigmas and adds to the emotional distress experienced by those covering crisis and traumatic news events (Smith et al., 2018). Consideration needs to be given to the workload, high expectation, competitive nature,

and prevalent attitudes about experiencing or witnessing trauma (Keats & Buchanan, 2013). Newsroom managers should also consider the degree to which they are prepared to address staff who may benefit from education, training, and/or mental health services (Smith et al., 2018). Formalizing psychological supports within journalism should address the specific need of journalists by educating them about "effective and helpful communication among themselves in an effort to normalize and maintain a healthy workplace" (Smith et al., 2018, p. 220). Newsrooms should strive to destigmatize disclosure of psychological needs to editors and news agencies and introduce more training focused on how to improve and maintain psychological well-being (Dadouch & Lilly, 2020). Improving psychological preparation and encouraging a supportive workplace climate is advantageous for both the journalist and the organization as healthy journalists are good journalists (Smith et al., 2018).

During an emotionally demanding assignment

The most noteworthy recommendation found in the literature for reducing psychological injury while pursuing the next big story online is to reduce the frequency of exposure to uncensored UGC and to funnel more experienced journalists in the direction of potentially traumatic assignments. Feinstein et al. (2018) write, "here our data give clues as to where attention might be directed, namely on journalists with children, with no prior war experience and with a proclivity to provide direct assistance to the migrating refugees" (Feinstein et al., 2018, p. 5). While this suggestion is intended to protect journalists with children from being exposed to psychosocial hazards when reporting on a specific crisis, it should be considered with caution outside of its original context. Funneling parents away from demanding assignments in favor of more experienced journalists without children raises several ethical concerns. Most notably, this approach has potential to disproportionately impede women from making career

advancements in an already male dominated field. While Feinstein et al. (2014) suggest focusing on parents in general, dominant discourse constructs the ideal woman as a nurturer who nurtures others and not herself. Therefore, focusing on parents who have a "proclivity to provide direct assistance" (Feinstein et al., 2018, p. 5) to children in need may get in the way of hardworking mothers in pursuit of journalistic capital.

After an emotionally demanding assignment

Several researchers point to the need for more group meetings or formal debriefing sessions after an emotionally demanding assignment involving trauma or crisis reporting (Garvey, 2009; Idås et al., 2019). For example, meetings, individual discussions, or debriefing sessions with a focus on how cases were handled may work to improve workplace morale, reduce experiences involving ethical dilemmas and underlying feelings of guilt (Backholm & Idås, 2015). "[M]anagers responsible for such meetings, however, would have to be properly prepared, and training would need to be provided" (p. 147).

This recommendation has its limitations. Many reporters are working from home or in a very small newsroom where there are no available peers. Asking for peer support after an emotionally demanding assignment in the workplace may not be appropriate in a competitive workplace culture. Private and confidential mental health counselling services for journalists through supplementary insurance plan may be a better solution.

Solutions that focus on the workplace in real time and place assumes in-person meetings and debriefing sessions exist for the employee seeking help. Such assumptions fail to consider the fast-evolving world of virtual workspaces. The workplace may be the journalist's home even though they are exposed to digital media. This gap deserves research attention.

News journalists, newsroom managers, editors, and news organizations have the potential to support personal growth after traumatic assignments by "developing a culture for discussions, reflections and recognition" that "emphasize a culture for peer-to-peer recognition" (Idås et al., 2019 p. 7). Future research examining factors such as the cohesiveness of newsroom group members and peer support within the workplace may be an important step in improving the occupational health and safety of the at-risk profession of journalism (Smith et al., 2018).

There is clearly a need for more research where data from quantitative studies are "combined with interviews with journalists to learn more about their reasoning and possible ethical concerns" (Rauchfleisch et al., 2017, p. 11). It is important to understand UGC as not only an occupational hazard to be quantified and alleviated but to view it as a major part of trauma reporting in general. UGC presents journalists with new and unique hazards that must be met with adequate education, training, and institutional supports before, during, and after exposure to trauma. Every journalist, wherever they work in the world, in the newsroom, or on the frontline, deserves physically and psychologically healthy and safe workplaces. Work-related psychological injuries are real, and they can happen to anyone if the stressors are prolonged or severe enough. These injuries are not a sign of individual weakness but an indicator of institutional or systemic problems. This thesis set out to identify and describe these workplace problems from the perspective of journalists engaged with uncensored UGC on the digital frontline.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

Narrative Inquiry

A review of the literature suggests that there is a lack of qualitative research surrounding the occupational health and safety of journalism in the digital age. To fill this gap, I conducted a narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is the study of experience as story and a way of thinking about experience (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). This methodology adopts a view of experience as phenomenon that focuses on temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Journalists engage with stories in a meaningful way every day, however these stories are rarely about themselves. Narrative inquiry allowed me to turn the microphone toward the journalist and elicit rich data from individuals who tell stories for a living. Being context-sensitive is considered essential to narrative inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, narrative inquiry is a useful tool for exploring occupational health and safety issues unique to today's journalistic practice.

This thesis includes four participant informed narrative summaries focusing on journalists and their exposure to emotionally demanding assignments and uncensored UGC on the digital frontline. A qualitative approach to this phenomenon fills methodological and practical gaps in our understanding and reveals the variations and heterogeneity of the lived experiences of journalists with web-based duties. Accessible researcher-constructed narratives can be used pedagogically as "the 'story' is one, if not the fundamental, unit that accounts for human experience" (Clandinin, 2007, p. 4). Conducting individual interviews elicited participants' deep meaning of the phenomenon and shed light on areas for improving workplace policies and practices and enhancing educational curricula in the field of journalism.

Borrowing from Oral History

This thesis borrows from oral history approaches to narrative inquiry. “Oral history is the collection of stories and reminiscences of a person or persons who have firsthand knowledge of any number of experiences” (Janesick, 2010, p. 2). Oral history is used to “help understand current events through the lived experience of participants” (p. 2). Telling the stories of others through lived experience and key events is a major goal of the oral historian (Janesick, 2010). There is no one set of explanations or interpretations for a given set of data. Oral historians use the data at hand “and render the best explanation and interpretation possible at that moment in time” (p. 7). Using plain language, as I have strived to do in my narrative summaries, is required of the oral historian (Janesick, 2010).

Many of the techniques of the oral historian such as interviewing, observing, journal writing, and digital recording are also the techniques of the investigative journalist. Mark Feldstein (2004) explains how journalists and oral historians are like “kissing cousins” (p. 1), related but separate. He argues that the similarities between the two professions showcase their differences. He suggests that each discipline can be improved by borrowing techniques from the other (Feldstein, 2004). This was true for my research, as turning the mic around and interviewing the professional interviewer was an enlightening and challenging experience. Detailed first-hand experience from working journalists produced rich data surrounding the psychosocial hazards unique to journalism in today’s online climate. Moreover, this research was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to public health measures, many journalists have been working from home and spending a great deal of their time reporting on the pandemic. Borrowing from oral history research allowed me to use this moment in history as a backdrop and reoccurring theme in my narrative summaries.

Target Study Population and Recruitment

To ensure purposeful sampling, I used a snowball sampling method. This strategy is best suited for examining commonalties and similarities such as those found in the lived experiences of Canadian journalists with web-based duties (Palinkas et al., 2015). Key informants are asked to identify subjects of interest with shared characteristics such as their professional backgrounds (Palinkas et al., 2015). The key informants then pass the researchers recruitment information along to subjects of interest, who are also encouraged to forward the material along to other potentially interested or eligible players in the field (Palinkas et al., 2015).

After discussing my research topic with a professor of journalism at King's College and a retired staffer from the CBC, I used these personal connections in the field for arms-length information sharing and recruitment of participants. I provided my recruitment document to these connections and asked that they forward the information to journalists currently working within Canada. This document provided my personal and professional information, a brief background of the research problem, the studies aims and objectives, the guiding research questions, the inclusion and exclusion criteria, a description of the participants' role in the study. There was also a statement indicating that the proposal for this research was in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy and had been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics and Human Research. Interested participants were asked to contact me directly via email or phone. My objective was for the pool of interested or eligible participants to grow like a rolling snowball as the recruitment material traveled throughout the Canadian journalism community.

Journalists working in Canadian newsrooms with direct experience with uncensored UGC were eligible to participate in individual interviews. Freelance journalists and frontline

journalists without any digital media or newsroom experience were excluded from the study. Journalists with fears or sensitivities around re-living traumatic experiences were advised not to participate in the study.

My goal was to recruit participants who had meaningful stories to tell about their lived experiences on the digital frontline (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 798). Initially I set out to interview participants who had recent educational experience. Because of the challenges to recruitment during the Covid-19 pandemic, I expanded the search to include newsroom journalists who could reflect meaningfully on UGC and any educational or profession preparation for work in the context of trauma. Front-line reporters were intended to be excluded, however this was difficult given the way work is structured in journalism, as many journalists working out of newsrooms have responsibilities in the field. While freelance journalists likely have stories of their own to tell about my research problem, I chose to exclude them from the study because they were unable to comment on formal mental health supports in the newsroom or office. I offered $50 Starbucks gift cards to enhance recruitment and offer compensation as a token of thanks and recognition of participants' time.

Data Collection

In May of 2021, I conducted a series of conversational one-on-one, in-depth, open-ended interviews with four participants. These interviews were conducted virtually in light of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. At the beginning of each interview, the study was explained. Informed consent was obtained both verbally and in writing. A copy of the informed consent document was emailed to the participants prior to the interview process. They digitally signed the document and returned it to me before I proceeded with the interviews. The participants

were also given the opportunity to address any questions or concerns they had about the study. The virtual interviews were recorded using the Webex recording feature.

One and a half hour interviews with each participant provided enough time to tell meaningful stories. Rather than relying on a set of predetermined questions, unstructured informal interviews flowed as natural conversations focusing on the lived experiences of participants. I encouraged participants to reflect on the strengths and challenges in their community and promote dialogue, knowledge, and strategies for change (Donoghue et al., 2017). During the interview process, participants were asked to reflect on their experiences with uncensored UGC and emotionally demanding web-based assignments. I also inquired about formal education and mental health training and supports.

Data Analysis

The narrative analysis of this study involved synthesizing individual narrative summaries for all four research participants and then carrying out a thematic analysis that considered the recurring and significant findings when looking across narratives. Interviews were analyzed using Creswell and Poth's (2018) Data Analysis Spiral. Interviews were first transcribed verbatim in a Word document from the WebEx audio recording. Transcripts were then read several times and storied field notes were taken to synthesize into a higher level of analytic meanings. I organized the data into digital files and created a file naming system, ensuring materials could be easily located in large databases of text (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

I continued my analysis by memoing emerging ideas and "getting a sense of the whole database" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 932). I developed an individualized system of memo organizing and created captions reflective of developing themes by arranging them into files based on 'the five W's and an H' of journalism pedagogy: who, what, where, when, why, and

how (Markman, 1993). Borrowing ideas from journalism educators can improve academic writing skills (Markman, 1993).

Following the organizing, memoing, and transcribing of the interviews I began storying, chronicling, and interpreting the data (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Finally, I developed and assessed my interpretations to carefully determine what was meaningful in the patterns and themes generated by analysis and linked these meanings to larger research literature developed by others (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The connection between the experiences of my research participants and the literature helped determine which themes to emphasize in my narrative summaries. This is not to suggest that my narrative summaries simply repeat the themes that appeared most frequently in the literature, as themes absent from the literature are also covered in each narrative summary. Only when my interviews were transcribed, digitally organized, memoed, and analyzed did I begin to construct individual narrative summaries for each individual participant. This allowed me to use my memo documents as a guide for the individual summaries.

Building in Rigor

To ensure trustworthiness, narrative truth and methodological congruence in my research, I followed several validation features outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018) and Loh (2013). First, I corroborated evidence through triangulation of my varying pieces of data. This entailed finding shared themes, perspectives and stories that are consistent within the lived experiences of my research participants and other published sources such as scholarly literature, news articles and journalism publications. This evidence of corroboration informed the insights and interpretations I present in my writing (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Second, I highlighted disconfirming evidence or "rival evidence" to ensure a realistic illustration of the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 1283). Third, I clarified my researcher bias and engaged in reflexivity and critical subjectivity. In disclosing my understanding of my biases, values, and experiences I justified my position in the narrative and provided the reader with the rationale for my methodology (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These biases were explored in detail in the Conceptual Framework and Locating Myself sections of Chapter One.

I built rigour through peer validation and audience validation where I sought validation from intended readers familiar with the themes applied to the interview texts and corresponding data (Loh, 2013). This included my CBC contact and a formally trained journalist currently working for a Canadian media outlet. I also sought validation from a professor of journalism and from my co-supervisor, Dr. Howse, who has extensive work and teaching experience in the occupational health and safety field. Audience and peer validation ensured I accurately interpreted my participants' lived experiences in a way that was accessible to my intended readers. Lastly, I used direct quotations from participants that provide thick and rich description of the themes and setting of my narrative to allow readers to make decisions concerning the transferability of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The generalizability of my research is afforded through my use of social concepts that can be applied elsewhere similarly. The heavy reliance on direct quotations preserved the original emotion captured in the participant interviews. It also placed the participants' voices on the forefront for the reader to interpret independently in my narrative summaries before engaging with my thematic analysis in Chapter Five.

Ethical Considerations

This study was granted approval from the Memorial University Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR). The core principles of TCPS2 are respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice (Government of Canada, Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics, 2019). These principles informed my study. Narrative inquiry requires a high level of sensitivity around the emotionally-charged nature of my research topic. I drew on my previous interviewing skills and experience working with vulnerable populations to ensure I engaged in empathetic listening. There was the potential for participants to feel an array of negative emotions when discussing their workplace experiences with emotionally distressing UGC. Therefore, I had a sound psychological safety plan in place. This plan included check-ins with the participants before and after interviews had been conducted to ensure they were doing well. I also provided participants with the contact information for a counsellor and the contact information for a crisis line. Both resources were free of charge.

Informed Consent

I used an informed and ongoing consent process that had two parts. First, it provided participants with a general overview of the project. Second, it covered the consent given to me by the participant to disseminate (in whatever form) their narratives. The consent form informed individuals of their right to withdraw from the study at any time and it notified them of all activities in which they were to participate. Interviews only began after participants fully understood the potential risks and benefits of participating in the study. This information was presented in plain language on the written consent form to ensure that participants made an informed decision about their involvement in the study.

Confidentiality

The participants were informed that I would remove all identifying information from their interviews and my narrative summaries. Ultimately my goal was confidentiality rather than complete anonymity. Confidentiality is ensuring that identities of participants are accessible only to those authorized to have access (Saunders et al., 2015). Confidentiality includes keeping private what is said by participants by choosing not to share parts of the data (Saunders et al., 2015). For example, one participant requested that I exclude one of their stories involving sensitive subject matter. This story was not included in my findings.

I de-identified all materials by providing pseudonyms for all four participants. In choosing pseudonyms, it was important to avoid revealing too much about the ethnic or cultural backgrounds of participants (Saunders et al., 2015). For this reason, I simply assigned the participants generic names found in some of my favorite television shows. I used direct quotations from the interviews and provided general information about the participants and their educational and professional backgrounds. I did not refer directly to places of employment, geographic location, physical appearances, or any identifying features in my narrative summaries. However, it was difficult to disguise some of these details, as the participants discussed their coverage of local news events in their communities. Therefore, I only described geographic details surrounding high-profile stories that were covered nationally and I omitted revealing details surrounding local stories. There are possible limits to anonymity, particularly related to the use of direct quotations in the published findings, and participants were fully informed of these limitations.

Storage of Data

The study data are stored on an external hard drive that is password protected. The digital files were encrypted and labelled with an alphanumeric combination. Only I have a copy of the electronic files. MUN requires data to be kept for 5 years. After 5 years, the paper data will be destroyed, and all electronic files will be deleted. Professional standards will be used to guarantee all data are destroyed and erased.

Chapter 4: Findings

In this chapter, I present the individual narrative summaries that were constructed for all participants. This allows the reader to better understand the unique experiences of each participant before considering overarching themes shared across the interviews. All four participants work for Canadian news organizations in various provinces across the country. Three of the four participants, Lisa, Cheryl and Elaine, identify as female and one participant, Andrew, as male. Lisa and Cheryl are white, and Elaine and Andrew are BIPOC. Lisa is the only participant who did not complete a journalism degree prior to entering the field but she is also the oldest and most experienced journalist with more than 20 years working as a reporter. Therefore, Lisa offers a unique perspective surrounding the psychosocial hazards unique to the digital age of journalism as she is the only participant who has witnessed the profession shift to an online framework.

All four participants have covered the news both online and on-the-ground. Andrew is currently a web producer who largely deals with online content. While all four participants may differ in age, ethnicity, education, place of work, and type of work, their experiences share several common themes pertaining to the mental health of journalists in the digital age. These themes include journalistic capital, the ubiquitous nature of trauma in daily news coverage, the structure of work, uncensored UGC, and formal education, training and supports. Each narrative provides a glimpse into the fast-paced world of journalism and some of the psychosocial hazards distinctive to the profession in the climate of social media, camera phones, rapid online communication, and the Covid-19 pandemic.

To increase the readability of these narrative summaries, I use participant quotations to highlight important threads within each narrative. As mentioned in the previous chapter, each

narrative summary was developed through a process of restorying, chronicling, and interpreting the data to develop character, tension, scene, and plot (Clandinin & Huber, 2010).

Narrative Summary One: Elaine

Elaine is a woman of colour in her mid 30's with 12 years of experience as a journalist. Since graduating with a journalism degree from a Canadian university in 2012, Elaine has won several prestigious awards for her investigative work. She is currently employed as a reporter in a major Canadian city, but her work has taken her all over the world. Elaine is "not somebody who sits behind a desk all the time and is solely exposed to things on a computer screen," and she regularly generates news stories both online and in the field. This diverse work experience has shaped her knowledge of trauma in journalism far more than her formal education or training. In journalism school, her "understanding of the relationship between trauma and journalism mostly had to do with frontline reporting, war correspondence, and being on the ground for a tragedy." She recalled few "lessons on how to deal with that, or what that looks like, or how to recognize the signs and symptoms that you're experiencing trauma."

When asked about her education around sourcing news content online, Elaine said, "there was not as much of a conversation about UGC back then just because I think we were using the internet differently." Instead, she mostly recalled being "taught about copyright infringement and fair dealing principles" and how "giving credit to the original source of content is a key principle of journalism." Elaine has witnessed a monumental shift in the field of journalism towards a digital framework in which the public plays a major role in the creation and online spread of newsworthy eyewitness material. She noted, "to an ever-increasing degree, a lot of the stories we chase end up being the results of user-generated content" such as "a video that's posted online"

or “a tweet that’s shared in an angry blog from a parent about something that happened at school.”

Oftentimes, this uncensored digital content “can be distressing, particularly in the last year and a half” as “the amount of content that has distressing subject matter has gone up.” For example, Elaine has reported on a great deal of UGC surrounding Covid-19 and racial inequity:

> So many disturbing videos of police interactions. So many disturbing videos of, you know, families posting about their relatives in long term care, and their relatives living in profoundly distressing conditions and often saying things like, “oh, I just want to die. I want somebody to kill me. I don’t want to be here anymore.”

Despite the bleak nature of Covid-19 and the omnipresence of human suffering in everyday news coverage, Elaine recognizes that this online increase in UGC provides her and her colleagues with “better access to the thoughts and concerns of the communities we serve” and therefore more opportunities to get the next scoop and advance in their field.

Early in her career, Elaine often experienced negative feelings of guilt and shame when receiving formal praise, promotions, or accolades for her reporting on trauma and human suffering. She explained:

> Tragedies, on a mass scale, provided an immediate opportunity to advance my career. You can call it being in the right place at the right time and it took days for me to get over the high of the opportunity to advance my career. To realize the scale of the tragedy that I had just covered and how twisted my reaction to it was.

In a similar instance, Elaine felt “sick and ashamed” after witnessing a dead body for the first time while reporting on the scene of a fatal traffic accident:

> I was there first. I was going to get the story out first. I did a great job. My editors were mentioning, you know, "this is fantastic," and it wasn't until about ten o'clock that night I had come to realize somebody had died and I was so sick and ashamed of how I felt. The fact that I was thrilled that I was going to get a scoop when someone had just lost a child. I was so sick to my stomach.

Profound ethical dilemmas are not "something that happen often, but it's something you can expect at least a couple of times in your career." Experiences covering trauma have shaped Elaine into a "negative, jaded, deeply cynical person" as she identifies her emotional response to traumatic events in the past with her level of experience as a journalist:

> Being a younger journalist when, you know, I was less developed as a professional. Still fresh out of journalism school, the rigorous principles instilled in me. I don't think I would react the same way today and I know that in similar circumstances I haven't reacted the same way because I don't feel the same pressure to advance my career.

When working with potentially emotionally distressing UGC online, it is "hard to quantify the impact given that the qualitative nature of the video is what determines the amount of distress that it causes." After witnessing a traumatic event in the field like her "first dead body," Elaine did not "process it for hours until the story was done." Only when she was home and away from the newsroom did she realize the magnitude of what she has witnessed. On the other hand, Elaine has more control over disturbing onscreen UGC and is therefore able to process the material more rapidly:

> I process it right away. I get it, I watch it. I watch it again and it's sitting right in front of me, and I don't have any other responsibilities. I don't need to get this shot or that shot,

> so I think that the processing of the information comes sooner when you see it on the screen.

Although Elaine's personal experience with trauma in the field has been more profound than her experience with emotionally distressing onscreen content, she said that "online content has just as much potential to be distressing to one person as seeing something disturbing in the field has for another."

For Elaine, what is "so disturbing" about uncensored UGC "is continuing to see layers of violence where violence isn't necessary. And when there's a racial element in the violence, it's even more upsetting." While she rarely has all the answers to the "questions around the circumstances of the videos" depicting violence, Elaine believes that "there's always at least one step that can be taken before you start beating the life out of somebody." Given the high volume of UGC depicting police violence against unarmed black men to emerge in recent years, Elaine is left questioning, "how and why are we still seeing videos like this? Why is nothing changing?"

When reporting on UGC depicting racial inequity and social injustice in her community, Elaine is faced with the ethical dilemma of remaining objective despite her personal beliefs and emotional response surrounding the online material. Nevertheless, she recognizes the powerful role that objective reporting and eyewitness material play in the fight for social justice:

> The fact that they no longer escape hidden in the dark corners of the world means that they can be used to propel social changes in the cell phone age. There's nowhere for the perpetrators of violence to hide and when a video like that falls on my desk, part of the challenge and part of some of the vicarious trauma, or the challenge of reporting on it, is that it's human nature when you see disturbing content to have an emotionally charged reaction. You may be angry; you may have a range of emotions. You may be deeply

> saddened, but then you're immediately put in a position where you have to remove those emotions and report objectively on something that you may feel on the inside is very much not objective and that's the hard thing to do, to try and report on something so deeply human.

While Elaine covers "deeply human" stories involving trauma, human suffering and death, she is expected to follow journalism's fundamental rule of objectivity and "remove all emotions." However, according to Elaine, "objectivity doesn't necessarily mean you feel nothing" and "that's what we're taught in journalism school, is that to be objective you need to completely detach yourself from the story." Journalism school, "in some ways, teaches you to remove humanity from your profession." According to Elaine:

> You're not human; you're a journalist. But I think humanity is such an important part of being a journalist. It allows you to report with kindness, with compassion, and so why wouldn't we encourage any young journalists to approach every situation with kindness and compassion? Rather than the mechanical objectivity and state of emotionless being that you're sort of taught to take on out of J school.

Objective reporting can be difficult because sometimes "keeping yourself whole and coming to the story as a human who feels things is the only way to report a story effectively."

Journalists may find it especially difficult to detach themselves from a story because following up on a newsworthy scoop found online or in the field often requires speaking directly with victims about their trauma. Elaine said that this is one of the most emotionally distressing aspects of creating a deliverable news story. She explained:

> I dislike having to speak to families when they've lost someone. When, a son or daughter is shot, or when they've lost a relative to Covid or their child is the subject of a disturbing

> online bullying event at school. It's really hard to talk to people about the trauma that they've endured. Because, you know, fundamentally, they don't want to talk to you about it and you don't want to talk to them about it either. You don't want to put them in that position. You don't want to write that story, but you have to do it anyway and it's just part of the job. So, you just sort of, I hate to say man up, but you just sort of bite your teeth and bear it or whatever the expression is.

At first glance this may seem unrelated to UGC, but it is an example of how assignments sourced online can lead to an emotionally demanding experience. For example, UGC may require a follow-up process that involves trauma reporting and contacting survivors. In addition to the emotional labor and stress involved in speaking directly with victims of trauma, Elaine pointed to the already tarnished relationship between the media and the public. She said, "sometimes more distressing than the experience of covering this content is the public response that comes from the coverage." For example, Elaine regularly receives "emails upon emails of criticism, of shaming, of anger, of hatred" that she finds "harder to deal with than covering the issue itself." In reflecting on her workplace and journalism school experience, Elaine said that she was never warned of the online racism and harassment that she would receive from media users. She explained, "No one tells you you'll get public hate mail for doing your best every day to do the right thing." There was "no preparation for what it would be like to interact with the public" or "for what journalists of color will experience in the field."

Public outrage, hate speech, and harassment also make their way into the online comment sections of news articles that Elaine and her colleagues produce. For this reason, Elaine does not read public comments posted online. She does, however, firmly believe that "comment sections serve a purpose" of maintaining "public discourse and discussion" as long as they are filtered for

"hateful racist content or even just the swear words and stuff." Although Elaine supports the censorship of hate speech and harassment found online, she views potentially traumatic content as being part of the job and does not think that journalists should be sheltered from such content:

> I don't think it's the public's responsibility to attach trigger warnings for journalists. I think it's the journalist responsibility to attach trigger warnings for the public. I think consuming that material, vetting that material, and developing content is part of our job. It's our job to find a way to present disturbing content to the public in a way that is most in the public interest and to censor information when it's not in the public interest and its airing would have more damage than benefit.

Rather than limiting journalists' exposure to emotionally distressing content, Elaine believes that journalism educators, newsroom managers, and editors need to re-evaluate the "toxicity of the culture" of journalism and better prepare journalists for coping with and recognizing the signs and symptoms of trauma. "Journalists are hotwired, usually, to look for the bad news," and it is up to educators, newsroom managers, and editors to give journalists the tools needed to maintain this lifestyle. She said, "school prepared me really well for the task work of being a journalist but gave me no preparation for living life as a journalist."

Due to the constant pressure to deliver stories promptly in the digital age of journalism, "every journalist is concerned about traumatizing the person that they're interviewing. … The 24-hour news cycle combined with a lack of resources and tighter deadlines" have made it more difficult to deliver stories with "the amount of care and responsibility that they deserve." Journalists are required "to get the story out faster" and "have less time to play with the wording." Ultimately this means that she has "less time to consult other members of the community and bring in other voices and turn it into the beautiful memorial tribute piece that you

like." Elaine pointed to a case where she had only 30 minutes to produce a deliverable news story after conducting a 45-minute interview with a grieving mother who had just lost her only son:

> You never feel like you've really done the story justice by the end of the day and that's a hard thing to go home with. And it's really hard when you want to do another story and you have to show your face again to the people you've interviewed, knowing that you didn't do the best story you could have done for them.

Despite there being "a comfort certainly that comes when you're in the trenches together," Elaine does not always feel like she can talk about mental health and trauma in front of her coworkers:

> Sometimes you don't want to be perceived as the only one who's really struggling with something. You risk losing your assignment if you reveal that you're struggling with something. You risk being the person on the team letting the team down. If everyone else is going to continue in this trauma-based coverage and you say, "I want out," now you're making everything harder on everybody else. And you know, while you do take comfort in having colleagues, and none of you are in alone in it, and everybody's grinning and bearing it together. There isn't always necessarily the ability to discuss the mutual experience in that way.

Instead, Elaine highlights a workplace in which journalists grow cynical and desensitized because of their exposure to suffering. She explained, "it's so toxic to the point where seeing your first dead body is like a rite of passage. Like 'oh, you lost your dead body virginity. Good for you! See you tomorrow!'" A significant part of the toxic culture of journalism, Elaine said, is how employers provide mental health supports to their staff. After trauma-based assignments,

"there's no formal debriefing process" as "you just get up and do it again the next day." Elaine attributes the "toxic culture around mental health" with long standing public notions of what it means to be a journalist:

> Part of it has to do with many years of the glorification of overwork, and burning the midnight oil, and writing the late-night article while chain smoking and drinking. You know, there's this romanticized notion of being overworked and underpaid for journalists that doesn't apply to other fields and, over the years, journalists have come to wear it as a badge of pride and honor. You know, here's how little money I make and here's how hard I work.

Although her workplace has "adequate" mental health resources, Elaine believes that these resources are not made available to the journalists who may be experiencing psychological injury or burnout and therefore need them the most. Instead, Elaine believes that only those in the office who have time to access such resources can avail of them. Journalists "burning the midnight oil," however, do not have the time or freedom to access mental health care. This perception of her workplace has caused Elaine to feel some resentment towards coworkers with higher paying positions and more free time to access formal mental health supports. Elaine explained:

> I think there are adequate resources in place that exist. I think accessing them is much more difficult. I don't think they're terribly accessible. I think it would make a journalist feel safe and valued if the mental health resources that are available were available in part on company time and if some of the recreational mental health resources, you know, free yoga classes, an online program over lunch that were on mindfulness and meditation. Those are things that, while they exist, journalists just can't access them because there's

> no time in the day to use those things. Whereas other members of the company, HR, management, marketing, and everybody else, can take time in their day to access these wonderful resources that are available. Sure. Yet, when we're faced with trauma or other experiences that might merit access to some of the counseling services available our only opportunity is to do that on our own time at night. On our own free time, after we've done a full workday. And then it's like, okay, now you have time for your mental health by diving back into your workday on a Friday night.

Elaine feels as though employers have "a list of mental health workplace boxes that need to be checked and workplaces are good at checking those boxes…. The true accessibility of those services is another question." Elaine said that "simply getting lunch breaks would just go a really long way." Instead:

> Some of the most basic parts of having a mentally healthy workplace is denied to us. We don't have jobs where we get lunch breaks ever. We don't have the kind of job where you can, you know, come in late, because you've got a dentist appointment. If you have any kind of appointment, you need to book a sick day.

Ultimately, Elaine's workplace culture around mental health and the unrealistic expectations of rapidly turning out stories in the digital age left her feeling undervalued as an employee. She said that this feeling made her second guess her profession and her role in the workplace:

> When you do encounter vicarious trauma, whether it's on the front line or through user generated content the weight of that experience ends up being compared with how much you feel valued and you really start asking yourself "Why on earth am I doing this? Why am I putting myself through this? So that I can get this story?" And that's an equation

> that I think a lot of journalists ask and it's a question that I think a lot of journalists have been asking themselves over the past year. You know, especially as our exposure to all of these things has just gradually increased along with the demands on all of us.

Re-evaluating the culture of journalism in a way that makes journalists feel valued and human, Elaine said, is the first step in the path to improving the mental health for all journalists in a digital age. When asked what advice she would give to journalism school educators, Elaine said:

> I would advise journalism schools to just be very realistic with students about what they're going to encounter when they take jobs as reporters. The way this content is presented to them is always going to be evolving. I think they need to be realistic about the amount of content that they might end up consuming. It could be every day that they have to watch and report on trauma. And importantly, perhaps most importantly, I think it's important to inform students about how the public may engage with and respond to their coverage of these issues.

Despite feeling undervalued as an employee and frustrated with the accessibility of the mental health resources in her workplace, Elaine finds a great deal of comfort in the meaningful stories that she deals with in her career. While truly profound stories are not an everyday reality for Elaine, they help to balance out the sorrow and ethical dilemmas that make up every day the bulk of what gets covered in the 24-hour news cycle. She said, "every now and again, you get those deeply meaningful stories where you do help somebody, and it is a positive story, and that one story can get you through the next eight months of shit."

Narrative Summary Two: Lisa

Lisa is a white woman in her 50s who works for a Canadian news outlet producing both radio and online digital news content. Lisa has no formal education as a journalist, but she has worked in the media for nearly 25 years and has witnessed the industry shift towards a digital framework. When I asked Lisa if she had ever heard of the term UGC before reading my recruitment document, she responded, "no, no, we don't talk about that. We just say social media, you know, we just use the plain language if you will." Yet, eyewitness material posted on social media by the public plays a "key role" in her everyday coverage of the news, depending on "the story and how we become aware of it." Sometimes Lisa stumbles upon newsworthy material while scrolling through social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook on her smartphone. Other times, she reviews digital material submitted to the newsroom by members of the public. Throughout "all hours of the day and evening," Lisa shifts back and forth between social media and her email inbox in pursuit of a lead for her next story.

If Lisa considers a piece of UGC to be newsworthy, she first validates the material by contacting the original owner before it can be turned into a deliverable news story. Sometimes, however, this digital material is just "out there. It's in the public realm" and can therefore be "taken at face value." For example, when a food processing factory in Lisa's community burned down, Lisa did not verify the online footage surrounding the event because the smell of smoke was in the air and social media was flooded with real-time images of the blaze. Although Lisa was not physically present on the scene of the fire, the lines between the frontline and the newsroom were blurred as she received "dozens" of pieces of eyewitness material documenting the event.

Lisa used the metaphor of "the fly on the wall" to explain her "shocking level of perception of the world through others' eyes" She described how, "if you zoom in closely on a fly, he's got all those multiple little eyes." These eyes represent "all the cell phones that are out there, ready to film the next newsworthy disaster." This "interesting phenomenon," Lisa said, is not only "changing journalism, but also entering the psyche of the individual too, as kind of a flurry…. It's making journalism a less satisfying place to be." Lisa questions whether humans are psychologically prepared to witness a steady digital stream of suffering from all corners of the globe. For example, she said, "were we meant to know that this koala fell from the top of a burning tree and has a broken leg and is singed? Were we meant to know that this is happening in Australia?... We have got to give ourselves a little bit of distance. We know that suffering occurs. We know that suffering is happening all the time but are we meant to know it and consume it and absorb it? No."

Images involving traumatic content such as fatal automobile accidents, animal abuse, and war are not typically emotionally distressing for Lisa, but she often feels upset by the public response generated online by her coverage of events. She said, "the images are not so much distressing" but "things like the acrimony, the vitriol, the one-sidedness, those kinds of things" posted online and directed at the media by the public are "ethically distressing." She explained:

> The part that I find most wearing on my mental health and on the mental health of my colleagues. I've seen it wearing us down. I have never encountered this until recent years. You know, a lot of stuff you could filter but it's harder to filter this stuff because it's an avalanche; it's an onslaught sometimes. And a lot of it is baseless so they're that added level of frustration dealing with attacks and finger pointing that are baseless or based on flimsy opinion. Flimsy amounts of facts or information. That kind of stuff is very, I

> mean, we're at a point now where for the first time in my life, we do make editorial choices on a regular basis and we've been doing that since I've been in this business, but we're at a point now where we're making really strange editorial choices.

One such "strange editorial choice," was when Lisa chose not to cover the story of a man who posted on social media that he had been discriminated against, because "you realize if you carry the story and it ends up online, the man will be subjected to the same racism that was in the original story he was trying to tell."

Social media, and "the kind of responses certain stories can generate," have altered Lisa's workplace climate in a way that makes her feel a "great deal of resentment and anger." She is no longer able to predict which stories will generate the outrage and hate that end up on social media every day and she felt "blind-sided" by the constant awareness of the negativity felt and expressed by the public:

> We were never meant to read people's minds. But the way that we're reading people's minds now is in a way and in a fashion that we never anticipated we would be doing. You know, this isn't telepathically, it's showing up in your feed and you have no control over it. It is the same thing if you can suddenly telepathically hear somebody's thoughts saying, "wow, she is so fat." It's that kind of shocking level of a perception of the world through other's eyes, that none of us, psychologically speaking, I think, are [sic] prepared for in any way.

This continuous awareness of the public's negative emotional response to her work and everything going on in the world, made Lisa "feel very isolated or insulated." She explained, "now, all of a sudden, we're thrust into it and it's not a comfortable place to be." Before the digital age of social media and the 24-hour news cycle, Lisa did not experience such external

pressure to bow to public feedback. In recent years, however, she said that things have changed for the worse:

> It really feels like censorship not because anybody is telling us what to say or how to say it, but because we anticipate that the public reaction will be such through social media that it will make everyone's life a living hell.

Regardless of how she and her colleagues cover the news of the day, their reporting usually garners "negative energy" online.

Lisa spends "hours and hours and hours and hours every day looking at these comments" that "add nothing to the discourse" and "provide no redeeming content." She said, "it's just people saying, 'oh that's fucked' or even worse." Sometimes the online public commentary is so scathing that Lisa believed "people don't understand defamation at all" and "there's no way to stay on top of it." Although Lisa's workplace recently removed public comment sections from their website, their online news articles still get shared on private and public Facebook pages that have bustling comment sections. Unfortunately, Lisa "can't pick and choose comments if a certain story starts to generate a lot of negative commentary that verge into outright hate or libel." When a story generated enough comment section vitriol for Lisa to consider it a defamation issue she said, "you've got to take that story off of social media altogether in order to block any comments." This inability to isolate and delete single comments posted under many of the news articles she produced made Lisa feel powerless. When Lisa decided to take a story off social media altogether to curb comment section slander, she said, "they'll find new ways to attack you in other ways through other means."

"It's become so problematic that it's really hard to justify having comments at all," Lisa explained. For her, "it's really quite sad because, for the most part, a lot of the commentary is

just not conducive to discourse or conversation, it's simply reactionary in nature and, in many cases, horrible." Despite the constant stream of disparaging online public commentary, Lisa sifts through online comment sections in pursuit of story leads. Oftentimes, buried amongst the comment section "vitriol and distrust" are valuable "telling details" surrounding newsworthy events in her community and abroad.

Due to the fast-paced nature of the 24-hour news cycle and the endless stream of newsworthy UGC, Lisa is expected to source and deliver stories rapidly. Yet, if Lisa told a story "without the time, and the care that it requires," it opens her interviewees "up to attack." She explained, "I feel protective sometimes towards the people that I've been interviewing or talking to because they're going to be subjected to online vitriol." Interviewees "want to get their story out there, but they're going to be subjected to a public reaction that really is not fair" and "it doesn't matter what the story is." For example, Lisa explained that "sometimes the story doesn't even need to be controversial on any level" and "the way the wind is blowing on a particular day" is enough to "generate something negative from the audience."

In reflecting on her role as a professional journalist in the digital age, Lisa said that she handled newsworthy eyewitness content with care and respect for victims of trauma whereas citizen journalists are less respectful and considerate. While citizen journalists carelessly film and post "shocking images" and nasty comments online, professional journalists consider the legal implications of the content or the psychological wellbeing of their intended audience. According to Lisa, citizen journalists "don't provide any context whatsoever. It's just no context. It's just, 'here is an image, isn't this shocking? Blah, blah blah.'" It is up to the professional journalist to make sense of this uncensored UGC and to shape the material into meaningful news stories that do not rely on shock value. In addition to sourcing UGC online, Lisa also receives

news tips and pieces of digital eyewitness material through other channels such as established and reliable community informants.

Lisa has a close relationship with first responders in her community and she works with a running police scanner on her desk. Long before information is released to the public by the police or the press, Lisa often receives news tips informing her of the identities of victims of fatal automobile accents and other tragic events in her community. For instance, Lisa pointed to a case where she was sourcing information on social media around "a very distressing and very disturbing accident" involving a "white Honda Civic and a white Dodge Ram." One of the vehicles "had caught on fire and there was a baby in that car." Between the volume of online UGC depicting the wreckage and the intelligence she received from first responders on the scene, Lisa accumulated enough evidence to identify the victims of the traffic accident before their families were alerted to the unfolding tragedy.

Lisa said it is not in her "interest, nor is it any of our interests as journalists to inform someone that their loved one has been involved in a serious accident or worse. … Because somebody had somebody they love on the road that's driving a white Honda Civic and another one who's driving a white Dodge Ram," Lisa published an image of "the backup of traffic," rather than visuals of the accident. In doing so, she avoided publicly identifying the victims and successfully alerted other highway drivers of the subsequent road delays. On the other hand, citizen journalists who were on the scene of the crash and driving by rushed to social media and posted "shocking" eyewitness material without hesitation. These images were then shared online until "Facebook was flooded" with visual evidence of the accident and the victims' families were prematurely notified of their tragic loss of a loved one. "That was very distressing," Lisa said. This lack of sensitivity and journalistic integrity on the part of citizen journalists is what Lisa

described as “the difference between people who think they’re journalists and people who are journalists.”

Lisa questions the public’s intentions in capturing digital eye-witness material and posting it online. She suspected that citizen journalists often capture and share images with media outlets to tap into their “bajillion followers” or to advance their political agendas. She noted, “we’ve got a very high level of activism out there now and people who feel strongly one way or another about one issue or another use the media or social media” to advance their political causes. Despite often agreeing with the public’s political stance on issues involving online news content, Lisa said, “more power to you, just don’t drag me into it.”

Lisa often considered shifting careers “because of how rapidly things have changed and how sometimes difficult it is to adapt to things that move so quickly.” She explained, “sometimes you think, you know what? Is this really what I need to be doing for another five to ten years or do I need to start looking at something that’s going to make me much more enjoy my life.” She elaborates,

> I said to somebody today, are you going to be on your death bed saying to yourself, “I wish I was on time for that meeting; I wish I had attended more Zoom meetings; I wish I had covered another few hundred car crashes?” No, no, we’re not. None of us are going to be doing that. I wish I had attended more political speeches?! No, no, none of us will.

When I asked Lisa about how she coped with the combination of comment section negativity, graphic uncensored user generated content, and the pressure of the 24-hour news cycle, Lisa discussed the importance of disconnecting, and turning off her mobile phone. She said, if “I’m on my phone then it will follow me, but I’m just getting better as I get older.” When she puts her phone away, she said, “I don’t care anymore.” For example, she said, “I found last

week so trying in terms of dealing with the level of acrimony that I had a couple of days off." During these couple of days, Lisa checked her phone "once or twice in the evenings just to make sure" she was "still on top of things" and "was much happier and better for it." She elaborated by saying, "as somebody who most of my career has been before social media, I have a very good ability to filter garbage when it comes to these kinds of things, but it does become overwhelming from time to time." Lisa advised younger, aspiring journalists to do the same:

> Take a break, take a little break. Go get something to eat, take a long weekend and take a trip. Go see your mom, you know, some of those grounding perspective-giving moments. Take some distance. Distance yourself a little bit and, if it's really serious, get a bit of counseling or something. But more often than not, it is just to get that breathing space around you and a little bit of fresh air. Turn off the white noise and just be present.

When asked about formal mental health supports in her workplace, Lisa said, "there's not a whole lot of newsroom training around trauma" and "there's certainly not much training around the concept of vicarious trauma either." However, she and her colleagues are "continuously reminded" through group emails from head office of the "programs and supports" that are available. Usually, these email reminders only occur when upper management knows that the newsroom is "having a really bad week." Although Lisa has not "felt the need to avail" of these services, she is aware of other journalists in her workplace who have sought formal mental health supports. She said:

> I have known people who have mentioned they are going to pursue mental health resources, but you don't ask about that stuff. You let them deal with their own thing and if they want to talk about it, they talk about it, and if you don't want to talk about it that's cool too.

Lisa largely relied on her newsroom "family" for support and comradery rather than formal supports. There is a "real close connection" between journalists in her newsroom who "truly, truly care very deeply" about each other. Part of this closeness between colleagues, Lisa said, is due to the shared experience of what it means to be a journalist. She described this experience as being characterized by a "high" or "adrenaline" that is only felt by those with a journalistic "gut instinct." According to Lisa, this high is what keeps many journalists going in such a demanding and fast paced profession. She believed that education cannot teach you how to be a journalist and "if you see this as a job, you're not in the right place." Those who enjoy the lifestyle, Lisa said, "have staying power" and "the academic world is not able to identify these people because it's in the doing" that set true journalists apart from the others. She explained, "if you don't react emotionally to that image or the circumstances that led to that image, you're not human." However, "if you don't cover it," you are "not a journalist. … It's news. It has to make it to press."

Narrative Summary Three: Cheryl

Cheryl is a white woman in her late 20's who graduated from a prominent Canadian journalism school. As a requirement of her journalism degree, she wrote her honors project on trauma and war correspondents, so she is well versed in much of the same academic literature that I have reviewed as an occupational health researcher. Since graduating, she has worked as a reporter for several Canadian media outlets, covering events spanning from small business news to Covid-19 and the 2020 Nova Scotia shooting spree that left 13 dead in the small town of Portapique.

Cheryl is currently employed as a reporter with a news organization that covers events, politics, and entertainment. Although her position is full-time with benefits, Cheryl's work

experience has been precarious due to a Covid-19-related layoff that added an extra layer of stress to the already emotionally demanding nature of her profession. The most stressful aspects of being a journalist, Cheryl said, is the looming fear of "being laid off." She explained, "basically everyone I know in the field is job insecure." The romantic notion of the freelance journalist uncovering hard hitting stories and exposing injustices is crushed by the reality that "someone who has a university degree only makes 35 000 a year" and lives in constant fear of losing their job.

Cheryl enjoys going on Twitter and seeing "what people are already saying" about the topics on which she reports every day. The information is "already available and that way you don't have to reach out to someone or, if you have trouble reaching out to someone and finding a source," then social media makes it much easier to contact interviewees. Cheryl sources from both "visual elements and story ideas" on social media. For example, when reporting on the long lineups of people waiting for Covid-19 vaccines in her community, Cheryl said, "we don't have the time to go down there ourselves as journalists because we've got so much to do and tight budgets, small newsrooms, and all of that so we can just embed a person's tweet or photo." Rather than conducting an entirely new interview or capturing original photos, Cheryl can quickly grab these story elements online. While a lot of the material Cheryl sources on social media depict human suffering, disease, and tragedy, she still enjoys uncovering story ideas and leads through various online platforms.

Although familiar with the term, "UGC" is not something that Cheryl recalled learning about in journalism school, but she said emotionally distressing UGC is "one of those things that, over time in your career, I think journalists will all be exposed to." Covid-19 has brought the frontline home for many journalists. "Now we're all working from home, no one's really going

anywhere," Cheryl refers to this work environment as the "digital frontline" because "you're not there anymore at the car crash as it happens, you are seeing the people post about it on the internet." This virtual and socially distanced nature of her profession has opened Cheryl's eyes to the idea that "maybe it's not just the journalists on front lines in a war zone" who experience trauma but also the people who are "covering everyday stuff in their communities." For example, Cheryl pointed to journalists who cover "small town car crash where it ends up being your neighbor or something, or whether you're in a bigger city and things happen like the Nova Scotia shooting."

When I asked Cheryl about her formal education around vicarious trauma in journalism school, she responded, "I think that education around it needs to be improved because there is no education around it right now unless a student or a young journalist wants to be educated about it." In journalism school, Cheryl experienced a disproportionate focus on how to write about and disseminate stories involving traumatic content as opposed to how to cope with them mentally. She explained,

> If you're the first at a scene for a car crash, and you're in a small town, you're not posting on the front page. You're not tweeting a photo of that car crash, because your friend down the street might see it and know her friend had been in the accident. We adhere to those ethical considerations of not doing click bait and not posting things that may be graphic or may be hurtful to people. Like a lot of journalists, I don't think any journalists cover suicides. Here in [an unspecified Atlantic province], frequently people commit suicide on the [name of bridge] and journalists, for a very long time, have not covered it because it's been thought to increase suicides.

While Cheryl believed that journalism schools need to focus more on ways to help journalists cope with issues around trauma and mental health, she asserts that training around ethics and the proper handling of sensitive material is also paramount to the success of any good journalist.

"There is no personal care course in J school, but there is an ethics course," Cheryl said. Although she "didn't learn a whole lot about vicarious trauma" in journalism school, a year of covering a massacre and the Covid-19 pandemic, combined with the instability of employment in her field has taught her a lot about vicarious trauma and the everyday stressors of being a journalist in the digital age. This experience has also "taken a toll" on her mental health. "I wouldn't say I wasn't coping well," Cheryl said, "but just feeling stressed all the time." She described the "pressure to work more, work harder, work faster, cover more stories, write more stories … be more aligned, Tweet more, have more followers, get more page views." She said that she had no idea what she was signing up for when she graduated from journalism school and applied for her first job as a local reporter.

According to Cheryl, "most journalists don't get into the field because they're dispassionate about their work." Instead, "every journalist cares about something and wants to write good stories about their community or the subject matter they care about." Cheryl especially liked writing about people helping others, newly emerging businesses and non-profit groups. However, not every newsworthy event is enjoyable or easy to cover. Since graduating from journalism school, Cheryl has covered layoffs, strikes, missing children, the death of a Snowbird flight member, Covid-19, the Nova Scotia massacre, and many other negative newsworthy events. Whether it is "something you saw" online or something "a source told you" the news of the day is unpredictable and there will always be "that one story, or several stories" that will "stick with you" in a negative way. For example, Cheryl said that "if you're a woman,

especially covering a sexual assault trial, that stuff is going to stick with you." Similarly, reporting on UGC that depicts racial inequity may be uniquely stressful for journalists of color. For instance, Cheryl pointed to a piece of UGC in which a black man in her community "had been stopped by police and the police were yelling at him and saying they would shoot him."

> This video made the rounds on social media within very little time. Everyone knew about this video. We wrote about it. Other outlets wrote about it. It was wild and it all came from social media … but if you're a person of color seeing another person of color being chased by the police and told 'I'm going to shoot you,' that's traumatizing.

Covering the Nova Scotia massacre was a major event in Cheryl's career that resonated with her in a negative way and made her feel "burnt out." However, she did not recognize the intensity of what she had witnessed until the massacre was long over. In the first few days of covering the massacre, Cheryl said that "it was just work, work, work" and that "it took a year to start realizing the impact" and magnitude of what she had covered. Yet, she explained, "I realized maybe after the first few weeks or first month or two that, wow, this is a lot, and it was taking a toll on me." It was not just the intensity of reporting on such a grim tragedy that was impacting Cheryl's mental wellbeing as "another huge impact on being stressed out" was her juggling two jobs at the same time. Cheryl was also worried that she was not "covering enough or covering things right" because she "didn't have the time" to handle the story with the care and attention it deserved.

In addition to her feelings of uncertainty in her work performance around the coverage of the massacre, she later "felt bad" after writing an article about vicarious trauma and her experiences as a journalist working around the tragedy. She explained,

> It's part of me that still feels bad. I don't know whether it could be seen as profiting off of this, but I got paid for the article. I hope no one would ever think I'm trying to profit off of this.

Cheryl also experienced concerns about the way that larger international news networks were covering the tragedy and representing her community. She said, "we were being highlighted by a lot of journalists from outside the province, from outside Canada, who weren't covering the story in a respectful way." They were covering the story like "the rest of Canada" looks at Nova Scotia, "like so cute, where never a bad thing happens."

Even as the gunman was still active, Cheryl recalled reporting on several pieces of UGC that she described as being "potentially emotionally distressing." For instance, as "the shooter was on the move" and "the police had done a horrible job of saying where he was at this point," members of the public rushed to social media and posted digital images of the unfolding tragedy in real time. She explained,

> Police were confused themselves but there was someone who had posted on I think it was Instagram or Twitter, and it made its way to Instagram, and it was this vehicle on fire in Enfield, which ended up being the vehicle fire where Constable Heidi Stevenson died and the other police officer, I think Chad Morrison, was shot and injured by the shooter and people posted that and shared it on Instagram. And people were speculating about whether it was related to the shooting or not because, at that point, no one knew where he was. People said he was still in Portapique or the more northern part of the province and this was all the way down Enfield almost. Anyway, and that made its rounds on social media … So, it got shared on Halifax Noise. I don't want to blame Halifax Noise, or the other accounts that do this, but a lot of the time they just share whatever gets direct

messaged to them and they get the views for it. They get the followers for it. They get the comments and then they make money in their other ads, right? Because they have such a high viewership. So, a lot of those accounts repost things like that.

Cheryl explained how it was not necessarily the images of the burning vehicles that were upsetting, but rather the fact that people were casually posting and viewing something so sinister and evil as it was unfolding in that community. Rather than reposting these images that she considered to be "click-bait," Cheryl relied on her journalistic training to inform the public of the massacre in a respectful and ethical manner.

Cheryl did not believe that uncensored UGC was a quantifiable occupational hazard like dangerous substances in the workplace, but rather a complex and nuanced phenomenon that journalists should be better equipped to deal with. Most journalists, "will have that one event that they could probably point to where they say, 'my work first started really affecting me'." She believed that it was up to journalism educators to teach students how to identify and cope with these events as they arise as well as "the symptoms of trauma." Cheryl again explained how it is not the image alone of the burning vehicle, violent police encounter, or crowded intensive care unit that is most emotionally distressing, but rather the treatment and handling of this material by the public and the press as well as the stories and social context attached to the digital images. "It's all of it. The image, the context, the story, what your relationship is to it."

Cheryl grew up in the age of shocking online images, violent video games, and explicit internet pornography. She said that there is something different about having to report on shocking images rather than merely consuming them. She said, unlike "the videos that we saw as teenagers growing up, I never had to write about those or think about the impact on society." However, "when journalists see videos that they have to report on, we have to put them in

context. We have to think about and write about things like, why is this police officer chasing this black man with a gun?" Similarly, she said that her coverage of Covid-19 was "more exhausting and repetitive, rather than traumatic." While some of the images and stories that Cheryl chased online may have been distressing, they were more than just digitally captured visuals, they told a story and they required emotional labour.

Although Cheryl said that there was rarely a formal debriefing process after reporting on the massacre, Covid-19, or other emotionally troubling newsworthy content, she found support from her colleagues and fellow journalists. "You're all covering it together," she said, and "you all have that camaraderie" that keeps the group focused, productive, and mentally fit. "It's kind of morbid that journalists are going to bond over all the horrible things that we've seen, but we definitely do," asserted Cheryl.

In addition to the support she found in her colleagues during the coverage of the massacre, Cheryl also sought therapy on her own time, using her own money. Cheryl was hesitant to criticize her employer at the time because she "wasn't a full-time employee" so she did not have any benefits. However, Cheryl said that at the time of the interview she was "very happy to have a rare journalism job in this day and age that's offering benefits and a full-time job" where things like therapy are covered.

Cheryl believed that the first step to creating a healthy work environment for journalists was to "have a job that is full time with benefits that pays well enough so that they're not below the poverty line." She said that "there are tons of journalists working horrible jobs, long hours, weekend hours, never taking time off, all of those things" that make the "industry itself." According to Cheryl, "Journalists would be a lot better off if their jobs were not constantly at stake" and if "we all had healthcare to be able to afford therapy."

When I asked Cheryl what advice she would give aspiring journalists who may find themselves feeling the stress of the digital frontline, she replied, “I think it’s important that everyone tries to create some sort of distance…. I think I would just say that your mental health is much more important than your career.” However, Cheryl said that it is not always easy to “disconnect” from work when story leads are just one click away because of her “journalistic instinct.” She explained, “if you see something on a Saturday night that could be your story for Monday morning,” try to turn off that “static part of your brain” and tell yourself, “I need to save that for Monday morning. I don’t need to do it right now.” Finally, “the most important thing” Cheryl did to safeguard her mental health, was to “try to have a lot of hobbies outside of just work.” Cheryl found comfort in her colleagues, yoga, and her extensive plant collection and when things get a little too tough, she sought therapy with the help of her new employer.

Narrative Summary Four: Andrew

Andrew is a BIPOC male in his 20’s. He received a Master of Journalism degree from a Canadian university. Since graduating, Andrew has worked for several news organizations across Canada. Most of his experience has been around online investigative work and covering crime and politics. He is currently employed as a web producer for a major Canadian news network. When he is “on the web desk,” Andrew reaches out “to people to get breaking news photos or get videos and stuff if they are relevant to what’s being covered that day.” For example, “if there’s some kind of tough fight on a school yard and it’s gaining a lot of traction,” Andrew will “try and get the right to use that footage.” Or, if “someone takes a photo of a car crash and tweets it out” he will “try to get that photo and permission to use that photo for a story.” Although the online eye-witness content Andrew works with “can be emotionally

distressing," it regularly relates to feel good stories, politics, and other mundane newsworthy events.

I asked Andrew what he remembered learning about UGC in journalism school and he replied, "we went over how to get the rights, what the rights were like, and the legal fair use doctrine and stuff like that." He did not recall any lessons around how to identify and cope with emotionally distressing UGC. "We didn't really have anything like that," he said. Instead, "it was more about making sure if you want to use this video, how you and your organization will be legally covered by it." Only after he graduated and was on-the-job, did Andrew learn about "the emotional component" of covering the news online. He explained,

> The program was really heavily focused on teaching you the skills and teaching you basic ethics and legal components. It wasn't a whole lot about treating yourself or the emotional component of it. That wasn't really a part that I thought about as even being necessary until I started working on the job and getting into the job and covering the news.

After Andrew graduated from journalism school and started working as a web producer, he experienced a few unexpected occupational stressors unique to the digital age of news media. For example, "receiving hateful comments" online was a psychosocial hazard that Andrew said he "wasn't necessarily ready for." When I asked Andrew what the most stressful aspect of being a web journalist is, he responded, "definitely the hateful comments that I would get, and it's not even like they affected me right away." He explained, "you know, you put a story out there and you put yourself out there. That means people notice you or notice your name, and they reach out and email you, and sometimes it can be racist or hateful people." In one instance, Andrew faced anti-Asian rhetoric after he covered a story about "a historical event" involving Asian Canadians.

Although Andrew said that comment sections are "kind of a joke among journalists," a large part of his career has involved moderating online content and sifting through social media in pursuit of his next story. "So, if there was a chance that something would be hateful," Andrew "would have to go in and moderate that chat and that involved reading it." Andrew found it easier to "shake off" negative online comments when he first started as a web producer, but "it kept building up…. You feel slightly more uncomfortable as it goes on," he explained, "because it becomes more of a regular thing." He elaborated,

> The hateful comments just kind of build up over time where you're like, wow, there're people who read my stories or read my work and don't really know me but call me racial slurs or refer to my identity in a negative way.

Despite his experiences with online hatred, Andrew believes that comment sections are necessary for civil public discourse. However, he argued that they "need to be carefully moderated."

As a web producer with his last employer, Andrew had this power to remove and delete comments under the articles that he produced online. However, due to strict policy from his past employer around deleting media user's comments, Andrew felt that some racist and slanderous comments were going unchecked. He described this experience,

> Working in the confined structure of things, especially in a very corporate kind of way, there's limited ways you can, or you can't moderate comments. If it's not explicitly racist or explicitly has a slur or something like that, there's not a lot you can do. This wasn't my direct bosses or anything like that, this is high up the food chain of policies and stuff where the rule was, if it's not explicitly hateful, doesn't have a slur or anything, you don't necessarily delete it. It's not a policy I agree with because these guys are clearly being

> racist or just discussing race when this story has no race component to it. You're clearly trying to talk about or be racist in some way and it makes you feel like, well, that's not a productive comment to have below your story and it's just by policy, it's just, you're not supposed to delete it. So, it was always a weird thing to me, where I find this personally offensive, but I can't remove it or, by policy, it just can't be removed, it's supposed to stay in there.

Andrew worries that other racialized individuals may read his news stories and be targeted by the same hateful commentators that he faces online. He said, "it's not just for journalists themselves, but there's always people who are going to read your stories and, if they scroll down and see a bunch of racist stuff, that might be targeting towards them and might affect them." This ethical dilemma in online reporting has "become a major issue as well," Andrew said, because few of the stories he produces are anonymous. Therefore, his interviewees and story subjects are often left open to online attack from the public. Andrew explained, "if it's not anonymous, people will chime in and say hurtful things or terrible things or speculate about why someone was robbed or something like that."

The Covid-19 pandemic, according to Andrew, has "compounded the stress" he feels around the everyday reality of being a journalist in the digital age:

> I covered this stuff for an entire year. If I wasn't covering it every day, it was at least multiple times a week where I'd have a story that meant writing up numbers, writing up the latest kind of science on it, or the latest studies out of the region.

In addition to the bleak nature of covering the daily death toll of the pandemic, Andrew said that the comments sections around the pandemic contained "a lot more anti-Asian stuff than there

was in the beginning." He described, "there is a lot of anti-Chinese stuff because of the belief that it came out of China. It's China fault."

> People not wanting lockdowns, not believing science, it would just descend into it, and I think because people were stuck at home, because of lockdowns or it was just far easier just to have more people online, and more people wanted to pay attention to the stories, because it matters, but people would just go into all-out flame wars. So, I definitely think the pandemic has made it worse.

While Andrew said that online hatred has been the most unexpected and severe occupational stressors unique to the digital age of news media, he also spoke of his experiences with uncensored eyewitness material. I asked Andrew how often he finds this UGC to be emotionally distressing and he responded:

> I don't want to say, like, once a week or something like that, but it's not infrequent and it's not always something that even turns up or will go to air because it just might not be necessarily newsworthy enough or there isn't enough to make it into a story. But it's not infrequent. There might be a string of things that you see over a month and then you may not see anything for a while. But, because you're searching for stories and you're searching for things, you come across stuff that is disturbing. So, you reach out for stuff, and then once you get that UGC, it's either edited in such a way that the most disturbing parts of it are not the parts that are broadcast. Like, we will blur out bodies, blur out faces or not use those specific shots that caught the most graphic details…I think every journalist can definitely say they found something disturbing online and had to interact with it. My position as a digital producer meant doing it a lot of the time because we had to go fish around to find videos on Facebook, and there's a bunch of people tweeting

about the school yard fight or whatever is blowing up online, so we try and find the videos. You go dig for it and that takes a while and that means going through some disturbing stuff to find it.

During one newsworthy tragedy in his community, Andrew said he "saw lot of the same stuff that the frontline reporter saw, because it was fed back to the web desk." He explained,

> It's not just UGC. My role and my position meant that I would take stuff that was fed back to us over a streaming box. So, like, our reporter would be up in the field, but by the nature of technology, they push it back to us online and we would see those images. We would edit through those images to find stuff that we could use and put online.

Onscreen images of violence and human suffering are not always the most emotionally distressing aspect of working with UGC and eyewitness material. Instead, Andrew often finds the process of turning such material into deliverable news stories to be more stressful than viewing the content online. He described parts of this process:

> You might have to interview friends or family or people where there's some kind of emotional attachment to it. So, it becomes almost personal to you. Or just you have some kind of repeated contact with that disturbing image or disturbing story more than the image itself. It becomes more than an image itself. You know, like the images is static or just a video image, and it can be serving on its own. But if you have repeated exposure to it, or repeated exposure to people around that image, so it's not just a video of a person getting, I don't know, punched in the face repeatedly. It's a video of a person who you've talked to their family about, and they become not just a person anymore. They are a father, or they were a husband who had family, and that lends itself to being more

familiar with the story or being more familiar with something kind of gives it a more traumatizing lens.

Andrew said that the term "UGC is vague and nebulous and not useful." He prefers "eyewitness material" because the focus is taken away from the individual who may or may not be a "user" of his media organization. He is also hesitant to use the label "citizen journalist" to describe eyewitnesses who film newsworthy events and post the footage online. Journalism is a process that requires a level of professionalism that goes beyond merely posting digital footage online. Therefore, Andrew believes that referring to anyone who films a newsworthy event as a citizen journalist is inaccurate. He elaborated,

> The way I look at journalism is it's a process. You take in a bunch of information, you synthesize it into a story, a package or something like that and in a way that people can understand it. And then you put it out there and people can read or watch or listen to it. So, citizen journalism is a thing. I appreciate people who do that. It's good that people film and take photos. I shy away from calling them journalists…It's useful. It's helpful for cases where people can be held accountable, or we can get a visual component to something.

Andrew believes that citizen journalists often fail to practice some of journalism's most fundamental principles such as humanity and accountability. For example, he pointed to a case where footage of a violent schoolyard fight flooded social media in 2021. Graphic video evidence of the violence was posted and shared on social media by citizen journalists "without any foresight," Andrew said. "They're just kids through" he declared, "it exposes not just them, but if anybody who stumbles across it and finds that video is exposed to it, that can have repercussions." In contrast to some members of the public who capture and share newsworthy

events online, Andrew and his colleagues rely on their formal training to ensure that eyewitness content is appropriately verified and edited before it goes to air. For example, in the case of the school yard fight footage, Andrew protected the identities of the children and blurred any graphic details in the video before posting his story online.

In the months prior to the interview, Andrew was largely working from home due to the pandemic. This has made him "feel really isolated," as the online story meetings, he explained, cannot replace the feeling of "just having people to interact with on a daily basis, face to face…. You're either stuck in your head" or "feeling off," he said. Before the pandemic, Andrew worked for "such a small newsroom that it felt like a family." Andrew recommended that employers or newsroom managers check in on their journalists when they are working from home for extended periods. However, he was careful to note that some journalists may not want their employers or coworkers contacting them outside of office hours. Therefore, check-ins should be mutually agreed upon between journalists and management.

Andrew's first job as a web producer came with health benefits, but he found private mental health services to be more effective. He noted that journalism work is often precarious, and many journalists do not have full-time jobs with mental health supports.

> Because there are so few permanent jobs available with benefits, a lot of people are freelancers, and it just makes it a whole lot harder. The nature of the industry where it's people who don't have benefits and don't have health support, also might not have the support system. Then it just kind of makes it more difficult…I was fairly lucky and got a full-time job that was unionized and had benefits right out the gate into journalism and we would have the employee assistance program that we would have access to. So, if we had something go down and we felt like we needed someone talk to, we have that

> opportunity to call essentially like a therapist on call and just talk it through and talk about it or if we needed time off because of stress or because of something that we had gone through covering it in the job, we could ask for time off and get that. But, I mean, that was explained to me at the beginning when I was hired, but I didn't really start accessing and using it until probably like a few years into the job because that's when I started covering some more serious stuff, and it started getting to me a little bit.

Andrew experienced feelings of guilt after asking to take time off to care for his mental health. He explained,

> I felt bad saying I need to slow down and take some time off because this just isn't working, I'm burnt out…being fairly new into the newsroom, I felt bad taking time off and maybe that's just the workaholic in me, but I felt bad having to say no.

Saying no, Andrew explained, is not easy because, "at the end of the day, that's the story and it has to be covered." This leads Andrew to feel like he is shifting responsibility and pushing the stressors that are impacting him onto others in his workplace family. When Andrew requested to take time off to deal with his mental health he felt "lucky." He explained, "my boss was wonderful about letting me take time off after the shooting because it was traumatic, and it was stressful and compounded with other events and the pandemic."

However, when I asked Andrew about attitudes towards mental health in the field of journalism, he explained how "there's definitely a split between two generations." On one hand, "there's a generation that has grown up understanding that there are things that, if you don't talk about them, are just going to hurt you in the long run." This generation, according to Andrew, "grew up talking about things, going to therapy and just had a normal kind of relationship with

therapy." On the other hand, there is an "older generation of reporters and editors and stuff that are not as much open" about mental health issues. He said:

> I don't think that they don't want to deal with it, but [therapy] was either a thing that was never really offered or it was just, you know, you just be strong, work and you don't talk about it at all.

As our interview was winding down, I asked Andrew what advice he would give to journalism educators and newsroom managers surrounding improving the mental health in the field. He described how journalism schools and employers need to educate students and employees on the stressors unique to the digital age of news media, such as uncensored UGC, comment section racism, burnout, and emotional labour. He said, "most journalism schools are either not equipped to teach it, or they're staffed by journalists right now where that was not a component of a newsroom." Moreover, he explained, "if you want to make journalism work and make the news work, you have to have a kind of level of familiarity. So, having the management be open to reaching out if you're not doing well or just checking in on you, I think it would be a good thing." Most importantly, Andrew said that media outlets need to offer health benefits to their employees that meet the needs of journalists not only in the field but those working online as well.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented individual narrative summaries that I constructed for all participants. I used direct quotations from the participants to provide thick and rich descriptions of their unique experiences pertaining to health and safety in journalism. Several overarching themes were shared across the narrative summaries including journalistic capital, the ubiquitous nature of trauma in daily news coverage, the structure of work, uncensored UGC, and formal

education, training and supports. In the next chapter, I use Bourdieusian thought to frame a discussion around these themes and how they relate to the literature.

While this chapter focused on some of the negative aspects of journalistic work, the participants spoke of many of the things that they loved about their jobs as well. They described meeting, interviewing, and telling the stories of amazing people. They proudly spoke of telling stories that garner public support and improve their communities. It may be the duty of the occupational health and safety scholar to highlight safety issues within the workplace, but it is important to step back and to see both the good and the bad. The participants were united in their belief that journalism, despite its challenges and drawbacks, is a noble profession through which they are serving their communities.

Chapter 5: Thematic Analysis and Discussion

This chapter discusses overarching themes discovered in the participant interviews and how they relate to the existing literature. Five themes emerged: journalistic capital, the ubiquitous nature of trauma in daily news coverage, the structure of work, uncensored UGC, and formal education, training, and supports. The chapter begins with a review of the Bourdieusian concepts used to frame the discussion: capital, journalistic field, doxa, habitus, and symbolic violence.

With the rise of the internet and social media, the *journalistic field* has changed dramatically since the time of Bourdieu's life and death. However, many of the mechanisms of power to which he refers in his lectures and writing stand true in the field today. For example, Bourdieu (1996) describes how audience ratings act as "the hidden god of this universe who governs conduct and consciences" (p. 25). "A one-point drop in audience ratings" he sarcastically claims, "can, in certain cases, mean instant death with no appeal" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 25). This hidden deity, along with other instruments of power such as market demands, government subsidies, and official sources of information (e.g., government officials, the police) encourage a highly competitive and rapid form of journalism characterized by an unhealthy "obsession with 'scoops'" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 6).

Journalistic doxa is a common set of unquestioned beliefs about the profession that often lead to common action such as the competitive drive for story leads within the field (Schultz, 2007). These beliefs are taken-for-granted and unquestioned because they seem part of the natural order of things (Schultz, 2007). For example, journalistic doxa is at play in the un-discussed standard of what is considered newsworthy and thus in the common experience of the journalist in pursuit of the next big story. Journalists are in constant search of "the extraordinary"

and “anything that breaks the routine” (Bourdieu, 1996 p. 20). Bourdieu describes “the pressure to get things out in a hurry” (p, 28), “the competition among newspapers” (p. 28), and “the pressure to get a scoop, and get there first” (p. 28).

Bourdieu (1977) describes the *habitus* as the unspoken strategy and assumed rules of the game. One such strategy, as well as a recurring theme in the participant interviews, was the assumed objective of beating competing news networks and industry professionals to the story. A second rule referred to by Elaine, was the “if it bleeds, it leads” operating mechanism of journalism where stories depicting crime and other sensational content are chased by players in the field. According to the participants, being first and obtaining sought after news content are direct sources of journalistic capital and emotional distress.

Bourdieu (1996) notes that “journalists are under constant pressure to offer a daily dose of the extra-daily, and that’s not easy” (p. 20). This pressure “explains the attention they give to extraordinary occurrences, usual unusual events like fires floods, or murders” (p. 20). He argues that such examples of sensational news are clear cut examples of *symbolic violence* in that they distract from the bigger picture. “[B]lood, sex, melodrama and crime have always been big sellers” (p. 17), and the race for ratings inevitably brings this violence to headlines.

The treatment of work-related psychosocial injury as a matter of journalists’ personal responsibility is another form of symbolic violence in the field. It distracts from the root cause of potential injury and perpetuates the careless worker myth. The careless worker myth is the idea that workers are accident-prone, careless, or even irresponsible in the execution of their duties and therefore cause their own injuries (Foster & Barnetson, 2016). However, most injuries are caused by unsafe working conditions that are under the control of employers, not workers (Foster & Barnetson, 2016)

Journalistic Capital

> Elaine: Tragedies, on a mass scale, provided an immediate opportunity to advance my career. You can call it being in the right place at the right time and it took days for me to get over the high of the opportunity to advance my career. To realize the scale of the tragedy that I had just covered and how twisted my reaction to it was.

A systematic analysis of how journalism scholarship appropriates Bourdieusian thought shows that scholars have yet to apply the concept of journalistic capital to the occupational health and safety of journalism (Maares & Hanusch, 2020). Yet, Bourdieusian thought is increasingly popular in journalism scholarship and has been used to explore a variety of aspects of journalistic work, such as journalistic routines, the shift in journalistic norms, technological change, and the boundaries of the journalistic field (Eldridge, 2017; Maares & Hanusch, 2020; Schultz, 2007). In the context of the current study, appropriating Bourdieusian thought provides valuable tools for better understanding some of the ethical dilemmas faced by the participants in pursuit of journalistic capital. When dealing with health and safety issues in journalism, addressing the solution requires first understanding the problem (Seely, 2019).

The participants are faced with a dilemma: there are health risks associated with trauma reporting but covering trauma events provides an immediate opportunity to advance in the field. As a field-specific symbolic capital, journalistic capital is associated with "peer recognition, respect from colleagues, and a favourable position within journalism" (Maares & Hanusch, 2020, p.1).

This conflict between journalistic capital and emotional distress is illustrated by Elaine's experience around witnessing her first dead body. On one hand, Elaine felt excited after receiving praise from her producer for being the first reporter to arrive on the scene of the

accident. On the other hand, she later felt sick and ashamed of her "twisted" reaction to the loss of an innocent child. The participants spoke of how this constant race for subject matter leaves them with little time to emotionally or professionally process news content before it gets published.

Bourdieu (1996) argues that "time limits make it highly unlikely that anything can be said" (p. 15) and, therefore, the rapidity of the journalistic field acts as an invisible form of censorship. This is evident when the participants highlighted how time constraints have negatively impacted the quality of the work they produce, as well as their overall job satisfaction and emotional wellbeing. For example, Cheryl often reminds herself, "your mental health is much more important than being the first to a story." Additionally, research highlights how the rush to produce deliverable news content does not allow time for survivors to grieve before being bombarded by journalist's questions and rolling cameras (Cherry, 2021).

The participants described how the rushed nature of the news cycle makes them feel guilt and angst around further traumatizing or hurting their interviewees. For instance, Cheryl often worried that she was not "covering things right" because of time constraints and the fast-paced nature of journalism. Similarly, Elaine said:

> Sometimes you find yourself in a situation where you do a 45-minute interview with a grieving mother about the loss of their son, and then you have 30 minutes to get that story up online and 30 minutes to turn it into a television package. And you never feel like you've really done the story justice by the end of the day. And that's a hard thing to go home with…We know that we're being trusted to handle these stories with great care and responsibility and as journalists that's exactly what we aspire to do but with the evolving pressures of the 24-hour news cycle combined with a lack of resources, and newsrooms'

> tighter deadlines, it's actually harder to deliver those stories with the amount of care and responsibility that they deserve.

This sentiment was echoed by a journalist interviewee in the literature who said, "the combination of long hours, stress of navigating a breaking news situation, and trying to not cause additional harm while doing your job – it's heavy and takes a lot out of me" (Cherry, 2021, p. 130).

Elaine reported feeling sick to her stomach by her "twisted reaction" to being first on the scene of a fatal traffic accident involving the death of a child in her community. On one hand, she was "thrilled," as she said "I was first, I was going to get the story out first. I did a great job. My editors were mentioning, you know, 'this is fantastic.'" On the other hand, "later that night," Elaine came to the disturbing realization that "somebody had died" and she grew "sick and ashamed" of her initial reaction. She explained further, "the fact that I was thrilled that I was going to get a scoop when someone had just lost a child, I was so sick to my stomach." She said it is awful how "grossly addicted and twisted it can become in our mind."

The moral discomfort in contacting survivors immediately after a trauma event was a reoccurring theme in the participant interviews and the literature. According to the occupational health literature, this places journalists at risk of moral injury (Feinstein et al., 2018). Moral injury is defined as "the injury done to a person's conscience or moral compass when that person perpetrates, witnesses or fails to prevent acts that transgress their own moral and ethical values or codes of conduct" (Feinstein et al., 2018, p. 1). Bourdieu would likely refer to moral injury as one of the many failures brought on by the field's obsession with the scoop, rapidity, and competition. While he was largely focused on how these factors negatively impact the public's

access to important information, I agree that they also have negative occupational health and safety implications for journalists and increase the potential of further traumatizing survivors.

Although the participants agree that contacting survivors is one of the most stressful aspects of work, Elaine went into the most depth on the topic when she explained:

> I dislike having to speak to families when they've lost someone. When a son or daughter is shot, or when they've lost a relative to Covid or their child is the subject of a disturbing online bullying event at school. It's really hard to talk to people about the trauma that they've endured. Because, you know, fundamentally, they don't want to talk to you about it and you don't want to talk to them about it either. You don't want to put them in that position. You don't want to write that story, but you have to do it anyway and it's just part of the job. So, you just sort of, I hate to say man up, but you just sort of bite your teeth and bear it or whatever the expression is.

Not only does Elaine's experience highlight her feelings of guilt around ambushing grieving family members but it also points to the emotional labour involved in turning others' trauma into deliverable news content. Emotional labour is defined as "any aspect of a job that requires workers to regulate their emotions to meet organizationally defined rules and to display the required emotions" of the job (Foster & Barnetson, 2016, p. 147). In other words, journalists "engage in emotional labour when they are asked to display an emotion-empathy, happiness, friendliness- that they may not actually feel" (p. 147). Every time the participants contact a survivor or report on a trauma event, they must regulate their emotions to meet the organizationally defined rule of emotional impartiality. Emotional labour is associated with negative health consequences, such as a decrease in job satisfaction and an increase in psychological stress in workers (Foster & Barnetson, 2016).

The participants' experiences around contacting survivors are consistent with the literature as the death knock is often mentioned as a recognized psychosocial hazard (Cherry, 2021). Death knocking refers to the point at which a journalist attempts to interview a bereaved family member or partner to garner their thoughts, feelings, and other information about the death (Harcup, 2014). For example, moments after Elaine witnessed her first dead body, she contacted the deceased's grieving mother for comment. This was an experience that Elaine said has negatively impacted her life more than any other emotionally demanding assignment she has endured. Again, this situation illustrates the dilemma between journalistic capital and emotional distress as the same news assignment that advanced Elaine's career negatively impacted her emotional wellbeing.

In a recent study examining the personal impact of reporting on trauma, 22 journalists were asked how soon after an event such as a homicide or traffic fatality they generally make their first attempt to contact survivors (Cherry, 2021). Thirteen of the 22 journalists responded, "as soon as I have the information necessary to do so (i.e., name/address/phone number)" (p. 127). Five journalists said, "within the first 24 hours" (p. 127). Only five of the journalist participants indicated they were comfortable reaching out to survivors in the immediate aftermath of traumatic events and none described it as a positive experience. One participant said he grew numb and began viewing his interviewees as statistics rather than human beings (Cherry 2021). This was similar to Elaine's response to death knocking and trauma reporting as she described having grown into a "negative, jaded, deeply cynical person."

It is not only journalists who are sounding the alarm bells around death knocking, as survivors of trauma events are also calling on news outlets to change their approach. The Survivors Against Terror report, whose contributors include the widows, relatives, and victims of

the Manchester Arena and Fishmongers Hall terror attacks, calls on media outlets to agree not to contact people seriously injured or bereaved relatives of victims for at least two days after a trauma event (Gayle, 2021). The group of survivors is also demanding that journalists avoid printing photos of attackers, manifestos, and videos and to stop publishing detailed accounts of terrorist methods and the injuries they cause (Gayle, 2021). My guiding research questions largely focused on UGC and emotional wellbeing in journalism, however, my participants shed light on how some of the follow-up practices around the digital material such as death knocking must be factored into how we make sense of the psychosocial hazards inherent in UGC.

According to my research participants, competition and many of the field's driving pressures make journalism a highly stressful profession. Bourdieu (1996) argues that making the mechanisms of power in the journalistic field conscious or explicit "could lead to an arrangement that would neutralize competition" (p. 55). If people became aware of them, he explains, "conscious action aimed at controlling the structural mechanisms that engender moral failure would be possible" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 56). Bourdieu says that such moral failure is evident in the flurry of headlines that fill up "precious time" (p. 18) that would be better suited for "relevant news" (p.18) or "the information that all citizens ought to have in order to exercise their democratic rights" (p. 18).

It is not the war, famine, natural disasters, or political events behind the headlines that make them problematic, according to Bourdieu, but rather the media's treatment of such topics. He argues that a sort of homogenization process occurs when current affairs go through the "keep it short, keep it simple" (p. 17) production process of the daily news cycle. Although Bourdieu's understanding of the journalistic field gives little weight to the autonomy or moral integrity of the individual journalist, it provides valuable insight into some of the operating

mechanisms that promote the fast thinking, pressure driven field described by the research participants.

Bourdieu reflects upon the rules and nature of the journalistic game rather than on the beliefs or consciousness of the individual players. However, it is possible for elements of the habitus to come to consciousness like when Elaine weighed the chances of landing a promotion against the emotional guilt she felt benefiting from other's trauma. She was consciously aware of the reality that landing a sensational story was in line with the silent doxic news values of her field and questioned her journalistic identity or habitus.

The Ubiquitous Nature of Trauma in Daily News Coverage

> Lisa: We know that suffering occurs. We know that suffering is happening all the time but are we meant to know it, and consume it, and absorb it? No.

In their psychological study of journalists in the newsroom, Feinstein et al. (2014) refer to "the ubiquitous nature of violence in daily news coverage" (p. 6). This theme was explored in all four participant interviews, with a focus on the omnipresence of trauma in daily news coverage rather than onscreen images of extreme violence. The participants described how a great deal of their time was spent telling the stories of victims and survivors. They spoke of the "emotional component" of continuously covering automobile accidents, crime, homicide, natural disasters, animal cruelty, racial injustice, death, and disease. This is consistent with the literature as research suggests that between 80 and 100% of journalists have been exposed to work-related traumatic events either onscreen or in person (Smith et al., 2015).

Elaine said her experiences of trauma reporting have shaped her into a "negative, jaded, deeply cynical person" and described how "seeing your first dead body is like a rite of passage." Andrew spoke of all the "stressful and compounding things" on which he has reported from the

web desk. Cheryl described "feeling stressed all the time" by the combined pressure of writing about trauma and the precarious nature of employment in journalism. Finally, Lisa used the metaphor of the fly on the wall to describe her "shocking level of perception" of human suffering through other's eyes. She explained how people are not meant to have an awareness of human suffering to the degree to which journalists do.

According to Bourdieu (1996), sensational news topics such as blood, sex, melodrama, crime, forest fires, tornados, and floods, are all directly linked to market success. He suggests that sensational news topics "offer something for everyone" (p. 18). They are "the basic ingredients of news because they interest everyone, and because they take up time-time that could be used to say something else" (p. 18). Bourdieu describes how the news media sees the world as "a series of apparently absurd stories that all end up looking the same, endless parades of poverty-stricken countries, sequences of events that, having appeared with no explanation, will disappear with no solution" (p. 7).

Through the stringing together of such events, the news media leaves potentially meaningful and complex events "stripped of any political necessity" (p. 7). He explains how "journalism shows us a world full of ethnic wars, racist hatred, violence and crime- a world full of incomprehensible and unsettling dangers from which we must withdraw for our own protection" (p. 8). Bourdieu touches on how the media's obsession with a fast-food style of trauma does not "serve to mobilize or politicize" but rather "increases xenophobic fears, just as the delusion that crime and violence are always and everywhere on the rise feeds anxieties and phobias about safety in the streets and in the home" (p. 8).

The Huffington Post published a five-part series in which they declared a mental health epidemic in the newsroom (Arana, 2017). In the series, one journalist wrote, "as much as

journalists may fancy themselves superhuman observers of history, the truth is that we are as susceptible to trauma as the victims whose stories we tell" (p. 1). This sentiment was echoed by all four of my participants as they spoke of how reporting on trauma has adversely impacted their lives.

Covering trauma is a fundamental part of journalism and an unavoidable psychosocial hazard that cannot simply be shut off. Nevertheless, it must be managed, and this is the responsibility, not solely of the individual journalist, but of news organizations, educational institutions, and social media platform providers. While the participants are expected to report on trauma events with emotional impartiality, turning others' suffering into deliverable news content can be emotionally distressing. As trauma coverage frequency and intensity increases, so does the severity of post-traumatic stress symptoms in journalists (Seely, 2019). In one study examining the personal impact of reporting on trauma, 15 of the 18 journalists who answered the question, what impact has covering traumatic events had on you? reported being impacted negatively (Cherry, 2021). One respondent with more than twenty years of experience said, "I think about death and dying a lot more than most people I know" (Cherry, 2021, p. 130). Experienced journalists may endure more trauma, but all journalists who cover trauma are at risk of developing psychological injury (Specht & Tsilman, 2018).

The Covid-19 pandemic provided the participants with a new source of trauma on which to report. Andrew described how repeatedly covering the daily death toll "compounds the stress" he felt around other aspects of his work. Elaine argued that there will always be a constant influx of trauma material to fill the 24-hour news cycle, but the pandemic "provided a new topic." Cheryl said that reporting on the pandemic and keeping up with the rapidly evolving science was

"exhausting on a day-to-day basis." Lisa described the emotional burden of "everyday telling people how their lives have changed dramatically."

Survey data indicate that journalists repeatedly covering the Covid-19 pandemic and its associated consequences had significantly higher levels of psychological distress than journalists who are not reporting on the pandemic (Tyson & Wild, 2021). This is consistent with the occupational health literature as the rates of post-traumatic stress symptoms in journalists rise during times of crisis (Idås et al., 2019). In addition to providing journalists with a steady stream of emotionally demanding newsworthy content, the Covid-19 pandemic forced many journalists to work from home and precipitated the layoff of hundreds of journalists across the country (Wechsler, 2021).

For many journalists, home may be the location of personal traumas and stress unrelated to work. Respondents from one study with high scores on both traumatic experiences in their personal life and a high amount of professional crisis-related assignments had a significantly higher level of PTSI symptoms than others (Backholm & Björkqvist, 2010). Therefore, it is important to consider not only how this global health crisis has increased journalist's reliance on UGC and the web, but also how it has impacted the structure of work for many journalists. For example, the public health crisis has precipitated the layoff of hundreds of journalists across the country (Wechsler, 2021).

The Structure of Work

According to Bourdieu (1996), what an individual journalist "can or cannot do is largely determined by the structure in which they are placed and by the positions they occupy within the structure" (p. 54). The individual journalist, "like an electron…is the expression of a field" (p 54). Job insecurity in the field of journalism makes it more difficult for players to improve the

field from within. He says that there is so little job security in the news media that "there is a greater tendency toward political conformity" (p.15). Bourdieu refers to this idea as "economic censorship" (p.15) where "consciously or unconsciously, people censor themselves" (p. 15) to avoid being "called into line" (p.15). He asserts that the autonomy of an individual journalist depends on the degree to which press ownership is concentrated as "concentration of the press augments job insecurity by reducing the number of potential employers" (p. 69). Moreover, the autonomy of the individual journalists depends on the position occupied within the journalistic field (Bourdieu, 1996).

Working Alone

> Andrew: The isolating nature of working from home means you're either stuck in your head or, if you're not super close with your boss or something like that, or because you just started, it makes it a whole lot harder to approach someone and say, "hey, I'm not doing well."

The literature highlights how personal and environmental factors work in combination with the stressors of trauma reporting makes journalism an at-risk profession (Smith et al., 2018). Two such factors discussed by the participants were working alone and the precarious nature of employment in the field of journalism. Andrew described "feeling really isolated" and "off" when working from home. This is problematic, because "it is precisely the absence of other people that makes working alone a significant psychosocial hazard" (Foster & Barnetson, 2016, p. 134). Working alone exacerbates other hazards present in the workplace.

Working alone can also lead to "uncontrolled hazards causing harm to a worker without others noticing and taking action" (Foster & Barnetson, 2016, p. 134). Andrew described how journalists' emotional wellbeing may go unchecked if they are working from home. He stated:

> If you're feeling off, a co-worker or your boss might see that at work. But here, it's just you on your own and so you're reliant on you noticing things and having the willpower and the foresight to reach out and ask for help.

Similarly, Cheryl pointed to how journalists are often removed from informal workplace supports when reporting on emotionally demanding assignments. She explained, "if you are covering a trial, you might be covering it all alone. Whereas if everyone is covering a mass shooting, you're all covering it together. You all have that camaraderie." The participants described how their greatest workplace support system is their coworkers. In addition to isolating journalists from the formal and informal workplace supports, the Covid-19 pandemic is the current example of a traumatic event that added to the already precarious nature of employment in the field of journalism.

Precarious Employment

> Cheryl: Basically, everyone I know in the field is job insecure.

Journalism is a notoriously precarious profession (Reid & Ghaedipour, 2021). Precarious employment is defined as paid work characterized by limited social benefits and statutory entitlements, job insecurity and low wages (Foster & Barnetson, 2016). Precarious employment is associated with increased risk of work-related injury and other negative health outcomes including increased stress and poorer physical well-being (Foster & Barnetson, 2016).

The precarious nature of employment in the field of journalism was a reoccurring theme in the interviews and literature. When I asked Cheryl to describe the most stressful aspect of being a journalist in the digital age, she said:

> I think layoffs are what come to mind first. Basically, everyone I know in the field is

> job insecure. I guess you would call it freelance or on the side juggling multiple jobs to try to get by. I mean, I don't want to shit on my employer, but I have a university degree and I make $35,000 dollars a year.

Despite her low salary, Cheryl said she was "lucky" to have "a rare journalism job in this day and age that's offering benefits and a full-time job." Likewise, Andrew said that journalists were "lucky" "to get a full-time job with salary and benefits." A group of researchers looking at how journalists with precarious employment handle the day-to-day demands of their work, analyzed in-depth interviews with more than 100 journalists. The participants "were caught between intense demands from employers for near-total commitment and persistent anxiety and financial insecurity rooted in the precarious conditions of their work (Reid & Ghaedipour, 2021, p. 1).

Elaine said she would have never gone to journalism school had she known how little income she would make in relation to the heavy "demands" of the job. Her low salary and lack of access to benefits and mental health supports made her feel "undervalued" at work. She explained that "when you do encounter vicarious trauma, whether it's on the frontline or through user-generated content, the weight of that experience ends up being compared with how much you feel valued." She went on to say that in journalism, "there's a romanticized notion of being overworked and underpaid that doesn't apply to other fields." This sentiment was reiterated by Lisa who described how journalism is not a "financially satisfying" profession but rather a "lifestyle" characterized by high demands, low pay, and "the thrill" of uncovering the news.

Precarious work and working alone are examples of how the structure of work and the employment relationship itself are often linked to ill health (Foster & Barnetson, 2016). According to Bourdieu (1996), precarious employment is a form of "economic censorship" (p. 15) in that it makes it more difficult for players to improve the field from within. Occupational

health and safety practitioners and scholars rarely identify work itself as an occupational hazard (Foster & Barnetson, 2016). Instead, traditional approaches look at aspects of work, such as tools, equipment, and processes (Foster & Barnetson, 2016). This is evident in the occupational health literature as researchers examine aspects of journalistic work such as exposure to violent UGC or journalists' response to a terror event (Backholm & Idås, 2015; Feinstein et al., 2014). Identifying UGC as a hazard that could harm workers while also considering the entirety of work provides a richer understanding of the health and safety of journalism in the digital age.

User Generated Content

> Elaine: A lot of the stories we chase end up being the results of user-generated content, a video that's posted online, a tweet that's shared, an angry blog from a parent about something that happened at school. So now that the content is so widely available, it gives us better access to the thoughts and concerns of the communities we serve. So, a lot of the news that we generate is in response to things that we see online produced by other people.

Ambiguous Definition

UGC has caught the attention of several occupational health researchers, but there is still some ambiguity around how the digital content is defined. The literature and common online discourse refer to the material as eye-witness media, citizen journalism, participatory journalism, audience material, and sometimes UGC. However, leading scholars in the field define UGC as "video material and photographs submitted to the newsroom by the public" (Feinstein et al., 2014, p. 1). While this definition serves as a great jumping off point, it fails to capture the diverse range of UGC revealed in journalists' interviews.

Andrew said the understanding of UGC was "vague and nebulous." Lisa said she preferred to use plain language rather than "buzz words." She explained, "we just say social media." The participants mostly viewed UGC as potentially newsworthy "photos and stuff posted online." Material submitted to the newsroom by the public/media user makes up a small amount of the uncensored UGC that the participants report on every day.

A broader definition of UGC can be found outside the occupational health literature in digital marketing and journalism publications where UGC is regarded as any content (e.g., photos, videos, audio, text, a blog post) created by a member of the public (Fader & Winer, 2012; Flynn, 2021). This content can be provided to news organizations directly or posted on social media or the web (Fader & Winer, 2012; Flynn, 2021). This broader definition is useful for examining UGC from an occupational health and safety lens because it aligns more closely with the participants' understanding of the digital material. It also highlights some of the types of UGC that the participants consider emotionally distressing.

Expanding the Definitional Scope of UGC

Like many journalists, the participants were exposed to a wide range of online abuse in recent years (Westcott, 2019). Lisa described how "the images are not so much distressing" but "things like the acrimony, the vitriol, the one-sidedness, those kinds of things" posted online and directed at the media by the public are "ethically distressing." She said that online vitriol and the public's response to certain stories she produces are "making journalism a less satisfying place to be." Elaine described how "sometimes more distressing than the experience of covering this content is the public response that comes from the coverage." For example, she regularly received "emails upon emails of criticism, of shaming, of anger, of hatred" that is "harder to deal with than covering the issue itself."

When I asked Andrew what he found most stressful about being a web journalist in the digital age, he responded, “definitely the hateful comments that I would get, and it’s not even like they affected me right away.” He explained, “you put a story out there and you put yourself out there. That means people notice you or notice your name, and they reach out and email you, and sometimes it can be racist or hateful people.” When Andrew reported on “a historical event” involving Asian Canadians in his community he experienced online harassment and racism from his readers. Cheryl said that she produced a story focusing on Indigenous peoples only to find racist comments posted online under her article.

All four participants spoke of their experiences around hateful or racist online comments. However, working with comment section UGC is part of Andrew’s job as a web editor, so the emphasis on this topic was the greatest in his narrative summary. Andrew also experiences online racism from the perspective of a racialized worker and is therefore at a higher risk of negative health effects from harassment (Foster & Barnetson, 2016). The participants’ exposure to online hate and harassment from media users and the public is consistent with current survey data. A recent survey of 115 Canadian and American journalists found that 85% believed their career had become less safe in the past five years (Westcott, 2019). Online harassment is the largest threat, as more than 70% of the participating journalists report they experience safety issues or online threats (Westcott, 2019).

In another survey of more than a thousand Canadian journalists and media workers, online harassment is a daily occurrence for some journalists (Bundale, 2021). Online harassment takes a toll on their mental well-being with a third of the journalists reporting feelings of fear, shame, and anger with others, trouble sleeping and other mental health issues (Bundale, 2021). Participants report needing to distance themselves from social media, delete their online

accounts, or leave the profession of journalism. Some avoid potentially polarizing stories or consider requesting a change of assignments (Bundale, 2021). These findings were echoed by the participants in the current study as they described the need to distance themselves from their smart phones and "turn off the white noise and just be present." They also spoke of avoiding certain stories and making "weird editorial choices" in fear of eliciting online vitriol from media users.

With the travel restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic it stands to reason that news agencies rely more heavily on content submitted to them or posted online by outside sources such as relief agencies, on-the-ground human rights workers, activists, and citizen bystanders. Not only has the pandemic confined many journalists to working alone at their desks it has also increased their reliance on UGC. The participants regularly searched the web for newsworthy UGC during both work and home hours. Every time they browsed social media, they did so from the perspective of a journalist. That meant scanning Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other online platforms for leads and newsworthy visuals at all hours of the day.

The participants' heavy reliance on UGC is consistent with existing survey data. For example, 90 of 100 journalists from 48 countries who participated in a study report viewing uncensored UGC at least once per week and 22% engage with it for over 6 hours a day (Dubberley et al., 2015). Over half of the survey participants report viewing distressing UGC several times a week and 40% report that the work has had a negative impact on their personal lives (Dubberley et al., 2015). A study by Feinstein et al. (2014) reports that 40.9% of participants have daily exposure to violent UGC and 46.1% and 13% of participants report weekly and monthly exposure. The mean time of exposure per shift is 3.12 hours (Feinstein et

al., 2014). The literature suggests that journalist working with UGC often see more disturbing imagery daily than frontline workers (Dubberley et al., 2015).

While the participants often sourced UGC online, they also received eyewitness material from other sources such as first responders and frontline journalists. For example, Lisa worked with a running police scanner on her desk and Andrew worked with a "streaming box" that enabled frontline reporters to feed live visual and audio material to his computer monitor in real-time. These are two sources of digital eyewitness content that are discussed in the literature.

UGC and Occupational Health and Safety

The participants in the current study said that emotionally distressing UGC was "not infrequent", but they were unable to quantify the regularity of exposure. Nevertheless, each participant told meaningful stories of past exposures to emotionally distressing UGC. During one newsworthy event in his community, Andrew said he "saw lot of the same stuff that the frontline reporter saw because it was fed back to the web desk." While Elaine's most traumatic experience occurred on the frontline, she viewed "disturbing videos" of police interactions and eyewitness footage of people "living in profoundly distressing conditions." She said that "online content has just as much potential to be distressful to one person as seeing something disturbing in the field has for another person." Lisa often dealt with eyewitness footage of traffic accidents and other traumatic events in her community. Cheryl spoke of the stress involved in investigating "shocking videos without any context of what's going on."

The participants spoke of how uncensored UGC is not always emotionally distressing because of the overt violence or trauma depicted in the eyewitness footage, but because of the context and broader social implications of the material. For example, Cheryl said that women were more likely than their male counterparts to experience more emotional distress covering

stories and UGC involving sexual assault trials. Elaine and Andrew said that people of colour experience more emotional distress covering stories and UGC involving racial injustice. Lisa's narrative summary and the literature highlight how mothers often find UGC depicting the death of a child to be particularly emotionally distressing (Feinstein et al., 2014).

The participants said that emotionally distressing UGC is difficult to quantify in the workplace because "there might be a string of things that you see over a month and then not see anything for a while." For example, the participants reported an influx of emotionally distressing UGC during the 2020 Nova Scotia attacks that left 22 dead. Psychosocial hazards are notoriously illusive in the workplace and this influx of material is consistent with the literature as volume of UGC is shown to increase during unpredictable crisis events such as terror attacks (Foster & Barnetson, 2016; Rauchfleisch et al., 2017; Wardle & Williams, 2010).

UGC and Democratizing the Press

Bourdieu (1996) was writing from a time when television possessed a "de facto monopoly on what goes into the heads of a significant part of the population and what they think" (p. 18). Since his death in 2002, journalism has changed and there is a new juggernaut in the field, the citizen journalist. With the emergence of the internet and social media, there is a mechanism of pressure placed on journalists from the bottom up that did not exist in Bourdieu's time. Bourdieu (1996) refers largely to government, market value, money interest and other mechanisms of pressure that have clout over the press. In Bourdieu's analyses of the field, a great deal of the scoops found by journalists come from other news sources and sources of knowledge run by the government. Nowadays, citizen journalists and online commentators influence and apply pressure on reporters to cover certain stories from certain angles.

While journalists like Elaine felt compelled to get the next big scoop and impress their producers, they also felt the machinery of power coming from below; coming from victims and citizens with expectations around how their trauma will be depicted in the news. They felt pressure to tell stories that promoted democratic rights and political engagement. Journalists felt they lacked the time to tell meaningful stories and time to shed light on the systemic issues underlying the traumatic content they cover daily.

One cannot help but wonder what Bourdieu would say about the current digital age of news media, citizen journalism and UGC. Perhaps, he would argue that citizen journalists are governed by the same operating mechanisms of power as their professional counterparts. After all, are social media likes, views, shares, and clicks that much different from the hidden god of audience ratings? On the other hand, I propose that the key role of UGC is democratizing the press, focusing the media's gaze on systemic and social issues, and mobilizing the public. For example, UGC has sparked widespread social justice movements such as the Black Lives Matter fight for police reform and the Me Too social movement against sexual harassment where people used social media to publicize allegations of sex crimes.

Education, Training and Supports

> Elaine: School prepared me really well for the task work of being a journalist but gave me no preparation for living life as a journalist.

Bourdieu (1990) suggests that education leads to cultural reproduction in that institutions like journalism schools socialize students with a set of world views as legitimate. For example, it solidifies the doxa or the common sense, taken-for-granted ideas of what it means to be a journalist such as the need to compete and get the scoop before anyone else in the field. Journalism schools have the power to both preserve and reduce many of the negative

characteristics of the journalistic field as discussed by the participants. For example, Elaine described the "glorification" in journalism school and popular culture of "overwork and burning the midnight oil and writing the late-night article while chain smoking and drinking." The participants felt that journalism school focused little on how to mentally cope with the stressors of the field but rather on how to be an effective player in the fast-paced game of journalism.

Bourdieu (1990) argues that education reproduces and legitimizes inequality in society. Journalism schools, for example, shape students' habitus and enhance their journalistic capital over non-educated journalists attempting to enter the field (Bourdieu, 1990). The habitus is comprised of various attributes of a person's culture such as their vocabulary and cultural knowledge. These attributes place the citizen journalists at a disadvantage as they are out of place in this formalized field. This can lead to formal journalists rejecting the world of citizen journalists and deeming them illegitimate. This is evident in the participants' rejection of citizen journalism as a real form of journalism. Unlike the citizen journalist who posts a shocking video online, the participants believe that professional journalism is more than just capturing and posting newsworthy content online. Peer recognition and respect from colleagues are considered great sources of journalistic capital (Maares & Hanusch, 2020). Therefore, an individual with a journalism degree has higher journalistic capital than the citizen journalist navigating the journalistic field.

While journalism schools make those with formal education legitimate actors with privileges, citizen journalists are challenging these privileges. In the digital age of social media, there are online spaces in which citizen journalists broaden their audiences and increase their journalistic capital. According to Lisa, many of the younger journalists in her office are not formally trained, but rather have web-based skills and a natural journalistic drive. Lisa felt that

many of the non-educated journalists in her newsroom outperform and outlast many of the formally trained journalist because of their natural curiosity and connections.

Formal mental health education, training, and support was a reoccurring theme in the participant interviews and the literature. However, Lisa only touched on training and supports because she did not go to journalism school. The rest of the participants received little to no education in journalism school around trauma, mental health and UGC. They described the disproportionate focus on ethics, copyright, liability, and fair dealing practices rather than health and wellbeing in journalism school. When I asked Cheryl about her formal education around vicarious trauma in journalism school, she responded, "I think that education around it needs to be improved because there is no education around it right now." Relatedly, Elaine said there were no lessons on how to deal with trauma, or "how to recognize the signs and symptoms that you're experiencing trauma."

A content analysis of course material from a total of 61 UK universities and 7 interviews with journalism educators, curricula developers, and journalists working with uncensored UGC found that many educational bodies are failing to train in vicarious trauma (Specht & Tsilman, 2018). Less than 1% of journalism courses and modules examined teach the risks of vicarious trauma or uncensored UGC (Specht & Tsilman, 2018). In another survey-based study of 115 US and Canadian journalists, less than half of the participants reported receiving any web-based safety training (Westcott, 2019).

Bourdieu suggests that education reproduces existing power relations in a field. Education can shape one's habitus and enhance journalistic capital. Education may provide journalists with the tools and knowledge needed to identify and manage potential psychosocial hazards involving UGC or remind workers of their right to safe and healthy workplaces. On the

other hand, a lack of education surrounding the health and safety of journalism in the digital age may reproduce existing power relations in the field that perpetuate the culture of silence and the careless worker myth discussed in this thesis. This was evident in how the participants spoke of leaving journalism school with the sense of how to be productive players in the game, but had little knowledge in how to cope with the "toxic culture of journalism." Education taught the participants how to navigate within the existing journalistic field, not how to challenge the mechanisms of power driving the problematic elements of journalism such as shift-work, precarious employment, and the competitive rush for original news content.

It is important to note that UGC is a rapidly evolving and newly emerging health and safety concern in journalism, and the participants' level of education around the potential hazards may be due to the time in which they attended journalism school. For example, Elaine graduated in 2012 and the occupational health literature surrounding the phenomenon largely began gaining traction in 2014 (Feinstein et al., 2014).

While the participants were taught how to handle UGC from a process standpoint, journalism school did not educate them around the potential health risks inherent in the content. According to Cheryl, "there's no personal care course in J school, but there is an ethics course." This echoes Elaine's comment at the outset. Andrew recalled learning about UGC including "how to get the rights, what the rights were like, and the legal fair use doctrine and stuff like that." He only learned about "the emotional component" of journalism outside of the classroom and on the job. He did not recall learning any lessons in journalism school around how to identify and cope with emotionally distressing UGC. "We didn't really have anything like that," he said. Instead, "it was more about making sure if you want to use this video, how you and your organization will be legally covered by it."

The participants also spoke of being blindsided by the level of harassment that they faced online. “No one tells you you’ll get public hate mail for doing your best every day to do the right thing” explained Elaine. There was “no preparation for what it would be like to interact with the public” or “for what journalists of color will experience in the field.” This sentiment was echoed by Andrew who expressed shock in the volume and intensity of racism and vitriol that he faced online. This lack of trauma-informed education and training around the hazards of the digital frontline are consistent with the literature.

The participants also spoke of the poor quality of formal mental health supports in the workplace. Two of the participants reported visiting an outside therapist and noted how “you’re only in therapy if you pay for it.” Andrew and Cheryl spoke of the “limited resources” in the field around mental health but said they were fortunate to have jobs that offer some benefits. Elaine said that there are adequate mental health resources in her workplace but “the true accessibility of those services is another question.” Instead, she believed that her workplace had “a list of mental health workplace boxes that need to be checked and workplaces are good at checking those boxes.” Elaine did not feel comfortable availing of the mental health supports in her workplace because “some of the most basic parts of having a mentally healthy workplace are denied to us.” She explained:

> We don’t have jobs where we get lunch breaks ever. We don’t have the kind of job where you can, you know, come in late, because you’ve got a dentist appointment. If you have any kind of appointment, you need to book a sick day.

While the participants spoke of the need for improvement in education and practice around many of the occupational stressors unique to the digital age of journalism, they also touched on some of the benefits of UGC and their close online proximity to the public. For

example, the participants described how social media makes it easier to contact interviewees and provides them with greater access to the communities they serve. According to one participant, "if you open your eyes and your ears, you'll see those silver linings and those adaptability stories in your community with the ability to rise you up."

Chapter Summary

This thematic analysis of the participant narratives addressed my original research questions: What are the lived experiences of Canadian journalists working with uncensored UGC? How well has their formal education prepared them to manage the associated risks to their health and wellbeing?

Guided by Bourdieusian thought and current literature, this chapter examined the complexities of participant journalists' lived experiences working in the digital frontier. First, it pointed to an occupational health and safety dilemma experienced by the participants: there are health risks associated with trauma reporting but covering trauma events provides an immediate opportunity to advance in the field. This is the first study that uses Bourdieusian thought to apply the concept of journalistic capital to the occupational health and safety of journalism. Direct quotations from the participant narratives and the literature highlight some of the ethical issues faced by journalists in pursuit of journalistic capital.

Second, participants' narratives exposed the temporality, sociality, and place of journalistic work (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). This study added a previously unexplored qualitative dimension to our understanding of the ubiquitous nature of trauma in daily news coverage as detailed in quantitative studies conducted by Feinstein et al. (2014) and others.

Third, structural elements of journalistic work such as precarious employment and working alone negatively impact journalists overall job satisfaction and emotional wellbeing. I

used Bourdieu's concept of economic censorship to illustrate how these factors can prevent journalists from improving the health and safety of the field from within.

Fourth, participants' emotionally distressing experiences reflected a broader understanding of UGC. Leading occupational health scholars define UGC as potentially violent "video material and photographs submitted to newsrooms by the public" (Feinstein et al., 2014, p. 1). This study proposed that UGC may include any content (e.g., photos, videos, audio, text, a blog post) created by members of the public and provided to news organizations directly or posted on social media or the web. This broader definition acknowledges that emotionally distressing UGC is often hidden in everyday social media posts and other online content. This understanding is also consistent with how other professional fields such as marketing and online communications define the material (Fader & Winer, 2012; Flynn, 2021).

Fifth, and finally, participants in this study received little to no training in journalism school or ongoing trauma-informed education and support around the psychosocial hazards of web-based journalism. This finding was consistent with the literature as many educational bodies are failing to train in vicarious trauma, web-based safety, and UGC (Specht & Tsilman, 2018; Westcott, 2019).

In the next and final chapter, I highlight some study strengths and limitations and make recommendations for future research, education, and practice in the field of journalism.

Chapter 6: Strengths, Limitations and Recommendations

This chapter has three parts. First, I make recommendations for future education, mental health services, and professional practice in the field of journalism. These recommendations are directed largely at educational intuitions and newsroom managers. However, my narrative summaries can be used pedagogically to educate anyone interested in the field of journalism and to provide a glimpse into what working life looks like for Canadian journalists in the digital age.

Second, I focus on my study's strengths and limitations. Third, I link the limitations of my study to where future research might go.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were guided by the lived experiences and perspectives of the participants as well as my analysis of the data and existing research. I have organized these recommendations based on their intended audience of either journalism educators or media organizations.

Establishing Connections between Research and Education

As journalistic practice rapidly changes in the digital age, so does the occupational health literature. Therefore, there needs to be active communication between occupational health researchers and journalism educators to keep up with the evolving and newly emerging psychosocial hazards found in the field.

- Journalism educators must identify academic and mental health experts who can provide guidance on the best mental health promotion practices specific to UGC and the digital age of journalism.

- Journalism schools must provide students with documents or lessons that clarify the potential hazards inherent in all categories of UGC including any content (photos, videos, audio, text, a blog post, etc.) created by members of the public and media users.
- Journalism educators must teach students about online harassment and its associated risks.
- Journalism educators must provide lessons about vicarious trauma and PTSI (Journalists must be informed of how to recognize the signs and symptoms of vicarious trauma and PTSI).
- Journalism educators must provide lessons around healthy coping mechanisms in the newsroom.
- The practice of death knocking and its associated risks to journalists' emotional well-being and public safety must be discussed by educators in journalism classrooms.
- Journalism schools must educate students on trauma informed practices around contacting survivors or bereaved loved ones in the immediate aftermath of a trauma event.

Establishing Connections between Research and Practice

As both the occupational health literature and journalism education evolve in response to the rapid changes of the digital age, newsroom managers and media organizations must keep up with current research and education in the field. This means bridging the gap between journalism educators, occupational health scholars, mental health experts, and newsroom managers, so that education and practice are aligned in their response to the demands of the current climate of journalism.

- Newsroom managers must identify academic and occupational health and safety experts to provide guidance on mental health promotion practices.
- With the guidance of mental health experts, newsroom managers must create modules, courses, and other deliverables that educate employees around how to recognize psychosocial hazards in the workplace.
- Newsroom managers must consider mentoring programs where seasoned journalists are paired with newcomers to the field so coping skills can be shared.
- Media organizations must make mental health services available on company time (free counseling, mindfulness, yoga etc.)
- Media organizations must offer a living wage to full time employees.
- Media organizations must re-examine the practice of heavy reliance on short term contracts that offer no job security and few benefits.
- Newsroom managers must examine all existing processes in the newsroom to incorporate honest conversations about the impact of emotionally demanding assignments.
- Media organizations must implement staff rotation policies that ensure that staff members are given breaks from emotionally demanding assignments during shifts.
- Newsroom managers must consider ways to offset the risks inherent in viewing UGC.
- Newsroom managers must check in on employees reporting alone from home on the Covid-19 pandemic and other emotionally demanding assignments.
- Newsroom managers must hold team debriefings for journalists working with emotionally demanding assignments

Study Strengths

The greatest strength of this study came from turning the mic around and interviewing the professional interviewer. The participants, like many journalists, are remarkable storytellers, and recording their first-hand accounts of the phenomenon under study provided excellent context and rich data to add to the existing literature. Moreover, the use of multiple perspectives from a diverse range of journalists working in Canada was also a strength of the current study. For example, Lisa is a white female journalist with extensive experience in the field but without a journalism degree. By contrast, Andrew is an Asian-Canadian with a graduate degree in journalism but with mostly web-based news experiences. Despite their different professional and ethnic backgrounds, the participants shed light on many of the shared experiences surrounding psychosocial hazards on the digital frontline. Interviewing the participants from home due to the Covid-19 pandemic was a strong point of the current study because the participants were free to discuss intimate workplace issues that they may not have wanted to discuss from the confines of their office or newsroom.

The social lens and Bourdieusian perspective that I applied to this thesis can be considered a significant strength. It allowed me to offer a fresh take on journalism and UGC by providing a theoretical framework to think about this and other similar professions. Applying these sociological concepts to OHS research demonstrated how useful they can be in illuminating some of the hazards of journalism as socially produced and embedded in broader structures of work. This application of the Bourdieusian thought was unique and not readily found in existing literature.

Study Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study highlights some of the journalist-identified weaknesses in Canadian journalism schools around UGC and other health and safety issues. I cannot claim that these experiences accurately represent today's Canadian journalism classroom. It has been several years since my study participants attended an academic institution. The voices and experiences of Canadian journalism instructors were not included. Current Canadian university curricula was not examined although existing literature and recent survey data highlights many of the same issues around education participants disclosed in their interviews.

Future qualitative studies focusing on journalism educators would highlight some of the challenges and needs faced by those responsible for educating journalists and providing safe and healthy work environments in the field. Future research could also look at current journalism curricula in Canadian educational institutions to assess how educational bodies are evolving to meet the recommendations of the current research and the existing literature. My findings point to opportunities for sociological analysis of the field that considers workers health and safety using Bourdieusian thought.

The limited sample size does not reflect the experiences of all those working on the digital frontier. News managers and freelance journalists may have different experiences with UGC. A future study might explore a broader range of experiences and perspectives surrounding UGC and trauma reporting. The small sample size limited my ability to make broad statements about policy. Additionally, given that my research focus was on education, making policy recommendations was beyond the scope of this study.

Two commonly cited limitations of purposive sampling and narrative inquiry are selection bias and recall bias. Future research may be designed to address these limitations. For

example, researchers could conduct a qualitative case study or ethnography, in which the investigators explore a real-life newsroom over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information surrounding journalistic practice (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports) (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This thesis touched on job security in the field of Journalism. Future research may investigate the connections between health and safety policy and practice in unionized and non-unionized places of employment.

Final Thoughts

Occupational health and safety practitioners and scholars rarely identify work itself as an occupational hazard (Foster & Barnetson, 2016). Instead, traditional approaches look at aspects of work, such as tools, equipment, and processes (Foster & Barnetson, 2016). Applying Bourdieusian thought to the occupational health and safety of journalism allowed me to highlight how some of the structural mechanisms of power in the field contribute the psychosocial hazards described by the participants such as the fast-paced nature of work, the competitive drive for the scoop, and the overall structure of journalistic work. Addressing these unspoken strategies and rules of the journalistic field sheds light on the conflict between journalistic capital, emotional distress, and ethical dilemmas. Emotional distress and psychological injury such as PTSI are often perceived as the individual's response to an event. Bourdieusian thought diverts the onus of occupational injury away from the injured worker and onto the structural factors that drive and inform workplace hazards.

It may be easy for policy makers, newsroom managers, and journalism educators to look at UGC from an occupational health and safety lens as nothing more than a hazard in need of mitigation. However, recent history has demonstrated how UGC can act as a vehicle for social

justice and the democratization of the press. While psychosocial hazards often lurk within uncensored UGC, the digital content is symptomatic of larger social and technological changes. As much as UGC is one of many aspects of work that make journalism an at-risk profession, it also provides journalists with better access to the communities they serve and more opportunity to gain journalistic capital.

When I began this research, I did not identify work itself as an occupational hazard. Much like traditional occupational health and safety practitioners and scholars, I set out to look at uncensored UGC, an aspect of journalistic work, to identify hazards that may harm workers (Foster & Barnetson, 2016). What I discovered was a brave group of journalists who enlightened me about the finer details of what it means to be a journalist in the digital age. In doing so, the participants shed light on the broader effects of work that spill over into workers' home lives. The participants felt that the "toxic culture of journalism" is at the heart of many of the occupational stressors touched on in this thesis. Therefore, it is important for employers and educators to look inward at the culture of journalism that they promote and perpetuate. Humanizing the newsroom begins with considering the entirety of work in journalism and "addressing the solution requires first understanding the problem" (Seely, 2019, p. 239).

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Appendix A: ICEHR Approval Letter

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

St. John's, NL Canada A1C 5S7
Tel: 709 864-2561 icehr@mun.ca
www.mun.ca/research/ethics/humans/icehr

ICEHR Number:	**20210742-ME**
Approval Period:	November 10, 2020 – November 30, 2021
Funding Source:	
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Diana Gustafson Division of Community Health and Humanities
Title of Project:	*Good Story, Bad News: Journalistic Capital and Occupational Injury*

November 10, 2020

Mr. Jacob Canning
Division of Community Health and Humanities, Faculty of Medicine
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dear Mr. Canning:

Thank you for your correspondence addressing the issues raised by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) concerning the above-named research project. ICEHR has re-examined the proposal with the clarification and revisions submitted, and is satisfied that the concerns raised by the Committee have been adequately addressed. In accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2)*, the project has been granted *full ethics clearance* to November 30, 2021. ICEHR approval applies to the ethical acceptability of the research, as per Article 6.3 of the *TCPS2*. Researchers are responsible for adherence to any other relevant University policies and/or funded or non-funded agreements that may be associated with the project.

The *TCPS2* **requires** that you submit an Annual Update to ICEHR before November 30, 2021. If you plan to continue the project, you need to request renewal of your ethics clearance and include a brief summary on the progress of your research. When the project no longer involves contact with human participants, is completed and/or terminated, you are required to provide an annual update with a brief final summary and your file will be closed. If you need to make changes during the project which may raise ethical concerns, you must submit an Amendment Request with a description of these changes for the Committee's consideration prior to implementation. If funding is obtained subsequent to approval, you must submit a Funding and/or Partner Change Request to ICEHR before this clearance can be linked to your award.

All post-approval event forms noted above can be submitted from your Researcher Portal account by clicking the *Applications: Post-Review* link on your Portal homepage. We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Kelly Blidook, Ph.D.
Vice-Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research

KB/bc

cc: Supervisor – Dr. Diana Gustafson, Division of Community Health and Humanities

Appendix B: Recruitment Document

Recruitment

My name is Jacob Canning, I am a master's student at the Faculty of Medicine at Memorial University in the Division of Community Health & Humanities working under the supervision of Dr. Diana L. Gustafson. I am conducting a research project called *Good Story, Bad News: Journalistic Capital and Occupational Injury.* The purpose of the study is to investigate the lived experiences of journalists who work with traumatic video and photographic material submitted to newsrooms by the public.

I am contacting you to invite you to participate in a series of 2-4 interviews in which you will be asked to engage in conversations about your personal experiences working with user-generated content in the newsroom. Participation will require about an hour of your time per interview and will be held virtually.

Technological and social media advancements such as smartphones, dash-cams, Twitter and Facebook are changing the field of journalism. Print journalism is becoming less common while new forms of digital media are taking its place. Journalists increasingly rely on photo and video content submitted to newsrooms by members of the public known as participatory or citizen journalists. This user-generated content often includes images of extreme violence and disturbing content. For the first time in human history, there is a large portion of the global population walking the streets with camera phones ready to film the next newsworthy disaster, violent encounter or traumatic event.

The first aim of the proposed research is to better understand novice journalists' lived experiences by generating a meaningful narrative illustrating the impact of occupational exposure to user-generated content on health and wellbeing. The second aim is to generate participant-informed narratives from which to draw recommendations for enhancing university curricula about this workplace issue.

The primary research questions are: What are the lived experiences of novice Canadian journalists working with traumatic user-generated content? How may journalism educators and newsroom managers prepare journalists to manage the associated risks to their health and wellbeing?

Journalists working directly with user-generated content will be eligible to participate in individual interviews. Participants will be asked to provide published news articles, photos or other media that relate to the topic of traumatic user-generated content. These materials will be used to generate conversation during the interviews and will not appear in the final research product.

Individuals should not volunteer for the study if they have fears or sensitivities of re-living traumatic experiences.

Frontline journalists and war correspondents will be excluded from the study.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me to arrange a meeting time.

Appendix C: Discussion Guide

How often do you view violent or graphic user-generated content at work? (daily, weekly, monthly).

For how many hours a shift do you view violent or graphic user-generated content?

How would you describe the experience of working with violent or graphic user-generated content?

What are your feelings when your work involves dealing with this content?

If it causes you stress, what are some ways you cope with this stress at work?

Does your work with user-generated content affect your work satisfaction?

Does your work with user-generated content affect your home life?

Did anything in your past experiences or formal training prepare you to deal with such content?

Did you receive specific training or guidance in journalism school on how to deal with such content?

Was this training adequate?

Do you think that violent or graphic user-generated content poses an occupational health and safety risk?

How could journalism educators better prepare aspiring journalists for their future work with traumatic user-generated content?

What advice would you give aspiring journalism students and other novice journalists about working with traumatic user-generated content?

Have you felt pressure to work with content that made you uncomfortable?

In your experience, are newsrooms too reliant upon violent or disturbing content?

Do you think that such content has changed the profession of journalism?

If so, for better or worse?