# “No Name, No Face, No Nothing”: Representations of Perpetrators in Mass Shooting Coverage

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## Introduction

On March 22, 2021, a gunman entered a King Soopers supermarket in Boulder, Colorado, with a semi-automatic rifle and fatally shot 10 people. Within the following days, as a witness to the beginning of the attack, I was interviewed by many news outlets ranging from local to international. Before police identified him, the questions journalists asked me primarily centered on my description of the shooter. After the shooter had been identified, local coverage appeared to significantly shift to honoring and remembering the victims of the shooting before shifting back to the shooter during legal hearings, while national coverage disappeared. As a journalist, I understand the newsworthiness of the shooter's trial proceedings; as a witness to his crimes and a member of the impacted community, I resent repeatedly seeing his name and his image and feel like I see fewer stories about the lives of the victims and survivors. Experiencing intimately how journalists approach mass shootings and how my community was upended by the King Soopers shooting reignited a curiosity I've long held about how journalists speak about perpetrators when covering mass shootings. Specifically, I want to explore the common question of whether news coverage of mass shooters does more harm than good.

The FBI defines mass murder as an incident with at least four fatalities, although different organizations use varying definitions of mass shootings based on factors such as the number of fatalities, location, and the shooter's motivation (Smart & Schell, 2021). The Gun Violence Archive defines a mass shooting as one in which four people are fatally injured with no specification for location or motivation and, using this definition, found that there were 418 mass shootings in the U.S. in 2019. When specifying public and indiscriminate mass shootings, however, the Mass Shooter Database found that there were 6 shootings in the U.S. in 2019

(Smart & Schell, 2021). While many mass shootings happen in private settings—for example, within families—the term "mass shooting" for many conjures up the image of an active shooter killing random people who are just going about their daily lives. This is what the Department of Homeland Security defines as "an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area" with, in most cases, "no pattern or method to their selection of victims" ("Active Shooter: How to Respond," 2008).

Using the Department of Homeland Security's definition of an active shooter and the FBI's definition of mass murder as one with at least four fatalities, criminology professor Adam Lankford compiled a dataset of 292 cases of public mass shootings worldwide from 1966 to 2012. He found that American shooters accounted for 90, or 31 percent, of them (Lankford, 2016b). Political pundits and policymakers have attributed this to several things, one popularly cited factor being inadequate gun control policies. The Second Amendment of the United States Constitution gives citizens the right to bear arms, which is staunchly defended today by major gun-rights advocacy groups such as the National Rifle Association. A 2018 report by the Small Arms Survey found that while U.S. citizens make up 5 percent of the world population, they own 46 percent of the world's civilian-owned guns (Masters, 2021).

Another factor that has commonly been attributed to the prevalence of mass shootings in the U.S. is insufficient mental health resources. The Violence Project found that over 80 percent of mass shooters who killed publicly and indiscriminately since 1966 "were in a noticeable crisis prior to their shooting" (Peterson & Densley, 2020). Safe2Tell Colorado, which allows Colorado students, school staff, parents, and others to anonymously report concerning behavior was

created with the philosophy that "prevention and early intervention is the key to preventing violence and saving lives" ("About Us," n.d.).

These issues, paired with the visibility of prolific mass shooters of the past, can inspire and enable people, particularly men, to carry out mass shootings. Since the Columbine High School mass shooting in Littleton, Colorado, in 1999, there have been at least 74 known "copycat" cases of mass attacks or threats of mass attacks in which the perpetrator cited the shooting as inspiration, resulting in a phenomenon commonly referred to as "the Columbine effect" (Follman & Andrews, 2015). Campaigns such as Don't Name Them and No Notoriety have arisen in recent years intending to minimize journalistic coverage of perpetrators. Not only have many perpetrators inspired copycats, but many perpetrators commit mass shootings with the prospect of fame that has been granted to previous shooters (Lankford, 2016). However, research evidencing a clear causal link between traditional news media coverage of mass shootings and the actions of copycats is lacking, and instead, many researchers simply assume that such a relationship exists based on correlation. (The term "traditional news media" is used to refer primarily to radio, television, and print news and excludes the internet.)

Many journalists recognize the impact that their work has on the public and are taught to minimize harm in reporting whenever possible. This is especially important when it comes to coverage of traumatic events such as mass shootings, which often involve multiple victims and witnesses and deeply impact the communities in which they occur. While the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics tells journalists to minimize harm ("SPJ Code of Ethics", 2014), *The Elements of Journalism* by Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel puts forth that "journalism's first obligation is to the truth" and that "its first loyalty is to citizens" (2014).

These guidelines, which can conflict with each other, may require journalists to talk about mass shooters in more depth than is recommended by groups like Don't Name Them and No Notoriety so that the general public and policymakers receive the information to which they are entitled, free of perhaps excessive censorship.

This project investigates how media outlets in Colorado have reported on perpetrators of mass shootings to find out how coverage can potentially do harm or good for the public with the goal of finding the best balance between minimizing harm and fulfilling one's duty as a journalist to inform citizens. As I approach this project, both as a student journalist and a witness to a mass shooting and its devastating effects on a community, finding this balance is essential.

## Chapter 1: Literature Review

The two extremes on the spectrum of approaches to news coverage of perpetrators following mass shootings are 1) speaking on the identity, history, and motives of the shooter at length and 2) refraining from publishing the name, photo, or manifesto of the shooter under any circumstances. Most approaches appear to fall somewhere in between these two poles. For example, The New York Times publishes the names and sometimes the photos of perpetrators, but its policy is to not publish photos in which the perpetrator is holding a weapon, nor does it publish or quote any manifestoes that the perpetrator may have written explaining their motives (Bahr, 2021). This literature review covers a range of opinions from academics, journalists, and activists alike, divided into two larger camps: the first being that journalists should generally strive to minimize coverage of mass shooters as much as possible, and the second being that journalists should not prioritize censorship over properly fulfilling their duties of informing the public.

### Don't Name Them:

Many researchers and activists have argued that speaking at length about perpetrators or even naming and showing photographs of them has led to martyrdom, idolization, and a potential increase in shootings by copycats (Blair, 2015; Lankford, 2016a; Lankford & Madfis, 2018; "Media sensationalism partly to blame", 2018; Schildkraut, 2019). Many argue that copycat shootings, such as the 74-or-more cases of attacks and threats inspired by the Columbine High School shooting and are evidence of "the Columbine effect" (Follman & Andrews, 2015), have increased as a direct result of news outlets reporting on perpetrators in a sensationalistic manner

— in other words, in a way that focuses on the perpetrators and their motives above all else to tap into the morbid curiosities of readers, viewers, or listeners. Others theorize that many people who have committed mass shootings, at least in part, have done so because of the expectation that news outlets will give them notoriety (Lankford, 2016a). Lankford also predicted, based on anecdotal data from 24 mass shooters who sought fame for their actions, that fame-seeking perpetrators kill more people in the hopes of gaining more coverage (2016a). Indeed, Silva & Capellan (2019) found that "for every additional injured victim [in a mass shooting], the odds of getting news coverage [in the New York Times] increases by 25%." As previously mentioned, The New York Times published an article following the King Soopers mass shooting in Boulder, Colorado, outlining how it does not show photos of shooters brandishing weapons and doesn't link to or cite manifestoes. It is possible that many people would not be as motivated to carry out mass shootings that attract news coverage if the amount of information shared about them is limited in that coverage.

Researchers often suggest that traditional news outlets must minimize representations of mass shooters, including their names, photos, and manifestoes, when reporting on mass shootings in order to minimize the notoriety of the shooter and the harm to victims (Blair, 2015; Lankford & Madfis, 2018; Schildkraut, 2019). This suggestion is commonly made under the assumption that these outlets have at least a partial role in encouraging copycat shootings. Lankford & Madfis argue that because of the exposure of mass shooters like the Columbine shooters, their messages and their resulting notoriety attracts people, whether through their reasoning for carrying out their shootings or the resulting notoriety itself, to commit mass shootings of their own (2018). Lankford & Madfis (2018) write that some copycat shooters often

"empathize with the original attackers' claims that violence is a justifiable response to their feelings of mistreatment and marginalization." Other shooters have been motivated by the prospect of being given notoriety through traditional media. Lankford (2016a) cites 24 mass shooters who expressed their desire for notoriety, several of whom expressed expectations that they would earn it by way of traditional media. For example, exactly one month after the Columbine High School shooting, a gunman opened fire at Heritage High School in Georgia, wounding six students (Eldridge, 2016). He told a psychiatrist after the shooting that "he was thinking about Columbine, and how much media coverage the incident received, and about how much attention he might win if he followed suit" (Lankford, 2016a). Similarly, the 2007 Virginia Tech shooter sent a video and a manifesto directly to NBC News with the hopes of circulation (Lankford, 2016a). The tone of news coverage may also be significant; Lankford & Madfis suggest that copycat shooters "may be attracted to the sensationalized, dramatic, or powerful ways the original attackers were portrayed by media outlets" (2018).

Differences between coverage from newsrooms of varying sizes have not been widely researched (Holody & Daniel, 2016), and studies investigating the contagion effect generally don't make a distinction between local, regional, and national coverage. Hawdon et al. (2014) found that "distant papers" such as regional and national newspapers are "more likely to publish stories that focus on the potential causes of the tragedy" than local newspapers, which may include things like undetected mental health issues of the shooter. This suggests that, by focusing more on the causes of shootings, regional and national newspapers may be more likely to write about the shooter than local newspapers, which are "more likely to publish articles that focus on the victims, depict the community as victimized and grieving, and report evidence of community

solidarity" (2014). A study of news coverage of the 2012 Aurora Theater shooting found that "the local paper focused on the victims more often, and provided a fuller picture of who they were" than national print publications (Holody & Daniel, 2016). While copycat mass shooters are more likely to see national news coverage than local coverage, a greater focus on perpetrators of mass shootings on a national scale may also re-traumatize and take attention away from the victims, families, and the community affected by the shooting.

Citing this research, campaigns like Don't Name Them and No Notoriety have heavily advocated for minimizing the information circulated about shooters in mass shootings, encouraging media and public information officers not to name them whenever possible. No Notoriety was founded by Tom and Caren Teves, the parents of a victim of the Aurora, Colorado, movie theater shooting in 2012 (Schildkraut, 2019). No Notoriety emphasizes the importance of balancing the tasks of informing the public and minimizing harm, advocating for "limited use of the perpetrators' names (no more than once per article or broadcast segment), no prominent placement of the story or its components (e.g., photographs), and a refusal to publish manifestoes or other content generated by the shooters" (Schildkraut, 2019). While No Notoriety's website emphasizes the news media's role in the copycat effect, its founders also urge news outlets to focus on the community in place of perpetrators. An article in The Guardian outlines how Tom and Caren Teves "spent the hours and the days after the shooting watching lurid photographs of the shooter constantly on the news, even as Tom Teves pushed news anchors to focus instead on the bravery of the victims, survivors and first responders" (Beckett, 2018). Don't Name Them is a similar campaign coordinated by the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) Center at Texas State University, the I Love U Guys Foundation, and the FBI. J. Pete

Blair, director of ALERRT and a founder of Don't Name Them, published an op-ed in USA Today where he cited the copycat effect, the appeal of earning potential notoriety, and the trauma of families of the victims as reasons to minimize coverage of shooters (Blair, 2015). The Brady Campaign, a longstanding nonprofit that advocates for gun control in the U.S., developed a browser plug-in for Google Chrome that "replaces the names and pictures of mass shooters in news stories with the names and pictures of their victims" (Rosenwald, 2016). According to reporter Michael Rosenwald, the plug-in has more symbolic than practical value, as it will be downloaded "by people who have no interest [in] shooting a bunch of people" (2016).

Schildkraut (2019) proposes that journalists refer to the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines for reporting on suicides when approaching mass shootings. According to Schildkraut, over 100 studies have found a relationship between news coverage of suicides and an increase in copycat suicides. This relationship is called the Werther effect. The effect is more apparent "when the coverage is prominent, sensational, and extensive, or if the person who died is of a celebrated status" (Schildkraut, 2019). The WHO suggests that stories about suicide should never be prominently placed in a newspaper, newscast, or website and should never contain the word "suicide" or methods of suicide. Among other things, journalists should avoid sensationalistic language, explicit details, photographs or videos of the scene, and anything written by the deceased. Similarly, when covering mass shootings, Schildkraut (2019) suggests that journalists avoid sensationalistic language and imagery, prominent placement of stories, and publishing anything produced by the perpetrator.

While several shooters have cited previous shooters as their inspiration years after the fact, such as those inspired by the 1999 Columbine High School shooting, statistician Sherry

Towers suggests that news coverage of mass shootings contributes to copycat shootings just days after the initially reported shooting. Towers et al. used statistical probability to show a pattern of the contagion effect, a term that refers to a mass shooting being followed immediately by a spike in additional mass shootings. After mass shootings with four or more people killed, Towers et al. found that there is a temporary increase in the probability of another mass shooting for 13 days. On average, each shooting results in at least 0.3 new shootings (2015). On the other hand, shootings with fewer than four fatalities didn't show an increase in shootings directly thereafter. Tower et al. theorize that the lower numbers of fatalities compared to other shootings "reduces their relative sensationalism, and thus reduces their contagiousness" (2015). Towers stated in an interview with Arizona State University, cited on the official Don't Name Them website, that "media attention may be the driver of the patterns we see" (Rincon, 2020).

Counterarguments:

Towers' study provides strong evidence for the existence of a contagion effect caused by major mass shootings. However, while Towers et al. (2015) theorized that news media has a role in perpetuating the contagion effect in the weeks after a shooting, it cannot be said with certainty that efforts to minimize information shared about mass shooters will result in a decrease in copycat shootings, especially given that many people now turn to social media and online sources for information. The correlation found between increased media sensationalism of mass shootings and copycat events does not confirm causation, just as the anecdotal evidence of a handful of shooters anticipating fame through news media (Lankford, 2016a) does not confirm a consistent pattern. It seems that there exists limited evidence and yet many assumptions that mass shooters who are inspired by former shooters—particularly their messages and

motives—learn about these shooters strictly through traditional media such as radio, television, and print, and would not commit their crimes had journalists approached coverage differently. This doesn't take into account the power that non-mainstream media, such as imageboard websites 4chan and 8chan, may have on radicalizing mass shooters in the 21st century. With the advent of the internet, traditional news media is not the only disseminator of information that could influence future mass shooters. Software developer Fredrick Brennan started 8chan when he believed 4chan had become too restrictive of its users' speech, but now regrets creating what was meant to be a "free speech utopia" but now has become "a megaphone for mass shooters" (Roose, 2019). Before killing 23 people in a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, in August of 2019, a 21-year-old man uploaded his four-page manifesto to 8chan. He cited inspiration from the mosque shootings in Christchurch, New Zealand, which occurred in March of 2019 after the shooter posted a manifesto and a link to a live stream of the shooting on 8chan. In April of 2019, another shooter posted a manifesto to 8chan before opening fire at a synagogue in Poway, California (Glaser, 2019). Elliot Rodger, who killed six people in Isla Vista, California, in 2014, was a self-described incel, short for involuntarily celibate. In a manifesto he wrote before carrying out the shooting, he wrote about a website called PUAhate.com, a website where "sexually frustrated men could go to vent and share pseudo-scientific theories about women" (Woolf, 2014). Rodger wrote that what he read on the website "confirmed many of the theories I had about how wicked and degenerate women really are" (Woolf, 2014).

A 2021 study focusing on the contagion effect immediately following a mass shooting found that "mass public shootings have a strong effect on the level of news reporting, but that news reporting on the topic has little impact, at least in the relative short-term, on the subsequent

prevalence of mass shootings" (Fox et al.). This finding contradicts Towers' theory that the increase in mass shootings in the 13 days following a major mass shooting is caused by news coverage of the said shooting. Fox et al. suggest that the long-term effects of mass shootings on society may be the greater contributor to a contagion, writing that "excessive worry over the risk of mass shootings and endless discussions of the issue among neighbors, on social media, and in political debate can play into the mindsets of malcontents and hatemongers," rather than immediate coverage of a specific shooter (2021).

There is also the question of how journalists perceive their "first obligation to truth" and their "first loyalty to citizens" as established by journalists Kovach & Rosenstiel in *The Elements of Journalism* (2014), and how these perceptions relate to the coverage of mass shootings. While there is minimal academic research specifically surrounding coverage of mass shooters that advocates against censorship in coverage, there is research that deals with how journalists view their responsibilities and priorities in general, which can be applied to coverage of mass shooters. A 2017 study by Dahmen et al. surveyed over 1300 newspaper journalists, asking about their attitudes towards coverage of mass shootings and responses to the idea of journalism perpetuating copycat shootings. The survey found that, on average, journalists were ambivalent to this idea and strongly supported sharing the names and photos of mass shooters (Dahmen et al., 2017). The survey divided journalists into their most valued functions of journalism. The interpretive and disseminator functions—interpreting and analyzing news events with a "detached, objective approach" (Dahmen et al., 2017)—were among the most valued functions among the journalists surveyed, and these journalists were more likely to be proponents of covering perpetrators more extensively. Having experience covering a mass shooting also

increased support for covering perpetrators more extensively (Dahmen et al., 2017), which suggests a conflict between those who advocate for minimal perpetrator coverage in mass shootings and those who have direct experience reporting on mass shootings. Fox et al. write that "the name, image, as well as basic demographic information about an assailant is newsworthy, just as much as descriptions of those who were killed" (2021). Craft & Davis (2013) list seven news values for journalists to consider when determining newsworthiness, which are timeliness, impact, currency, conflict, novelty or emotions, prominence of the individuals being reported on, and geographic proximity. News stories do not have to contain all of these values but should ideally contain at least one.

Others have argued, albeit less frequently and with little available research, that speaking about which cracks in the system enabled mass shootings inevitably involves speaking about the shooters themselves but can potentially inform effective policy changes. An opinion piece from the editorial board of USA Today argues that campaigns such as No Notoriety "could do more harm than good if they give public officials an excuse to withhold information, impede investigative reporting on what makes killers tick, or provide the gun lobby with a way to point fingers at the news media in an effort to deflect pressure for common-sense laws" ("Sympathetic #nonotoriety has a downside", 2015). Notably, to the board's final point, founder of the Second Amendment Foundation—a foundation that defends American gun ownership rights—Alan M. Gottlieb said in 2018 that the news media is "partly to blame for school shootings" ("Media sensationalism partly to blame"), citing the copycat effect. Regardless of whether this is true, any arguments criticizing news media coverage of mass shooters should be made with the additional acknowledgment that mass shootings most likely happen due to a variety of cumulative factors,

including the shooter's access to firearms. Fox et al. write that focusing on the news media's role in perpetrating copycat mass shootings "diverts attention away from efforts to deal with more fundamental issues" such as gun control laws and mental health services (2021).

Not only is it likely that any negative effects of traditional news media on increasing mass shootings occur in tandem with other media such as forum websites like 8chan, but it is also likely that they occur in tandem with insufficient gun control policies and mental health resources. Mainstream journalists do not actively radicalize mass shooters, nor do they deprive them of mental health services or provide them with firearms. Without neglecting the importance of these additional factors, it is important to look at how journalists can most responsibly cover mass shooters in ways that minimize harm ("SPJ Code of Ethics", 2014) while also prioritizing journalists' obligation to the truth and their loyalty to citizens (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014).

## Chapter 2: Method

The creative piece for this project is a long-form journalistic article discussing the different approaches to covering mass shootings that different journalists choose to take. I interviewed nine people in total; six of whom work in journalism and three of whom do not. To narrow my scope, I focused on how journalists have approached coverage of mass shootings in Colorado, namely the 1999 Columbine High School shooting, the 2012 Aurora theater shooting, and the 2021 Boulder King Soopers shooting.

I interviewed both print journalists and broadcast journalists to determine whether they have different approaches to covering mass shootings based on their mediums since I couldn't find any literature on the distinction between print and broadcast journalism in relation to mass shootings. I did not interview any national or international journalists and did not find any significant differences between how local and regional journalists report on mass shootings based on the scale of their audiences and their geographical proximity to the shooting. However, I asked the journalists I interviewed for their observations of the differences between their newsrooms and national or international newsrooms, given that the differences in proximity and audience size are significantly larger than those between local and regional journalists. I chose to interview journalists who have specifically contributed coverage of Colorado-based mass shootings and gained insight into how they have approached speaking about perpetrators in the past. I kept these interviews within the context of Colorado because an attempt to cover every major mass shooting in the entire U.S. would have warranted far more time and resources than are available to me.

The article included interviews with people who are not journalists but have insights as to how they believe journalists should approach coverage of mass shootings. One of these interviewees is J. Pete Blair, executive director of the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training Center (ALERRT) at Texas State University and a founder of Don't Name Them. I also interviewed Tom Sullivan, a state representative whose son was killed in the 2012 Aurora theater shooting. Lastly, while I ultimately didn't include her interview in my final article, I interviewed Marilyn Saltzman. Saltzman was the public information officer for Jeffco Schools, the school district Columbine High School belongs to, during the time of the Columbine shooting in 1999.

I chose not to name any mass shooters in my article. I made this decision after completing my interviews and finding a common sentiment among my interviewees that a shooter's name or likeness should not be shared when it is not necessary. Despite receiving varying perspectives regarding when sharing such information is and is not necessary, I found that naming the perpetrators of the shootings referenced in the article did not add any value or clarity to the story, so I chose to omit them.

I hope that this project can be published in a national or Colorado-based magazine or news website that publishes long-form investigative articles. One possibility is the Columbia Journalism Review, a leading press criticism publication published by the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. The Columbia Journalism Review has published several articles on how journalists do and should cover mass shootings. This sets a precedent for my article, but I also believe that I can provide a unique perspective both by focusing primarily on Colorado and by potentially providing a counter-argument to the claim that news coverage of mass shooters is

to blame for the contagion effect. In 2018, the Columbia Journalism Review published an article by freelance writer Tony Biasotti called “Reporters shouldn’t profile mass shooters, say experts.” Biasotti (2018) cites several studies discussed in my literature review, including Towers et al. (2015) and Lankford & Madfis (2018), and discusses the advocacy group No Notoriety. Biasotti’s article includes a dubious claim from Western New Mexico University psychology professor Jennifer Johnston that a “total blackout on names, faces, and life stories of the killers, as well as a move away from covering every mass shooting as a national story” would result in mass shootings decreasing by one third (2018). If I submit my article to the Columbia Journalism Review, I will likely cite and incorporate a direct response to Biasotti’s article, which is not currently included. A perhaps more realistic possibility is The Colorado Sun, a Denver-based publication that publishes many in-depth investigative articles. I am acquainted with editors at The Colorado Sun, and several of my peers have had their work published on its website.

I believe that this project provides a more nuanced approach to how journalists can respect the wishes of victims who do not want to see perpetrators spoken about at length if named at all, while also providing information that the public and policymakers should know. Academic research regarding the matter skews in favor of not naming or showing perpetrators, but there are potential benefits to speaking about perpetrators in a public forum that, if not agreeable, should at least be properly acknowledged. Journalists have the power to do significant harm and good; we may do harm by giving perpetrators the fame that they wanted and inspiring copycat shootings in the process, but we may also do good by better informing policymakers on how to improve the broken systems that led to the shooting in the first place and establish

effective preventative measures. In lieu of effective gun policy in the U.S., it is essential that journalists do the best coverage we can with the information made available to us.

## Chapter 3: Reflection

Throughout my creative project, I gained insight into the differences between journalists' approaches to covering mass shootings depending both on their medium and their audience and proximity to a shooting. While I only interviewed local and regional journalists, they all provided similar responses to the question of how national approaches differ from those of their own newsrooms in covering mass shootings. While national journalists tend to stop covering a high-profile mass shooting after a week or two and are less attentive to the impacted communities, journalists living in the communities in which the shooting took place cover it indefinitely with more time to focus on their impacted communities rather than the shooter.

I also noticed differences between print journalists' and broadcast journalists' approaches to covering mass shootings. Mitchell Byars, Shelly Bradbury, and Julie Vossler-Henderson, all of whom are print journalists, emphasized the journalistic importance of sharing information about a shooter and more readily shared things like names and photos. Kim Christiansen, Anne Trujillo, and Kirsten Boyd, who all work in television broadcast journalism, emphasized being sensitive to their communities and identified the perpetrators of mass shootings as little as possible. The latter interviewees also spoke more about the difficulty of remaining neutral when reporting on tragic events. This may be because television news anchors must maintain composure while speaking directly to their audience, while print journalists report with relative anonymity, save for their byline.

One thing I would have done differently in this project is to have interviewees respond more directly to one another. This could have been done by transcribing and reviewing my

interviews after each individual interview rather than reviewing all of them after completing all of my interviews. While this article consists of a balance of varying perspectives, the people interviewed were never directly responding to one another, which made establishing a flow throughout the article more difficult. For instance, the first person I interviewed was J. Pete Blair, who shared his belief that sharing more information about a mass shooter may partly be profit-driven on the journalist's part. If I had asked the journalists I interviewed after J. Pete Blair what they thought about this idea, then the article could have flowed more naturally and leaned more heavily on the differences between the perspectives of those I interviewed. Another benefit of transcribing interviews earlier would have been the ability to follow up with my interviewees on any questions I didn't ask in our initial interview. By doing this, I would have more easily been able to fill the gaps that I found in my final article. For example, Tom Sullivan told me that he was "floored to hear some of the ways" that journalists interacted with Columbine survivors. I did not ask him for examples of the negative interactions that the survivors had with journalists during the interview and did not give myself enough time to follow up with him after the interview asking for elaboration. As a result, I instead followed this statement with a recount that Columbine survivor Sean Graves gave to Kim Christiansen about his interactions.

Despite differences in perspectives among my interviewees on what constitutes responsible coverage of a mass shooter, I found a consensus among all of them that journalists need to be intentional about what they choose to report and considerate of the potential consequences. I also learned that journalists experience trauma. While it is important to hold news outlets accountable for providing responsible coverage, we must treat journalists with as much grace as anyone in a community upended by tragedy.

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