

THE RELATIONAL WORLD OF JOURNALISTS WHO REPORT ON TRAUMATIC  
EVENTS

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## **Abstract**

A growing body of research explores the impact of reporting on traumatic events for journalists. Current research has not focused on early attachment histories or included the relational worlds of journalists in regard to the trauma they witness. The purpose of this study is to provide a detailed portrayal of how journalists who report on trauma understand their relational world both in how earlier relationships contribute to who they are now and what happens in relationships when they are exposed to traumatic events. In this study using a narrative approach and the Life Story interview method the stories of nine journalists who have had experience reporting on traumatic events were told. From their narratives, the methods for thematic analysis of Atkinson, 1998; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; and Riessman, 1993, 2008 were used to identify relational patterns. Six themes emerged including close family relationships in early life, family relationships being central to well being in adult life, juggling three relational spheres (private life, professional life, relationships with people they report about), finding support for managing trauma, making a difference in human lives through reporting on trauma, and the impact of reporting on traumatic events on relationships.

Based on the results of this study recommendations are made for journalists who report on traumatic events at an individual and organizational level. Implications for practice and for further research are also discussed.

## **Preface**

This research was conducted by me with the guidance of a supervising committee which included Dr. Marla Buchanan, Dr. Marvin Westwood, and Dr. Norman Amundson, all from the Department of Counselling Psychology at The University of British Columbia. I was responsible for completing all parts of the study. I received feedback and direction throughout to ensure academic excellence in the completion of this research. This study and the procedures used to conduct it were approved by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board of The University of British Columbia. The certificate number is H09-03246.

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## **1 The Problem**

*There are parts of my story that I may one day be able to recover and heal from, and, to whatever degree possible, forget about them and move on. But there are parts of my story that are so horrific that once they are shared, other people's minds will keep them alive.*

~Amanda Lindhout

### **1.1 Introduction**

The faces of 32 year old Laura Ling and 36 year old Euna Lee, two American journalists, were broadcast around the globe following their detainment by North Korean soldiers on the border of Korea on March 17, 2009. They were later tried for entering North Korean territory and sentenced to 12 years hard labour (Sanger & Sang-Hun, 2009) reminding the world that the work of journalists often exposes them to traumatic events both as observers and at times victims. Ling and Lee were later released. On August 23, 2008, Canadian freelance journalist, Amanda Lindhout, and Australian freelance photographer, Nigel Brennan were kidnapped while reporting in Somalia. They were released 15 months later in November, 2009. These journalists like many others survived their ordeal. Others have not been so fortunate. On April 21, 2011, photojournalists, Tim Hetherington and Chris Hondros, were killed by a bomb in Misrata, Libya. Kevin Carter took his own life on July 27, 1994, just two months after winning a Pulitzer Prize for his photograph of a vulture stalking a starving child in Sudan (Johnson, 2011). From 1997 to 2007 one thousand journalists and support staff around the world died in the course of reporting the news (International News Safety Institute, 2007), that is two each week. Though stress reactions to exposure to trauma among some groups of helpers such as therapists, firemen, police, and emergency workers is more recognized, journalists represent a group that has largely gone unnoticed (Feinstein, 2003; Marais, 2005). Stress reactions to trauma can be debilitating,

for example, hyperarousal symptoms such as irritability, sleeplessness, and exaggerated startle responses, intrusive nightmares or flashbacks, numbing, and avoiding anything associated with the event are common effects (American Psychiatric Association, 2000; Herman, 1992).

Social phenomena such as relational style and social support have been shown to be significant predictors of how an individual manages post traumatic stress (PTS) (Charuvastra & Cloitre, 2008). The general purpose of this study is to encourage journalists to narrate their lived experiences of meaningful relationships and management of work related PTS, with the hope of increasing appreciation for the challenges of their work and understanding of the role of social factors in managing PTS. In this chapter, I provide the background and rationale for this study, its purpose, definitions of terms used, and a description of the research approach.

## ***1.2 Background and Rationale***

PTS has been studied extensively with those who have experienced traumatic events (Brewin, 2003; Herman, 1992; van der Kolk, McFarlane, & Weisaeth, 1996; Violanti & Paton, 2006; Yehuda; 1998). Studies of professionals who are exposed to trauma through their profession are also prolific (Badger, 2001; Figley, 2002, 1995; Violanti & Paton, 2006). Groups that have been well studied include therapists (Arvay, 2001), firefighters (Varvel, He, Shannon, Tager, Bledman, Chaichanasakul, Mendoza, & Mallinckrodt, 2007), police (Alkus & Padesky, 1983; Violanti, 2006) and medical responders (Palm, Polusny, & Follette, 2004).

Researchers in the field of traumatic stress have begun to explore traumatic stress among journalists (Paton & Meyer, 2006; Violanti & Paton, 2006). Much of the focus of research has been quantitative (Brewin, Andrews, & Valentine, 2000; Feinstein, 2003; Ozer, Best, Lipsey, & Weiss, 2008) and few qualitative studies have taken a historical perspective. Lifespan relational factors have only recently been considered in spite of the breadth of knowledge on the links

between early relationships, social development and trauma (Briere & Runtz, 1989) and in spite of research support indicating social factors are significant predictors of development of and recovery from PTSD (Brewin, Andrews, & Valentine; Ozer, Best, Lipsey, & Weiss). Research strongly supports the persistence into adulthood of attachment style developed in childhood although few studies have looked at this in reference to those who are exposed to trauma in their work.

Feinstein in his book, *Journalists Under Fire* (2003) describes the experience of war journalists and contrasts the two worlds that these journalists live in, a world of horror while on assignment and the world at home with family and friends. Research has not looked specifically at the relational world of journalists and how they manage to move back and forth between these two very different worlds while managing symptoms of trauma exposure. The high instances of divorce, substance abuse, and mental health problems among journalists who report on traumatic events, attests to the difficulties of this work (Smith & Newman, 2009). They also work in a profession where they are expected to be able to manage the effects of exposure to trauma, where stigma is attached to not managing well and where systemic support to prevent traumatic reactions and facilitate recovery are for the most part undeveloped (Matloff, 2004; Ricchiardi, 2001). Having journalists write or tell narratives about their relational worlds and their experiences of trauma will provide a means to understanding the interaction between trauma and relationships. Studying the narratives that journalists create about their relational world will provide insight into what their needs and the needs of their families and friends are. This information will assist news organizations with providing structural supports for journalists, and will inform treatment providers with knowledge about the unique experience of journalists.

### *1.3 Purpose of this Study*

The purpose of this research is to provide a detailed portrayal of how journalists who report on trauma understand their relational world both in how earlier relationships contribute to who they are now and what happens in relationships when they are exposed to traumatic events. Through this study, I elucidated how early social patterns that were formed with significant others persist through life and influence how we relate to others as adults. I also, clarified the relational needs of journalists who report on traumatic events and recommend possible individual and systemic interventions for journalists who experience PTS. The research question guiding this project is: What narratives do journalists who report on trauma and disaster construct concerning their relational world?

### *1.4 Definition of Terms*

**Trauma.** For the purpose of this study the term "trauma" is used to refer to an emotional shock, a psychological response to events that overwhelm one's ordinary human adaptive responses to stress (Herman, 1992). Trauma speaks both to the nature of the event and one's reaction to it.

**Post Traumatic Stress (PTS).** In the study of human response to trauma in the last two decades a distinction has commonly been made between primary and secondary exposure to traumatic stress. A number of constructs that have similar or overlapping definitions are used in the literature to describe exposure to the experience of trauma by another person or persons. These related constructs include secondary traumatic stress, vicarious traumatization, compassion fatigue, and burnout. Secondary traumatic stress refers to a set of psychological symptoms that mimic post-traumatic stress disorder acquired through exposure to other persons suffering the effects of trauma. Vicarious traumatization has most commonly been used in

reference to therapists and refers to harmful changes that occur in professionals' views of themselves, others, and the world through exposure to traumatic material of their clients. Compassion fatigue was coined by Figley (1995, 2002) and largely overlaps with the first two terms and is viewed as synonymous with secondary traumatization (Arvey, 2001). Burnout is a more general term and has been used in relation to the wearing down of personal resources over time for people who work in stressful environments. The three predominant effects of burnout are emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and one's sense of accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009)

More recently, researchers have looked for a way to provide a uniform language that acknowledges the continuum of experience of exposure to trauma rather than compartmentalized degrees (Baird, & Kracen, 2006). For many professionals no clear distinction can be made to determine whether exposure to trauma is primary or secondary, for example, in occupations such as emergency medical workers, police officers, and firefighters. For those in dangerous professions their work involves both primary and secondary traumatic stress. Journalists are among this group as their work may lead them to hear stories of the traumatic experiences of others or in the other extreme they may be imbedded with soldiers and exposed to much of the same trauma. For the purposes of this study, I have chosen the term posttraumatic stress to acknowledge the blurred line between primary and secondary traumatic stress and to avoid the semantic but unclear distinctions between terms used for non primary trauma.

**Journalists.** Currently active members of an organization or freelance reporters, who report on events in written, oral, or visual form through some form of media.

**Attachment.** The theoretical groundwork on the construct of attachment was written by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. They identified the child's innate adaptive drive to be in

proximity to significant others particularly the primary caregiver especially in situations that are dangerous, stressful or unfamiliar (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1959; Cassidy & Shaver, 2008). Bowlby referred to a behavioural homeostasis in which the goal of the child is a state brought about through regulation of emotions. This capacity emerges in response to the ways the primary attachment figure responds to emotional expression and facilitates the development of regulating behaviours (Cassidy, 2008). Modern theory has greatly expanded our understanding in a number of areas. Schore and Schore (2008) and others (Tronick, 1989) have looked at how the ability to regulate emotions is learned through the attachment process and is central in the human ability to form healthy relationships and to manage life stressors. Extensive study has been done on the biology of attachment and how it relates to identity formation (Charuvastra & Cloitre, 2008). In relation to trauma social experience is salient in human response to trauma beginning with early significant relationships and through to adult social experiences (dyadic and group or community level). Attachment theory is discussed because it represents the predominant field of study on relational experience in the last 50 years and laid the foundation for other perspectives on social behaviour. Relational theory which fits more closely with a social constructionist epistemological stance will be presented as a lens through which the participants' social experience in response to trauma can be explored.

**Relational Theory.** Though attachment theory allows perspective of the internal processes of social development, it ignores the co-construction of relational style and fails to acknowledge the multiple factors that challenge the assumption that human socialization can be explained through discreet stages and styles of an individual. For example it fails to address cultural, class, gender and other factors that influence relational style. Relational theory refers to a body of work that approaches socialization from an interactive perspective rather than



individual and acknowledges that human experience is always co-constructed and fluid rather than objectively measurable. Social experience is salient in human response to trauma beginning with early social experience and through to adult social experiences (dyadic and group or community level). Within this study relational style will be used to explore the capacity for and nature of intimate relationships in the lives of participants. Focus will be on how relational style interacts with trauma exposure.

**Social Support.** Social factors will be looked at in relation to managing traumatic stress. The influence of both positive and negative social support on journalists' experience of post traumatic stress will be considered (Ulman, 1999). Different types of social support during times of stress have been identified and studied, for example, the distinction between perceived versus received social support (Norris, & Kaniasty, 1996). In addition social support across the life span as reported by the participants will be considered in its relationship to social support as adults who have experienced PTS.

### ***1.5 Research Approach***

My research project is a narrative study in which the social experiences of journalists who report on traumatic events are viewed as part of a constructed, comprehensive, life-span relationship narrative. To explore how they construct this I used a combination of the Life Story Interview method described by Atkinson (1993), and Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998) and written life story methods which have a long history in the early work of Allport, Bruner and others (Murray, 2003). Participants were asked to either write their own narrative with guiding questions to provide direction or to participate in an interview covering the same questions. Initial summaries were created from the narratives. If needed brief follow up interviews were conducted by telephone or email to gain feedback, seek clarification and to ask

any further questions that arose. Journalists were also asked to review the summaries and to amend if they felt changes or corrections were needed. Having journalists write their own narrative was offered as an alternative to an oral interview because writing in narrative form is a natural mode of expression for journalists and it would reduce my influence on the directions their narratives took. The intent was to provide a means to understand the experience of managing post traumatic stress as embedded in life-long social patterns and in current individual and systemic contexts. I used the methods of Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998) as well as Riessman (1993, 2008) and Atkinson (1998) for analysis of themes within individual narratives and across narratives. The resulting final themes are presented along with the narrative summaries. In the next two chapters I provide a review of pertinent literature as well as a more detailed presentation of my mode of inquiry.

## 2 Literature Review

*In recognition of this need for affiliation as a protection against trauma, it is widely accepted that the central issue in disaster management is the provision and restoration of social support.*

~Alexander McFarlane, Bessel van der Kolk

### 2.1 Introduction

Trauma is a psychological response to events that overwhelm one's ordinary human adaptive responses to stress (Herman, 1992). The natural human response to threat includes arousal of the sympathetic nervous system. This leads to a rush of adrenalin and state of alertness. Attention becomes focused on the immediate situation, at times leading to altered experiences such as disregard toward hunger, fatigue or pain, and often accompanied by intense emotions of fear and anger (McFarlane, A. & Girolamo, 2007). Although these changes are normal and adaptive mobilizing responses when one perceives themselves as unable to resist or escape the threat, they overwhelm the human system of self-defence causing it to become disorganized. These ordinary responses to danger tend to persist long after the danger is passed but in altered and exaggerated states. Although people in most cases typically become preoccupied with traumatic memory following the experience, they are able to gradually modify the impact of the memory increasing tolerance for it (van der Kolk & McFarlane, 2007). For some, they begin to organize their life around the trauma which can lead to enduring changes in physiological arousal, emotion, cognition, and memory (Herman; van der Kolk & McFarlane). The traumatic symptoms tend to become disconnected from the event and lead to a fragmented experience of cognitive, emotional, and physical memory.

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was first introduced into the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual in the third edition, in 1980 (DSM-III, 3rd ed; American Psychiatric

Association, 1980). The criteria have been revised twice though with minor changes. Currently, in the DSM-IV R, the core criteria include reexperiencing the trauma, avoidance and numbing, increased arousal and the requirement of a life-threatening event to which the symptoms are directly linked. Areas of symptomatology not included in the DSM-IV are problems with memory, attention, and paranoid thinking (Lipton, 1994). PTSD is often comorbid with other diagnoses, particularly mood disorders, anxiety disorders and substance use disorders (Brewin, 2003; Kessler, Sonnega, Bromet, Hughes, Nelson, & Breslau, 1999). There is now widespread recognition that PTSD as described in the DSM-IV R inadequately encompasses the symptomatology of those who have suffered prolonged repeated trauma such as in child abuse or captivity, and the disorganization of personality that can result (Shalev, 2007). Individuals on this extreme end of the spectrum of PTSD symptoms are often diagnosed with personality disorders, somatization disorder or dissociative identity disorder and the underlying trauma can go unnoticed (Herman, 1992).

Hyperarousal, marked by irritability, poor sleep, and extreme startle response results from chronic stimulation of the sympathetic nervous system (Charuvastra & Cloitre, 2007; Herman, 1992). Intrusion occurs as the individual continues to experience the traumatic event as though it is in the present long after the event is over. This can result in frequent ruminations of the traumatic events (Lipton, 1994). Flashbacks while awake and nightmares while asleep break into consciousness spontaneously. Stimuli associated with the event can evoke intrusive memories from the trauma. Unlike normal memories that are recorded in a linear, narrative, historical fashion, traumatic memories are encoded as vivid, fragmented sensations, sets of images without context. Dreams often include aspects of the traumatic event exactly as it occurred and often occur repeatedly (Herman, 1992; van der Kolk, McFarlane, & Weisaeth,

1996). Compulsive reenactment of the traumatic event is common in both adults and children, even preverbal children. This is thought to be an attempt to heal, a spontaneous attempt to integrate the experience through mastering it (Herman). In a similar vein, one may be drawn to the very things that caused the trauma, for example, combat veterans being fascinated by movies about war (Lipton).

Constriction, or numbing, is an alteration in consciousness that occurs in response to overwhelming traumatic events in which the person is completely powerless and helpless to protect themselves (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). A state of detached calm in which perceptions are altered takes over. The person may feel indifferent, emotionally detached, a surrender of voluntary action and a sense of the event not happening to them, as though they may be observing the event from outside of their body. Following the traumatic event, efforts are likely to be made to avoid thoughts, feelings, activities or situations that are associated with the trauma or can produce recollections of the trauma (Lipton, 1994). Memories may be fragmented with important aspects of the trauma being blocked out, an experience known as psychogenic amnesia. Rogers (1994) noted the distinction between repression and dissociation in a study in which she interviewed women who identified themselves as having experienced trauma in childhood. She found that repressed memories lie just below the surface and can be triggered by perceptual cues while narratives of dissociated memories have gaps and are fragmented in sequence.

Certain assumptions enable people to live their lives, plan their futures, and believe that they will be able to cope with the difficulties they face. These include beliefs that the world is generally good and meaningful, the self is worthy and people are generally well-meaning (Brewin, 2003; Janoff-Bulman, 2006). Traumatic events can shatter these beliefs as events occur

that appear random, people behave in ways that are monstrous, and one cannot always protect themselves from trauma nor move on from it. Brewin speaks to the illusion of invulnerability which is shattered by traumatic experiences. In addition posttraumatic shame and guilt related to one's role in the traumatic experiences are common and can be debilitating (Lipton, 1994). Shame transforms core dimensions of the self, altering personality while guilt manifests itself in self-recrimination for one's actions (Wilson, 2006).

PTS has been studied extensively with those who have experienced traumatic events (Brewin, 2003; Herman, 1992; van der Kolk, McFarlane, & Weisaeth, 1996; Violanti & Paton, 2006; Yehuda; 1998). The research literature has tended to distinguish PTS in the general population from PTS among professionals. The main reason for the distinction was the acknowledgement that the stress reactions of professionals were in response to exposure to the trauma of others rather than direct exposure to trauma. However many professionals experience both primary and secondary trauma. Regardless of the source of trauma the human response is consistent and universal (van der Kolk, 1987). A number of related constructs are used to describe exposure to persons suffering the effects of trauma, including secondary traumatic stress (Arvey, 2001; Buchanan et al., 2007; Stamm, 1995), vicarious traumatization (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995), burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2008; National Center for PTSD, n.d.; Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009) and compassion fatigue (Figley, 2002, 1995). Because stress reactions form a continuum of intensity from mild stress reactions to diagnosed PTSD regardless of whether it is primary or secondary trauma I have chosen in this study to use the term Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) to include all responses to trauma in which there are symptoms present as described in the DSM-IV-R.

Studies of professionals who are exposed to trauma through their profession are prolific (Badger, 2001; Figley, 2002, 1995). Groups that have been well studied include therapists (Arvey, 2001), firefighters (Varvel, He, Shannon, Tager, Bledman, Chaichanasakul, Mendoza, & Mallinckrodt, 2007), police (Alkus & Padesky, 1983) and medical responders (Palm, Polusny, & Follette, 2004). Only recently has attention been drawn to PTS and journalists in part due to unspoken beliefs among journalists that psychological distress reflects weakness (Matloff, 2004; Ricchiardi, 2001), yet they experience high levels of substance abuse, marital problems, and health concerns. Recent studies of PTS among journalists have looked at psychological effects, and recommendations related to training and treatment (Dworznic & Grubb, 2007; Feinstein, Owen, & Blair, 2002; Himmelstein & Faithorn, 2002; Osofsky, Holloway, & Pickett, 2005).

Rates for PTSD are 5% in the general population and 7 to 13% among police officers (Feinstein, 2003). In a study conducted by Feinstein, rates for PTSD among war journalists were 29%. While this is extremely high it is also remarkable that it is not higher given the amount of trauma that a career war journalist is exposed to. Feinstein also noted that whereas police officers, firefighters, and soldiers expect to confront danger and are educated and trained in preparation for it, journalists have very little preparation. Of the symptoms of PTSD the group of symptoms most pronounced in war journalists are avoidance symptoms particularly feeling estranged or detached from others. An important consideration for this study is whether this is specific to war journalists because of the amount of exposure to trauma and separation of home life from life while on assignment or if it is related to the nature of their work as journalists and thus observable in all journalists who report on trauma. One aspect of a journalist's profession that distinguishes them from other hazardous professions is that the aim of their work is to report on the trauma they observe and experience rather than to intervene or take action to assist others.

## ***2.2 Risk Factors for PTSD***

A number of factors have been shown to predict the development of PTSD following traumatic event(s) and recovery from traumatic events. The most common model used to explain risk for PTSD is a stress diathesis model. In this model the interaction between the current stressor and predisposing factors result in vulnerability to PTSD (Harvey & Yehuda, 1999). Brewin, Andrews, and Valentine (2000) conducted a meta-analysis of risk factors for PTSD in adults based on 77 studies. The analysis which included 14 factors considered moderating effects of sample and study characteristics. The most uniform predictive effects were found for psychiatric history, reported childhood abuse, and family psychiatric history. Other effects such as gender, age at trauma, and race predicted PTSD in some populations but not in others. Somewhat stronger effects were found for factors operating during or after the trauma than for pretrauma factors (for example, trauma severity, lack of social support, and additional life stress). Of these, the lack of social support was the strongest predictor (average ES of .40), race, the weakest (average ES of .05), and most other predictors with ES between .10 and .19.

Ozer, Best, Lipsey, and Weiss (2008) also conducted a meta-analysis of studies of PTSD to identify predictors of PTSD or its symptoms. Ozer and colleagues grouped factors into two types of predictors, individual characteristics that are important for psychological processing and functioning and aspects specific to the traumatic event. From the 68 studies that met the criteria for their study, they identified seven predictors which included prior trauma, prior psychological adjustment, family history of psychopathology, perceived life threat during the trauma, posttrauma social support, peritraumatic emotional responses, and peritraumatic dissociation. All effect sizes were significant with the strongest predictor being peritraumatic dissociation



( $r=.35$ ). The smallest effects were yielded with family history, prior trauma, and prior adjustment.

Both meta-analytic studies identify the lack of social support as a strong predictor of post-trauma PTSD. However, the nature of social support and its relationship to other risk factors were not discussed in depth. The focus of this study is on the role that social phenomena and particularly perceptions of social relationships before and after traumatic events play in influencing vulnerability to developing PTSD and recovery. Because the risk of developing PTSD is increased when traumatic events are human-generated (Charuvastra & Cloitre, 2008), greater focus will be on interpersonal trauma.

Theories of human social development will be discussed beginning with attachment theory followed by relational theory. Attachment theory provides an explicit, discreet explanation for how humans learn to relate and to experience themselves in relation to others. However, attachment theory gives little attention to the social construction of the relational self and the multiple factors beyond the attachment relationship that influence the shaping of identity and relationships over time. Nonetheless, because attachment theory has been enormously studied and has significantly influenced ongoing theory development it is discussed first followed by relational theory which is more commensurate with a social constructionist perspective. These theories will then be discussed in terms of how they relate to PTSD development and recovery. Research will be reviewed that examines the relationship between attachment/relational style and social development first with children and then with adults. The neurobiology of social relationships will be discussed followed by types of social support and how they relate to the development of and recovery from PTSD. How this body of research relates specifically to journalists will then be addressed.

### ***2.3 Attachment Theory in Relation to Risk for PTSD***

Bowlby and Ainsworth in their work on human attachment presented as fundamental the biological basis of behaviour in that a child has an innate adaptive drive to be in proximity to significant others particularly the primary caregiver especially in situations that are dangerous, stressful or unfamiliar (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1959; Cassidy & Shaver, 2008).

Bowlby referred to a behavioural homeostasis in which the goal of the child is an internal state. Regulation of emotions develops in response to how emotions are responded to, shared, communicated about, and regulated within significant relationships (Cassidy, 2008). The child develops, through experiences, mental representations of the attachment figure, the self, and the environment. These are organized into cognitive scripts which enable the child to anticipate the future and make plans. When the internal representation of the attachment figure is of someone who is available and responsive to their needs the child forms a secure attachment. The internal representation is of self-in-relation with a regulating-other (Tronick, 1989). On a biological level, as changes in the external environment occur internal bodily states can fluidly switch in response (Schoore, 1996).

Attachment theorists relate the attachment behavioural system to the fear system and the exploratory system. The caregiver is motivated to ensure proximity and safety of the child thus allowing the child to explore their environment. When the fear system is activated it increases attachment behaviours as one pursues protection and when the exploratory system is activated it decreases attachment behaviours (Bowlby, 1973; Cassidy, 2008). Over time an internal working model develops which guides an individual as to what to expect relationally, when and from whom they can expect help during times of distress and difficulty (Charuvastra & Cloitre, 2008).

In insecure-avoidant attachment the mother withdraws, hesitates, is reluctant to regulate and organize infant's attention and behaviour. The infant displays low motivation to seek out the caregiver after separation and experiences a bias for a parasympathetic-dominant state. These infants have difficulty moving out of low-arousal states and in regulating high arousal states. This leads to overcontrolled or internalizing behavioural tendencies. In insecure-ambivalent attachment the mothers are unpredictable in availability across situations. Infants are highly distressed at separation, and difficult to comfort on reunion. They have a bias towards a sympathetic, excitatory dominant state and are prone to undercontrolled, impulsive, externalizing behaviour (Schore, 1996). In disorganized/disoriented attachment infants demonstrate conflicting behaviours when reunited with their mother after separation. This behaviour is seen in children who have been maltreated, and experience the caregiver as frightened/frightening. Disorganized attachment is thought to be partly responsible for dissociative symptomatology and can result in vulnerabilities to trauma, difficulty self reflecting and problems with reciprocal trust (Wilson, 2006). The child's conflict is between attachment needs and fear of the caregiver. When the parent is the source of the trauma as in physical and sexual abuse, or neglect the child is faced with the conflict that their source of safety, comfort, emotional and cognitive repair is also a source of danger (Forrest, 2001).

### ***2.3.1 Attachment Formation and Social Development***

Developmental consequences of child maltreatment by caregivers include psychological maladjustment, and vulnerability in facing stressful life events (Tummala-Narra, Liang, & Harvey, 2007; Wilson, 2006). A number of studies have looked specifically at the relationship between attachment formation and social development concluding that warm, responsive parenting results in more advanced social skills in children (Karass & Walden, 2005). However

the mechanisms by which this occurs are not fully understood. Social behaviour is impacted both by one's own emotional experience and by the perceptions of others' emotions. Emotions regulate and organize intrapersonal and interpersonal interactions. They assist in coordinating goal directed behaviour with environmental factors. Karrass and Walden studied emotion as a mediator between nurturing caregiving and social behaviour with thirty-two 4 and 5 year olds. They found that more nurturing caregiving led to increased happiness, which resulted in more social initiations in subsequent interactions with a second adult.

Conteras, Kerns, Weimer, Gentzler, and Tomich (2000) examined the mechanisms that help to explain the well established link between attachment and peer relationships, secure attachment being correlated with peer competence. Emotion regulation as a mediator was tested with 5<sup>th</sup> graders using self-report and semiprojective measures of mother-child attachment, mother's reports on children's emotionality and coping strategies, and teachers' reports on children's peer competence. The authors found that more secure attachment was associated with increased use of constructive coping strategies and with higher peer competence. However, the attachment competence although significantly correlated with peer competence did not account for a significant percentage of variance on peer competence beyond that which was accounted for by constructive coping. Further, attachment was related to constructive coping and not to negative emotionality, a component of emotion regulation that is temperamentally based and therefore likely more influenced by innate factors than by coping style. In examining the correlations between constructive coping and peer competence for children high and low on negatively emotionality, it was found that constructive coping was significantly associated with peer competence only for children high on negative emotionality.

### ***2.3.2 Attachment Capacity in Adults and its Relationship to PTSD***

Studies support that affective and social disturbances seen in children persist into adulthood, resulting in problems with emotion-regulation, social relationships, and increased risk for mental disorders such as PTSD (Hyman, Gold, & Cott, 2003). Although abuse in childhood produces consistent points of vulnerability in functioning across the lifespan it is not known how stable these patterns are in individuals (Charuvastra and Cloitre (2008). Early traumatic experiences, particularly when the parent is the source, impact how an individual will later organize his social life, in terms of social bonds within a network and his ability to use social relationships as a resource for managing emotionally distressing events (Charuvastra & Cloitre, 2008). Briere and Runtz (1989) using retrospective reports of university women examined the differences and overlap of three types of child abuse histories, psychological abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse in relation to three types of adult psychological functioning. They found significant relationships between histories of psychological abuse and low self esteem, between physical abuse and aggression toward others and between sexual abuse and maladaptive sexual behaviour. They also found that the combination of physical and psychological abuse, often presented together, was related to generalized psychosocial problems.

Tummala-Narra, Liang, and Harvey (2007) investigated the relationship between attachment capacities and recovery from trauma in adults. Essential to recovery in this study was relational repair, the survivor's ability to form safe and meaningful relationships with others. The authors had clinicians rate 126 participants on the Multidimensional Trauma Recovery and Resiliency (MTTR) scale to look at stage of recovery and scores on the four safe attachment subscales of the MTTR. Using exploratory principal factors analyses of the safe attachment domain they found four sub scales, capacity to form meaningful relationships, personal self-care

in the context of intimate relationships, the ability to extend safety to another in relationships and balanced sense of power in relationships. They also found a positive correlation between stage of recovery and safe attachment and with each of the four subscales of safe attachment. The question left unanswered by this study about the relationship between attachment in trauma survivors and the recovery process is whether trauma survivors who have a history of capacity to form stable attachments are better able to engage in a recovery process in therapy or the therapy process facilitates capacity for safe attachment resulting in the correlation between safe attachment and stage of recovery.

Of note in the studies presented in this section is the framing of the study around attachment theory which provides a definitive perspective of how humans are socialized and learn to form and sustain intimate relationships. However, this perspective ignores other contributing factors particularly the social construction of human experience and relationships, and the historical, cultural contexts within which they are embedded (Garcia Coll, Cook-Nobles & Surrey, 1995). In addition, some question the emphasis in the child development literature on the child as a product of parent behaviour and look at significant other factors, primarily the temperament of the child as the stronger predictor of how the child will develop (Birns, 1985). Relational theory provides a more flexible lens that can address these shortcomings and better fits a social constructionist perspective.

#### ***2.4 Relational Theory***

While traditional Western theories of psychological development look at discreet models of how humans form and maintain relationships such as attachment theory or theories of movement from dependence to independence, a number of theories have challenged these perspectives (Jordan, 1989; 2001). Relational theory sees isolation as the main source of human

suffering and that healing and growth develop out of human connection. This desire for and movement toward connection is central to people's lives providing both meaning and well-being (Jordan, 1994; 2001). When development is viewed from a relational perspective boundaries with others are viewed not as a means to protecting self but as flexible processes that through contact, and exchange, allow relational development not just self development. Growth enhancing relationships are characterized by mutual intersubjectivity and empathy which can lead to increased empowerment, worth and sense of connection (Miller, 1986; Jordan 1986). While disconnections in relationships occur in every life and through many means confronting them can lead to strengthened connection. In healthy living, connections become increasingly differentiated through empathetic interactions and mutual understanding (Surrey, 1990). As an individual learns that they can be themselves, that they matter to another and can influence the relationship, capacity for maintaining mutual relationships grows (Jordan, 1989). Relational theorists shift from a perspective of self-in relation to movement of relation where connection rather than self is the focus of growth and development (Surrey).

When children experience a negative response and let the parent know they are hurt, the tendency will be to internalize a negative view of self, feel disconnected from the parent and they will alter their behaviour to preserve their safety. Their inability to trust that they can be authentic in relationships teaches them that they have little power to shape relationships which leads to chronic disconnections. Relational theorists look at these responses which can include isolation or self-blame as survival strategies (Jordan, 1993; 2001). The shame that results from failure in interpersonal relationships for females can lead to depression and disempowerment, and for males, anger. The shift in the relational perspective of development is from intimacy developing out of identity formation as in traditional developmental theories to identity being

formed as a process that is continuously informed by relationships with the goal of growing an ability to create mutually enhancing relationships (Bergman, 1991). When early disconnection is chronic the desire for connection becomes stronger, however so does the fear of the vulnerability necessary for authentic connection (Jordan, 2001).

Stiver (1989a) looked at the nature of connections in the children of families in which the context involves family members who were holocaust survivors, alcoholics or incest survivors to illustrate how dysfunctional relational dynamics develop. She found that relational interactions involving tendencies such as conspiratorial secrecy, parents who are emotionally unavailable to their children or children who are put into parenting roles prematurely led to power imbalances and disconnection in the family. Stiver (1989a) found that the children from families such as she described develop restricted capacity for emotional experience and a tendency to hide vulnerabilities. Strategies used to manage relationships include emotional disengagement which in the extreme can include, numbing, dissociative states, or the use of substances, assuming roles that may seem to be adaptive yet are not authentic and repeating negative family patterns (Stiver, 1989b). Stiver's work may have relevance to this study.

Bergman (1991) points out that for developing males a process of disconnection from the mother occurs starting at about age three and is influenced by social and cultural pressure toward dominant male power and pressure to achieve. This disconnection from their mother is not, as in traditional theories, a break from the mother but rather a shift from a mutually empathic relationship and a relational way of being. Power in relationships is often associated with violence and the greater the disconnection the greater the potential for violence. Because males are socialized to be powerful, male violence is often directed towards females who experience themselves as physically weaker (Bergman). In Gilligan's early work she noted that while



women are socialized to be connected, men desire it and yet more easily use strategies such as humour or physicalizing it to make it more comfortable (Gilligan, 1982). Gilligan noted that language in Western society reflects the adoption of the male life as the norm, that "masculinity is defined through separation while femininity is defined through attachment" (p.8). Thus males are threatened by intimacy while females are both threatened by separation and failure to separate is viewed as a developmental failure. Given ethical dilemmas, Gilligan noted that males make moral decisions based on a hierarchy of values and categories whereas females on a network of relationships and contextually. On a cautionary note, relational theory has expanded in the last thirty years and now includes development of nurturance in boys. As a result of the work of Gilligan and her colleagues schools now address this disparity through curriculum development, for example, in the emphasis in schools on social and emotional development.

These patterns of connection and disconnection, as proponents of this relational-cultural model described, occur both on a personal and societal level. Western society's emphasis on the individual, the separate self, can promote a non-mutual pattern, unlike many non Western cultures where the emphasis is on the group, attending more to relationships (Jordan1994). Individuals and groups in society can become marginalized and disconnected as they face prejudice by more powerful groups or only aspects of themselves can be expressed authentically. A relational perspective is particularly suited to this study as it focuses on the need to understand a person's current relational context and the context they grew up in to understand their self-esteem as seen in feelings of confidence, strength, respect, and regard (Jordan). Jordan (1994) described self-esteem not as anchored in the self but in one's efficacy in reciprocal, meaningful connection with others, ability to create responsive relationships. Non responsiveness in relationships can lead to isolation, a sense of being alone. For journalists who report on

traumatic events how does exposure to trauma interact with relational theory? We need to know how journalists experience their relational worlds to expand our knowledge and supportive strategies in view of the trauma they face.

### ***2.5 Neurobiology and Social Relationships***

In terms of physiological response to stress, the most commonly studied systems are the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis (HPA) and the autonomic nervous system. Under high stress that is not prolonged these systems are adaptive when they can regulate physiological responses. A maladaptive response occurs when under acute or prolonged stress these systems cannot regulate the physiological response. A number of authors have focused on early attachment and neurodevelopment and how these relate to the development of regulating systems (Forrest, 2001, Schore & Schore, 2008; Tronick, 1989). Forrest, for example, provides a neurodevelopmental model related to disorganized attachment which draws from theory related to the neurobiology of the orbitalfrontal cortex and its protective inhibitory role in temporally organizing behaviour, development of emotion regulation, development of the self, and the experience dependent reorganizing neocortical regulation. Central to his model is the impact of discontinuous socioaffective interactions between caregivers and infants in abusive environments on the development of the prefrontal cortex. Schore and Schore (2008) and Tronick (1989) focus on emotion regulation and its development in early attachment relationships. Dissociation in response to trauma is an adaptive response that can be normal or pathological (Lipton, 1994). Dissociation involves unconscious processes which can include aspects of identity, repressed or dysregulated emotions, or unprocessed memories (Wilson, 2006). Consistent in the literature is the recognition that the brain develops in response to environmental influences. When this results in psychosocial problems later in life requiring relational repair, healing relationships can

in turn help the brain to reorganize itself to respond in more adaptive ways. Research in the area of neurobiology has looked at neural pathways in the brain and the relationship between social relationships and emotion regulation, such as in processing fear, and anxiety. For example, Olsson, Ebert, Banaji, and Phelps (2005) studied race bias, whether people more readily associate an aversive stimulus with people from another race and whether attitudes, beliefs or contact with members of that race moderate the effects. They found that positive intergroup contact reduced negative reactions to the outgroups, suggesting that basic aspects of the fear system in humans are modulated by social information and that positive experience can attenuate certain kinds of learned fear while negative experiences can impair fear extinction. Elman, Frederick, Arley, Dunlap, and Rodolico (2005) provide preliminary evidence that diminished neural capacity to respond to social rewards may be linked to numbing found with PTSD, suggesting that not seeking out or accessing social support may reflect both avoidance of fear reactions and hyperarousal and also a lack of reward from social contact. It is not clear whether a decreased ability to respond to social rewards is a risk factor for or a result of PTSD or both.

## ***2.6 Social Support and Trauma***

Social support has been shown to be a significant protective factor against traumatic stress both in terms of availability of positive social supports and the tendency to use them as a source to share the traumatic experience (Forbes & Roger, 1999; Foy, Sippelle, Rueger, & Carroll, 1984; Keane, Scott, Chavoya, Lamparski, & Fairbank, 1985; King, King, Fairbank, Keane, & Adams, 1998; Martin, Rosen, Duran, Knudson, & Stretch, 2000; Pennebaker & O'Heeron, 1984). For journalists, as with many dangerous professions, overseas work may lead to isolation in the host country in addition to separation from family and friends at home (Violanti & Paton, 2006). The age at which the traumatization occurs is known to influence the

likelihood of contracting PTSD (Maecker, Schutzwahl, & Solomon, 1999). Studies of relationships among soldiers show age dependent changes in the depth and duration of relationships with fellow soldiers (van der Kolk, 1987; Westwood, McLean, Cave, Borgen, & Slakov, 2010) with soldiers who enter the service after adolescence having longer lasting more meaningful relationships. In addition younger soldiers were more likely to develop PTSD. As with attachment in which young children experience protest, despair, and then detachment when separated from their mothers, a number of studies have identified similar processes in soldiers who have lost a buddy during war. Although many are able to marry, have children, and develop a career, psychic numbing is often reported in this population and they feel emotionally detached from those who are close to them (van der Kolk). This is similar to experiences described by war journalists in Feinstein's book, *Journalists Under Fire* (2003). This next section considers how social support is related to recovery from PTSD.

### ***2.7 Social Support and Recovery from PTSD***

As a group, adults who meet the criteria for a diagnosis of PTSD form a very heterogeneous group in terms of effects of trauma exposure and predictors of symptoms as was noted with the meta-analyses mentioned earlier by Brewin et al. (2000) and by Ozer et al. (2008). Thus in discussing social phenomena it is important to specify the group to whom the research applies, whether there is a prior history of childhood abuse or prior trauma, type of trauma, and extent of trauma. Because psychological trauma occurs in a social context the trauma response involves the disturbing of one's basic sense of security and damaged social attachments (van der Kolk, 1987b). The psychological difficulties that can follow trauma can also disrupt one's ability to use social supports to help them manage PTS symptoms and daily demands of living (Riggs, Byrne, Weathers, & Litz, 1998; Solomon, Mikulincer, & Avitzur, 1988). Social support

is known to contribute to increased well-being and health whether or not a traumatic event has occurred (main effect model) but can also serve as a buffer when facing a traumatic event (stress-buffer-model) (Maercker, Schutwohl, & Solomon, 1999). Conflict in important relationships prior to trauma can negatively affect recovery. This is especially true for those who are motivated to use relationships to cope with PTS (Major, Zubeck, Cooper, & Cozzarelli, 1997). Though a support network is essential in preventing the development and maintenance of symptoms of PTSD, people often resist social involvement because of fear, shame, and distrust of others (Lipton, 1994; van der Kolk, 1987b). Some victims find that following a traumatic experience a period of respite from talking about the trauma is needed to regain a sense of equilibrium (Charlton & Thompson, 1996). At the same time discomfort with the traumatic experiences of others may weaken social support. Although family is a key resource for the member who has experienced work related trauma the family itself can become vulnerable to stress through their member's regular work related traumatic experiences (Paton & Meyer, 2006). The prolonged separation due to work demands can itself be a significant stressor. Areas that are covered in this section include types of social support related to PTSD, the distinction between received social support and perceived social support, and posttraumatic growth in the area of social relationships.

### ***2.7.1 Types of social support and PTSD***

Extensive literature exists that focuses on the role that social support plays in mediating the risk for and recovery from Acute Stress Disorder or PTSD. A number of studies primarily focusing on military personnel note that support through family, friends, and the organization are an important source of coping (Amen et al., 1998; Black, 1993; Paton & Meyer, 2006; Van Breda, 1999). Findings indicate that high levels of support lead to better social functioning,

greater satisfaction with work and family and other relationships, and lower levels of depression. Lower levels of support are associated with family stress vulnerability, denial, and emotional suppression. While some studies focus on the perception of support as central to impact, others have looked at the multifaceted nature of social support and how this impacts perception. Pruitt and Zoellner (2008) for example, highlight the roles that negative social support or lack of support can have in the development of PTSD.

Ullman (1999) reviewed empirical studies of social support and adult female sexual assault victims to examine the effect of types of social support on physical and mental health consequences for victims. Social responses to victims may be intentionally negative such as in blaming the victim, unintentionally harmful responses that were meant to be supportive, or neutral responses such as absence of social support or of negative reactions. Ullman found consistent and strong negative effects of negative aspects of social relations such as blaming the victim, emotionally withdrawing, taking control of the victim's decision making, or discouraging talking. Recovery from sexual assault was found to be associated with having a network of social support, and living with family members at the time of the assault rather than alone or with a spouse. Social support was also found to have a moderating effect on physical health perceptions. A number of factors were found to mediate the effects of social support and negative social reactions on post rape recovery, for example, the type of support provider that the victim disclosed to. In general, women found more tangible aid and information from formal support providers. Women found more emotional support and validation from telling rape crisis centers than from telling informal supports such as friends or family members, although women reported both positive and negative responses from rape crisis centers. Emotional support from friends was related to better recovery than emotional support from other sources. Coping

strategies such as avoidance strategies (substance abuse, withdrawal from others, problem avoidance coping) were associated with greater psychological symptomatology. It was also noted that coping strategies used by the victim and their level of adjustment may influence how they are treated by members of their social network.

Ullman's model of social support in response to trauma is as perceived and multifaceted and as positive, negative, or neutral. Pruitt and Zoellner (2008), based on this model, experimentally manipulated social support to examine the effect on post trauma recovery. Ninety three undergraduates were randomly assigned to one of three types of social support: positive support, negative support, or no support. Results indicated that participants in the negative social support condition compared to the positive and or no support conditions initially reported higher levels of negative effect. However, participants in the no support condition, rather than negative support, had an increase in the frequency of intrusive thoughts and their perception of the initial severity of the event was biased. The authors hypothesized that no support invalidates the experience of the distressed person and may be viewed as a lack of support rather than as neutral support.

Cohen and Wills (1985) found evidence for two models that explain the link between social support and well-being. The first of these models is the main or direct effect model in which well being is attributable to an overall beneficial effect of support through integration in a large social network. The second model is the buffering model in which perceived availability of interpersonal resources being responsive to the needs that arise out of stressful events thereby protects persons from the potentially negative effects of those events. The mechanism by which social support buffers against developing symptoms is that it intervenes between the stressful

event and the victim's reaction to influence cognitive appraisal of the experience (Tremblay et al. 1999).

In addition to research that considers the impact of the quality of support on symptom outcome, there is also a body of research that looks at the impact of support on treatment outcome. Tarrier, Sommerfield and Pilgrim (1999) examined the effect of expressed emotion (EE) of a close relative on treatment outcome for patients with chronic PTSD. They found that when the close relative was high in expression of hostility and criticism that treatment outcome was significantly impacted.

### ***2.7.2 Social support: Perceived and received***

The two major facets of social support identified in the literature are received and perceived support. Norris and Kaniasty (1996) describe received support as naturally occurring helping behaviours that are provided, whereas perceived support refers to the belief that when helping behaviours are needed they will be provided. They investigated the buffering effect of six types of social support on psychological functioning for victims of property and violent crime (Kaniasty & Norris, 1992), comparing perceived support to received support using longitudinal data. Participants included 175 victims of violent crime, 328 victims of property crime and 304 non victims. These were each interviewed three times six months apart. The three types of perceived support were perceived appraisal support (blend of emotional and informational support), perceived tangible support (perceived availability of material aid), and self-esteem support (includes reassurance from others on one's self worth). The three types of received support were informational support (receipt of guidance or advice), tangible support (receipt of material aid), and received emotional support. The four outcome variables were depression, anxiety, fear of crime, and hostility. Appraisal support promoted well being regardless of crime



status and for violent crime victims, protected against experiencing excessive anxiety and fear of crime. Perceived tangible support was shown to protect victims of violence from anxiety, and to protect both types of victims against depression. Regardless of crime status the perception of social support consistently promoted well-being. The three types of received support had no main effects of any outcome measures though received informational support and received tangible support both showed evidence of stress-buffering in protecting victims of violence from experiencing high levels of fear. Interesting that receipt of emotional support was not related to well-being for victims or non-victims. This study supports research specifically with journalists who report on traumatic events for whom low perceived social support has been shown to be a risk factor (Newman, Simpson, & Handschuh, 2003).

In a later study, Norris and Kaniasty (1996) proposed a social support and deterioration model in which post disaster mobilization of received support counteracts the deterioration in expectations of support (perceived social support) often experienced by victims of traumatic events. Data was collected for two independent samples of victims of severe natural disasters Hurricane Hugo (n = 498) and Hurricane Andrew (n = 404) at different intervals (12 and 24 months after Hugo and 6 and 28 months after Andrew) to examine the interrelations of exposure to disaster, received support, perceived support, and psychological distress. They found that exposure to disaster directly affected distress but only in the period closest to the event (6 months and 1 year). Overtime, the path became indirect and included two distinct effects: the potential of disasters to result in deterioration of victims' ongoing perceptions of support combined with the general ability of perceived support to protect mental health. With both of these studies the greater influence of perception of support on mental health is important for understanding the cognitive processes related to recovery from exposure to traumatic events and has implications

for interventions. It is important to note that the interaction between social support and coping is two way - - that social support influences how one copes with traumatic stress and that how one is coping with traumatic stress can influence their social support.

In a study by Maercker and Schutzwohl (1997), in which they assessed psychological effects in a group of 146 former political prisoners in the German Democratic Republic it was found that perceived social support seemed to be lessened by posttraumatic avoidance. Participants who used avoidance behaviours also demonstrated low interest in important activities, felt estranged from others and also reported low levels of emotional support or social integration. Conversely, those who felt emotionally supported and socially integrated were less likely to experience symptoms of posttraumatic hyperarousal. The implication for treatment is the importance of addressing perceptions of social support and social skills that can promote healthier interpersonal relationships (Maercker, Schutzwohl, & Solomon, 1999). Indirectly, supporting clients through exposure therapy to not use avoidance strategies may increase their openness to looking to others for support.

This section has highlighted the literature that indicates perceived support as more effective than received support in protecting against PTSD. In addition posttraumatic avoidance lessens perceived social support. The implication for journalists is whether their perceptions of social support function as a protective factor against PTS. In addition do they use avoidance strategies and if so how does this affect help seeking or support seeking? Does the stigma among journalists against help seeking lead to increase use of avoidance strategies and does this affect the ways in which social support can influence risk for and recovery from PTS?

### ***2.7.3 Social Support and Posttraumatic Growth***

In general, the focus in the literature related to trauma and recovery looks at predicting the damage, repairing the damage, the factors that relate to both and the relationships between factors. However, there is a body of research that looks at positive outcomes of trauma that extend beyond repairing the impact of trauma. The construct for this growth has been termed posttraumatic growth (PTG), a term coined first by Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996, 1999, 2001). In the movement of positive psychology of the last several decades posttraumatic growth has engendered much interest, the notion that trauma can produce growth that would likely not have occurred without it. Duckworth, Steen, and Seligman (2005, p. 630) describe positive psychology as “the scientific study of positive experiences and positive individual traits and the institutions that facilitate their development.” It represents a shift from the traditional focus in psychology on identifying and repairing damage to a focus also on building positive qualities (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The posttraumatic self to be healthy must somehow reinvent, transform the self and find a way to transcend the self and to find meaning, wholeness, humanity and even growth through the trauma (Wilson, 2006).

Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996, 1999, 2001) describe posttraumatic growth (PTG) as positive psychological change that results from the struggle with highly challenging life circumstances (2004). Posttraumatic growth is distinguished from resilience, hardiness, optimism, sense of coherence, or adversarial growth. It is well documented that reports of growth experiences following traumatic events far outnumber reports of psychiatric disorders (Brewin, 2003; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Reports of growth following trauma have long been reported in religion, philosophy, drama, and in writing such as in novels and poems. Tedeschi and Calhoun cite studies (2004) of PTG found following bereavement, cancer, rheumatoid

arthritis, HIV infection, heart attacks, transportation accidents, sexual assault and sexual abuse, combat, and refugee experiences. It is important however to note that PTG does not imply that the individual no longer experiences psychological distress as the two frequently coexist.

A number of measures have been developed to measure PTG. The Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) developed by Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) measures five domains: greater appreciation of life and changed sense of priorities, more intimate relationships with others, greater sense of personal strength, recognition of new possibilities or paths for one's life, and spiritual development. This measure has been shown to reliably measure PTG in a number of studies (Linley, Andrews, & Joseph, 2007; Shakespeare-Finch & Enders, 2008; Taku et al., 2008). The Stress-Related Growth Scale (SRGS) (Park, Cohen, & Murch, 1996) is a second widely used measure which assesses positive change following stressful events. There is however, some evidence that part of the variance in the scores for the scales on these measures is associated with self-enhancing biases (McFarland & Alvaro, 2000; Zoellner & Maerker, 2006).

The correlation of the dimensions of the PTGI as reflecting the construct of posttraumatic growth is important in that as one experiences growth in any one dimension they likely experience growth in each of the dimensions. The dimension of interest for current purposes is the experience of closer, more intimate and more meaningful relationships with other people. The changes included on the PTGI that reflect greater intimacy are increased compassion for others, particularly for others in similar circumstances, appreciation for others, increase in willingness to express one's emotions, increased ability to accept needing others, greater sense of closeness with others, greater effort put into relationships and belief that others can be counted on in times of trouble (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996, 2004).

It is important to note that research indicates that vulnerability to PTS and resiliency are not two ends of a continuum. Rather they are distinct processes that can both occur through traumatic experiences (Violanti & Paton, 2006). Within the traumatic stress process both positive and negative changes coexist. Baker, Kelly, Calhoun, Cann, and Tedeschi (2008) compared posttraumatic growth to posttraumatic depreciation using the PTGI and a 21-item measure which they developed to assess depreciation. Items related to depreciation were designed to parallel the items on the PTGI. Their findings suggest that following a stressful event people experience both growth and depreciation on the same dimensions, but growth is experienced at much higher levels, and there is no correlation between growth and depreciation. Predicting resilient behaviour is made difficult in that the literature varies significantly in how resilience is defined. Factors include enduring coping skills, personality variables such as locus of control, assertiveness, or affect regulation, and the ability to use effective protective factors such as social and personal support mechanisms (Wilson, 2006). Given the research on posttraumatic growth and depreciation this study provides a means to identify areas in which journalists report growth or depreciation in intimate relationships and how they understand this to relate to exposure to traumatic events.

## ***2.8 Journalists and Trauma***

There is now extensive literature that looks at how individuals deal with potentially life threatening events. As noted earlier the literature has also addressed well the experience of professionals in jobs in which they are likely to face traumatic events, for examples, police officers, firefighters, and medical professionals (Violanti & Paton, 2006). In regards to journalists the literature is largely silent. Feinstein (2003) notes that this silence is somewhat fostered by the profession itself that tends to think that journalists can somehow face trauma and

not be affected by it. Journalists themselves can be hesitant to acknowledge the impact of reporting lest they be viewed as weak or less capable (Bolton, n.d., National Centre for PTSD). In addition, in response to limits of what people are willing to observe and understand, the news is often cleaned up and softened to protect viewers from the horror of atrocities. The by-product of this is that the experiences of journalists are also sanitized. As a profession, journalism is a field that can be extremely competitive, demanding long hours, pressure to meet deadlines, and frequently obligation to maintain high standards with insufficient staff or funding (Kalter, 1999). In addition to this many journalists intentionally seek out high risk situations. Journalists who report on war are often similar to other professionals in dangerous jobs who find pleasure in the adrenaline rush and heightened alertness they experience in high risk situations (Lipton, 1994).

Rates of PTSD among journalists range from 6% to 28.6% (Smith & Newman, 2009). Feinstein (2003) found that 29% of war journalists in his study met the diagnostic criteria for PTSD over the course of their careers. He observed in his interviews with war journalists that the three most impactful experiences were particular traumatic memories especially near death experiences, viewing the terrible consequences that survivors lived with, and having a colleague die. Feinstein (2003) found commonality in the histories reported by the journalists he interviewed. Five of the twenty two male war journalists interviewed had fathers in the military or police force with whom they described as having difficult relationships. All recalled childhoods that were discordant and painful and saw this as influencing the direction of their career choice.

Two studies have looked specifically at PTS symptoms for journalists who report on traumatic events (Freinkel, Koopman & Speigel, 1994; McMahon, 2001; Pyevich, Newman & Daleiden, 2003). Freinkel, Koopman, and Speigel assessed 18 journalists who had witnessed an

execution one month after the event. They found that although journalists reported short term difficulties with dissociation, anxiety and depression none endorsed severe or enduring psychological problems. McMahon compared one group of journalists that had reported on traumatic events within the previous three years to a group that had not. The results indicated that some journalists experienced distress such as avoidance of reminders of events, intrusive memories, and symptoms of depression and for some the distress persisted for several years. Pyevich and colleagues compared the impact of exposure to traumatic events on and off the job. The results indicated that greater symptom severity occurred with greater exposure to traumatic events. They also found that the relationship was stronger for work related trauma and PTSD symptoms than for non-work related trauma and PTSD symptoms. Journalists also described the closeness they felt to other journalists and survivor's guilt when a colleague was killed.

The literature that looks at professional factors that influence who develops PTSD is sparse. As would be expected greater experience is correlated with more proactive preparation, and planning for overseas work (Violanti & Paton, 2006). Agency support is also critical to managing exposure to traumatic events. Problems can occur when agencies are ill prepared to provide support or do not recognize the need. Journalists may experience feelings of abandonment and resentment towards their agency and in response will often distance themselves from the agency further deepening problems. Further, problems occur when staff have to manage the transitions back and forth between home and overseas where the contrasts between values and inability of family and friends to understand their experience can increase sense of isolation and difficulty managing stress reactions (Violanti & Paton).

Although rates for PTSD among war journalists is much higher than the general population, Feinstein and colleagues (Feinstein, Owen, & Blair, 2002) report that war journalists

are no more likely to pursue mental health treatment than peers who do not report on war zones. Newman, Simpson, and Handschuh (2003) surveyed photojournalists, the vast majority of whom had covered traumatic events. Endorsement of PTSD symptoms was consistent with rates in the general population (6%). Rates of distress increased with number of assignments to photograph traumatic events. Only 11 percent reported that their employers had advised them of potential emotional impact of their work and only 25% stated that their employers had offered counselling.

In terms of training in preparation for reporting on trauma, a number of journalism schools now include curriculum on trauma response. In a study which followed up on journalist's retrospective experiences of the usefulness of training on dealing with trauma, Maxson (1999) found that journalists found the training helpful but also reported need for increased professional support when experiencing PTS. In contrast Dworzniak and Grubb (2007) found that when journalism students were interviewed about whether they needed training on dealing with trauma they minimized the need, thinking they would be able to manage the effects. These and other authors note the reluctance in the profession to admit emotional distress and the belief that it is a sign of weakness. Other concerns expressed by journalists are fear of losing their jobs, being viewed as incompetent or overlooked for assignments, and competition among organizations for ratings putting pressure on journalists to find the most attention grabbing news (Dworzniak, 2006). This contributes to a professional culture that may partly explain the reported lack of professional support for journalists experiencing PTS (Keats & Buchanan, 2010).

## ***2.9 Recommendations***

Support for journalists who report on traumatic events is critical for their safety and well-being. This includes at all stages of engagement and preparation, before arriving at the site,



while in the field and on their transitions home between assignments. In addition, the literature emphasizes that support needs to be both on prevention and intervention (Buchanan & Keats, 2011). Training for journalists must include attention to psychological health which can serve as a protective factor for staff who will be exposed to trauma through their work. Specific subject areas may include stress management and conflict resolution (Feinstein, 2003; Violanti & Paton, 2006). Humour is an important antidote to traumatic stress (Figley, 2002). Offering training and treatment resources to family members strengthens the social support network for journalists. It also recognizes that spouses and children are also greatly affected by journalists being posted overseas and having to manage traumatic situations (Feinstein, 2003). Family members of individuals with symptoms of PTS often manifest symptoms themselves, especially spouses and children (Lipton, 1994). Information on how to support spouses who are experiencing post traumatic stress should be included in the training for partners of journalists. Lengthy separations, child care being primarily left to the parent at home, concern for the journalist's safety all contribute to strain on the family (Violanti & Paton, 2006).

Agency support for returning staff is critical to their ability to manage posttraumatic stress. While journalists are on assignment social support from family, friends and the news agency can provide an important coping resource and with improvements in communication technology this is more readily available. This has been well documented with other types of workers (Violanti & Paton, 2006) but I did not find any research specific to journalists. Typically agency support of returning staff for different types of overseas workers, for example UN workers, Aid workers, or missionaries, tends to be restricted to debriefing. A voluntary treatment plan including confidential counselling should be made available to journalists who report on trauma (Feinstein, 2003). Journalism agencies like many agencies tend to lack policy

or guidelines to direct the process (Violanti & Paton, 2006). It is essential that agencies develop procedures carried out by trained personnel for responding to journalists returning from the field. Dworzniak (2006) studied how 26 television reporters and photojournalists who report on trauma were able to continue in their work. Findings suggested that being able to talk about their experience and to reframe it in a more positive light was helpful. Professionals likely most prepared to adequately ensure the support of journalists are trauma therapists. Charles Figley in his book *Treating Compassion Fatigue* (2002) provides excellent guidelines that organizations can implement for the prevention of traumatic stress symptoms and support for those who report symptoms. It also provides recommendations for individual self-care.

### **2.10 Summary**

In conclusion, the link between early trauma and attachment difficulties is well established (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). Attachment style may endure through the life span and influence later risk for development of and recovery from PTSD (Charuvastra, & Cloitre, 2008). Attachment formation influences social development in childhood particularly in terms of affect regulation, social competence, and peer relations (Conteras, Kerns, Weimer, Gentzler, & Tomich, 2000; Karass, & Walden, 2005; Schore & Schore, 2008). When exposed to traumatic events, attachment style will impact support-seeking behaviour. Early attachment experience influences neurodevelopment which in the context of highly abusive environments contributes to enduring psychosocial problems (Forrest, 2001). Social support following trauma may be positive, negative or neutral (Ullman, 1999; Ullman, & Filipas, 2001). Both negative and neutral responses to the victim can negatively impact recovery (neutral responses likely because they invalidate the experience of the trauma survivor). Studies have also looked at type of social support generally comparing functional support and perceived support (Kaniasty, &

Norris, 1992). Perceived support has much greater impact on recovery which highlights the importance of cognitive processing in recovery (McFarland, & Alvaro, 2000; Norris, & Kaniasty, 1996). Considerable research has been conducted on posttraumatic growth which typically includes deepening of relationships (Baker, Kelly, Calhoun, Cann, & Tedeschi, 2008; Tedeschi, & Calhoun, 1996, 1999, 2004).

As noted in this chapter extensive literature exists regarding attachment theory and relational theory and the impact of early relationships on adulthood. Lack of social support was shown to be a strong predictor of post trauma PTSD. In addition the research indicates that the impact of social support depends on the type of support. For example perceived support is shown to be more effective than received support.

The current research has not focused on early attachment histories or included the relational worlds of journalists in regard to the trauma they witness. The purpose of this study was to provide a detailed portrayal of how journalists who report on trauma understand their relational world both in how earlier relationships contribute to who they are now and what happens in relationships when they are exposed to traumatic events. Through this study, I elucidated how early social patterns that were formed with significant others persist through life and influence how they relate to others as adults. I also, clarified the relational needs of journalists who report on traumatic events and recommend possible individual and systemic interventions for journalists who experience PTS. A narrative research design using Life Story was conducted to answer the research question. The research question guiding this project is: What narratives do journalists who report on trauma and disaster construct concerning their relational world?

### 3 Mode of Inquiry

*It is present at all times, in all places, in all societies: indeed narrative starts with the very history of mankind; there is not, there has never been anywhere any people without narrative.*

~Roland Gérard Barthes

#### 3.1 Introduction

Underlying the method selected to conduct this research is my theoretical framework, an essential foundation to doing effective qualitative research (Richards & Morse, 2007). This includes assumptions about social reality and how it can be understood and interpreted. This study is founded on social constructionism which assumes that the ways in which we understand our world are historically and culturally relative (Gergen, 1985; 1999). Congruence and integrity between the research question, the method, how I collected data, and how I handled the data is essential. Given the theoretical framework, and the research question I hoped to answer I sought an approach that would facilitate learning about the inner world of journalists and their experienced reality, their identity and their relationships. The narrative approach provides a means to this end. It acknowledges that the stories we tell about ourselves are constructed and centred around facts of life events and yet encompass one's individuality as their story is created and recreated throughout life (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). My goal in this chapter is to clarify my epistemological assumptions, the research design, the procedures used, and to illustrate how they fit together to form a congruent whole ideally suited to the purpose of the study.

## 3.2 *Research Design*

### 3.2.1 *Overview*

This is a narrative research study that uses Life Story through written or oral form and brief follow up questions by email for clarification and feedback. It draws from the Life Story interview method described by Atkinson (1993), Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998), and Murray (2003). It involved having nine journalists who reported on traumatic events through their work write guided life stories or participate in a guided interview about their relational world in both their work world and private world. Narrative summaries were then created. The stories were analyzed first individually for themes and patterns and then across cases. Follow-up contact was made for clarification, to provide opportunity for feedback and input or to ask any questions that arose through analysis. The research question guiding this project was: **What narratives do journalists who report on trauma and disaster construct concerning their relational world?** Other related secondary questions addressed by this study include: What kind of relationships do journalists have and how do they sustain them? How do journalists who report on trauma understand what they do in relationships and how does this relate to the trauma they experience? How are relationships with other journalists who also report on trauma different from relationships with non-journalists? What would be helpful on a systemic and individual level in terms of prevention and treatment of PTS for journalists? Through this study, I elucidate how early social patterns that were formed with significant others persist through life and influence how we continue to relate to others as adults. I also clarify what happens in relationships of journalists when they report on trauma. I identify needs that can exist for journalists who report on traumatic events and recommend possible individual and systemic interventions in terms of structural changes and treatment interventions.

### ***3.2.2 Rationale for Narrative Inquiry***

The narratives we create about work are always integrated into other narratives of our lives. Journalists are trained to observe life and to put what they see and hear into words or pictures or some form of expression that will describe and interpret events and place them within broader contexts. Consistent with a social constructionist perspective journalists move dialogically through the process of becoming part of the events reported, bringing to it their own lens, beliefs, reactions, and life experiences. The narratives become a joint creation between the writer, the subject, and the events. My first research interest is in traumatic stress and recovery. I chose to look at journalists because they are in a unique position of choosing to be exposed to traumatic events not as a helper but as an observer and supposedly unbiased reporter of events. It is impossible for journalists to not be impacted by exposure to trauma and as with all traumatic exposure social factors profoundly affect stress reactions and recovery. The narratives we construct continually change with new experiences, new insights, and new interpretations. The approach used to study how journalists understand their relational world needed to incorporate perspective of prior relational influences that shaped how they respond to traumatic events and also to highlight the continuous transformation of our life stories as new experiences are added. I needed a methodological approach that would elucidate who journalists are as social human beings, how they interact, how they understand relationships and what happens in relationships in regards to managing PTS.

A narrative approach provides a way to capture the longitudinal social experiences from birth to the present that shape how journalists respond when experiencing traumatic stress and the role that social factors play in their recovery process. The role that early life experiences play in shaping our lives is widely accepted and researched however, there is disagreement as to

how the past shapes the present (Wong, 1995). Narrative inquiry assumes that human experience is by nature storied (McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich (2001). Polkinghorne (1996) notes that the process of creating narrative involves transforming lived experience into narrative form through reflection that captures the felt meaning of our experiences and links them to reconstructed memories of past events based on culturally available plots. Giving journalists the option of writing their own narratives rather than participating in a guided interview took advantage of their natural and highly developed language skills. As it turned out only one journalist chose to write his narrative. All of the others preferred to participate in an interview. The goal was to choose a method that would allow me to explore the felt meaning they construct out of traumatic events they have experienced, how they link them to reconstructed memories of past experiences based on plots that are culturally available to them specifically through the lens of their perceived relational worlds.

This narrative study using the Life Story method allowed journalists who are adept at telling the stories of others to explore their own social life story in relation to their personal and work life, exploring their perspective of the whole of their story and linking its parts. Using the narrative approach facilitates the journalists' ability to narrate an autobiographical story that focuses on relationships across their life span and their consideration of how significant relationships beginning from birth have shaped who they are in the present. The Life Story method has been used effectively in a number of studies (Bell, 1999; Foley & Faircloth, 2003; Lempert, 1994; Luttrell, 2003; Reissman, 1990).

Having journalist narrate life stories allows freedom for them to use their own unique style and to follow their own thoughts within a structured process. Narrative studies can be especially appropriate when effort is being made to give voice through the process of speaking or

writing, interpreting, and disseminating the experience of people who represent groups whose stories have been suppressed, or ignored (McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2001). Recognizing that the epistemological assumptions I hold to greatly influence my involvement in this project, I will next turn attention to delineating these.

### ***3.2.3 Paradigm of Science: Social Constructionism***

Epistemology is defined as a theory of knowledge, how we know what we know, and the scope of what can be known (Crotty, 1998). The theory on which this current research is founded is social constructionism. A brief historical overview of predominant epistemological perspectives will be provided to illustrate how social constructionism developed. Social constructionism will then be defined and developed as the foundation for this study. The role of language will be explored as well as understandings of identity, the self. The place of context will be presented followed by a definition of discourses and discursive psychology. This discussion of epistemology will provide the basis to then look at my theoretical perspective, followed by the methodology and methods specific to this study.

#### ***3.2.3.1 Historical overview of epistemological paradigms.***

Epistemological paradigms fall into three general categories, objectivism, constructivism and subjectivism, each with its own variants (Crotty, 1998). Objectivism holds that things exist as meaningful entities, that as objects they have truth and meaning residing in them independently of consciousness and experience (that objective truth and meaning can be discovered through scientific research). Constructivism holds that truth and meaning is constructed as one engages with the world and that different people construct different meaning even in relation to the same phenomenon. Meaning develops as an interaction between subject and object. Subjectivism holds that meaning is imposed on the object by the subject with the



object contributing nothing to the meaning that is made. The meaning imposed may come from prior experience or the unconscious but does not develop from interaction with the object (Crotty). In research a general divide exists between objectivism on the one hand and constructivism and subjectivism on the other. With this divide there has historically been a tendency for quantitative research to be conducted from an objectivist stance while qualitative research is conducted from a constructionist or subjectivist stance. The boundary is however somewhat arbitrary and has shifted over time. As will be seen in the following summary of the development of epistemological positions over time, early research tended to be done on the basis of objectivism. As this view faced challenges and constructivist or subjectivist perspectives became more common, methodologies also developed to reflect the different perspectives of how one can know and the means that can facilitate this. It is now more accepted that both quantitative and qualitative research can be conducted founded on any of the three epistemological positions however the manner in which the data is handled will vary. The beginning question is what methodology and methods will best enable one to answer the particular research question.

As with epistemological paradigms there are also three general categories of theoretical perspectives from which research is conducted. These are positivism/postpositivism, an interpretive paradigm, and a critical/ideological paradigm. One's theoretical position is related to their epistemological position as well as what it is one believes is the purpose of research. Positivism is the epistemological stance that approaches knowledge as gained through experience, not speculation, and holds that it can be scientifically observed using the scientific method (Crotty, 1998). Today, positivism, which is theoretically objectivist, maintains the link

to empirical science confident that scientific knowledge is accurate and can be discovered and is distinct from subjective knowledge which cannot be verified.

The positivist paradigm evolved developed during the modernist movement. Modernism was an intellectual movement that developed as a reaction to the unquestioned acceptance of God and the church as the source of truth and morality for living (Burr, 1995). During the Enlightenment, beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, men saw themselves as able to arrive at truth, supported by objective, scientific evidence and therefore able to determine what then was appropriate social and moral behaviour. Underlying was a belief that the rules and structures of life were there to be explained (cause and effect) and those who held this belief were called structuralists. Over time challenges to positivism's assertion that scientific knowledge is completely objective, certain, and accurate, have increased. As early as the 1700's, there were dissenters, philosophers who challenged the positivist paradigm. Out of this has grown postpositivism which challenges the idea of absolute truth and seeking probabilities rather than certainties (Creswell, 2003; Crotty, 1998).

Postpositivists hold to an ontological position of realism, however the goal of research is not to explain phenomena but rather to discover it. Postpositivists remain ontologically essentialist. As challenges to a positivist/postpositivist theoretical stance as a way to understand human behaviour and social reality increased so did recognition of the need to consider cultural and historical influences on social behaviour. Postmodernism rejects both the notion of the existence of absolute truth and the belief that the observed world reflects the structures that produce it (Burr, 1995). It also rejects overarching metatheories or systems of knowledge to understand the world (such as religion). Instead multiple and varied ways of knowing life and

different kinds of knowledge are assumed to exist and be available to people. Paradigms that developed out of this perspective were interpretism and a critical/ideological paradigm.

Constructivism holds that people develop out of their subjective experience varied and multiple meanings. The epistemological lens used to conduct the current study is social constructionism, which grew out of constructivism and is sometimes used interchangeably with constructivism. Both recognize the influence of history and culture on one's perspective. Social constructionism pays particular attention to how meaning is socially constructed (Creswell, 2003).

### ***3.2.3.2 Historical overview of constructivist thought.***

In 1725, Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico, wrote *The New Science* in which he stated “To know is to make” (Vico, 2008). Generally thought to be the founder of constructivism, Vico recognized the influence of human interpretation on what we experience. Immanuel Kant later in the same century argued in his text, *Critique of Pure Reason*, that the human mind is an active organ which captures, moulds, and transforms sensations and the chaos of experience into an ordered unity of thought (Meiklejohn, 2009). This insistence on the relativist nature of reality held sway against the objectivist stance that continued to predominate research. In 1924, Hans Vaihinger published his treatise on the philosophy of “as if.” His premise was that consciousness always moulds what it receives. Just a few years later in 1932, Frederick Bartlett wrote *Remembering* (New World Encyclopedia, 2011) in which he spoke of the perpetual effort after meaning, that meaning is made through abstracted processes. Mead (The Inception of S.I., 2011) who founded symbolic interactionism spoke of how people construct their own identity and others’ identities through social interaction (1934). Friedrich Hayek eloquently explained constructivist theory in his book, *Sensory Order* (1952), describing

how people bring their own frames into everything they do. This he called the “primacy of the abstract.” Later, in 1966, Berger and Luckman wrote *The Social Construction of Reality*, in which they argued that social reality is jointly created and sustained by humans through social interaction. The processes involved include externalization as people act on their world creating ideas or practices, objectivation as the practice or idea becomes an object of consciousness in society, and internalization as succeeding generations adopt it as part of the pre-existing world they are born into.

Another hugely influential twentieth century constructivist was Jean Piaget who stated that “intelligence organizes the world by organizing itself” (1999). Although Piaget never called himself a constructivist his notion that to know an object is to act upon it reflects his position. Piaget proposed a theory of assimilation and accommodation as self-organizing concepts that represent attempts to maintain stability in our life worlds. George Kelly (1955), who developed a personal construct theory, was another influential constructivist who mentored and worked with many contemporary constructivists including Michael Mahoney (2003) and Vivian Burr (1995). Mahoney in conjunction with Italian researcher, Vittorio Guidano, were central to formally developing critical constructivism as an epistemological stance. It is out of their work that social constructionism was founded.

Kenneth Gergen and John Shotter extended the work of Mahoney and Guidano, shifting the epistemological position from emphasizing that reality is created as we act upon it to emphasizing that this occurs within relationships, in interactions between people (Gergen, 1999; Shotter & Gergen, 1989). Social constructionism is generally thought to have found its beginning in psychology through the work of Gergen who saw all knowledge including psychological knowledge as historically and culturally specific (1973). Theoretical premises are

based largely on dispositions acquired through culture and as culture changes so do the premises on which theory is based. Theory of social behaviour reflects current history and as psychological knowledge is disseminated patterns of social behaviour are modified.

### ***3.2.3.3 Social constructionism defined.***

Although individual researchers who would consider themselves social constructionists vary considerably in the distinctions of their positions, there are certain key assumptions held by social constructionists that unite them. Social constructionists hold a critical stance towards positivist or empiricist ways of viewing the world. Nothing is taken for granted or assumed to exist just because it is observable, because we perceive it (Burr, 1992). Conventional knowledge is challenged because its foundations are not objective, for example, problems with subjectivity in language which Gergen (1985; 1999) calls the “reification” of language. The ways in which we understand the world, the categories we use are historically and culturally relative and not necessarily more “true” than any other perspective. Michel Foucault (Morris & Patton, 1979) viewed truth as an “ensemble of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and functioning of statements” (p. 47). He saw truth as produced and sustained by systems of power which are linked to truth in a circular fashion. How we understand our world is constructed or negotiated between people through historically situated social processes in which people are active, cooperative participants (Bruner, 1991; Burr; Gergen, 1985; Gergen, 1999).

Jürgen Habermas (2001) noted that shared meanings are arrived at between people when they share understanding of something in a particular way and agree as to the intersubjective validity of what is communicated. It is changes in social processes rather than empirical validation that shape how a given form of understanding endures across time. For example, what constitutes aggression and how causality is attributed is negotiated within a complex array of

social interchanges. Social patterns are negotiated and integrated with many other human activities with the descriptions or explanations for behaviour sustaining certain patterns while excluding others (Gergen, 1985, 1999). We create the future through how we represent, and describe the present. At the same time our future well being is dependent on reflecting the ways in which we understand.

Social constructionists are anti-essentialist in that they go beyond rejecting the notion of behaviour being largely determined by nature, an inner essence of people or objects that determined who or what they are (Burr, 1995). They also reject the notion of nurture or environment as determining who or what one is. Both positions are seen to be essentialist. Social constructionists hold that people do not have a definable nature that can be discovered. As there is no such thing as an objective knowable single truth, knowledge is gained through looking at the world through a particular lens towards some aim rather than others and is socially constructed between people. Any psychological theory or explanation is bound by time and culture. People both create and are created by the society in which they live (Ruth & Kenyon, 1996).

A social constructionist perspective is consistent with my beliefs about knowledge and reality. The emphasis on the subjectivity of language and historical and cultural influences on the way in which we understand the world (Gergen, 1985; 1999) are essential to understanding and interpreting the narrated experience of each participant in this study. A subjectivist stance takes interpretation and knowledge of reality to an extreme in the view that meaning is imposed on the object by the subject with the object contributing nothing to the meaning made (Crotty, 1998). I would position myself as acknowledging that a reality does exist but that as Burr notes (1992) that nothing is taken for granted or assumed to exist just because it is observable, because

we perceive it (Burr, 1992). The intent is to see the relational world of the participants through their lens while being aware that the reality they present is situated in time and co-constructed both through all of their social experience and through the influence I bring to the process whether conscious or unconscious.

#### ***3.2.3.4 Ontology: Relativism.***

Ontology is the nature of existence. What is real? Historically, research methods have tended to be privileged over the research question which minimizes the importance of the ontological, epistemological and methodological bases on which the research is founded (Camic et. al., 2003). When the foundations are clearly laid they direct the questions that are asked and the methods that can best provide answers, thus creating congruence between philosophy, methodology and methods (Geanellos, 2000). Social constructionists hold to an ontological position of relativism. One's reality is influenced by their cultural and social background, and by multiple other factors such as gender, age, or race. This position holds that there are no core structures or essences and is consistent with an epistemological position of constructionism (Gergen, 1999). Gergen notes that when categorizations are used to characterize groups they also tend to destroy the differences within groups as the similarities overshadow individual differences.

Ontology within social constructionism applies also to the self as the notion of self as a single individual develops within relationships through one's words and actions. McAdams, Josselson and Lieblich (2001) note that not only are relationships constructed narratively by the individuals involved they also do not exist outside of this. In addition, we collectively through our relationship create ethics and conventions that are socially understood and agreed on though often unconsciously (Gergen, 1999).

As noted earlier one of the difficulties that arises with social constructionism is the logical end one arrives at if it is taken to the extreme. Relativism holds that there is no truth, only various constructions of the world each shaped by historical and cultural factors. All truth can be reduced to text, markings on a page that are given their meaning by people according to their function in relationships (Gergen, 1996). In its extreme this can lead to the assumption nothing exists outside of its existence in language and discourse. Parker (1990) resolves this by insisting that things exist ontologically outside of human processes and thought and although we cannot know them directly it is these objects that make thought possible. The conceptual frameworks we use to understand the world pre-exist us and are acquired as we develop language (Burr, 1995). In reference to this study my position is that although we socially construct reality it is not random. The raw material pre-exists and limits the directions that discourses can take. In this regard I am closer to Parker's ontological position.

#### ***3.2.3.5 Role of language.***

The traditional view of language is that words can correspond to the world as it is (Gergen, 1999). The social constructionist view is that although persons are constructed in and through a symbolic system which sets them in a particular place, mastery of the symbolic system remains out of reach (Foucault, 1994; Harre, 1998; Sampson, 1989). Social constructionists recognize that language can have varied meanings and is constantly changing. Language is a closed system which being based on a specific semantic structure requires interpretation (Reagan & Stewart, 1978) made more difficult because words can have more than one meaning resulting in ambiguity and misunderstanding. Human nature, thoughts, feelings, and experiences all result from language (Burr, 1995; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) and consistent with a poststructuralist view, it is through language that meaning and social reality are constructed (Sampson, 1989).



Language provides a vehicle for describing and expressing the self. At the same time the self pre-exists language and yet words have language specific meaning that existed before we are born and which shape the way we conceive of ourselves (Gergen, 1991). Language allows us to structure our experience and our world. We can only express or even think what our language allows (Harre, 1998). Drives, desires, interests, dislikes, result from, are made available to us through language (Burr). This means that the role of language in our construction of personhood could always have resulted in a different outcome given the diversity in languages (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

This understanding of language comes out of the structuralist, poststructuralist tradition founded on the work of Saussure (1974) who called the things that we think about *signs* and distinguished the two component parts of signs as the words we use for things which he called “signifiers” and the thing itself which he called the “signified.” What Saussure pointed out is the arbitrariness of the link between the signified and the signifier and between one category and another. The categories that develop in language reflect the culture and society within which they are imbedded and individual signs find their meaning not within themselves but in the ways that they are distinct from other signs. Meaning is found in differentiating the presence of something from what is absent, for example, "white" is given meaning dependent on what is not "white" (Gergen, 1999). Further, Ricoeur notes that a system of language is constructed to organize a domain of knowledge. A signifier is an artificial isolation of a unit of meaning within a non arbitrary system, while a sign represents an isolated, arbitrary relationship between a sound and a meaning (Clark, 1990). Thus the structure of language shapes how we conceptualize our world through the system of signifiers, signifieds, and the arbitrary meanings assigned to outline categories and to distinguish differences between them. Once a signified is given a signifier in a

culture it allows common understanding and communication among members of the society (Saussure, 1974). The validity of meaning given to a particular sign is through its context and through its relationship to all the other signifiers that in a particular moment define the language (Foucault, 1994). A sign is constrained by these limitations. The tendency for meaning of words to change over time and the fact that words can have multiple meanings (influenced by who is speaking in what context) prevents meaning (signifiers) from being static (Burr, 1995).

Wittgenstein used the term “language games” to describe the stereotypical, recurring patterns used by people to govern how they communicate with each other (Habermas, 2001). Habermas, takes the idea further emphasizing that using the medium of language, the grammar of language games changes via cultural transmission and people are shaped via their socialization.

Language serves a purpose for people and people use specific linguistic tools or construct language in particular ways to achieve their ends (Gergen, 1991, 1999). Potter and Wetherell (1989) call these tool kits "interpretive repertoires" a term that is close to the notion of discourse. People use language in this way and yet it is imbedded in society as a resource shared by its members and can be drawn from to create an explanation of events for one's own purposes. It seems then that the motivation or source of the account must come from the individual. Yet people draw from a moral order that is socially understood to explain their positions or behaviour. Social constructionists vary in terms of the position they take on how individualistic or how tied into social practice one's account of their own behaviour or beliefs are (Burr, 1995; Kenyon, 1996). Ricoeur (Valdés, 1991) speaks to writing as the full manifestation of discourse although in removing the presence of the speaker the intention of the author and the meaning of the text are separated.

Of utmost importance in this study is the awareness that language was the vehicle used for participants to describe and express themselves. However, they can only express or even think what our language allows (Harré, 1998). The thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the participants all result from language (Burr, 1995; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). As a closed system their language required interpretation (Reagan & Stewart, 1978) and yet because language is constantly changing and can have varied meanings, interpretation was influenced by both the language used by the participant and the researcher as well as the meaning that was understood by both, thus a co-construction of social reality through language will result (Sampson, 1989).

#### ***3.2.3.6 Understandings of identity: the self.***

In Western thought personality is understood as one's inner self, that which makes one a separate, distinct, individual with personal, characteristic traits, thought, and emotion tendencies that remain relatively stable throughout life (Gergen, 1989; Schultz & Schultz, 2005; Wetherell & Potter, 1989). In addition, personality generally represents a unified, coherent, consistent self resulting in consistent patterns of behaviour. Some however challenge this generally accepted view of personality as essentialist (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1999; Meacham, 1995, Sampson, 1989). Personality is not a physiological entity, genetically determined but rather is inferred from observation. The notion of personality as a measurable entity is in general a Western construction. Other cultures understand human behaviour differently, for example attributing behaviour to demons or spirits (Gergen, 1989). Two general approaches to personhood or human subjectivity are to see subjectivity as residing in language (Harré, 1989, 1998) or to see it as arising from culturally available narrative forms (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1995). Both positions however, see the use of language as providing the basis for identity. Harré describes language

games which we use to give substance to ourselves. He does not deny the self as psychological but does insist that there is not a prelinguistic self that determines behaviour (1998). My own position is more consistent with that of Gergen in that I do hold to a prelinguistic self and that behaviour is somewhat determined by that self although influenced by other factors as well such as context, environment, experience. I also collude with the ideas of Paul Ricoeur (2007) who suggests that the self is a narrative self encompassing both a temporal self and a dialogical self.

Gergen (1999) asks the question as to whether our conception of the mind itself, our thoughts and emotions and intentions, are not derived from metaphors. It is not to say that personality does not exist but that there is no *true* definition of personality. Our Western conceptualization is one perspective bound by the present time and current culture. With the Western focus on internal experience there has also been movement towards explaining behaviour as personality, for example, a person is caring because that is their nature rather than because of the kinds of things they do (Gergen, 1991, 1971) thus reifying psychic phenomena in the way we do physical objects.

The social constructionists view of personality is that it is constructed between people rather than existing within people; for example, timidity can only be evident in relationship and is otherwise meaningless (Burr, 1995). People change from one relationship to another, with who you are being a product of the relationship rather than simply an expression of personality. In addition, people change from encounter to encounter and context to context even within any relationship. Social constructionists would say that we create rather than discover ourselves, that we have multiple potential selves which are historically and culturally bound. Harré (1998) distinguishes between the self that is created via what we are aware of about ourselves and the self that is relational created through private and public thought expressed presently and

historically. The self is a process in addition to a structure (Gergen, 1971), a process involving the ways one conceptualizes one's behaviour, both external conduct and internal states and the system of available concepts one uses to define oneself.

Social constructionists move beyond the construction of individual selves to self as an expression of relationship (Gergen, 1999) on human interaction, a stark contrast to the Western tradition of individualism and separation (Miller, 1984). In addition this view extends beyond symbolic interactionism which views self as derived from social interchange whereby persons are born as private subjects but take on roles through interacting with others which then become part of the self. It also extends beyond phenomenology which looks at all behaviour as intentional, directed towards the other and subjective, conscious experience as derived through social interchange via language.

With respect to this study if a person's self concept is the array of beliefs one holds about themselves at a particular time than their historical self is their recall of what they thought, felt or did in the past as well as their knowledge and beliefs about their history, abilities, power, and position in their moral and social worlds (Harré, 1998). The autobiographical stories one creates about themselves are varied and changing. Thus the narratives written by the participants will be one version of their histories, a particular recollection of the past that allows them to anticipate the future. Autobiography reports and interprets our actions in the past and shapes it in the future (Harré).

#### ***3.2.3.7 Role of reflexivity in social constructionism.***

Reflexive inquiry is central to social constructionism in that recognizing we construct our worlds through discourse we therefore should reflect critically on our traditions, practices, institutions, relationships, the ways we speak and write (Gergen, 1999; Richardson & St. Pierre,

2005). I continue to get caught in the implication this has that some newer, different ways of being that challenges the old is not somehow closer to the "truth." Who should decide in which direction to shift and why unless there is operating some underlying universal sense of moral prerogative. Gergen states "no set of assumptions is without weaknesses: there are no ultimate justifications for any of our beliefs" (Gergen, 1999, p.118). I can accept the questioning of discourses about notions such as individualism or gender however, I would not go so far as to say that because our experience of reality is interpreted and subjective therefore there is no pre-existing reality and with it no truth. The former does not prove the latter. It only recognizes that we are always left with a social construction that shapes our understanding. To take social constructionism to its extreme seems to turn existence into meaningless arbitrariness.

Social constructionism challenges the modernist perspective that the subjective mind can objectively mirror the world out there, that the world is separate from the self and the self is capable of objectively understanding the world by removing all bias. It is through reflection, through discourse analysis that we can make sense of what is (Gergen, 1999), that we can think critically and creatively about everyday ways of life, can expose the ways that discourse is used for example to manage power, who has it and who does not. Paul Ricoeur spoke to the human capacity to reflect upon itself as a reflective imputation that creates a dualism in how one lives (Reagan & Stewart, 1978).

#### ***3.2.3.8 Views on context.***

Context is central to a social constructionist perspective. In reference to research, historical and social contexts change over time which can dramatically alter the focus of inquiry, perspectives on listening or reading, and the nature of interpretation (Cohler & Cole, 1996). As noted regarding language it is a vehicle to express something about the world, not as it is but as it

is viewed by that person, in that society, at that time. Social constructionists hold that “truth” is not an objective reality but a representation of the rules of a particular position developed according to particular conventions of particular groups (Gergen,1999). I would question that truth is dismissed as not existing and say rather that truth may be an objective reality but we can only apprehend it such that what we are left with is our own representation of the truth shaped by our culture, history, discourses and so on. For this study, attention to context is critical to understanding the perspective of the participants, "truth" as they see it. Ricoeur (Reagan & Stewart, 1978) noted that the meaning of language finds its interpretation in how it is connected to a particular context, audience, and situation.

#### **3.2.3.9 Discourses.**

Vivian Burr (1995, p.48) defines a discourse as “a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events.” Since many different versions of any given object are possible through language, there may be many discourses each presenting to the world an alternative representation. Each discourse may emphasize different things, draw attention to different aspects or have different implications for action and yet each may also claim to be the truth. Within a social constructionist perspective even attitudes or opinions are understood to be socially constructed manifestations of discourses rather than essential conditions arising from private experience (Burr). Foucault (1994) noted that from culture to culture the modes of how discourses are circulated, valorized, attributed, and appropriated vary and are modified within a culture. Discourses are viewed as practices, a population of events, groupings of statements that are dynamic (Merquior, 1985).

How then do discourses influence identity? Identity is shaped from the discourses that are available to us within our culture, accessed through interactions with others and woven together. For example the discourse of what it means to be young is very different when woven together with white, educated, middle class, male than when woven together with poor, uneducated, Hispanic, female (Burr, 1995; Gergen 1989). Discourses are linked in a historical manner and exist side by side, at times transforming one another (Foucault, 1994). We are restricted by the number and kind of discourses available to us in our language. In addition some discourses more easily combine to shape identity than others such as female and nurse rather than masculine and dancer. Although authors vary in terms of the degree to which they understand persons to have choice in the structure of themselves, I am most comfortable with the view that we actively produce and negotiate the discourses we are subject to at the same time as we are products of them. At the same time I also acknowledge the power of discourses in shaping identity and behaviour for example, discourses about what it means to be a woman in a corporate world or a minority in a community dominated by a particular racial group.

Burr (1995) identifies several problems if one takes these social constructionist views to their logical conclusion. One of the problems with adopting this view of identity is that the person appears to be a shell, experience being shaped by the culturally embedded discourses available through language. Second experience becomes also a product of social discourses rather than a reflection of human agency. Thirdly, because language is a self-referent system in which things can only be described by using descriptions used for other things, there is no way to discuss the "real" world outside of this system. At its extreme something can only be real if we have a discourse with which to talk about it and since there can be many valid discourses about the same thing it is impossible to speak of something as true or false in comparison to reality.



### ***3.2.3.10 Views on power and knowledge.***

Power refers to the degree to which a person has access to desired resources such as money, education, career opportunities and is able to influence their world socially, politically or economically, for example (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1999). One cannot understand power inequalities within a society without understanding the role of discursive practices in the creation and maintenance of different forms of social life (Wetherell & Potter, 1989). The discourses that shape our identity are integrated into how our society is constructed and operates and therefore include with them implications for what we can and should do (Meacham, 1995). Institutions such as legal, educational, healthcare, or religious all have enormous influence on how we live from day to day. Experience and memory are influenced by social interests, prevailing discourses and struggle for identity and thus subjectivity shifts under the influence of competing discourses (Richardson, & St. Pierre, 2005). Powerful groups may be invested in influencing the discourses that are sanctioned as true, for example, whether all people have equal access to education or what roles are available to women as compared to men. Psychological discourses can be used as resources to achieve particular ends, for example, the ways that trait theory and role theory are constructions that can place people within categories that are arbitrary rather than empirical reality (Wetherell & Potter, 1989). Thus personhood, identity are constructed through language and produced through discourses which are coherent systems of representation (Gergen, 1989). This brings to the forefront the question of agency, whether people created through discourse can have agency. A number of authors speak to the issue of how discourses can be used to make change, what Gergen calls "warrant voice" (Gergen, 1999). The capacity to warrant voice, a skill that can be learned and improved upon, means to have power. Whichever linguistic construction of the state of things has the most influence has the most to gain (Shotter,

1989). It stands to reason that competition is created not over whose voice is “true” but over whose voice is honoured (Gergen, 1989). This explains in part why different people construct events differently depending on their goal and those most skilled linguistically are best able to attain their goals. This notion resonates with Paul Ricoeur’s (2007) thoughts about authority, that power is legitimized both by virtue of position but also by authority being accredited and the possibility of dissent.

The French philosopher, Foucault, an influential post-structuralist, has written about the relationship between knowledge and power. Consistent with a social constructionist perspective knowledge is not understanding the “truth” but rather the current version of truth claimed by a particular culture at a particular time and for Foucault this knowledge is profoundly linked to power (Burr, 1995; Merquior, 1985). Power as an effect of discourse allows certain people to act in certain ways. Foucault then sees knowledge as a means to having power over others because it allows you to define them and then act on that frame. But with the exercise of a discourse of power comes a discourse of resistance to it which reveals that power exists (Foucault, 1979). Foucault sees power that produces knowledge and uses knowledge to manage society without force as most effective (Merquior). When resistance to power is overcome or quashed it indicates a lack of power rather than real power. Power, in Foucault's writing is presented as suffused throughout society in all of its systems from carceral to education to medicine and the exercise of power that operates as a result of historical forces and through the use of techniques and strategies and programs (Morris & Patton, 1979). Power produces knowledge and discourse rather than solely represses. Although discourse and discursive practices are viewed to provide the raw material for how personhood develops authors vary in terms of the degree of choice that individuals have to move within the discourses available to them (Burr). We can choose to

accept or resist those discourses. One of the things that allows power to be maintained is the degree to which those who are controlled by it are unaware that this is so and how.

### ***3.2.4 Methodology: Narrative Inquiry***

This study is founded on social constructionism as my epistemological position. It provides a starting point for this project. I recognize that what is produced represents a joint construction of the participants and myself that is culturally and historically imbedded, represented through language and within the parameters of the discourses that are available to us. In linking epistemology to theory and method a narrative approach best suited this project because of its consistency with social constructionist thought. It links the life-span perspective of journalists that I am interested in understanding with an approach that is designed to elicit this.

Although there are different meanings given to narrative, Polkinghorne provides the following definition which fits my purposes: “a storied linguistic production of a person's emplotted configuration of life events into episodes or whole life” (1996, p. 78). Narrative research is the study of narrative materials ( Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). Narrative works take the form of oral life stories through interviews, written autobiographies, diaries, or field notes written in narrative form (Chase, 2005). They are used in many disciplines to understand the personal identity, culture, and historical world of the narrator and how they understand their lives. In the social sciences narratives are used to diagnose psychological problems in therapy, to give voice in society to a particular group, or to look at transitions and change across the lifespan. Narratives allow access to the inner world of people. The narrative approach is consistent with a social constructionist perspective in that one's identity is viewed to be shaped and constructed by the narratives they tell and retell through life. Through the stories

we tell we reveal ourselves to others at the same time as we are creating ourselves and our reality (Ruth & Kenyon, 1996).

Traditionally, memories are evaluated on the basis of accuracy (Meacham, 1995). Identity is embodied in the telling as we shape the past and project into the future (Camic et. al. 2003). Narratives are founded on lived experiences and events and yet are shaped by the lens or interpretation through which we experience life thus creating subjective representations (Leiblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). In addition, the meaning that memories of events and experiences are given is socially constructed, negotiated with other persons through dialogue (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005; Kenyon, 1996; Meacham, 1995). The narratives collected in this study will represent the constructions of the participants' selves and lives at the time of writing and thus will be only one presentation of endless possible presentations. They will provide a window into the cultural and social world and the contextual influences at the time of writing and will represent social constructions of the memories provided (Meacham, 1995). Paul Ricoeur (Valdés, 1991), noted that interpretation focuses on the intersection between the writer's text and the reader. In interpreting the historicity both of the writer's text and the reader is brought out by creating a dialogue so that a higher level of the conceptual meaning of the reader can be produced. In this study the result is a temporary statement about relationships of journalists who report on traumatic events.

#### ***3.2.4.1 Historical underpinnings.***

Narrative inquiry begins with the recognition that storytelling is as old as time and universal. A number of predecessors to narrative inquiry as a research methodology provided the foundation for its development. Narrative accounts in psychology can be traced to the work of William Wundt, (1832-1920) known for his early work in experimental psychology but who

also looked at phenomena such as myths in human life. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) developed his psychoanalysis through his study of the personal stories of his patients told in psychotherapy (Atkinson, 1998). In the 1920's and 30's, sociologists from the Chicago School collected life histories and other documents (Chase, 2005). *The Polish Peasant* for example, written by Thomas and Znaniecki presented the life of a Polish man before and after immigration to the United States. Other Chicago School studies such as those on juvenile delinquents and criminals sought to demonstrate behaviour as an interaction between the individual and their sociocultural environment. The use of early life histories can also be found in anthropology, in documentation of slavery, and then in the feminist movement. Narrative psychology is the study of stories, their structure, content, function, and the social interactions in which stories are imbedded (Murray, 2003).

Gordon Allport published a report on the use of personal documents in psychological research following a project he led in which he and colleagues studied the life histories of refugees from Nazi Germany (Atkinson, 1998; Murray, 2003). Jerome Bruner, one of Allport's research assistants continued to write about the tendency of people to make sense of their world through imbedding events within larger structures, series of stories that become linked together and allow integration of deviations from cultural norms (Bruner, 1987; 1991). He observed that through the making and telling of one's narrative personal meaning is constructed. Labov and Waletzky (1967) wrote an influential article, "Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience" which focused on the value of studying the oral narratives of ordinary people and outlined a narrative structure that is characteristic of oral presentation. Today narratives are used across disciplines, in psychology, anthropology, sociology, and education.

#### ***3.2.4.2 Basic tenets of narrative research.***

The ontological position in narrative research is relativist and antiessentialist, consistent with social constructionism. The nature of what exists is believed to depend on the particular context. There are no core structures or essences. My belief is that there may be core structures or essences and what exists may have a particular nature but any person's apprehension of it is socially constructed. Narratives are socially constructed using everyday language within social interactions (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005; Chase, 2005; Murray, 2003). Language is a social phenomenon. We tell stories in a way that the audience can understand and in the act of narrating, the narrator, the audience, and the cultural and social context we live in also influence the structure that the story takes.

Meaning is made of our experiences through the narratives we construct (Atkinson, 1998; Chase 2005; McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2001), and it is through narrative that we identify ourselves (Gergen, 1999). A narrative provides a coherent causal account of events (Murray, 2003). The plot that develops is intertwined with the social influences involved and is a continual negotiation between one's personal narrative and the dominant narratives in society which rather than being value free represent different power interests.

Structure in narratives is provided by the plot through linking the details of events into an ordered, meaningful whole with a beginning and end (Chase 2005; Polkinghorne, 1996). The plots that form to some degree depend on the influence that the different players have in its development and the context in which they are imbedded. This tendency to use narrative to integrate past experience, current circumstances, and goals or purposes into a unified story is viewed to be universal and mastered at an early age (Polkinghorne). Narratives recreate past occurrences by dialectically structuring current needs and interpretations with memories of the

past to develop coherence and closure. At times the events that occur in an individual's life do not fit into a coherent plot, for example, a personal tragedy. This can also be true at a societal level such as when a culture goes through a genocide or natural catastrophe (Murray; 2003).

In conducting narrative research, the researcher typically begins with a research question or something that leads him/her to the particular participants and procedures selected. However, there are typically no a priori hypotheses (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). Rather these emerge or develop in reading and interpreting the data recognizing that even the interpretation is personal, partial, and can change with further reading and understanding (Atkinson, 1998).

#### ***3.2.4.3 View of the self.***

Sarbin noted that we impose a narrative structure on our experiences, stories we develop in accounts of ourselves and our experience that we give both to ourselves and to others (Burr, 1995). The narratives we tell about our experiences to ourselves and to others are integrated with how our identity is shaped and maintained (Murray, 2003). Knowing through narrative enables us to understand the importance of past choices or events in relation to present experience (Ruth & Oberg, 1996) and to make sense out of particular outcomes (Polkinghorne, 1996). According to Gergen and Gergen (1986) the narrative structure includes the three criteria of having a valued goal, causal connections between the narratives and related to the goal, and movement of the narratives through time. At the same time, narrative identity is fluidly constructed dialogically within social contexts that influence both the actual conversations we have about our lives and the imaginal dialogues we have. Remembering itself is a social process involving willing co-actors in the narratives we construct (Burr; Meacham). Interchange

involving negotiation also exists between our social construction of ourselves and of the world through narratives. We look to others to willingly support our perspective of how things happen.

People position themselves in narratives through drawing from different discourses or position others through the roles they give them in their stories (Burr, 1995). In daily dialogue those positions can be offered, accepted, or resisted. Change occurs through recognizing the discourses that shape us and through challenging the social practices, structures and power relations associated with a particular discourse.

#### ***3.2.4.4 Role of the researcher.***

In collecting narrative data the researcher attempts to draw out the story of the participant using various strategies. However, the data are influenced by the interaction that occurs between the researcher and the participant so that the end result is a jointly constructed story (Atkinson, 1998; Cohler & Cole, 1996). For example, the choice of questions, responses, and level of attentiveness of the researcher influence the response of the participant (Polkinghorne, 1996). As noted earlier the researcher cannot avoid to some degree influencing the structure of the participant's account. In research this becomes a concern in terms of the researcher's influence on the shape that the participant's narrative takes. This raises issues of social power that cannot be ignored in collecting and analysing the data. Offering journalists the option to write their own narratives rather than collect data through interviews was done to decrease the influence I have on the shape that their narratives take. In addition, contextual factors influence the data.

People link aspects of their experiences with their understandings of those aspects to make meaning of their lives. The task of the researcher is to capture this understanding and to interpret it within some conceptual framework (McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2001).



#### ***3.2.4.5 Issues of reflexivity.***

Narrative cognition, the process of creating narrative involves moving back and forth dialectically between the parts and the whole, linking life events, motivations, actions and so on until a whole is created that makes sense of the parts (Polkinghorne, 1996). However the wholeness created is temporal and represents a reflectively produced current interpretation of past experiences (Atkinson, 1998). It is this process of reflexivity that creates meaning both for the story teller and the researcher. The process of working with narrative material is dialogical and includes listening to several voices, that of the narrator, the theoretical framework on which the interpretation is based, and reflexivity of the researcher (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). In reading and interpreting narrative data the researcher uses his/her own cognitive narrative operations to make sense of the data (Polkinghorne) and monitors one's own decision making process of what is drawn from the data. The process is circular, moving back and forth between the narratives and interpretation creating increasingly deepened understanding, with identity being constructed through the autobiographical writing process.

#### ***3.2.4.6 Models of narrative analysis.***

A number of models have been developed for analysis of narrative material. Lieblich and colleagues (1998) offer four possible modes. They consider two dimensions that can direct the researcher. Holistic versus categorical approaches distinguish whether the researcher considers the narrative as a whole with any section studied being considered in terms of how they relate to the whole or whether the researcher dissects the story and draws out sections or words from one or more narratives that fit a particular category. On the second dimension, content versus form refers to whether one looks at what happened and why, the meaning within the narrative or whether one looks at how the story is written, structure, sequence of events, complexity, and

style, use of language etc (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). A second approach used in narrative inquiry is to look at how people construct themselves, the lived experience of people, within different organization, institutional or discursive contexts (Chase, 2005). Narrative ethnography is a third approach in which the researcher through long-term involvement in a context jointly creates with the participants a text that reflects the nature and process of their encounter. A fourth approach is autoethnography in which the researcher interprets and presents their own experience in narrative form.

Although narrative research is still somewhat new relative to other qualitative approaches there are many examples in the literature of how this approach can be used. Following are just a few examples. Foley and Faircloth (2003) examined the work narratives of 26 midwives practicing in the United States to understand how the discourse of medicine is used as a resource to construct validation of their profession. Reissman (1990) looked at discourse about personal relationships, marriage and gender by examining men's and women's divorce stories. Susan Bell (1999) conducted in depth interviews with two women who had developed vaginal cancer as a result of prenatal exposure to DES, a drug used to prevent miscarriage. Bell considered how social structure and cultural discourses such as medical or feminist contexts were related to their narratives. Luttrell (2003) looked at identity of working class teen mothers returning to school for their general equivalence diplomas focussing on race and gender. Finally, Lora Lempert (1994) analysed one woman's narrative of intimate, interpersonal violence to look at how systems of social meaning influence the ways in which other abused women and their supporters make sense of violence from intimate partners. In my own study, narrative inquiry is being used to explore how journalists who report on traumatic events construct their relational worlds.

### *3.3 Procedures*

#### *3.31 Selection of Participants*

The participants in this study were nine journalists who self-reported to have experienced work related traumatic stress. To recruit participants I initially called news organizations such as The Associated Press, Reuters, The Canadian Journalists Association and major news rooms such as Globe and Mail, the Vancouver Sun, the Toronto Star, and the Montreal Gazette. I sent them an advertisement for the study (Appendix A). I asked permission to post the advertisement for participation on their websites and for a list of members. Recruiting via this method did not produce any participants as organizations were not willing to provide me with a list of journalists or the organization did not respond at all. I also checked hard copy and on line newspapers for potential participants. As virtually all journalists had email contact information through their websites I was able to contact them in this manner. A letter of invitation (Appendix B) attached to the email explained the purpose and format of the study and asked if they would be interested in participating. The letter also provided telephone and email contact information where I could be reached where they could give their assent or decline or could request further information to aid in deciding whether or not to participate. Using this method nine journalists expressed interest in participating. Aside from these a number of journalists initially responded positively but then chose to withdraw when they read the consent and understood the extent of disclosure about their personal lives that was requested. A consent form (Appendix C) was sent either by email or by mail. The consent form explained their involvement in the study and the potential of being traumatized through participation. It also included information regarding support services they could access and self-care recommendations if they were interested. They were asked to sign and return the consent by fax or by mail. Consent indicated agreement to having the

narrative and any follow-up conversations used for research and for possible publication once the study was concluded. They were asked to choose either to write their narrative using guiding questions which I provided (Appendix D) or to participate in a recorded interview which was also guided by the same questions. When I received the signed consent form arrangements were made to deliver the guidelines for writing their narratives either by email or by mail or if they preferred to be interviewed personally the time was arranged and telephone numbers exchanged. The consent also noted that they could withdraw at anytime and that I could be contacted at any time if they had any questions during the period of writing their narratives or following the interview. Demographic information was included with the guidelines for writing the narrative. For those journalists who chose to be interviewed the questions regarding demographic information were asked prior to beginning the interview.

### ***3.3.2 Data Collection***

The Life Story written narrative was divided into decades, for example, ages 1-10, 11-20 and so on. First, the participant was asked to think about their experience of important relationships in that decade and how it helped to shape them. For example:

People's experience of relationships can be written in the form of a book. I would like you to think about different meaningful relationships in your life from the time you were born to the present. First, think about the chapters in this book. I have included a page to help with this task. Start from the first meaningful relationship in your life. What is your earliest memory of you and this person? How would you end this chapter?

They were then asked to answer several questions about each decade to create a narrative description of the stages of how relationships developed over time in their lives.

1. Tell me about a significant episode or memory that you have about your relationship with the people you talk about in each chapter.
2. How would you describe yourself during this chapter?

3. What were the other people you describe like at that time?
4. How would you describe your relationships?
5. What other significant events do you recall experiencing with these people at this time in your life?
6. What did you learn from these relationships?
7. How did these learnings influence who you are today?
8. How have these relationship beliefs affected you as a journalist?
9. How have the relationship lessons influenced current relationships with family, friends and work?

For the last decade the participant was then asked to write about their experience of reporting on traumatic events. They were asked to answer the following questions.

1. How would you describe your current relationships with co-workers, your boss, and personal relationships in your private life?
2. How has reporting on trauma shaped these relationships?
3. Has your experience of reporting on trauma shaped how you understand your relational world in the present and when you think about relationships from the past?
4. Is there a connection between how relationships have changed over time and the length of time during which you have reported on traumatic events? If so how are the two related?

The journalists were told that an initial analysis would be conducted when I received their written narratives or transcribed their interview. I informed them that I would arrange to contact them by email or telephone to allow me to clarify anything that I was uncertain about, to ask questions that emerged from considering the narratives as a group, and to deepen understanding

of their individual experience. Any additional contact with journalists conducted in person, by email or by phone was included in the data. The data were then analysed as described below.

### **3.3.3 Data Analysis**

The narrative method I used to analyse the data for this study was based on the work of several narrative researchers. The model used by Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilbur (1998) provided a way to focus the analysis. In the four dimensions of analysis they described, the best fit for my particular study and purpose was a holistic-content approach. I considered the narrative as a whole with any section studied being considered in terms of how it related to the whole rather than categorical. I also focused on content rather than form in which the focus was on what happened and why, the meaning within the narrative rather than the form or structure of the story. In addition I drew from the work of Catherine Kohler Riessman (2008) and the work of Robert Atkinson (1998). Analysis was thematic, a sociological approach that looks at specific aspects of people's lives (Riessman) in this case how they think about relationships and how they describe what they do in relationships. In keeping with this approach I was interested in how people experience, create and communicate meaning and how their stories are imbedded in the interaction between myself and the participants.

Only one of the participants chose to write his narrative. The other eight participants were interviewed by telephone. All of the interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. While transcribing I began the initial process of re-familiarizing with the interview content and identifying initial patterns in each case or things that stood out. Because the study looked at relationships starting at birth I considered how they described early relationships in their life and then focused on how these changed over time. As the research relationship developed during the interview, I noted that participants tended to tell longer stories about specific relational

experiences and to refer back to earlier questions to expand on what had been said. Conversation was transcribed as close to spoken language as possible (Atkinson, 1998) to retain their patterns of thought and the narratives were constructed in sequential order (childhood to present).

Following Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilbur (1998) and Riessman (2008; 1993) I first read the transcribed interviews several times looking at each narrative as a whole focusing on the nature of relationships for each participant and how they evolved over time. I began taking notes and developed a process that focused on identifying underlying assumptions about relationships and how they were impacted by exposure to trauma. I looked for meaning making rather than uncovering laws or principles (Atkinson, 1998). I looked for ways that participants talked about relationships and at causal explanations they gave for ways that relationships developed or were maintained. I also looked for relationship patterns that were repeated in multiple relationships and tended to continue over time.

Second, I then wrote a narrative summary for each transcript. For each summary I skipped over my questions and comments and at times shifted content to create a chronological biographical account (Atkinson, 1998; Riesmann, 2008). Quotes, often lengthy were used extensively to illustrate patterns especially across time and the summary reflected as closely as possible the chronology of events and personal descriptions of each journalist. Information that could specifically identify a journalist was removed. Because the narrative method relies extensively on stories and direct quotations, I was concerned that their unique experiences could still lead to them being identified by others who worked in the field despite attempts to protect confidentiality. As will be discussed later in the chapter each participant approved their final narrative account.

Third, I went back and forth between the summaries and transcripts and put into writing initial impressions. I particularly looked for exceptions to the overall impressions, anything that stood out, instances that seemed to provoke more emotion or to contrast with the overall impression of the narrative (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilbur , 1998). Fourth, for each narrative I looked for general patterns, relational themes carried through the narratives. I paid attention to the space given to a theme in the text, how often it is brought up, how much detail the teller goes into, and how they link the theme to other aspects of their lives. To confirm the themes I then went through each narrative and transcript again to look at how the theme is carried through the narrative and to ensure I was using the teller's own words to illustrate the theme.

Fifth, I then looked at general patterns across the nine cases comparing the underlying assumptions of different cases and looked for commonality in relational phenomena among the participants. In identifying this I also looked for differences or nuances of difference in relational experience and the meaning they made in the stories they told about relationships. I tried to consider how participants used culture, institutional, or organizational discourses to make sense of their experience, the different narrative strategies or links they develop to manage conflicting discourses, and how they reconstruct psychological issues through the use of particular metaphors or underlying storylines (Chase, 2005).

Once the initial thematic analysis was completed the across case themes were sent to each participant along with their own narrative summary. They were asked to review the initial results and to clarify anything that I had misunderstood, to add or delete anything and to provide feedback about the narratives and the thematic results. Their feedback was then incorporated



into the thematic analysis and any requested additions or deletions were also made. The documents were then resent to ensure they were satisfied with the results.

### ***3.3.4 Issues of Representation***

In narrative inquiry it is impossible for my own voice not to become intermingled with that of each participant (Shotter, 1989). To represent the voice of the participants I tried to ensure the narrative summaries of their stories kept to their language as much as possible. Although I did the thematic interpretation, I provided two opportunities for the participants to review the results and to provide feedback. I tried to ask how and what questions to open up particular ways of understanding (Chase, 2005). I recognize that the small number of participants within this study cannot be representative of a larger group of journalists and that the cross case thematic analysis describes patterns among these particular nine journalists.

### ***3.3.5 Managing Risk of Being Traumatized through Participation***

A number of steps were taken to inform participants of the potential for being traumatized through participation in the study and to provide support should this occur. The consent form outlined the potential of being traumatized through participation in the study and informed journalists that resources were available to them if they presented symptoms or expressed concerns. During the interview I checked in with participants about any subject discussed that they reported to have a significant impact on them to ensure that they felt they could manage the impact. When participants were uncomfortable with information about traumatic events they had experienced being described in the results they had the option of deleting it. Only one participant reported significantly elevated symptoms of PTS. Although information was provided about resources he did not choose to discuss with me his intentions to follow through but assured me that he wanted to continue with participation in the study.

### ***3.3.6 Criteria for Evaluating the Worth and Rigour of the Study***

The quality of this study within a social constructionist perspective depends on whether I inspire confidence in the results presented, that is, do the themes identified resonate with the data and have I been faithful and congruent with the stories as told? Secondly, does the research make a substantive contribution to human experience?

1. To inspire confidence in my results my work must be credible. To address this I have tried to
  - a. Imbed the work within the theoretical framework of trauma theory, and attachment and relational theory to provide a lens through which to understand my interpretations and provide sufficient information of the framework so that it can easily be apprehended;
  - b. clearly explain the methods I have used to allow readers to understand how I arrived at the results I present;
  - c. ensure the data collected is comprehensive enough to cover the area I am studying and to support the conclusions I have drawn;
  - d. support the results presented with interpretation and quotations that demonstrate the results;
  - e. provide participants with two opportunities to reflect on the results, to evaluate whether I have accurately represented their perspective and to contribute further if they desire;

To ensure that this study makes a substantive contribution to human experience, I have done the following:

- a. provide a summary of my results to the participants with an invitation for feedback about their experience;
- b. plan to present my findings to refereed journals and at scholarly conferences;

- c. use the results in my profession as a therapist working with those who experience post traumatic stress, for example, providing information and normalizing their experience.

### ***3.3.7 Researcher's Context***

My presence is unavoidably woven into the narratives of the journalists as I provided the guiding questions and carefully kept the narratives focused on relationships across the lifespan. In keeping with the narrative framework I acknowledge and accept the impact of my background, beliefs, and values at each level in the process of conducting this study. I developed this project out of my interest in studying a group who are exposed to trauma in the context of their profession. I was grateful for the openness of each participant in allowing me a glimpse into their most intimate relationships throughout their lives and their honesty in sharing both these and how they manage their exposure to trauma. I was struck in reading the literature at the lack not only of professional support for journalists who have faced trauma but also the lack of systemic recognition that the need for support exists.

### ***3.3.8 Representation of Findings***

In the following chapter the narrative summaries are presented. Thematic results are provided across cases. Participants were given the opportunity to verify their own individual narratives and to provide feedback on their across case thematic results. In the next chapter I provide the results of this research.

## **4 Participants' Narratives**

*Through having been a journalist, a job I fell into with no training, I have had the privilege of glimpsing others' lives and of telling their stories.*

~Nicole Parton

### **4.1 Introduction**

Riessman (2008) tells us that narratives are stories that we tell about ourselves and others at a particular time in history to a particular audience within a particular culture based on taken for granted discourses and values. For the nine journalists who agreed to participate in this study I am grateful for their openness, candour, and self reflection. In this chapter, I provide a short demographic description of the participants as a group. Following this, I discuss the research process. A summary of the narrative of each participant is then provided followed by individual thematic results and finally cross case thematic results.

### **4.2 Participants**

The participants are nine journalists ranging in age from 27 to 56 years old. Of these eight were men and one was a woman. Six of the journalists were married and one was living common-law with his partner. Two journalists were single. Of the journalists who were married four each had two children under the age of 10. The journalist who was living common-law had one child age five. One of the journalists who was single had been married twice. He had an 18 year old son from his first marriage. The other journalist who was single had never been married.

All of the journalists had been reporting on traumatic events for many years ranging from 16 to 30 years. The one exception was the 27 year old single journalist who had been reporting on trauma for 4.5 years. The journalists were from a number of different countries. Two were

Canadian, three were American, two were English, one was from Pakistan and one was from India. Six of the journalists had reported extensively on war and conflict. These journalists also tended to report on natural disasters and other international crises such as earthquakes, tornados, and famine. Two of the journalists reported on crime and corruption as well as years of experience reporting on child abuse and neglect. Both of the South Asian journalists, from Pakistan and from India, had focused their reporting on crime, corruption and violence in their respective countries. One of them had immigrated to Canada and expanded his focus to include issues of human rights and injustice wherever it occurs internationally.

One of the English journalists was a photojournalist. All the others were writers. Five of the Western journalists got into journalism by taking a course or coming across a program that seemed interesting. Two of the Western Journalists read books by writers who had been exposed to serious trauma through their travels and then wrote about it. This led to a keen interest in having that life of adventure and reporting on the truth. The two South Asian journalists both got into journalism because they were deeply impacted by growing up seeing many traumatic events and feeling compelled to speak on behalf of other people and a desire to influence positive change.

### ***4.3 Comments on Research Process***

The narratives that follow provide a summary of the conversation that I had with the journalists during the interviews. It is impossible for the narratives to capture the emotional content of the stories although I tried to do so by using their own words as much as possible. Participants were given the opportunity to review the narrative summaries of the interviews and to make revisions or provide feedback. A number of journalists made changes in biographical information. One journalist insisted that he wanted his real name to be used as he felt his

participation was one more way that he could use his experience to make a difference for others. Several journalists asked that stories or information that they believed could identify them or expose others be deleted. This ranged from individual names of places to entire paragraphs. In some cases journalists added other stories to further support what had already been said.

All of the journalists reported that they enjoyed the experience of the interview. Several commented that it was nice to be able to talk about themselves as their work requires that they take on a role of objective detachment about others. Several commented that the process made them think about relationships and reflect on things they had not thought much about before. The narrative summary of each participant is first presented followed by a cross case thematic analysis of the narratives. A discussion related to the findings is then provided in the next chapter.

#### *4.4 Narrative One: Mushtaq*

Mushtaq grew up in Kashmir, an area deep in the Himalayas, which is fought over by India and Pakistan. “The two neighbours rule the region in parts and have fought wars over the stunningly beautiful Kashmir since they won independence from Britain in 1947 when the subcontinent was divided. Kashmir was an independent state before partition.” He was raised with his parents, three sisters and a childhood friend. He described his family as very close. He stated that they lived in a shanty home in a “notorious area of Srinagar, Kashmir’s summer capital.” He believed that who he is now has been mostly shaped by his mother as she taught him to “be a good human and live for others.” His father was involved in a research project on Kashmir’s classical music for 15 years and was less present. He continued to experience his family as close during his teen years. However, he recalled one incident in which his father was beating his mother. He stepped in which he noted was unusual in Kashmir. He stated that his mother said “thanks my son. You are now grown up.”

Mushtaq did not plan to become a journalist. He reported that in 1989, when he was in his mid twenties, an anti India insurgency broke out 1989. He noted that “the violence paralyzed every walk of life.” He chose to report the conflict honestly. He did not plan to be a journalist who reports on trauma but it was unavoidable in his circumstances. He recalled losing friends and relatives as a result of the violence. One year after the armed rebellion began he became a journalist. “During more than 20 years of violent Kashmir conflict, I have covered fierce gun battles, between Indian soldiers and Muslim militants, suicide bombings, rebel attacks, massacres, protests, mayhem, violent elections and disasters.” At one point in the late 90’s he was among 19 journalists freed after being held hostage for 18 hours by government militia.

For Mushtaq, he stayed in journalism compelled to report on what was happening to his people and seeing their pain. He noted that Kashmiri Muslims are always viewed with suspicion in India. “The strain of seeing the impact of the news I report on, loved ones, friends and neighbours and the awful dilemma that stems from having to choose at times between being with your family and covering the story.” Distinct from other journalists who participated is the impact of journalism when you are reporting on your own people rather than a foreign country.

According to Mushtaq he became desensitized to the daily violence. He noticed the toll it was taking on his mental health in 2005 when his wife worked in a highly guarded government building. A suicide attack by separatist militants occurred. “The exchange of fire was fierce, bombs exploded with huge orange flashes inside the tax building. The building was on fire and my wife along with her colleagues were shouting for help from a window, waving a red scarf.” He noted that other journalists were rescuing employees. His wife observed him however, dictating the story to a colleague in Delhi by phone. He reported that although she was rescued it “left a crack in the relationship.”

In spite of this negative experience he noted that his relationships give him strength to carry on in his work. He noted that when he had been taken hostage his nervousness was mostly for his mother and wife and that “the love of my wife and mother gave me strength till we were rescued.” He described staying up all night with them talking about it until “fear vanished.”

Mushtaq noted that such incidents make his relationships stronger and “the insecurity, I have observed, strengthens the bonds.” He elaborated by noting that the violence is so horrific it creates fear and insecurity and being with loved ones provides psychological security, strengthening the relationships. “You want to die but in their presence you want to protect them.”



#### *4.5 Narrative Two: Dane*

Dane is a British journalist who works as a photographer for a large News Provider. He is married and has two children. He has worked as a press photographer for 20 years. He was raised by his mother, and step-father, both of whom he was close to growing up. He was also close to his maternal grandparents and one particular friend. He describes his childhood as “very happy.” The one difficult experience he recalled was when he was about seven. The family spent about eight months in Wales. During this period he attended a school with a headmaster who could be quite harsh. His memories of the school were not pleasant and after leaving he never stayed in contact with any of the people he had met there. A key influence on him was his mother who was an artist and his step-father a professor of politics and history. From an early age he was exposed to art, culture and history and learned to think critically about world events. This knowledge and awareness has influenced his understanding in his profession of events and the meaning behind them. In the interview he provided the following example; “if we all look to history we wouldn't be in Afghanistan because we would know that for the last 500 years people have been trying to take it over and that they've never ever achieved.” His parents were both successful in their fields which influenced his desire to “be something and be quite successful at it.”

As a teenager, Dane described himself as “just the most average person at school that you could possibly be.” When he was 14 or 15 he discovered photography and that he was very good at it. He had no problems making friends up until this period. “I was always a very popular child and had lots of friends and never had difficulty making friends or being with people.” However, peer relationships became difficult in his middle teens. He hung out with a group of ten or fifteen friends who began to bully other youth. This bothered Dane and he would frequently

intervene to discourage the behaviour. The result was his group of friends began to bully him. His response was to take it for a period of time thinking they would eventually stop. However, the bullying went on month after month and they didn't stop. He finally decided he had had enough. "I came home and I said 'okay, that's the last time I'm ever going to cry about it.' And the next day I turned up and I never spoke to any of them again." After this he had friends but not close friends for the last 2-3 years of high school. It was about that time that he discovered photography. He described it as "somebody who's always on the outside looking in or whatever" which reflected who he had become in his peer relationships in his teens.

Dane thought about the influence on who he became as a result of this experience. He stated that it made him a strong person, that he learned to deal with being by himself and he learned to deal with pressure internally without externalizing it. He reported recently telling his 10 year old daughter after she went through a difficult experience that the difficulties in our lives make us stronger. He also noted that he still has the impulse to walk away from things he doesn't like.

Dane told a story about being picked on at school when he was about fifteen by a teacher. He said he has dark skin and that as there were no Latinos in England -- "everybody thought I was Indian or Pakistani." He noted that while growing up there was of racism against these minorities in England. One of his high school teachers, a "games" teacher, was very racist and would often hit the students. He would often pick on Dane and hit him on the head or elsewhere leaving bruises, trying to get a reaction which Dane refused to give him. In hockey he would hit him "incredibly hard with a hockey stick." He would hit Dane repeatedly while Dane would stand there and not react until he gave up. Dane also thought the abuse was motivated by the teacher seeing Dane as a student who was ostracized by his friends and a weakling. Dane's

mother was “desperate to complain to the headmaster but Dane wouldn’t allow it. He said that now he regrets it as he expects that the teacher would have been fired. “And the way that I dealt with that has kind of shaped my life since then and sometimes in a bad way. In a . . . I've been able to walk away from things . . . which . . . which maybe I'd sort of survived if I'd worked a bit harder but in the end I've just . . . the walking away . . . that's how I dealt with it then. It's still something I can . . . feel myself doing now.”

At 18 Dane went to college. However he was kicked out of college after his first year because he was doing a lot of partying. As a result he moved to London and lived with a childhood friend. He began to establish himself as a photographer and by 21 was quite successful. At 23 he won British photographer of the year. He met his wife at 24, also a photojournalist. They moved to Asia for three years, based in Vietnam but working throughout Asia. During this period he did a lot of reporting on traumatic events, frequently reporting on war. His wife had previously had a friend killed in Kosovo which made her very aware of the dangers. They made a verbal agreement that although they would report on war if they happened to be there it would not be their career focus just going from war zone to war zone. However they were in Asia from 95-98 a period when there were many wars happening. After being in Afghanistan for five or six weeks during the time when the Taliban became active his wife made it clear that she did not want to be worrying about his safety. According to Dane this was the last war he reported on aside from a coup or a riot that turned bad while he was reporting.

Dane noted that his experience has shown him that people the world round are the same. However, the value placed on human life varies from place to place. He compared the Germans who killed people other than themselves to Cambodians who killed two million of their own people. “So I would, just on those grounds deal with situations knowing that life wasn't so

important to them.” He found this to be bizarre. “I remember thinking that was quite weird. They really, they were killing each . . . themselves.” This influenced how he would deal with situations while there knowing the difference in the value put on life.

In his own life Dane describes a happy marriage and close family and friends. He notes that generally he tries not to dwell on things, to think about the horror. However he described the last horrific experience he had in a country in West Africa in which he was exposed to much death and suffering. He noted that he couldn’t cope with it especially because it was soon after the birth of his daughter.

And it was really heavy, really heavy, that situation and lots of people died and it was . . . I didn't like it at all and in fact I . . . I called my office and I said ‘this is absolutely not for me. I don't like this. I feel very sad and um . . . ’ They've got no interest in life or death. They're not going to care about this and whether you die or whether they die. They were all off their heads on drugs and I felt very guilty as well . . . And becoming a father, I really felt I . . . it wasn't just me anymore and my wife. It was me and my daughter. And my daughter had nothing to do with . . . she wasn't able to make a decision about me going or not and I felt that I didn't want her to grow up not having a father probably.

Dane talked about how he tries to keep his home life separate from his work life. He recalled photographing a young girl about the same age, same height and similar in colouring to his daughter during an earthquake in Indonesia. “I took a very, very, moving and yet beautiful picture. I can say this because we're talking of this girl and the pain she was in and um, I had this feeling that it really was, I just felt so bad. I could really relate to that . . . and my daughter.” He noted that when he comes home from an assignment it takes him one or two days to readjust to life at home and it becomes normal again. At the same time he described the distinction as

less clear, that it does tend to be mixed in, that they don't have a hard and fast rule about not talking about work. Rather they will often have a ten minute conversation about work when he first returns and then move on to talk about other things.

During his 20's, Dane became close to his picture editor who had given him his first assignment where he works. This relationship became very important to him and has remained so through his thirties as well. The editor was able to bring the best out of those who worked with him to motivate them and to communicate clearly what his expectations were.

Dane also described friendships with co-workers that began in his twenties and continued. Some, along with their families have become friends with his family. At times they go on vacation together. Dane attributes his well being to being raised in a stable home. He compares himself to friends who are not doing so well who are "still messed up" and noted "they were never really loved by their parents and I think that that's something that is really a tough thing to recover from." He looks at friends he's had since childhood who have not done well and sees this as a result of not having unconditional love as children. He feels very happy with his life and reports that he never thinks the grass is greener on the other side as he sees many friends doing.

I always think that things happen for a reason and that even really bad things, that I really should be . . . they happen and you have to deal with them and accepting them and try to make the most of them in how, in what shape who you are as a man or a woman.

Dane described being separated from his kids when on assignment and how difficult this can be especially when he sees them struggling with it. In general he tries to keep his work separate and noted that with his wife he tries not to talk too much about work at home. "I'd rather not talk about work. I try not to talk about it too much to her obviously, when I get home.

But we do have a ten minute conversation where we can get everything out and then we say okay, now what and then we talk about other stuff.”

#### *4.6 Narrative Three: Jarrod*

Jarred is a single man who works for a large news organization and who at the time of providing his narrative was on assignment in a large South American city. He has been reporting on trauma for four and a half years most of which was spent in East Africa. He lived in several countries in East Africa and also reported on Rwanda, Burundi, Djibouti, Somalia, Tanzania and Sudan and in the Middle East on Iraq. During this time he reported on riots, police shootings, building collapses, land mine victims, bombings and other traumatic events.

Jarred is American and was raised in a city in North Carolina by his father and mother. He has one sister who is a year and a half older than him. He recalled his childhood as quite pleasant. His family was fairly close and he was also close to his maternal grandparents, less so his paternal grandfather and step grandmother. He described his parents as yuppies, his mother had been in a sorority and his father in a fraternity. His mother worked in a school and his father for a software company. During this period Jarred remembers himself as a shy kid. He played sports and collected comics and baseball cards. He remembered getting picked on at school and that he was a little chubby. His mother got a job at a private religious school and was able to enrol Jarred and his sister there for 75% off. He noted that things were a bit better then. When Jarred was around ten to twelve he began acting out, such as shoplifting at convenience stores and vandalism. His grades were in the bottom third of the class. He reported that after getting caught at a number of these things his parents “scared him straight.” He began making top marks at school and became extremely focused on soccer, making a state team. He recalled having a couple of close friends and described the relationships as typical relationships of teenage boys. “I mean we didn’t really talk about anything deep or personal but you know, but then again we were teenage boys so...you have few things on your mind.”

Jarred was hoping to play college soccer and was working hard to achieve this. However, in the spring of grade 11 just before the time when college scouts would come to look at different players he injured his knee. It took nine months to recover which meant he missed the window of opportunity to get into college level soccer. He recalled the impact on his identity. "And so it kind of defined me in some ways cause I spent years working, working my ass off to kind of reach this level to achieve a dream that I had set up for myself and then to have it kind of disappear." He noted that it was also difficult for his parents who were proud of his accomplishments and potential as a soccer player. Jarred said that during his recovery he escaped by reading fantasy books. He didn't see until later that he was using them to avoid dealing with his loss but noted that over time he came to accept that his future was going to be different than he had expected.

During this same period his sister was diagnosed with epilepsy and went from being an 'A' student to getting 'C's. She put on a lot of weight from the medication which he noted was the "wrong medication." This was difficult for the whole family. When her medication was changed things improved but she never returned to who she was before the seizures began. In addition all of his grandparents died during this period.

He read a book about a man who covered the Bosnian war in the early 90's. He had been in the army but had no journalism experience. Jarred was taken with the book and decided journalism was what he wanted to do. His grandfather had been a marine in WWII and Jarred had always idolized him growing up. He said that neither his grandfather nor father would ever talk about it which made him ask himself "what could be so bad that someone doesn't want to talk about it?" He had thought about joining the army but didn't want to hurt people. The book made him realize he could have "these adventures" without being an active participant the way



you would be as a soldier. The people he was close to during this time were his parents and sister and one particular friend with whom he had a falling out in his last year of high school.

After reading this book about covering a conflict zone he read anything written by a foreign correspondent that he could find. Following high school he attended a local university and studied journalism. He won a scholarship to attend a training in the UK led by soldiers to prepare workers such as journalists or aid workers to work in conflict zones. He said he was only twenty attending this course with these three other foreign correspondents in their forties. They suggested he drop journalism because he could learn the trade in the field and instead study political science or focus on a region of interest. When he returned he switched to political science and worked for the school paper for a year to get writing experience. After graduating he took a plane to a city in East Africa and met up with a journalist who set him up with an internship there with her organization. He did this for three months, then transferred to a large journalistic organization and moved to another country in East Africa. He noted that his parents were initially scared about him working in Africa but over the years adjusted to the idea.

Jarred recalled in college that his friendships were deeper than they had been in the past. This continued after he graduated and moved into professional life. His boss both while in Africa and now in South America is very important to him. He noted that “he’s always there for advice and I could always talk to him about anything that was going on in my life both professionally and personally. You know how some things in your professional life will affect your personal life.” He also has gotten close to other correspondents and stated that the experience of going through difficult circumstances together creates a bond. He dated a girl while in East Africa for two and a half years. They tried to continue the relationship after he transferred from her country but the barriers made it too difficult.

He described some of his experience in East Africa as being exposed to considerable violence and unrest. He recalled the impact of this becoming more paranoid and distrustful. “After awhile you can’t, you wonder who your friends are and why they’re your friends.” This was made more difficult because he was a foreigner, and a journalist. He remarked on the influence this had on relationships. “[this] was . . . the most definitive experience I think for me in how . . . I form relationships.” Jarred noted that as a result “I don’t have the most positive outlook on everything so it kind of fed into that . . . into the bad parts of my . . . the bad parts about who I am . . . you know being negative and things like that so.” He found when he left that he was more paranoid, less trusting, and often looking over his shoulder. He felt worn down by how hard life was. When he moved to a more stable area of Africa he initially found it really hard to make friends as he was “so spent.” He stated that it was just in the last six months that he was beginning to feel more like himself.

Jarred noted that the experience of having people open up to you about extremely difficult experiences keeps him in the work. He recalled one incident that he still feels guilty about in which a 13 or 14 year old girl came to him wanting to tell her story. She was wearing a veil and lifted it to show him that half her face had been burned with acid. He was with another correspondent and they chose not to film or interview her because they were uncomfortable. He knew that it was important to her to tell her story and said if he would just have given her ten minutes she would feel better but he acted on impulse and said no. He rationalized it at the time by telling himself that he was there to do a story on malaria but later felt badly. He stated that over time he chose to learn from this experience, “try to take something positive away from it which you know, I don’t usually do. But for some reason I kind of did with that so I think that if

it happens...if it happens again I'll just talk to the person, a few minutes, a few questions. No big deal.”

Jarred stated that he mostly keeps his experiences to himself. When he does talk about it he talks to other journalists who have had similar experiences. “Sometimes it’s easier to interact with them because they know all that crap so you don’t have to talk about it or sometimes you swap stories in kind of a collegial kind of ‘oh yeah, that was crappy.’” He noted that people who haven’t had those kinds of experiences don’t want to hear about it or don’t know what to say. He reported that initially when he would go home he would feel angry about how absorbed his family and friends were in things that seemed unimportant. He stated that overtime he was able to recognize that this is their world and that’s okay. People relate to the world they’re in. He noted that he often is unaware of American pop culture and can feel out of place when at home. He stated he is now able to transition back into American culture more than he was in the past.

To cope with the trauma Jarred goes through phases where he works out a lot. At times he drinks too much and then will realize it and cut back. He noted that once he got into this field and his view of the world changed so profoundly he could “never go back” to life as it was before. He feels his eyes have been opened and that it would be hard to do anything else.

#### *4.7 Narrative Four: Anderson*

Anderson is British. He is married with two children, ages 6 and 8. His wife was raised in South America. He has worked as a journalist for approximately 18 years. His reporting has included major air crashes and Shining Path terrorist attacks in Peru, many refugee situations in South America and Africa, the Lima hostage crisis in 1996, conflict in Somalia, election crises, the Iraq war, religiously motivated violence in Ireland and the Haiti Earthquake. At the time of the interview he noted that he was enjoying a reprieve reporting on the World Cup in South Africa and was wondering if he really wanted to go back to reporting on trauma for many more years; “I’m seeing the need for some light relief now to be honest.”

Anderson reported that the people he was close to in his childhood were his parents, his grandparents, and his brother who is two years his elder. He described his childhood as “probably a fairly conventional middle class upbringing with a very happy and loving family actually.” He recalled spending lots of happy times with his parents, “lots of happy experiences watching football together, doing sports with my father.” According to Anderson, he has always felt an internal dichotomy as a result of wanting to recreate the idyllic setting and being drawn to study and report on traumatic events. “I was always happy with that background so I try and carry that with me wherever I am. I always try and create a little village around me wherever I am. But you know, on the other hand I have a yearning to break out of that and to also go and look at you know, um . . . as extreme a situation, as far away from that as possible. So I’ve always felt that um, that sort of um, those dual pulls in my life.” He first noticed this duality while studying at Cambridge when he travelled during the summers with a fellow student first to a shanty town in Peru to work on a project, the following summer to India and Nepal (including

to Calcutta to work in one of Mother Theresa's homes) and the third summer to Bolivia to work on a building project.

Anderson reported that his idyllic upbringing was shattered at age 14 when his father "dramatically" left the family with a student of his, moved to America and started another family. "I think that was a, quite a . . . that was a major rupture for me and for all of us." Due to the drop in income Anderson moved with his mother and brother into the city and his mother had to work hard to support the family. He was especially close to his mother. His grandparents became more prominent in his life and his grandfather became a father figure to him. He had close friends during that period and his first dating relationship. Anderson recalled that in part because of his parents' split he turned his attention to getting into Cambridge and felt this was an enormous achievement as he was not from a privileged background as so many students were. "I think perhaps as a result of the family split as well I really put all my efforts into making sure I could um, to make sure I was successful academically." He began studying law, hated it and switched to English Literature which he loved. It was his exposure to the "tough and rough" places he saw during the summers in college that convinced him journalism was the right career for him. "So I was really enjoying being able to reflect on what I was seeing in writing . . . and . . . it just hit me over the head as far as university that there was no other profession for me other than journalism." He recalled later being inspired by writers from privileged or normal, healthy backgrounds who felt compelled to view and write about the worst situations, people like George Orwell or an Australian journalist, John Pilger.

In his 20's Anderson recalled the important people in his life as being fellow journalists all at different levels of experience, first with other young journalists starting out like himself and also with older, experienced journalists who he admired. He recalled how initially there was a

novelty about reporting on trauma but how over time it became somewhat normal among journalists taking similar assignments. “Most of the people I was living with or hanging out with were doing similar type things so there was a strange sort of . . . almost . . . normality . . . but I would talk about it very frankly with people back then certainly yeah. And I think to start with I was very . . . very shocked at what I would see.” He noted that he would sometimes feel angry when returning to England that his family and friends from home seemed so disinterested in the people and events he was reporting on.

No one would be really very interested or um, yeah, people just didn't really care. It was so apparent that the rest of . . . the people of the first world really . . . just . . . all that stuff just sort of passes them by and they just shrug their shoulder and so to start with in my twenties I felt that . . . quite a sense of sort of young, righteous sort of indignation really that these things could be happening and going on and certainly people were taking no notice whatsoever of them.

Anderson met his wife at age 27 in South America. Shortly after they were married he was assigned to cover the hostage taking in Peru in 1996-97 and was made responsible for the field office. He had to delay his honeymoon to cover the story and was working night and day for four and a half months. “Covering the hostage crisis in Peru um . . . at the end of 1996, the beginning of 1997 was an absolutely massive event for me.” He stated that this event gave him a lot of professional confidence as he was put in charge of the organization’s Peruvian office. He and other journalists were very moved by the events as most of the rebels were 14-16 year olds from jungle areas who they got to know during the hostage taking. He recalled it being extremely intense ending when Peruvian troops dug a tunnel into the complex and killed the rebels rescuing the 1000 hostages. He thought that one hostage was killed. “In a strange sort of

way I . . . I'd been in daily contact for four and a half months. We'd built up something of a relationship with them. And they're all kids as well . . . most of them were fourteen, fifteen, sixteen year olds." Upon returning home he found himself at one point "crying and crying and crying . . . until I sort of went to sleep . . . I don't really know why." Anderson recalled this period being "awful" for his wife, who was stuck in their apartment throughout the ordeal in a new country by herself. He noted that she never complained and that it drew them closer as he felt greatly indebted to her. "I felt actually . . . felt great loving and gratitude towards her for that." He said that for years afterward they would joke about it whenever she would want something or Anderson would take her somewhere "remember Lima. You owe me."

In his thirties Andrew found that he shifted in priorities and perspective in that things he earlier scoffed at such as thinking "I'm going to get out in the real world." he now realized were important and also very valuable. "Friends and family from the early years sort of remerged." This included becoming closer to his mother and brother and reengaging with friends from his university years. His closest friends were his wife but also fellow journalists who really understood his reporting experience. He felt that non-journalists would interpret his talk about reporting experiences as pompous whereas it continued to be very normal for him.

It sounds kind as if you're trying to show off or something . . . to people who've lived all their lives in the same country . . . whereas in reality it became the complete norm for me and for other foreign correspondents so . . . it's nice to have a group of friends with whom you can just sit down and have a cigarette and a cup of coffee and discuss well . . . 'what was it like for you when you were in Iraq?' "What was it like covering the Haiti earthquake? How did you find it?" "

Anderson reported that the experience of Haiti for himself and for many other seasoned journalists was deeply affecting.

It was very interesting for me seeing an awful lot of sort of hardened, seasoned, veteran correspondents there....you know people who had covered wars, and famines and all sorts of things really you know . . . lost a bit . . . a lot of us struggled to . . . struggled with Haiti in many ways. We really did . . . almost wondering why on earth we were there as well . . . Almost a sense of . . . felt disgust at being there actually.”

Again later he remarked

Maybe Haiti was just too much for some of us. It was just too horrible. I mean I discussed with people for a couple of days afterwards and then I’ve barely discussed it since. I mean that, that, that was just too horrible. And interestingly a few other people of my age level and experience level have reacted a bit similarly to Haiti as well.

In contrast to Haiti Anderson talked about his children. “The best thing that’s ever happened to me, having kids. I mean that’s really marvellous. I just live and breathe for my kids. They’re um, they’re um, the greatest source of happiness in my life without any doubt at all.” He noted a transition in assignments he was willing to take. He resolved when his first child was three or four he would no longer take assignments that would put him in danger. He had continued up to that time going to dangerous locations to report on the news. On returning to England from Somalia where a couple of journalists had been killed a friend confronted him with this.

And I got back from one trip and . . . and a friend of mine from England I was talking to said ‘I cannot believe you’ve been to Somalia. You’ve got a beautiful wife and two



children. And you're going to Somalia.' And he actually said to me . . . he actually said to me 'you're a selfish bastard' were the words he used."

This took him aback as he had long held the perspective that his journalism represented his commitment to exposing the truth and other noble ideals. He was able to see that there was an element of selfishness in his work. He has kept this commitment since 2006. He stated that he feels privileged to have had the experiences he's had but now would be content to return to a rather "dull" life. He stated that though this was how he felt at the moment, maybe it would change. He also wondered if this was influenced by the trip to Haiti which he found very difficult.

Anderson reported that his wife over the years always gave him freedom to do what he wanted to do but also told him that she wasn't going to be sitting at home worrying about him. "She said 'you know, you go to Iraq but I'm not going to sit at home and fret about it all day long' so she would just, she would just black it out." He stated that she was never too interested in hearing about what he'd seen as she was born next to a slum in South America alongside shanty towns. She wanted to get away from that and not pursue it in her current life.

At the time of the interview Anderson noted that he felt he was experiencing a significant shift in his life that had "been brewing for a year and a half." He wasn't sure what the shift would be. "I've met some absolutely extraordinary people, real sort of heroes, be they people I've interviewed or people I've seen or situations I've been in and you know I just, I just feel now I would quite like a few years just to think about it and absorb it, just think back and take stock a bit actually." He wasn't sure what was next but felt he had had enough of trauma. He again spoke about his children that he absolutely adored them and would rush home from work just to be with them. "Their world is just such a happy, simple value based world and it's been a

wonderful anchor from all this other craziness . . . In a sense it sort of restores me in some sense. All this sort of nastiness I've really been seeing elsewhere."

Anderson recalled a time when the "two worlds collided" when he was with his two children in church and had to go outside to take an urgent call from Kenya. He remembered asking questions like "have you counted the dead bodies?" while his children were standing there. He found this to be "absolutely horrendous" that he "couldn't bear these two worlds colliding." This occurred again after the election in Kenya when there was considerable bloodshed and he found his phone would just not stop ringing and he never knew what his children overheard. He closed by noting that he wasn't a risk taker as a child and yet felt compelled to explore the worst of scenes in other parts of the world and to write about them. However, he noted that this was changing in that he was less and less drawn to reporting on trauma and more content to be with family and friends.

#### *4.8 Narrative Five: Lilly*

Lilly has two children and is pregnant with her third child. She has been working as a journalist for 19 years. She began as a crime reporter and over the years has reported on fatal accidents, murders, and multiple murders. In more recent years she has covered court cases in which you hear the evidence in “excruciating detail.” She has covered child abuse and problems with the child welfare system. Although she tried covering other areas such as education or fisheries she found that “for some reason I just keep gravitating back to those stories.”

Lilly describes a very secure early childhood. She grew up in a small town in Eastern Canada. Her parents separated when she was nine and though the years prior to this were “a bit rocky” she doesn’t recall it as an overly difficult experience because she had a very loving supportive family. After the break-up she lived with her mother and saw her father on weekends. She felt very close to both. She was an only child. Through and after the break-up her maternal grandmother lived with her. She felt very close to her. The biggest impact of her parents’ split and then adjusting to being just with her Mom was that she became “very independent and just determined to persevere.”

Lilly loved her teen years. She loved school, had lots of friends and did well. She didn’t experiment with drugs or with excessive amounts of alcohol. During her teen years her mother went back to university and Lilly often stayed with the family of a very close friend. Her mother commuted for her undergrad and then went away for the years she did teacher’s college. Lilly learned to go back and forth between her parents’ homes and her friend’s home without problems. In her last year of high school she was the student body president. She wasn’t sure what she wanted to do after high school but was determined to be successful at it. She recalls

that her mother's expectations of her were very strict and that she could either rebel or begrudgingly accept it, which she chose to do.

Lilly went away to university and got a degree in English. She stated that she loved university. She again had lots of friends and was involved in student counsel. She met her husband while there and though they dated while there they were usually in different cities for the next ten years and so the relationship became long distance. After university she got an office job which was not fulfilling and then applied at the last minute to go to journalism school at a local college. It turned out to be a great fit for her. In her first placement with a local paper she noted that she loved the experience, the high pace, the fast deadlines, the high expectations. She happened to be put on breaking crime stories and liked the unpredictability of it.

Important relationships for Lilly during her twenties continued to be her mother and father, her grandmother, her boyfriend and a group of friends she formed at university who she is still close to today. She also said she had a number of good bosses who really helped her along her career path. She moved from working at the one paper to a different location in southern Ontario where she again worked with a local paper. During this time she covered a highly publicized trial of a young couple that was charged with the murders of two young women. She tended not to talk to others about it and noted that her boyfriend and friends were supportive but not interested in hearing the gory details. She stated that she was more likely to talk to fellow journalists both from her paper and other media outlets. "I find over the years that they've been my sounding boards more than people outside the journalism um...industry... because they understand right, a little bit better I think." This continued throughout her career. She noted that her husband is generally not interested in the details, works in an entirely different field and she rarely discussed her work with him. She noted that one of the most difficult parts of reporting on

trials is that evidence is often under a publication ban which was the case with this trial and so she was not allowed to publish or even really talk about it to others.

Reporting on this particular crime story was eye opening for Lilly in that she hadn't thought someone could be that "intrinsically evil." She said she went into the trial thinking that the woman charged with the murders was also somehow a victim, forced or bullied into participating by her partner. She soon saw that she had willingly and actively participated. She stated that this did not impact her trust in people she already knew and loved but in her work she did find herself "approaching interview subjects for stories with perhaps less rose coloured glasses."

Lilly's career continued to unfold in continuing to report on crime mostly because this was her experience and what she would use to get her next job. She also noted that she was good at it. The core of this she thinks is empathy and being able to talk to victims and relatives of victims. "I think you also need to ...care that you are speaking out for people who haven't received justice or people who have been rocked by some violent act." She noted that she has learned to withhold judgment when reporting as she often finds that people involved in horrific events often ended up there in part due to coming from families where there are multigenerational problems of abuse, neglect, poverty and lack of support or intervention, for example many of the missing women from the downtown Eastside of Vancouver. She saw this as a more systemic societal problem. One of the effects of crime reporting is that she has learned to be grateful for the life she has had and currently has and to not allow herself to get in to self pity.

In her thirties Lilly married, had two children, bought a house and stayed in one city throughout the decade. In her work she shifted away from reporting on an immediate event to

more investigative reporting which can entail spending significant time on one particular story. She noted that because you stay on a story you can form relationships with people involved. She said she tries to keep the boundaries between professional and personal life clear but at times people may come from very chaotic backgrounds with few stable people in their lives and find something more stable in you than they find in their personal relationships. She spoke of following the cases of missing women on the downtown Eastside in Vancouver. “In one case I was the person that the sister of the missing woman called when she found out she had breast cancer because I was the stable person in her life.”

She remarked on the need to remain unbiased and present herself as such. For example while covering the trial of a man alleged to have killed many women from the Downtown Eastside, she could not celebrate with the family members and friends when he was convicted or show any bias despite her own personal beliefs. She stated that her home for her is a place to shift away from the world of work. During the trial of the serial murderer she found being able to come home to her family was a reprieve for her. She continued to be close to her parents, each who had new partners, to her in-laws and to her college friends (all who are long distance friends). She also has a large group of very close friends in Vancouver who she sees very regularly but when she needs support for getting through a crime story she leans on her friends in the newsroom.

Lilly found that when covering crime that more closely related to her own situation it became more difficult. A particularly difficult crime to cover was investigating the death of a young girl who was the same age as her own daughter. In reviewing the documents she continually had to face the issues of abuse and neglect that were apparent and the failure of the system to protect the child.

We spent a long time going through all the documentation on her and my daughter at the time was the same age as this little girl when she died. And I have to tell you that that was probably, maybe even more than covering the missing women, a very difficult story for me to cover because I would read on the . . . for example the daycare reports and the doctor's reports on this little girl what her weight was and I would compare it to the weight of my daughter at the time. You know, and her cognitive abilities and kind of her developmental stages and you would just know that there was something terribly wrong with her and people weren't catching it. And I think as a Mom that was really tough. She noted that the lasting effect is that she can be excessively protective of her own daughter who finds it infuriating.

Throughout her life it appears that developing and maintaining relationships has been one of Lilly's strengths. She noted that her husband is very similar in this regard and that outside of work they spend enormous amounts of time with friends. They also work to maintain long distance relationships. This doesn't appear to be just a way of coping with her work but rather a personal value and ability as she described this tendency through each stage of her life.

#### *4.9 Narrative Six: Musaid*

Musaid lives with his partner and their five year old daughter. He was born and raised in Pakistan. His family was Muslim and lived in a rural village in a large house with approximately fifty members of his immediate and extended family. Because he was raised in a culture where women were viewed as inferior to men and he was exposed to a lot of abuse of women and children he was very affected by this as a child. He was also moved by the prejudice against Christians and other minorities. Musaid first was interested in journalism as a child. He noticed in a local barbershop how the patrons were all interested in the news reported in a small paper there. He began to think whether he could report on news. His interest grew as he saw injustices. At seven he was slapped hard by a police officer who he saw taking a bribe. He thought about the importance of growing up to be someone who could prevent these kinds of things from happening. About the same time a neighbor committed suicide on the train tracks and he recalled people walking through the street with the man's head. He again felt very traumatized.

The person he was closest to growing up was his grandmother. He recalled his father being strict, referring to him as his "bad boy" and at times beating him. It was to his grandmother that Musaid would turn to for comfort and support. His father one time hit his mother when Musaid was about ten. He told his father "I know you're powerful. You're Daddy. You're strict. But if you ever again do that you'll lose me" threatening to run away. During this period his brother who was 1-2 years older than him fell into a large pot of boiling milk. His mother took him to the Christian Hospital and Musaid recalled them providing excellent treatment and support. His mother was told that his brother would recover which over time he did. This influenced Musaid's openness to Christianity. His father studied both the Quran and



the Bible and when Musaid later came to Canada he studied the Bible through correspondence courses.

Musaid identified specifically the role of women in shaping him. He had five sisters and many female relatives and was influenced by their views of what was important to them and by the cultural fight for women's rights. This influenced who he was as a journalist in that he became an advocate for women's rights. His mother was unable to read or write but she believed that you should strive for the things you want in life and God will bless your efforts. "But she...I saw her very hardworking, very committed and very strong in her faith. And she wasn't able to read or write Quran. But she...just uh...always she pick up in the morning and go for the Quran and just thinking that she believed in one God that everybody believes." His mother was compassionate and supported Christians who were discriminated against. In addition his mother's lack of education and how difficult it made her life increased his drive to ensure he got an education.

In his teens Musaid wanted to continue his education and go to university, in part because he saw how difficult his mother's life was that she was unable to read and write. His father chose to have his children stay in school only until grade 10 and then work in the field because "getting all the education and you don't get a good job or position because of the corruption in the country." While he was in school he was very involved with school activities. "So I was into writing, art, sports, I was very good in weight lifting and body building kind of thing. And no smoking, no alcohol, those kind of things, things get off course." He was in the mosque every morning and described himself as a social butterfly. During his teens he was very close to his wrestling coach with whom he did a lot of positive activities. He also had close friends and stayed close to his paternal grandmother. When he was 16-17 he saw a 12-13 year old boy from

the neighbourhood get run over by a bus and die. He said it again created a discontent with his society's lack of support for its citizens. He received a scholarship at that time to continue in school but his father refused to let him go. He became more involved in journalistic writing and as a young adult he started a newspaper that reported on issues pertaining to minorities as well as a monthly magazine about human rights and women's rights which he said had a small circulation but gained some followers and is still running today. He was supported in this by his mother who encouraged him to pursue his dreams and convictions.

Musaid described journalism in South Asia, that there is little to no pay and that no one reports on events in small towns, rural areas unless somebody local decides to do it. In addition, the newspapers are very expensive and little space is given to report on traumatic events. He stated that most journalists write because they feel compelled to let people know the terrible things that are happening and do this at great risk to themselves. After high school he worked for the largest paper in his country. He knew he wouldn't get rich but loved the work he did. He noted that when he would write about these things in the paper he was not supported by his employers because they would also be harassed for allowing it. He noted that "they were not into supporting in the sense of uh...standing up, and pursuing the case and investigation, no. There's no such culture." During his twenties he was close to a cousin who supported him in the work he did. He continued to be close to his coach. He noted he dated two different women but each time his father beat him because of differences in class and because in his culture where marriages were arranged dating just because you love someone was frowned upon.

At age nineteen Musaid was interviewing a 22 year old woman who was resisting being forced by her in-laws to go into prostitution to make money for the family. He said the family bribed the police to pick him up which they did. He was jailed for several days until his uncle

paid a bribe to have him released. While in prison he was beaten and lost his hearing in his left ear. Again, this experience drove him towards writing about crime and justice issues. During his twenties he had several other experiences of being picked up by the police and beaten. Often this was as a result of businessmen bribing the police to arrest him because he was reporting on their corruption. Twice he was shot at and survived. Musaid described the long term impact of reporting on and experiencing trauma. “So basically trauma on me, domestic abuses, women violations, human rights violations, police torture to the innocent citizens.” He noted that when he recalls the work he did in his country of origin

going back into files that I worked on kind of give me shivers when I talk about it, when I think about it right, sometimes. Uh...and...mostly uh what traumatized me is something of the people and personal injuries, beaten up, or tortured situation. Because I knew I was beaten up. It was rough and it’s gone. And just uh...feeling of being beaten that scares me. That horrifies me.”

The most difficult part for him is the people who are left behind in his country of origin to deal with their trauma and losses.

Because I knew I was beaten up. It was rough and it’s gone. And just uh...feeling of being beaten that scares me. That horrifies me. What horrifies me mostly uh...the people left behind. Uh, the subject I have worked on, in the past yeah that’s the most most traumatizing for me you know.

His father initially was against him choosing journalism, preferring him to be a businessman but when he saw that reporting could lead to positive changes and to admiration from the community he became more supportive. During this period Musaid did some work for foreign journalists with BBC, CNN etc. He would be a guide, translate, arrange things though he

was paid very little for his work. In 2002, he and a friend were reporting on police corruption in his area. His friend was shot and killed at his home in front of his pregnant wife. He wrote the story of this and participated in a rally against police corruption. The police involved were suspended. He was then picked up and tortured to try to get him to retract his story. He agreed so that they would let him go but then realized he couldn't lie about it. He left the area. His brother and father were then arrested. His brother was beaten and his father paid a bribe to avoid being beaten. At this time he realized he had to leave the country. He was able to get to Dubai with assistance and then with the help of an organization that supported journalists he was able to get to the US. He was refused asylum but then entered Canada. He was 28 years old. It took him seven years to become a Canadian resident. In the meantime he worked as a labourer in different jobs. He also did some freelance work for BBC, the New York Post and worked for several Canadian newspapers. He then started his bi-weekly paper.

Musaid compared his work in Canada to that in his home country. He stated that a cousin was shot to death when they thought that Musaid had returned home. He stated that he has nineteen former colleagues who have been killed because of their journalistic efforts. During a trip last year while filming a documentary about a Christian man who was killed for falling in love with a Christian, Muslim woman, his cameraman was shot and has since been in a coma. He noted that his one regret is not being born in an English speaking country as he sees how much language is a barrier to being able to defend human rights and help people. He described a friend who has also been persecuted by the police who is trying to leave the country.

He's in Dubai and we're trying to get some help to get him the asylum file but the consulate and the diplomats they told him sorry go back. They're sending him back and we don't know what to do. Because I'm not very good at the communication of the e-

mails and stuff like sometimes one word makes your communication difficult to understand, you know. So that challenge kind of haunts me. That's the only regret I have in my life. That I was not born with English and in an English country.

Musaid describes the impact of his experiences on who he is as a person.

I'm a little bit lost person kind of thing, not stable mentally . . . emotional issues because of those things I've been through in my life like different incidents, like everything started from my writing experience, and beaten up, and imprisonment . . . and my friend getting killed and countrymen suffering, and the corruption behind (?) some victims all that and stuff.

Musaid sees the impact of his passion for his work on his five year old daughter. He described her bringing her pillow and blanket and trying to sleep on the floor where he is working in their home. He related this to the impact of being beaten by his father on his sense of self even though he states that his father did the best he could at the time. He said that he wants to be a friend to his daughter so that she'll be open with him. He stated that he adores her but also sees how he gets caught up in his work and then ignores her. With his partner he admitted that he has had affairs, that he jumped into the relationship too easily not realizing how it would affect his work and that they were not a good match for each other. Nonetheless he said he wants to work on the relationship for the sake of his daughter.

A number of times Musaid noted his regret about not having more education and his disappointment that his father had not supported him in this.

Maybe if my father had let me go to the big university in a different city when I was offered a scholarship my life could have been different. Maybe I would be a professor today. Maybe not a journalist... maybe an editor right?

Again later he reiterates “Like . . . because one person’s wrong decision changed my life. You know? Have impact. I might have had chance to go to university, improve my language, work better.” In his relationship with his daughter he noted that he hoped she wouldn’t become a journalist or at least that she would not have to have the difficult experiences he had. “So looking at those experiences I’m trying to apply. You know... to uh... make sure my daughter’s life won’t get affected, you know.”

The biggest factors that he sees make his marriage difficult are the cultural differences and that he is very open while she is very private. He sees this as what led to the one year affair he had with another woman. In his view the relationship with his partner would have been easier if she was also a journalist. The main person who Musaid talks to about his experiences is an older friend who is also from Pakistan.

Musaid talked about how his ultimate passion is to help people whether it be through journalism or otherwise. “Yeah, like doing something positive you know? And I don’t want to go back and do crazy reporting. So my life can be dangerous... cause I’m on a path and experience to save many lives.” He spoke of different ideas such as using advertising to generate relief funds for a flood in his country, or going back to start a small journalism school in his country.

#### ***4.10 Narrative Seven: Edward***

Edward is a single man with an 18 year old son who had just moved out. He has been in the field of journalism for 18 years. He has worked in crime reporting including murder trials, pornography, sexual assault, and court reporting. He has also worked as a foreign correspondent in Afghanistan, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi and Zimbabwe. Edward started out on general assignment for two newspapers which included reporting on crime. He found murder cases particularly interesting and noted that he would gravitate towards these sorts of stories.

Edward grew up in California with his parents and one brother who is a year older than he is. He described the early years as idyllic. He was especially close to his Mom who was a stay at home mother until he was in his late teens. His father worked quite a bit but made as much time as he could to spend with his two sons. He would take them on trips and would take them on backpacking trips in the mountains. In his teen years he had a lot of friends and played a lot of sports. His father refused to let him play high school football which he said damaged their relationship for three or four years. His father was a doctor and was concerned that he would “blow out his knees” and so refused to sign the papers which Edward resented. As a result his friends who did play shifted to hanging out with others on the team and Edward moved to a different group of friends which he says was a “much better group of friends.” He recalled a group of about five or six close friends. He had a best friend and was also close to the friend’s parents. He also reported being close to his mother’s best friend who he had known from birth and stayed close to until she died a few years ago.

When Edward was sixteen his best friend was killed in a car accident. He said he thought that his friend’s death made him a bit more of a worrier which has continued to be a tendency for him. “Scared about losing people I care about.” A couple of years later another friend who was

very close was diagnosed with schizophrenia. He is still in contact with him. Then when he was nineteen his father died of cancer. He continued in sports and student government and other activities but said his life was greatly affected by these events. His father was diagnosed with a brain tumour eight months before he died. Edward was already in university. He said he came home as often as he could and then was home for the summer. His father died at the end of the summer. As a result of his father's illness and then death Edward and his brother were very concerned about his mother. He transferred to a school closer to home and both he and his brother tried to spend a lot of time with their mother. When he was 21 his mother died of lung cancer just a few months after being diagnosed. He stayed in school knowing that was what she would want and moved home to commute to school. He said that school gave him something to focus on. "I didn't really do a good job of . . . addressing my . . . trauma. I'd try not to think about it. My brother and I never talked about it and I didn't talk about it to anyone else."

Edward's general response to the loss of both parents was "a low level non specific anger . . . I didn't show any kind of emotional response. I sort of felt like . . . I should be a strong person and, you know, not inflict my anger on anyone else, inflict my sorrow on anyone else." He and his brother began spending "as much time as possible together" but they never talked about their losses until they were in their mid thirties.

In his twenties Edward stayed close to his high school friends. He played rugby and was also close to guys on the team. He had a lot of casual girlfriends but no one serious. During his twenties one of his high school friends accidentally killed a homeless man who had fallen onto the road while his friend was driving. The friend worked as a carpenter and through an accident had vision and nerve problems which ended his ability to do carpentry. Then one day he got quite drunk and drove his motorcycle into a truck. Edward and his friends suspected that it was



suicide. He said that he and the others from the group of high school friends talked about good memories of him but didn't really share their grief.

Edward studied humanities in college and in his last year took an introduction to journalism course which captured his interest. He met a woman from Winnipeg while travelling in Europe and they had a long distance relationship for a couple of years. He moved to Winnipeg after college while she was completing a law degree. She got pregnant and they got married. He decided to continue studying journalism and so they moved to California while he went to school. They were together for just over a year and a half and then separated sharing custody of their son. They had moved to a town in BC from California and he stayed a few more years in the town before moving to Calgary. He described the marriage as terrible, that she turned out to be not at all like he thought she was. He said they fought all the time and that it seemed unavoidable. But he also noted that he was "so thankful that I had it because I have my son." After they separated he found wrangling about raising their son to be extremely stressful but in general he was not negatively affected by this relationship. He learned to be more careful in entering into relationships and evaluating compatibility.

Edward found that he has never suffered overall negative effects from reporting on crime. At one point he was beginning to find working at a particular paper to be repetitive and dull. Then he went to report on a car crash in which seven young people were killed. He was at the hospital and as friends were arriving he was the one who ended up telling them that five of the victims were dead and two were in serious condition. He recalled how difficult it was to see their suffering. He called in to the news desk and was told to go to the high school to get a yearbook so that they could post the pictures of the teens. He knew their names because he was at the hospital but he felt it was morally wrong because the police had not yet released their

names and he didn't want their relatives to find out about their deaths by seeing it in the paper. He drove around for about twenty minutes and then called to say that he couldn't find a yearbook. This was a tipping point for him and so he quit his job. He recalled this as one time when he did talk about his experience, in this case with his girlfriend. He then switched to doing freelance for a couple of years.

Edward by then was living with a girlfriend who he stayed with for five years. He realized he couldn't make enough doing freelancing. He and his partner got married and then travelled around the world for ten months. At the end of the trip they split up. He then moved to Vancouver. He described the relationship as really good, very supportive but said that she was bothered that he looked at other women which led to her thinking that it was very likely he had cheated on her. He noted that he had never even kissed another woman but was unable to convince her. They lived in different places for a couple of years and made some attempts to work it out but then finally divorced. He stated that the loss of his second wife was extremely difficult to get over as it was also the loss of a dream of having the kind of life he grew up with, buying a house and having kids and spending his life with someone. He noted he didn't really get over it until this last year. At the same time Edward noted that a core reason he thinks that he has been able to report on trauma and not have post traumatic stress is by staying focused on his role as a witness, that the victims' grief is much greater. "I may not like feeling the way I'm feeling as a result of this experience but . . . it's nothing compared to what the people who are directly involved are feeling." He also noted that his experience of other people's trauma "pales in comparison to the trauma I've had from people dying and . . . you know, my . . . break up from my second wife, which was, you know, very difficult."

In his thirties Edward stayed close to his brother, his mother's best friend and the friends he had from high school. He described his Mom's best friend as "a person who had unconditional love for me. And I did for her, you know. She cared about everything in my life and wanted what was best for me." Through his thirties he said that he was very close to his son and they would often go on trips together. This was a highlight for him. His son lived with him for the last three years of high school which he laughingly noted "was great although he became a bit of a surly adolescent."

In 2006 Edward went to Afghanistan as a war correspondent. This led to a shift in career for him in that he began doing as much war correspondence as he could. "So it was kind of revelatory that once I got there and started doing that work I felt like . . . it was really what used my . . . skills and my character in the . . . sort of maximal way." He is now trying to leave Vancouver to go work overseas doing political reporting or conflict reporting. He met a nurse in the city where he lives who works in conflict zones for doctoring foreigners and also "sort of medical field coordinator in wars and sometimes in disasters." He stated that he had always had anger about the greed and selfishness in war but meeting this woman changed his perspective.

She sort of personifies the counter to all that. And . . . it kind of like opened up my mind to this whole other world of people that are working like on the ground to, you know, combat the effects of what I'd always been so angry about. So, we're still really close and, I don't know, that was another sort of revelation to me. It was kind of like a window into this . . . bigger world. And that's also a possibility that I may . . . ah, not go in the direction strictly speaking of journalism, but I may go and end up working in the, you know, applying and I've applied for jobs as an NGO in the UN and stuff like that, doing basically writing and photography . . . in, for humanitarian missions.

This experience has led to a significant change for him. He sees much more the possibility of doing great good in horrible situations, and that people can counter the terrible things that “greedy, powerful” people are doing by promoting “peace and justice and equality.” His one concern was that the work was very dangerous and he wasn’t sure how his son would deal with it if he died. He had spoken with his son about it and his son had told him not to worry about it but he felt he was not really telling him how he felt.

#### ***4.11 Narrative Eight: Bill***

Bill is married and has no children. He has worked in journalism covering traumatic events for 21 years. Events reported on have included natural disasters such as tornados and forest fires, and crime reporting such as assaults or serial murder trials. He has also worked as a war correspondent in Kandahar, Afghanistan. Bill was raised in a nuclear family. He is the youngest of four children and has three older sisters. He described the first ten years of his life as fairly stable, “the typical nuclear family.” He stated that closest people to him during this decade were his parents, sisters, friends and teachers. He had a best friend from early childhood who he is still close to. The years were pretty uneventful with no really difficult experiences. Bill also felt he transitioned through his teen years quite easily. He did recall his parents fighting and going to see a counsellor as a family when he was in grade seven which he described as “Very awkward and uncomfortable. I didn't enjoy it.”

In grade nine Bill got caught by his coach smoking marijuana with a friend before a basketball game. He was suspended from school. The next summer his parents decided he needed a different environment and he was sent away to boarding school. Initially this was difficult but he said that he adjusted and then enjoyed it. He recalled getting quite close to the teachers because it was a small school with more extracurricular activities and the teachers were around in the evenings. He felt that the impact on his life was “huge” and that when he graduated and went away to college he was probably a little more mature than other students, more able to adjust to being away from home.

Bill’s interest in journalism began in elementary school. He had a paper route and would usually have one or two extra papers. As he would be the only one up he would sit and read the paper. He said he became a “kind of news junky.” In university he enrolled in journalism but

was kicked out of the department after his first year because of his grades and so ended up getting a BA in History. He had a long term girlfriend during these years but didn't speak of the relationship having a significant impact on his life. Bill described the first five years of his twenties as difficult. "Um school was a struggle for one thing, so academically I was very poor. Not living up to expectations, like others or my own, feeling stress and feeling guilt for not achieving." He described his parents as supportive and saw the guilt as more his own that he couldn't repay their generosity by "achieving or working hard."

After university Bill got hired to do an internship as a journalist for a weekly magazine from the area of Alberta he grew up in. He found the first few years to be very stressful, not feeling strong academically and trying to make deadlines. He coped with this socially. He had a group of good friends in the same business who were also young and starting out and he recalled having lots of fun with them. The work got easier over time and he switched to freelancing for five years. During his twenties he also met his current wife. They then moved to a city in Eastern Canada where he was hired to work for a large paper. The shift was motivated by the desire for a challenge and more stable pay.

According to Bill, he sometimes talks to his wife about his journalistic experiences but not that often. For example, he noted that he hadn't talked to her about being in Kandahar and said that he didn't want to. He said she doesn't overreact to things but sometimes he won't tell her because he may want to go back to a certain place and doesn't want her to worry about him. Instead he'll talk to his best friend or to people in the field. "I just spoke to my best friend about it now, today actually. Um, colleagues in the field where I was for sure. Um . . . members of the military where I was, they weren't colleagues but working alongside these people who

understand exactly what the situation is and how it can affect people. They're actually trained to deal with it.”

Bill described the third decade of his life as “exciting, lots of achievement.” Again he made close friends where he was living, most of whom he noted had some connection to journalism or publishing. He remained close to his wife but noted that they tended to have different sets of friends. He continued to be close to his childhood friend and said that they had a lot in common and were always able to laugh about childhood memories.

In his thirties he had the opportunity to write a couple of books which he said was kind of a dream for him. “A large mining fraud called (name). It was an international scam that was kind of perpetrated from Canada and Indonesia. And a book on gambling, the gambling industry.” He and his wife went through a difficult period when she had a miscarriage after three months and shortly after her father died. During this period he was away in Indonesia doing research for his book. He described feeling guilty and having separation anxiety about not being with her at the time. He notes that he still in some ways carries it. “I think that it was . . . that's an area that we don't really go to very much. So we, at least I do, sort of avoid it. So I think there's a sadness there and maybe a bit of a wall there that I've, at least I've put up.”

Bill and his wife had wanted to move to Western Canada and did so when an opportunity arose. In this time he has moved around professionally but noted that he has been looking for a new challenge and hasn't yet found it. “I need to find work that challenges me and stimulates me. I need a lot of stimulation.” His wife also likes change and challenge so they are in agreement about this. He did report a difficult time in their marriage in recent years. He said he left for a night after a big fight. He described it as quite traumatic for both of them and noted that they needed help to resolve it.

Since 2006 Bill has been going to Afghanistan every year for six weeks. He described the disorientation he feels when he returns from these trips. “There's sort of a strange feeling of . . . after I've left, and returned here or been on holiday. Afterward there's kind of a very odd discombobulated feeling of not being attached to anything. It's almost a weightless feeling. And somewhat anxious.” He thought that the anxiety was about the adrenaline rush having stopped and an impulse to look for something “to get that adrenaline rush.”

It doesn't mean being reckless, that's the connotation that comes along with it but there was never any sense that I was being reckless, but I was definitely . . . pushing the barriers a little bit. And some risks that were definitely measured, but I was definitely taking some risks. So and it was very, very exciting each time. And so at the end of that, that's suddenly just gone, like instantly. Gone. And it's something that you live with . . . 24/7 when you're over there. It's . . . doesn't stop at night. I mean it's . . . it's constantly there, this dread and this danger and this excitement.

At the same time he noted that he also feels driven to return because of his frustration with the way the war is being reported and his desire to “contribute to understanding” of what's happening. He expressed frustration at the spin that he saw the military put on their efforts in Afghanistan. One of the changes in who he is that arose out of his experience of being imbedded is his awareness “of the harm that people are willing to do to each other.”

Bill contrasted the ease of life in Canada and with the hardship in Afghanistan. “The . . . you know, despair of the Kandahari and Afghani people, ah, the amount of hardship that they've had to endure, which in turn, you know, makes me think of the sort of hypocrisies in Canada, the complaining and whining that goes on in Canada over relatively trivial matters.” Bill spoke



about not expecting support from his news organization to cope with trauma and even though he has felt traumatized a couple of times he chose to keep it to himself. “I don't want to indicate that because, out of fear basically, people thinking that I can't handle it or that I'm cracking under pressure.” He gave the example of covering the widely publicized trial of a serial murder and said that he was fine covering it but when he covered the victim statements by family members on the last day he found it more difficult to deal with. He noted this in his column by saying “people in the courthouse were crying including at least one reporter.” “So the editors definitely picked up on that right? And then I felt embarrassed and kind of ashamed for having expressed myself emotionally in my work and I kind of decided that I would never do that again.” The editor had actually sent an email being supportive but it made Bill feel uncomfortable. He stated that he thought his attitude was common among journalists and that it was in part due to the expectation of readers that journalists will report in an unbiased, unaffected way. He also thought that it was more expected for males that they would not show emotion . . . “just weakness, guys crying and . . . kind of cultural in a way.”

Bill noted that he likes the thrill of reporting on trauma and noted he chooses who he speaks to about it. “I would say also just in terms of, like I've had a lot of close calls that I . . . like I hate to say this but I will because this is honest, but um, I kind of like to tell my friends and not my family because my parents can't handle it, but my friends and even my wife about some of those close calls. I kind of relish it.”

#### ***4.12 Narrative Nine: Jason***

Jason is married and has two children ages eight and five. He has been working as a full time journalist for 16 years. He covered stories related to child protection services for ten years. This included covering the deaths of 22 children. He has also covered “dozens” of murders.

Jason spent his early years with his parents and his brother who is two and a half years older than him. He recalled his family as close and described his parents as role models for him. His mother was a school teacher but stayed home until he was in grade one. His father was a school administrator. He recalled both of his parents being around a lot and those early years as quite happy and very safe largely because of how available his parents were. “I had a golden childhood I think.” His family lived in Puget Sound near the forest. He and his best friend spent many happy hours playing in the woods. In fifth grade the family moved into a rural poorer area and he again had a close friend who he spent lots of time with. After about a year and a half his parents separated. His mother moved out and within about six weeks his father announced he was getting married to Jason’s best friend’s mother so he and his best friend became step brothers. As his father had a stable job and the house Jason stayed with his Dad. His Mom got an apartment about a half hour away. It was difficult for Jason and his brother and he recalled he become less trusting of people and withdrew a bit more into books.

Jason described himself as a child as basically optimistic and outgoing. He said he could have a flash temper that could get him into trouble with other kids and that he was the kind of kid who liked to curl up in the corner with a book. In his teens he was close to his step brother and he had the same girlfriend throughout high school. They were “inseparable.” Aside from that he didn’t have many close friends. In spite of this he was the class president for every year in high school and then student body president his senior year. He found he had to work hard at sports

but he lifted weights and became quite good at football. Jason explained his involvement in leadership positions due to the fact that he was perceived as being smart and had a drive to be “in charge.” He recalled he was good at fundraising and able to assert himself when he needed to.

Jason’s first experience in journalism was writing for the local paper. His girlfriend was a star athlete and Jason was spending a lot on gas attending all her games. His journalism teacher suggested he write game stories for the local paper so that they would pay his mileage. This sparked his interest in journalism. “I liked how much attention it got me. And I liked to write. And I liked to feel someone out by their personality and I like to be able to get my questions answered.” Following high school he studied journalism in university and wrote for the school paper. He was then hired by a larger city paper. Unfortunately he made a “stupid mistake” when writing a brief and was fired. He was still in university and so went back to writing at for the school paper and within a year became the editor of the paper. He got an internship at a large north western paper and then was hired by the paper.

After less than a year Jason tried to write on his own but couldn’t make enough money and he moved to a smaller town where he was hired to work for their local paper. He described how he learned the ropes of journalism by being mentored by good people while there. He initially lived with a woman in a non romantic relationship. His life shifted quickly when he met a woman, they moved in together, got engaged and then married. “And within three or four years I was married and owned a house and hanging out with other sorts of married couples.” Through his profession he and his wife made some good long term friendships with others in their age group. They are still close to this group of friends. Jason described his father during his twenties as “very religious.” “He was really trying to be very controlling religiously, just didn’t approve of me moving in with different girls.” It caused a fracture between them which

wasn't reconciled until he was in his mid to late twenties. Once reconciled, he said they became very good friends. Also in his late twenties he began having more professional success which involved travelling extensively. He noted that there were a couple of periods where "I mean I had points where I was drinking too much and being a little bit too wild."

In dealing with coping with reporting on traumatic events he stated that for the most part it didn't bother him too much. He noted that one particular situation was tough and he did talk to his wife a lot about that but aside from that tended not to talk about his experience. He said that he did see a counsellor for a couple of years and that he learned through this to identify patterns and feelings and deal with them in healthier ways rather than have them "bubble up in unhealthy ways." He reported he did talk about the stress, "that you know, either the pressure of the job or just sort of the, all the incredibly weird stuff you see and hear. So . . . between my wife and a counsellor I guess I talked." He noted that he tended not to talk about it at work because of the "machismo culture" among journalists.

At thirty Jason had his first child. He then was offered a job again in a larger city which they had agreed to accept if it came up. In a short period they moved back, bought a house, and had a second child. His wife who was an attorney had to give up a good job and to leave her family who lived in the town they left. He stated that his family was the centre of his life in his thirties, that once they adjusted to all the changes, having kids improved their relationship. "Our kids are just a delight and they're really just sort of the gravity of our life. But we've really had a point of it being our kids not consuming our relationship and so we've been able to, we try to sneak away as much as we can. Go have weekends with ourselves, make sure we still like each other (laughs)."

Changes in his thirties have mostly related to work but overall Jason described his thirties as very stable with no real significant events in his personal life. He had been very involved in his work in covering child protection stories. He in particular followed one story for an extended period of time in which the family was coping under extremely challenging circumstances and then after that followed a very horrific story involving the death of a parent who was struggling with an addiction. At that point he told his editors that he couldn't cover child protection stories anymore. "I couldn't deal with it anymore. I was having nightmares. About the . . . some of the images from the last one." He switched to reporting for the most part on non-traumatic events for about three years which he said really helped. He noted that it wasn't until he was not reporting on continuous trauma that he realized how crazy the life was. "That's when I started realizing, my god, this is just a crazy, crazy pressure on your life... And now when I do go back into it, I'm able to deal with it better." He noted that in the midst of it everybody wanted to talk about it because it was very high profile so he would, "my friends, my neighbours, my family....but I just wasn't able to get past just waking up at night, um, you know with the images of these kids and I was just (*sighs*)... So . . . I didn't talk to anybody professionally about it at that time. I kind of knew what I needed to do. Stop. So . . . I guess talking to my wife and I did have a friend at work whom I've known for years, one of those people who I met in my twenties who, we ended up both moving to (---) and I talked to him quite a bit about it."

In the last several years Jason co-wrote a book about a high profile murder case that occurred in the North Western United States. One aspect that really did affect him was his awareness of the impact of the murder on the victim's children. He spoke again about the lack of support from the news organization.

One thing that I do think is screwed up about the newsroom culture is that ah . . . I think that there is not a recognition that what we're doing is stressful and chaotic. I tell some of these stories to my friends, I was in (a city in Southern United States) reporting this story, I was in this really crappy part of (city), reporting a story, reporting for part of the book and I basically got held up. I basically got, you know, six dudes surrounded my car and tried to get me out of the car and I just had to sort of screech off down the street with dudes banging on the hood of the car. And I tell this story and I was like, you know, I was calling my wife like, you know, holy shit . . . you don't know what happened to me. And I tell it to my boss and he's like, 'well, make sure you didn't get your rental car damaged'."

Jason noted the lack of appropriate support for journalists who report on trauma.

And the IEP program for newsrooms are really bad, the mental health benefit. They're not intended to deal with the stress of work. And I would love to see a journalism outfit that helps with therapy or processing the trauma and there's just not anything out there. I mean people, the DART centre here has done work about that but they've much more focused on war and for good reason. But I think part of the burnout of journalism is that if you can't deal with it, at the end of the reel it has a real lasting effect if you can't process the trauma.

He recognized that for himself if he had not gone through the therapy he earlier went through to help his marriage he could not have had the career success he had and managed as well as he did.

"Because I wasn't responding to stuff well and I wasn't seeing things as clearly as I did after I had therapy. So I think, I don't know, I think there's still a real resistance to the scene that, the scene that there are real problems that arise at work."

## 5 Cross Case Thematic Results

*Just the feel and the smell of the papers. . . I sit there and smell the ink. . . It's healing.*

*~Participant 6*

### 5.1 Introduction

In this section I provide the findings from the nine narratives. Six themes were identified across the narratives. These include close family relationships in early life, family relationships being central to well being in adult life, juggling three relational spheres (private life, professional life, relationships with people they report about), finding support for managing trauma, making a difference in human lives through reporting on trauma, and the impact of reporting on traumatic events on relationships. Although theorizing across cases has a long history in qualitative inquiry there are distinctions in narrative methods. Prior theory guides narrative analysis while at the same time the researcher seeks out new insights to augment theory (Riessman, 2008). In addition, sequences are preserved, rather than thematically coding segments as in other approaches such as in grounded theory or phenomenology.

### 5.2 Close Family Relationships in Early Life

All of the Western journalists described close, supportive families in their early years. Anderson described his childhood in England. “I was brought up in the countryside, probably a fairly conventional middle class upbringing with a very happy and loving family actually.” Although this was shaken when his father abruptly left the family for another woman when Anderson was 14 he continued to be very close to his mother and brother and maternal grandparents. The stability and intimacy of these relationships appeared to enable him to adjust to the unexpected departure of his father.

Edward in similar fashion described a pattern of stable, satisfying, enduring relationships beginning in childhood. "I had an idyllic childhood really, in California." He described a particularly close relationship to his mother as a child and recalled an incident in which she arrived just when he needed help in Kindergarten as symbolic of his relationship with his mother.

In kindergarten after school I was riding a tricycle and my shoelace got wrapped around the peddle and I was so stuck to it. And I was crying and there was no teacher around.

And my mom pulled into the parking lot and she came and rescued me. I think that pretty much symbolizes my . . . my relationship with my mom then.

Jason described a similar feeling of safety and security in his early childhood. "It was a very happy childhood." He emphasized the importance of people he cares about being physically present and the sense of security and safety this provided. "I think the fact that my mom was home with me a lot was very positive. It was very, a very positive development and . . . I'd get sick at school or something like that and my dad was just, there . . . I felt very safe." He summed up his childhood by saying "I had a golden childhood I think."

Three of the journalists noted that their parents split up while they were growing up. Each described secure early years which appeared to provide a foundation for them to cope with their parents' divorce. Lilly stated, "I had a very positive family life although my parents separated when I was nine. But I don't really view it as a really difficult thing because I had a very supportive family through it all." After her parents' divorce she stayed with her mother but remained close to both parents and saw her father regularly. The impression was of a person who is optimistic and happy and who enjoys life and people. For example she spoke of her teen years; "My teen years were great. I loved high school. I had lots of friends. I was very involved in all sorts of elements of high school."



One of the purposes of this study was to look at the links that participants made between childhood and adulthood. We see this in Anderson who as noted early also described a secure early childhood but noted that the experience of his father abruptly leaving the family was devastating. However the close relationships with his mother and brother seemed to help him cope with the change. He later reflected on whether his intense love for his children was a way of compensating for that early loss of his own father. "I love being with them. I rush home from work as fast as I can . . . obviously it's possibly to do with having had that . . . losing a father figure maybe and trying to compensate for it."

Jason like Anderson described his parents' divorce as quite difficult but appears to have adjusted. When he was in fifth grade his family moved, his parents divorced not too long after that and his father then married the mother of Jason's best friend so that his best friend became his stepbrother. The impact of his parents' divorce on him was that he stated he withdrew more into books and became a bit less trusting. "Well I know for a fact that that made me a little bit more, kind of wary. . . of people and also . . . a little less outgoing and a little further into books. Sort of much less trusting I guess." At the same time he continued to be close to his best friend, now his stepbrother, a closeness which they have maintained to the present.

The two South Asian journalists also noted being raised in fairly stable homes however both described family life in the context of chaotic communities where violence was normal. Musaid noted that he was raised in a family compound with about 50 family members. Rather than describe his family in general terms as "secure" or "happy," he described the impact of various relationships. He noted that his closest relationships as a child were with woman, especially his grandmother. He recalled when he was a child he would run around town but when he came home "the first person I always go and tell is her . . . of what's happening in

town.” Although he continued to describe his grandmother as the closest person to him throughout his life he described his mother as the one who most shaped his values. He observed growing up how she was kind to the Christian minority who were persecuted and taught him to pray and have faith that God hears. “And my Mom always felt bad and she always supported them and that’s what led me to open a newspaper called Christian and Other Minorities in 95.”

Musaid’s relationship with his father was more volatile. The result was that he would turn to his grandmother for comfort. “My dad was always a tough Dad... strict Dad. Come to the street standing with his “bad boy” even though I wasn’t doing anything. He would beat me up. So all those things led me towards Granny all the time.” In addition he recalled defending his mother against his father when his father was beating his mother.

Mushtaq, the other South Asian journalist highlighted the importance of strong family bonds and the anchor this has provided throughout his life. At the core of this was the feeling of being loved against the backdrop of hardship. “My parents and three sisters loved me a lot. We could not live without each other. Though we lived in a shanty home in a notorious area of Srinagar, Kashmir’s summer capital, but still the family bond was strong.” The influence of his mother in particular shaped who he matured to be. “She would always teach me to be a good human and live for others.” As can be seen in this theme all of the journalists spoke about the importance of early relationships and the influence they had on shaping them as adults. The early lives of the two South Asian journalists were somewhat distinct in that the hardship in their early lives was part of their narrative whereas Western journalists tended to describe a more stable even idyllic childhood.

### *5.3 Family Relationships Central to Well Being in Adult Life*

The Western journalists in this study described stable adult relationships. This appeared to be built on capacity for being in intimate relationships from early years by being raised in stable families. Dane explicitly linked his adult wellbeing to his childhood. He described his early childhood as offering him unconditional love which in his view enabled him to cope with difficulties in his life. He supported this view by contrasting his experience with other journalists who did not have a stable childhood.

I know some very, very, good friends of mine who I know are pretty messed up . . . and I knew them when they were children and they never had unconditional love from their parents. . . everybody loves you but unconditional love is something that I think they never had and I think that I've had that in my life and it's given me the strength to deal with things.

Bill's narrative showed how his closest friendship as a child continued to be a stable, important relationship for him in adulthood. He noted that they still talk regularly. "Just very, very easy to talk to, ah there's nothing to hold back or no fear of offense." Anderson described the impulse he maintained as an adult to recreate positive aspects of his childhood. He described the enduring desire for belonging in a loving environment. "I was brought up in a little village and I love feeling safe and secure in my . . . in a small environment."

Several of the journalists spoke about their close social support network as adults in very unassuming terms almost as if everybody has this or can have it rather than being too conscious of the foundation laid by early family life or their own capacity to maintain healthy relationships. Lilly, for example, in describing her support system as an adult stated "I still have an excellent relationship with Mom and her partner and Dad and his wife . . . And I have a very good

relationship with my in-laws, my husband's parents and his family so ... and then we have a really tight set of really wonderful friends here in Vancouver." She attributed the many friends she has to valuing friendships and being willing to put effort into maintaining them. "Well my husband and I both really value friendships. And we're both very good at um cultivating it and maintaining it."

Again this similar pattern of appearing to take it for granted that one values relationships and can maintain them was seen in Jason's narrative in his flexibility in being able to adapt to changes in relationships and to work out problems. Part of how Jason was able to do this is a willingness to allow others to mend rifts rather than cut them off when he's hurt and his willingness to get help to learn to relate better. He described a rift with his father in his twenties. He credited his father with mending the relationship but seemed to overlook his readiness to accept his father's shift.

He and I ended up reconciling in my mid to late twenties. It was mostly him sort of changing his outlook on how our relationship was going to be and that was very important. And because of that, we've remained very good friends.

What stood out in this theme was the continuity of capacity for intimacy from childhood to adulthood and the tendency to take this for granted. In this next theme we see how participants spoke about how they managed the contrasting parts of their lives, work and personal, while protecting close relationships.

### ***5.3 Juggling Three Relational Spheres: Private Life, Professional Life, Relationships with People They Report About***

As with the first two themes there again were distinctions between Western and South Asian journalists. The two South Asian journalists appeared to have minimal boundaries

between their personal lives, their professional lives and their relationships with those they reported about. They openly looked to their families and friends for support in managing PTS. This was largely because their work was not separate from their personal lives. Trauma affects the whole community including family. Mushtaq described his family's reaction after he was released from being held hostage by a group of government militia with a group of 19 journalists in the late nineties. "When I reached home, my wife and mother were waiting at the gate. I had tears rolling down my face and both my mother and wife cried for hours. We did not sleep that night . . . we talked and talked till the fear vanished." He later expanded on this. He described the environment. "Firefights, explosions in your backyard, crack downs by brute alien forces, blood-spattered streets littered with bodies, abductions and executions, fear and insecurity." He then noted his response. "That is the time when you feel safer among loved ones and that is the time when family members give you psychological security . . . that is, I feel strife makes relationships stronger." He also described how his perspective could become skewed with the constant level of violence that not just he but also his family was exposed to. He told of an incident when separatist militants launched a suicide attack in the building where his wife worked and that she and others were calling for help from a window. "Journalists were rescuing tax employees but to the surprise of my wife I was dictating the story to my colleague in Delhi on my cell phone." He then talked about the impact of this on his relationship both with his wife and his mother and the recognition that he had lost perspective. Part of this he noted is the normalization of violence over time and the non-existent line between professional and personal trauma.

Among the Western journalists there was a deliberate and intentional separation of work life from personal life for all of the journalists. Part of this style of managing life was that they

had the option to do this where the South Asian journalists did not. This appeared to enable them to be able to be immersed in either world and function well. Dane describes the dichotomy of reporting on traumatic events and the impact on human lives and keeping his own personal life as separate and distinct. His wife was also a photojournalist and had a very good friend who was killed in Kosovo. He described negotiating this when they were dating. “And I had always said I don’t want to be a war photographer but if there’s a war there and I’m there I will take pictures but I don’t want to be somebody who’s particularly going to look for it . . . we were trying to make an agreement.” When he went to Afghanistan in 1996 for five weeks she let him know that she didn’t like him being there. “So that in fact was the last time I went to a war . . . again, a war as opposed to a coup or a riot that turns bad.” The separation between his professional and personal life was maintained though not in a rigid way. “I try not to talk about it too much to her obviously, when I get home. But we do have a ten minute conversation where we can get everything out and then we say okay, now what and then we talk about other stuff.” Even here the blurring of the two worlds was managed and somewhat intentional but generally he wanted his family life to be separate. He stated “It takes two days to get back to normal but after that you know, you just . . . I’m living in London and I’m going from A to B and all the kinds of things that normally happen.” For Dane keeping his two worlds separate appeared to enable him to get the most out of both worlds.

Similar to Dane, Anderson described this dichotomy where he lives in two extremely different worlds in even more distinct terms. He noted that he felt compelled to pursue both, the world of family and friends, and the world of trauma, but that he very intentionally kept them separate. He described the contrast between the pull to both extremes.

I was brought up in a little village and I love feeling safe and secure in my . . . in a small environment. And yet on the other hand I've always been drawn to seek out and see and study and report on the most extreme and traumatic and difficult situations possible. . . So I've always felt those dual pulls in my life.

To maintain these two worlds as separate he talked about how he and his wife learned to negotiate and relate in a way that would enable them both to be in relationship yet allow his career. Unlike Dane his wife was not a journalist and so he was even more careful to keep his world of journalism away from home. He described how she supports him to go to places where traumatic events are happening but then copes with it by blocking it out of her mind.

She's been completely brilliant and quite supportive . . . always said . . . "go and do what you want . . . you need to do it." . . . She said "you go to Iraq but I'm not going to sit at home and fret about it all day long" so she would just block it out.

Lilly also kept her professional and private world separate. She reported that her family and friends don't really pursue asking about her experiences. Regarding a very public trial she covered early in her career she noted "both my boyfriend and my friends were supportive but not interested in kind of the gory details but also I usually kept it pretty internal." This continued over the years with her husband. "Unless I offered anything up we rarely, rarely, rarely discussed any kind of details beyond surface level on any of the stories I was working on . . . it's just a system that works fairly well for us." Within her work life Lilly also kept clear boundaries between her colleagues and people who she reported about. At the same time as she saw empathy as essential to good reporting she also believed in maintaining professional distance in her relationships with victims and their family members. "When the verdict comes down on (perpetrator), I can't celebrate with the victims' families because I'm supposed to be impartial."

She noted however that because you are compassionate and because victims may come from circumstances where there is little support or stability they may see you as someone who can support them. “In one case I was the person that the sister of the missing woman called when she found out she had breast cancer because I was the stable person in her life.”

Although Lilly’s style was similar to most of the Western journalists Jarrod, who is the youngest of the journalists, maintained much looser boundaries between his relationships with colleagues and relationships with nationals in the countries where he was reporting. Unlike the other journalists who participated Jarrod was living in the countries where he was reporting rather than going out on assignments but residing in the West. His narrative showed the evolution of his figuring out how to juggle professional journalism, life in the country where he lives on assignment and life in the US when he goes home to visit. He commented on his choice to form friendships with nationals. “I think making friends, loved ones and ties to the countries where you live is one of the best parts about the job. It adds to your understanding of the place. It makes the experiences more rewarding and deep.” At the same time he talked about the difficulties of doing this in a country where there is violence and unrest. “After awhile you wonder who your friends are and why they’re your friends . . . I mean for (nationals) it’s dangerous for them to be friends with foreigners.” For example, he dated a young woman he met in Africa for two and a half years. Although he tried to figure out how to be a foreign journalist and date a citizen of the country he was residing in he found that the two different worlds they came from made the relationship difficult and eventually untenable. He also found that although he formed friendships with people in the countries where he worked his trust in the relationships was also affected by the culture of “distrust and paranoia.”



At the end of Jarrod's two years in this country he found he was having difficulty managing the level of trauma exposure mixed with the culture of distrust and having personal relationships with the people who are traumatized. "When I left I was exhausted mentally so when I got to (country) I had to make an effort to be friends with people and it took me awhile to form close connections with people."

Bill, like the other journalists kept his professional world separate from his personal life. He described how he thinks about when he chooses to talk to his wife or family members or friends about his work experiences. For example whether he talked to his wife or not may depend on his purpose. "Certain things I'll keep from her and it's not because I'm afraid she'll worry too much. It's almost because . . . if I do want to go back to certain places and do more reporting, I don't want her to know exactly what I might be facing." With others he was also selective about what he would say because of how they might respond. For example, he chose not to tell his parents because they would worry and yet enjoyed telling friends who he knew would be interested. "I kind of like to tell my friends and not my family because my parents can't handle it, but my friends and even my wife about some of those close calls. I kind of relish it . . . Because it's exciting. And it's self-aggrandizing." (laughs)

Bill noted that sometimes managing his personal and his work life at the same time could become difficult. For example, this occurred when his work pulled him away to important things and his personal life was also needing his attention. This became very real when his wife suffered a miscarriage just after her father died while Bill was away in Indonesia doing research for a book. "So there were feelings of guilt around that. And just being . . . the separation anxiety I guess. Just not being there." He reflected on how this experience changed him as a person. "It was hard on our relationship as well . . . that's an area that we don't really go to very

much. So we, at least I do, sort of avoid it. So I think there's a sadness there and maybe a bit of a wall there that I've, at least I've put up.”

Of the Western journalists who had partners Jason was somewhat more open to seeing his partner as someone he would talk to about his professional experiences. On the one hand he noted that he was not terribly affected by what he experienced through work but on the other hand did note that both seeing a counsellor and talking to his wife were helpful when needed. At one point he noted that he was becoming overwhelmed by reporting on trauma especially relating to children and had to shift to work that was more interspersed with other topics rather than strictly trauma. This also illustrates that having a separate, healthy personal life at times is not enough to enable one to cope with the amount or degree of trauma one may be exposed to. “And that's why I just came in and told the editors that I had to quit playing the child protective services stuff. I couldn't deal with it anymore. I was having nightmares.” At this point he arranged to decrease the portion of his journalism that was trauma focused which brought balance back to his life. “So that really helped. As soon as I got out of it, I didn't do it on a daily basis, you know, that's when I started realizing, my god, this is just a crazy, crazy pressure on your life. And now when I do go back into it, I'm able to deal with it better from that.”

For all of the journalists who had children this experience increased their desire to keep their personal and professional lives separate. Dane described how having children led to shifting to prioritizing his personal life and keeping it separate because it made him aware of the responsibility of not risking his life which would affect his children.

I went to Sierra Leone. And uh . . . I had a daughter by then. And she was six months old. And it was really heavy, really heavy, that situation and lots of people died and it was . . . I didn't like it at all and in fact I . . . felt very guilty as well . . . and becoming a

father, I really felt I . . . it wasn't just me anymore and my wife. It was me and my daughter.

Anderson described a similar experience in that having children deepened his desire to keep the two worlds separate. "And it did change me a lot in that maybe when my first kid was about three or four I resolved actually to stop . . . to stop going to places where I would personally expose myself to danger." Part of this was after a friend from England pointed out to him how his exposing himself to danger put his children at risk of losing their father.

And I got back from one trip and a friend of mine from England I was talking to said 'I cannot believe you've been to Somalia. You've got a beautiful wife and two children.' And he actually said to me . . . 'you're a selfish bastard.' . . . It really took me aback but it crystallized the change in that it made me wake up to the fact that of course there is an element of selfishness in this . . . if anything happened to me . . . the consequences would be enormous for my wife and kids.

Although Anderson has tried to keep the two worlds separate he noted that at times the two worlds "collided."

I remember one Christmas I was actually in church with the kids on Christmas morning and I got a call from Mogadishu to say that Ethiopian planes had bombed the airport . . . And I had to walk outside with them and take this urgent dictation . . . And I was asking 'Are there dead bodies? What have you seen?' in front of my kids. It was absolutely horrific . . . absolutely horrendous. You know, I couldn't bear those two worlds colliding.

One of the side effects of having children for Anderson was that he noted that his children offer him a side of life that is innocent and untainted. He described how by keeping the

two worlds separate the positive world with family and friends helps to heal or enable him to cope with the heaviness of the world of trauma. “I love getting into the kids’ world. In a sense it sort of restores me in some sense. All this sort of nastiness I’ve really been seeing elsewhere.” This was a similar sense that Lilly described. “It was great to come home from that trial I covered for two years and have two small kids who you know...who just wanted Mommy and everything else would just wash away.”

While journalist tried to keep the trauma separate from their personal lives they found other ways to meet the need for support in managing PTS. The following theme describes how they did this.

### *5.5 Finding Support for Managing Trauma*

Although all of the journalists reported that creating a network of social support through family and friends was important they also noted that the primary people who they talked to about their experiences of trauma were fellow journalists or other professionals who worked in the field of trauma rather than family or friends. Jarrod spoke about choosing to cope with trauma by talking to friends who live in countries where violence is common or colleagues who also report on traumatic events and understand his experience. The shared understanding is what was important.

At least journalists, aid workers, that kind of stuff . . . It’s easier to interact with them because they know all that crap so you don’t have to talk about it or sometimes you swap stores in kind of a collegial kind of ‘oh, yeah, that was crappy.’

It appeared that he for the most part had learned not to talk too much about his experiences when he arrives home to the US. “Occasionally I’ll tell them some stuff . . . but you know . . . you see clearly that people don’t want to hear about that kind of stuff.” In moving

back and forth between these two worlds without integrating them he was able to see both worlds a bit more objectively. “If you’re talking to someone else who’s seen the same stuff it’s normal right. If you’re talking to someone who hasn’t you can recognize the fact that it’s quite f . . . d up.”

Bill also described how he has close relationships through work that he looks to for support in coping with the trauma he’s exposed to. “Colleagues in the field where I was for sure . . . members of the military where I was, they weren’t colleagues but working alongside these people who understand exactly what the situation is and how it can affect people.” Among the journalists Jason was the only one who spoke openly about the importance of therapy in helping him to cope better both in his personal and professional life. “If I hadn’t of gotten therapy, I don’t know if I’d still be in journalism or, I certainly wouldn’t have had as good of a career as I’ve had so far. Because I wasn’t responding to stuff well and I wasn’t seeing things as clearly as I did after I had therapy.”

Several noted that they found their organizations to be very unsupportive in terms of acknowledging the impact of exposure to trauma, and providing adequate support for prevention of PTS and treatment of symptoms. Most spoke of it as assumed that you wouldn’t expect support to come from the organization itself. Bill stated that this is the culture of the organization and that he is concerned that they might think he can’t handle the work.

Most editors are pretty practical people and they just want a good copy, and a lot of it is self censorship on my part because . . . if I’ve felt traumatized, which I have a couple times I don’t want to indicate that because, out of fear basically, people thinking that I can’t handle it or that I’m cracking under pressure.

He described one situation in which he did express the impact of reporting but then regretted it. “So the editors definitely picked up on that right? And then I felt embarrassed and kind of ashamed for having expressed myself emotionally in my work and I kind of decided that I would never do that again.” He referred to why he thought that this situation has developed, that it is both because of cultural expectations that men don’t show emotion and because he thought that readers expect journalists to be able to handle their experience and continue to report in an unbiased, unaffected fashion. “I think there's an expectation that readers have that the journalists will be objective and be able to withstand and just tell it like it is without letting his or her emotions get away with them.”

Jason also described the culture of the journalistic world. He noted that he copes with the impact of reporting on trauma at work by being selective about who he talks to and careful not to rely at all on the organization or management to be supportive. In talking about dealing with a particular situation he noted: “It wasn't the kind of thing you talked about at work. There's a little bit of a . . . oh I guess a machismo kind of culture.” He again brought this up later in greater detail noting how humour can be used to make light of situations rather than acknowledging how truly difficult their experiences may be. He noted that this culture extends beyond the organization to how individuals relate to each other in the newsroom. “But there is a definite, like, culture, where if you are feeling the effects of your work, it's really just like, go have a f . . . ing drink.”

Jason made specific comments about the inadequacy of the resources available to journalists. “The EAP program for newsrooms are really bad, the mental health benefit. They're not intended to deal with the stress of work.” He then noted the impact of having inadequate resources. “But I think part of the burnout of journalism is that if you can't deal with it, at the

end of the day it has a real lasting effect if you can't process the trauma.” While the journalists found ways to get the support they needed in their work they also had a desire to make a difference through their work. This is described in the next theme.

### ***5.6 Making a Difference in Human Lives through Reporting on Trauma***

All of the journalists described wanting to have an impact through journalism. For south Asian journalists this is what brought them into journalism. For Western journalists this appeared to evolve over time. They were initially drawn to reporting on trauma because it was interesting or exciting. Jarrod demonstrated a tendency from his early teens to make reflective, intense, independent choices for his life moving between being shy socially, valuing relationships and yet driven to pursue interests. He was playing high level soccer as a teenager when his athletic career was cut short by a serious knee injury. He described how he then got into journalism. During his recovery he spent a lot of time reading. He read a book written by a journalist who “basically just picked up and went and covered the Bosnian War in the early 90’s . . . .And I thought, ‘wow, that’s kind of what I want to do.’ ” Again, we see this decisiveness, initiative he takes, independent of relationships, in that when he finished college he abruptly decided to go abroad to train as a journalist.

I graduated . . . I . . . didn’t have a job, you know, any marketable skills whatsoever, as you do when you graduate from college . . . . And I just decided f . . . it so I got a plane ticket to (city in East Africa). I emailed some correspondents in (city) and one of the correspondents from (organization) told me “I’ll be there in about five days. Come here and I’ll set you up with an internship in our office.”

Lilly also describes stumbling into journalism. “Well, I went to (university), where we all thought we were God’s gift to the world I think by the time we graduated. And then I got a

job in Toronto making \$16,000 a year essentially as a secretary and figured out there was more to life than that. So ...applied for last minute entry to a journalism program at (University).”

Her first job led her into reporting on crime which then became a constant in her career. What stood out in her narrative was first how her exposure to trauma pushed her to wrestle with her beliefs about human nature and the darker side of life. Her narrative provided a clear example of how journalism provided a way for her to grow in her understanding of human nature and how and why terrible things can happen. She recalled reporting on a horrific murder case in which a young woman was one of the perpetrators.

It was very eye opening quite frankly that someone could be that intrinsically evil. I think I had such a happy upbringing and I had such good friends that it was a bit of a shock . . . A huge...a huge, huge, kind of educational experience.

Although she found she became more wary in interviewing subjects she said that her experience did not alter her ability to continue to trust people she already knew and trusted. Again she found herself wrestling in another case with the tendency of people to be passive in standing up to wrong, to blame or judge victims for their plight and to make assumptions about the causes of things. “It was ...very...eye opening about . . . not even just the evil that he was able to perpetrate but about the people on the farm who clearly knew and didn’t say anything . . . that’s all very difficult to understand.” She noted that it was not just eye opening that people close to the perpetrator did nothing to prevent the murders but also at a societal level people seemed uncaring.

It’s also very difficult to understand how society cared so little for these women who ended up in the downtown Eastside and who ended up going missing and sometimes weren’t reported missing for weeks or months, sometimes even years after they vanished.



One of the things she learned about people is how easy it is to make assumptions about why they are who they are and have done what they've done. "All of a sudden you start to understand that it's a systemic problem and that these women weren't just abandoned by cold hearted parents but that this is a societal issue." Part of what she feels makes her able to do the job well is being empathetic and able to speak for people who haven't received justice or who have been victims of a crime. "I think you also need to care that you are speaking out for people who haven't received justice or people who have been rocked by some violent act. You need to really care that you are presenting a point of view . . . responsibly and fairly."

While Lilly's narrative illustrates how her growing understanding of trauma shapes her desire to make a difference Edward's illustrates the shift in the work as he saw greater opportunities to make change. He initially began reporting on trauma because it was interesting. "I found working on . . . murder cases particularly interesting. So I . . . gravitated towards those sorts of stories." Edward's first experience of war correspondence was in 2006. He noted "it made me want to change my career in that direction, in the direction of kind of doing as much foreign correspondence and war coverage as I could." What appeared to happen for Edward in going to Afghanistan was that it brought together a heightened capacity to use his abilities, knowledge and experience but also a belief that the work he did could bring something positive out of something that was so negative. As a result he began actively pursuing opportunities to go where he could deliberately enact this rather than working with events that happened to occur in the course of his work. "So it was kind of revelatory that once I got there and started doing that work I felt like . . . it was really what used my . . . skills and my character in the . . . sort of maximal way." He noted a shift in his own response to trauma in that whereas in the past he was angered by it he now saw a way to bring something worthwhile from it. This was influenced by

meeting a nurse who was very involved in relief work. For Edward she personified this capacity to actively work to influence the outcomes of trauma for good.

I'd always been angered by the causes of war, the anger, the greed, basically the greed and the selfishness. But she sort of personifies the counter to all that. And . . . it kind of opened up my mind to this whole other world of people who are working on the ground to, combat the effects of what I'd always been so angry about.

Several of the Western journalists described initial anger or frustration at the apparent lack of caring or interest at home about what people in other countries were experiencing. This resolved over time for all of them to become acceptance that people at home were removed and could not relate. Jarrod noted he struggled with whether to try to educate people in the US about the harsher world he knows. Initially he stated he felt angry when he would return home at what appeared to be trivial things that upset people or that people seemed not to be aware of or to care about the suffering in other parts of the world.

When I first did that it used to make me angry, a little angry . . . my experiences are different just because I'm living where I am. And their experiences . . . that doesn't mean mine are better or worse than theirs. So I've slowly come to, to terms with the fact that it's going to be different.

Bill described his own anger about the reactions at home.

The . . . you know, despair of the Kandaharis and Afghanis people, ah, the amount of hardship that they've had to endure, which in turn, you know, makes me think of the sort of hypocrisies in Canada, the complaining and whining that goes on in Canada over relatively trivial matters. So that, that's a frustration . . . dealing with that when I come back because things seem incredibly trivial.

The two South Asian journalist both described getting into journalism and staying in it because they were driven to try to change their world especially their own communities. This passion appeared to be intense from the start, to be constant and to be moved by compulsion to do something about the suffering and injustice. Mushtaq described being 25 when “an anti-India insurgency broke out in 1989.” He stated “I chose to report the conflict honestly and earn out of it.” The following year he became a journalist. The role appeared to give him some sense of power or influence in a helpless, overwhelming situation. He later reiterated that what keeps him in journalism is “my own conflict, my own people and their pain and there was no way out even if I wanted to escape from Kashmir. Every Kashmiri Muslim was a suspect in the rest of India. I decided to stay back and report honestly.” He has experienced many personal losses among people he knows and spoke of the difficulty finding the balance between his professional job as a journalist and his personal role as a resident of Kashmir. “Well, it is hard to grasp just how much it means to work for a media organization if you are reporting from a region in conflict that happens to be your own . . . I lost my friends and relatives due to violence.” He also noted how the violence can become normal something that all of the journalists noted. “With the passage of time I became used to the daily violence, and it turned me insensitive.” He commented on the difficulty of making the best decisions when the stress levels rise.

Musaid noted a similar experience of being drawn into journalism because of his own experiences of trauma and seeing the suffering of his own people due to corruption, frequent violence and systemic social problems. “I had no plans to get into journalism school . . . So basically trauma on me, domestic abuses, women violations, human rights violations, police torture to the innocent citizens. That’s what took me into it.” The desire to make an impact on

society started at a very young age for Musaid. He recalled being a boy of seven years old and being slapped by a police officer who noticed that Musaid was watching him take a bribe.

Again we see the interaction for Musaid between his own experience of trauma connected to his determination to expose corruption. At 19 he was imprisoned for reporting on a family that was trying to force their daughter in-law into prostitution. “I was shocked, horrified. They beat me up. That was the time when I lost my hearing in my left ear.” This experience rather than leading to giving up gave him more direction as to what to focus on. “I got to do something to . . . write about the police capture so I end up going more towards doing crime reporting, more towards digging stories and building my skill. It was human right issues.” At the same time as reporting on trauma came out of deep conviction Musaid also noted that it provided a source of great happiness. “I like doing this. I enjoy it. . . . I know everybody wants to get rich and things like that . . . I believed from that day on, the job is what you like doing, what gives you excitement.” It was also a source of healing. “I’ve been publishing this newspaper in Victoria for the past four five bi-weekly editions and I go every time it’s printed, I sit there and smell the ink. It’s healing.”

While journalism provided a way for the participants to make a difference in people’s lives they all noted that their work impacted their relationships in different ways. The next theme describes this.

### ***5.7 Impact of Reporting on Traumatic Events on Relationships***

The sixth theme that emerged was patterns of how relationships of journalists were impacted by reporting on traumatic events. Although the western journalists reported PTS at different times in their careers they in general stated that they were not disabled by reporting on trauma. They used various strategies to manage the effects of trauma and to maintain

relationships in spite of the traumatic exposure. Edward, for example, did not deny being affected but gained distance from his own emotional reactions by minimizing the importance of his feelings in comparison to those of the victims and relatives of victims. “Their grief is so profound that it's pretty easy to tell myself that . . . I'm not in a position to be feeling hurt by it.” He was more similar to the South Asian journalists in that he had suffered significant traumas in his life. His best friend died when he was sixteen, his father at age 19 and his mother when he was 21. While he thought about the trauma of others in a way that could give him some distance he did not minimize his feelings when they were related to his own losses. “And all that kind of stuff, no matter what effect it has on me, which is usually fairly minimal, it pales in comparison to the trauma I've had from people dying and . . . my break up from my second wife.”

All of the journalists noted that over time trauma became normalized to them. Some of the journalists initially found it exciting. They were drawn to the adrenaline of reporting on traumatic events. Anderson describes it as follows:

the novelty . . . to start with it was very vivid and very fascinating and very exciting and then the novelty sort of wears off a little bit and it became almost a way of life and . . . most of the people I was living with or hanging out with were doing similar type things so there was a strange sort of . . . almost normality.

Bill also spoke about being drawn to traumatic events. “People talk about adrenaline junkies and I actually think there's some truth to that. It doesn't mean being reckless . . . there was never any sense of being reckless.”

In contrast the South Asian journalists were profoundly impacted by reporting on traumatic events. Both had experienced multiple personal traumas and had family members that also experienced traumatic events. Unlike the Western journalist they also reported more

significant symptoms of PTS. Musaid had a pattern of desiring close relationships and yet finding that they are difficult to maintain when trauma has such an impact on your life and your drive is trying to relieve suffering through your work. His own struggles and his passion in his work appear to put strain on relationships. In Pakistan this theme was overt in that his work spilled over into his personal relationships because of open corruption and brutality and the threat placed on people close to anyone who exposes it. In Canada this appeared in trying to develop relationships and yet struggling to manage both fulfilling his passion in work and building healthy relationships. In reflecting on the 7-8 years that he had been separated from his family in Pakistan he remarked. “Very tough. I end up in relationships . . . that I was not ready... made a baby. . . I did not realize how much it could impact my journalism life. And how much they will suffer because of this and how difficult it is to understand me...emotionally.” You could see the conflict he had in his drive to report on trauma and yet the desire to have intimacy. At the same time he described himself as unstable psychologically. “I was traumatized mentally if you ask me uh . . . even as of today I'm a little bit lost person kind of thing, not stable mentally . . . emotional issues because of those things I've been through in my life.” Part of this pattern is that in his work in Pakistan it was impossible to protect his family from the consequences of exposing corruption. He referred to going into hiding in Pakistan after being released from prison and his father and brother then being picked up by the police.

Although Musaid described support in his life in Pakistan he noted that he has limited support in Canada. He describes a distant and unstable relationship with his common-law partner and noted that he stays with her for the sake of his daughter. “But for the sake of the child I want to make this relationship work. Cause I know If I was separated that's the only person who's close to me. I would go back to the ditch. Then I can never come out.”

In this theme of juggling his work and personal life he also vacillated between the great love he felt for his daughter and the pull to being absorbed in his work. “I’m a very loving father. I miss her very much . . . adore her... but when it comes to like working you know . . . I kind of ignore her. . . And I feel guilty.” This was similar to Anderson’s experience where he described the two worlds personal and professional “colliding” and also to Mushtaq who felt caught between the two worlds. For Mushtaq, who still lived in a violent community the impact of his work on personal relationships was significant. “The strain of seeing the impact of the news I report on loved ones, friends and neighbours and the awful dilemma that stems from having to choose at times between being with your family and covering the story.”

While Mushtaq described how his work negatively impacted significant relationships he also described the process through which family relationships grew stronger through coping with trauma. This first resulted from the impossibility of separating personal from professional life. He stated “amid all this trouble the relations only give you strength while reporting in Kashmir, where detentions, kidnapping, beatings and killings, is all in a day’s work for many working journalist reporting their own conflict in a hostile environment.” He provided the specific example of being held hostage for 18 hours with 19 other journalists by government militia. He noted that his nervousness was about his mother and wife and wondering if they had heard about it? “We were at the mercy of brain washed killing machines. The love of my wife and mother gave me strength till we were rescued.” He then described returning home. “When I reached home, my wife and mother waiting at the gate, I had tears rolling down my face and both my mother and wife cried for hours. We did not sleep that night . . . we talked and talked till fear vanished.” He then described how relationships change through such experiences. “ Incidents like this have always made my relations stronger and the insecurity, I have observed, strengthens

the bonds.” The suffering drove them together and provided some measure of psychological safety in an overwhelming situation.

Several of the journalists described being particularly impacted when reporting on people most similar to their loved ones. For example several were deeply affected by reporting on children and noted that they reminded them of their own children and affected their relationships with their children. Dane described this.

And so she’s very similar . . . and I took a very, very moving and yet beautiful picture . . . we’re talking of this girl and the pain she was in and I had this feeling that it really was, I just felt so bad. I could really relate to that . . . and my daughter.

Lilly described a similar experience when reporting on a child the age of her daughter. “I suspect, the lasting effect of covering that case with my daughter being the same age as the victim I’m a very, very protective mother. And it drives my daughter who’s eight, almost nine, it drives her crazy.” She, like Dane noted how reporting on the suffering of other children can make it harder to keep the two worlds separate.

Another way in which journalists noted the impact of reporting on trauma was that it increased their appreciation of family and loved ones. Anderson described being close to his wife and the relationship being strengthened by her support for him when his work would pull him away for periods. “You know I felt a real debt of gratitude to her for not having made me feel guilty . . . not having made me feel bad about it . . . I felt, actually felt great loving and gratitude towards her for that.”

Edward reflected on how he was changed by these experiences. “I’ve thought about that . . . quite a bit and, it was sort of one of the first things that made me . . . more of a worrier. You know, more prone to worrying. That is sort of characteristic of my personality and character . . .



Scared about losing people I care about.” This may be in part why he drew close to people, that it’s important to him to keep people that matter close in his life. At the same time again we see the capacity to do this. He then noted that he and his brother didn’t really talk about the deaths of their parents until they were in their mid thirties. “We didn’t talk about it but we spent a lot more time together. It felt good for both of us to be together. . . we pretty much spent as much time as possible together . . . it was comforting that way.”

Bill described a somewhat similar pattern in that when life became challenging he would forge ahead and focus on what is positive in relationships. During the first years of working as a journalist, he continued to find life very stressful, mainly because of his expectations of himself. He managed the stress by putting energy into developing enjoyable relationships. “I had a good group of peers, lots of fun . . . colleagues who I had a really good time with. We were all young and sort of in the same boat, so . . . those were, you know, we had good times.”

Although their narratives unfolded in distinct ways this theme illustrated how all of the journalists identified ways in which their important relationships were impacted by reporting on traumatic events in their work.

## **5.8 Summary**

In this chapter the nine participants’ narratives were presented. Although the narrative summaries cannot fully represent the detail, emotional content, and at times contextual information of the interviews the participants did have the opportunity to review the narratives and to make changes and were satisfied with the final summaries as a reflection of their relational experience. As a result of the cross case thematic analysis, six themes emerged. The results were reviewed by two experts in the field of trauma and post traumatic stress who concurred with the findings.

The cross case themes presented include close family relationships in early life, this pattern of family being central to well being in adult life, juggling the worlds of work and personal life, finding support for managing trauma, making a difference in human lives through reporting on trauma, and the impact of reporting on trauma on important relationships. There were some distinctions between the seven Western journalists and the two South Asian journalists. The South Asian journalists entered journalism because they felt compelled to report on trauma in order to influence change in their society whereas Western journalists often fell into reporting on trauma incidentally and then saw the pull towards it grow over time along with the increasing desire to make a difference. In addition to leaning on colleagues for support South Asian journalists also looked to their family members. This appeared to be because they lived in unstable environments and family members were also exposed to trauma. When one of the South Asian journalists moved to Canada the distinction between professional and personal life became clearer and more intentional. All of the journalists reported being raised in stable, nurturing homes. They also described close healthy relationships throughout their lives, However, the two South Asian journalists described being raised in communities where corruption and violence was common and talked about the impact this has on their own sense of well being. They reported more symptoms of PTS and described fewer close relationships as adults.

Several of the Western journalists described initially feeling angry when they would return from the field at the apparent lack of interest and care about what others in the world suffered. Each of these also described coming to terms with this by recognizing that Westerners live in a very different reality and that other parts of the world may not be on people's minds. Several of the journalists described backing off from reporting on trauma over time in that they

became more selective about where they would go and how much they would do. This appeared to be related to having children and to shifting views of their roles and what was important for them.

## 6 Discussion

*It is through story that we gain context and recognize meaning. Reclaiming story is part of our birthright.*

~Robert Atkinson

### 6.1 Introduction

My initial intent in choosing to conduct research on journalists who report on trauma was to explore a population that is exposed to trauma through their work in part because of my own work as a therapist who specializes in working with traumatized people. Journalists were a fascinating group to study because of their unique role as witnesses and spokespersons. They were also a group with whom I was unfamiliar. I was grateful with all of their involvement at their candour and thoughtful reflection and that they allowed very personal stories to be included in this work. My own observations of what they do in relationships to help manage the stress of what they do professionally has increased my understanding of healthy and often unconscious ways that people manage traumatic stress. While other professionals who are exposed to trauma typically work in their own communities (firefighters, police, medical professionals) most of the journalists in this study followed the story which for the majority led to extensive travelling, often to many other parts of the world. It was their career choice to pursue journalism and exposure to traumatic events through their work that linked them together for this particular study.

The nine participants in this study shared their experiences of being in relationships across their lives from birth to present and how this relates to exposure to trauma. Their stories illustrate their capacity to adapt to different environments and to manage complex networks of relationships while living often in distinct environments. The Life Story interview method

provided a way for readers to observe how their relationships and the ways they relate evolved over time and continue to evolve. Their range of experiences and willingness to be open gave us a window into the intensity, heartache, beauty, gratitude and joy that can be part of relationships especially when one intentionally puts themselves in a position to come face to face with the most intense of human experiences. The participants, although varied in background In this chapter I first discuss implications of this research for theory related to Post Traumatic Stress, risk factors for PTSD, attachment/relational theory and social support for trauma exposure. This is followed by discussion of implications for practice including organizational changes and treatment recommendations. I then discuss implications for future research and ethical considerations. I close this chapter with limitations of this study.

## ***6.2 Implications for Theory***

### ***6.2.1 Post Traumatic Stress Disorder***

The participants in this study from Western nations reported few current symptoms of post traumatic stress although some acknowledged that there have been periods in the past following reporting on highly traumatic situations when they experienced more symptoms. In a study by Feinstein (2003) he noted that five of the twenty two male war journalists interviewed had fathers in the military or police force with whom they described difficult relationships. All recalled childhoods that were discordant and painful and saw this as influencing the direction of their career choice. This was quite distinct from the journalists interviewed for this study. As a group they generally described happy, secure childhoods and the majority did not link their experience of childhood to their career choice. They became interested in journalism and then in the course of career ended up reporting on traumatic events. None reported having a father who was either in the police force or military. The purpose of this study was to look at relationships

from birth to present. Many journalists who initially expressed interest in participating dropped out when they understood that they would have to describe relationships throughout their lives. Thus it is unlikely that the participants in this study are representative of journalists who report on trauma as a whole. The two participants from South Asian nations reported many more trauma symptoms and greater psychological difficulties in general. Of these one had immigrated to Canada seven years prior to participating and thus was removed geographically from the frequent trauma he was exposed to in his country of origin. The journalist who was still living in South Asia reported significant ongoing symptoms and distress.

Of note in the criteria for PTSD described in the DSM IV-R is exposure to overwhelming events in which the person is completely powerless and helpless to protect themselves (American Psychiatric Association, 2000; Herman, 1992). Although journalists can be exposed to horrific events capacity to protect themselves and to choose what to face is to some degree built into their profession. In this study it was notable that symptoms increased as exposure crossed from being restricted to their professional life to entering into their personal lives. For example Mushtaq who reported the highest number of symptoms described his family members as continually being exposed to trauma in their community. This was also true for Musaid. Jarrod expressed greater distress at what he had been exposed to than the other Western journalists but he also pointed out that unlike the others he was living where he worked and this was frequently in very unstable countries so the line between personal and professional life became blurred.

A number of journalists in this study described the process of choosing when and to what degree to report on trauma. Jason, for example, described how in recent years he had pulled back from reporting on so much trauma in order to bring more balance to his life. "I just came in and told the editors that I had to quit reporting on the child protective services stuff. I couldn't

deal with it anymore. I was having nightmares. About the..some of the images from the last one.” Both he and Jarrod noted that when they were removed from the intensity of trauma they were able to gain perspective. “As soon as I got out of it, I didn't do it on a daily basis, you know, that's when I started realizing, my god, this is just a crazy, crazy pressure on your life. And now when I do go back into it, I'm able to deal with it better from that.”

One of the characteristics of PTSD is a shift in core beliefs. These include disruption to core beliefs that the world is generally good and meaningful, the self is worthy and people are generally well-meaning (Brewin, 2003). A number of the journalists in this study commented that exposure to human generated trauma opened their eyes to the evil that people can do to one another. “It was very eye opening quite frankly that someone could be that intrinsically evil.” Traumatic events can shatter these beliefs as events occur that appear random, people behave in ways that are monstrous, and one cannot always protect themselves from trauma nor move on from it. Again this was only true of the Western journalists as the two South Asian journalists were exposed to human generated trauma while growing up. Their beliefs about the world incorporated trauma as part of life from childhood. What was interesting was that the Western journalists were able to create and be part of a stable home life that was distinct from their professional life. There was no denial about how dark life can be but they had learned to leave work at work and come home to enjoy family life in a more stable environment. One might think this could create cognitive dissonance in trying to shut work out and live as if the world is a safe place when at home. However, the journalists appeared to have accepted that life can be both traumatic and at peace in different parts of their world and its okay to move back and forth between the two while living vitally in each.

The literature describes specific changes that can occur through traumatic experiences. Posttraumatic shame and guilt related to one's role in the traumatic experiences are common and can be debilitating (Lipton, 1994). For journalists their role as witnesses can produce feelings of shame related to being a bystander observing the suffering of others. Andrew described this experience in his trip to Haiti following the Haiti earthquake: “. . . almost wondering why on earth we were there as well . . . almost a sense of . . . felt disgust at being there actually.” Wilson (2006) speaks to the self-recrimination that people can experience through guilt about their role in traumatic events. This was seen both among Western and South Asian journalists. Jarrod described his regret that he did not interview a young woman in Africa who had been burned with acid and wanted to talk about it. “I’ve always felt bad, I mean because that was part of the reason I got into a story . . . I mean if I just sat down with her for ten minutes.” At times journalists also spoke about losing perspective in making decisions about what to report. This was true for both South Asian journalists who described how normal it was for injustice and abuse to occur. Mushtaq’s example of dictating a report by phone about a terrorist bombing while his wife is in the building needing help illustrates the impact on chronic exposure to trauma where one’s perspective can become skewed.

Van der Kolk (1987) notes that regardless of the source of trauma the human response is consistent and universal. Although this is true, the clear distinction between the response to trauma by Western journalists and the two South Asian journalists demonstrates the complexity of human response and the many variables that affect one’s reaction. Although all of the journalists spoke about trauma becoming somewhat normalized the distinction for the two South Asian journalists was that traumatic experiences were also normal within their personal lives, historically for both and currently for Mushtaq who continues to reside in Pakistan. Musaid who



had immigrated to Canada lives in much safer conditions but described the long term impact of traumatic experience. “Even as of today I’m a little bit lost person kind of thing, not stable mentally . . . emotional issues because of those things I’ve been through in my life like different incidents, like everything started from my writing experience, and beaten up, and imprisonment and my friend getting killed and countrymen suffering.”

As noted in the literature review a number of related constructs are used to describe exposure to persons suffering the effects of trauma, including secondary traumatic stress (Arvay, 2001; Buchanan et al., 2007; Stamm, 1995), vicarious traumatization (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995), burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2008; National Center for PTSD, n.d.), and compassion fatigue (Figley, 2002, 1995). I suggested in the literature review that the distinctions are artificial in that symptoms of PTS resulting from exposure to traumatic events are universal and consistent (van der Kolk, 1987) and that whether the exposure is through being involved in an event, witnessing an event, or hearing about an event may be irrelevant. Journalists may be exposed to a range of degrees of exposure from being told about events, to witnessing events, to being involved in responding to victims, to their own lives being threatened by, for example, being attacked or held hostage. It is difficult to look at any one event as discreet and thereby categorize their experience as primary or secondary stress as most often for journalists their experience may involve both. This was true in the experience of both Western and South Asian journalists in this study. The range of exposure to trauma from listening to the stories of others from home to being imbedded with soldiers and under constant threat highlights the importance of using a framework to understand their experience that focuses on symptoms and impact rather than the nature of exposure to trauma.

Studies of journalists speak to the unspoken beliefs among journalists that psychological distress reflects weakness (Matloff, 2004; Ricchiardi, 2001). In this study, most journalists tended not to speak directly about the lack of support they received from their organizations. Others spoke in a manner that assumed not to expect the support. This was true for almost all of the journalists. Western journalists made a point of talking about how the trauma did not affect them too much, as if greater support was unnecessary or they had found other sources for support. They focused on the need for support being met by fellow journalists and other professionals who are exposed to trauma. Bill focused more on societal expectations than on organizational expectations. “I think there's an expectation that readers have that the journalists will be objective and be able to withstand and just tell it like it is without letting his or her emotions get away with them.” Jason was the one journalist who openly described the lack of support in journalistic organizations for traumatized employees. “The EAP program for newsrooms are really bad, the mental health benefit. They're not intended to deal with the stress of work.” Although changes most certainly need to be made in the type of support provided by organizations the results of this study suggest that while journalists look to colleagues as a place to vent they find a great source of support in having a separate personal life that is satisfying and separate. It suggests that one of the ways organizations can support journalists is to value the private lives of journalists and to find ways to promote well being outside of work. Several of the journalists indicated that being able to go home to a separate life was therapeutic and restorative.

The two South Asian journalists openly described difficulty managing their symptoms and the psychological effect of exposure to so much trauma. Musaid was also clear about not expecting any kind of support from news organizations in Pakistan. Journalists also spoke about

how news organizations tidy up the news to make it palatable for readers. Musaid described this situation in Pakistan. “There’s a lot of bloody pictures we, unfortunately, when I say ‘we’ means media, there in the Eastern, East part of the world.” Further, journalists are often restricted in what they can talk about while crimes are in court proceedings until the verdict comes out. Lilly for example spoke of not being able to speak about the details of killings by a serial killer for a number of years. “It was those years of knowing terrible things that were under a publication ban that I could never publish and shouldn’t really even talk about. Those were the tough years.” Both of these factors may influence the freedom journalists experience to be open about the impact of trauma exposure as the disconnect between the truth and what the public sees may make it appear that admitting PTS would be an overreaction rather than a normal response to horrific events.

Studies show that war journalists in particular experience high levels of substance abuse, marital problems, and health concerns (Feinstein, 2003; Feinstein, Owen, & Blair, 2002). This was not consistent with those who participated in this study. The participants in this study described generally healthy marriages, few health problems and denied excessive alcohol or substance use to cope, although several noted that they had periods where they were drinking too much and then intentionally slowed down. Again many more journalists expressed interest in participating than followed through. Two journalists openly admitted a reluctance to talk about their personal history and chose not to participate. Many journalists backed out without giving a reason when they received the consent form which clearly delineated the purpose of the study. The key issue appeared to be the requirement that they speak candidly about their childhood and adolescence and about personal relationships.

One of the factors consistent in the interviews conducted by Feinstein, Owen, and Blair (2002) with war journalists was the common tendency to intentionally pursue opportunity to be exposed to trauma. This was very true for the Western participants in this study. Most spoke openly about the pull to traumatic events. Anderson's comment illustrates this. "I've always been drawn to seek out and see and study and report on the most extreme and traumatic and difficult situations possible." However Western journalists also intentionally kept their world of reporting separate from their families and personal lives. As Lilly noted: "I like keeping it separate." The two South Asian journalists appeared to naturally incorporate their personal lives and support system into their professional lives. Mushtaq describes the extreme of this after he was released from being held hostage for 19 hours. "When I reached home, my wife and mother waiting at the gate. I had tears rolling down my face and both my mother, wife cried for hours. We did not sleep that night . . . we talked and talked till fear vanished." Not only was there the impossibility of keeping his work life separate he intentionally turned to family as a way to process his experience. Although this study did not look specifically at cultural and other influences clearly this is important to understanding the differences between the ways that these Western and South Asian journalists managed PTS.

Although the research indicates that recovery from trauma is facilitated by having positive social supports and being able to talk about one's experiences (Forbes & Roger, 1999; Foy, Siprelle, Rueger, & Carroll, 1984; Harvey, Orbuch, Chwalisz, & Garwood, 1991; Keane, Scott, Chavoya, Lamparski, & Fairbank, 1985; King, King, Fairbank, Keane, & Adams, 1998; Martin, Rosen, Durand, Knudson, & Stretch, 2000; Pennebaker & O'Heeron, 1984) I found only one study that looks at the strategies adopted to do this (Buchanan & Keats, 2011). In this study the Western journalists did look for a support system to help them manage the effects of

exposure to trauma. They consistently said this included colleagues and other professionals who were exposed to trauma. They intentionally did not tend to talk to their families about their experiences. Their families were a core source of support but home provided a place that was distinct, untainted and provided a place that they could go to where life was “normal.” Although the literature talks about different kinds of support I did not find any studies that looked at the dynamics of how journalists or other trauma workers structure their lives to create places to vent (with colleagues and friends through work) and places to rejuvenate (with family and friends).

### ***6.2.2 Risks factors for PTSD***

In considering the two meta-analyses of risk factors for PTSD (Brewin, Andrews, & Valentine, 2000; Ozer, Best, Lipsey, & Weiss, 2008) the narrated experiences of the journalists in this study show consistency with the outcomes of both meta-analyses. Brewin and colleagues in their analysis of 77 studies (Brewin, Andrews, & Valentine) included 14 factors with somewhat stronger effects found for factors operating during or after the trauma than for pretrauma factors, for example, trauma severity, lack of social support, and additional life stress. Ozer, Best, Lipsey, and Weiss in their meta-analysis of 68 studies of PTSD found seven predictors that were all significant with the strongest predictor being peritraumatic dissociation. Both meta-analyses reported that social support was one of the strongest predictors. What neither analysis clarified was the type of support and how it mediates risk for PTSD. The journalists in this study described stable childhoods with no reported history of personal or family psychiatric problems. What is consistent is the acknowledgement among them of few symptoms of PTSD and that they felt that they had the capacity to cope with the traumatic events experienced. Although the traumas covered by the journalists were in cases horrific, their involvement as unbiased witnesses likely mediated the impact of the trauma as it would give

them a level of control not afforded the immediate victims. Several journalists commented on the most difficult part of covering trauma being awareness of the suffering of those left behind by the victim, for example the family members of murder victims. And the more closely the victims reminded them of people they knew, for example, their child, the greater the impact of the trauma. The role of journalists in most cases enabled them to prepare for trauma exposure, and to manage the distance they needed to report on the trauma. The journalists in this study described multiple close relationships in their lives and having close relationships throughout their lives. Thus, they appeared to have capacity to build relationships which would enable them to use their support system to manage stress. Again what was highlighted in this study was that the social support does not necessarily need to be at all related to the trauma. For example all of the journalists who had children spoke about the power of children to bring joy in life and to rejuvenate. They all expressed being extremely careful about their children not being exposed to conversations or knowledge of their work. As Anderson described it “their world is just such a happy, simple value based world and it’s been a wonderful anchor from all this other craziness.”

### ***6.2.3 Attachment Theory/Relational Theory***

Although relational theory about human development is more consistent with a narrative approach attachment theory is worth commenting on as most of the research that examines relational concerns approaches relationships from an attachment perspective. The results of this study will first be explored from an attachment theory perspective and then more broadly from a relational perspective. As noted previously all of the journalists described stable early childhoods. The foundational work of early attachment theorists (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1959; Cassidy & Shaver, 2008) would understand this as providing capacity for emotion regulation in response to how emotions are responded to, shared, communicated about,

and regulated within significant relationships (Cassidy, 2008; Schore, 1996; Tronick, 1989). Journalists described particular incidents as children in which their parent had responded in a manner that made them feel secure. Several used phrases about feeling “safe and secure” as a child. The absence in this study of journalists who did not have stable early childhoods is unfortunate as it does not allow exploration of the role of social support in their lives as adults and consideration of how this is linked to early socialization. Charuvastra & Cloitre (2008) note that in early relationships over time an internal working model develops which guides an individual as to what to expect relationally, when and from whom they can expect help during times of distress and difficulty. Studies indicate that disorganized attachment can result in vulnerabilities to trauma, difficulty self reflecting and problems with reciprocal trust (Forrest, 2001; Wilson, 2006) which can persist into adulthood. Jarrod provides an example of how exposure to trauma can lead to vulnerability and instability in relationships and yet underlying capacity for relationship previously developed re-emerges to facilitate restoration to more relational homeostasis. “When I left (African country) I was exhausted mentally so when I got to (African country) I had to make an effort to be friends with people and it took me awhile to form close connections with people. Just because I couldn’t um...I couldn’t (unclear) death more. I was just kind of so spent from (African country)... and I’m starting to get over that now just recently in the last six months where I feel more like myself.”

Developmental consequences of child maltreatment by caregivers include psychological maladjustment, and vulnerability in facing stressful life events (Tummala-Narra, Liang, & Harvey, 2007; Wilson, 2006). It is interesting that in the two meta-analyses of risk factors for PTSD (Brewin, Andrews, & Valentine, 2000; Ozer, Best, Lipsey, & Weiss, 2008) factors prior to the trauma such as psychiatric history, reported childhood abuse, family psychiatric history

and previous trauma were significant but less so than factors during and after the trauma such as peritraumatic dissociation, trauma severity and lack of social support. Viewed from an attachment perspective one would expect that social factors prior to the trauma would be closely associated with social support after the trauma which would influence risk for PTSD. What is interesting is that the more significant factors are factors during and after the trauma including social support which does not appear to be necessarily strongly linked to early attachment capacity and adult capacity for forming and sustaining healthy relationships. This is also in contrast to the most commonly held explanation for the development of PTSD, the stress diathesis model in which it is the interaction between the current stressor and predisposing factors that result in vulnerability to PTSD (Harvey & Yehuda, 1999). Studies support that affective and social disturbances seen in children persist into adulthood, resulting in problems with emotion-regulation, social relationships, and increased risk for mental disorders such as PTSD (Hyman, Gold, & Cott, 2003). In this study the link was clearly present as the participants reported healthy early attachments and capacity as adults to use their social support system to help them maintain psychological stability. This suggests that predisposing factors such as early attachment style may render one vulnerable to PTSD, however emphasis in organizational support and treatment for preventing and treating PTSD should be on developing social support and increasing capacity to use social support. The lack of clear link between family history, prior adjustment and social support following trauma may also indicate that people who have social support and are therefore less at risk of developing PTSD may have also learned to use social support despite early childhood attachment problems. This gap in the literature has been previously noted in that although abuse in childhood produces consistent points of vulnerability in functioning across the lifespan it is not known how stable these patterns are in individuals



(Charuvastra & Cloitre, 2008). It is known that essential to recovery from PTSD in adults is relational repair, the survivor's ability to form safe and meaningful relationships with others (Tummala-Narra, Liang, & Harvey, 2007; Wilson, 2006).

As noted in the literature review relational theory was presented as a perspective that is more consistent with a social constructivist stance and the narrative approach on which this study is based. This is because it challenges the individualistic position of attachment theory which sees identity formation as an individual process and shifts to a relational perspective of how identity is formed as a process that is continuously informed by relationships with the goal of growing ability to create mutually enhancing relationships (Bergman, 1991). Relational theory also moves beyond attachment relationships to considering the many other factors that influence relational capacity such as cultural, history, gender or race (Jordan, 1989; 2001). The distinctions between the social worlds of the Western journalists and the two south Asian journalists highlights the importance of considering the many other factors that may muddy interpretation of results. Although all nine journalists described close families in early childhood there were differences in culture, race, amount of trauma exposure, and prior history of trauma.

Relational theory sees isolation as the main source of human suffering and that healing and growth develop out of human connection contributing to meaning and wellbeing (Jordan, 1994; 2001). What was consistent among all of the journalists was the movement towards others to address their experience of exposure to trauma, whether it was colleagues or families all participants noted the importance of talking about their experience to others who would care about them and understand their experience. Growth enhancing relationships are characterized by mutual intersubjectivity and empathy which can lead to increased empowerment, worth and sense of connection (Miller, 1986; Jordan 1986).

Bergman (1991) explored the role of cultural and social influence on male relational style. She points out that for developing males a process of disconnection from the mother occurs starting at about age three and is influenced by social and cultural pressure toward dominant male power and pressure to achieve. Although attachment theory would see this as a break from the mother relational theory sees it as a shift from a mutually empathic relationship and a relational way of being. In this study a number of the participants spoke about expectations of journalists that they be able to manage the impact of the trauma they are exposed to, of a machismo culture in the newsroom, and of a lack of support from the organization for managing trauma. Bill describes this; “I don't want to . . . indicate that I've . . . if I've felt traumatized, which I have a couple times . . . because, out of fear basically, people thinking that I can't handle it or that I'm cracking under pressure.” This is consistent with previous studies on journalists (Feinstein, 2003; Bolton, n.d., National Centre for PTSD). What relational theory suggests is that this is not just in professions where there is a felt expectation that particularly men can manage the effects of trauma but rather the product of broader social and cultural expectations. Gilligan (1982) identifies this as gender norms that develop through socialization in which women are socialized while men desire it and yet more easily use strategies such as humour or physicalizing it to make it more comfortable. Bill's comment reflects the discomfort that men may feel in expressing emotion particularly in public domains.

The clear distinction in this study between Western and Eastern responses to trauma provides some support for the notion that while Western society emphasises the individual, the separate self, which can promote a non-mutual pattern, many non Western cultures emphasise the group, attending more to relationships (Jordan1994). While Western journalists tended to manage trauma on their own, finding support in relating to fellow journalists but keeping their

personal lives separate and distinct, the two South Asian journalists responded to trauma collectively by dealing with it within the family unit and together. As noted earlier this was likely in part due to the fact that family members were also traumatized but is likely also influenced by cultural discourses about how to deal with stress.

#### ***6.2.4 Social Support and Trauma***

The research on social factors related to managing exposure to trauma has looked at different aspects of how social support can mediate one's ability to cope with trauma. What this study added to the literature is a perspective of how people think about relationships and how they structure social relationships to manage exposure to trauma. This study provides some evidence to support the research that indicates the likelihood of contracting PTSD is influenced by the age at which the traumatization occurs (Maecker, Schutzwahl, & Solomon, 1999). Studies of relationships among soldiers show age dependent changes in the depth and duration of relationships with fellow soldiers (van der Kolk, 1987) with soldiers who enter the service after adolescence having longer lasting more meaningful relationships. In addition younger soldiers were more likely to develop PTSD. Jarrod the youngest of the journalists described the least stable and enduring friendships. He had lots of friends but did not describe a set of relationships that ran through his life wherever he is. He reflected on how he had responded earlier to facing multiple traumatic experiences in saying "sometimes I wonder if I was just young . . . too young to go there." This is not to say that stable, enduring relationships would not become more central in his life as he ages. Anderson for example in contrast described drifting from important relationships then returning to them later in life as he realized the importance and value of them. "Some friends and family from the early years sort of remerged. I felt a real sort of . . . in my

thirties I felt a real sense of . . . perhaps a sort of realigning and prioritizing and realizing that things I left behind at home that were very good and very valuable.”

It is known that social support contributes to increased well-being and health whether or not a traumatic event has occurred which in this study suggests that part of why particularly the Western journalists were doing well psychologically is because they had strong social support prior to, during, and after exposure to trauma. Social support can also serve as a buffer when facing a traumatic event (Amen et al., 1998; Black, 1993; Maercker, Schutwohl, & Solomon, 1999; Paton & Meyer, 2006; Van Breda, 1999) which for journalists would help them cope when facing trauma. This was true for all of the journalists including the two South Asian journalists. Mushtaq noted “But amid all this trouble the relations only give you strength while reporting in Kashmir, where detentions, kidnappings, beatings and killings, is all in a day's work for many working journalists reporting their own conflict in a hostile environment.” Although a support network is important to preventing the development and maintenance of symptoms of PTSD people often resist social involvement because of fear, shame, and distrust of others (Lipton, 1994; van der Kolk, 1987b). This was certainly evident among the Western journalists. The two South Asian journalists however were very open and direct about admitting fear, vulnerability and distress. Mushtaq again stated “When I reached home, my wife and mother waiting at the gate. I had tears rolling down my face and both my mother, wife cried for hours. We did not sleep that night . . . we talked and talked till fear vanished.”

Ullman (1999) reviewed empirical studies of social support and adult female sexual assault victims to examine the effect of types of social support on physical and mental health consequences for victims. She found consistent and strong negative effects of negative aspects of social relations such as blaming the victim, emotionally withdrawing, taking control of the

victim's decision making, or discouraging talking. Recovery from sexual assault was found to be associated with having a network of social support, and living with family members at the time of the assault rather than alone or with a spouse. This is consistent with studies of other populations and with the results of this study. What was interesting in this study is the reports of what the journalists intentionally did to create contexts where they can receive positive support, avoid negative support and have safe places to go to that are outside of the trauma. For example they all spoke about choosing to talk to other journalists and people in similar professions about their traumatic experiences. Most intentionally did not talk to family or friends who couldn't understand or relate to their experience. They also tended to protect home as a place that was separate from the world where they experienced trauma. This was even more so when they had children. Lilly described this. "It was great to come home from that trial I covered for two years and have two small kids who you know...who just wanted Mommy and everything else would just wash away."

In the meta-study cited Ullman (1999) found that women did find more tangible aid and information from formal support providers while emotional support from family and friends was related to better recovery than emotional support from other sources. What was not discussed was whether the emotional support was general support or whether it was related to the traumatic experience. The journalists were clear that emotional support from family and friends was important however they were also clear that for emotional support related to their trauma they tended to look outside of their family and friends. Friends who supported them around the trauma were generally colleagues.

The two major facets of social support identified in the literature are received and perceived support. Norris and Kaniasty in two studies (1992; 1996) found that perceived

support, the belief that when helping behaviours are needed they will be provided, has greater impact on recovery from PTS than received support, naturally occurring helping behaviours that are provided. This study supports research specifically with journalists who report on traumatic events for whom low perceived social support has been shown to be a risk factor (Newman, Simpson, & Handschuh, 2003).

In a study by Maercker and Schutzwohl (1997) in which they assessed psychological effects in a group of 146 former political prisoners in the German Democratic Republic they found that perceived social support seemed to be lessened by posttraumatic avoidance. Participants who used avoidance behaviours also demonstrated low interest in important activities, felt estranged from others and also reported low levels of emotional support or social integration. Conversely, those who felt emotionally supported and socially integrated were less likely to experience symptoms of posttraumatic hyperarousal. In my study the link between emotional support and not using avoidance strategies was evident in the journalists intentional sharing with colleagues about their exposure to trauma. Again it is notable that they sought emotional support both from colleagues and family and friends but different kinds. The emotional support from colleagues generally appeared to be work related looking for people who understand the experience while the emotional support in their personal lives was about caring and belonging. Lilly describes this. “Both my boyfriend and my friends were supportive but not interested in kind of the gory details but also I usually kept it pretty internal.” The implication for treatment is the importance of addressing perceptions of social support and teaching social skills that can promote healthier interpersonal relationships (Maercker, Schutzwohl, & Solomon, 1999). Indirectly, supporting clients through exposure therapy to not use avoidance strategies may increase their openness to looking to others for support.

## ***6.3 Implications for Practice***

### ***6.3.1 Organizational Changes Needed***

Recommendations for organizational changes needed to improve support for journalists were discussed thoroughly in the literature review. The results of this study add little in terms of augmenting what has already been stated. What it does highlight is the tendency for journalists to not look to the organization for support and therefore the importance of facilitating social support in creative ways so that this critical factor in prevention and recovery is present, available and accessed. Providing journalists with literature that clearly describes the factors that protect against risk of PTSD is one way. This can be part of training both at hiring and ongoing (Feinstein, 2003; Violanti & Paton, 2006). Including this helps to normalize PTS symptoms as part of the reality of working in a field where trauma exposure is common.

I noted in the recommendations in the literature review that agency support for returning staff is critical to their ability to manage posttraumatic stress. Professions that tend to involve expectations that employees can manage the impact of trauma exposure have to deal with the possibility that employees will not take advantage of support provisions because it is akin to admitting weakness (Matloff, 2004; Ricchiardi, 2001). It would be helpful therefore to provide support in a manner that enables employees to not to have to admit that they are struggling. For example sending out information to employees about services provided through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) should ensure that the employee can pursue it without other employees needing to know about it. One of the concerns presented by Jason in this study was the lack of skill and knowledge the EAP counsellors had in the area of trauma. It is critical that the service providers be well prepared to provide appropriate service. Jason notes

The EAP program for newsrooms are really bad, the mental health benefit.

They're not intended to deal with the stress of work. And I would love to see a journalism outfit that helps with therapy or processing the trauma and there's just not anything out there. I mean people, the DART centre here has done work about that but they've much more focused on war and for good reason. I think part of the burnout with journalism is that if you can't deal with it, at the end of the day it has a real lasting effect if you can't process the trauma.

His comments also highlight the issue of whether reporting on trauma in one's own community as opposed to being imbedded with soldiers is recognized as potentially traumatizing.

Violanti and Paton (2006) noted the importance of having policy and guidelines to direct the process of how journalists receive support. It is my opinion that some of this be required especially for journalists returning from field work where they have been exposed to multiple traumas for example war zones. Journalists should have the opportunity to receive confidential counselling (Feinstein, 2003) if they choose but at a minimum their symptoms should be monitored and services offered. In addition providing materials they can take home and read may be helpful. If these practices became standard they would eventually become normalized which could help to decrease stigma about admitting vulnerability.

### **6.3.2 *PTS Treatment***

In terms of treatment this area was not addressed in the literature review. However, a number of recommendations can be made on the basis of the results of this study. If organizations choose to provide some form of debriefing for journalists following exposure to traumatic events it is important to clarify the purpose and carefully select the components. Assessing symptom severity is important in planning treatment. Debriefing should focus primarily on normalization of trauma reactions, educational components and teaching coping



skills for managing symptoms. For journalists who do choose to receive therapy it is important to provide information about what to expect in therapy. Planning treatment around the stages of recovery will help guide the therapist through the process. Treatment for exposure to traumatic events involves three core stages, establishing safety, remembrance and mourning, and reconnection with ordinary, everyday life (Herman, 1992). The therapist may have to deal with issues related to the stigma of needing support. Journalists may prefer individual rather than group therapy again because of discomfort with publicly admitting vulnerability. It is critical that therapists are very knowledgeable about theory related to trauma and recovery and experienced in the use of effective treatment. It is also important to note that EAP programs typically are quite limited in number of sessions available and that treatment must be planned around this limitation.

#### ***6.4 Implications for Future Research***

The results of this study illustrate how journalists structure their worlds in such a way as to be able to dedicate themselves in their work but also create a private life that is distinct. To resolve their experience of exposure to trauma they look to friends through work and other colleagues rather than bring it home to their partners and friends. This appears to provide a place to rejuvenate and maintain beliefs in a world that is safe from trauma. Feinstein and colleagues (2002) noted that the majority of war journalists they interviewed described chaotic childhoods which influenced their choice of career. In this study the participants described happy childhoods and close family relationships. The result is that this study cannot be representative of the general population of war journalists and journalists who report on traumatic events. A challenge for researchers is recruiting participants who have difficult backgrounds who are willing to describe their relational experience openly and reflectively.

The Western journalists in this study described few symptoms of PTS and stable families which is again not characteristic of the general population of journalists who report on trauma for whom there are high instances of divorce, substance abuse, and mental health problems (Smith & Newman, 2009). It would be useful to recruit journalists with a broader range of social experience in their childhoods in order to look at whether they structure their worlds in similar ways to journalists who have stable backgrounds and whether they are able to use this to help with managing PTS.

In terms of grounding the research in theory on how relationships develop over time and relate to managing exposure to trauma most studies address this from an attachment perspective (Charuvastra & Cloitre, 2008; Schore, 1996; Tronick, 1989; Tummala-Narra, Liang, & Harvey, 2007; Wilson, 2006). Although relational theory provides a broader lens through which to consider other factors that influence relational style such as culture, gender or race very few studies have been conducted. Among factors considered in relational theory culture has enormous impact on early childhood experience, how one structures their lives as adults, and how they use relationships to manage the impact of trauma exposure. Although this study did not look specifically at culture in respect to relationships and trauma exposure the obvious distinctions between the Western and South Asian journalists highlighted the importance of understanding how cultural influence can result in significant differences in journalists' relational lives.

As described earlier many recommendations for organizational changes and treatment have been made to assist journalist who experience symptoms of PTS (Dworznic, 2006; Feinstein, 2003; Figley, 2002; Lipton, 1994; Violanti & Paton, 2006). As journalists may be reluctant to pursue treatment within their organization due to stigma or concerns about being

viewed as not being able to handle the work it would be useful to look at what other professions that deal with trauma do to ensure the well-being of employees, for example firefighters, police officers, or emergency medical workers. In addition, in this study almost all of the journalists spoke about turning to colleagues and others in related professions to talk about their traumatic experiences. Research that looks specifically at the kinds of strategies they use with colleagues to resolve PTS symptoms and what is helpful and not helpful would help in identifying how to better support journalists in their work.

### ***6.5 Ethics***

The narrative method used for this study asks for very personal sharing on the part of participants. As a result concerns arise related to issues of privacy, harm, and confidentiality. Thus potential benefits of the study must be weighed against potential harm. One of the benefits of participation for journalists was the potential for increased awareness and understanding of how relationships across the lifespan are connected through social patterns and style. In addition reflecting on the links between relationships, trauma exposure and capacity for managing symptoms provided opportunity to become more intentional in what they do in relationships and to improve well-being.

One of the potential risks to participation in this study are emotional reactions to speaking openly about experiences of being traumatized, vulnerability to symptoms, and disclosing very personal experiences that relate to who they are in relation to others and how significant events have shaped them. To address evidence that the individual was currently experiencing symptoms of PTS or the potential for being distressed by involvement participants were offered suggestions and immediate support through therapists specialized in treatment of PTSD and recommendations for professional support. None of the journalists expressed a need for

assistance and the two who did present with more significant symptoms of PTS did not express interest in pursuing any support though the resources offered.

Journalists work in a field where their opinions are openly presented in public forums. For this reason confidentiality was extremely important. Rigorous steps were taken to ensure the participants' confidentiality. This included using pseudonyms to replace actual names, removing any specific identifying information about the participants or their families from summaries. For example, specific dates, and places of events were removed. Specific information about individual assignments was excluded to avoid identification as well. All demographic information was amalgamated and included in a separate section from participant summaries. In reviewing their narrative summaries and the thematic results several journalists still had concerns that incidents described could still lead to identification of someone they knew who could be put at risk because of their connection with a particular event. In these cases the events were either removed from the results or were amended to further prevent identification. The results were then resent to the journalist to ensure they were satisfied with the final document. Although these changes may take something away from creating a fuller picture of a particular participant it protects their anonymity which is paramount. In the consent, during the interviews and when corresponding by email I was careful to ensure that participants understood they did not need to share anything that made them uncomfortable. When they were given the narrative summaries to review I stressed that they could edit by adding or removing anything they wished.

## ***6.6 Limitations***

This study provides a small picture of a limited group of journalists who report on traumatic events. While a quantitative approach would provide a clearer picture of very specific questions about a larger representative sample from this population the qualitative approach

allowed a richer more in depth understanding of particular aspects of this group and the relationships between factors. The narrative approach because of the flexibility for participants to address what is important to them can bring to the forefront issues that could be overlooked in quantitative research.

### ***6.7 Conclusion***

In this study using a narrative approach and the Life Story interview method the stories of nine journalists who have had experience reporting on traumatic events were told. From their narratives, the methods for thematic analysis of Tummala-Narra, Liang, & Harvey, 2007; Reissman, 1993, 2008; Atkinson, 1998 were used to identify key experiences and increase our understanding of what happens for journalists relationally as they manage the impact of exposure to traumatic events. The stories of the participants contained descriptions of enduring meaningful relationships, evolving capacity for being in close relationships, and intentional action to help them manage their exposure to traumatic events especially in the ways that they structured their network of relationships to help them manage both their world of work and their personal world.

This study fits relational theory well in that it highlights the complex factors that influence who journalists are in relationships over the course of their lives and the strategies they use to manage relationships so that they can succeed in their work and have a healthy private life. Although there has been considerable research conducted to support the centrality of social support as important in the prevention of and recovery from PTSD this study provides a more holistic look at the intentional ways that journalists think about relationships and structure them to support well being. The implications for practice include the importance of creating support services that protect the privacy of journalists because of stigma against needing help in the work

place. In addition interventions need to be provided by service providers who have the expertise to deal with PTS and within limited time frames. Support needs to include appropriate assessment and be provided in creative ways such as through the use of literature or other media as journalists may be unlikely to seek out therapy. The stigma in the work place of admitting vulnerability needs to continue to be addressed at the systemic and individual level and recognition that not just war journalists have PTS but also journalists who report on traumatic events in their communities. Future research needs to include looking at ways to deliver services for journalists that will maximize the role that social support plays as a buffer from developing PTSD and in recovery from symptoms.

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*Appendix A: Advertisement*

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology & Special Education  
Faculty of Education, 2125 Main Mall, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1Z4

Research Study: Journalists and Reporting on Trauma

**Needed: Journalists and Photojournalists Who Have Reported on  
Traumatic Events**

Project Title: **The Relational World of Journalists Who Report on Traumatic Events**

Our University of British Columbia study: "Journalists, Relationships, and Reporting on Trauma" wants to better understand the nature of relationships for journalists and photojournalists who have experience reporting on traumatic events.

We are looking for journalists who would be willing to write a guided narrative or participate in an interview about past and present significant relationships and how they are influenced by reporting on trauma. The study involves writing a guided narrative and participating in a brief follow-up interview about the narrative.

For more information please contact (tel. number) or (email address).

Please leave a message with your name, phone number, email and that you wish to find out more or to be a participant in the Journalists, Relationships and Reporting on Trauma Study.

## *Appendix B: Letter of Initial Contact*

### THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology & Special Education  
Faculty of Education, 2125 Main Mall, Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4

#### Letter of Initial Contact

The purpose of this letter is to offer you the opportunity to participate in a research study about how life-span relationships are connected to risk for and recovery from post traumatic stress for journalists who report on traumatic events.

Feinstein in his book about the experience of war journalists (*Journalists Under Fire*, 2003) contrasts the two worlds that these journalists live in, a world of horror while on assignment and the world at home with family and friends. Research has not looked specifically at the relational world of journalists and how they manage to move back and forth between these two very different worlds while managing symptoms of trauma exposure. The high instances of divorce, substance abuse, and mental health problems among journalists who report on traumatic events attests to the difficulties of managing this (Smith & Newman, 2009). Journalists also work in a profession where they are expected to be able to manage the effects of exposure to trauma, where stigma is attached to not managing well and where systemic support to prevent traumatic reactions and facilitate recovery are for the most part undeveloped. Having journalists write narratives about their relational worlds and their experiences of trauma will provide a means to understanding how they think about this. Studying the narratives that journalists create about their relational world will provide insight into what their needs and the needs of their families and friends are. This information will assist news organizations with providing structural supports for journalists, and will inform treatment providers with knowledge about the unique experience of journalists.

If you consent to participate in this study, the research project will involve either writing a narrative or participating in a one hour interview about relationships over the course of your life using guiding questions to provide direction. If you prefer to write your narrative you will be asked to complete this within a one month period. After an initial analysis of your narrative someone will call you to for a brief conversation to ask for clarification about aspects of your narrative. This conversation will be audio-taped.

All participants will receive a \$25 gift card from Chapters for their participation.

If you would like more information or would like to participate in this study please contact Alison Stevens at (tel. number) or at (email address).

The Journalists and Reporting on Trauma study is being conducted by Dr. Marla Buchanan, Dr. Marvin Westwood, Dr. Norman Amundson, and Alison Stevens of the University of British Columbia.

Sincerely,  
Alison Stevens, MA

## *Appendix C: Consent Form*

### THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology & Special Education  
Faculty of Education, 2125 Main Mall, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1Z4

### **Consent to Participate**

Project Title: **The Relational World of Journalists Who Report on Traumatic Events**

**Principal Investigator:**

Dr. Marla Buchanan  
University of British Columbia  
Phone: (tel. number)

**Co-Investigator:**

Alison Stevens  
University of British Columbia  
Phone: (tel. number)

This study is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a PhD for Alison Stevens, the co-investigator, and is part of her dissertation. The results may be published in a peer reviewed journal or presented at a scholarly conference.

**Research Purpose:**

Journalists who report on traumatic events can be at risk for post traumatic stress (PTS) and have difficulty recovering. The primary aim of this study is to explore how their construction of life-span relationships helps us to understand their current relational world in managing post traumatic stress. The objectives are to: (a) use a narrative approach to explore life-span relationships of a diverse group of Canadian journalists and photojournalists who report on trauma in national and international trauma events or disaster areas, (b) explore how relationship patterns across the life-span are reflected in current relationships as they are managing the consequences of their exposure to traumatized populations and (c) use the results to understand how attention to relational health can contribute to protection from PTS and recovery from symptoms of PTS. The findings will also help to address how psychological support for journalists and photojournalists both in and out of the newsroom can promote relational health.

**Study Procedures:** By signing the *Consent to Participate* form, you have agreed to participate in a study where the following activities will occur: writing a personal narrative or participating in a one hour interview (by telephone or face-to-face), follow up telephone call (if not possible follow-up will be by email). These activities will entail:

*A. Writing a Personal Narrative*

1. You will meet with one of the investigators at the University of British Columbia or in an agreed upon location, or through telephone and email, in order to complete a five-minute self-report assessment called the "Impact of Events Scale-Revised (IES-R)," to determine your

responses following any traumatic life event. It is expected that most participants will have mild to moderate overall scores. Participants who show severe symptoms will be given added information on trauma related symptoms, methods of coping with reactions to trauma, and referrals to professional mental health counselling for assistance, if required.

2. You will be invited to participate in writing a personal narrative. You will be given a brief questionnaire asking for demographic information such as age, gender, and number of years reporting on traumatic events. You will be provided with guiding questions to assist you in writing your narrative. The narrative will be about significant relationships from birth to the present and how they influenced your development. You will then be asked to describe your experiences as a journalist reporting on trauma survivors, and/or victims, and how your significant relationships influence you in this context. You always have the right to decline answering questions that make you feel uncomfortable during the interview process. You have the option to only answer questions you wish to answer. You also have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage of the research without any penalty or obligation. If you choose to participate in the interview rather than write a narrative the content will be the same as for the written narrative.

3. We will contact you after you have written your narrative or participated in the interview about our analysis related to your narrative material. The focus will be on your conceptualizations of the meanings of your experiences in trauma/disaster, particularly in how relationships influence managing the stress of reporting on trauma and/or disaster events. You have the right to decline to participate in further interviews at any time.

**Potential Risks:**

Although it is unlikely, you may experience some psychological stress while writing your narrative or participating in the follow up conversation as you remember traumatic experiences you may have been exposed to. As a precaution to any stress continuing after the interview is over, you will be offered self-care guidelines, a list of psychologists who work in the field of psychological trauma in your area whom you may wish to contact, and the possibility of speaking with a professional counsellor by telephone free of charge. The professional counsellor will use his/her clinical judgment in arranging further contact with you as needed.

**Potential Benefits:**

The findings from this research study will provide valuable knowledge about posttraumatic stress in the understudied occupations of journalism and photojournalism. This study offers the benefit of a greater understanding of the costs and risks to you as a photojournalist or journalist as you work in trauma and disaster contexts. This can increase the possibility of support for mental/emotional health for you in your work. This knowledge will assist news agencies, photojournalists, and journalist to understand the importance of knowing and recognizing posttraumatic stress reactions so that you can decrease the financial, social, and personal costs such as extended sick leave, relational issues, physical stress responses. In the process of

participating in this study, you may find support in having the opportunity to talk about your reactions of being exposed to traumatized people and events to the researchers. This may aid you in articulating your beliefs and actions related to help-seeking, about the meaning of your experiences, and about struggles in coping with trauma responses in the context of your work community. Finally, this study will also define further areas of research into posttraumatic stress in the field of journalism.

**Confidentiality:**

Any information that is obtained during this study will be kept confidential to the full extent permitted by the law. Knowledge of participant's identity is not required. You will not be required to write your name or any other identifying information on research materials with the exception of this confidential consent form. Materials such as your written narratives or transcriptions of follow-up conversations will be maintained in a locked filing cabinet in the principle researcher's office at the University of British Columbia for seven years. Participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. Code names selected by the participant will be used. Only the principal investigator and the graduate doctoral research student on this study will have access to the audio-taped interviews and files. Data will be managed using qualitative research computer software that will provide a range of tools to organize, link, code, shape, search, and visualize the data. This data will be accessible only by the principle investigator and the graduate doctoral research student on a computer system that is password protected. Some people may be able to identify you by the content of your answers in spite of the measures taken to protect confidentiality. You have the option of being identified if you choose and can initial below to indicate your consent.

**Remuneration:**

Participants will receive a \$25.00 gift certificate from Chapters Bookstore for their participation.

**Contact:**

If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Alison Stevens at (tel. number) or (email address) or Dr. Marla Buchanan at (tel. number) or (email address). If the consent form is delivered by email or fax it can be returned by fax to (fax. number).

**Consent:**

Having volunteered to participate in the research study named above, I certify that I have read the procedures specified in this document describing this study. I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. I understand the procedures to be used and the personal risks to me in taking part in the study as described above.

I understand that I may withdraw my participation at any time. I also understand that I may register any complaint with the researchers named above to the Director of Research Ethics, or with the Dean of the Faculty of Education as shown below:

Researcher - Dr. Marla Buchanan, (email address), (tel. number)

Doctoral Graduate Research Student - Alison Stevens, (email address), (tel. number)

Director of Research Ethics - Dr. Martin Kirk, (email address), (tel. number)

I may obtain the results of this study, upon its completion by contacting:

Alison Stevens, (email address), (tel. number)

I have been informed that the research will be confidential.

I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records.

I understand the risks and contributions of my participation in this study and agree to participate:

Participant \_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name First Name

I am willing to be identified in documents produced by this study. \_\_\_\_\_  
Initial

Contact Information (Province, telephone, email address)

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature Witness Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## *Appendix D: Guiding Questions for Narratives*

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology & Special Education  
Faculty of Education, 2125 Main Mall, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1Z4

### Guidelines for Writing Your Narrative

Project Title: **The Relational World of Journalists Who Report on Traumatic Events**

*Investigators: Dr. Marla Buchanan, UBC; Alison Stevens, UBC*

**Research Question:** What narratives do journalists who report on trauma and disaster construct concerning their relational world?

#### **I. General Information for Participants:**

1. Description of the research purpose: As you are aware the primary aim of this research project is to explore how journalists and photojournalists construct relationships across the life-span in order to help us understand their current relational world in managing post traumatic stress. The objectives are to: (a) use a narrative approach to explore life-span relationships of a diverse group of Canadian journalists and photojournalists who work with trauma survivors in national and international trauma events or disaster areas, (b) explore how relationship patterns across the life-span are reflected in current relationships as they are managing the consequences of their exposure to traumatized populations and (c) use the results to understand how attention to relational health can contribute to protection from PTS and recovery from symptoms of PTS. The findings will also help to address how psychological support available to journalists and photojournalists both in and out of the newsroom can promote relational health.

#### **II. Consent Procedures**

2. Do you have any questions you would like to ask me about the study or any aspect of participation?
3. Review and sign Informed Consent from.

#### **III. Narrative Questions**

*Demographics:*

1. Age, current living situation
2. Gender
3. Years in first responder profession
3. Trauma/disaster events participated in as part of work, including duration and frequency.

### Life Narrative Overview:

The Life Story written narrative will be divided into decades, for example, ages 1-10, 11-20 and so on. First, think about your experience of important relationships in each decade and how it helped to shape you.

For example:

People's experience of relationships can be written in the form of a book. I would like you to write about each decade as a chapter in the book. For each chapter think about different meaningful relationships in your life from the time you were born to the present. Start from the first meaningful relationship in your life. What is your earliest memory of you and this person? How would you end this chapter?

### *Chapter Content:*

1. Please give each chapter a title.
2. Who are the significant people in your life in this decade?
3. Tell me about a significant episode(s) or memory(s) that you have about your relationship with the people you talk about in each chapter.
4. How would you describe yourself during this chapter?
5. What were the other people you describe like at that time?
6. How would you describe your relationships?
7. What other significant events do you recall experiencing with these people at this time in your life?
8. What did you learn from these relationships?
9. How did these learnings influence who you are today?
10. How have these relationship beliefs affected yourself as a journalist?
11. How have the relationship lessons influenced current relationships with family, friends and work?

### *Experience of Reporting on Traumatic Events:*

1. How would you describe your current relationships with co-workers, your boss, and personal relationships in your private life?
2. How has reporting on trauma shaped these relationships?
3. Has your experience of reporting on trauma shaped how you understand your relational world in the present?
4. Has your experience of reporting on trauma shaped how you think about relationships from the past?
5. Is there a connection between how relationships have changed over time and the length of time during which you have reported on traumatic events? If so how are the two related?