

Freelancers on the Frontline: Influences on Conflict Coverage

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This dissertation is dedicated to freelance journalists who have lost their lives while covering conflict. Specifically, Tim Hetherington. Your sacrifice and passion for combat zone coverage sparked this research.

The researcher would also like to dedicate this work to the late Dr. Dwight Teeter. His encouragement, wit, knowledge, and ideas for this dissertation were invaluable. He is greatly missed.

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Abstract:

Some journalists who cover conflict in countries like Syria, Ukraine, and Egypt work as freelancers. As opposed to full-time staff members of media organizations, freelancers pay for their own travel, security, drivers, and insurance. While this model of conflict coverage is financially beneficial for media organizations, freelancers indicate that they work for themselves in order to have “freedom” to make their own decisions about conflict coverage. The researcher studied the phenomena of freelance journalism in conflict scenarios through an exploratory study utilizing long interviews, an interpretative, textual analysis of war correspondents’ autobiographies, an online, open-ended questionnaire, and follow-up in-depth interviews with freelancers. This data was examined through the lenses of the Hierarchy of Influences model as well as Gatekeeping Theory. Findings show that media worker influences, media routine influences, as well as extra-media influences are perceived by freelancers to have strong influences on their coverage of conflict. These levels of the Hierarchy of Influences model are manifested through financial and safety. Freelancers also perceived that their gender influences conflict coverage because of cultural norms that dictate their access to sources. Finally, freelancers see the gatekeeping process as control that overlaps between the media worker, media organizations, and extra-media influences.

Preface:

I worked as a broadcast and online journalist for more than 10 years before deciding to pursue my PhD. Because of my background as a reporter, I have always been passionate about the conditions that journalists work in and the factors that influence their work. With a Master's Degree from the University of Westminster in London, I applied to the School of Journalism and Electronic Media at University of Tennessee.

In the second year of my doctoral studies, I learned of a non-profit organization in New York City started by internationally known, award-winning journalist, Sebastian Junger. After Junger's good friend and colleague Tim Hetherington was killed while covering conflict, he decided to do something about the safety of freelancers.

Hetherington was hit in a femoral artery by shrapnel. This is not a typically fatal wound but unfortunately, Hetherington and his colleagues did not know how to apply a tourniquet. He died on the way to the hospital. As an answer to the need for first aid training for freelance journalists, Junger started the organization Reporters Instructed in Saving Colleagues (RISC) in 2011. The program operates on grants and donations and is free to freelancers. There is a waiting list for the program and at the time of publication, more than 200 freelancers have graduated from the training.

In 2012, I was fortunate enough to be granted access to one of the RISC sessions as an observer. Freelancers took the training seriously and practiced how to react to a bomb, how to apply a tourniquet, how to stop the bleeding from various wounds, and how to notice signs of dehydration and shock. Upon graduation, each freelancer receives a combat first aid kit as well.

Freelancers feel they have an obligation to society to share news from conflict zones. My hope is that this research effort adds to academic literature about the perceived reality and concerns of freelancers in conflict zones and presents information that could be useful to the industry about the dangers they face.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In August 2014, news of the beheading of journalist James Foley flashed across headlines worldwide. Even though Foley was an established journalist, at the time of his capture, he did not have the endorsement of a media company. He was working as a freelancer. After his death was reported, friends and family made formal statements saying that Foley was determined to report the truth about what was happening in Syria (Chulov, 2014).

Foley was not new to conflict reporting. His career began as a reporter for a military newspaper: *Stars and Stripes*. He also knew about imprisonment. Foley was captured while covering conflict with two other freelancers in Libya in 2011. One of his friends, South African photographer Anton Hammerl, was killed. The prisoners were held for 44 days and when Foley was released, he decided to continue covering conflict, despite the danger to freelance journalists. This narrative begins to show the obstacles and dangers freelancers face while covering conflict.

Journalists who work for themselves typically work in groups with other freelancers. They do not have insurance, savings for additional expenses, or a way to leave a dangerous country in an emergency. This was the situation Foley found himself in when he was captured with another freelancer in Syria in November 2012. Both of them were reporting at the end of a two-week trip on the day before they were due to leave. Nearly two years later, a member of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), beheaded Foley, while creating a video of the act. While Foley was in captivity, 11 more journalists, most of them freelancers, were reportedly kidnapped in Syria (Chulov, 2014).

As recent headlines show, freelance journalists themselves are becoming part of the top stories for being victims of kidnappings, injury, and murder as they cover stories in countries

such as Syria, Iran, and Afghanistan. Some news outlets have stopped sending their own staff to gather stories in dangerous areas because they do not want the blood of journalists on their hands. Because of that, stringers get the assignments and editors in turn pay a cut rate to get information. In 2013 and 2012 alone, 70 journalists were killed while covering conflict in 2013 and 74 were killed in 2012 (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2013). It is not enough to tell a good story anymore. Journalists in conflict situations have to worry about survival as well.

Using a phenomenological approach to gain knowledge, this dissertation looks specifically at freelance journalists working in all mediums (print, broadcast, online) and how they choose what is “news” during conflict coverage. Part of a journalist’s role is deciding which stories to report and what information should be filtered to the audience. Thus, this research also examines the influences that exist in shaping conflict coverage by freelancers. It does so through the theoretical lens of Gatekeeping and the Hierarchy of Influences (HOI) model. Gatekeeping Theory, originally presented by Lewin (1947), argues that “gatekeepers” filter information to an audience through “gates” or individuals who pick and choose which news stories should be presented to audiences (Lewin, 1951, p. 186). White (1950) and later Shoemaker (1991) developed the theory, adding details to the process through which news personnel filter information. This theory led to the formation of the HOI model, which posits that there are different levels of influence shaping news messages (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). These factors of influence have specific characterizations that will be briefly explained here and further elaborated in Chapter 3. It is important to note that Reese and Shoemaker (1996) argue that each factor has a different level of influence on content with individual levels having less influence, for instance, than ideological influence. A visual interpretation of the model by Reese (1991) is provided in Chapter 3.

The HOI model posits that individual level factors that influence news content are shaped by personal values and beliefs. Education and training also influence how and why journalists cover the news (Shoemaker, 1987). Less is known about whether a journalist's attitude toward a subject influences content. Shoemaker and Reese (1991) summarize that a journalist's attitude impacts some content, some of the time. The authors believe the professional roles and ethics of journalists influence conflict more than personal attitudes and values. There are also cultural influences on their decision-making. Because of their different backgrounds and culture, journalists' values, beliefs, and attitudes are different. This ultimately influences how they cover conflict. While this dissertation is not a cultural study, the researcher acknowledges that a freelance journalist from the United States will have a different cultural view than a freelancer from another country. His or her whole being is culturally oriented to an American audience. Part of the reporter's culture is also created through his or her education and training. The researcher will collect data regarding these areas of the journalist's background.

An additional factor in the HOI model is "routines," and is considered to be a second level of influence (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Routines are defined as "patterned, routinized, repeated practices, and forms that media workers use to do their jobs" (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996, p. 85). Routines help to decide: what is acceptable to the consumer, what the media are capable of producing, and what raw product is available from sources. Organizational factors comprise the third level of influence on content (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). At this level, research considers the internal structure, goals, policies and market of organizations. These factors account for variations in content that cannot be explained by individual level factors or routines (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Extra-media forces also influence the message. This level of the model includes sources, government, NGOs, and elements that are outside the media

organization. Finally, ideological factors, in the HOI model, are posited to have a high level of influence on content. The authors explain that ideological factors are not individual beliefs, *per se*, but instead, a societal-level phenomenon. This level of influence considers how power in society is reflected through the media.

Research Rationale

Researchers have called for more studies regarding what correspondents face in the field (Steffens, Wilkins, Vultee, Thorson, Kyle, and Collins, 2012). Media have covered war and conflict scenarios for centuries and accounts about different reports stretch back over history. However, the phenomenon of freelance journalism, especially pertaining to conflict coverage, is a relatively new area of research. A number of studies on conflict coverage and foreign correspondents exist, but there is little research on freelancers covering conflict.

Freelancers and the impact of conflict scenarios shape the messages and discourse of their reports (Pedelty, 1995). If we study how messages by freelancers are gathered and shaped during conflict, scholarship will have more of an understanding about how news forms. Ultimately, this is essential because news messages can impact how the public sees and understands conflict. One of the ways to study messages produced during conflict situations is to explore how freelance journalists operate in such situations. Then, there can be an understanding of how they see and communicate about their world and what they cover (Beliveau & Lonnendonker, 2011). Therefore, the intent of this study is to uncover and understand how freelancers form coverage of international conflict and why the news might be shaped in certain ways. Borrowing the definition offered by Seaton and Allen (1999), conflict reporting in this study is defined as “news media reporting in situations of war” (p. 2).

As a roadmap to show what is to come in this dissertation, the researcher will briefly outline the information presented in the rest of the study. In Chapter 2, literature will be presented to outline nuances of conflict coverage and provide details about how freelance journalists operate in the field. Literature regarding advances in technology and how the changes impact the roles and routines of journalists is also included in Chapter 2 of the dissertation. Chapter 3 is dedicated to the examination of theoretical lenses through which data is examined. The researcher utilizes Gatekeeping Theory (Shoemaker, 1991) as well as the Hierarchy of Influences Model (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996) to interpret findings. The model and theory will be critically reviewed in Chapter 3. Following a look at theoretical underpinnings, Chapter 4 focuses on Methodology: approach to research, role of the researcher, sample, procedure, and information on how the researcher conducted analysis of the data. From there, the dissertation presents chapters on analysis, findings, discussion and conclusion, limitations, and ideas for future research.

CHAPTER 2. CONFLICT AND FREELANCE JOURNALISM

Information gathered during conflict situations has high value because the stories are difficult to cover (Lisosky & Henrichsen, 2011). While this information is often dangerous to collect, it can be essential for a society's growth and cultural knowledge. Shoemaker (1987) argues that news media fulfill a basic social function when they provide ways for society to understand what is happening around them. Journalists disseminate normative explanations of events and this leads to some understanding of the situation by the public. To many of these journalists, reporting about conflict is more than just a job. Freelancers may believe that the information they gather and broadcast is essential to the continuation of, or, at times, formation of democracy. If media are unable to produce news from conflict areas, the process of cultural growth or formation could be hindered. Lisosky and Hendrichsen (2011) point out that when reporters are kidnapped, injured, and killed in the field, other media personnel might be scared away from doing that type of work. If journalism is described as "the first draft of history" (p. 1), then covering conflict is useful in establishing accounts for history (Lisosky & Hendrichsen, 2011). Therefore, conflict coverage and how it is shaped is worth studying and exploring.

Over the last 30 years, research has shown that audiences have an interest in international news and some audience members express a high interest in international news (Tumber, 2006). This point argues that it is important to consider communication as a creative process that is impacted and shaped through culture and history (Hardt, 1992). Burke (1965) wrote that researchers should study media messages less and individual intentions, historical moments, and cultural identities more. This study seeks to do so by specifically considering the influences that shape media messages produced by freelance journalists. This is in line with Strauss' (1987) idea that researchers should study groups in order to explore their practices, behaviors, and the

institutions they establish. Because this study is interested in how these factors shape the news production process, the knowledge uncovered will add to information about messages that potentially shape views of the world. These views are what lead to actions and eventually shape our social reality (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991).

An article in *The New York Observer* (September 2013) outlines another reason that scholarship should consider what is happening to freelance journalists covering conflict. The report focuses on the danger to freelancers in Syria. Because more reporters are dying or being badly injured, editors in the United States have stopped sending their own staff or hiring U.S. freelancers to file news reports (as previously mentioned). Instead, media networks are paying stringers to provide conflict coverage. Due to increasing danger, journalists are losing opportunities to work and stringers with little to no experience are reporting on important news events. While there is not yet a solution to this type of situation, freelance reporter Anna Therese Day worked with other freelancers to launch Frontline Freelance Register in June 2013 as a way to take a stand against dangers to freelancers. The group works to represent the concerns of freelance journalists in conflict zones. More than 70 people joined the group before it was officially launched (Sennott, 2013).

Safety is just one element that may influence how freelancers gather and report news. In a 2005 article for the *American Journalism Review*, former *The Wall Street Journal* and *Jordan Times* reporter Jill Carroll defined freelancers as “equal parts reporter, salesman and entrepreneur.” She went on to say:

The freelancer is a different breed of journalist than a staffer at a major media outlet.

Freelancers pay for their own accommodations, translators, food, and health insurance, and most do it for under \$100 a day.

This means that freelancers might be staying in places that are not considered to be sanitary or safe in order to afford a room for the night. That adds to the danger of the profession. Carroll wrote about journalists in Baghdad, “Key to many freelancers’ financial survival is the \$20-a-night al Dulaimi hotel. The hotel is home to scores of freelancers, bed bugs and garish velveteen furniture” (p.56). Narratives like these with less than glamorous details about the reality of journalists have led scholars to study why they endanger their lives to cover conflict.

While reporting on conflict, especially in war zones, has always been dangerous, it is relatively recent that journalists have become specific targets of violence and kidnapping. In a June 2004 interview, journalist Peter Arnett noted that there is a feeling among journalists who cover conflict that they no longer have protection just for being “Press” (Foerstel, 2006, p. 18). Foerstel (2006) concludes that the nature of war and coverage has changed and there is a greater number of journalists in the field overall attempting to cover conflict. Simply, there are more easy targets.

Insurgents watch for the easy journalist “target” and often kidnap or murder them to get media attention. To potentially avoid this, freelancers would need to hire armed guards and private cars but that is nearly impossible because they cost more than \$2,000 per day (Foerstel, 2006, p. 30). Lisosky and Henrichsen (2011) provide three reasons why journalists are being targeted by insurgents: growth in the power of the media (messages can impact public opinion and outcome of conflict), lack of pliable media (combatants want to get rid of journalists that have a message that is different from their agendas), and impunity (there are little or no consequences for those who hurt, kill, or kidnap journalists). This is different from the days of embedding when journalists traveled with and were mostly protected by military units. Although the key for journalists in conflict zones now is to mitigate risk, the danger for freelancers is

increasing because of the modern warfare culture: there are no “front lines” and it is difficult for foreigners to determine who is friend or foe.

Osofsky, Holloway and Pickett (2005) looked at journalists who report on conflict and the likelihood that they are often first responders in tragic situations. The study focused on the “experiences, concerns and needs of media members with wartime assignments” (p. 283). The authors identified typical dangers for journalists covering conflict: mortar attacks, lack of access to purified water and food, and transportation concerns. Freelancers may face more dangerous situations than full-time journalists (Osofsky, et al., 2005) because they may be willing to put safety on the back burner to avoid career suicide by turning down dangerous assignments (Feinstein, Owen & Blair, 2002).

Being prepared to cover conflict involves recognizing “risks, managing risk, developing skills in self-assessment, awareness of the consequences of prolonged assignments, management of substance use, having tools to maintain one’s health, managing emotions and behaviors in a variety of situations, and other factors” (Osofsky, et al., 2005, p. 286). Some correspondents learn and identify these skills through formal combat zone training (Ricchiardi, 2003); others obtain skills through informal training and from other journalists in the field. Still others leave on assignment so quickly that they have no time for informal or formal training. Advances in technology have no doubt placed additional pressures on journalists covering conflict, leaving them little time to receive needed training or time to reflect on their work.

Technology and Changes in Conflict Reporting

The business of conflict reporting has changed and the industry is responding to the differences. One of the main reasons for the changes includes advances in technology. Media have turned digital and that makes content production instantaneous in some cases. A journalist

does not just create a video of conflict, he or she produces photos, video, audio clips, and text files of an event to be sent to different outlets (Schroeder & Stovall, 2011). The journalist is also aware of and under pressure to fill 24-hour-a-day newscasts, websites, and social media.

Foerstel (2006) argues that new technology makes things more “dangerous” (p. 84) for journalists covering conflict for another reason. Consider a bomb explosion in a city square in Syria. A freelance journalist is a few blocks away conducting an interview. After hearing the blast, she grabs her small, digital video camera and makes her way to the scene. While she wants to be the first to capture the video of the aftermath and publish it online, she becomes instantly vulnerable to additional bomb blasts planned to detonate when emergency crews arrive. In this and other ways, the Internet has “drastically changed the journalist’s work routines” (Schroeder & Stovall, 2011, p. 189). The Internet has also made access to news possible from around the world (Ibrahim, 2002) without needing a visa. Journalists can use tablets, computers, and even their phones to tap into information about events anywhere.

In a 2000 study about the impact of technology on journalism, Pavlik posited that advances in technology influenced journalists in four ways: “the way they do their jobs, the nature of news content, the structure and organization of the newsroom, and the nature of the relationship between and among news organizations.” The journalist’s work can also more easily be challenged because audiences can access their work online (Tumber, 2006).

Researchers Schroeder and Stovall (2011) interviewed 15 correspondents in order to study how they find sources and determine what to cover. All of the interviewed correspondents stated that they used the Internet as their main communication method. This included use of email to contact sources and accessing online material to gather background for reports. Some of the interviewees also indicated that the Internet made it possible for them to view press

conferences online or read transcripts of governmental presentations. In those cases, they did not have to leave their hotel rooms or newsrooms in order to report on a press conference. The material they needed was online, including sources for ideas of news stories and reports. Journalists also outlined a few problems with advances in technology. One was the element of time. When they were reporting from one side of the world, their editors were sleeping. After the journalists would file their stories for the day, the editors (now awake and at work) would see a new development on the web and ask for follow-ups. The time difference turned the foreign correspondent's job into a 24-hour position.

Professionally, stories from conflict zones lead to more attention from editors and journalists must continue working even when they are exhausted, needing to fill the void created by the modern news cycle (Lisosky & Henrichsen, 2009). Many journalists run on adrenaline so they can be ready at a moment's notice to report for the networks and websites that are always "on." Conditions have become "much less hospitable for the foreign correspondent" in the Middle East and reporting on conflict is one of, if not the most, dangerous assignments available (Tumber, 2006, p. 442). In simple terms, a reporter that covers conflict needs: "the ability to do without sleep, and a certain amount of ... cunning" (Tumber, 2006, p. 445). Online news updates constantly and many journalists serve the audience by continually providing content for immediate upload. The Internet has created more jobs for reporters to cover conflict therefore there is more competition in the field.

Money can be a motivator for journalists in combat zones. They need money for clothing, medical equipment, food, and even cash for bribes (Ricchiardi, 2003). Operating without a media organization to financially back them, freelance journalists must front the money themselves for protective gear and training or go without, potentially making them more vulnerable.

Another danger to conflict journalists pointed out in literature is an increasing lack of experience of reporters and photographers. A *New York Times* editor explained that less experienced people are volunteering to cover conflict as freelancers (Lisosky & Henrichsen, 2011). She relayed in an anonymous interview that when journalists are staff members she can hold them back from covering war but when the journalists are operating on their own as freelancers and selecting their own assignments, no one can tell them that someone more experienced will be handling the coverage. The lack of experience of journalists presents an additional element of danger.

While recommendations for giving journalists protective gear, provisions for hostile training, and information about the culture of the conflict area seem intuitive, the time and money required to do so often make these strategies impossible to implement. In a study of journalistic training in Sub-Saharan Africa, Schiffrin and Behrman (2011) recommend:

“Training programs should be designed to fit the needs of journalists being trained, not to serve as public relations events . . . Given the time constraints that reporters face, it can be difficult to enroll them in long training courses. But we believe that a one-week course is far better than two or three-day courses. . . .” (p. 355-6).

The authors strongly recommend that media organizations make training available to journalists, saying that even current training programs provide positive experiences, knowledge and strong benefits. However, there is a lack of safety training (Foerstel, 2006, p. 126) and sometimes a “too-tough” attitude from journalists when it comes to participation.

While journalists in conflict zones face danger and many suffer the effects of trauma, they may not show the impact outwardly. This leads to another type of danger: psychological

trauma. Masse (2011) writes about conflict journalism and argues that there is a journalistic code of detachment (p. 28). Journalists deny personal feelings and act in a way as to seem to be unflappable in crisis situations. Dr. Frank Ochberg, a medical doctor, studies adrenaline and journalists and said in an interview with the *American Journalism Review* that journalists go through different phases while covering conflict (Ricchiardi, 2001). The first phase is the “heroic phase” that involves a surge of adrenaline, and the journalist has a sense of purpose. This phase can last for days or weeks. This is followed by a phase of mental burnout and depression where the correspondent may put herself in danger. After studying journalists and symptoms of depression among reporters who cover conflict, Ochberg founded the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma. This foundation was developed to give journalists who traditionally do not discuss what they face in the field a place to enter into discourse about what they experience and how they are impacted by what they cover. This is a necessary outlet when considering Greenburg, Gould, Langston, and Brayne’s (2009) article in the *Journal of Mental Health* with data that showed 40% of participants (journalists) believed that showing signs of emotional distress would hurt their career. Some reporters even referred to mental health assistance as “head laundry,” asking to be exempt from debriefing services offered by news networks to help staff members who cover war (p. 151).

Underwood (2011) specifically uses the word “code” in his description of the behaviors of journalists who cover conflict. He writes that journalists are encouraged by the culture of the profession to participate in situations and activities that might be damaging to their health. Furthermore, they do so and choose not to discuss it, putting on a brave face. The code “incorporates heroic and patriotic values that identify with military training and the concept of putting your life on the line for your country” (Underwood, 2011, p. 121). This ideology has

roots throughout history from journalistic icons like Ernest Hemingway, Dickey Chapelle, and Ernie Pyle.

Chapter 2 of this dissertation took a careful look at literature concerning conflict coverage and journalists who work in war-like scenarios. While it is dangerous to gather information in violent situations, it has high social value. Changes in technology have made the job of war correspondents easier in some aspects but many also claim it compromises safety because it makes them vulnerable to tracking from rebel groups or the government. In the following chapter, these elements are considered for how they potentially influence conflict coverage through the lenses of theory.

CHAPTER 3. THEORETICAL LENSES

Because this dissertation is interested in the way freelance journalists from the United States collect and develop messages from the field as they cover conflict, the author uses two theoretical lenses through which to approach study: Gatekeeping Theory (Shoemaker, 1991) and the Hierarchy of Influences model (Reese, 2001; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). These approaches bring explanation to the newsgathering process by freelancers in various ways that are explained below.

Gatekeeping

Shoemaker (1991) describes the concept of gatekeeping in a simple way: “the process by which the billions of messages that are available in the world get cut down and transformed into the hundreds of messages that reach a given person on a given day” (p. 1). Donohue, Tichenor, and Olien (1972) say gatekeeping includes repetition, shaping, and withholding of messages. The idea of gatekeeping was first brought to light by Kurt Lewin, posthumously, in 1943 through the publication of his manuscript “Frontiers in Group Dynamics: II. Channels of Group Life; Social Planning and Action Research” in the journal *Human Relations*. Lewin was the first scholar to add the idea of “gatekeeping” to the idea of communication during his research about how people implement social changes in a community. Specifically, Lewin studied food habits in a population and how messages influence those habits and the “channels” through which they travel. Lewin (1951) posited that the channels through which messages flow are “gates” and that the flow of these messages is controlled by “gatekeepers” or a set of rules formed by gatekeepers (p. 186). An important part of Lewin’s theory regarding channels of messages and the control of the channels was his belief that there are several forces at work as messages are selected and filtered. For instance, in his research on food choices, his (1951) model of how food passes

through channels on the way to the dinner table shows influences such as “buying” and “gardening.” In each channel there are aspects of those actions that impact the final meal including, “planting, harvesting, preparation at home,” etc. (p. 175). Lewin believed these ideas regarding the flow of a message could be generalized:

This situation holds not only for food channels but also for the traveling of a news item through certain communication channels in a group, for movement of goods, and the social locomotion of individuals in many organizations. A university, for instance, might be quite strict in its admission policy and might set up strong forces against the passing of weak candidates. Once a student is admitted, however, the university frequently tries to do everything in its power to help everyone along (p. 187).

Researcher David Manning White (1950) put Lewin’s idea to the test in his research about “Mr. Gates” in a United States newsroom. White worked as Lewin’s research assistant at the University of Iowa and was familiar with the concepts of gatekeeping (Shoemaker, 1991). To explore them further, White wanted to study how an editor makes decisions about which news stories get published in a newspaper. To do so, White convinced a newspaper editor to collect all of the wire stories that arrived in the newsroom during one week. The news items came in from the Associated Press, United Press, and the International News Service. “Mr. Gates,” as he was called, would put the stories he did not select for the news into a pile. Later he would go through the pile and write a reason on the item for why he did not select it for the newspaper (White, 1950). White’s analysis found that approximately 90% of incoming wire copy was discarded and the reasons for discarding them were “highly subjective” (1950, p. 386). Mr. Gates rejected stories because he did not believe they were true, there was not room in the paper to run the story, or because a similar story was recently published. Sixteen years later, Snider (1966)

replicated White's study with the same Mr. Gates and found similar results. During the replication, Mr. Gates was almost 20 years older and had fewer incoming wire services but his decisions were subjective, based on what he thought was newsworthy, and what he thought his audience would like. In Snider's study Mr. Gates described news as, "The day by day report of events and personalities and comes in variety which should be presented as much as possible in variety for a balanced diet" (Snider, 1967, p. 426).

Snider and White's studies about Mr. Gates led to research by Gieber (1956) that argued a different conclusion. Gieber studied how newspaper telegraph editors selected wire copy and found that their decisions were based on more than just personal beliefs. He wrote that editors work in "a strait jacket of mechanical details" that forces the ultimate selection of stories more than personal subjectivity (p. 432). Gieber also posited that deadlines and the amount of incoming sources (organizational routines) are strong gatekeeping forces. A year later (1957), Westley and Maclean created a model that combined gatekeeping with the idea of co-orientation as a way to study communication. Westley and Maclean (1957) expanded this model by adding the gatekeeper and the idea that the person ultimately receiving the message as well as the gatekeeper can give feedback to the person who first sends the message. Like White's model, not all information that is presented to the gatekeeper passes through to the audience. Westley and Maclean's (1957) research found that at any given time, there may be more than one sender, receiver, and gatekeeper, with news judgment ultimately explaining how gatekeepers make decisions. The studies by Westley, Maclean, and Gieber are different than White's in that they consider the media organization and individual media workers as a collective gatekeeper. In White's studies the initial gatekeeper (Mr. Gates) was studied for his individual attitudes toward

wire stories. Specifically, in models by Westley and Maclean (1957), and Gieber (1956), the individual news worker is considered to be more passive than Mr. Gates.

After these studies were published, researchers' attention went back to the importance of the individual level of gatekeeping (McNelly, 1959; Bass, 1969). McNelly considered foreign correspondents, print editors, and broadcast news editors as gatekeepers (1959) and Halloran, Elliott, and Murdock (1970) theorize that gatekeeping starts on the "street" with the reporter (p. 131). Chibnall (1977) gives nuance to the process: "The reporter does not go out gathering news, picking up stories as if they were fallen apples, he creates news stories by selecting fragments of information from the mass of raw data he receives and organizing them in a conventional journalistic format" (p. 6).

The raw data or information comes to the journalist through email, wire stories, online sources, phone calls, word of mouth, press releases, trials, and other media sources. Shoemaker (1991) explains,

Gatekeeping begins at the point at which information is created or discovered by a communication worker. Where does the pool of items or messages come from? Some come knocking and others have to be dragged kicking and screaming through the gate (p. 19).

The pool of information that reaches the first gate is fed from three different channels: routine, informal, and enterprise flow (Sigal, 1973). Enterprise sources come from the communication worker and may be a matter of the worker just being in the right place at the right time.

Information that is routine and informal comes from outside of the media organization. This is where White's "Mr. Gates" comes into play. He serves as the boundary from the outside to the inside and decides to pass certain information into the flow. Sigal (1973) found that most

information comes from routine sources such as the U.S. Government. The reason for that might include the idea from Hirsh (1977) and McCombs and Shaw (1972) that if a journalist gets a large proportion of stories about the government, she might be more likely to select news about the government for distribution to her platform, especially if it is newsworthy. This coincides with the extra-media influences in the Hierarchy of Influences (HOI) model, which is discussed in detail below.

Different news items have different characteristics. Shoemaker (1991) said, “some messages are clearly more newsworthy than others, and the more newsworthy a message is, the more likely it is to pass a news gate” (p. 21). The concept of “newsworthiness” seems obvious but what does literature say about the concept? Nisbett and Ross (1980) argue that a news item is important to an audience if the information is “vivid” rather than pallid (p. 43). Vivid information is defined as information that is more likely to “hold our attention and to excite the imagination” (Nisbett and Ross, 1980, p. 45). Others define “newsworthy” events as items that have “timeliness; proximity; importance, impact, or consequence; interest; conflict or controversy; sensationalism; and prominence” (Dennis & Ismach, 1981; Harriss, Leiter, & Johnson 1977; Izard, Culbertson, & Lambert, 1973). Items that are thought to be more newsworthy by media are more likely to pass the first gate. Whether an item is newsworthy or not is just one force behind the first gate. Gatekeeping Theory and the Hierarchy Of Influences model show that there are various influences on the news-gathering and dissemination process. These theoretical perspectives are useful when considering how messages about conflict are shaped.

Hierarchy of Influences

This dissertation takes into specific consideration the aspects of the Hierarchy of Influences Model by Shoemaker and Reese (1996). In the book “Mediating the Message,” the authors spend a considerable amount of time outlining five influences on media content identified in their research. These include: individual influences, influences from media routines, organizational influences, influences from outside media organizations, and ideology. It is important to study these influences in order to consider whether they impact coverage of conflict by freelance journalists.

Researchers study media content because it “is the basis of media impact” and is an “indicator of many other underlying forces” (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 23). Researchers also consider media content as a topic of research because it is accessible whereas the behind-the-scenes process including producers, organizational procedures, and routines may not be. Another reason researchers study content is to determine the impact, if any, on the audience (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Whereas this dissertation does not look at content effect on an audience, data and analysis may lead to information that is useful when connecting content and audience needs and/or reaction.

Reese (2007) calls for more research that explores the forces that shape news through a line of research he began developing with Shoemaker in 1996. The model looks at different influences on media messages and how those influences interact to shape the end product. As shown in Figure 1, five areas of influence that are hierarchical in nature and range from micro to macro levels are identified: individual, routines, organizational, extra-media (institutional), and ideological (sociocultural).

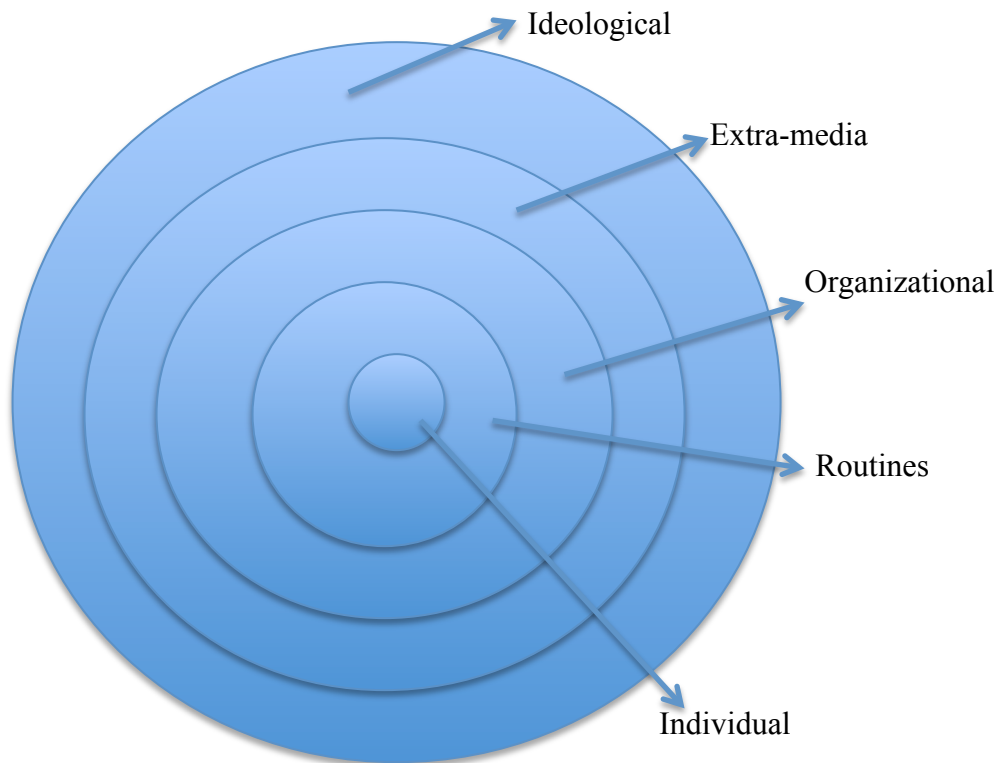


Figure 1. Hierarchy of Influences Model, Shoemaker and Reese (1996)

This model is meant to help ultimately explain the behaviors of journalists as they do their job. Reese argued, “Structures are abstractions that only become visible when we name them and begin to look for regularities and norms in human behavior” (2007, p. 36). He suggests that researchers consider the different influences on media messages, decide which are most determinative, and how they interact. That is what this study proposes to do by carefully considering and studying macro and micro levels of influences on conflict coverage.

The Media Worker

The individual level of the model (micro level) refers to the journalist’s attitudes, background, and training. Where did he or she grow up? Did the journalist earn a formal journalism degree or learn the ropes from colleagues in the field? While this dissertation is not a

cultural study, the researcher again recognizes the importance of the journalist's social reality, constructed through background elements such as education and training. Factors such as gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, as well as that of their parents, lead to choices about education such as where the journalist is formally trained (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996) or whether they are trained at all. The education of a journalist may influence their worldview and therefore the way they approach coverage. Some journalists come from a technically based program where value is placed on skills such as shooting and editing. Other media workers may be educated in a program with an emphasis on critical thinking and theory. Still others experience training that is a combination of both. Shoemaker (1987) reviewed 31 mass communication textbooks and found that they either teach students how to be mass media "insiders" where they are critical of organizations other than media or those that teach them to be "outsiders" where they look critically at organizations including media.

It is also in this level of influence that age, gender, religious and political beliefs have an impact on how a journalist covers conflict (Hughes, 2006; Hanitzsch, et al., 2010; Kim, 2010; Reese, 2001; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; Weaver, et al., 2007). Age may influence media content because workers are able to gain employment in the journalism field without a special license or certification, which makes it an easy career to begin as a young person. Once a young person is in the business and experiences low salary and poor benefits they might move onto another career, causing high turnover in the industry (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986).

Routines

The next level of Hierarchy of Influences is routines. What are the rules, norms, procedures, and limits that might influence the journalist or how he or she works? At this level, Reese (2007) suggests it is useful to consider how media have chosen to deploy resources and

what it means about the rest of the structure. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) define media routines as “patterned, routinized, repeated practices” by journalists while they are working (p. 105).

Technology may also relate to this level of influence as changes in equipment impact how journalists collect and distribute content. Technology is also a consideration at the extra-media influence level.

Organizational Influences

At the organizational level, messages might be influenced by economic or journalistic goals, editorial policies, power relationships, and decision-making processes.

Extra-Media Influences

Still more influential to the message than organizational aspects, is the macro level of extra-media influence (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). This level includes influence from the government, public relations, interest groups, and interests of the elite. Relationships with other institutions are categorized as extra-media in this model as well and can influence news content.

Ideological Influences

Finally, the fifth level of the HOI model is ideological influences. This refers to how meaning is constructed to benefit the power structure in the culture within which the journalist reports. What are the assumptions about power and how is it distributed in society? Although each of the discussed levels influence the media message, Reese and Shoemaker (1996) find that higher levels, or more macro factors, exert greater influence on content than lower levels.

After outlining the five levels of influence in the HOI model, this section of the chapter will critically consider research that looks at how media content is impacted by the various levels. While there is not literature that speaks specifically about freelance journalists from the

U.S. and conflict coverage regarding influences, there are studies that use the HOI model to examine coverage of violence and conflict by journalists.

Hanitzsch and Mellado (2011) conducted a survey of journalists across 18 countries to determine what they perceived to influence their work. The researchers theorized that the journalists' responses would vary across nations and political, economical, and social differences. They found that journalists in Western countries did not perceive political or economic influences to be strong. Those from other countries, however, believed that these influences strongly impacted what they covered as news and how they covered it. In the HOI model, political and economical factors are included in the "extra-media" and "ideological" levels of influence. Western journalists acknowledged an association between who owns the company and influence, but the relationship was not as strong as the authors predicted. It is important to recognize however, that Hanitzsch and Mellado's study (2011) shows that journalists across nations may not fully recognize political and economical influences on their work. In the study's conclusion the authors point to procedural (media routines) and professional (individual) influences as being the most important factors impacting journalists' work. This is in contrast to Shoemaker and Reese's (1996) theory that political forces and economic forces are highly influential. In identifying the above results, however, Hanitzsch and Mellado (2011) offer the observation that "one needs to be extremely cautious with generalizing from empirical evidence established in the West to social phenomena in non-Western contexts" (p. 16).

Fahmy and Johnson (2012) conducted another study that does not directly support the HOI model by Shoemaker and Reese (1996). The authors looked at influences on journalists' work in the Iraq war and throughout different stages of the war. Their data showed no significant difference in levels of influence during different stages of the war. In their study, the most

influential level is that of media routines. Fahmy and Johnson (2012) studied journalists who were embedded and embeds did not go anywhere without the military. The relationships they formed with the military unit highly influenced how they covered the war (Fahmy & Johnson, 2012). Individual levels of influence were also found to be of high impact. This is in line with previous findings (Fahmy and Johnson, 2005) but it should be noted that the findings pertain specifically to those journalists who were embedded.

After the ground war, reporters said that personal safety was increasingly the largest influence on what they covered and how they covered it. Fahmy and Johnson (2012) wrote:

The increased danger limited the reporters' abilities to go out and report the story, and therefore it was essential to use stringers to get information that they otherwise couldn't get, especially in situations where personal risk was perceived to be high. Respondents contended that personal safety issues limited their ability to cover the war" (p. 36).

Individual level factors such as respondents' attitudes towards the war were also influential on coverage and in line with Patterson and Donsbach's (1996) findings that the personal values of journalists have an impact on what they cover. Fahmy and Johnson (2012) conclude that while the HOI model helps to explain what embedded reporters believe had an influence on their coverage of war; "Results are limited to just what embeds perceive as factors that had the greatest effect on their work" (p. 36).

Ibrahim (2002) presents research that supports Shoemaker and Reese's (1996) HOI model while examining perceptions of media coverage from the Middle East. The author looks specifically at the individual level influences on coverage including "personal beliefs, professional perceptions, and schema" (p. 88). While the study found that educational, professional, religious, and personal values influenced news coverage, it also found that other

factors had more of an impact. One of the journalists interviewed by Ibrahim (2003) discussed his difficulty getting in and out of coverage areas: “Visas are... a major access issue in Afghanistan, Iran, Morocco, Algeria, the Gulf States and Sudan” (p. 97). Western journalists overall reported that censorship, and suspicion of the journalists themselves kept them from sources and interviews and determined what they covered.

Ibrahim’s research (2002) also examines the news production process (referred to as “media routines” by Shoemaker and Reese, 1996) and finds that it is a “crucial factor in determining the shape of news content” (p. 89). News production includes deadlines, research, and space for publication. More importantly, Ibrahim (2002) acknowledges that the journalist’s idea of important news content does not always make it past the editor’s gatekeeping and information may be construed because of these processes. The author goes on to conclude that the gatekeeping process usually works to curtail journalists’ individual influences on content. Ibrahim (2002) also identifies “pack” mentality as an influence on content being part of the organizational level of the HOI model: “Constraints at the news production level... perpetuate distortion, superficial reporting and stereotyping” (p. 99).

In their study of journalists working in the northern states of Mexico, Relly and Gonzalez de Bustamante (2014) consider influences on journalists’ coverage of news. They find that the hierarchy-of-influences model is a “strong and valuable” (p. 123) framework for examining the elements that impact news when it is covered in conflict scenarios. The authors developed a list of journalists that worked for print, online, radio, and television and conducted a questionnaire based off of Kim and Hama-Saeed’s (2008) framework. They analyzed results considering the levels of influence from the HOI model. The individual level of influence was strong and included concerns for new journalists’ lack of training in conflict and overall concerns about

personal safety. When it came to media routines, these journalists reported that they altered their driving routes when covering stories because they were concerned for their personal safety. This could, in turn, impact the timing and berth of news coverage.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, technology has an impact on news coverage. Relly and Gonzalez de Bustamata (2014) write that journalists concluded that “technological innovations, which allow rapid news dissemination and increased use of social media, along with the faltering economy and local job layoffs, had led to increased workloads, longer workdays, and superficial reporting in an already challenging and often violent environment (p. 116). Depending on the medium of news coverage, journalists have various obstacles and influences on their work. Obstacles include media routines such as: no access to the Internet, and lack of cell phone signal. Relly and Gonzalez de Bustamante (2014) added their own level of influences to their study: inter-media. This included a level of influence that other researchers have mentioned. They explain that the idea of journalistic “pack mentality” is useful to consider when studying what influences content (as outlined in Crouse’s *Boys on the Bus*, 1973). Extra-media influences in the study included criminal organizations, governments, transnational organizations, as well as sources. Journalists outlined how they felt unsafe working in conflict environments and the real possibility of being killed, injured, or kidnapped (p. 119) while on the job. Even their sources could not be trusted:

Grenade attacks, shootings in public places, and streets blocked by government or organized crime group convoys made it difficult for reporters to distinguish among corrupt government officials and battling crime groups on the street, further challenging the work... (Relly, & Gonzalez de Bustamante, 2014, p. 120).

Beyond worrying about who the danger is coming from, journalists in the study complained about regularly setting up interviews with sources just to have them cancel at the last minute. Sources that would participate in an interview may have presented a risk to the journalist because they could be affiliated with organized crime. Extra-media influences such as these were perceived by journalists to impact how they covered the news.

The ideological level was also influential although the authors of the study were not able to provide uniform examples; there was nuance presented in analysis of this level. For instance, some of the journalists reported a general lack of trust in the government and less access to citizens who were willing to interview publicly about community issues. Also, organized crime groups sometimes held more power than the government and this had an impact on how safe journalists felt while covering conflict (Relly & Gonzalez de Bustamante, 2014).

Data showed that every level of the HOI model influenced conflict coverage in some way. Violence, identified as an extra-media influence, seemed to be the strongest, even impacting the levels above and below it. It particularly had an effect on the individual level of influence as journalists regularly communicated being fearful while they worked and after their shifts were over. The authors also found that lower level influences such as media routines impacted higher levels such as media organization. These findings are in line with other studies (Fahmy & Johnson, 2005; 2012; Kim, 2010).

In summary, literature shows that levels of influence impact news coverage differently depending on the scenario. In most studies, higher-level factors such as extra-media and ideological forces exert more influence on news coverage than individual forces and media routines (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Ibrahim, 2003; Hanitzsch & Mellado, 2011; Fahmy & Johnson, 2005; 2012). The exception to the rule includes those examples where culture, training,

and education are found to be more influential on the overall news product for specific reasons (Fahmy & Johnson, 2012). Some of those examples were found in journalistic cultures from the West. What the above examples of literature do not consider is the work of freelance journalists, specifically those from the West. Freelancers often have different working conditions than journalists who are employed by a media company. They may not have the same financial and editorial support initially and safety can be more of a concern. These aspects should be considered when pursuing research about freelance journalists who cover conflict.

This dissertation contributes to literature by examining the different levels of the Hierarchy of Influences model and Gatekeeping processes that U.S. freelance journalists believe influences their work as they cover conflict. This research is not specifically focused on the difference in conflict coverage in various parts of the world by U.S. freelancers but the results and analysis will consider the nuances whenever possible. With this in mind, several overarching questions arise:

RQ1: When journalists relay their experiences of conflict coverage, how do they present attitudes, values, beliefs, and motivations in relation to their role?

RQ2: What do freelance journalists perceive as factors influencing their coverage of conflict?

- a. Individual factors (education, attitudes, beliefs, values)?
- b. Media routines?
- c. Media organizations (editorial control, policies)?
- d. Extra-media factors (competition from other media, technology, government)?
- e. Ideology?

RQ3: How does the process of gatekeeping influence conflict coverage by freelance journalists?

RQ4: Are there differences between male freelancers and female freelancers in terms of what they perceive as factors influencing their conflict coverage?

CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY

When approaching research of certain phenomenon, we should first acknowledge the researcher's perspective regarding knowledge. In considering how researchers pursue knowledge, their thinking lies at the heart of inquiry (Kuhn, 1962). Phillips (1990) said that the aim of study is to establish knowledge, and this dissertation recognizes that there is more than one way to do so.

Approach to research

Guba (1990) believed that the positivistic and humanistic approaches to research were specific in what each assumes. Simply put, a positivist acknowledges a reality that exists “out there” and is virtually the same for all humans. A humanist recognizes multiple realities for humans that are influenced for different reasons for different people. Kuhn (1962) discussed three key assumptions in the pursuit of knowledge: ontological, epistemological, and the consideration of human nature. Burrell and Morgan (1979) added to these assumptions by arguing that methodology and axiology are also important. What does this mean for the researcher? When considering ontology, the nature of reality is explored. Specifically, “What is the nature of reality?” Epistemology refers to the nature of knowledge. Is it acquired (positivistic assumption) or do people *experience* reality (humanistic assumption)? Epistemological orientation is important to consider as it gives the researcher a framework to determine the best way to enter into discourse with others as an integral part of deliberation and inquiry. Consideration of human nature (What is the relationship between humans and their environments?) also provides different assumptions for the paradigmatic traditions. In the positivistic tradition, humans experience nature in much the same way because reality exists outside of a person. In the humanistic tradition, humans interact differently with their

environment depending on their background and the meaning they subscribe to situations. As Burrell and Morgan (1979) agreed, methodology is also important when considering the different assumptions between positivistic and humanistic approaches to research. Making sound decisions about methodology is essential when determining which tools are appropriate for finding and discovering “truth.” Axiology, or consideration of the role of values in research, is also meaningful when we discuss the different paradigmatic traditions. In a positivistic approach, traditionally, research and results are value free or “objective.” For a humanist, traditionally, research and findings are value-laden because the researcher is a tool in the research and a potential influence on the findings.

The humanistic approach was developed as a critique of social scientific methods and is a more subjective way of pursuing knowledge using methods such as in-depth interviews, case studies, and focus groups. This approach is influenced by the phenomenological idea that people have different realities because they are born into different sociocultural situations and grow into them over time (Gurwitsch, 1965). There is no specific scientific approach in the humanistic tradition as compared to the positivistic tradition. Instead, findings are inductive and emergent. The researcher comes from a humanistic perspective for this dissertation. That means that the researcher seeks descriptions of freelance journalists’ experiences in their own words, and will interpret the meaning of those words.

Research method

This research assumes that reality is socially constructed and the subjects in the study create meaning through lived experiences. Qualitative methods lead the researcher to be deeply immersed in the subject and this brings veracity to data and analysis (Coleman, 2004). Meaning is best uncovered and explored through studying descriptions of phenomena in the words of the

people being studied (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989). The researcher studied descriptions of the phenomena in several ways: an exploratory, in-depth interview study with journalists who cover conflict, thematic analysis of journalists' autobiographies depicting accounts of their coverage of conflict, analysis of answers to open-ended questions presented in an online qualitatively designed questionnaire, and a follow-up member check with additional long interviews with freelancers. Interpretive research considers words as data (Frey, Botan, Friedman & Kreps, 1992) and when researchers arrange those words into stories, they provide meaning that can convince a reader in the same way a statistic might convince another reader of the veracity of a social scientific study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As an interpreter of the participants' words, the researcher serves as an instrument in interpreting the data.

Role of the researcher

As Wolcott (2008) points out, the researcher is an instrument of inquiry. For example, in this dissertation, it is useful for the researcher to present information about her professional background in journalism and motivations for the study. Sharing this type of information is typically known as identifying the "researcher's role" in the process of inquiry.

Because the researcher sought narrative themes as representations of human experiences, she recognizes her own background knowledge and insight into journalism practices in the field and the news production process. The researcher was employed as a broadcast journalist in the United States for approximately 10 years. During that time, she reported from domestic newsrooms on conflict situations such as: hostage negotiation scenarios, SWAT team standoffs, and the "War on Terror." While she was not dispatched to cover conflict in another country, she witnessed colleagues in situations where outside forces impacted the news production process

and shaped the message. The researcher also acknowledges that she experienced her own reports being influenced by outside and internal elements.

The researcher first became interested in studying freelance journalists in conflict zones after reading about more journalists dying in the field in 2011 than any other year on record (Commission for the Protection of Journalists, 2012). Around the same time, news came out about internationally known, award-winning journalist Tim Hetherington being hit by shrapnel and dying while covering news in Syria. His colleague, Sebastian Junger started RISC (Reporters Instructed in Saving Colleagues) training for freelancers because he believed that if journalists had basic first aid training they might not die as easily in the field. (Hetherington would have possibly lived if another freelance journalist with him knew how to apply a tourniquet.) Through research on RISC, the researcher discovered more about the forces freelancers deal with in the field when they cover conflict and war. After consulting the literature, she learned that there is a large body of work concerning war correspondents but much less about freelance journalists and how they play into the news production process from the field. This is one reason why the researcher is pursuing this line of inquiry. While the major focus of the dissertation is on what freelancers believe influences their work, the study is also interested in how some of these forces put reporters in danger. The researcher will discuss this more in the discussion and conclusion chapter of this dissertation.

The researcher's fundamental assumptions about what constitutes legitimate knowledge include an acknowledgement that a human's lived experience is their perceived reality and humans have different experiences and therefore different perceived realities. This is why she sought to spend time with and interview journalists about what they face while covering conflict as freelancers. Her professional orientation is similar to those that she hoped to gather knowledge

from. Carey (1975) argues that researchers must understand history, economics, organizations, power structures, social relationships, and the nature of social reality within the society under study. While the researcher's reality is indeed different from other journalists' realities, this situates the author in a position as a researcher that allows certain insight into the phenomenon. The researcher believes, in line with Carey's argument, that no matter the level of sophistication of the research tools used in the process of inquiry, it is the questions asked that are most important in uncovering knowledge (Carey, 1975). Because of her background in media, the researcher has insight that helped to shape the questions needed to uncover meaning.

Sample

As an initial step to the dissertation, the researcher performed an interpretive, textual analysis of autobiographies by journalists who have covered conflict situations. To gather the sources, a search was conducted on a southeastern university library's database using the words "war correspondent autobiography." This search resulted in five autobiographies: "Muddy Boots and Red Socks, A Reporter's Life" by Malcolm W. Browne, "Ambushed: A War Reporter's Life On the Line," by Ian Stewart, "A Rope and A Prayer" by David Rohde and Kristen Mulvihill, "Flirting With Danger" by Sidbhan Darrow, and "Beyond Bogota" by Garry Leech.

The purpose of analyzing the autobiographies was to provide a contextual understanding of the types of challenges journalists face while covering conflict. After completing the autobiography analysis, the researcher moved forward to further explore how freelance journalists in particular cover conflict. The examination of the autobiographies allowed the researcher to design a series of questions to delve into the thoughts of the freelancers. Data from the autobiographies evolved as themes emerged from the text and resulted in the final themes discussed in the next section. The analysis used to generate and refine themes was modeled after

Ryan and Bernard's (2003) thematic identification where initial themes are identified and then refined and collapsed to culminate in categories that are both exhaustive and mutually exclusive. The process of thematic identification is a multi-staged approach consisting of several reviews of the textual sample. Thematic analysis results in a final set of themes that lend to understanding the meaning of a specific situation.

The researcher attended first aid training for freelance journalists in New York City, New York. Award-winning and internationally known journalist Sebastian Junger started the non-profit program after his colleague, Tim Hetherington, was killed while covering conflict (as previously mentioned). Junger's goal for his organization, Reporters Instructed in Saving Colleagues, is to give free first aid training to freelance journalists who cover conflict. During the RISC training session, the researcher observed the program and was allowed to recruit freelancers for in-depth interviews. Five male freelancers, 18 and older, agreed to participate. Freelancers signed consent forms and were informed that their identities would remain confidential. The findings are discussed in Chapter 6 and present context about freelancer experiences in violent situations.

The third stage of the dissertation entailed sending out a questionnaire to individuals, 18 years of age or older, who worked as freelance journalists, and self-professed to covering conflict. In order to recruit participants the researcher sent emails to the organizers of RISC (Reporters Instructed in Saving Colleagues), The Freelance Community of the Society of Professional Journalists, Committee to Protect Journalists, The Rory Peck Trust, as well as the Freelance Frontline Register in order to recruit participants. The researcher chose the entities by conducting an online search for "freelance journalist organizations." She compiled a list of organizations identified in the search and specifically searched the Internet for mentions of each organization. Those that were also mentioned in news stories regarding freelancers and conflict

journalism were added to the final list of organizations that the researcher emailed. Organizers of RISC and the Freelance Frontline Register replied to the researcher and agreed to send emails to the members of their groups. A representative for The Rory Peck Trust replied but declined to participate. The other organizations did not respond to the initial email or a follow-up email.

In the recruitment email, the researcher explained that she is conducting research regarding freelance journalists that work in conflict situations and is searching for United States citizens to share their experiences via an online questionnaire. She asked organizers to send the email to their members, soliciting those who might be willing to interview about their profession. An incentive of a \$25 Amazon.com gift card was offered to participants. The email contained the link to the online questionnaire. The questionnaire began with an informed consent statement. If the participant agreed to consent, he or she clicked to the next page to begin the survey. It was communicated that the journalists' identities would be kept anonymous and that there was no requirement to participate. The questionnaire was available online for two weeks and the researcher sent an additional email to the above media organizations after one week asking for a reminder to be sent to potential participants. The researcher also designed the online survey so that an I.P. address (or computer) could be used to enter responses only once. This was a way to avoid having a participant take the survey more than once.

Questionnaire

All participants were informed of the voluntary nature of the study and agreed to an informed consent statement by clicking to the second page to begin the online questionnaire. The data collection consisted of questions via an online questionnaire that was approximated to take 15 to 20 minutes of the participant's time. The survey included approximately 20 unstructured or open-ended questions administered in English. The unstructured questions were followed by a

large text box where the participant could offer as much information as he or she wanted to. These questions were followed with approximately 10 structured questions to collect demographic data. For instance, a structured question might ask about the participant's years of experience. Structured questions offered multiple choices for the participant to select for an answer (Less than 5 years, 5 to 10 years, 10 to 15 years, more than 15 years...), although only one choice could be made. The questions presented in the online questionnaire are included in Appendix 1.

As McCracken (1988) suggested, the questions were carefully constructed in order to collect the necessary information to answer the over-arching research questions. The researcher chose to present participants with open-ended, unstructured questions that asked about their training, education, decision-making processes, attitudes, beliefs, and outside influences on their work. The questions were clear, brief, and focused to uncover information useful in examining elements of the previously mentioned theories. Questions were designed so that participants were able to interpret concepts easily and common language and proper grammar were used to make responding simple (Alreck, 1985).

Words and phrases that are familiar to respondents were used as Frey *et al.* (1991) recommends that researchers should take "...into account the respondent's culture and education when designing questions [and] maximizes the chance they will understand the content and participate" (p. 190). All of participants were directed to and interacted with the same questionnaire, and therefore received the same messages about the research.

Responses

RISC had a total of 190 graduates of the first aid training program at the time that the recruitment emails were distributed. The Freelance Frontline Register showed a listing of 498

freelancers on its website at the time of the survey. The organizers of the groups do not have a record of demographics of the members and it is difficult to know how many United States citizens make up the total membership. Specifically, U.S. citizens were recruited for this part of the dissertation and a total of 46 freelancers answered the online, open-ended questionnaire, submitting 275 pages of responses. A table of the demographics of the 46 respondents is included at the end of the dissertation as Table 1.

While collecting data, the researcher worked to achieve data saturation and redundancy and this was achieved at approximately participant number 26. Redundancy, or data saturation, means that participants eventually begin to share similar experiences as they answer questions about their jobs. Because perceived realities are different for people in a humanistic research tradition (Gurwitsch, 1965), recording lived experiences until reaching data saturation and repetition or redundancy is essential when working to uncover meaning. How does a researcher know when she has achieved data saturation? In other words, how many completed questionnaires are needed? Coleman (2004) answered this by saying, “When no new information is being revealed... and nothing new results, stop.” (p. 97). The researcher collected as many completed questionnaires as possible in the two weeks that it was available to participants online. Even though after a certain amount of questionnaires were no longer offering new information, the researcher used data from all of the completed surveys to compile demographics. Qualitative surveys can be used with small samples to collect data of great depth, “describing the perspectives of particular respondents fully” (Frey, Botan, Friedman, & Kreps, 1991, p. 202).

“Qualitative researchers study spoken and written records of human experience, including transcribed talk” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 647) thus, the researcher treated the data as the respondent’s own lived account. Guided by initial concepts identified in literature, the

researcher allowed new concepts to develop and shift as she collected and analyzed data. The analysis began early in the data collection process with an analytic strategy: the researcher simultaneously checked and tested emerging ideas with lenses of guiding theory and literature in the field (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973).

Once the online questionnaire was closed, the researcher read the answers, allowing themes and patterns to emerge through the process of data reduction (Patton, 2002), which allows data to be transformed into “meaningful data.” While reading through answers for the first time, the researcher did not take notes or try to create understanding from a participant’s answers. The first read-through was an opportunity to concentrate on answers.

During the second read-through, the researcher took notes or memos of initial reactions to answers. In this stage, it was useful to consider repetition of ideas, words, and meanings. The more times a concept was repeated by participants, the more significant the concept became. Therefore, the researcher would write notes, considering the surface meaning as well as the underlying nuances of a concept. Upon a third read-through, the researcher began to identify themes and categories that were examined during subsequent read-throughs (Morrison, Haley, Sheehan, & Taylor, 2002). Once the answers were reviewed three times, the researcher considered the data using inductive analysis. This process consists of several consultations of the data, looking at the answers line by line to identify patterns, themes, and preferably emic categories (Patton, 2002). In order to evaluate the meanings found in the answers, and seek understanding of how the participants’ descriptions create social realities, the researcher coded questionnaire answers into key concepts relating to the categories of the Hierarchy of Influences model (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Theory is important to consider when reading responses because it is central to the process of interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Constant themes

were coded and the researcher used Strauss and Corbin's (1998) strategy of axial coding to group codes according to conceptual categories that reflect commonalities. Then, codes were clustered around points of intersection (Fielding & Lee, 1998) for overall consideration.

After concepts were coded and grouped together, the researcher used McCracken's (1988) final "phase" of analysis that considers the relationships, assumptions, and participants' perceptions of reality. At this stage of analysis, the researcher considered social practices, representations, assumptions, and stories shared by freelance journalists.

Because meaning is socially constructed the researcher cannot offer one interpretation that is universal (Creeber, 2006) and rather than support what was already believed to be established in literature, the researcher analyzed data using a critical eye (Deacon, Murdock, Pickerington, & Golding, 1999) taking care to consider whether the participant exercised impression management (attempting to present themselves in a way that they believe is socially desirable), avoidance of a topic, or had misunderstandings about the questions asked. Then, more importantly, the meaning of such things was considered. All of this information was used in analyzing the data. The researcher also recognized what the literature says should be in the data as well as what is there that is not easily explained.

Goffman (1959) argues that self-presentation should be considered in humanistic inquiry. He posits that actors in a phenomenon present themselves in different ways in different spaces. For instance, a journalist may act authoritative and brave in front of onlookers but internally experience fear and a lack of confidence. This is the concept of "front stage versus back stage" in social interaction. This researcher agrees with Goffman (1959) in that in order to uncover true meaning, researchers in the humanistic perspective should consider data through participants' presentation of self and the possible implications in various scenarios. Clifford (1988) says

researchers can study social facts as evidence to argue why and how certain patterns arise out of a set of “facts.” Detail can also give description to the way a person experiences the world or culture under study (Fishman, 1980) and Geertz (1973) posits that “thick description” helps to explain a complex symbolic structure that means something or says something.

It is important to recognize that the researcher of this dissertation study is not seeking to generalize findings to a population. Instead, the researcher wishes to provide “rich description” of the phenomenon by uncovering multiple perceived realities, the meanings of those perceived realities, and the experiences of participants.

Follow-up to responses

In order to check data collected in the online questionnaire and confirm validity of the analysis, the researcher conducted nine in-depth interviews with freelancers. The objective of the in-depth interviews was to confirm and clarify points in the data and to gather even more information about the experiences of freelancers who cover conflict. To recruit freelancers for the interviews, the researcher asked questionnaire respondents to provide their email address at the end of the survey if they were willing to be interviewed. Participants who volunteered for a follow-up interview, but were not able to meet in person because of their location outside of the country were interviewed on-camera via Skype. Four females and five male freelancers interviewed with the researcher. A table with descriptions of the participants is included as Table 3 in Chapter 11 of the dissertation.

CHAPTER 5. WORDS ON CONFLICT

For the initial phase of this dissertation, the researcher studied autobiographies of journalists who cover conflict. Those journalists wrote about the danger they faced, the idea of remaining objective while in the field, and their motivations for being in the field. The purpose of this portion of the dissertation study was to provide context and a knowledge base for the research that would follow. The data in this chapter is provided as additional information about the experiences journalists face as they cover conflict. The first research question of the dissertation asked, “When journalists write about their experiences of conflict coverage, how do they present attitudes, values, beliefs, and motivations in relation to their role?”

Through a careful textual analysis of the autobiographies, it was discovered that commitment to truth and a pursuit of thrill were common themes in why journalists cover war. Reporters also indicated an unspoken code of bravery that is to be followed in every situation. They believed they were to be brave despite warnings from others and personal hesitations. Journalists who report in war zones also appeared to do so out of a spirit of fierce competition. They were committed to getting the best angle, being the fastest to do so, and through the process, most felt a sort of “high” especially when editors were pleased with the results.

Journalists often witness horrific scenes while reporting in war zones. People are shot in front of them, victims lose limbs when coming into contact with a roadside bomb, and locals are shell-shocked from losing family members and homes due to battles. A theme of compartmentalization arose from all of the autobiographies. Without being outwardly taught to do so, journalists appear to compartmentalize what they witnessed and put aside feelings in order to do their job. Many indicated that is how they coped but admit it is not healthy.

Commitment to truth

Reporters seem to pursue information in dangerous situations not exclusively for adventure but from a commitment to “truth.” David Rohde writes about his dedication to “rigor” in his book with Kristin Mulvihill entitled “A Rope and a Prayer.” Rohde feels as though he needs to interview a Taliban commander in order to be objective and present both sides of the story. He expresses hesitation for the assignment but pushes himself to move forward. He writes, “After privately wrestling with the decision for weeks, I have decided I need to interview a Taliban commander for the book to be as rigorous and thorough as possible (p. 2).” He admits the risk he is taking: “It’s a fraught proposition, one that comes with [a] kind of extreme risk” (p. 2) but continues with the assignment out of a personal commitment to getting “both sides” of the story. This socialization to the ideal of objectivity is an influence from media organizations (Breed, 1955) and journalists do not seem to recognize, or at least they do not write about, the impact on their operation in the field. Ian Stewart writes about his appointment as a reporter in West Africa. He was there to report the *truth* but questions whether he is making any difference.

I realized that after just five months in Africa, the relentless scenes of death and destruction were making me question whether I was serving any purpose as a reporter. I had always justified my role as a journalist by saying to myself that I could do some good by reporting to the world what was happening in forgotten places (Stewart, p. 113).

Stewart became depressed because he no longer felt he was able to do what he believed he was meant to do as a journalist. He felt he actually had the power to alert the world to the poor conditions in his assigned country. Garry Leech has the same type of feelings when he believes he is unable to do his job. He is in Columbia reporting on the fumigation of coca plants grown to

make cocaine. After being captured by a guerrilla group, he questions his work as a reporter and faces possible death:

I feel an overwhelming sense of impotence as a result of being detained and held at gunpoint. At times like this, I wonder why the hell I do the type of work I do. The time is passing interminably slowly. The option to change my mind, to simply walk away, no longer exists. I am now at the mercy of the FARC. Some distant rebel commander will be my judge, jury, and if things take a real turn for the worse, my executioner. (Stewart, p. 9)

In Siobhan Darrow's book, "Flirting with Danger," she describes a certain hope she has that her reporting will "help the situation" (p. 102) even though she is facing almost impossible deadlines from the network. "We were under pressure to feed the network 24 hours a day... The network's thirst was unquenchable, never able to drink enough from the trough of human suffering" (p.102). Darrow does not avoid sending products to the 24-hour news cycle that she describes, instead she feels that the *truth* she is witnessing should be part of it.

The Thrill

Journalists indicate that the pursuit of truth has a reward that can also be a drawback. From their perspectives, journalists are not simply risk-seeking adrenaline junkies. They believe the drive to report is more complicated than that and consider war reporting to be a sort of addiction. Darrow wrote, "For some correspondents, the thrill and danger of war becomes a way of life. Perhaps being near death makes them feel more alive" (p. 105). She admits that she had a difficult time letting go of her combat reporting career. Even after being home on a short break she could not pull herself away from watching CNN coverage of war. She describes herself as an addict: "I'm like an alcoholic on the wagon about to take a drink; I can't go there again" (p. 164).

But even though she Darrow did not think it was healthy for her to return to war coverage, she picked up the phone, ready to call her editor:

I was like a junkie for whom the only thing that will make her better is the very thing that hurts her the most. There I was, frozen on the couch with the phone in one hand, feeling so terrible and repelled by what I saw, yet so drawn to the violence and the crisis.
(Darrow, p. 164).

Browne also describes reporting in a war zone as a type of drug: “News is a kind of all-pervading ether... Editors demand that their reporters stay ahead of the pack and speed is the primary concern of the news business” (p.40). Not only is it a drug for Browne, he also feels his profession is like a prize. He “won” (p. 64) his posting as a foreign correspondent in a volatile country, writes that he “tasted the nectar of foreign correspondent” (p. 78), and realized that he could not do without it. For him, even the preparations to cover battle were a thrill and when he gets a new assignment he is as “happy as a kid ready for camping” (p. 101). Stewart feels the same way as Browne when he gets ready to go on assignment to cover battle. After his first survival in conflict, he writes that he experienced an adrenaline rush and loved it.

My blood surged with the excitement of someone who had cheated death. That had been my first time under fire; I had survived it, and I felt invincible. At the age of twenty-nine, I had discovered I had a taste for the rush of adrenaline that comes in life-threatening situations. In the years to come, that taste would become insatiable, until it nearly killed me. (Browne, p. 17)

Stewart searches out more dangerous assignments, pushes limits and tests his “mettle” under fire (p. 17). Even after Stewart was sent to Hanoi for work, earning more in pay and status, he still longed for adventure and war reporting:

When I got restless I asked to spend time in nearby Bangkok, to help with the task of covering much of Southeast Asia. It was during one of these trips to Thailand that Cambodian co-premier Hun Sen staged a coup to oust his counterpart, Prince Norodom Ranariddh. I immediately offered to help cover the story. (Stewart, p. 17)

War correspondents realize that they are in danger but like an addict, they continue to put themselves in harm's way. The above accounts begin to explain the highs and lows of the correspondent's job while covering conflict. He or she is drawn to the rush of facing danger and feels almost hopeless when there is no more war to cover.

Code of Bravery

In order to face danger and experience the adrenaline rush that often comes with it, journalists must have "bravery" as a war correspondent. They write about an apparent unspoken code that allows no fear or outward signs of fear in dangerous situations. The code is the same for female and male journalists. Darrow discusses her first assignment as a war reporter. She was a new producer and CNN asked her to cover the civil war in Georgia. Her job was to make arrangements for war coverage but she did not know what a news crew's basic needs were in a war zone. Despite being inexperienced, Darrow didn't want other journalists to know she was feeling "chicken" (p. 75). She writes that she wanted "to hide [her] fear" (p. 75). For Darrow, the idea of extreme bravery specifically came into play when she was working alongside male reporters: "Women covering war often feel they have to be braver and tougher than their male competitors, just to prove themselves" (p. 79). Journalists didn't even want to be seen in flak jackets, equipment that could save their lives under fire.

War is often all about that kind of bravado and, in some cases, an addiction to danger.

Some correspondents give up their families and stable lives to push themselves to the

limits of risk and endurance. Lots of hardened journalists would never be caught dead in [a flak jacket], the wartime equivalent of seat belts. (Darrow, p. 79)

Rohde's story agrees with Darrow's. He writes about the code of bravery among journalists regarding risk and how it relates to status: "The reporter who takes the greatest risk usually gets the most acclaim" (p. 17). Rohde took risks in pursuing an interview with a Taliban commander and was kidnapped. If he had completed the interview without being kidnapped, it would have earned him elite status among other journalists even though he was already highly respected for other assignments. Despite the danger, journalists take risks to earn status among other journalists, and present a brave front in all situations.

Stewart received a prestigious position as the West Africa Associated Press Bureau Chief but faced anxiety before even leaving for his post. When he arrived at his assignment he felt dread and hesitation: "sensed I made a monumental mistake" (p. 31) but he continued on. He didn't want to let others down due to fear: "I wanted to stay on the plane and return to Vietnam. Of course I did not – I ignored my dread and kept moving toward the terminal" (p. 31). Leech writes about hesitating twice before a major assignment that he considered dangerous. He went ahead with a particular interaction with a local person rather than acknowledging his fear and returning to his hotel room.

I reacted as I usually did when traveling in Latin America, which was to make decisions about people based on my gut instinct. However, while my gut told me that Roberto was okay, my rational mind still remained wary as we exited the hotel and made our way around the corner to the bar. (Leech, p. 31)

Leech was eventually kidnapped and thought he would be killed. This was the second time he was kidnapped.

Compartmentalization

Journalists who put themselves in harm's way to provide accounts of war have to cope with what they witness. Most of the writers shared stories of witnessing murder, suffering, and hopelessness. Because this was their reality, they had to find a way to continue working under the psychological stress of tragedy. Reporters seem to share a similar way of dealing with horrific details of war. Browne writes about compartmentalization of tragedy in the field. He even sets the tone of his book by writing in the introduction: "Journalists, more than many other people, spend their lives boiling in the caustic bleach of reality" (p. xiv). Browne even writes that the goal of his book is to help his "beloved heirs" as they cover conflict. "A survivor by instinct, I've learned how to walk safely through minefields of both the literal and figurative kind, and since I can't take this skill with me, I'm seizing this chance... to set down some reflections" (p. xv). An example of compartmentalization comes from Browne when he describes what he witnesses one day in the field. He is at a pre-arranged event for the press where a Tibetan monk sets himself on fire and burns to death in front of a crowd. Browne includes photos in his autobiography of the incident and writes that journalists didn't flinch and kept filming roll after roll, without thinking, "as an athlete chews gum to relieve stress" (p. 11). As a natural reflex, the war correspondent records what happens no matter how gruesome it is.

Even though journalists seem to compartmentalize what they witness, their memory holds on to images and experiences. Browne writes, "There are some deaths reporters cannot forget. The best that can be said is that such deaths season us and make us think twice before writing something that may leave blood on our hands" (p. 19). Darrow chronicles how journalists deal with what they see in a distant voice. She doesn't discuss how she processes her assignments, instead she abstractly explains how photographers cope with what they see:

When they look through the viewfinder they forget they are just as vulnerable as their subjects. Life and death decisions over a picture... we made them all the time. It seemed crazy...beating the odds one more time. (Darrow, p. 104)

Leech also has an account of how his compartmentalization about what he witnesses did not always help. While reporting in Columbia he sees corpses and deaths and specifically writes about “hitting rock bottom” (p. 83). Leech admits to depression and having vivid memories of sights and scents of corpses years after the event. He also shares an account of being in a firefight. Reporters, he writes, learn how it feels to not feel and tell themselves they are “just in shock” (p. 132). Other journalists write in their autobiographies that while they compartmentalize what they see, they do so with realization. Stewart writes of his days covering conflict in Western Africa:

When Chea tripped the wire with his rubber-sandaled foot, the blast sent a shower of red-hot shrapnel into his groin, where his leg has been blown off. ...I watched [him] through a viewfinder as I walked beside him, callously taking photographs. I had been conditioned as a journalist not to become involved with a story, which really means not to be human. (Stewart, p.23)

The conditioning that Stewart discusses is part of the socialization process that journalists go through in order to remain successful in the overall media organization and cope with covering war.

In summary, these autobiographies show that journalists who cover war believe their material should make a difference or do some type of “good” in the communities they work in. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) argue that the overarching idea of the journalist having the ability to change conflict is an Ideological force in reporting. The journalist is socialized to have this

belief and their attitudes about the stories they cover show this. Examining this theme through the lens of the Hierarchy of Influences model (Shoemaker & Reece, 1996), it is difficult to determine which level of influence the idea of the “thrill” falls under. In some instances, outside media forces determine the dangers that journalists must escape, leading them to the adrenaline rush. This is also a concept that could be specific to the media worker. Not all of the authors presented a desire to be in dangerous situations or a need to pursue the thrill. The reporters indicated that it is important to remain brave in the face of danger. In this way, the media worker takes on an attitude and value (bravery) but the overall socialization and ideals of what is acceptable among journalists who cover war is an influence from the media organization level. Lastly, when war correspondents compartmentalize the horrors they witness, they do so as a sort of media worker routine. Again, this is a learned response and journalists socialize each other to this method of coping.

These findings informed the researcher as she designed the open-ended, qualitative, online questionnaire, and analyzed the data. The journalists who wrote their autobiographies were not necessarily freelancers but they experienced coverage of conflict. The reflections on these experiences helped to inform the researcher on perceptions of journalists in conflict scenarios and influences on their coverage of conflict. Specifically, influences from the levels of media worker routines, media organization, and ideology were prevalent throughout the journalists’ written accounts.

CHAPTER 6. EXPLORATORY STUDY

In order to prepare the questionnaire designed to get at the core purpose of this dissertation, which is to identify and explore influences on journalists' coverage of conflict, exploratory interviews with five freelancers were conducted. The freelancers agreed to in-depth interviews via Skype from their work bases in various countries. Pseudonyms are used in this chapter when discussing the freelancers' experiences and the researcher has included descriptions of participants as Table 1 at the end of the end of the dissertation. The freelancers were U.S. citizens, 18 years old or older, and graduates from the non-profit first aid training program Reporters Instructed in Saving Colleagues (RISC) described earlier in this dissertation. A list of the questions posed to freelancers in this portion of the study is included in Appendix A.

The freelancers interviewed pointed to specific ways they prepare for assignments and survive in dangerous situations. They discussed their experiences when faced with danger but were less forthcoming when acknowledging the risks they face in the field. All five participants became somewhat tense when answering questions about fear and, as found in the study of autobiographies, discussed the concept abstractly. Another finding that was also present in the researcher's interpretative, thematic analysis of autobiographies about war coverage was that of the freelancers' belief that bravery is necessary for success while covering conflict. Referring again to Goffman's (1959) argument that humans have more than one self, the researcher acknowledges that participants may act one way in the presence of some company and another way in other company. However, the supreme idea of bravery was constant in interviews with all five freelancers.

The freelancers in this portion of the study alluded to having felt fear at various times while covering dangerous assignments but when asked directly, participants would not expand

on the idea of being afraid in a combat zone. The possibility of dying in the field or being kidnapped seemed almost a taboo topic when probed beneath a surface level. In this way, freelancers are brave and heroic on the “front stage,” especially around editors, other journalists, and family members (Goffman, 1959).

In delving deeper into how freelancers cover dangerous assignments in different ways, three needs emerged. Participants agreed that they need some form of first aid knowledge. They need to know how to deal with the pressure cooker of the editorial process, and how to play cultural, social, and political roles in conflict-ridden areas.

First aid training

Freelancers’ survival in the field hinges on whether they can save themselves or a colleague after being severely injured. The journalists who completed RISC training agreed that trainers armed them with essential, albeit simple, survival skills. If a participant is hit by shrapnel in the leg and begins bleeding from the femoral artery, they know how to apply a tourniquet to stop the bleeding. If conscious, they can also direct someone else to apply a tourniquet. All journalists who graduate from RISC learn how to apply a tourniquet and practice doing so many times in combat-simulated situations. This simple knowledge could have saved the life of Tim Hetherington, the main catalyst for RISC training.

Lisosky and Henrichsen (2009) said journalists in combat should always be trained. Beyond that, they found that protective gear may be helpful (such as “flak jackets”). However, those interviewed in this exploratory study pointed to such gear as being useless because it slowed them down. Dan explained that journalists need to avoid looking like members of the military at all times (certain gear can give the impression that the journalist is a member of the military), and Phil shared that reporters who are new in the field might wear flak jackets but

others do not. Because they indicated they are not likely to wear protective gear, RISC training was especially important to the participants.

During the interviews, journalists discussed survival in dangerous situations. Josh talked about a reporter getting shot while running next to him as they were covering conflict. He said the shooting fueled his desire to go through survival training. Josh explained first aid knowledge as not just a skill he should obtain but something that his colleagues deserve from him.

After (the reporter) was hit I felt guilty. You know it's not fair to him if I'm his wingman and I don't know how to help him if he's shot. If that had been worse and he couldn't get up and he was bleeding I would have had such a limited mental toolbox with which to assist him and that's not fair.

After completing RISC training, Josh knows some survival skills and it gives him more confidence: "I am convinced that the primary benefits are psychological and mental. That you will remember a small content from all the training but the hesitation is gone." Other journalists like Phil recognize the benefits of the training and would like to see more young freelancers attend RISC. He even brainstormed ways to raise money for more sessions.

I think having something like this where people are able to get training that otherwise they'd have to pay thousands of dollars for, the courses are really expensive to people... this is so important.

While learning about how to survive in the field during RISC training, the reality of injuries and even death were forefront in journalists' minds. Because of this, freelancers started to consider their mortality. Participants talked about their experiences with violence, tear gas, kidnappings, and dodged bullets.

While the first aid training portion of RISC received praise from attendees, some freelancers had concerns with the curriculum. Shawn was pleased with what he learned and admitted that as a freelance journalist, he would not be able to afford training on his own. He reiterates the financial hardships of freelance journalists and praises the RISC training as an unbeatable resource. However, he thinks the strategies need updating:

You know I think the skills are fantastic. The problem is, it's not enough. It assumes that you stabilize someone and then a helicopter comes in and takes out the patients. Well that's for embeds and most of us aren't embeds. We don't have access to helivac (medical helicopters).

RISC training is planned and presented by a medical doctor, wilderness survival trainer, and a National Guard Member. The trainers haven't operated in the field as journalists and seem to assume that freelancers will have access to professional medical help. Several participants in the study explained that they do not work near NATO forces or military units and would not have additional medical support. This is another reason that first aid training is essential in preparation for potentially dangerous assignments. Dan said, "The medical advice was spot-on. These kids needed to hear that because we don't always have help within an hour's drive."

Money, money, money

All five participants discussed the media routine of managing finances as an important influence on conflict coverage and survival in the field. Journalists who cover dangerous assignments need a pre-paid evacuation plan and gear insurance. Freelancers have to provide this on their own. Shawn said:

You have to make the decision at some point of whether or not you're going to go into that space where the mortar is and then there are huge financial problems there. If [you]

don't have insurance in the states and get hit by a mortar round but don't die your family goes bankrupt trying to evac[uate] you and the health care that goes with it.

He believes freelancers should not enter conflict situations unless they have at least \$10,000 in the bank to stave off the "financial insecurity" of being in the field without a daily paycheck.

A lot of these people are running so dry financially. They might have \$800 in their bank account and they have to do it [pursue assignments that might be dangerous]... These risks [are] devastating professional decisions.

Alan agreed, saying he makes decisions in the field based on a media organization influence level: whether an editor will buy his work. He admits that he'll sometimes take a chance to get a "scoop." This risk-taking also comes from a desire to make a name for himself but even more experienced journalists like Josh will also push the line of safety on assignment. He is quick to admit that he covers dangerous situations to get paid and garner additional assignments.

Of course I felt pressure to do the bang-bang stuff cause they had staffers in. P [a competitor] was there... So in order for them to buy my sh*t I had to guarantee my work was desirable. It had to be dramatic and I sort of had to figure out what neighborhood P was in so I could be in a different neighborhood. And you know I felt... yeah. There's pressure. I'm going to have to get more violent sh*t than P just to guarantee that I get paid today.

Getting paid is essential but for Josh another frustration is the business exchange with U.S. and international media organizations. Earlier this year, he attended a photography conference abroad and showed his portfolio to an editor hoping to get hired as a staffer (full-time employee). The editor just shook his head, surprised that Josh was working in such dangerous places.

He was like, “I can’t... I can’t believe you did this.” He asked me... “Have you noticed there’s no staff in [the country] and there hasn’t been?” And I’m like, “No. No I didn’t even realize that until you just mentioned it.” He was like, “Yeah, I can’t really bring myself to send anyone. The only way I would is if I knew we had an absolute guaranteed escape route and that’s not an option so...” The irony is I was working for a feeder and [the media organization] was buying my work through them [the feed] but paying a lot less and holding less responsibility over the risk.

Shawn expresses similar concerns with the business side of covering conflict but proposes a solution. He thinks that dangerous situations because of finances can be avoided if new freelancers learn professional development skills. He says he would have benefitted from advice on how to allocate money while on assignments in conflict areas. “They never teach this in journalism... just how to manage your finances even in a basic way is never, ever taught.” For Alan, it isn’t just a case of organizing his finances. He lives with his parents when he’s not in the field and says he doesn’t have money to manage.

I seriously spend most of my time off looking for and writing grants. I’d like to get some funding to cover what’s happening in [the country he works in]. That way, I could stay there, possibly get insurance or even upgrade my gear. If you sell a picture after working all day, you might get \$300 but if they don’t like anything that day or if they don’t have space for it, you get nothing.

Alan plans to return to the area where he works after saving more money.

The other branch of professional development or preparation for covering conflict pertains to assignments in the field. Shawn was adamant that freelance journalists should learn how to survive professionally, saying this has an impact on physical safety in dangerous

situations. He said, “Journalists need to know how to get into magazines and how things work,” referring to the process of getting hired for an assignment and negotiating payment. “Especially when you’re starting out, freelance journalists don’t have a lot of money to begin with. Even getting an assignment is a huge feat.” But as Alan and Josh shared, even when a freelancer lands an assignment he or she can still be anxious about executing the work. Shawn becomes animated and sounds frustrated when he discusses the fear that some colleagues have.

I’ve found that freelancers are actually more afraid of the editors than the risk in the field and I think that is RIDICULOUS. It’s, ‘You either talk to an insurgent that’s getting shot or we don’t have a story.’ What the editor is thinking about is what makes the best story and they’re not thinking about the risks that freelancers are thinking about.

Shawn relays that he learned how to sell his work from other freelancers. He explained that he doesn’t fall prey to pressure-filled editorial situations because he has saved some money over the seven years that he has been a freelance journalist. Shawn said he is also more selective with his assignments and can stay on the fringe of violence at times because he works strictly as a writer (photographers need to get closer to combat scenes to capture the images).

You know, negotiating salaries with magazines is an art. You need to tell people in the field to not undercut the value of their work when they sell it. If you almost got killed for it, you should be paying the “I almost got killed for it price.” When someone puts their life on the line, it deserves a little financial support.

Dan, who has been in the business for a long time agrees. “Sometimes [editors] have no clue what they’re asking for. I’m the one there on the ground and I have to protect myself and my crew first.” Because Phil has a wife and children, he won’t take risky assignments but knows

others do. Phil has also been in the business longer than some of the other participants, is internationally known for his work, and gets paid more than inexperienced freelancers.

I see this next crop [of journalists] sort of coming up in their early 20s. I feel like everybody is under the impression that if they go to Syria and go to Libya this is what's going to blow, what's going to open up their careers. And I think that while there's some truth to that, what people are not considering is the saturation. Everyone is taking these tremendous risks, but editors are overwhelmed with the number of people who are there. Less experienced freelancers like Alan would benefit from information about how assignment negotiation works for journalists in the field where situations can be dangerous. Participants said it's necessary for freelancers to learn the ropes before entering the field rather than working to catch up with more experienced freelancers by placing themselves in more risky situations.

Cultural and political knowledge

Some of the participants (Shawn, Dan, Phil) also expressed a requirement of cultural knowledge for anyone entering the field on potentially dangerous assignments. Cultural and political knowledge pertains to in-depth familiarity of the political landscape of the conflict area as well as awareness of the language of native people. This knowledge not only helps freelance journalists survive dangerous assignments but also helps them stay safer while pursuing them. Lisosky and Henrichsen (2009) wrote that this type of understanding may be almost as effective as carrying protective gear. Participants routinely shared stories about how they were able to “talk [their] way out of” dangerous situations. Language training seemed to have an impact on high-stress situations because the potential perpetrator felt less threatened.

Shawn, Phil and Dan provided anecdotes about tense situations when they were able to “talk their way out of” getting shot, kidnapped, or beaten. Shawn was working with freelancers

in [another country]. They were talking to armed villagers in support of community insurgency against communists. The journalists had permission to enter the village but when they arrived, the leader who had invited them was gone. The number-two person in charge was furious to see reporters in the village. He motioned to armed children to surround the outsiders. Shawn explained how he survived:

I jumped out of the car while kids were surrounding it. I speak Hindi so I went over in the middle of where these kids were standing and I'm like "Hey! Where's the boss?" And they were kind of like, "Oh look. The crazy white foreigner can speak our language..." And I was like, "Oh, okay, sorry. My bad. We're just going to go now."

The freelancers were able to leave without being attacked but Shawn attributes the escape to his knowing the language and understanding the village's power structure. Dan shared a similar story and had a message for freelancers: "Know how to play your politics." He believes field preparation includes developing intelligent communication skills and learning extreme patience.

You have to be in-tune to human behavior patterns. I guess I just have a radar for dealing with people. It isn't a gift but I'm able to talk with and communicate effectively with different kinds of people.

Communicating effectively with different kinds of people means being culturally wise for Phil. He thinks cultural and political training (when there is time) is essential for safety in the field.

I think it is really important for us to remember our foreign-ness. It is important for us to explore things and really push for information but it is important to remember often times there are many things happening that we're not privy to. You have no idea who's really involved and why things are happening.

Shawn explained that just knowing whether to make eye contact in a certain culture can be a safety measure. Alan shared that easily learned information like this is important to him. Of all the participants in this study, Alan shared the most information about the region in which he works. He has taken the time to learn native languages and know how politics function and change. While he is in the states saving money to go back, he reads about what is happening there through emails from his sources.

Phil stays up to date on what is happening in the country where he regularly works as well. He uses reason, demeanor, and sometimes humor to talk his way out of conflict. “I try to be more of a thinking photographer instead of getting in there and just taking pictures... Communication is key.” Like Alan and Shawn, he spends a lot of time researching the assignments and politics before dispatching to a dangerous area.

I will really sit down and ask a lot of questions of someone who’s proposing that I go to [another country] and I really want to know who we’re going to be with, what are the existing relationships of who is going to be showing us around and once I feel satisfied I’ll always have a lump in my throat when I go to a place where I think I can be kidnapped or killed.

The freelancers in the exploratory study indicated that routine-level factors influence how they cover conflict. Considering Shoemaker and Reese’s (1996) HOI model, the routine level is argued to have less influence on coverage than other levels such as media organizations, extra-media forces, and ideology. Considerations such as the gear they use every day, how they pay for covering stories as freelancers, and the training they are involved in were discussed regularly by freelancers. Some of the themes that arose in the interpretive textual analysis were revealed again through long interviews. However, other concepts emerged as the researcher asked the

participants about details relating to themes such as fear, bravery, and cultural aspects of coverage. These factors are part of the media worker and their attitudes, feelings, and considerations of how they protect themselves. Findings in this chapter as well as those from the previous chapter were considered as the researcher prepared for and designed an online, qualitative, open-ended questionnaire that was completed by U.S. freelance journalists who cover conflict. A larger group was accessed through the instrumentation of the questionnaire to determine how the themes found in the exploratory study were developed and refined.

CHAPTER 7. DEMOGRAPHICS AND JARGON

This chapter of the dissertation will briefly add additional details to the world of the freelancer such as: who does he or she work for? What is the overall number of freelancers actively working in conflict? In this chapter, the researcher will also list and define jargon and vocabulary that freelancers used while answering survey questions about their experiences. Words uncommon to people who do not work in the industry are explained and context is provided for the use of the phrases. The final part of this chapter will present demographics about the freelancers who provided responses to the questionnaires. The researcher presents these details in order to inform the reader and paint a picture of the participants.

It is difficult to know the overall number of freelancers working in conflict situations throughout the world. There are several reasons for this. Freelancers do not necessarily register their work through a service or even inform others that they operate as a freelance journalist. Also, when researchers consider the population of freelancers, should they include local people in conflict situations who operate as stringers (paid by the day or hour) as well as local reporters who do not work for media companies? Considering these questions, this study was informed by looking at online databases of freelance journalists to get an idea of the overall numbers of workers in the profession. For instance, at the time of the writing of this dissertation, the Frontline Freelance Register listed a directory of 498 freelancers who work in conflict. This directory includes journalists from all nationalities. However, there is no way to know how many freelancers work in war-like scenarios that are not listed on this registry. As far as who hires freelancers working in conflict, participants in this study's online questionnaire listed specific media organizations as some of the buyers of their products: Newsweek, the Associated Press, MSNBC, The New York Times, British Broadcasting Company, ABC News, and Reuters. The

questionnaire did not ask the freelancer whom they regularly sell work to but these entities were included in answers about the pitching process.

Jargon

An uncommon phrase used by freelancers in this dissertation is “bang-bang.” Participants used the phrase to describe the coverage of violence in a conflict. For instance, if a firefight or bombing occurred, the freelancer would describe that he left his hotel to cover the “bang-bang.” This phrase was used in approximately 20% of the transcript content and always by male freelancers. Female freelancers did not use the phrase “bang-bang.”

Freelancers indicated that “stringers” were used daily to help with translation and driving in conflict zones. “Driver”, “stringer,” “fixer,” and “translator” were words that seemed to be used interchangeably by journalists when they discussed how they devised a plan for coverage of conflict each day. Most freelancers indicate that they operate with a driver, stringer, fixer, or translator, (some freelancers used more than one supplemental person at a time) and even share these resources with other freelancers in order to save money and remain safer by traveling in a group. Some freelancers indicated that they worked with both a driver and a translator for some assignments but others explained that the driver they hired to be taken to news stories also served as a translator in most situations.

Another word that appeared frequently in the data, “pitch,” was used to describe the process through which freelancers approach editors with the goal of selling their work. For instance, freelancers “pitch” stories to media organizations before they cover the event and/or conflict. Others wait until they have the story in hand to approach an editor and “pitch” the story. The “pitch” is a media routine that freelancers partake in when attempting to sell their product to the media organization. In the data, freelancers explained that they typically email an editor or

producer to present their idea for a story or the material they have already captured. If the editor accepts the “pitch,” the freelancer will likely be paid upon delivery of the agreed upon news material.

Many of the freelancers in the data used the phrase “safe house” to describe their lodgings. “Safe house” was used in place of “hotel” in many instances throughout data. As an example, one freelancer said he attempts “to return to the safe house by dark each day and file [the] story.” Another freelancer reported that she “left the safe house - but only with a driver.”

When participants in the study discussed “breaking news” they were usually referring to some sort of event that included violence or a deviant act. Freelancers also used the phrase “breaking news” to describe scenarios that included urgency and a change of plan in the day’s coverage. Journalists covering conflict often pursued “breaking news” in a group because they would expect media organizations to want information about the event. These concepts will be explored more deeply in following chapters.

Demographics

The researcher has extracted and explained jargon and language from the data and will now present details about the freelancers who participated in the online questionnaire. A total of 46 (n=46) freelance journalists participated in the online questionnaire. A majority of the respondents identified their race as “white.” Participants described their political affiliation as “left,” or “leftist.” When freelancers were asked about how they identify themselves religiously, a majority answered “atheist” or “agnostic.” These findings mirror those of Litcher, Rothman

and Litcher (1986), positing that journalists are mostly liberal and indicate that they have little or no religious affiliation.

Ten freelancers who participated in the research are female the rest identified themselves as male. Six of the respondents said they have children and approximately half of the freelancers in the study indicated that they have a partner or spouse. All of the respondents indicated that they had at least one year of experience as a journalist with nine respondents having more than 10 years experience and three having more than 20 years experience. Participants and descriptions are listed at the end of the dissertation in Table 2.

CHAPTER 8. MAIN FINDINGS: INFLUENCES ON COVERAGE AND THE HOI MODEL

The central purpose of this dissertation was to uncover the influences on freelance journalists' conflict coverage and build on the knowledge gained through the preliminary inquiries into journalist autobiographies and interviews. Specifically, the research considered levels of influences through the lens of the Hierarchy of Influence Model (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996) and Gatekeeping Theory (Shoemaker, 1991). The second research question of the dissertation asked: What do freelance journalists from the United States perceive as factors influencing their coverage of conflict? This chapter will consider influences such as attitudes and beliefs of media workers, the routines they follow to get the story, the process of working with an editor, outside media forces, and ideology. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) assume that ideological factors have the strongest influence on media messages with macro levels of the model impacting micro levels. The researcher will include quotes from participants followed by their participant number (for example, #14). A list of the questionnaire questions is included as Appendix B.

Findings from this dissertation show that freelancers perceive media organization and extra-media organizational factors to have the strongest influences on their coverage of conflict. Results from this study show that freelancers do not recognize ideology as an influential factor but the ideological level was found to interact with the other levels passively as well as actively. The implications of these findings will be discussed in the concluding chapter and the nuances of these findings will be explored more below.

Why do you work as a freelancer?

One way to examine the attitudes, beliefs, and values of the respondents was to ask about their motivations for working as a freelancer. Reese (2007) recommends starting research about media coverage and content by considering the media worker and the factors that “progressively [hem them] in by more and more constraint” (p. 37). Participants were asked, “Why do you work as a freelancer as opposed to working as a full-time staff member for a media company?” A common answer was repeated in almost all of the 46 questionnaires: “Freedom.” (#16) Respondents said: “There’s much more freedom to pitch the stories that I feel need to be told that don’t make it into the mainstream media.” (#11) “There is more freedom to decide which conflicts and regions need more in-depth coverage.” (#33) “Simply, I enjoy the freedom to focus on the story I want to focus on.” (#8) “I enjoy the freedom of doing whatever I want.” (#14)

Most of the freelancers in this study believe that they are free to pick and chose the stories they cover. In their view, they have the power and control to set the news agenda. This finding is in line with Patterson and Donsbach’s (1996) results that personal attitudes have an impact on what journalists cover. Not only do the participants believe they are choosing their own stories, they think they shape how the story is reported: “I wanted to control which stories I focused on, and also how I wrote them.” (#31) “As a freelancer, I decide what to cover, from what angle, and for how long.” (#15) “I have the power to decide what is relevant and important when working. When you follow your own agenda, you make the difference.” (#19) “As a freelancer, well, you are free to do what you like and want... We can choose the work we take and what we want to cover.” 39

Some freelancers in this study have the attitude that they are not “selling out” by working for a media company. They tend to believe that as a freelancer, they have more control over their

work than journalists who are employed full-time as a staff member for media organizations. However, participants present the fact that in order to get paid, they have to sell their work. In other words, an editor from a media organization has to agree to accept what they cover and pay them for it. If the goal of the freelancer is to sell his or her work, control and power is shifted, at least somewhat, to the media organization. While freelancers perceive that they shape the messages from conflict, Ibrahim (2002) found that what journalists found to be news worthy doesn't always reach an audience because it doesn't make it past the gate of the media organization.

A few freelancers recognize the relationship with media organizations for what it is: a marketplace. "The flip side of working as a freelancer is that I don't have a monthly salary I can rely on. Same goes for equipment insurance, and medical insurance, especially in conflict zones." (#15) "Thankfully, I can work [as a freelancer]. I'm young enough to not have any dependents so the fact that I am constantly bumbling along the poverty line with no regular paycheck is of no great discern to anyone but myself." (#8) "It is easier to say 'f*ck you' and call them out on their tricks if you don't rely on one paycheck." (#11) While freelancers think their role gives them the opportunity to control what they cover, the power is often in the hands of the media organization that they sell their work to. Power and control by media organizations will be explored in-depth later in the chapter. Overall, freelancers think that they have at least some influence on what gets covered in conflict scenarios: they believe they have the power to choose the story.

Challenges of media routines

While freelancers believe they control which stories they cover, it is also important for them to control the process through which they collect stories. Most freelancers outlined a day of

conflict coverage as beginning just after dawn in order to be first to an interview or news scene.

“It starts early. You always want to be the first one there or just get the best lighting.” (#39) They also begin the day early in order to get the best light for video and photos: “It usually involves waking up early to get the light. We take a break around lunch and work again till it’s dark when I file.” (#4) “I will shoot while the light is good, do interviews and work throughout midday, and photograph again in the late afternoon till sunset.” (#7).

Respondents also discussed the importance of starting the day early while covering conflict for a different reason. They start early so they can get back to the “safe house” before dark. Some freelancers also worried about the safety of their drivers and said they wanted to get back to the hotel in the late afternoon so those who work for them could get to their homes before nightfall. Female freelancers especially make a point to return to wherever they are staying before the sun goes down. They indicated that this is for cultural and safety reasons. In this way “job routines limit individuals in what they can do” (Reese, 2007, p. 37).

My usual day would start around 8:00 in the morning. I would either meet my translator or go out on my own to a previously arranged appointment. By sundown, most people are back at home for the night. It isn’t safe to walk around at night, and no one would arrange any meetings in the second half of the day. (#15)

The rising and setting of the sun is perceived by freelance journalists to influence their coverage of conflict. They use the sunlight for practical reasons such as illumination for video and photography opportunities but more importantly to protect themselves from danger that could be veiled under the cover of darkness. Freelancers do not routinely cover news events that occur after a certain time of day (sundown). This routine could be seen as a negative, being a constraint on coverage but it can also be viewed as an inevitable feature of everyday life (Reese, 2007).

Freelancers begin their day by checking emails, calling sources, and talking with their driver and/or translator about the “plan” for the day. “Often you go with gut decisions. In terms of planning out a day, since it’s impossible to predict, I’ll just make decisions based on the information at hand.” (#18) Part of the “plan” for the day has to factor in the practicalities of being in a conflict scenario: “Basics like obtaining food, electricity, water, or filing material out of war zone are constant challenges.” (#3) “We worry about safety, petrol, reliable drivers and translators, secure exit routes, and power for recharging batteries.” (#20) “Language barriers and not having local connections are always issues.” (#7)

Some freelancers also mentioned that they work in groups with other freelancers in order to cover conflict. They indicated that they report on stories in a group for safety reasons and in order to split the cost of drivers, gasoline, and translators. “We head out. Sometimes it is in a small group since I’m a freelancer with a limited budget.” (#12) “I normally work in a team for safety.” (#28). “Freelancers tend to group together to minimize costs.” (#2) Relly and Gonzalez de Bustamante (2014) added their own level of influence, inter-media, to the HOI model after considering the “pack mentality” of the journalists they studied. Journalists in their study predominantly indicated that they covered stories together for safety. The findings in this study show that freelancers perceive both financial and safety concerns to motivate them to work with other freelancers in conflict. As Reese (2007) wrote, the routines level shows how media organizations employ resources. When it comes to the freelance experience, organizations do not seem to employ resources beyond regular pay for sold work. Implications of this will be explored later in the dissertation.

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) regard the issues of a journalist’s safety and financial concerns on a level of influence other than the media routine level. Relly and Gonzalez de

Bustamante (2014) consider safety concerns to be a part of media routines when it centers on the practical news gathering process. This dissertation explores freelancers' safety concerns as both a media routine level of influence and an outside media organization level due to threats and dangers from outside forces. The implications of these concepts will be revisited in another section of this chapter as well as in the concluding chapter of the dissertation.

Editorial control

Freelancers recognize that editors have a substantial influence on conflict coverage. "There's lots of waiting around, talking to everyone and anyone, pleasing the higher ups before convincing [editors] to let me up to the frontline." (#16) The media organizational level of influence manifests itself through policies, goals, and socialization of the journalist. Freelancers discuss two major themes of influential media organizational control: the process of "pitching" the story to the editor, and financial concerns from a lack of or low pay.

Pitching. Every freelancer (n=46) referred to the process of selling his or her work in the online questionnaire. The researcher asked, "How do you publish your work?" Most freelancers indicated that they sold their work either before traveling to an area to cover a news event or after covering the news event. While this seems to be an obvious finding, there are nuances between the two processes. Freelancers in this study who indicate that they have more than 10 years experience are more likely to sell their work before they cover conflict. The data suggests this could be because they have had a chance to develop contacts or because they have had several years to learn how to navigate the industry. "I don't go without a pre-existing commission and try to avoid working with clients who won't cover transportation and safety expenses." (#25) "I secure a commission first. I pitch stories in advance. If they are accepted and commissioned then I cover them. If they are passed over I look for something else to pitch."

(#23) “I used to do work first. Now, I only cover a story once I know I have an outlet to give it to.” (#8) “Pitch to editors. If they commission, go do the work. Travel expenses come out of freelancers’ pockets, so I pitch well ahead of any trip.” (#26) For these freelancers, it is important cover what they have already sold or what they hope an editor will buy. “You pitch to editors... The decision of what to cover has been made for you.” (#36)

While freelancers believe they have control to cover what they want to cover (media worker level of influence), or what they’re able to cover (media routines level of influence), they recognize that the media organizational level also has an influence on what they cover. How so? The editor decides which stories to buy. “Editors usually want to cover whatever is in the news or whatever issues are the biggest that the media are covering.” (#37) “It is mainly a question of emailing and calling editors at every conceivable publication I can think of, hoping they’d be interested.” (#22) “I tell editors that I am heading to an area and they pick me up for assignments.” (#11) Some freelancers admit that they don’t cover conflict until they have a buyer for their work and even when they have a buyer, they don’t know what the pay will be. That is why the “sell” is so important. As long as they are getting published, the freelancer will do the work:

I send an email with a pitch to an editor, wait for a go-ahead, almost never get even a reply; send a similar pitch to another editor and so on until someone gives a go-ahead.

We almost never talk about money. It seems undignified. I guess that makes me a really poor negotiator. I will just, in the end, accept any offer they throw my way. (#41)

Others explained how unglamorous the process of selling their work is: “Endless pitching is a serious bore. It’s often a time consuming process, and you don’t want to fracture any

relationships by firing off [pitches] to too many people in case more than one gives you the green light.” (#13) Freelancers walk a tight rope while trying to sell their work, stay safe, and get paid.

Financial concerns. In conjunction with pitching a story to an editor, freelancers negotiate pay for their work or accept the going rate of pay. Beyond that, freelancers must fund their own way to the conflict zone. In the data, they explained that they also have to pay for health and equipment insurance. They pay for their travel expenses, drivers, translators, stringers, fixers, food, and cell phones. “There is such a limited budget. I purchase my own insurance, for instance, and I wouldn’t dream of asking for additional funds to stay an extra day.” (#21) “It doesn’t even nearly pay my bills. I don’t think it even pays for the trips, so far. The level of pay is just ridiculously low.” (#41) “As a freelancer you have to cover your expenses and then get the money back from the client 30, sometimes 60 days later. We don’t have health insurance and no benefits except the ones we can afford which are very, very few.” (#39)

First there is the layer of financial risk because freelancers tend to pay out of pocket for all travel expenses, which can also include drivers, fixers, and translators. If a media company decides to kill the story later, you can actually take a financial loss for having put yourself at risk and you have no redress. (#26)

Earlier in this chapter, the researcher discussed the routine of freelancers traveling together to cover stories because of safety and financial concerns. If they do not have enough money to hire a driver to get to a location for an interview, they do not go. Findings show that freelancers perceive financial concerns to be highly influential on their coverage. They have to pool their money to travel with other freelancers to cover a story, essentially getting the same details and perspective of conflict. The implications of this will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

Organizational goals. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) indicate that goals and policies are an important part of the media organization level of influences in the HOI model. Freelancers in this study believe that media organizations do not have goals for freelancers, or if they do, they are unspoken. Previous studies have found the same outcome (Breed, 1960). If the media organization does have a goal for freelancers, some believe they are centered on budgetary concerns. “I guess they want us to do the things that are too dangerous or expensive for them to do themselves.” (#41) “They want to use the freelancer’s work for the smallest possible expense to the media company.” (#11) “They want access to genuine and exclusive info at the lowest cost.” (#10) “Give them as much material as possible for as little money as possible” (#25) “The goal is to cover major events in the cheapest way possible.” (#23)

Interestingly, freelancers who have more than 10 years experience seemed to take a less cynical approach when asked about media organization goals. “I am expected to deliver the stories I pitch, to stay safe, and keep out of harm’s way.” (#3) “The goal ... of these media companies is to keep you safe and make sure nothing happens to you. They don’t want you to risk your life for an image. The goal is always to get the story and if you have an exclusive, even better.” (#39) “I believe they want the best, most impactful image available from a place that does not already have a handful of photographers filing. The goals are rarely spoken.” (#33)

Even though freelancers must get the approval of the media organization’s editor to sell their work, they don’t seem to understand or grasp goals from the organization. However, those freelancers who are socialized through their dealings with the media company have their work published more frequently. Socialization includes the idea of “getting the story.” Freelancers explain that the media organizations they sell to want them to “get the story.” “They don’t care as long as we get a good story and they don’t get bad publicity.” (#28) “Goals are not directly

communicated but there is a feeling of wanting me to be out traveling, getting stories.” (#12) “I do not really know what their goals are – other than often relying on people ‘on the ground’ to provide coverage, rather than sending out someone.” (#2) “They ask you to get the story done, nothing more, nothing less. I rarely have the feeling that there is any sort of ‘goal’ beyond that from any media company I have worked for.” (#8) “I think the media companies just want the story from the ground. They don’t really communicate their internal organizational goals with freelancers.” (#26)

What are the implications of the lack of communication about goals from media organizations to freelancers? Are full-time staff members aware of the goals from media organizations or are the goals unspoken? These are needed areas of future research.

Extra-Media Influences

Factors such as access to sources, technology, support staff, and danger from external forces are perceived by freelancers to be strongly influential on coverage of conflict. These elements influence what freelancers cover and how they cover the stories. Literature shows that journalists may not recognize the influence of extra-media forces on their coverage (Fahmy & Johnson, 2012) but data from this dissertation provides specific examples of what freelancers perceive as important to their coverage of conflict.

Safety concerns. First, the concept of safety is regularly repeated in the data as a concern for freelancers. This is discussed under the “extra-media” level of influence because often, the dangers that freelancers face include terrorists, firefights, kidnappings, and other security threats. These factors are beyond the control of the freelancer and/or media organization. When asked about challenges in their daily coverage of conflict, the freelancers relayed the following: “I worry about kidnapping and aerial/sniper threats.” (#1) “Kidnapping is a major risk in countries

where I work.” (#25) “Physical harm is the most obvious risk when covering any sort of conflict environment and being freelance.” (#8) As explored in a previous chapter, the concept of “bravery” comes into play with freelancers who cover conflict. Even though kidnappings and firefights were discussed as concerns, these risks did not appear to dissuade most freelancers from covering the story. As found in the interpretive textual analysis of war correspondent autobiographies, freelancers appear to accept the necessity of being brave. They do not mention feelings of fear while covering conflict and while they say they worry about safety, it does not impact their routines. In this way, extra-media factors and media worker attitudes overlap and interact to influence conflict coverage.

Changes in technology. Some freelancers indicate that technology has made their job easier because they are able to look up maps online, file their stories more quickly, and purchase media equipment that is now relatively inexpensive. “It makes it a lot easier. I communicate all the time with social media and SMS.” (#12) “We can get better quality gear at a cheaper price.” (#10) “Smaller, more affordable gear has made it easier to stay longer in the most remote regions, and to work alone with just a translator or a translator and driver.” (#18) Pavlik (2000) posits that influences from technology happen in four ways. In one way, it changes the way journalists do their job. One freelancer changed his medium because of technology:

I went into television journalism because broadcast-quality cameras have gotten small and cheap enough to be affordable on a freelance budget. The way filming and editing and filing are done has been transformed. There is the Internet nearly everywhere and that too impacts the way you collect the news. (#22)

Other freelancers share that advances in technology have made their jobs more dangerous because they can be tracked. “It makes security a lot harder. You never know how someone is

going to be tracking you these days.” (#11) A freelancer covering conflict in Burma pointed out that the “Government and... army are more able to track us, learn about our work... and you don’t want to be on the government’s radar.” (#24) Freelancers also argue that technological advances mean that the news cycle is shorter and editors expect the story “now.” Pavlik (2000) argues that technology also changes the nature of news content as well as the nature of the relationship between the media worker and the news organization. Freelancers perceive this change: “Editors will expect that you are in touch all the time, and that you produce all kinds of material in a professional way very quickly.” (#37) “It has an effect of immediacy. Before, you had to wait to develop the film, now you only transfer it to your computer, iPad or iPhone, edit the pictures, and send. So they ask for work today, immediately.” (#19) Technology changes the relationship between the freelancer and the editor because the concept of the “deadline” has changed. From conflict, freelancers must always be ready to submit work to outlets, at any time, from any place.

Most freelancers in the study recognize both positive and negative aspects of advances in technology:

Advances in technology are a mixed bag. On the one hand I can file from anywhere given the right equipment and knowledge. From a rooftop, desert plain, forest. But on a rooftop in a warzone trying to get reception, I’m also vulnerable to air fire or snipers. And sending out a signal in a place like Syria makes me a target. (#3)

“The internet makes filing stories faster and cheaper. But it also shrinks the news cycle to mere minutes. Because we can transmit stories faster the demand is for stories at a faster rate. This can compromise quality.” (#23) “Instagram and Twitter help raise your profile if you are reporting on the ground and providing live updates during this time – but in certain countries this also

increases your kidnap risk, so it's a mixed bag." (#25) While freelancers would not be able to sell their work as quickly without advances in technology and access to the internet, they must also now produce more work to fill the 24 hour news cycle.

Access to sources. Freelancers have to access sources for their news stories and in the midst of conflict, access can be a problem because of safety, a limited work day, ability to get a ride to the source for interviews, and availability of a translator. Sources are an extra-media organizational factor and freelancers in this study recognize their influence. Fahmy and Johnson (2012) found that because of concerns about personal safety and kidnappings, journalists in their study would fall back on sources that were easily accessed. The increased danger would impact what they could cover. Freelancers who participated in this study did not admit to using sources that were easier to talk to or get to but they did perceive safety and access to sources as influential on their coverage. They often used those sources that were in relatively close proximity to them: "I get my sources at UN or NGO coordination offices and we determine when we will go out and where." (#21) "I get information from humanitarian aid organizations, community councils, NGOs, colleagues, and residents of the area." (#19) "I talk to people who are around which could be drivers, other journalists, and military contacts." (#2) At times, freelancers don't even leave their desks. Especially if their medium doesn't include gathering photos or video, they are able to cover conflict without exiting a building.

Mostly I cover news in Kenya from my desk. I get reports coming in, I'll call the spokesperson, and people on the ground. That's how I sometimes put stories together.

(#14)

As some of the data shows above, freelancers often rely on sources from the government, NGOs, community organizations and humanitarian aid workers. Gans (1979) found that these sources

have power and explains that they are more likely to be used in news coverage. Because of access issues, journalists are more likely to use organizational sources and less likely to use individual sources (Gans, 1979). Freelancers confirm this by explaining how they spend their time accessing sources: “Part of my day is spent waiting around for some official or going office to office.” (#15) “I’m immediately in touch with local organizations on the ground to find out if there is an incursion, repression or action taking place.” (#43) Freelancers also pay attention to what their colleagues are covering. In this way, media set the agenda for other media (Gans, 1979). “Many times you find information through talking to people or other colleagues mention something that is going to be interesting...” (#39) “I check the usual sources: the Internet, other newspapers, local journalists, colleagues, rumors...” (#22) While safety concerns and financial issues lead the freelancer to work with other freelancers. They also do so to cover the same stories.

Working with others. As indicated above, freelancers appear to work with others in conflict scenarios for several reasons. Not only do they worry about staying safe they need translators in order to do their work in a non-English speaking country. They are also interested in staying competitive by covering news stories that colleagues are covering. Furthermore, in violent scenarios, journalists are often forced to use stringers, rely on other journalists, and therefore succumb to the pack mentality (Fahmy & Johnson, 2012).

Many of the participants in the study described their daily routine by explaining how they work along side drivers and fixers. “I meet with the fixer and go to interviews and locations that have been arranged the previous night. Basically, you set out targets with fixer/translator and then make yourself as flexible as possible.” (#25) “I contact a fixer/interpreter and we agree on when and where we are meeting, and on how we are going to travel into the conflict zones...We

agree on what kind of stories we are going to try to do... and we both start working on trying to arrange interviews and meetings.” (#37) In this way, the freelancer and stringer or driver decide on coverage together. Bailey and Lichty (1972) found that group editorial decisions are more common than individual decisions. This finding is noticed in the extra-media level of influence on freelancers’ work in conflict. Freelancers indicate that drivers are a necessity: “I decide what I’m going to cover by consulting the driver, translator, other local stringers, and wire offices” (#29) but they do not perceive them to influence their work.

As with other areas of the freelancer experience in conflict, the concept of safety is center stage. Freelancers work with other staff members to mitigate danger and have the opportunity to get to their sources. “I am usually accompanied by a photographer and a local fixer. The local fixer assesses the security situation from words on the street.” (#21) In this way, extra-media forces such as safety concerns have the power to shape content (Reese, 2007). This idea will be discussed further in the concluding chapter.

Ideology

Findings from Shoemaker and Reese (1996) indicate that the most salient level of the five aspects of their hierarchical model is the ideological level. The ideological level includes the “link between... values... the ruling ideology, and occupational ideologies” of media workers and organizations (Becker, 1984, p. 73). Ideology also encompasses the sociology of deviance: people are interested in events that are sensational, unusual, controversial, and violent (Shoemaker, 1984). Media stories that serve the dominant elite are also part of the ideological influential level of the model (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). While data shows that ideology influences coverage of conflict by freelance journalists, the freelancers themselves do not perceive ideological forces to impact their work. However, it becomes clear

when reading freelancers' answers about what they choose to cover that the ideals of society come into play in their selection.

Victims. In this study, many of the freelancers explained that they regularly cover the “underdog” in conflict. They point to stories that they pursue about children, women, and people that may not regularly have a voice. This is a slight deviation from the idea that the powerful usually gain media coverage. However, the consideration of violence toward “innocent” people plays into the idealism of a democratic, peaceful society. When there are events that break that norm, or normative deviance, the freelancer is more likely to cover the event (Shoemaker, Chang, Brendlinger, 1987). A freelancer indicated: “I am very interested in the underdogs, whether they be women, religious minorities, or those who suffer disproportionately in war. A lot of journalists are interested in the bombs, but that will end one day and then you’re left with all the people who have suffered.” (#31) “Above all, I cover victims of the armed conflict.” (#19) “I share the voices of the under represented.” (#33) Shoemaker and Reese (1996) argue that, “one of the key functions performed by media is to maintain boundaries in a culture” (p. 186). By covering the plight of people who are not the cause of violence, freelancers bring attention to news that supports the ideology of peace and democracy. “It’s important to highlight the plight of children in conflict zones because they are truly innocent victims.” (#18) Another freelancer covers “how families and individuals survive and overcome challenges of a destroyed society and violence.” (#25)

Violence. Coverage of violence is a constant in the world of a freelancer covering conflict. He or she will regularly get calls from editors as well as tips from colleagues about violent events in the field. Violence is a deviant act as it disrupts the ideological democratic peacemaking strategy. Thus, freelancers are quick to cover “breaking news” that involves

violence such as bombings and firefights. “As a photographer in conflict, I tend to focus on: direct fighting, injured combatants and civilians caught up in fighting.” (#2) “I cover fighting stories – the actual men and women out there fighting. The conflict be it army versus army, protestors versus riot police, heavy artillery fighting, air combat, ground combat, etc. Also personal stories of loss – killed and maimed children, brothers, parents, refugees.” (#3) “I prefer to cover who is doing the fighting, who is moving the weapons, who the people are who are being affected by the conflict who want no damn part of it.” (#11) News tends to be about the powerful, as in, how the powerful reacts to deviant acts such as violence (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996) but it also “structures stories so that events are interpreted from the perspective of powerful interests” (p. 185). When women and children face violence in a conflict setting, the powerful tradition of Western politics disapproves of such scenarios. This lends credence to coverage of those events by freelancers.

In this dissertation, freelancers perceive that they choose what they want to cover in conflict scenarios. Despite that perception, this study has presented literature that posits journalists are socialized to select news stories that media organizations are likely to purchase. He or she is likely to cover conflict and conflict in itself is a deviant act. The freelancer does not appear to understand that in covering conflict, he or she propagates ideology. They instead believe they are telling the story of the victim: “I have typically covered rebels, insurgents, militants and protestors, and seek to highlight the personal stories of both fighters and civilians.” (#18) “I cover the aftermath of terrorist attacks and demonstrations.” (#15)

Power. In the realm of journalism, some scholars argue that media help support the ideology that surrounds hegemonic power structures (Meyers, 1997; Vavrus, 2007). This dissertation’s data shows that freelancers actively cover the actions of government. “I pay

attention to how decisions are made by governments in a time of war and the impact of those decisions on ordinary civilians.” (#25) “I focus on power imbalances, so anytime I feel that there is a conflict with a lot of coverage on one side (often the more powerful, Western-friendly side), one must venture to the other.” (#8) While freelancers say that they hope to make others aware of power imbalances, they may often let prominent sources dictate the news (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). This use of sources overlaps the media routine level of influence in that the freelancer accesses officials because they are available, and at times, safe for the freelancer to interview (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). “The conflict stories I’ve done always relate to the ongoing peace process, and the upcoming general elections.” (#24)

This chapter presents data about the factors that freelancers perceive to influence their coverage of conflict. Findings show that freelancers appear to believe that media organizations and extra-media influences impact their coverage more than other levels of influence. Results show that freelancers do not necessarily recognize ideology as an influential factor but the ideological level interacts with other levels of influence in various ways. Implications of this will be discussed later in the dissertation. In the next chapter, the researcher will answer the third research question regarding the practice and process of Gatekeeping by freelancers in conflict scenarios.

CHAPTER 9. MAIN FINDINGS: GATEKEEPING IN CONFLICT COVERAGE

This dissertation's third research question asked about the gatekeeping process and its influence on conflict coverage by freelance journalists from the United States. Specifically, "How does the process of gatekeeping influence conflict coverage by freelance journalists?" The idea of gatekeeping (Shoemaker, 1991) refers to the process through which messages are filtered to an audience. While there are many forces at work in gatekeeping, responses in the data from this dissertation study show that ultimately, gatekeeping happens at two levels as freelancers cover conflict. Freelancers pursue a specific story, editors purchase stories, and messages are filtered to the audience.

Freelancer gatekeeping. The first level of gatekeeping occurs as the freelancer makes a daily choice of which parts of conflict to cover. As stated in a previous chapter, freelancers say they are motivated to work in the role of a freelancer because they believe they are able to decide what stories to cover and how they cover them. The freelancer's perception is that he or she is able to decide what is important and interesting in the field and cover those stories. Kim (2010) found that journalists "rated their own individual judgment as an individual level gatekeeping force, as highly important in their news reporting" (p. 333). They also perceive that different influences have an impact on what they cover such as the time of day the event takes place, the dangers involved in covering the story, as well access to sources. These factors play a part in the gatekeeping process at the media worker level. For instance, if the freelancer doesn't have enough money to hire a driver to go to one part of the conflict, he or she might decide to tag along with another freelancer for budgetary concerns, therefore passively deciding what messages will be available to the public. The location of the news story is extremely relevant to

gatekeeping by freelancers in conflict scenarios. These findings coincide with Gieber's (1956) study that posits routines are strong gatekeeping forces.

As part of the media routine, journalists gather the news. Mannheim (1998) indicates that there are four types of processes through which journalists collect news: hunter-gatherer, cultivation, investigative, and enterprise. Two of these, hunter-gatherer and cultivation were found to be dominant processes by Mannheim (1998). The hunter-gatherer process of news coverage refers to the collection of surface level ideas as potential stories. Cultivation refers to the practice of using a beat system and familiar sources to gather news. These are the processes that most freelancers in this study use to gather news about conflict. As mentioned previously, they rely on sources that they have an established relationship with as well as news ideas that come from non-profit organizations.

While the freelancer collects and shapes the news message, it must pass through another gate before being presented to an audience. In this way, more than one entity is involved in the gatekeeping process, interacting and shaping the message (Westley & Maclean, 1957). This is different from White's (1950) idea that one person operates as a gatekeeper. Westley and Maclean (1957) argue that the media worker and the media organization operate together as a gatekeeper. Data in this dissertation study show that in a conflict scenario, freelancers work with editors to make decisions about what to cover because the journalist has a goal to sell his or her work.

One of the nuances of this finding has to do with whether the freelancer sells his or her idea to an editor before or after he or she covers an aspect of conflict. Some freelancers email editors with a story idea up front and ask if they are interested in purchasing the work. If the editor agrees to purchase the work, the freelancer will cover the news. Other freelancers cover an

aspect of conflict and then email editors attempting to sell their work. The freelancer that operates by reporting first and selling later has more of a gatekeeping role than the freelancer who sells an idea before covering it. The freelancer who sells his or her work first, is relying on the editor's decision and guidance to collect certain messages for the audience. This process has a major influence on what gets covered in a conflict scenario. Ibrahim (2002) found that in this way, the gatekeeping process works to curtail journalists' individual influences on content. A caveat to this finding, however, is the freelancer who publishes work through his or her website and social media accounts. In those rare cases, the freelancer acts as the final "gate."

Organizational gatekeeping. Editors from media companies have numerous freelancers sending news story ideas to them from conflict scenarios. As the original Mr. Gates (White, 1950) performed gatekeeping by literally throwing away wire stories that didn't meet his standards for news worthiness, editors select what they want from incoming story ideas, shape the messages they accept, and pass on other ideas (Tumber, 2006). This is part of the "pitching" processes that freelancers discussed in this study. They "sell" the story to the editor before or after they cover it, but they are always looking for a publishing outlet. If the editor chooses a news story from a conflict zone, part of the message, if not all of it, is passed on to the audience. However, data in this dissertation study show that the news selection process is more passive than active. Freelancers cover what they are able to, influenced by routines and values, as well as beliefs, and editors choose from different pools of information. News stories that come out of conflict do not come from just one channel. This is a weakness of early ideas about Gatekeeping Theory (McQuail, 2000). Early Gatekeeping Theory posited that information flows through many channels but stops at one gate. The gatekeeper then determines which messages will pass through to the audience and which messages will not be admitted. Freelancers acknowledge that

while they select news stories to sell to editors, the editors have an influence on the content that is presented to the audience.

Freelancers' and editors' decisions about what to cover in conflict are also influenced by ideological ideas about what is news: violence, peace efforts, success of democratic governments, and the plight of victims. Gatekeepers have the power to represent certain perspectives and voices in society (McQuail, 2000) and do so as they pick and choose the messages to filter to the audience. Many freelancers who cover conflict believe that their role is to expose injustices to "innocent victims" such as women and children.

Editors are also influenced by the cost of producing a story, advertisers, public relations, and the owners of the media company (Berkowitz, 1990; Shoemaker, 1991). Routines at the editorial level are also part of gatekeeping as Lippmann (1922) wrote, "Without standardization, without stereotypes, without routine judgments, without a fairly ruthless disregard of subtlety, the editor would soon die of excitement" (p. 123). These judgments happen every day, every hour, as editors work with freelancers in conflict coverage. Location of the news is also relevant to conflict news gatekeeping by editors since stories that have proximity to an audience are more likely to be noticed (McQuail, 2000).

The purpose of this study was not to determine "why" editors choose certain news stories over others but literature shows the decisions are "highly subjective" (White, 1950, p. 386). News stories have different elements of newsworthiness but if an item is deemed newsworthy, it is more likely to pass a gate (Shoemaker, 1991). News stories that are timely, unusual, have proximity to the audience, or "excited the imagination" are also likely to be passed on to the audience (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). As previous studies have shown, there are patterns for news coverage of events, and gatekeepers have a perception about what an audience wants (McQuail,

1977; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; Hetherington, 1985). Freelancers are socialized through working with editors and come to the point where they know what will “sell.” This subjective element is bolstered by institutionalized news values that bring relevance to messages: media organizations publish news stories that are valued by Western societies (Galtung & Ruge, 1965).

There are many influential factors, channels, and “gates” in the selection, gathering, and publication of news stories from the field of conflict. Ibrahim (2003) wrote “News as a product, comes through an assembly line, where individual reporters contribute to the final product without taking ownership or full responsibility” (p. 90). The process of gatekeeping influences the coverage of conflict in substantial ways. Journalists who work in situations without conflict will likely select the same types of news that freelancers gather in conflict because of Western, socialized news values. However, media routines by the media worker, such as specific safety concerns, and financial challenges, and the ability to get the product to the media organization may be more influential on the gatekeeping process in conflict than in non-conflict situations. This finding will be elaborated in the discussion and conclusion chapter of the dissertation.

CHAPTER 10. MAIN FINDINGS: DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE COVERAGE

The fourth research question in this dissertation asked about differences between what male and female freelancers perceive as influential on their coverage of conflict. In this section of the dissertation, findings regarding the differences between female and male experiences and views regarding conflict coverage will be presented. The number of the respondent is indicated after his or her quote, followed by the sex of the respondent with “F” for female or “M” for male.

Threats to safety

In the data, both male and female freelancers referred to sexual assaults and sexual harassment as challenges for women. Interestingly, several freelancers said that sexual assaults and harassment come from colleagues, not just from people near where the conflict is taking place. “Female freelancers are subjected to constant sexual harassment, often times from other reporters.” (#33M) “As females, the challenge is the fact that in many conflict areas they are seen as ‘sexual objects’ or that they don’t belong there just because they are females, so they have the high risk of getting sexually assaulted.” (#39M)

I worry about rape, sexual violence, sexual abuse, and sexual discrimination of all kinds.

Sexual violence is extremely prevalent and not at all discussed. And I don’t mean by ‘bad guys’ on the ground in countries where we work. Often it’s among colleagues – as in male colleagues are often the perpetrators. (#25F)

As discussed in a previous chapter, freelancers perceive the concept of “safety” to have an influence on their work in conflict zones. However, the data indicates that males and females have different concerns regarding safety. Male freelancers do not indicate that they are concerned about being raped or sexually harassed as they cover conflict, but the majority of

females in this study (n=10) regard sexual assault as a constant concern. Men discuss fears of kidnapping, beatings, and being killed and appear to believe that women are less likely to face those threats: “I’d rather be a woman; less chances to be beheaded.” (#10M) Because of these concerns, male and female freelancers cover conflict differently. Female freelancers discussed traveling in a group with other freelancers or using a driver/translator or fixer when covering stories. This also has financial implications. Males also use these resources but do not seem to rely on another person as much as female freelancers. Female freelancers also indicate that they do not cover stories or set up interviews after dark. While this is an aspect of coverage that males also mention in their questionnaires, females allude to the importance of this unspoken “rule” more often than men. In many areas of conflict it is not feasible for a women to travel alone, especially at night. This has an influence on which stories women can cover.

Getting the interview

In a study by Harp, Loke, and Bachmann (2011), female journalists covering war were found to include more diverse sources and fewer official sources. However, when women are included in a story as a source during wartime, they are most likely seen as victims or private individuals rather than official sources (Byerly & Ross, 2006; Carter, Branston & Allan, 1998; Meyers, 1999). Women are also presented mostly as mothers, supporters of male sources, and occasionally as peacemakers (Barker-Plummer & Boaz, 2004). Barker-Plummer and Boaz (2004) argue that, “The reverence for power inherent in a masculinist worldview is manifested in news through sourcing and coverage practices that closely follow and reproduce military and political power” (p. 371). Elmore (2009) found that masculine norms, practices, and understandings contribute to the role of the female journalist and this dissertation recognizes that the male perspective may dominate the messages in conflict coverage (Ferris, 2004). For one

reason, only a fourth of the respondents to the online questionnaire were women. There are simply less female freelancers in the field than male. The implications of this are less opposing viewpoints to war because specifically when considering coverage of conflict and violence, female journalists include more opposing viewpoints than males (Harp, Loke, and Bachmann, 2011). The data in this study suggest that beyond ideological influences, there are routine level reasons such as safety concerns and cultural issues that lead female freelancers to use minority sources such as women. A woman's perspective on war may be different than a man's and some scholars believe females have championed a different way of telling the story (Prentoulis, M., Tumber, H. & Webster, F., 2005), with more diverse sources and points of view. Females indicate that they cover stories about women, children, and the peacemaking process. However, women may choose these news stories because of ease of access to the sources in conflict scenarios.

Male freelancers are also not able to cover certain aspects of stories because of their sex. In some areas of conflict, culture dictates that females may not be able to talk to men other than their family members. Many of the male freelancers in this study shared that women have less challenges in conflict scenarios because they are able to gain access to sources more easily: "In most cases, women have more access in some societies because they can speak to men and women whereas male outsiders are only allowed to speak to other men." (#23M) "For a man to cover any subject relating to Afghan women would be incredibly difficult, because in many conservative families, women cannot even be in the same room with a male who is not their relative." (#15F) "I've always thought females have an easier time, particularly in the Arab world, because they can cover themselves and blend in more easily, and might arouse less suspicion." (#22M) Some females in the study agree to the validity of this argument but say the

opposite is true when they are attempting to access male sources. Females also share that government and military personnel give more credence to male freelancers. “In war zones there seems to be more of a ‘guy network.’ Often military men laugh at a woman’s request to join them on the frontlines or go with them to war.” (#3F)

One female freelancer believes she is passed over for assignments because of her sex: Journalism is male-dominated and quite sexist, and this is only amplified in the field among freelancers. I think women have a harder time getting connected to media outlets because usually the commissioning editors are male and I feel they tend to pick men over women. (#31F)

Researchers have found an absence of women in roles as journalists as well as sources in coverage of war and conflict (Barker-Plummer & Boaz, 2004; Zanger, 2005) and Del Zotto (2002) argues that traditional war coverage is patriarchal in nature due to male control of mainstream media and findings in this dissertation support the argument.

Practicalities

Both male and female freelancers perceive practical differences between the sexes to impact conflict coverage. One male freelancer stated the obvious: “Males don’t have to carry tampons.” (#11M) Having access to a bathroom was also often discussed as a challenge. Women explained that unlike their male colleagues, they are not able to urinate in public. “We can’t do that and it isn’t always easy or safe to find a bush or tree to go behind.” (#25F) “Men are better equipped when it comes to urinating in public areas. As a woman joining male fighting units, personal toilet needs become a bit trickier.” (#3F) Another woman discussed her habit of sleeping in full clothing when bombings or firefights were common. She would often have to evacuate the house in the middle of the night and it was culturally unacceptable for her to be seen

in pajamas by a man. This is yet another difference that freelancers perceive to influence their work: their sex and cultural norms that dictate who they can interview and what they can cover.

CHAPTER 11. MAIN FINDINGS: FREELANCER FOLLOW-UP

The researcher followed the online questionnaire portion of the dissertation by interviewing nine freelancers to clarify findings and delve deeper into information that was given importance during the analysis of the data. McCracken (1998) suggests eight interviews as an acceptable number for in-depth interviews because the researcher is able to spend a substantial amount of time with a few participants. The goal is to work longer, with greater care, with a small number of people. McCracken subscribed to the “less is more” mentality with this method (1988). While the researcher recruited more freelancers, nine agreed to the in-depth interviews. Lazardsfeld (1944) argued that in-depth interviews should clarify meanings of concepts and opinions as well as work to understand explanations that participants attribute to their motivations. This portion of the dissertation hopes to elaborate on four concepts: influence of sex (male or female) on conflict coverage, safety and financial concerns while covering conflict, the process and nuances of pitching a story to a media organization, and clarification of the gatekeeping process of news that comes from conflict scenarios.

Nine freelancers agreed to in-depth interviews; four of the participants were female; five of the participants were male. Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and transcripts produced approximately 27 pages of data (not including the researcher’s interaction with the participants). A table of the participants’ descriptions is included at the end of the dissertation as Table 3. A list of the questions asked during the in-depth interviews is included as Appendix C.

After conducting the first interview, the researcher began transcribing the interview and reading it before conducting additional interviews. For the analysis of this section of the dissertation, the researcher used McCracken’s “mannered reading” analysis model (1988, p. 43). The model indicates that it is important for the researcher to approach the data without

assumptions and use the literature review to match concepts and ideas to current research. The researcher then paid close attention to observations, relationships, and similarities between data in this portion of the study as well as those throughout the rest of the dissertation's data and findings (McCracken, 1988).

Influence of sex

After analyzing answers to online questions about the difference in challenges to male and female freelancers in conflict zones, the researcher wished to clarify some of the findings. Many of the male freelancers indicated that they did not perceive much of a difference in challenges to the sexes or replied that they thought females have an easier time accessing sources. Men seemed to perceive this as an important influence on their conflict coverage because as a male, they believe they cannot always access the sources they wished to talk to. Female freelancers provided the same perspective but oppositely. They indicate that because of their female sex, they are unable to access male sources. In this way, one of the research questions is answered. Freelancers perceive that a difference between male and female coverage of conflict is access to sources. Data collected from in-depth interviews provide nuances to this finding.

One female freelancer explained that because of her sex she was barred from covering a potentially violent situation:

In war zones, specifically, fighters are less apt to take me along because I am a woman...
In Libya, there was an angry mob protesting outside our hotel...[pauses, shakes her head]
I ran to the hotel lobby with a cameraperson who was male. He went right out into the crowd to begin working. I was stopped by security! They said, 'this is too dangerous for you. You're a woman.' I, of course, argued and fought with them saying the reason I was

in Libya was to cover the war and they had no right to keep me inside. I was LIVID! The interesting part is that at the time I also had a male personal security guard. He was furious with me for the way I spoke to the hotel security - saying I should understand the way they view women. Regardless, I pushed my way out into the mob and did my work. But Libya and many countries I've worked in are 'men clubs'...Women aren't necessarily welcome. (S)

The above quote is a lengthy account of how the sex of the freelancer can influence coverage of conflict. If a female freelancer is held back from certain coverage and has to convince others to let her perform her duties as a journalist, time that could be used to cover a news event is lost as well as photograph and interview opportunities. The female freelancer sets out to cover what she deems is newsworthy or what an editor purchases beforehand. The idea that an assignment can be dangerous is sometimes less of a concern to her than getting the story. Some female freelancers have even developed complicated coping strategies: they change their persona. One freelancer discusses her adaptation of a "third gender" when reporting in conflict:

In Afghanistan, I felt like I had to become a third gender. [Laughs.] I didn't really act like a woman and I wasn't a man. I was given access to the men – who while not seeing me as an equal, took me seriously, met with me, gave me interviews and information. (A)

The freelancer who gave this account went on to share that she "acts more like a woman" when she wants to interview female sources. When asked to explain specific challenges she faces as a woman in conflict zones (L) also talked about changing her behavior in different scenarios. "If you feel the pressure of the power or of government on you... it's better to act like a man and pretend that you are their equal. Sometimes I shout, not in a hysterical way, but in a way that shows I have power." A male freelancer, (R), also acknowledged the practice of females

morphing into pseudo males while covering conflict. He shared the behaviors of his former girlfriend, a freelance photojournalist, when they worked in Cairo. “She had to prepare mentally to go out... as well as compressing her breasts with a vest, tucking her hair away in a beanie and wearing baggy, thick jeans.” In this way, she hoped that no one would notice her female sex and target her with sexual harassment. (R) mentioned that as a male, in the same neighborhood, he was able to cover clashes, protests, or riots without worrying about safety. He offered that his former girlfriend was no longer a freelancer in the area and was in therapy in another country because of violence she suffered. Another female freelancer, (J), said that she has to work harder than male freelancers to build rapport with male sources. Through dialog, she presented her life as a freelancer as different than her “ordinary” life. She indicated that she has to act in certain ways to avoid losing possible sources. “I could really go on and on about this... for instance... indulging a general so that he would give me an interview, humoring a young man so he’ll let me keep hanging out with his activist group of friends...” (J). She did not seem distraught about play acting to do her job but appeared to accept it as part of her freelancer role.

Male freelancers did not discuss their sex as being a catalyst for danger but, as discussed in a previous chapter, they were concerned about lack of access to woman as sources.

There have certainly been occasions when I've found it nearly impossible to talk to female sources. In refugee camps in Syria and Iraq in particular, there have been occasions when I couldn't talk to the 'mother' of the family, because the father or older sons have been absent or dead. (P)

The male freelancer who gave the above account is experienced and respected in the field. He explained in a candid way how his “maleness” puts boundaries on the perspectives of conflict that he can cover. He is not always able to access female perspectives of war. However,

he recognizes the implications of culture and points out that female freelancers do not receive the same treatment as men: “I’ve found that fixers are often willing to take greater risks with male journalists than with female colleagues.” (P) Another male freelancer acknowledges that as a man he is in a more powerful position than his female colleagues:

Being a male, especially in Arab countries, significantly assists in my access to crisis scenarios. Most of the time I’ve spent in crisis situations has been in Yemen, a historically very patriarchal culture. In those situations, nearly all the people involved like protestors, soldiers, police officers, and tribesmen are male and they don’t want to interact with females. Beyond that, there’s the serious danger that female reporters would face in these situations. It’s simply much more difficult to get someone to speak to you if you’re not a male. Females are often just not respected. (N)

Presenting a different perspective, (M) believes that female freelancers have a privileged position in conflict coverage: “The Middle East is very much a place where gender matters and believe it or not, in my experience, it is better to be a female.” He explained that he has a difficult time accessing women as sources to interview or even photograph.

Exploring whether it is “better” to be a male or female freelancer while covering conflict is beyond the scope of this dissertation but findings inform the question about perceived differences between the work of male and female freelancers. In some situations in conflict, it is more beneficial to be a female freelancer. In other situations while covering conflict, it is more beneficial to be a male freelancer.

Conflict Coverage Concerns

There are two concepts of conflict coverage that freelancers regularly discuss in this research: safety and financial concerns. In long interviews with freelancers, it became apparent

that many freelancers consider financial concerns before they worry about safety. Although both finances and safety are important to freelancers and they perceive both to have an influence on their coverage of conflict, this nuance was identified through in-depth interviews. (S) answered a question about security and finances by saying, “Finances are a big driving factor... I am ashamed to admit that safety comes last... I’m a single mom so in some sense it is NUTS that I’m doing what I do.” (J), also a female freelancer, used the word “ashamed” when discussing putting financial concerns before safety:

I definitely cut corners since most reporting trips are either self-funded or under-funded.

Then my priorities are getting the story... I’m ashamed to say, but apart from the obvious examples like ‘Don’t embed with a Taliban commander’ [laughs]... safety usually falls by the way side.

(L), a female, said, “Selling my work is the first goal... Secondly, I think in terms of safety. You need to cover a place risking not more than a 20% range of possibility to die.” (P) presented the same attitude about putting finances first: “For me, I think financial concerns have the biggest influence on my work. I’m always worrying about things like, ‘Will I get paid enough to take on a fixer?’” Although (P) was also asked about safety concerns, he didn’t directly mention the concept of security or danger in his interview. In this portion of the study, male freelancers do not appear to put as much emphasis on the importance of safety as compared to female freelancers. This could be because of reasons previously mentioned such as risk of sexual harassment and assault to females.

As presented earlier in this dissertation, when freelance journalists in conflict consider safety, they do so for different reasons. They want to live through conflict, they are concerned for support staff’s safety, and they often consider the safety of other freelancers and sources.

While these norms seem to be common among participants, they will still pursue a story even if they face danger. (N), a male freelancer, said:

I will sometimes put safety on the line for a story I feel is especially important or significant. And when I say ‘important or significant’ those are typically also quite a bit easier to pitch and sell to media outlets. They’re big, important stories, and I can generally find an editor willing to commission it because he or she agrees with me.

He pursues the story that he believes will sell, despite the danger. (M) admitted in his interview that he is well aware of the dangers of his job. He has considered the threat to himself and others, and in turn, has constructed an ideal for how he operates in the field, holding fast to advice from others:

My primary concern when deciding to cover a conflict is advice my mentor gave me years ago: ‘Don’t risk your life for a sh*t picture.’ I will not head into a conflict area if I am not certain that the people affected, the story, would somehow benefit from my work. I will not risk my life, and the life of those who would be taking care of me, to do work that isn’t worth it.

Does this statement mean that (M) is willing to risk his life for a picture that is not “sh*t?” He explains that some material is “worth it” when bypassing safety measures meaning that as a freelancer, he is perhaps more interested in selling his work, or being true to his own reporting ideals, than staying out of danger’s way. For other freelancers, a lack of safety precautions is a practical decision. If they cannot afford to work, they will likely have to go home. (A) admits, “Financial concerns is definitely number one” and (R) confided, “I want to make sure that I don’t lose money in working on a conflict story.”

The freelancer, however, will consider safety if he or she knows that there is a guaranteed

paycheck for the work. (B) said, “Lately I’ve been lucky enough to be getting a fair bit of work where the client pays for everything and will pick up essentially everything that I’ve filmed so right now, my main concern is safety” and (M) explained that when he has financial backing he has more resources to “limit risk as much as possible.”

Pitching the story

Freelancers perceive that the pitching process is complicated and nuanced. They regularly weighed in on this in the questionnaire portion of the dissertation study and the researcher followed up in this section to gather more details about pitching and the meaning of the process. Freelancers are different from full-time, employed journalists who work for media organizations. Full-time journalists get a regular paycheck and are paid for working whether they deliver a product or not. The freelancer is paid, instead, for a product he or she presents to the media organization. If the freelancer does not get the story, he or she is not paid. Because of this, freelancers explained that they work hard to cover stories that media organizations want so they will get a check. In order to sell a product, the editor accepts the pitch from the freelancer. What does the freelancer believe is the significance of this process? What helps the freelancer sell the pitch?

Factors that influence potential appeal include... whether competing colleagues are already in place, logistics issues of getting there, my ability to quickly get into place, and the advantage I bring to the table in telling the story. (S)

“I tailor my pitches to different editors' wants and needs.” (M) Freelancers consider what they can bring to the editor. The pitching process is competitive and as data from this dissertation study’s online questionnaire shows, the freelancer attempts to deliver something to the editor that is unique. Again, freelancers indicate that their goal is to sell their work so those journalists who

can and will get the story have a better chance of making the sell than those who do not have the product to sell.

Through in-depth interviews, freelancers communicated that they are different than full-time staff journalists. Freelancers are not just journalists covering conflict they also become salespeople, working primarily to sell their work. They present their best persona to editors in order to be trusted to know their product, deliver it on time, and to provide it at a competitive price. In this way the role of freelancers covering conflict morphs into a position that is more complicated. (M) explains how he puts together a preview of his “product” in order to sell the work: “We prepare a complete package of a few paragraphs to explain the story, including some choice quotes and passages from the writer’s text, and a link to a webpage with a wide selection of my pictures.” (L) even uses the words of someone who is in a sales environment when describing how she pitches her work: “You have only one commodity and you have to find the best bidder.” Freelancers also “sell” themselves in order to draw in an editor. “I try to show them why I am best suited to covering the story. I have experience in the field... better contacts... I know the language...” (R) “...I include details about who I am and why I should be trusted to write the story.” (P)

(A) explained how she attempts to get the editor to buy her product: “I always explain why we need a story like this, why I think the story is important, and whom I’ll interview.” The freelancer has to sell the story by convincing the editor it is worth the media organization’s money. Implications of the freelancer working as a salesperson in conflict coverage will be discussed in the discussion and conclusion chapter of the dissertation.

Gatekeeping clarification

The freelancer's relationship with editors and media organizations sets the stage for gatekeeping. Because both the freelancer and editor are involved in deciding which messages will be passed on to an audience, the question arises: Who has more control over the process? In questionnaires, freelancers indicated that they were in control of the messages sent to audiences because they decided which stories would be pitched to an editor. In the in-depth interviews, however, freelancers began to discuss an overlap of gatekeeping roles. Generally, they perceive a large amount of personal influence over what gets covered but acknowledge the team effort of gatekeeping that occurs between the freelancers and editor. While the freelance journalist pitches the story and gathers information to shape the message, the editor of the media organization is actively involved in the gatekeeping process by accepting and likely changing the product. The editor is the gate that either lets the message through (purchases the work) or passes on it (does not purchase the work). Freelance journalist (A) explained how freelancers and editors work together, "The freelancer is on the ground and knows the story best but the editor can spot larger themes and guide coverage."

Some freelancers in this study perceive the influence of editors in another way: "Editors have an influence by editing the journalist's work, taking out parts of articles, choosing a photographer's pictures and editing video" (M). (P) said, "The editor will often have somewhat set ideas about how things are playing out on the ground but usually they will bow to the journalist on details." Another journalist acknowledges that the editor can and will alter the work sent in from the field. "I've stopped pitching to the editors because their headlines turn more and more hyperbolic and more incredibly sensationalized. In this sense, editors possess an incredible amount of power as they control what gets published and what doesn't." (N) This freelancer

points out that he chooses which media organizations gets his pitches, an indication that the freelancer reserves some power in the gatekeeping process. However, another freelancer was quick to point out, “We know that if we don't go, there's someone out there who will. So it's a choice without a choice.” (S)

In-depth interviews are useful tools in exploring connections between the journalist and larger social problems (Iorio, 2004). In this chapter, particulars and nuances of the freelancer's reality were examined and clarified. Both female and male freelancers perceive their gender to have an influence on the sources they can interact with in conflict zones. This is an interesting finding because, theoretically, this means that female freelancers have better access to stories about the victims (women and children) in a conflict scenario, and males have better access to official figures.

Females tend to discuss their gender as a security concern but males believe that women freelancers may not be as likely to be killed because aggressors might show more mercy toward them. One freelancer expressed that he would like to cover war as a woman because there is a less likely chance to be beheaded. In the data, the concept of safety is also interestingly tied to financial concerns. Freelancers communicate that essentially, safety equals money. To be safe, it costs money and almost all participants in this research expressed a concern over finances.

While safety appears to be an important concern of freelancers, additional details in this chapter helped to clarify that they appear to be more concerned with finances than safety. Specifically, if safety issues stand in the way of a freelancer getting the story, he or she is more likely to pursue the story because of the need for money. Media routines such as getting paid puts pressure on freelancers and can undermine the ideals they subscribe to as a journalist (Tumber, 2002). The implications of this will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER 12. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This dissertation considered freelancers' perceptions of influences on their coverage of conflict. Specifically, the researcher explored data through the lenses of the Hierarchy of Influences model (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996) and Gatekeeping Theory (White, 1950; Shoemaker, 1991). These theoretical concepts informed the study and clarified findings. In this concluding chapter, the researcher will broaden the analysis to consider implications and final concerns.

Ultimately, research looks at the process of how media outlets shape the collective social reality. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) found that content has important implications for social change: "Media content takes elements of culture, magnifies them, frames them, and feeds them back to an audience" (p. 49). Freelancers add to the content shared by media organizations and therefore are part of the force that shapes social reality. When freelancers only cover the news stories that are purchased by editors, found to be safe to cover by stringers, and affordable to the journalist, it could be argued that the public is not receiving "true" coverage of conflict. However, because the ontological assumptions of this dissertation include the presence of multiple realities determined by backgrounds and experiences, it is difficult to define "accurate" news coverage. A common goal of news media is to show "reality" and tell the truth (Reese, 2007, p. 183) but the findings in this dissertation point to a socially constructed picture of conflict due to external influences on the work of freelancers.

Findings present information about perceptions and behaviors of freelancers who cover conflict. In a practical sense, data shows that freelancers have common routines. They pitch stories to editors through email and phone calls. They use digital cameras to record still images and videos, write copy for print and online stories, and worry about how they are going to pay

their way to conflict. But how does the freelancer build upon routines to distribute the story? The “pitching” process was particularly examined in this dissertation because freelancers believe it is influential on content. Freelancers subscribe several meanings to the concept of the “pitch.” They appear to see it as a hurdle to jump to get to the story, as a way to legitimize their account of news, and a gateway to a paycheck. While pitching the story to an editor seems, on the surface, to be a freelancer routine, the media organization level of influence controls the pitching process and which products pass through the gate to the audience. Therefore, the pitching process interacts with various levels of influence.

The freelancer “pitching” the story to an editor is not unlike a pitcher pitching a ball in a baseball game. While the baseball pitcher seems to have a substantial amount of power in the offensive strategy, he or she has the ideological goal of winning the game and being the hero. There are many factors behind the speed and forces of the baseball pitch as well as elements that influence the type of pitch. Findings show that the freelance journalist’s pitch to an editor is influenced by media worker attitudes, media routines such as safety and financial concerns, media organization (what the editor wants and the journalist is socialized to provide), extra-media factors (sources, advances in technology), and ideological elements (deviant acts receive coverage). Freelancers perceive that the process of selling their work and getting paid is a major influence on conflict coverage. Keeping with the baseball analogy presented above, the freelancer wins the game when he or she covers conflict and gains credibility by getting paid for his or her work. In the mind of the freelancer, selling his or her version of conflict is success.

When it comes to the types of stories freelancers pitch, Gans (1979) argued that media organizations socialize journalists on how to cover news. In this way, de facto control has been exercised. Reese (2007) wrote, “Editorial policy, in particular, allows the organization to shape

what stories are considered newsworthy, how they are prioritized, and how they are framed” (p. 181). In this way, Reese (2007) found that editorial control, a media organizational force, is more influential on media content than the HOI factors of media routines and media workers. As the behaviors and perceptions of participants became clearer that assumption was supported. However, it is important to note that freelancers do not readily perceive the strength of the influence. Freelancers bow to what media organization and ideological forces dictate that they cover, even though they perceive that they are free to cover conflict as they choose. This is a layered approach to the idea of gatekeeping. Both the freelancer and the editor shape the message that ultimately reaches the audience.

When it comes to the finding of the “team effort” of gatekeeping, it is important to recognize that the team is not just made up of a freelance journalist and an editor. The “team” is a complex symbolic structure made up of the freelancer’s support staff, their sex, which dictates who they can interview, the channels of information available to the journalist, routines they follow to stay safe, and expectations of the media organization. As Westley and Morgan (1957) argued, there is more than one sender, many receivers, and several gatekeepers at any given time in the gatekeeping process. Findings support the concept of the collective gatekeeper (Gieber, 1956) in that many forces influence the process of gatekeeping in conflict. The implications of this are positive because rather than having one Mr. Gates (White, 1950) to determine which messages pass to the audience, many factors dictate the possibilities of conflict coverage. This is important because cultural knowledge of conflict impacts how the public sees and understands happenings throughout the world.

The sex of the freelancer is an interesting consideration in the development and access to sources, which also influences gatekeeping. “Sources” are considered to be an extra-media force

of influence (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996) but how the freelancer accesses sources because of his or her gender is a nuance that should be examined for inclusion in the HOI model. Data in this study show that ultimately, conflict coverage is not an even playing field for male and female correspondents. Cultural norms in the countries where they work dictate whether freelancers have access to certain sources. Female freelancers indicate that they regularly travel with other journalists or support staff such as drivers or translators in order to stay safer. While male freelancers say that they also work with others, it is not just for safety. Because using support staff costs money, is it more expensive for female freelancers to cover conflict? Or, because females work with others to avoid risks, are they more likely to share media messages that are propagated by other freelancers or developed as a group? Since male freelancers are often unable to access female sources, does their coverage include more official sources and pro-war viewpoints? These questions need to be examined in future research and also present aspects of cultural coverage factors that impact gatekeeping.

Lewin (1951) believed that various channels of information include influences that impact the final message. In conflict coverage by freelancers, the media worker level appears to have more power over the gatekeeping process than White (1950) would have predicted. McNelly (1959), Halloran, *et al.* (1970), and Chibnall (1977) presented findings that point to the individual media worker as having more power than the media organization. While White's (1950) model gives the balance of power to the news organization's editor, Mr. Gates did not gather the news as the freelancer does. He considered stories as they flowed into the newsroom. The freelancer contributes to the flow of stories into various channels of information and the editor picks and chooses from the pool of news.

In the pursuit of conflict news, freelancers regularly discussed their concerns with safety while covering conflict but seem willing to sacrifice safety if a media organization will purchase the product. To do so, freelancers subscribe to a “code of bravery” which they learn through socialization by editors and other journalists in the industry. Because freelancers will put themselves in harm’s way to exchange a news story for a paycheck, financial concerns seem to be influential. However, the freelancer points to the concept of “freedom” as important in their choice of career. With “freedom” comes a lack of a regular pay and this puts the journalist back into the field, facing danger, to get the news product that he or she wishes to sell. This leads to freelancers taking risks to compete with others and have the most desirable product. The most desirable product will be purchased, therefore socializing the freelancer to continue taking risks. This has implications for the industry.

The freelancer does not notice or acknowledge the socialization process and believes that he or she has the power to choose stories that are covered. Even though freelancers are drawn to cover deviant acts such as conflict and violence due to an overarching ideological system, they are socialized to do so because their content is more likely to be used (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). The longer the freelancer works with a certain editor or media organization, the more socialized they become to policies (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996) and the idea of facing danger to get the story and sell their product. Because of this socialization, the freelancer loses control over the product and perhaps, at times, his or her safety.

When it comes to the safety of freelance journalists, some scholars call for specific professional promises: agreeing that no story is worth a life, no pictures or videos are worth an injury, and no audio is worth endangering staff. Danger comes from outsiders on all sides such as Sunni insurgents, Shiite militants, local criminals or even the U.S. military (Ghosh, 2006; Kim

and Hama-Saeed, 2008; McLeary, 2006). Findings in this dissertation show that specific demands regarding safety for full-time journalism staff will not easily transfer to the world of freelancers who cover conflict. Freelancers indicate that when they cover conflict they are not always able to take precautions because of their financial state and sometimes take risks just to get paid. This finding deserves further research and consideration. Should media organizations purchase a product before the freelancer dispatches to an event so that there is a guarantee of payment and less need for risk taking? Data shows that such an arrangement could present safer conditions for freelancers. If they know they have a buyer for their work, freelancers covering conflict could be less apt to ignore danger.

To address the above scenario, the organizers of RISC, the free-for-freelancers first aid course previously discussed in this dissertation released a letter to industry leaders in March 2015 asking that media organizations pay a fair wage to freelancers for work. They ask that media organizations hire freelancers who are medically trained, wear body armor and helmet, and carry a first aid kit. If media organizations use trained and equipped freelancers, RISC leaders present this pay scale as appropriate: \$1.50 per word (print articles), \$400 day rate for photographers plus expenses, \$700 day rate for videographers plus expenses, and a 100% kill fee (the freelancer receives full payment if their work is completed but not used). RISC organizers present a goal for this type of arrangement: “We believe that following these guidelines for fair pay and medical training will significantly contribute to keeping freelancers safe in today’s increasingly perilous climate for journalists” (RISC statement on training and fair pay, 2015). The statement acknowledges that some freelancers will believe the suggested pay is too low and some editors will believe it is too high. Media organizations have no obligation to heed the recommendations of RISC and this would mean that freelancers will have to go through medical

training of some sort. RISC is free for freelancers but there is a long waiting list. Other training courses cost thousands of dollars, money that the freelancer does not have. Future research should follow reactions by both freelancers and editors to the suggestions by RISC organizers.

Edicts from academics and media organizations are not always useful and an understanding of freelancers' experiences help to inform the field about concerns they have. Violence from outside media organizational forces and concerns of safety in the media routine level of influence overlap and interact. It is clear that freelancers who cover conflict spend a large amount of time thinking about safety and considering ways to stay safe, even if they do not heed safety standards in order to get a story that will sell. This is played out in the every day routine of freelancers planning how to pursue a story. They confer with extra-media organizational sources such as drivers and NGOs to evaluate levels of risk. Freelancers also spend time considering and weighing dangers from terrorists, rebel forces, and governmental organizations. As freelancers create a plan to cover an event, they cannot always be aware of potential violent acts from outside forces. In this way, media routine levels of influence fuse with the extra-media influence on conflict coverage. Ibrahim (2003) recognizes that forces shaping media messages occur on related levels and Reese (2007) acknowledges that forces interact at different levels simultaneously to shape media content.

Advances in technology, concerns of safety, and challenges of the freelancer's financial state bleed through the circles of the HOI model to outer levels. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) assume that each level of influence is impacted by the more macro influences, but in this data some of the micro influences are perceived by freelancers to be more important than macro levels. Specifically, with advances in technology, freelancers have the ability to send an email to the editor of a media organization with the goal of selling their work even from remote places.

This is another routine of the pitching process. Freelancers would have to go through the routine of pitching their stories even if they didn't have email capabilities and editors would either buy their work or pass on it. With advances in technology, the freelancer can easily offer different aspects of the news to an editor such as still photos, videos, as well as coverage on social media. Advances in technology make it easier for freelancers to sell their work but now more journalists have the ability to pitch from remote locations, creating a larger pool of competition. This study supports Schroeder and Stovall's argument (2011) that journalists perceive the Internet, an extra-media factor, to have a significant influence on their work routines. Freelancers indicate that they can cover conflict and sell their work more easily because of access to the web but they also discussed drawbacks to the Internet. Because of advances in technology, the Internet has made it easier for large audiences to access reports (Tumber, 2006). This change in distribution to the audience puts even more emphasis on the need for clear and accurate reporting.

In line with Fahmy & Johnson's argument (2012), this study found that the HOI model is valuable in exploring and explaining how journalists cover news events. The five levels of influence are useful when studying the work of freelance journalists in conflict scenarios. While the model serves as a viable structure for determining what freelancers perceive as influential on their work, they may experience influences in a hierarchy structure that is different from the ideas of Shoemaker and Reese (1996). For freelancers, media routines are highly important in the process of planning for, covering, and distributing a story. Extra-media forces such as safety and technological advances impact coverage and the pitching process overlaps into every level of the HOI model.

Ideological forces also have a major influence on freelancers' conflict coverage. Nisbett and Ross (1980) found that "vivid" information is more likely to pass a gate and be disseminated

to the public because it holds the audience member's attention. Since freelancers cover conflict and scenarios of war-like deviance, they subscribe to the over-arching ideology of the need to bring to attention acts that do not fall in line with democratic norms. They also take on an almost soldier-like mentality: they believe they should serve their country for the greater good and that means potentially putting their life on the line (Underwood, 2011). The difference is that a soldier has infrastructure, training, regular pay, and support from the larger military unit. The freelancer works for herself, usually without formal training, and manages with whatever gear and support she can afford.

The research questions in this dissertation did not predict relationships among the phenomena but instead guided the study of the phenomena of interest (Wood, 2004). The findings are significant because they present a pragmatic and conceptual importance of the theory of Gatekeeping (White, 1950; Shoemaker, 1991) and the Hierarchy of Influences model (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). By looking at the phenomena through the lenses of theory, this study was able to explain aspects of conflict coverage by freelancers. This dissertation subtly refined HOI and gatekeeping theory so that they can be better applied to research about freelancers and conflict coverage. The researcher examined "the myriad of details of what is said and done in order to connect them in such a way that the interpreter feels relatively confident that she has made sense of the discourse" (Briggs, 1986, p. 107). Because of this, the results enrich the current understanding of how freelancers cover conflict scenarios and what influences their work. The researcher recognizes that findings are not broad and generalizable but rather focused and specific.

It is important to note that this is the only study of its kind at this point in time that could be found about the perceptions of freelancers on what influences their conflict news coverage.

This is also the only study that triangulates qualitative questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and interpretive analysis regarding the work of journalists who cover conflict. Thus, this dissertation adds to the literature that explores the phenomena of freelancers and provides support to theoretical perspectives by examining macro and micro forces that influence the coverage of conflict. Specifically, there is a lack of literature in the field about freelance journalists and how they operate.

Qualitative methodology is powerful when it shows how respondents see the world (McCracken, 1988). How do freelancers see their world? They perceive themselves to be in control of the messages that come out of conflict scenarios and editors to have some control on how the message is disseminated. Freelancers also believe that they are serving the public by reporting “truthfully” on the events of war. Even though they cover and shape messages with a goal of selling their work, they do not perceive the editorial process to have a major influence on their coverage. Gender and access to sources, an extra-media level of the hierarchy of influences model, was considered to be influential to freelancers for different reasons. While, overall, the concept of conflict coverage is influenced by ideological forces because conflict and war is considered to be a deviant act (Shoemaker, Chang, Brendlinger, 1987), the freelancer does not appear to perceive this level of macro influence on the coverage of conflict.

Limitations

The methods used for the dissertation were successful in gathering data. However, there were limitations. The overall response rate for the online questionnaire was low. Another limitation of this study was the low response rate by female freelancers. Partly, this is because there are fewer female freelancers who cover conflict compared to male freelancers.

Social desirability bias is a concern in any questionnaire that allows self-reporting. Respondents may offer answers that are socially desirable but perhaps not entirely honest. Despite these limitations, Wood (2004) argues that self-reports “provide valuable insight into how individuals perceive themselves, others, and communication encounters” (p. 67). Besides social desirability bias, the researcher must also acknowledge that participants may edit their answers about past experiences to take into account current knowledge. For instance, if male freelancers have read recent reports about female freelancers facing sexual assault in conflict scenarios, they may be more likely to discuss that knowledge in questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Retrospective accounts are useful in methodological studies that assume there are multiple social realities (Wood, 2004).

It is also important to recognize that the researcher is an interpreter of the data. While this dissertation presented the words of the participants as they were spoken or written, the researcher cannot always know the meaning of the words. Gertz (1973) wrote that data is “our own constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to” (p. 9). This is a limitation in all research but the goal is to understand experiences and the meanings attached to the perspectives of participants (Bailey, 2007).

Future Research

This study looked at what the media worker perceives to influence conflict coverage, as well as how he or she interprets the gatekeeping process. Research should be expanded to explore what media organizations and extra-media forces perceive as influential on conflict coverage as well as gatekeeping. To do so, future research should collect data from editors and media owners and explore what other actors such as stringers, drivers, and translators see as influential on conflict coverage. Another important concept to explore further is the freelancer

and his or her budgetary concerns. They have made a choice to work for themselves, without regular paychecks, in order to operate autonomously in conflict. Data shows that this “freedom” also frustrates freelancers because they do not have enough money to pay for security precautions and often take risks to get the story that might lead to a paycheck.

The beginning of this dissertation gave a narrative account of the deaths, injuries, and kidnappings of journalists in war scenarios. It is possible that some of these tragedies could be avoided if media organizations, full-time staff journalists, as well as freelancers have an open dialogue about the realities and challenges of conflict coverage. Coverage of conflict would be stymied when the freelancer is no longer able to do his or her job because of injury, death, or kidnapping, even if he or she believes she is essentially free in the field of conflict. Freedom, in this sense, may mean that the freelancer has nothing left to lose except their choice to put themselves in harm’s way to get the story. While they believe they operate more freely than full-time staff journalists, findings show that similar influences impact the freelancer’s coverage but they may actually more reliant on others in conflict than the full-time staffer.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Tables

Table 1: Exploratory Study Participants

Name	Age	Medium	Race	Experience	Spouse or Partner	Children
Josh	32	Reporter	W	5	Y	N
Dan	45	Video photog	W	20	N	N
Phil	38	Still photog	W	15	Y	Y
Alan	21	Reporter	W	1	N	N
Shawn	27	Multimedia	W	7	Y	N

Table 2: Questionnaire Respondent Descriptions

	Yr B	Sex	Race	Ed	Rel	Pol	Exp	P	Ch
#1	1988	F	W	HS	Atheist	Progressive	3-5	N	N
#2	1982	M	W	MA	Non-existent	Left-ish	10-15	Y	N
#3	1964	F	W	BA	Neutral	Neutral	15-20	N	Y
#4	1985	F	W	HS	None	Left	>3	N	N
#5	1981	M	W	BS	Christian	Middle	3-5	Y	N
#6	1985	M	W	BA	None	Left	3-5	N	N
#7	1989	F	W	Some college	Non-denom Christian	Indep.	3-5	Y	N
#8	1989	M	W	BS	None	Left-wing	>3	N	N
#9	1980	M	Other	BA	Atheist	Liberal	>3	N	N
#10	1981	M	W	BS	Atheist	A mix	5-10	Y	N
#11	1978	M	W	MA	Fed Up	Negligent	5-10	N	N
#12	1982	F	W	MA	None	Left	3-5	Y	N
#13	1989	M	W	BA	Secular Jew	Centrist	>3	N	N
#14	1987	M	Midwesterner	BS	Atheist	Liberal	>3	N	N
#15	1982	M	W	BA	Christian/Atheist	Conservative	3-5	Y	N

Table 2. Continued.

	Yr B	Sex	Race	Ed	Rel	Pol	Exp	P	Ch
#16	1982	M	W	HS	Atheist	Left	5-10	N	N
#17	1980	M	Asian	BS	None	Left	>3	N	N
#18	1972	M	W	BA	Agnostic	Liberal	15-20	N	N
#19	1975	M	I am a mixture	Technical degree	I believe in the power of the universe	Open	5-10	Y	Y
#20	1950	M	W	HS	Rarely	Liberal	20+	Y	N
#21	1987	F	Asian	BA	Agnostic	Leftist	5-10	Y	N
#22	1979	M	W	Some college	Not religious	Liberal	10-15	Y	Y
#23	1978	M	Other	Some college	Agnostic	Radical	10-15	N	N
#24	1988	M	Italian	MA	None	None	>3	N	N
#25	1982	F	W	BA	None	Liberal	5-10	N	N
#26	1968	M	Irrelevant	Some college	Irrelevant	Irrelevant	15-20	N	N
#27	1972	M	W	HS	Agnostic	Democrat	10-15	Y	Y
#28	1984	M	W	MA	Non- existing	Left	3-5	Y	N

Table 2. Continued.

	Yr B	Sex	Race	Ed	Rel	Pol	Exp	P	Ch
#29	1980	M	Mexican	BS	Catholic	Conservative	3-5	N	N
#30	1979	M	W	MA	Athiest	Liberal	10-15	Y	N
#31	1979	F	W	MA	Athiest	Left	5-10	N	N
#32	1975	M	--	BA	--	--	10-15	Y	N
#33	1971	M	W	HS	none	Leftist	20+	Y	Y
#34	1978	M	W	BS	No religion	Middle	10-15	N	N
#35	1984	M	W	BA	Agnostic	Left	3-5	Y	N
#36	1981	M	W	BA	Atheist	Center-left	5-10	Y	Y
#37	1980	M	W	HS	Not religious	Liberal	5-10	N	N
#38	1980	M	Asian	Some college	None	Centralist	3-5	N	N
#39	1974	M	Latino	BA	Human	Human	10-15	Y	N
#40	1983	M	W	BS	Atheist	Left	>3	N	N
#41	1979	M	W	MA	I'm not religious	Liberal	3-5	Y	N
#42	1967	M	W	HS	Some	Some	20+	N	N
#43	1990	M	W	BS	Christian	Indep.	>3	Y	N
#44	1972	M	W	HS	Agnostic	Confused	5-10	Y	N

Table 2. Continued.

	Yr B	Sex	Race	Ed	Rel	Pol	Exp	P	Ch
#45	1975	F	Italian	Some college	Not religious	Leftist	10-15	N	N
#46	1974	F	Mixed	MA	Christian	Democratic	10-15	Y	N

Footnote: Key to table headings.

Yr B: Year born

Race: (answers are quotes)

Ed: Education

Rel: Religious affiliation (answers are quotes)

Pol: Political affiliation (answers are quotes)

Exp: Years of experience (choices were: less than 3 years, 3-5 years, 5-10 years, 10-15 years, 15-20 years, more than 20 years)

P: Do you have a partner or spouse? (Y/N)

Ch: Do you have children? (Y/N)

Table 3: Participant Descriptions.

Freelancer	Sex	Race	Birth Year?	Exp?	Medium	Education	Spouse Partner?	Kids?
S	F	W	1964	15-20	Reporter	BA	N	Y
P	M	W	1989	>3	Reporter	BA	N	N
N	M	W	1990	>3	Reporter	BS	Y	N
J	F	Asian	1987	5-10	Writer	BA	Y	N
M	M	W	1988	>3	Photographer	MA	N	N
L	F	Mixed	1974	10-15	Photographer	MA	N	Y
A	F	W	1979	5-10	Reporter	MA	N	N
R	M	W	1989	>3	Reporter	BS	N	N

Appendix B. Exploratory Study Question Guide

1. Tell me about the training you have had as a journalist?
 - a. Formal
 - b. Informal
2. Tell me about the last time you went out in the field to complete a story.
 - a. What did you do beforehand?
 - b. What did you do in the field?
 - c. What did you take with you?
 - d. What else do you wish you had taken with you or done beforehand?
3. Tell me about an assignment you felt prepared for.
 - a. What made you feel prepared?
 - b. What specific training helped?
4. Tell me about an assignment you did not feel well prepared for.
 - a. What made you feel unprepared?
 - b. What training would have helped?
5. Tell me about the most dangerous environment you have reported in.
6. If your supervisor came to you with a potentially unsafe assignment, what would it be?
 - a. How would you prepare for the assignment?
 - b. What additional training would make the assignment seem safer to you?
7. In closing, what are some things that happen in the field for which you could never be adequately prepared?

Appendix C. Online questionnaire

1. Tell me about a typical day for you in the field while covering conflict.
2. How do you decide what you're going to cover each day?
3. Explain how you sell/publish/distribute your work. How does technology play a role in this? Social media?
4. What kinds of goals do "parent" media companies have for freelancers? Are those directly communicated to you or unspoken?
5. What are some of the challenges that freelance journalists face in the field while covering conflict?
6. Are there any specific challenges that you believe male/female freelancers face in the field that male/female freelancers do not?
7. What types of stories do you typically cover in conflict scenarios? Stories that you do not typically cover in conflict?
8. Why do you freelance as opposed to working for a media company? How did you become a freelancer?
9. How would you describe yourself politically? Religiously?
10. Would you tell me a little bit about your background?

Age?

Sex?

Type of training and/or education?

How would you describe your ethnicity?

How would you describe your political affiliation?

How would you describe your religious affiliation?

Years of experience as a journalist?

Media format you most typically work with?

Do you have a partner or spouse?

Do you have children?

Appendix D. Follow-up Study Question Guide

1. Please tell me about a situation where your gender/sex had an influence on your access to sources in conflict scenarios.
2. What do you perceive as the most influential factors on your coverage of conflict?
 - a. Safety?
 - b. Financial concerns?
 - c. Selling your work?
3. Please explain the “pitching” process.
4. Would you please explain the relationship between the freelancer and the editor?
5. Do you think the freelancer or the editor has more control over the news that comes from conflict situations? Please explain.

Age?

Sex?

Education?

How would you describe your ethnicity?

Years of experience as a journalist?

Media format you most typically work with?

Do you have a partner or spouse?

Do you have children?

VITA

Denae D'Arcy was born to David and Deborah D'Arcy in Saint Joseph, Missouri. She has a younger brother, Dannen. The D'Arcys moved to Knoxville, Tennessee where Denae graduated from Powell High School and then enrolled in Carson-Newman University in Jefferson City, Tennessee. She graduated cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Mass Communication. From there, Denae began her television reporting career with an internship at CNN's Southeast bureau in Atlanta, and then moved on to WYMT-TV in Hazard, Kentucky as the weekday morning news anchor and backpack reporter. Her next career move took her back to Knoxville, Tennessee where she worked as a reporter and evening weekend anchor for WATE-TV. Denae then accepted a position as morning reporter and morning weekend anchor at WKRC-TV in Cincinnati, Ohio. From Cincinnati, Denae moved to London, U.K. and earned her Master's degree, With Merit, in International Journalism from the University of Westminster. Before accepting a teaching and research assistantship with the School of Journalism and Electronic Media at the University of Tennessee, Denae worked once more as an anchor and reporter at KVAL-TV in Eugene, Oregon. Denae graduated with a Doctor of Philosophy in May 2015. She has accepted a 2015-2016 Fulbright Scholar grant to Pakistan in order to continue her research of freelance journalists covering conflict.