

Katrina Anniversary Coverage and New Orleans Residents

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Abstract

This study surveyed New Orleans-area residents to determine their responses to local and national news coverage of Hurricane Katrina 10-year anniversary coverage. This study examined whether anniversaries as a type of routine news event corresponds to a form of re-lived trauma, and brings into question responsible and ethical journalism. The survey found that a majority of New Orleans area viewers sampled were exposed to Katrina anniversary coverage whether they deliberately chose to tune in or not. Additionally, New Orleans area residents sampled expressed negative reactions to the anniversary coverage that reflected continued signs of trauma from the event 10 years later. Negative reaction to coverage was higher for audiences who looked at national news sources compared to local ones. Locals also responded positively to coverage that demonstrated the strength and resilience of victims of the disaster, as well as coverage that featured the city's cultural and historical traditions.

Keywords: Hurricane Katrina anniversary, news routines, disaster news, New Orleans residents, media and trauma

Introduction

The Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma describes the “tragic anniversary” news story as a “staple of the news business.” Professional and student journalists are trained that this routinized type of news story is one that follows a set formula. Coverage of anniversaries of major events are carefully planned and laid out in newsrooms by assignment editors and journalists for the maximum type of story angles that drives readership and viewership during slow news periods (Harcup & O’Neill, 2001). However, scholars have only begun to call into question the ethics of this journalistic practice because of the potential impact of such tragic anniversary coverage on the victims, who must relive this trauma (Furedi, 2007; Simpson & Coté, 2013; Wilkins, 2010).

Studies have found that breaking news coverage of a tragic event when it first occurs carries significant positive and negative impacts on immediate audiences and the journalists who cover these events (Durham, 2008; Kaplan, 2005; Meek, 2010; McGinnis, 2015; Miller & Goidel, 2009; Miller et al. 2014; Olsson, 2009; Sumpter & Garner, 2007). Additionally, scholars have examined the intersection of media and psychology with regards to television news trauma (Pfefferbaum et al. 2013), and specifically post-traumatic stress disorder (Houston, 2009). However, few studies have looked at recurring trauma, after the initial trauma of viewing a tragic event. The role

that the news plays in reliving trauma through anniversary coverage of tragic events is a news routine that is still to be studied and questioned for the impact it has on victims of a traumatic event.

Bernstein et al. (2007) examined the impact of the anniversary report on viewers closest to the event by looking at 9/11 anniversary coverage. Bernstein et al.'s study sought to measure the impact of anniversary news coverage on New Yorkers one year after the September 11, 2001 attacks. The team of psychologists found that New York viewers who had experienced 9/11 first hand and who had watched more than 12 hours of 9/11 anniversary news coverage exhibited a 3.4 percent increased risk of onset of posttraumatic stress disorder. Prior to viewing the anniversary coverage, Bernstein et al. (2007) noted that participants did not exhibit signs of PTSD. A new onset of PTSD symptoms occurred at the point of viewing 9/11 anniversary coverage. Bernstein et al.'s study examined the 1-year anniversary of 9/11 to determine the degree of trauma for viewers with close proximity to a tragic event. The 10-year anniversary coverage of Katrina, in comparison, follows Bernstein et al.'s study, but it also allows researchers to examine long-term trauma invoked by coverage of a tragic event.

The 10-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina was a news event that carried a decade of time and space between local audiences' first hand experiences of the event and their recall of the trauma of the event. The 10-year anniversary was a significant news event for journalists because three of the most recent U.S. presidents, including the current president, Barack Obama, visited New Orleans to mark the occasion. Additionally, the devastation left behind in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina for some 1.7 million households across the Gulf Coast continues to be a slow return to normal,

even 10 years later. Roughly 80 percent of New Orleans flooded when levees failed after Hurricane Katrina (Plyer, Shrinath & Mack, 2015). By July 2014, the city's population number stood at 79 percent of its pre-Katrina population, (Plyer, Shrinath & Mack, 2015). Roughly 40 out of 72 neighborhoods in New Orleans had 90-percent of their population numbers by the 10-year anniversary of Katrina (Plyer, Shrinath & Mack, 2015). The data for such population numbers does not distinguish whether these were the original residents of these neighborhoods or new residents. The ongoing changes to the city's make-up, among other post-disaster factors, continued to be daily reminders of the impact of Katrina for residents, 10-years later.

Trauma and Proximity

The Centers for Disease Control (2015) lists “proximity to the event” of a major disaster as a primary reason for experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety as reactions when recalling a tragic event. Psychologists examining trauma note that additional stimuli, like media images, are likely to increase PTSD among those with close proximity to a disaster (Elsesser, Sartor & Tackenberg, 2005; Maercker & Mehr, 2006; Pfefferbaum et al., 2007; Pfefferbaum, 2003). Studies have also found that a prolonged return to normalcy also impacts the mental health of those with close proximity to a disaster either as victims, witnesses, and journalists (McMahon, 2001; Miller et al., 2014). Victims who suffer from acute anxiety as a result of close proximity to an event typically respond by “blocking out” memories, ineffectively recalling details of the event, “feeling emotional distress when encountering a reminder of the event,” “avoiding reminders or recollections of the event,” and “feeling detached” or “numb” or

“emotionally unresponsive” in response to recollections of the event (American Psychological Association, 2015; MHANY, 2015).

Psychologists note that stress levels increase for victims or witnesses of an event (Goodwin et al, 2015). Such post-traumatic stress for victims carry physical symptoms ranging from nausea to dizziness (Doll et al., 2007). For victims or witnesses of a trauma or disaster who suffer depression when recalling the event, psychologists found that the most common symptoms included a loss or lack of interest, appetite, energy, and sleep (MHANY, 2015; Weiss, 2007). Additionally victims and witnesses become sad, guilty, tearful and even suicidal (Doll et. al., 2007).

In placing journalistic practices in studies of trauma, Coté and Simpson (2000) examine the retelling of tragic events on victims and news workers. They clarify through medical experts how post-traumatic stress disorder (trauma’s “most chronic form”) and acute stress disorder linger with victims, with PTSD having the potential to last much longer (p. 5; pp. 23-24). In a news context, the anniversary story, which is a yearly retelling of a major news event, can exacerbate PTSD symptoms (pp. 25-26). With PTSD, experts observed symptoms like “intrusive recollections, avoidance and heightened anxiety” (p. 23). With acute stress disorder, medical professionals look for symptoms of “dissociation (feelings of unreality or disconnection)” (p. 24).

The authors explored in their guidelines to news workers how in a social climate after the Columbine High School shooting and the September 11 attacks that recollections contributed to stress and anxiety for victims. Additionally, they examine through war veterans and rape survivors the psychological effects of these events and reports that recall or revisit similar events (pp. 21-22). In suggesting that a journalist stop

or exclude an interview for its traumatic effects on interviewees or the public, Coté and Simpson acknowledge that such an ethical decision by a reporter could land them a reassignment to the obituary's desk (p. 9). To understand why this is an ethical test of the profession, it is important to outline journalism norms and routines, particularly for the "What a story?" that often comes with tragic event or disaster coverage.

Routine News Events

The routinization of journalistic professional norms were first outlined in seminal studies in the field conducted by Herbert Gans (1979), Gaye Tuchman (1978), Michael Schudson (1989), and Dan Berkowitz (1992). The findings of the field research by these scholars support that routine news coverage of events are driven by an accepted cadre of news values shared by journalists, that have been developed over time. The significance or record set by the event, the public figures involved, the number of affected citizens, and the economic impact of the event means that major disasters and their anniversaries fit into the accepted types of routine news stories journalists must cover. Journalistic values like objectivity and facticity preclude journalists to limit their framing of anniversary stories in a detached manner. However, journalists have, in recent events, become less detached in their coverage of tragic events, showing emotion, sympathy, and empathy in their reports of major news events (Dunn, 2011; Durham, 2008).

Outside of major disasters, journalists are hesitant to step beyond the boundaries of accepted practices for covering daily routine news events. In today's digital newsroom, scholars have begun to examine how news routines expand or become challenged by new producers of content outside of the traditional realm of journalism. In looking at how technology could interrupt news routines, Seelig (2002) argued that new technologies

could expand the parameters in which news is socially constructed. In examining news routines in news photography, Seelig (2002) found that photojournalists at one newspaper were apprehensive about expanding the boundaries for accepted photos for news stories when faced with an increasing wealth of visuals online supplied by non-journalists. This was two years before Hurricane Katrina and the explosion of news sites online. However, Seelig's respondents were not quite ready to abandon the norms of routine journalism in determining what photography was suitable for publication. As Seelig (2002) wrote of the photographers she studied in 2002: "familiar routines and processes are comforting and give people a sense of security in that they know what to do and how to do it." It is also a way for those in the profession, at a time of major technological change to say, as a group, what journalists consider to be authentic journalism and not-authentic journalism (Durham, 2008).

Therefore, journalists, as a group, are not inclined or motivated to cover tragic anniversaries differently, in order to distinguish journalistic reports from all other types of media content now available online for the public. Sticking to the traditional practice of covering anniversaries reinforces traditional journalism from, for instance, advocacy journalism, and protects journalists from labels such as "liberal" or "biased" should their routine coverage not fit the set formula for routine news reports.

Hurricane Katrina was an event in which local media provided what would then be considered journalism that pushed the boundaries of what routine reporting of a major disaster would look like (Miller et al., 2014). While national news organizations covered Katrina as a routine news event, with all the sensational breaking news frames that accompanied it, the experience for local journalism was quite different (Miller, Roberts &

LaPoe, 2014; Miller & Goidel, 2009, Durham, 2008). The eye-witness visuals and reports produced locally pushed the boundaries of accepted routine and breaking news reporting on sites like *The Times-Picayune's Nola.com* rolling weblog or on New Orleans' *WWL-TV's* website which was temporarily hosted on *Yahoo!'s* website in the aftermath of the disaster (Miller, Roberts & LaPoe, 2014, pp. 15-36.). These sites were a space in which local reporters and local residents participated in an exchange of information, debate and collective emotion as the story of the disaster unfolded in real time (Miller, Roberts & LaPoe, 2014, pp. 22). Katrina was an event in which the public, particularly local residents, shared in the process of making and shaping news stories and news frames. Additionally, the experience of being victims, as well as reporters at the same time for local journalists, also challenged the manner in which local reporters framed routine and breaking news during the Katrina disaster and in the years following the disaster (Miller, Roberts, & LaPoe, 2014, p. 38).

Molotch and Lester (1974) outlined that the professionalization of journalism defines how routine stories are covered, but as Schudson (1989) found, the personal experiences of journalists also shape how routine news is covered. The experiences of New Orleans journalists therefore also should shape the way in which a routine news event, the 10-year anniversary of Katrina would be covered. After directly experiencing Katrina as journalists and residents of the city, this study also sought to determine whether New Orleans area residents perceived local journalism coverage to be different compared to national news coverage of the anniversary.

The Dart Center has called for responsible coverage of the anniversaries of tragic events, and not just as a regular routine news story, devoid of the nuances that would

render such coverage traumatizing for victims. The Center has called on news organizations to examine the point where anniversary reports could promote healing and/or open wounds? The goal of this study was to examine the types of reactions of local residents to Katrina's anniversary coverage to determine whether the practice of routine journalism contributed to a form of trauma for residents. Scholars continue to question whether reducing the effects of some types of coverage should be a consideration in evaluating professional journalism norms and routines (Furedi, 2007; Wilkins, 2010). This study outlines the critique that journalism that does harm, even as routine coverage, is journalism that is not responsible or ethical to the public. Therefore, this study examines whether survey respondents who watched Hurricane Katrina anniversary coverage had a negative or positive response to the coverage and whether this response differed for residents who primarily read or viewed local news compared to national news.

As a result this study posed the following three research questions.

RQ1: Did New Orleans area residents have a positive or negative view of Hurricane Katrina 10-year anniversary coverage?

RQ2: Why did New Orleans residents carry positive or negative views of Hurricane Katrina 10-year anniversary coverage?

RQ3: How did viewers respond to local anniversary coverage, compared to national news sources for anniversary coverage?

Methodology

This study sought to determine the reactions of New Orleans area residents to Hurricane Katrina 10-year anniversary coverage. The study used a 10-item questionnaire of New Orleans area residents who experienced the Katrina disaster and who have returned to the city's metropolitan area as residents. The questionnaire consisted of both closed and open-ended questions, and standard demographic questions. The study was a purposive sample that eliminated any respondents who did not live in the city before the storm from the sample pool (see Teddlie & Yu, 2007 for mixed methods for purposive sampling). A purposive sample was chosen because although the New Orleans area has a population size that is currently 79-percent of its pre-Katrina size (Plyer, Shrinath & Mack, 2015), that percentage includes both a mix of old residents and a new wave of residents and immigrants who had not lived in the city prior to Katrina.

The study's research questions sought to gauge the opinions of the subset of current residents who were pre-Katrina natives, and not new post-Katrina residents of the city, who carry a different lived-experience and emotions towards the recovery and rebuilding of the city. New residents post-Katrina also do not carry the emotional trauma associated with the disaster, its aftermath and rebuilding even if they witness the changes to the city on a daily basis. Their experience is still different. The purposive sample meant that respondents were asked whether they were New Orleans residents prior to Katrina before being allowed to complete the survey.

Procedures

The questionnaire was conducted between August 24 to August 30, 2015, during the week of anniversary coverage. Respondents included residents from the entire New Orleans metropolitan area from the affected parishes. These Parishes included Orleans

Parish, Jefferson Parish, St. Tammany Parish, St. Bernard Parish and Plaquemines Parish.

The purpose of including respondents beyond Orleans Parish was because many of the primary residents of Orleans Parish have not reoccupied their homes in that specific parish and have relocated to rentals in the surrounding parishes that comprise the New Orleans metropolitan area. Therefore, in order to include original Orleans Parish residents, the study also surveyed residents currently residing in the surrounding parishes that comprise the New Orleans metropolitan area. The majority of respondents completed the questionnaire on and after August 29, the actual event date for Hurricane Katrina's 10-year anniversary, in order to coincide with the highest volume of Katrina anniversary coverage locally and in national media outlets.

The survey was administered at public sites, community centers, schools, and churches around the metropolitan area in order to gauge a wide cross-section of New Orleans residents. Additionally, the survey was administered in traditionally African American neighborhoods in order to accommodate for this specific group of residents who were disproportionately affected by the disaster and who have not returned or recovered at the same rate 10-years later as white residents of the metropolitan area (Miller, Roberts & LaPoe, 2014). In following Bernstein et al.'s (2007) study, the survey was conducted in real time at the height of anniversary coverage for the 10-year anniversary and ended immediately after in order to gauge audience's immediate reactions and not delayed or processed reactions or interpretations of the coverage. Given the window to conduct the survey, the study yielded a sample size of $N = 270$.

The purposive sample size was small given only seven days to administer the survey in real time while anniversary coverage was high. In limiting the time frame to

execute the survey, this impacted the sample yield. However, in order to assess the local response to the coverage as it was occurring, the survey could only take place during the anniversary coverage period. If the survey continued beyond the seven days, there could have been a larger sample size. This study was designed to resemble Bernstein et al.'s 2007 study. Therefore, the sampling timeframe was restricted to the days where Hurricane Katrina anniversary coverage dominated national and local headlines.

Results

Quantitative Results

Sample Descriptive Results

The sample was 43 percent female (N=115) and 57 percent male (N = 155). The majority of respondents identified themselves as African American (49 percent, N=132), followed by white/Caucasian (33 percent, N=90), then Asian (12 percent, N=32), Hispanic (4 percent, N=11), and Middle Eastern (2 percent, N=5). The majority of respondents 58 percent (N=157) were between the ages of 35-44, with the least number of respondents above the age of 65 (7 percent, N = 19). Roughly three-fifths of respondents were living in their pre-Katrina homes.

Reactions to the Coverage

Respondents indicated that they did not want to view/read anniversary coverage (89.6 percent, N=242), but 100 percent of respondents said they did eventually view/read anniversary coverage at some time between August 24-August 30. Table 1 below demonstrates where most respondents viewed/read anniversary coverage and whether they liked or disliked the coverage. Roughly 65.5 percent (N=177) indicated they disliked the anniversary coverage, regardless of where they viewed/read it. Roughly 34.5 percent

(N=93) said they liked the anniversary coverage they saw or read. The majority of respondents read or viewed anniversary coverage through national news sources (58.2 percent, N = 157). The remaining respondents (41.8 percent, N=113) viewed/read anniversary coverage through local news sources, as shown below. Those who viewed local news sources had a more favorable view of the anniversary coverage, than those who viewed national news sources (See table 1 and Figure 1 below).

Table 1

Residents Reactions and Where They Viewed/Read Coverage

<u>Reaction to Coverage</u>	<u>Liked Coverage</u>	<u>Disliked Coverage</u>	<u>Totals News Source%</u>
<i>Type of News Source</i>			
<i>Participant Viewed</i>			
Local News Source	64.6% (N=73)	35.4% (N=40)	41.9% (N=113)
National News Source	12.7% (N=20)	87.3% (N=137)	58.1% (N=157)
Totals Like/Dislike %	34.4% (N=93)	65.6% (N=177)	100 % (N=270)

* $\chi^2 (1, N = 270) = 78.27, p < .05.$

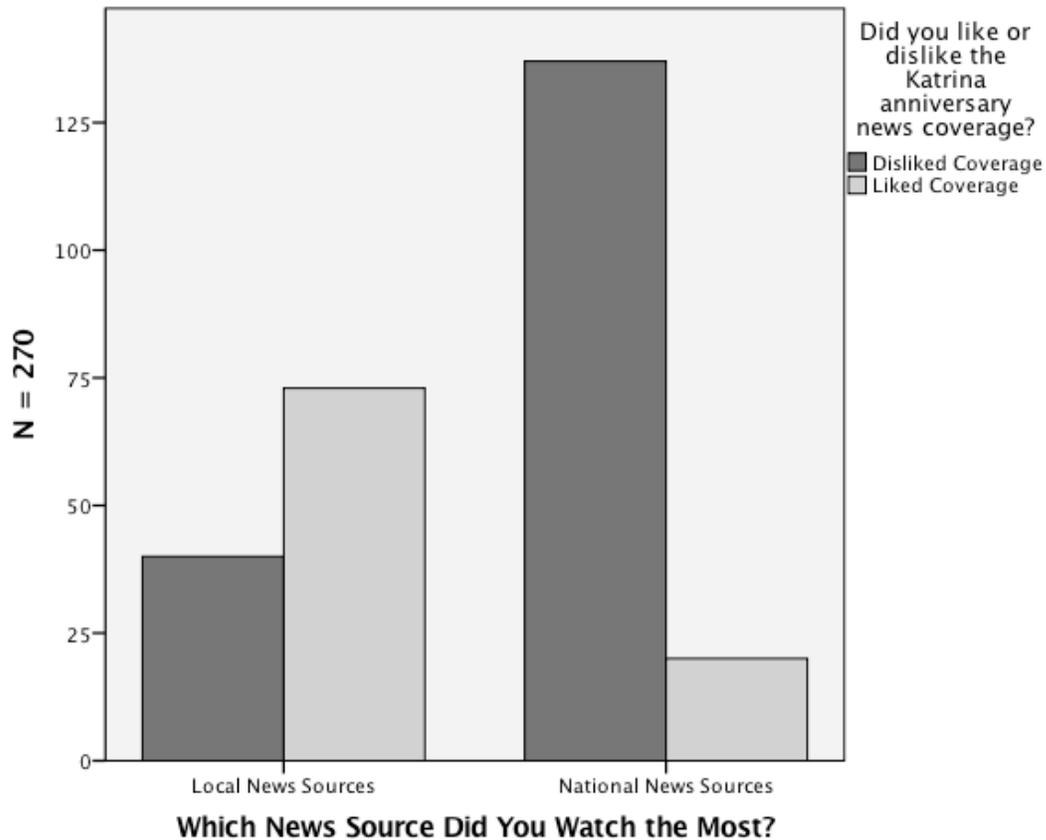


Figure 1. Respondents' reactions to local and national anniversary news coverage.

Open-Ended Results

In order to best reflect how respondents reacted to anniversary coverage, we aggregated key findings, but we also outlined below the specific words residents used to reflect their feelings about the coverage. In this way, we are able to demonstrate words associated to trauma as outlined by the American Psychological Association, and not words we as researchers have used to code these responses.

RQ1: Did New Orleans area residents have a positive or negative view of Hurricane Katrina 10-year anniversary coverage?

Roughly 89.5 percent of respondents said they did not want to watch the coverage but came across it through their daily routines. Altogether, 65.5 percent said they disliked the coverage they did see, regardless of whether it was online, through social media, on television, smartphones or tablet apps or in traditional print sources like newspapers, weeklies, or magazines.

Respondents identified a commonly used phrase across the board to articulate their negative reaction to the coverage and those were the words “bad memories.” For many of them who watched the coverage they did not want to “because as a victim it brings back bad memories, not something I want to celebrate” according to one respondent. Another respondent wrote “don’t want to be sad” in response to why she did not want to watch the coverage but looked at it anyway.

Some respondents who did not want to watch the coverage used the word “indifferent” or “bored” to describe their attitudes towards anniversary coverage, while others described wanting to forget the experience. One African American female respondent wrote there was “too much emotions, doesn’t wanna remember” to explain her views about anniversary coverage. Another white female respondent between the ages of 35-44 wrote that she was “too stressed out to watch it.” An Asian male respondent between the ages of 25-34 wrote “because it is a reminder of a terrible time in my life.” Another female Hispanic respondent between the ages of 25-34 wrote “it’s like re-opening a scar.”

Respondents who said they wanted to watch Katrina’s 10-year anniversary coverage carried mixed reasons that were not as unanimous as the “bad memories” that those who did not want to watch coverage expressed in their responses. Those who

wanted to watch the coverage indicated a range of responses from curiosity as to the nature of the coverage, the desire to see if what was shown in the coverage reflected the realities, and the need to mark an unforgettable lived experience that they have survived, or lived through. One male white respondent between the age of 55-64 wrote that “it’s a historical event that impacted everyone” to explain why he wanted to watch the coverage. The same respondent added that he carried both positive and negative views of the coverage because he liked that it “showed the transition from start to where we are now.” But he stated that he disliked the fact that the coverage “only focused on certain neighborhoods in the New Orleans area.”

RQ2: Why did New Orleans residents carry positive or negative views of Hurricane Katrina 10-year anniversary coverage?

New Orleans area residents provided some insight into their negative and positive reactions to the anniversary coverage. Respondents indicated that they felt the event seemed artificial, staged, and coordinated. Respondents wrote open-ended responses such as “it has been advertised too much,” and “everyone was using it as a photo-op.” Respondents in the youngest age group, 18-24, found the social media hashtags such as #Katrina10 diminished the severity of the event. For those whose primary interaction with the coverage was through Twitter or Instagram, they described the anniversary as a “false celebration.” One African American male, aged 18-24, who listed Instagram as his primary source of anniversary coverage wrote he disliked the “hashtag, it was more of a festival than a horrific event, and there is still much that needs to be done.” Another respondent, an African American male between the ages of 18-24, stated that “It was not

a celebration” and that “it did not look like they are talking about Katrina.” This second male respondent listed Fox News as his primary source for viewing anniversary coverage, compared to social media.

Respondents also carried positive reactions to the anniversary coverage, at about 34.5-percent or N = 93. Words such as “resilience,” “change,” and “progress” were used to describe positive reactions to the anniversary coverage. One female African American respondent between the ages of 25-34 wrote that she liked “to see the progress of the people and city.” The same respondent also said she received her news coverage online because she wanted “to see others perspectives on how they viewed the city of New Orleans & surrounding areas.”

Younger viewers in particular said the anniversary coverage was a teaching moment for them. A female African American respondent between the ages of 18-24 wrote that she wanted to see the coverage “because when I watched the coverage, I was too young back then to have an understanding.” A white male respondent between the ages of 55-64 wrote that the coverage was important because “I guess it informed people who might not have known what happened here.”

Respondents also had positive reactions to the public figures featured in the coverage, as well as the ordinary citizens whose stories were re-told in the anniversary reports. President Barack Obama was the sole name that showed up as a positive reaction to the coverage, while President George W. Bush’s name was listed as part of the coverage that respondents disliked. One female respondent between the ages of 45-54 wrote “I enjoyed Obama’s speech. I liked that he was involved even though it did not occur during his presidency.” Another African American male respondent between the

ages of 25-34 wrote that he disliked “Bush, fake politicians” who appeared in the coverage.

Respondents were also positive about coverage that featured citizens helping one another, and the stories of those who have persevered. One white female respondent between the ages of 55-64 wrote that she liked “how receptive, helpful some people can be to aid those in need.” Another white male respondent between the ages of 35-44 wrote that he liked that the coverage “showed that despite how awful the damage was, it was the people that banded together during and after the crisis.”

RQ3: How did viewers respond to local anniversary coverage, compared to national news sources for anniversary coverage?

Respondents followed the anniversary coverage through local news sources at about the same rate as they followed national news sources. The primary local news source listed by name were *WWL-TV* Channel 4, the local CBS affiliate, followed by *WVUE-TV* Fox 8. While the number one national news source listed by name was *Fox News*, followed by *CNN*. News website coverage was the number one source overall used by respondents, with *Yahoo!* listed the most, followed by *The Huffington Post*, and then *MSN* as the top three websites. Of social media sites, respondents listed Twitter, Instagram and Facebook in that order for sources for social media anniversary coverage. Respondents also listed local media websites as sources, with *Nola.com* being listed the most of this category, followed by local television station websites. Finally, respondents listed local television broadcasts, radio broadcasts and lastly print sources to describe the types of news sources they turned to for anniversary coverage.

Respondents who listed news online did not always distinguish whether these were the websites of local newspapers and TV stations or for *CNN* or *NBC*, for example. Likewise, respondents did not distinguish whether social media content was a re-circulation of local and national news coverage or other non-news originated content about the anniversary, like blog posts etc. However, respondents who listed social media as their primary source for coverage, also implied that “they”: the media, were likely national news sources based on their open-ended responses.

Viewers who listed local news sources as their primary source of news generally responded that they liked some aspects of the anniversary coverage, particularly coverage of the resilience of residents and the challenges that lie ahead. One white female respondent between the ages of 35-44 who listed the local news station *WVUE Fox 8* as her primary source of coverage wrote that “because I experienced Katrina first hand and looking back shows how far we’ve come. It showed how people went through pain and anguish but came together in the end to rebuild the city we all love.” Another *Fox 8* viewer, a male, Asian respondent between the ages of 25-34 wrote “it was amazing to see our beautiful city recover, to see the progress we’ve made as a city.”

Respondents who listed *The Times-Picayune*, the city’s leading daily, stated that they read the paper for more in-depth coverage of the state of the recovery. One respondent, who described his ethnicity as Middle Eastern, and was between the age of 45-54 wrote that “I wanted to see what were the improvements since Katrina, what the people who made speeches had to say about reform, how officials were planning to make things better.”

Viewers who listed national news sources as their primary source of coverage responded that they generally disliked what was shown in the coverage as well as the way the coverage made them feel. Respondents of national news sources wrote that the coverage “focused on negativity,” “focused on the past, not the present,” “was all about sympathy, not enough talk about reform.” One white male respondent between the age of 55-64 wrote that he viewed coverage on *Fox News* and disliked that it showed that the “government did not do enough to help. Children were stranded along the road, animals were suffering in the heat, the hunger, crime, etc.” Another female white respondent between the ages of 45-54 reacted to *CNN*’s coverage by writing that “it’s weird to remember a day when a lot of people died the way its being shown on TV.” An African American male respondent between the age of 35-44 who followed most of the coverage online via *The Huffington Post* and social media wrote “I don’t think they thought about how the coverage could bring up bad memories and be hurtful for those who did experience Katrina.”

Discussion

New Orleans area residents responded, in general, negatively to Hurricane Katrina 10-year anniversary coverage. The degree of negative reaction was stronger for residents who followed the coverage through national and online news sources than for those who followed the coverage through local media whether through online, broadcast, or in print. Residents also found that local news sources provided more of the news and information that local residents found important to the current recovery process than national news

sources. At the same time, respondents had more emotional responses to anniversary coverage when they followed the news via national news sources.

This distinction in reactions between local and national news is supported by findings by a 2011 survey done by the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism (Miller, Purcell & Rosenstiel, 2012). A 2012 report for the survey showed that 72 percent of respondents surveyed in January 2011 were very attached to their local news sources and considered themselves enthusiasts of their local news sources. This was particularly so for respondents over the age of 40, with the primary reason being "community attachment" as an explanation for their enthusiasm for their local news sources (Miller, Purcell & Rosenstiel, 2012, p. 2). About a third of these respondents also said that they would miss their local news source if it was no longer operating because they felt local news and information had a "major impact" on their lives. Additionally, they felt that local news sources reflect their local scene and the types of news that matters to residents (pp. 2-3).

In addition to the value of local news sources for news and information on a community level, as outlined in the 2011 Pew Center's Project Excellence in Journalism survey, Miller, Roberts & LaPoe (2014) found that the Hurricane Katrina experience as a uniquely local event, with national implications, endeared local media sources to their communities. Gulf Coast media outlets were considered lifelines for residents before, during and immediately after the disaster, and were considered advocates for rebuilding these communities in the years of recovery afterwards (Miller, Roberts & LaPoe, 2014, pp. 65-66). When *The New Orleans Times-Picayune* announced its cuts to well-known local reporters and to its print schedule, it triggered public outcry from citizens, groups,

and the mayor's office in 2012 (Miller, Roberts & LaPoe, 2014, pp. 65-66 & Theim, 2013). Therefore, despite the dominance of national news, as well as the threat of online news to traditional news sources, locals still carry positive feelings for local news sources because of its proximity and role in the community. In the Katrina context, residents particularly valued local news because of the experience it shared with the media through the Katrina disaster and the years following it.

However, despite some positive feelings towards local news coverage, anniversary news as a whole still contributed to feelings of relived trauma by local residents exposed to Katrina anniversary coverage. Across the board, New Orleans residents indicated that they did not wish to watch, read, view or follow anniversary coverage of Katrina. Their responses to this routine news event echoed the symptoms outlined by the American Psychological Association that reflect trauma from a major disaster or event. The survey captured these emotions in real time as anniversary coverage was at an all time high. In keeping with Bernstein et al.'s (2007) findings of 9/11 victims and New Yorkers, this study showed a heightened level of post-traumatic stress symptoms in the words written by New Orleans residents who were victims of Katrina. From stress, to bad memories, to tearful responses, to boredom, disinterest, and outright anger, respondents to the survey expressed reactions to the media coverage that are in line with the psychological impact of trauma from a major disaster or tragic event (Doll et al., 2006).

Respondents also questioned the motive of news organizations by ascribing them, both local and national, the collective "they" as being responsible for the volume, nature and effects of the coverage on "them," both victims and audiences. The open-ended

responses questioned the story angles, frames, visuals and sources featured throughout the coverage. Respondents were critical of the motivations of “they” meaning news organizations in the purpose and goal of such coverage. Local residents who wanted to tune into coverage were looking for both coverage to help them move forward from the disaster, as well as coverage that provided some insights on how the city and region can rebuild and recover. These responses help identify how anniversary coverage could reflect and serve the interests of those closest to an event and those who continue to be impacted by its aftermath.

Respondents also favorably viewed positive portrayals in both national and local media sources of the culture, history, and resilience of the people of the Gulf Coast and New Orleans metropolitan area. The focus on people making a comeback, compared to people suffering, elicited an emotional response of pride and admiration by respondents. It provided them a way to absorb coverage that relived a tragedy they had witnessed personally, but in a manner that provided healing, compared to the feeling of despair.

Conclusion and Implications

The findings of this study help to outline how best journalism norms and routines, such as anniversary event coverage can best serve those closest to an event. At the heart of journalism remains the duty to provide the public with the information that can best serve their lives, and improve their well-being. This study adds to studies like Bernstein et al. (2007) that outline that anniversary news coverage does have a real psychological effect on victims. The social and moral responsibility of journalists should be to consider

the trauma its norms and routines have on potential groups of audiences. The Internet, other digital platforms, and 24-hour cable networks have provided audiences more options to select the news that best appeals to them. For traditional sources of news to remain relevant it must also begin to re-evaluate how it approaches routine news events such as the anniversaries of tragedies and disasters.

The findings of this study not only carry implications for the practice of journalism in an increasingly crowded sphere for news and information, but also for the understanding of trauma and communities. This study suggests incorporating the expertise of the psychological disciplines in journalism practice and training, as Coté and Simpson's 2000 book argued. Coté and Simpson (2000) looked to the experiences of journalists and photojournalists who have covered traumatic events to provide guidelines for news workers, particularly for covering anniversaries. These guidelines seek to get journalists to empower their subjects in interviews to use their own traumatic experiences to help them and other victims along the recovery process. Coté and Simpson (pp. 112-113) suggest that in anniversary interviews, news workers should "share as much control with the interviewee as possible." In sharing this control in the development of a story or news report, both the interviewee and the journalist acknowledge the trauma, the impact of the trauma, and consider ways in which re-visiting the trauma can have some public good in helping victims and a community find meaningful ways to move forward. The authors suggest that taking a moral approach to the tragic anniversary report reflects the changing nature of journalism and supports what audiences want in viewing these types of news reports (p. 10). They write that "Coté and I cannot repeat too often that such details can be painful to survivors and in some cases may set back their recovery from the

initial trauma. But an anniversary interview that emphasizes how a survivor is living since the loss and trauma can be helpful to the survivor and informative to the public” (p. 110.)

The 10-year anniversary of Katrina demonstrated that residents were still as emotionally traumatized by an event a decade later as if it had occurred the year before. What has compounded the trauma in New Orleans and in other communities across the Gulf Coast is the fact that their lives have still not returned to normal, and that many parts of their communities still remain abandoned as they were immediately after the disaster (Plyer, Shrinath & Mack, 2015). This also carries implications for the local news workers who continue to practice their craft. An examination of how journalism norms should evolve long-term by journalists who have experienced disaster can provide a teaching tool for how tragedy and trauma ought to be covered in the best interest of victims and the affected community.

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