

Trauma Exposure in Journalists: A systematic literature review

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Abstract

Journalists frequently cover stories relating to fatal car accidents, crime, murder, suicide, natural disasters, and various other forms of violence and tragedy within society. The present systematic literature review aims to provide a concise, comprehensive, and systematic review of the quantitative literature relating to journalists' exposure to potentially traumatic events (PTEs). Such a review has not been conducted in this area before. The systematic review method adopted is that prescribed by Fink (2010), which contains three main elements: Sampling the literature, screening the literature, and extracting data. The range of PTEs journalists are exposed to are elucidated and discussed. This includes consideration of both work-related and personal exposure to trauma. The findings are beneficial to academics and professionals, in both psychology and journalism. Understanding the kinds of PTEs journalists are exposed to is the first step in developing procedures and support structures to safeguard individuals against adverse trauma reactions. Such findings can also be used to inform practice and policy within international journalism settings. This review raises a number of methodological and theoretical issues to be explored and addressed in future research. This study was developed from within the framework of psychological theory and research regarding journalists' trauma exposure. Therefore, this article is structured according to psychological standards for research reports.

Keywords

Journalist, Trauma, Personal Exposure, Work-related Exposure

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1. Introduction

Journalistic work, especially in news production, involves ongoing exposure to trauma in the attempt to meet the constant demand for up-to-date and instantaneous coverage of disaster, crises, and violence in society. Research has shown that this process of repeated exposure to trauma amongst journalists can result in adverse and varied psychological reactions. Such reactions can include altered world assumptions (Pyeovich, Newman, &

Daleiden, 2003), substance use, and symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder and depression (for a review see MacDonald, Saliba, & Hodgins, 2015; MacDonald, Hodgins, & Saliba, 2015). There is also a range of organisational and industry implications that makes the issue of trauma exposure pertinent to managers and organisations; for example, journalists personally exposed to physical danger are less likely to perceive their employing organisation as supportive (Beam & Spratt, 2009).

A firm understanding of the kinds of potentially traumatic events (PTEs) that journalists are exposed to is required if we are to reduce the risks and costs associated with psychological distress in journalists. The term PTEs is used because not all people respond to circumstances in a uniform way; some will experience events as traumatic whilst others will not (Bonanno & Gupta, 2012). The nature of trauma responses is therefore best understood in terms of a continuum based on individual differences, in which some people will experience little or no symptomology, and others will have severe traumatic responses (Bonanno & Gupta, 2012). The term 'journalist' is typically used to refer to a range of roles in the news production industry, including camera-operators, reporters, sound technicians, editors, and other management and technical staff (Newman, Shapiro, & Nelson, 2012). In the empirical literature, this generic term is also used when sampling news production staff in the exploration of the psychological implications of such work.

The fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) acknowledges that individuals may develop trauma reactions as a result of firsthand exposure, by witnessing a PTE as it happens to someone else, or from repeated exposure to details of a PTE. This makes journalists a population of interest because they are likely to be exposed to a range of PTEs both firsthand and vicariously through their occupation. Presumably, in addition to this work-related exposure, journalists have the same rate of exposure to potentially stressful or traumatic life events as other members of the community. An understanding of personal exposure to PTEs in journalists alongside work-related exposure is theoretically important because previous exposure to trauma leads to reduced resilience in the face of future adversity. Individuals who have had previous exposure to trauma (whether in their personal or work life) are amongst those most likely to experience negative trauma reactions when exposed to subsequent PTEs (Breslau, Chilcoat, Kessler, & Davis, 1999).

In reference to relevant general population studies, Mills et al. (2011, p. 407) state that prevalence rates of trauma exposure range from 16–90%. An Australian general population study reported a PTE prevalence rate of 74.9% (Mills, et al., 2011). A U.S. study of college students reported a prevalence rate of 66%, with the average number of PTEs experienced by participants being 1.5 (Read, Ouimette, White, Colder, & Farrow, 2011). A general population sample from Sweden was found to have an exposure prevalence rate of 80.8% (Frans, Rimmö, Åberg, & Fredrikson, 2005). Differences in reported prevalence rates may occur because of the measure used—scales that have a greater number of PTEs listed generally produce higher prevalence rates (Mills, et al., 2011). And those that include domestic violence and similar events are more likely to produce greater exposure prevalence rates for females than those that do not (Mills, et al., 2011).

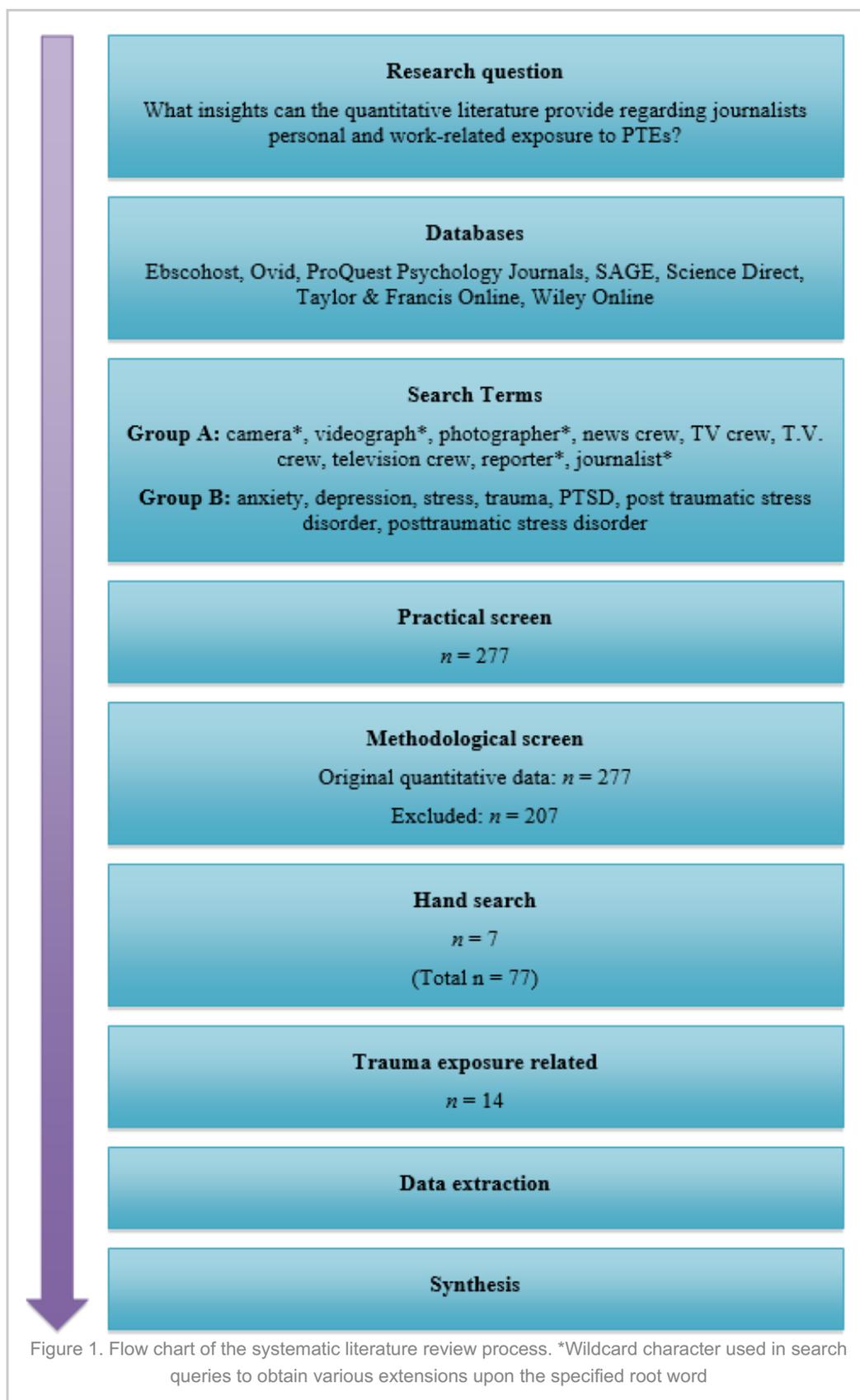
1.1 Rationale and aim

This study was developed from within the framework of psychological theory and research regarding journalists' trauma exposure. Therefore, this article is structured according to psychological standards for research reports. The aim is to provide a concise, comprehensive, and systematic review of the quantitative literature relating to journalists' exposure to PTEs. In order to achieve this aim, clear inclusion and exclusion criteria were maintained, as is transparency regarding the manner in which quality of the studies sampled was assessed. In this way, the findings of the present review will provide a valuable synthesis of existing knowledge to inform future directions in psychological research and practice with journalists. The research question is: *What insights can the quantitative literature provide regarding journalists' personal and work-related exposure to PTEs?* Reviews concerning psychology and journalism exist (Aoki et al., 2012; MacDonald, Saliba, & Hodgins, 2015; MacDonald, Saliba, Hodgins, & Ovington, 2016), but have not discussed rates of trauma exposure and associated psychological theory.

This review will: (1) synthesise the existing literature regarding journalists' exposure to trauma, (2) highlight the kinds of PTEs journalists are most likely to be exposed to, and (3) elucidate the kinds of PTEs journalists tend to find most distressing. The findings are beneficial to academics and professionals, in both psychology and journalism. Understanding the kinds of PTEs journalists are exposed to is the first step in developing procedures and support structures to safeguard individuals against adverse trauma reactions. Such findings can be used to inform practice and policy within international journalism settings. A firm understanding of journalists' trauma exposure serves as a useful foundation for future research in the nexus of psychology and journalism, such as trauma reactions, burnout, substance use, management within journalism organisations and job satisfaction.

2. Method

The systematic review method adopted within the present study was based on that prescribed by Fink (2010), which contains three main elements: sampling the literature, screening the literature, and extracting data. This procedure is congruent with previous reviews in the nexus of journalism and psychology (MacDonald, Saliba, & Hodgins, 2015), and with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses checklist (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman, & The PRISMA Group, 2009). Figure 1. is a flow chart of the steps taken throughout the procedure, beginning with the research question, and concluding with the synthesis of results.



3. Review

This review considers both work-related and personal exposure to PTEs amongst journalists. Prior personal life exposure to trauma as a predictor of negative trauma reactions is well established within the broader trauma literature; however, it has only recently been considered within the journalism literature. This point is apparent in the present review in that the personal PTEs results section has greater brevity than the work-

related exposure section. A summary of the studies sampled in this review is provided in Table 1.; the trauma exposure of journalists has been studied in a range of countries and across a range of media outlets. This review also identified a study by Gass, Martini, Witthöft, Bailer, and Dressing (2009) concerning journalists' experiences of stalking victimisation. The experience of being stalked is considered a PTE, assessed in trauma exposure scales such as the Traumatic Life Events Questionnaire and the Composite International Diagnostic Interview. However, an in-depth consideration of stalking as an area of trauma exposure amongst journalists is outside of the scope of this study.

Table 1.
Summary of studies assessing trauma exposure in journalist samples

Study	Country	Data collection	Sample	n	Media outlet
Simpson & Boggs (1999)	U.S.	Paper-based survey	Journalists	131	Newspaper
McMahon (2001)	Australia	Paper-based survey	Journalists who had covered trauma (n = 32) and those who had not (n = 25)	57	Newspaper
Newman, Simpson, & Handschuh (2003)	U.S.	Paper-based survey	Photojournalists	875	Newspaper, TV
Pyevich, Newman, & Daleiden (2003)	U.S.	Online survey	News journalists	906	Newspaper
Feinstein & Nicolson (2005)	International	Online survey	Various war journalists based in Iraq	85	One American and one British news organisation
Weidman, Fehm, & Fydrich (2008)	Germany, Austria, & Switzerland	Online survey	Journalists	61	Newspaper, TV, magazines, radio
Weidman & Papsdorf (2010)	Germany, Austria, & Switzerland	Online survey	TV (n = 81) and radio (n = 65) newsroom staff	146	TV, radio
Backholm & Björkqvist (2012a)	Finland	Online survey	News journalists	493	Newspaper, TV, radio, internet
Backholm and Björkqvist (2012b)	Finland	Online survey	News journalists	407	Newspaper, TV, radio, other
Browne, Evangeli, & Greenberg (2012)	International	Online survey	News journalists	50	Unspecified
Feinstein (2012)	Mexico	Online survey	News journalists	104	Three national news organisations
Sinyor & Feinstein (2012)	International	Online survey	Combined samples from Feinstein, Owen, & Blair (2002) and Feinstein & Nicolson (2005)	218	International news organisations
Levaot, Sinyor, & Feinstein (2013)	Israel and International	Online survey	Israeli war journalists (n = 38) and Western war journalists (n = 38; taken from Feinstein & Nicolson, 2005)	76	TV, print
Feinstein (2013)	Mexico and International	Online survey	Mexican journalists (n = 104) and war journalists (n = 104)	208	Mexican and international news organisations

3.1. Work-related exposure to PTEs

A series of self-report questionnaire studies have shown high levels of work-related exposure to PTEs amongst journalist samples. A number of studies are discussed here in relation to the scale used to measure work-related exposure. Studies that report work-related exposure to PTEs but did not use an established scale are also discussed. Table 2. provides an overview of the kinds of work-related PTEs journalists are exposed to and the percentage of each sample exposed to each PTE. Comparisons are not easily made across studies because not all studies assessed exposure to the same PTEs or in the same time period; moreover, some did not provide descriptive information about endorsed

items. In addition, some studies specifically asked whether exposure to these PTEs occurred on-site, whereas other studies did not. This means that in some cases coverage could be off-site (away from the newsroom, for example).

Table 2.
Percentage of journalists exposed to various work-related PTEs

Study	Simpson & Boggs (1999)	McMahon (2001)	Browne, Evangelii, & Greenberg (2012)	Pyevich, Newman, & Daleiden (2003)	Backholm & Björkqvist (2012b)	Newman, Simpson, & Handschuh (2003)	
Time Period	Previous 6 months	Previous 3 years	Throughout career	Previous 12 months	Previous 12 months	Throughout career	
Scale	Informal scale	Informal scale	Journalist Trauma Exposure Scale	Journalist Trauma Exposure Scale	Journalist Trauma Exposure Scale	Trauma-Related Assignments Scale	
PTE	%	%	%	%	%	%	Range (%)
Fire	74	50		58	20	93	20–93
Transport accidents							
Road	66	53		81	37	95	37–95
Air	32			40		65	32–65
Murder	56	72	55	75		81	55–81
Violent assaults	29					49	29–49
Within the family				62			63
Outside of the family				68			68
Natural disasters		41		34			34–41
Earthquake	4						4
People hurt or killed in			52				52
Sexual assault		59		65		31	31–65
Child abuse		50	48				48–50
Domestic violence		47				48	47–48
Riots		34					34
Bank robbery		31					32
War		9	69	5		12	5–69
Injured or dead people				96		98	96–98
Injured or dead children			51	78			51–78
Life threatening illness				70	18	48	18–70
Many casualties			62	47			47–62
Torture/kidnapping			51	41		29	29–51
Other	21			50		28	21–50

3.1.1. Journalist Trauma Exposure Scale

The Journalist Trauma Exposure Scale is a 23-item self-report scale concerning journalists' exposure to PTEs in the previous 12 months. It requires participants to indicate: (1) their range of exposure—i.e., whether or not they have been exposed to 14 different kinds of PTEs as part of a work assignment, (2) frequency of exposure—i.e., how many times they have been exposed to those kinds of events, and (3) intensity of exposure—i.e., whether or not they have been exposed to any of nine suggested intensity of exposure items such as being 'verbally threatened on assignment' (Pyevich, Newman, & Daleiden, 2003). Four studies have adopted the Journalist Trauma Exposure Scale to report journalists' exposure to work-related PTEs. The percentage of participants exposed to various PTEs for three of these studies can be found in Table 2. Backholm & Björkqvist (2012a) used the Journalist Trauma Exposure Scale; however, they did not provide descriptive statistics for the overall sample or a narrative of the items endorsed.

Pyevich, Newman and Daleiden (2003) sampled 906 U.S. daily newspaper journalists. On average, participants were exposed to 7.8 PTEs. Participants found the following kinds of stories to be the most stressful: injured/dead children (36.1%), murder (11.2%), and road accidents (8.1%). On average, participants experienced 3.4 intensity items, with 94% of the participants indicating that they experienced one or more items. Participants were most likely to have covered a PTE on-site (78.7%), been verbally threatened on assignment (61.8%), covered the same assignment multiple times in a week (54.3%), and to have covered a gruesome scene (53.8%). Other items endorsed included announced news of death to family/friends of the victim (36.1%), knew victim/perpetrator of assignment (22.4%), witnessed someone hurt/killed on assignment (20.2%), received personal injury

on assignment (6.1%), and physically attacked on assignment (5.3%). Backholm and Björkqvist (2012b) sampled 407 journalists from a range of media outlets in Finland and found that male journalists were exposed to significantly more work-related PTEs than females. The overall mean for number of PTEs exposed to was 1.71, which is notably lower than that reported by Pyevich, Newman, and Daleiden (2003), but in common with that study, participants were most frequently exposed to traffic accidents. In a study of 50 British news workers, 25% of the sample had been verbally threatened or attacked while covering a story (Browne, Evangeli, & Greenberg, 2012); the most endorsed PTE experience for the sample was war. This is notable because, if the category was experienced at all by the other groups, it is the least likely to have been endorsed.

3.1.2. Trauma History Questionnaire

The Trauma History Questionnaire “consists of 24 yes/no questions addressing a range of trauma events in three unique areas: (a) crime-related events (e.g., robbery, mugging), (b) general disaster and trauma (e.g., injury, disaster, witnessing death), and (c) unwanted physical and sexual experiences. For each item, the subject indicates whether he or she experienced it and, if so, the number of times and approximate age(s) of occurrence” (Hooper, Stockton, Krupnick, & Green, 2011, p. 262). This scale is not specific to the experiences of journalists but has been used widely in the broader trauma literature. The journalism and trauma literature has two broad domains, one that focuses on domestic journalism and one that focuses on what is variously referred to as war, conflict, or combat journalism. Feinstein and colleagues have conducted several studies relating to war journalism and associated psychological sequelae. In the following three studies PTE exposure was measured using the Trauma History Questionnaire. Participants were also asked, ‘in the Iraq war were you ever in a situation in which you feared you might be killed or seriously injured?’ and ‘in the Iraq war have you seen someone seriously injured or killed?’ It is noteworthy that the authors did not differentiate between personal and work-related exposure in these two studies.

Feinstein and Nicolson (2005) studied the differences between embedded and unilateral journalists covering the Iraq war. In times of overseas combat some journalists may be attached to military units. This is referred to as embedded journalism. Unilateral journalists are not associated with the military and often work closely with local journalists or community members (often called fixers) to gain access to local information and locations in order to cover a story. Differences between the groups were expected because embedded journalists are more likely to be exposed to combat situations (Feinstein & Nicolson, 2005). However, embedded journalists were not exposed to a significantly greater number of PTEs in Iraq than the unilateral group, nor did they witness more instances of someone being seriously injured or killed in Iraq. Similarly, no differences were found between the two groups in terms of PTE exposure, either personal or work-related, prior to their coverage in Iraq. Sinyor and Feinstein (2012) assessed gender differences in trauma history in war journalists. The study was based on previously collected data from journalists working in Iraq (Feinstein & Nicolson, 2005). No significant differences were found between males and females on the Trauma History Questionnaire, or on the two Iraq war questions: frequency of exposure to events that were life threatening to self, or to

others. Similarly, Levaot, Sinyor, and Feinstein (2013) found no significant difference between the number of PTEs Israeli war journalists have been exposed to compared to Western war journalists. Differences were expected given that the Israeli group live and work in conflict zones, whereas the Western group travels in and out of conflict zones as part of their work (Levaot, Sinyor, & Feinstein, 2013). The authors did not indicate the percentage of participants exposed to various PTEs and so comparisons cannot be made. The results indicate that journalists in these samples were exposed to a greater number of PTEs than in other domestic journalist samples; however, because personal and work-related PTE exposure were not considered discretely it is difficult to assess the sources of the majority of exposures and therefore if they are exposed to greater frequencies of work-related PTEs than domestic journalists.

3.1.3. Informal assessment of work-related exposure

The studies discussed in this section did not use an established scale; nor did they provide sufficient information to identify the scale they adopted when assessing journalists' work-related exposure to PTEs. In some instances authors have developed their own informal scale. Inadequate information is provided in most cases to establish whether the PTEs reported represent the complete list of questions, and whether or not participants were able to make suggestions or select only from a predefined list of PTEs. The findings are predominantly descriptive. Simpson and Boggs (1999) recruited 131 journalists from seven U.S. daily newspapers. The PTEs and sample percentages can be located in Table 2. " 'Other' events covered by 21 percent of respondents included volcanic eruptions, tornadoes, drownings, train derailments, explosions, prison riots, executions, and an elephant charge" (Simpson & Boggs, p. 10). McMahon (2001) sampled Australian newspaper journalists in a pilot study to assess whether those who had covered trauma in the three years prior to the study had greater trauma symptomology than those who had not. The most frequently covered PTEs can also be found in Table 2. 'Other' PTEs in this study included "chemical explosion, critical illness, child abductions, victimisation of disabled [people], false reporting of rape, police and government harassment [of journalists]" (McMahon, 2001, p. 52).

Newman, Simpson, and Handschuh (2003) recruited 875 U.S. photojournalists from a range of media outlets. Work-related exposure to PTEs was measured using a scale created by the authors called the Trauma-Related Assignments Scale. The aim was to build on the study by Simpson and Boggs (1999). Participants were provided a list of 11 kinds of traumatic assignments and asked to indicate which kinds they had covered and which was the most stressful/upsetting. Table 2. shows the kinds of PTEs this sample had been exposed to in the course of their work. As in the previously discussed studies, participants were most likely to cover road accidents. An interesting finding was that road accidents were considered to be the most stressful PTE to cover (Newman, Simpson, & Handschuh, 2003). Dimensions of work-related exposure were measured using 20 items assessing the frequency of potentially traumatic elements of assignments on a four-point Likert scale: 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = every day. The most frequently endorsed elements were covering a story that involved dead children (50.5%), family members of injured child (63.7%), equipment malfunction (54%), and having several similar assignments in a week (47%). Similar to the findings of Pyevich, Newman, and Daleiden

(2003), approximately 20% of the sample had covered a PTE in which they knew the perpetrator or victim. This point is interesting as it raises trauma exposure and reaction issues relating to dual relationships. Journalists may experience and react differently to a PTE if they know an individual involved in a story. It is likely that location (or proximity) plays a role in this issue, whereby regionally based journalists may be more likely to know people and locations in the stories they cover than journalists working in metropolitan regions. Such issues have not been explored in the context of journalism, but are widely acknowledged in the human services professions. This combination of proximity, dual-relationships, and exposure to car accidents makes regional journalists a group of particular interest.

Weidman, Fehm, and Fydrich (2008) aimed to explore journalists' psychological reactions to the tsunami in Southeast Asia in December 2004. Sixty-one journalists from a range of media outlets in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland participated in the study. Participants were presented with a list of PTEs developed by the authors and asked which they had been exposed to while covering the tsunami and how frequently. All participants indicated that they had frequently watched extremely destroyed areas. All participants had also needed to contact victims who were in shock or very distressed (approx. 65% frequently, approx. 30% sometimes, and approx. 5% rarely). Participants were also likely to have smelled intense odors of decay (approx. 90%), seen dead bodies in close proximity (approx. 80%), and had contact with traumatised children (approx. 80%). This study is interesting because it considers sensory elements of exposure to PTEs. Often individuals experiencing negative post-trauma reactions will not only have intrusive visual memories but other sensory memories such as sensations, smells, and sounds (Salyards, 2005). While these elements are included in trauma reaction scales, they are rarely included in trauma exposure scales.

Weidman and Papsdorf (2010) assessed TV newsroom staffers' experiences of intrusive memories of video footage and other psychological symptoms, and compared these to a control group of radio newsroom staffers. To measure TV newsroom participants' exposure to video footage they were asked six questions relating to the previous four weeks of work: "(1) to rate how much percent of their time at work they had spent with watching or processing video footage of any kind, (2) to provide a short description of the material, and to rate the percentage of video footage that (3) an average person not working in a newsroom, (4) the viewers, and (5) oneself would find distressing ... Participants also (6) gave an overall rating of how distressing they found working with potentially unpleasant video footage on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 6 (very much)" (Weidman & Papsdorf, 2010, p. 265). Additionally, participants were required to indicate the extent to which the past four weeks was typical for them in terms of the amount of distressing footage they were exposed to.

The results of Weidman and Papsdorf's (2010) study indicated that an average of 61.2% of participants' time was spent watching or processing video footage. "According to the participants' descriptions the material was mostly related to the following topics: war/terrorist attacks/riots/crime (25.7%), politics/economy (18.1%), accidents/natural disasters (17.5%), entertainment/cultural events (14.2%), science/nature (11.6%), sports (5.8%), and others (7.1%)" (Weidman & Papsdorf, 2010, p. 267). Participants indicated that

an average of 10.5% of the footage they are exposed to is distressing for them. Participants tended to indicate that people not working in a TV newsroom and viewers would find a greater proportion of the footage to be distressing (Weidman & Papsdorf, 2010). In relation to overall levels of distress associated with video footage over the previous four weeks, 77.8% of participants indicated that they were not or were hardly distressed, 22.2% felt moderately distressed, and no participants indicated that they felt severely distressed. The majority of participants (58%) considered the previous four weeks to be typical in terms of the level of distressing content. The remainder of the sample indicated that the amount of distressing content experienced in the previous four weeks was lower or much lower than normal. This study is valuable in that it goes beyond assessing on-site coverage and considers the impact of technical roles such as editing footage. It may be that repetitive exposure to potentially traumatic footage increases the individual's tendency to ruminate on an event and therefore experience increased negative post-trauma reactions. The two studies by Weidman and colleagues are valuable in that they considered the level of distress associated with exposure.

Feinstein's (2012) study of three groups of Mexican journalists found that one in four participants had stopped working on drug-related stories out of fear for their safety. Examples of drug-related violence experienced by the participants while on assignment include acquiring an injury from being attacked by drug traffickers (2.9%) and having a colleague injured (17.3%) or killed (49%) by drug cartels. For those who do report drug-related stories, half indicated that they had received threats from cartels and were significantly more likely than those not covering drug-related stories to be threatened. Feinstein (2013) compared 104 Mexican journalists to a matched control sample of 104 war journalists. The research was based on the idea that war journalists cover conflict for an intense but limited period of time, whereas local journalists covering conflict, such as Mexican journalists covering drug cartels, cannot take a break from their work or the potential danger of it. Feinstein (2013) reported that all war journalists sampled had been threatened due to their work, whereas 38.5% of the Mexican journalists sampled had been threatened. However, 10.6% of Mexican journalists had their family threatened, whereas this was not something experienced by any of the war journalists. This again raises the issue of location or proximity to events for journalists.

3.2. Personal exposure to PTEs

Outside of their profession, it is expected that journalists would be exposed to the same range of PTEs as other individuals. The studies discussed in this section highlight the range and nature of personal PTEs journalists may experience and suggest that the level of journalists' personal PTE exposure can indicate the likelihood that they will develop posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms. In a study of U.S. newspaper journalists by Simpson and Boggs (1999), participants were asked about their personal exposure to traumatic events and to common stressful life events. Thirty-eight percent of the sample had been exposed to personal traumatic events. Approximately half of these "had been in auto crashes, 16 percent had been assaulted, and 16 percent had been victims of fires" (p. 10). The authors reported that 5% had been in combat. However, the nature of the combat as a personal PTE is unclear and so it is difficult to determine what is being assessed. It may be that the participant has been personally involved in war, or that they have been in

an altercation with another person, or some other alternative. Seventy-nine percent of the sample reported experiencing at least one common life stressor. Participants were most likely to report having someone close to them be ill (31%) or die (28%), or to have financial problems (28%) in the previous six months. Three key limitations can be acknowledged when considering the interpretation of these findings. An established scale was not identified as being used for assessing stressful or traumatic life events. The distinction between 'traumatic' and 'stressful' events is not made explicitly. Finally, the authors do not provide details on which categories of events participants were asked about or which types of events participants suggested themselves.

Pyeovich, Newman, and Daleiden (2003, p. 326) measured personal exposure to PTEs via the Stressor Survey; this is described by the authors as "consisting of nine dichotomous items, (the survey) asked respondents whether they experienced potentially traumatic events (PTEs) including: natural disaster, accident, war zone, life-threatening illness/injury, traumatic death of family member/friend, kidnapping, physical assault, sexual assault, or other life-threatening event". Seventy-seven percent indicated that they had been exposed to at least one of the Stressor Survey items. Participants were most likely to have been exposed to natural disasters (40.1%). Newman, Simpson, and Handschuh (2003) stated that they developed 13 exposure items based on the Multiple Stressor Survey (unpublished scale by Newman & Willard, 1996). The items included "natural disasters, transportation accidents, military stressors, homicide of a family member, unexpected deaths, kidnapping, and various forms of family violence, sexual assault, and sexual harassment" (Newman, Simpson, & Handschuh, 2003, p. 8). This scale sounds like it may be the same as that used by Pyevich, Newman, and Daleiden (2003), although the studies report a different number of items. Newman, Simpson, and Handschuh (2003) found that 90% of the 875 photojournalists they sampled had experienced personal trauma. Participants were most likely to have experienced a natural disaster (66.1%: similar to Pyevich, Newman, & Daleiden, 2003), unexpected death of a close relative (39.8%), serious car or other accident (39.7%), and/or to witness family violence as a child (22.1%). Participants within the study who could be categorised as experiencing posttraumatic stress disorder were significantly more likely to have been exposed to PTEs that were sexual in nature or related to domestic violence/abuse as a child. It is worthwhile noting that the sample in Newman, Simpson, and Handschuh (2003) is described as consisting of photojournalists, but the demographics of the study indicate that 61% were still photographers, 34% were TV photographers and 5% were editors, educators or students.

In Backholm and Björkqvist's (2012b) study of 407 Finnish journalists, personal exposure to PTEs was measured via the Traumatic Life Events Questionnaire (Kubany, et al., 2000). Males were exposed to significantly more personal PTEs than females. The overall mean number of PTEs exposed to was 3.92. Participants were most frequently exposed to the sudden death of a family member or friend (70%). The results indicated that personal exposure to events, including intense fear, helplessness, or horror, was a significant predictor of posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms. These results mirrored those found through a similar regression analysis conducted by Backholm and Björkqvist (2012a) with their sample of Finnish journalists who covered the Jokela School shooting. The items on the Traumatic Life Events Questionnaire are highly consistent with those described in the Stressor Surveys mentioned above. Weidman, Fehm, and Fydrich (2008) used the Post-

traumatic Diagnostic Scale (Foa, Cashman, Jaycox, & Perry, 1997) to measure personal trauma in their sample. Of the journalists who had covered a tsunami, approximately 90% of the sample had previously experienced one or more other PTEs; just over half were personal PTEs such as childhood sexual abuse. The criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder were fulfilled in the case of three participants. In this study, exposure to PTEs in personal life was found to be a more significant predictor of posttraumatic stress disorder and depression symptoms than the work-related PTE exposure of the tsunami (Weidman, Fehm, & Fydrich, 2008). This final point highlights the need for studies of trauma reactions in journalists to assess both personal and work-related exposure to PTEs. A systematic literature review of trauma reactions in journalists (MacDonald, Hodgins, & Saliba, 2015) identified 20 studies that measured posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms in journalists, yet only six articles in the present review have assessed levels of personal exposure to trauma.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

This study aimed to provide a concise, comprehensive, and systematic review of the quantitative literature relating to journalists' exposure to PTEs. Trauma exposure has been studied in a range of countries and across a range of media outlets. The results of the review highlight key trends and areas for development in research relating to journalists' work-related and personal exposure to trauma. The thorough and structured process adopted in this review provides the ability to assert with some degree of confidence what areas within the journalist trauma exposure literature require further consideration.

In relation to work-related exposure, journalists were found to have prevalence rates as high as 95%, exceeding rates of exposure reported for the general population studies discussed in the introduction. Some researchers have adopted established scales (Journalist Trauma Exposure Scale and Trauma History Questionnaire), while others have utilised informal means of assessing work-related exposure to PTEs. Only those who have adopted established scales provided descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations. Even where such descriptive statistics are provided, comparison across studies is difficult because some report overall sample statistics and others report subgroup statistics only (e.g., males compared to females). Other studies have focused on providing narrative descriptions and percentages for endorsed items. Comparisons across studies is further complicated by the fact that different types of PTEs have been assessed over different periods of time, some asking if exposure was at the scene or off-site, while others did not.

There are benefits and disadvantages to weigh up when choosing between journalist specific trauma exposure scales (e.g., Journalist Trauma Exposure Scale) compared to other established trauma exposure scales (e.g., Trauma History Questionnaire). Scales specific to the role of journalists are useful in that they are tailored and insightful to that occupation. The disadvantage is that it is then difficult to compare to other occupations and the general population. This has been identified as a common concern within the journalism and psychology literature; often results are reported out of context of broader trends, making it difficult to ascertain the level of risk and associated issues that are unique to journalists (MacDonald, Saliba, & Hodgins, 2015; MacDonald, Saliba, Hodgins, & Ovington,

2016). The Trauma History Questionnaire and the Traumatic Life Events Questionnaire are not specific to the experiences of journalists but have been used widely in the broader trauma literature. Hence studies using these scales can be compared to broader literature and other professions when statistics are reported consistently.

As stated in the introduction, trauma exposure prevalence rates in general population samples range from 16–90% whereas the prevalence of personal trauma exposure amongst journalists ranges from 38–90%. Some studies have not measured personal and work-related exposure discretely, or have not measured personal exposure at all. In such cases it is difficult to assess the source of the majority of exposure. This is a considerable theoretical shortcoming since research has shown prior personal life exposure to trauma to be a greater predictor of negative trauma reactions than work-related exposure. Despite this, fewer studies have considered personal exposure when compared to work-related exposure. As stated previously, a review of trauma reactions in journalists (MacDonald, Hodgins, & Saliba, 2015) identified 20 studies that measured posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms in journalists, yet only six articles in the present review have assessed levels of personal exposure to trauma. Similar to the discussion of work-related exposure, the personal exposure findings are also troubled by inconsistencies in reporting techniques across studies. Most of the studies include an overall prevalence rate of participants who have experienced at least one PTE. However, only Backholm and Bjorkqvist (2012b) report a comparison of means. The period of time assessed is unclear in many of the studies.

It is noteworthy that Simpson and Boggs (1999) reported that only 38% of their sample had experienced a PTE, but the percentage of those experiencing stressors was more congruent with the high prevalence rates reported in other studies. This low PTE exposure rate may be due to a range of factors, such as the small sample size of the study, which might mean the sample was not as representative as in other cases. It might also be related to the fact that an established scale was not utilised. In many of the studies that did not use an established scale it is not clear if participants are presented with a list of items or if they offered their own experienced PTEs. When exposure studies rely on participant recall as opposed to recognition (asking them to suggest events compared to ticking from a list) lower prevalence rates of exposure are reported (Mills, et al., 2011). Another influential factor might relate to a difference in how the researcher and the participant define 'traumatic'. The contention over the difference between stressors and PTEs is a key issue in the area of psychological trauma; as the list of criteria for trauma exposure is widened, so are the kinds of events included in scales (Mills, et al., 2011). Finally, there is the possibility that journalists might have a tendency to under-report exposure given the stoicism traditionally associated with the profession. This might be the case especially where they have lower than usual levels of PTE exposure but typical levels of stressors. The category associated with trauma carries the accompanying stigma whilst stress is a more acceptable and widespread phenomena.

The area of research on journalists and trauma exposure lacks theoretical underpinning and tends to be focused on practical applications as opposed to contextualising within, or adding to, broader trauma research. Methodologically, future quantitative research should aim to use consistent criteria for events and time periods, and include descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and standard deviations) as well as narrative descriptions and

percentages of endorsed items, to enhance the capacity to compare across studies. There is also a need to consider both personal and work-related exposure discretely so as to best delineate and understand the trauma experiences and reactions of journalists. The findings indicate that the research on journalists' trauma exposure is piecemeal in nature, in that more recent research does not build upon the research that has come before it. Hence, it is difficult to ascertain whether trauma exposure varies due to factors such as country and media outlet.

A potential avenue for future development that has become apparent through this review relates to the experience of trauma exposure in regional journalists. Journalists working regionally may experience an overlap of risk factors associated with PTEs to a greater extent (or in a unique way) when compared to their metropolitan counterparts: the combination of close proximity, dual-relationships as a result of living and working in a small community, and greater exposure to car accidents, may increase the likelihood of adverse trauma reactions. This is likely to be exacerbated by the greater job demands and stressors that come with working out of a smaller media organisation (Cook & Banks, 1993; Cook, Banks, & Turner, 1993). To address this issue, quantitative methods could be used to establish whether there are differences in the rates of trauma exposure and related reactions in regional compared to metropolitan journalists. Qualitative methods could also be used to elucidate factors pertinent to working regionally and to establish the support required by those journalists.

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