LOCAL JOURNALISM BEYOND THE COMMAND POST:

JOURNALISTS AS STRATEGIC COMMUNICATORS

AND CITIZEN STAKEHOLDERS IN

NATURAL DISASTER RECOVERY

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By

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AND CITIZEN STAKEHOLDERS IN NATURAL DISASTER RECOVERY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLES AND FIGURES

Local Journalism Beyond the Command Post: Journalists as Strategic

Communicators and Citizen Stakeholders in Natural Disaster Recovery

Mildred Frances Wiggins Perreault

Dr. Ryan Thomas, Dissertation Supervisor

Abstract

On Memorial Day weekend 2015, between the hours of 9 p.m. and 1 a.m. the Blanco River crested at 42 feet, drowning the town of Wimberley, Texas. The Memorial Day flood resulted in the death of 11 people and damage to more than 300 homes and businesses. Journalists flocked to Wimberley to report the destruction, but as the hype from national news organizations died down, only a few local journalists remained to tell the story of the town's struggle for recovery. Using case study methods and narrative theory this study combined an examination of local news stories, interviews and observations of local journalists, and conversations with community members to evaluate how local journalists consider their roles in long-term recovery and resilience. Conversations with local journalists revealed the level of accountability they have to their communities, and the challenges they face to remain critical of events surrounding the disaster. Journalists also expressed a pressure created by geographic proximity, to change the focus of stories as more time passed after the disaster. An evaluation of the narratives expressed by journalists and how those transfer in to their newswork brings a deeper understanding to the tensions created when a journalist is also a citizen stakeholder in his or her community. Through the development of the *journalist as citizen* model, this study addresses the way local journalists practice strategic communication in the narratives they adopt in the six months after a natural disaster.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Wimberley, Texas journalist Gary Zupancic will remember May 2015 as one of the wettest months on record the Texas Hill Country had seen in 10 years. After a number of flash-flood warnings, the increase in rain culminated on Memorial Day Weekend. Warning messages early Saturday morning warned listeners: "During the overnight hours it is imperative that those out and about for the holiday weekend… especially those on local rivers and lakes… monitor the weather and be ready to act should a warning be issued for their area" (National Oceanographic & Atmospheric Administration, 2015). In less than 24 hours, unprecedented amounts of rainwater began spilling into the Blanco River. The waters collected in low-lying areas where many people had homes along the river. In the middle of the night on May 23, 2015, the river crested at 35 feet above the flood plain near Wimberley, Texas. In total, the Blanco River rose more than more than 41 feet between 9 p.m. and 1 a.m. (National Oceanographic & Atmospheric Administration, 2015). As early as 11 p.m., people were reported missing. The National Weather Service warned people of the inclement event the Friday before, tweeting from the account @NWSSanAntonio (National Oceanographic & Atmospheric Administration, 2015).

By Sunday afternoon, the water had subsided, more than 300 homes and properties had been destroyed, and more people were missing. Searches for survivors displaced by the floods continued for several days after the 41-foot rise in water. Eleven people were confirmed dead. National journalists descended on the town of Wimberley to report on the tragedy, joining a number of local and regional journalists in the news coverage of the story. As the flood debris cleared, national news organizations moved on to other stories, leaving only a few local journalists – like Gary Zupancic – to continue the news coverage of the devastation.

Natural disasters make national headlines even though they are often regionally and locally isolated. Journalists play a critical role in disseminating accurate information during a disaster situation and assisting in the process of community recovery afterward (see, e.g., Seeger, 2006; Sellnow, Seeger, & Ulmer, 2002; Wilkins, Steffens, Thorson, Kyle, Collins, & Vultee, 2012). However, research concerning the news coverage of natural disasters to date has tended to focus on national-level news coverage, often looping local journalism into a broad category of "media." Meaning there is little research specifically on the work and roles of local journalists and their news organizations in the context of local recovery. It is also unclear how local journalists function in their community in the months after the disaster and if, over time, these roles change because of their experiences. The lack of differentiation between national and local journalists is problematic, for natural disasters are local events that have long-term impacts (Norris et al., 2007). Local journalists are often left to tell a more complete story and provide context for the aftermath of a disaster while national news organizations report on natural disasters for a shorter amount of time than local news organizations (Masel-Walters, Wilkins, & Walters, 1993).

Understandably, local individuals have different vested interests in the communities they live in than people outside of their communities do. Therefore, journalists who live in a community will have a different perspective on that community than journalists who only visit the community to report on a particular adverse event. Their proximity to the disasters mean local journalists are much more likely to be affected by the devastation a disaster can wreak on a community than their national counterparts. After a natural disaster, local journalists face issues alongside their communities. They suffer loss and watch their friends and neighbors suffer loss. They too must cope with the trauma the community faces. Reporters may have children who

attend one of the local schools, may be best friends with people who read the newspaper, may serve in local capacities at houses of worship and non-profits, and may participate in recreational activities. And yet, journalistic norms do not alter for local journalists. Instead, local journalists are seemingly expected to do the same work even amidst the chaos of a local disaster. Consider, for example, a community like Joplin, Missouri, with a population of just over 50,000 people. In Joplin, there are two small newspapers with 25 to 50 employees at each (Missouri Press Association, 2013). On May 22, 2011 a tornado swept through the community, killing 160 people, injuring a further 1,100, and causing damages of almost $2.8 billion dollars (Edwards, 2013; Paul & Stimers, 2011). The journalists at these newspapers were confronted with covering a local story whose tragic implications were all too proximate.

Recently, disaster response has focused on the concept of resilience, and researchers who study this concept have built the field of resilience studies. Within this field, both researchers and practitioners are searching for the formula for what makes communities "build back better" than they were before disasters (Magis, 2010). Researchers acknowledge the role of what has been termed *responsible media* – media that share useful information that can be trusted by the community in the process of disaster recovery and resilience (Houston et al., 2015). Responsible media include journalists and news organizations that are actively sharing credible information during and after a natural disaster. Community resilience operates at the local level and local news media are the main long-term contributors to local disaster awareness and recovery awareness (Houston et al., 2012; Seeger et al., 2002). Therefore, local community recovery narratives will more likely be tied to the work of local journalists, making it necessary to examine the work of these journalists and their role in community recovery.

As citizens and professionals, journalists deal with the effects of covering a disaster including loss of life, property loss, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, anxiety and grief (Backholm & Bjorkquist, 2012; Beaudoin, 2008). In addition, a journalist's personal experiences change the way he or she gathers information about subsequent disasters (Dart Center, 2015; Edy, 1999). The vulnerability of these personal experiences often cause journalists to work towards certain goals, using their journalistic writing as a platform to discuss and mitigate their disaster experiences (Wilkins, 1987). Journalists may then mitigate natural disasters both as journalists and citizens of a community with the goal of helping themselves cope and assist their communities to build back better. Journalists also provide an active witness for natural disaster and crisis, and provide a testament to what actually happened (Cottle, 2013; Ellis, 2009; Frosh & Pinchevski, 2011; Peters, 2001; Tait, 2011; Zelizer, 2007). The hands-on real-time experiences of local journalists can provide eyes and ears for those outside the community as well as a platform for other community members' emotional discourse.

Rationale and Purpose of Study

The goal of this study is investigate how local journalists who have experienced a natural disaster situate their role in a community recovery narrative. The study will provide a deeper understanding of how proximity to a local natural disaster might create ethical and operational circumstances that shape the roles journalists fulfill in a particular community. Specifically, this study examines the role of journalists in post-natural disaster news coverage and information dissemination as the part of the role of responsible media in disaster communication. It establishes a foundation for the role of those journalists in formulating community values through personal involvement and journalistic practice. Within the context of this study, the

literature examines the tensions and intersections between being a journalist and a citizen of a community affected by a natural disaster.

Being local and having a local stake in a community can create challenges for journalists attempting to maintain objectivity. Local news organizations often find it difficult to be entirely objective in reporting because of their proximity to the issues they cover (Berkowitz & TerKeurst, 1999; Singer, 2010). A local journalist is not just a journalist, but also a community stakeholder. What happens when a journalist has the desire to help their community recover from a natural disaster – do they focus on certain themes and avoid others? Post-disaster news coverage often relies on specific disaster narratives. Traditional journalistic practices of neutrality and impartiality do not always account for a journalist's personal experiences and proximity to where they work. This study therefore examines the ways in which local journalists understand their role, and how that could contribute to community recovery and resilience. In addition, this research gives voice to local journalists living and working in their own communities after a natural disaster takes place since their voices have been absent from mass communication scholarship.

To understand how local journalists deal with this intersection of roles, the study examines the experiences of journalists through their personal accounts doing news work in Wimberley, Texas and the surrounding areas affected by flooding in May 2015 through case study methodology. Case study methodology allows a researcher to observe and analyze several different types of data, while recognizing thematic consistencies across those data sources. The data for this case study included observations and interviews with a collection of interviews with local journalists, conversations with local residents of the Wimberley community, and a narrative analysis of their news stories. This case study will provide a breadth of knowledge of the

phenomenon of local journalists operating as both locally invested citizens and professional communicators. Case study explores not just people but also the institutions in which those people operate, and validates data collected at the individual, organizational and institutional level (Stake, 2015; Yin, 2013). Throughout a case study, the researcher is able to deconstruct and reconstruct concepts and phenomena, as well as evaluate practices, and develop practical applications for future practice. Case studies require the researcher to dig deep into the data, revisit her analysis several times and tie the analyses together by recognizing thematic consistencies across the different types of data. Case studies are interpretive in nature. Case study research involves a process of collection and that processes is shaped by the environment in which the data it is collected and analyzed.

This case study is an ideal framework to understand how journalists transfer their experiences into their writing. Journalists construct stories as part of their work, and often continue to work even long after a disaster takes place in their communities. This study will also provide a perspective on the goals of local journalists, and how those goals might contribute to certain news narratives.

This study pairs case study and narrative, which have been used to discuss disaster resilience in the field of psychology (Cortazzi, 2014). Narrative research allows for the interpretation of the stories of individuals. Crisis and disaster research in journalism and mass communication has streamlined practices of journalists by not distinguishing between the roles of national and local journalists. Research does not consider a local journalist's responses to a natural disaster may not be the same as a non-local journalist's response. However, no one person or news organization is exactly the same. Similarly, no natural disaster or crisis is the same. The chaotic nature of disaster and crisis communication must be examined in a way that

reveals a journalist's limitations and abilities (Seeger, 2006; Sellnow et al., 2002). There is value in individual experiences, and also compilation of those experiences. This within case analysis—examining the data from this case study in relationship to itself—can reveal discourses taking place among local journalists about their work, roles and practice. Reading and analyzing those stories provides an understanding of how journalists think about their work. Therefore, there is a need to study the stories of local journalists and how their experiences might relate to a theoretical understanding of journalists' role in natural disaster recovery and resilience.

Journalists interpret their own experiences, while they are at the same time coping with and mitigating those experiences. Local journalists often live in the communities where they work and therefore are connected to these communities (Norris et al., 2007). Journalistic reporting can provide comfort for the public in a changing media world where facts are not always easy to verify (Hermida, 2012; Putnam, 2002). The mental wellbeing of a community is often harnessed in the relationships and social capital that lies within those relationships of individuals within that community (Norris et al., 2007). Social capital lives in relationships and networks. Allowing people to tell their relationships, as well as explain those relationships can contribute to social capital.

Definitions of Key Terms

Disaster communication refers to two-way communication that involves descriptions of disaster preparation, response and recovery Baker, 2009; Davies, 2002; McGrath, 1991).

Responsible media refers to media that fulfills that provides accurate information of context to the community in a crisis. (Houston et al., 2015).

A *local journalist* is a reporter, editor, or photographer who lives and works for a community based publication or news organization (Aldridge, 2007; Singer, 2010).

Resilience refers to the idea of a person or community "bouncing back better" from an adverse event (Aldrich, 2012; Cutter et al., 2008; Norris et al., 2008).

Transfer refers to the process of personal ideas and experiences acquired while reporting translating into published material (Harper & Cohen, 2005).

Positionality

It is important to be transparent, and share my positionality concerning this research. Positionality involves the researcher orienting herself to the content she might encounter in the research process (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane & Muhamad, 2001). Positionality is an active process, which considers the history of the researcher as well as the environment the researcher experiences while gathering data. In qualitative research, positionality helps the researcher identify any personal philosophy, orientation, bias, political vantage point, or assumption that may influence the way she sees things. These inherit biases are impossible to eliminate, for as Cresswell (2012) states, "interpretations of the data always incorporate the assumptions that the researcher brings to the topic" (p. 83). Positionality requires the researcher to identify these inherit biases that are part of her own "lived experiences" (Fine, 1994, p. 110). Positionality allows the research to explore and challenge these assumptions in the process of interpretation.

Throughout my life, I have experienced a number of natural disasters. As a researcher, I draw from my personal experiences as a child growing up in Houston and Boerne, Texas, and as a young journalist in Palm Beach County, Florida. These experiences inform my understanding of the work of journalists as well as the culture of Texas' small rural Hill Country communities. My experiences include those in communities in suburban, rural, and urban settings. As a child, I experienced several floods in Houston, one where my mother drove through several inches of

rain to retrieve me from school. I also experienced a few tornadoes and tropical storms in Houston. My family lived outside the city limits in suburban Fort Bend County, Texas. As an adolescent, I helped my Texas Hill Country community clean up from a flood that caused damage to the homes of several family friends when our town's lake overflowed. The same flood temporarily separated my mother and myself from my father and two sisters. One of my sisters was at scout camp in a community three hours from home and lost the majority of the belongings she took to camp in the floodwater. I recall retrieving her three days later. The memory of her plastic trunk covered in mud with her recovered belongings in it sticks in my mind.

In addition, as college student in Central Texas, I was wary of tornado sirens, flooding, and ice storms as the town I was in experienced all three in the four years I attended university for my undergraduate degree. I began college in Fall 2001; therefore, the September 11, 2001 crisis has framed many of my interpretations of crisis. The events of that day ultimately led me to pursue a career in journalism. As a greenhorn reporter in South Florida, I experienced at least three hurricanes and numerous tropical storms. These experiences are part of the lens for my study and will inform the way I view the crises and experiences of others.

Outline of Chapters

The study will address literature in the fields of journalism, strategic communication, and disaster communication practice. It will present and discuss how this study sought to develop the relationship of local journalists to the communities in which they work. It will then explain narrative case study methodology as well as how the data was collected and analyzed. Finally, the study will analyze the data collected from news stories, interviews and observations to see if and how journalists conceive their role as part of responsible media, which contributes to community resilience.

Chapter 2 provides the context for the case study. The chapter provides an outline of the background research as well as a theoretical framework for the role of a journalist in society. The first section establishes a foundation for the literature concerning disaster communication within crisis communication, as well as the different conceptualizations the roles journalists and specifically those of local journalists in disaster reporting. Chapter 3 provides the theoretical context by examining the expectations and challenges of strategic responses to disaster. Chapter 3 examines literature from disaster communication and explores the role of narratives in disaster communication and journalism. Chapter 4 will address ideas adapted from strategic communication and discuss how this fits with the practice of journalism. Chapter 5 will present the research questions and conceptual framework for the study. Chapter 6 will discuss the study methodology and explain how narrative theory and case study methodology linked together to create the study plan.

The next five chapters outline the findings of this study. Chapter 7 discusses the experiences and stories of local journalists and examines how they perceived their roles following a natural disaster. Chapter 9 examines how journalists saw their roles as citizen stakeholders and will highlight any strategic goals the journalists sought to communicate. Chapter 9 addresses how strategic communication relates to disaster communication and response. Chapter 10 provides an analysis of how journalists conceive their civic duty and how this appears in their reporting narratives. Chapter 11 examines how journalists' goals resemble characteristics of responsible media in community resilience as defined by disaster communication researchers. The final chapter, Chapter 12, will develop a model for the *journalist as citizen* (JAC) and will provide context for how local journalists conceive and practice the role of journalist as citizen after a natural disaster.

Chapter 2: Journalism

When journalists are bound to a location either by citizenship or geography, the ties that bind them to this location are often chosen (Robinson & DeShano, 2015). There are many challenges in crisis communication and traditional lines of communication often fail (Sutton, 2010; Zelizer, 2009). A primary role of local journalists is to report on information of value to the people in their community (Craft & Davis, 2013) and for local journalists this often means playing both a collaborative role with government officials and crisis communicators during and after a natural disaster, as well as a facilitative role following the disaster (Christians et al., 2009).

Reporting and collaboration align in that journalists must get information from local sources to complete their work. These local sources often seek to distribute useful information to the public through news organizations. In turn these connections help people find help and connect to resources after a natural disaster. Research concerning the role of the press in disaster response and recovery has dominantly focused on the impressions of the media audience and the way people respond to media messages (Dynes, 1970; Dynes & Tierney, 1994). This chapter will outline the background research as well as a theoretical framework for the role of a journalists in local communities.

The Roles of Journalists

Journalists are more than stenographers, as they help contextualize current events and their long-term social, political, and historical implications (Gans, 1979, 2011; Wilkins & Patterson, 1987). Implicit in journalistic practices are values of the profession

like accuracy, independence, truth-telling, and the minimizing of harm (Society of Professional Journalists, 2016). The experiences of journalists can change the way they view the ethical practices of newsmaking and reporting.

The role of journalists in disaster communication and response is understood to be one that provides information, which is accurate and timely. While journalism is practiced with certain professional and ethical guidelines, in a crisis journalists question their responses as citizens (Austin et al., 2015; Cottle, 2013; Middleton, 2009). This portion will present the literature on the roles of journalists and how journalists operate in a post-disaster environment. The absence of studies concerning local journalists and their reactions and roles in news coverage after local disasters is a very visible hole. Studies have found journalists can be both helpful and hurtful in the process of disaster response and recovery.

Roles defined. Journalism and public relations students are taught there are four primary ways in which the press operates within democracy these are defined as journalistic roles (Christians et al., 2009). Roles include the monitorial, facilitative, radical, collaborative roles. In the facilitative role, journalists help to facilitate conversations between groups of people in order to contribute to democracy (Christians et al., 2009). In the radical role, journalists question the intentions of those in society and bring attention to ideas outside the sphere of consensus (Christians et al., 2009; Hallin, 1994). In the monitorial role journalists monitor society and act as a watchdog when injustices are done within society. In the collaborative role, journalists work along side the government to provide information to the public (Christians et al., 2009). Journalists fulfill this role in disaster communication during the times of warning, response and long-

term recovery. How are these roles understood in local journalism? It is understood from literature on disaster communication that local journalists become part of the cycle of disaster response because of their role in information sharing. As citizens, local journalists are not only professionals but also invested consumers of this information. By their very proximity to the disaster, local journalists are positioned in the collaborative and facilitative roles in post disaster news coverage.

       Institutional obligations and training. Journalists have an institutional obligation to share information in a disaster as part of the facilitative role of journalism and therefore their investment in crisis communication is to report things as they see them (Christians et al. 2009; Rosen, 1999; Sood, Stockdale, & Rogers, 1987). Within the institutional obligation lies the challenge of journalistic professionalism and human disaster experiences. In disaster reporting journalists work within professional guidelines of research reporting and verification (Himmelstein & Faithorn, 2002). Research has shown that reporters felt it was their duty to write stories that help communities avoid panic (Kueneman &Wright, 1975). The goals of reporters and government in the wake of a natural disaster are often similar – to provide accurate information and prevent unneeded panic (Itule & Anderson, 1984). For example, in the early hours of September 11, 2001, broadcast journalists encouraged viewers to not jump too quickly conclusions concerning the cause of the attacks or the death toll (Scanlon, 2011).

       Confirmation of facts. In the past, news coverage of natural disasters was tied to print deadlines and for that reason journalists were more likely to confirm facts before printing the details of disasters (Reynolds & Barnett, 2003, p. 698). Media reports often describe the actions of the community. For example, media reports might state after the

disaster that "things are getting back to normal," or talk about how the residents of a community and their kin hope things will return to "normal" which is perceived as the most desirable outcome (Buzzanell, 2010, p. 3). Media reports describe how people sort through the natural disaster and regain a sense of normalcy (Buzzanell, 2010). Normalcy is considered to be the process of recovery as well as a desired end outcome.

While scholarship has focused on nationally covered natural disasters and crises, studies of how local journalists cover their own communities are almost nonexistent in journalism and mass communication scholarship. Fields like psychology and public policy have studied the involvement of local press practitioners as one of many groups of responders and political actors (Norris et al., 2007). This area merits a deeper investigation for two reasons: first, journalists dealing with the aftermath of a disaster are often victims, and survivors; second, journalists are often citizens and stakeholders in their communities who fill roles other than journalist. Disasters are unpredictable events and threaten the expectations of community stakeholders, they can also impact the way that an organization or individual responds (Coombs, 2010).

Journalists share a collection of values and strategies that characterize how they interact with crisis, the community, and authority figures based on the challenges and circumstances they face (Anderson, 2008; Deuze, 2005; Zelizer, 1992, 1993). The field of journalism studies has focused on the importance of boundaries in justifying the journalist's position of privilege when covering a crisis or disaster (Zelizer, 1992). Through the process of creating boundaries journalists attempt to remove themselves from the crisis. Journalists are encouraged to distance themselves from sources by not accepting gifts or forming deeper relationships with those sources. Journalists are also

encouraged to identify injustices and bring to light the limitations of government and social structures. However, the responsibility to report and share information, engage the public in information of consequence, and challenge injustice requires active listening. Active listening requires conversation, communication, and investment.

Roles of Local Journalists

Natural disasters have a direct impact on the local journalist's daily life, geography and routines (American Society of News Editors, 2015). Local journalists come from a variety of backgrounds (Dart Center, 2015). While many of them received educational training in journalism and journalistic skills, many are citizens who work part-time at a local news outlet while maintaining employment at another community organization or business (American Association of News Editors, 2015; National Press Association, 2015).

Local journalists might experience crises as citizens and many may not have the training of national level professional journalists (Bock, 2012; Carlson, 2007; Lewis, 2012; Örnebring, 2013). Therefore, a local professional journalist might not have training as to how to report on a crisis experience, but may have a reference point for how to deal with the emotional effects of the crisis.

Researchers have identified three dimensions where journalists construct professional ideologies and standards: specific skills (such as storytelling), norms (or ethical standards, such as objectivity and public service), and values (such as autonomy) (Ahva, 2010; Deuze, 2005; Singer, 2005; Zelizer, 1992, 1993). While specific skills constitute the craft of journalism, the norms and values provide a framework for the normative practice of journalists. Zelizer (1992) states that journalistic authority has been

established through the act of professional storytelling, or the craft, rather than just the practice of objectivity. In addition, other core values including accuracy, relevance, truthfulness, impartiality, balance, and neutrality are used to set journalists apart from social media users, citizen journalists, bloggers, and other writers (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013). Journalists have a set of professional norms by many times those norms are thrown out because they don't help the journalist to process what he or she is dealing with.

Journalists as victims. In journalism scholarship, journalists who have covered natural disasters might suffer trauma and psychological symptoms as a result of the disaster or crisis (Edy, 1999; Scanlon, 2011). However, practically driven research at centers like the Columbia Journalism School Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma is supporting deeper investigations into how journalists continue to work after they experience crises (Dart Center, 2015). For example, studies have included individual and organizational crises. During the Anthrax scare of 2002, a journalist in Tom Brokaw's office at NBC opened an anthrax-laced envelope and the newsroom became a crime scene (Scanlon, 2011). In this case the journalist was a victim as well as a source and journalist.

Increasingly the journalist is expected to be a "witness" to the disaster or crisis he or she is reporting on. This challenges what journalists have defined as traditional norms. When journalists are eyewitnesses they become more creditable and trusted (Tait, 2011). As an eyewitness, journalists have less opportunity to emotionally disconnect themselves from what they have experienced (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013; Pantti, 2010).

Journalist as citizens. Journalists are citizens, or contributors to the community and democracy (Putnam, 2002). Media theorist Michael Schudson (1998) described the "good citizen" as one who is civically engaged but also aware of his or her participation in the life of the community. Communities are groups of people who share culture, history and geography (Cutter et al. 2008; Magis, 2010) and for that reason they often share radio stations, television stations and newspapers. A citizen lives in a community, but a good citizen has responsibility to the community he or she lives in. Citizens actively participate in decision making within the structures that exist through community betterment projects, voting, and political participation (Putnam, 2002; Schudson, 1998). Journalists contribute to democracy by making information about these processes available to a broader public. Local journalists are also *citizens practicing journalism*. Conceptualizing journalists as citizens goes beyond the conventional understanding of journalism as a profession and becomes highly participatory, and more citizen-oriented (Gans, 2004). News organizations are strategic in informing people, specifically through the facilitative and collaborative roles of journalists (Christians et al., 2009). As local citizens, journalists are keenly positioned to examine their communities in a relational way.

However, in the case of local journalism, journalists work as media professionals as well as in other local capacities. For example, after 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in New Town, Connecticut a local newspaper photographer was also a first responder to the shooting and helped to lead children out of school parking lot (McCauley, 2012). While a local journalist has a responsibility to contribute to this information flow and exchange as both professional journalist and citizen, he or she

might be called upon to serve or help in a different capacity.. Meaning the potential for a

local journalist to be a community stakeholder is highly likely.

Professional standards. Since the early 1900s, journalists have held to specific

journalistic values to define their profession (Lewis, 2012; Singer, 2005, 2010; Williams

et al., 2011). Journalists often find themselves in challenging situations as they seek to

provide not just information. Journalists navigate through "diversions," and relay

"technical information" at the demands of a variety of interest groups who seek to shape

the news (Christians et al., 2009, p. 222). Out of the necessity to share information of

consequence with the public, journalists will have established connections with

community leaders and know how to reach these leaders in times of crisis. Local

journalists know their communities and are recognized as community professionals.

Local journalists find satisfaction in being part of a community and having direct

contact with readers (Aldridge, 2007; Singer, 2010). Community newspapers have the

unique opportunity to be a local source of information both in print and online, and for

this reason often benefit from advertising from local stakeholders such as doctors,

lawyers and business people (Singer, 2010). While local newspapers are situated for local

success, studies have found often their online presence is lacking because of failure to

latch onto local advertising resources online (Aldridge, 2007). Local journalists often

focus on local news and events, such as high school football games, new businesses,

town anniversaries, and festivals. A journalist might know the people they write about

personally, or share a mutual friend with a source. Community newspapers are often a

central location for these stories, and are more a chronicle than a critique of that

community (Images and Voices of Hope, 2015). This attachment to a community changes

the way journalists develop stories as well as interview sources. Interviewing a friend of a friend is different than interviewing a stranger.

Proximity and community relationships change the way journalists who have experienced a crisis or disaster report. Community journalists act as local gatekeepers and trusted sources of information (Singer, 2010). Gatekeeping theory addresses the process by which choices are made and information is abandoned and kept as those choices are made (Schramm, 1949). Gatekeeping relies on responsibly; the journalist develops a story, plans, interviews, structures, and edits the content, which is then published and shared with the public. The process of gatekeeping involves "selecting, writing, editing, positioning, scheduling, repeating and otherwise massaging information to become news" (Shoemaker, Vos, & Reese, 2009, p. 73). These decisions made at individual as well as institutional levels create the news of record. News creates specific shared narratives within a community. With this decision-making comes great power, and the values, predispositions, and organizational routines of journalists determine the information the public receives.

Certain stories and narratives are chosen and others are abandoned. Journalists are gatekeepers and make decisions about what information to share concerning a topic dependent upon what is the most important as well as the most marketable and informative (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009; Tandoc, Hellmueller, & Vos, 2013). While national level media do not have a vested interest in local disasters and rarely cover them for long periods of time (Houston et al., 2012), public policy and crisis communication studies often use disaster news coverage as a historical record of community response.

This record of disaster response is used by crisis managers to modify future disaster responses (Houston, Spileak, & Perreault, 2016).

In addition, other national level studies concerning disaster and terrorism news coverage have focused on either the frequency of certain types of news coverage, or how the audience perceives news coverage (Bryant & Pribanic-Smith, 2010; Houston et al., 2012; Marshall, Bryant, Amsel, Suh, Cook, & Neria, 2007). News coverage is a part of disaster communication and crisis communication, but understanding how the news coverage is created, and who creates it does not seem to be included in this definition.

Local impact. News coverage has more impact on the community at the local level, specifically at community newspapers where journalists reside geographically near their readers (Berkowitz & TerKeurst, 1999; Singer, 2010). News narratives help the public cope with natural disasters. They also help journalists cope with their personal experiences. Journalists might be able to cope with natural disasters because they are likely to experience multiple crises and disasters. This ability to cope develops adaptive capacities, which help journalists to assist others in coping. Individual adaptive capacities after a disaster include the abilities to assess risk, access resources and information, maintain self and collective efficacy (the power to produce a desired result), cope, and eventually move on (Magis, 2010; Norris et al., 2008). As a citizen with a vested interest in his or her community, the local journalist will be motivated to report long-term and concerning stories he or she may have more of an attachment to. Journalists are "geographically bounded" to provide information and facilitate community discourse (McBride & Rosenstiel, 2013, p. 172). Recognizing a tension to remain objective and understanding journalists who have attachments to their communities will have specific

goals for community recovery and therefore will chose certain stories based on these goals, challenges the current literature.

Practices of Local Journalists

Accuracy is a key value in journalism and a measurement of credibility (Franklin, Hamer, Hanna, Kinsey, & Richardson, 2005). The more accurate journalists are in their reporting more trustworthy their audience considers them to be (Phillips, Couldry, & Freedman, 2010). Local reporters also have a tendency to treat information differently and report on local issues with more accuracy (Scanlon, Allred, Farrell, & Prawzick, 1985). When comparing local and national news coverage of Hurricane Alicia which hit Houston, Texas in August 1983, researchers found the local newspaper, *The Houston Post* only used disaster myths, or particular stock story lines concerning disaster, in their reporting 30 percent of the time, compared to 70 percent of national news coverage in papers like the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* (Wenger & Friedman, 1986). Disaster myths concerned the death toll, a narrative of destruction, as well as characters being identified as heroes, villains and survivors. The decision to rely on disaster myths rather than work to gather new information is one of many decisions national-level and local-level journalists approach differently. As journalists have more or less context for what they experience they can change the way that people respond and even remember a crisis.

Challenges for local media. Local media have also created problems with disaster response for example after the Branch Davidian Incident Outside of Waco, Texas and the Oklahoma City Bombing in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma (Ange, 2007; Hansen, 1998; Hodges, 1993). In both cases, local journalists released information before

confirming its legitimacy, or without obtaining permission from victim's family members. These releases caused problems for the news organizations but also resulted in less newspaper credibility.

Command post journalism. The term "command post" has been used to identify the role that local journalists play in to disaster reporting. Command post journalism identifies that often in disaster reporting situations, journalists do not move around, and focus on sources near a particular area during the duration of their news coverage (Sood et al., 1987; Wenger & Quarantelli, 1989). Command post journalism conceptualizes the journalist as a stationary unmoving entity - much like a policeman stationed at an intersection waiting to catch speeding drivers. Journalists are tied to geographic locations and perform specific duties with those geographic bounds. However, local journalists are more like a walking police officers aware of problem spots, who patrol, but also stop to help others who look like they are in need or in trouble. While not all journalists actively practice journalism that seeks to uncover injustices and problem spots in their communities, local journalists are more likely to see these first hand.

The local journalist learns as he or she reports and interacts with citizens. The local journalist notices the challenges and concerns of the community. The local journalist focuses on specific concerns based on his or her knowledge of community history as well as firsthand observations. In my experience as a local journalist, I found sharing resources and information with sources often helped to strengthen relationships with those sources, even if that information was not part of the interview or the story. For example, I once interviewed an Eagle Scout for a personal profile. He was looking for additional projects to take on, and so I shared information with him about a city park

project. He signed up to participate in the park-landscaping project after our meeting.

Later, I wrote a story about the park and mentioned his scout troops' role in the project.

This shows how connections to locations, resources, sources and knowledge can

contribute to a more solid reporting foundation and crisis response (Scanlon, 1998;

Sellnow et al., 2002).

There are problems with the traditional practice of journalism which emphasize

certain news values over others. For example, journalists are encouraged to focus on

death tolls and property loss as soon as possible, but at the same time not report numbers

they cannot confirm with sources (Scanlon, 1998). Research has begun to acknowledge

the importance of restorative narratives in helping communities and individuals cope with

adverse events, rather than a focus on traditional disaster troupes like death tolls and

property loss.

Similarly, news media can create the narrative by which people begin to interpret

the disaster and determine how they should respond (Wenger & Quarantelli, 1989). The

role of the journalist during crisis is beneficial to local government functioning because

of the way journalists share information with the broader public (Burkhart, 1991).

Journalists contribute to collective understanding of a large-scale disaster event. News

stories can help people to work through the ritual grief process and create comprehensive

community narratives (Riegert & Olsson, 2007). These narratives become public

knowledge and eventually create community history (Kitch, 2003). This knowledge

making process is also part of the coping process.

Personal experiences and transfer. Often the personal experience of a natural

disaster or crisis brings about a more sympathetic, metered response than journalists

might have had if they had not experienced the crisis. For example, in a study concerning the news coverage of a massacre where 16 children and a teacher were shot at an elementary school in Dunblane, Scotland in 1996, international journalists were found to have been more sensitive to grief (Jemphrey & Berrington, 2000). They chose to give the families privacy and left the community before the funerals (Jemphrey & Berrington, 2000). Local journalists, many whom knew people directly affected by the loss, focused on the recovery of the community in their stories (Jemphrey & Berrington, 2000). Local journalists reported long-term on the grief of the community.

Collectively news coverage of events like September 11, an event that affected an international audience, provided a "cohesive story about the tragedy" moving from "shock and fear to inspiration and pride" (Kitch, 2003, pp. 222-223). For the month post September 11, 2001, the *New York Times* devoted the majority of its print product (69 percent) to publishing articles about those killed in the attacks (Lule, 2002). In the eight days following the attacks every editorial addressed the September 11 attacks (Lule, 2002). In news coverage of a number of crisis incidents journalists were consistently careful to avoid showing blood, bodies, or gore (Scanlon, 2011). Journalists wrestled with showing people jumping and falling to their death (Kratzer & Kratzer, 2003). They also worked to actively dispel rumors concerning the potential for subsequent attacks, the location of US leaders, other attacks being stopped at airports, and pre-attack warnings (Lasorsa, 2003). 24/7 news coverage on national electronic media (television, Internet, and radio) resulted in more unconfirmed facts before sharing them with the public (Lowrey, 2004; Scanlon, 2011). These personal accounts contributed to a broader understanding of September 11 and the process of coping with the tragedy.

Journalistic Roles in Disaster Communication

In the 1970s and 1980s, journalism and mass communication scholarship concerning disaster response and crisis communication was limited to studies of response manuals, books, and monographs. These studies focused on the integrations of policy makers and professional communicators with the press as an information-sharing institution that assists in sharing information during a crisis (Scanlon & Frizzell, 1976; Scanlon, Luukko, & Morton, 1978; Singer & Green, 1972; Waxman, 1973). In these studies, the press is an organization awaiting direction from government officials and leaders. Here the press is waiting to be told how and when to share information.

However, with an increased emphasis on crisis and disaster response post-September 11, 2001 and an influx of strategic social media crisis communication, the amount of literature has grown exponentially but most has failed to cross disciplinary boundaries (Scanlon, 2011). As scholarship increases, researchers have acknowledged the news media's role in disaster communication. Disaster research acknowledges the news media as an actor in helping people understand and experience disasters they might not be familiar with in their own personal experiences (Quarantelli, 1987). The news media provide a primary context for response to disasters. Primary context is the reference point from which all people formulate their understanding of natural disasters, as well as their perceived risk and ability to recover from a natural disaster (Quarantelli, 1987). Therefore, the news media should be evaluated at the institutional, organization, and individual levels.

The knowledge of news media scholars and scholars in other disciplines concerning the disaster and crisis responses are also disconnected. While media (as a

group) is often mentioned as a part of disaster response, the roles and responsibilities of

journalists (as individuals) and journalism (as an institution) are often neglected. This

research investigates the way that journalists operate as part of disaster response and

recovery, but also have certain goals in mind for their local communities. That said,

disaster responses are constrained by location, infrastructure, a person or group's

socioeconomic status, previous experience with similar events, access to risk information

and individual risk perception (Tierney et al., 2006). A journalist like any other individual

will experience a disaster and respond differently depending on his or her location,

previous experiences, risk perceptions and a number of other factors.

     Journalists' responses to crisis. In crisis situations, journalists work together

with each other as well as citizens to gather information, as well as verify and share their

information (Sandman & Paden, 1979; Wicker, 1966). Journalists devote their resources

to covering the crisis first. During the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorism

attacks local journalists rushed to the scene when the first plane crashed in to One World

Trade Center (Zelizer & Allan, 2002). In the Columbine High School Massacre, 15

students and the shooters died, and 13 others were critically wounded. Denver's KCNC-

TV used every person on staff to maintain a constant 13 hours of television news

coverage. This required a staff of 150 people working during that time (Rotbart, 1999;

Scanlon, 2011). Both these events were covered locally and by local journalists.

     News media scholarship specifically focuses on the responses of national

journalists during a crisis or disaster. However, some key studies have looked at local

news organizations. In a study of the World Trade Center-based *Wall Street Journal*'s

response to September 11, 2001, the *Journal* had a crisis and disaster response plan and

moved a large number of staff and reporters to an auxiliary location when the first plane hit their building (Baker, 2001; Scanlon, 2011). Experiencing the crisis created a unique opportunity and challenge for Wall Street Journal reporters.

Crisis reporting provides vital information, therefore legitimizing the profession of journalism to the general public (Allan & Zelizer, 2004). Journalists maintain a network of contacts as part of their daily work. Their conversations and exchanges with local leaders and public information officers (PIOs) makes them a mediator of community information. Public relations practitioners also see the value in creating relationships with local journalists (Spicer, 1993). This relationship between PIO and journalist creates a flow of information from stakeholders to the public, a position of power and responsibility.

Information provided by journalists can make or break crisis response in that it can provide life-saving information (Scanlon, 1998; Sellnow et al., 2002). For example, as rain bands from Hurricane Katrina began to shower down on Alabama and Louisiana people heard radio broadcasts, which encouraged them to begin evacuating their homes, but also resulted in people staying because of inaccurate information about where the storm would touch down (Memmott, 2005). However, journalists and citizens sharing information on social media were credited as one of the primary channels through which people were informed to take cover before the Joplin, Missouri tornado (Fisher, 2011). Also, *The Joplin Globe* newspaper was one of the only sources of information when telephone, cable and cell phone lines were down after the storm (Missouri Press Association, 2013). News reports were still considered an accurate source of information before, during, and after these natural disasters.

This chapter has addressed the roles of journalists and how this literature is situated within disaster and communication research. The following chapter will address how strategic communication relates to disaster communication and response.

Chapter 3: Strategic Communication

This chapter will examine the expectations and challenges of strategic communication and responses to disaster. This chapter provides a framework through which ideas adapted from strategic communication relate to local journalism during disaster recovery.

When communicating with the public after a natural disaster, strategic communicators begin their work with specific communication goals in sight. The chaos of a natural disaster is often followed by a return to pre-disaster levels of functioning if people have access to resources and know where to access resources (Norris et al., 2007), but subsequent crises can stunt recovery (Black & Hughes, 2001) since money and resources are often limited after dealing with a natural disaster (Eisenman et al., 2006).

Public information officers and journalists have been shown to provide a platform for honesty, credibility, and trust during post-disaster recovery (Rawlins, 2009). Although academic research has examined how the response of public figures can change the how the public responds to a crisis, it lacks the scope to evaluate the media messages used by local journalists during a crisis following a natural disaster. Bouncing back from a crisis is much more difficult for those involved in the crisis (Black & Hughes, 2001). It is also very difficult to address the after effects of a natural disaster long-term when resources are limited and tensions are high. As time elapses, with collaborative planning and recovery efforts, chaos is often followed by a return to pre-disaster levels of functioning (Norris et al., 2007). Communication is key in this process (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005). Often a public figure makes statements concerning the crisis, which the public then rallies

around. When a journalist is a local citizen, he or she might also be considered a public communicator – someone who speaks to the public and sometimes for the public. Strategic communication is defined broadly as targeting a key audience with a focus on a specific goal (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, Van Ruler, Verčič, & Sriramesh, 2007). Influence is a central component in disaster and crisis plans, consistent in public relations and strategic communication. Strategic communicators use persuasion, patronage, purchasing, and physical force (or presence) to direct certain audiences toward end goals (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006). The sheer presence of a certain public figure may allow people to feel more confident about the situation, for example, the presence of a CEO when job cuts are made, or the presence of a mayor at a community when something bad happens in a community.

Ideas from Strategic Communication

Journalists often craft messages to motivate the public to take action. Mass communication scholarship concerning disaster warning messages has addressed how journalists share disaster information with the public and how the public in turn responds. Researchers have found that when people hear or see a warning message they often confirm it with other media sources like radio broadcasts, television news, or social media (Perreault, Houston, & Wilkins, 2014; Perry & Greene, 1983). The news media can also provide connections to government resources and post-event information to people after a disaster strikes. For example, debris removal services, insurance claim stations, and temporary lodging (Scanlon, Osborne, & McClellan, 1996).

While crisis messages often impact the decisions of the public at large, media messages have both hidden and identifiable effects on individuals and communities

(Funkhouser, 1973; Kim, Scheufele, & Shanahan, 2002; Littlefield & Quenette, 2007; McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar, & Rey, 1997; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). One hidden effect is that a news source might also become more or less trustworthy if the information it shares does or does not help to prevent death or loss of property. One identifiable effect is that people will either respond or not respond to warning messages by taking cover in disaster situations depending on how they perceive the threat of the disaster as portrayed in the news media. Similarly, the news media often functions as a publicity tool for public officials during a disaster, by "repeating and enhancing the impact of these interpretations" (Seeger et al., 2002, p. 119). Local journalists share crisis information within their own communities, because of their investments as community stakeholders and trustworthy spokespersons.

Strategic stakeholders. Community stakeholders are invested in the long-term recovery of a community. Their goal is to see the community fully recover financially and socially after the disaster. Stakeholders respond to the situation at hand and often use previous experiences to mold their crisis responses (Cancel et. al, 1997; Grunig, 1983). Journalists, because of the nature of their jobs, will be more likely to encounter multiple crises and disasters. Therefore, journalists are often prepared for disasters and connected to disaster resources.

Similar to the role of stakeholders in strategic communication and corporate crisis management (Freeman, 2010; Freeman & Evan, 1990; Rawlins, 2006), a journalist has an investment in the place where he or she lives. This attachment might cause him or her to lean towards writing stories that could make a difference in the recovery of their community. Freeman (2010) states a stakeholder is any group or individual who can

affect, or is affected by, the achievement of a corporation's purpose. Stakeholders chose

certain goals and create a narrative around those goals. Narratives keep the stakeholder

and public working toward the outlined goal.

The next section will discuss the role of disaster communication in disaster

recovery and response, and how journalism and strategic communication are related to

the literature in the multidisciplinary field of disaster and crisis communication.

Chapter 4: Disaster Communication

This section will establish a foundation for the literature concerning disaster communication within crisis communication, as well as the different conceptualizations the roles journalists and specifically those of local journalists in disaster reporting, and present the ideas around disaster narratives.

Disaster Communication

Disaster comes from the Greek words "dis" and "aster" translated bad star. Disaster communication is about preparing for a response to the worst possible outcome, and helping people to recover from those outcomes. Disasters "provide the opportunity to observe the emergence of social structure and the functioning of such structure under stressful conditions" (Kreps, 1998). Traditionally disaster communication has set itself apart from crisis communication in that it deals with a specific geographic area affected by a specific natural hazard (Baker, 2009; Davies, 2002; McGrath, 1991). In disaster communication studies have focused on the in-person responses of communications professionals as well as first responders and public policy figures (Quarantelli, 1987; Seeger et. al, 2007). Disasters are calamities concerning natural and man-made hazardous events and like any other crisis require planning and forethought (Hendin, Pendás de Cassina & Walsh, 2008).

Disaster communication focuses on the actions and reactions of people and processes concerning natural disasters (Baker, 2009; Davies, 2002; McGrath, 1991). Since the 1990s, crisis and disaster communication studies have focused not just on the effects of media messages but also the stories journalists tell and how they are

constructed (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994; Graber, McQuail, & Norris, 1998; Masel-Walters, Wilkins, & Walters, 1993). These studies often highlight the interactions between journalists and public officials (Cutter et al., 2008; Norris et al, 2007). Local journalists and news organizations can play a role in the distribution of information that pertains to risk assessment and crisis response, as well provide a forum for long-term coping, understanding, and education about subsequent disasters (Houston et al., 2015). In disaster studies, the availability of accurate information can change disaster response and contribute to long-term coping for the community.

In the four stages of crisis – pre-crisis or preparation, impact, post-crisis and recovery (Graber, 2003) – journalists and public officials fulfill the role of sharing information throughout the process (Quarantelli, 1997; Seeger et al., 2002). In several case studies, researchers and public policy practitioners have worked together to identify ways in which the press falls short of their role to inform the public (Duke & Masland, 2002; Howell & Miller, 2006; Kaufman, 2005) but have not examined how media operates on different societal levels – both locally and regionally. These case studies identify the importance of strategic planning and responses in the preparation and recovery stages but do not identify if local media is part of the processes.

Disaster phases. The phases of a disaster and the role of the news media during those phases have been connected. Initial disaster response takes place a day to two weeks after the disaster and involves connecting victims to resources (Houston, 2012). The second phase is characterized by a process of mitigating the challenges the disaster has created, and takes place three months to a year after the initial event (Wilkins, 2010; Wilkins et al., 2013). In the fourth phase, or long-term recovery, communities experience

anniversary and trigger events, these are reminders of what the community has faced (Houston, 2012). The fifth phase involves long-term recovery and learning which takes place from three to five years after the initial event (Magis, 2010). This process is represented by the phases of disaster as described in a diagram from the Center for Disease Control (2012) which shows pre-disaster phases, impact a heroic period, followed by a short honeymoon period, a period of disillusionment (in the first one to three days after the disaster). This phase is then followed by and then followed by a period of one to three years that includes "coming to terms" and reconstruction periods.

Within disaster communication studies, theories like media synchronicity theory (MST) (Dennis, Valacich, Speier, & Morris, 1998; Dennis, Fuller, & Valacich, 2008), situational crisis communication theory (Coombs, 2007), the networked crisis communication model (Utz, Schultz, & Glocka, 2013), the social mediated crisis communication model (Austin et al., 2012), disaster management theory (Houston, 2013) and others and have been used to explain how information gets shared with the public during a natural disaster. In the following pages, these theories will be briefly discussed to illustrate their foundational nature in this study.

Disaster and crisis communication theories. Within disaster communication research there are several concepts that helped to formulate the study's focus and research questions.

Media synchronicity theory. Media synchronicity theory concerns the extent to which the environment encourages people to work together for the same goals (Dennis & Valacich, 1998). Within a media synchronic environment, all individuals have the same information and experience the same things in the same time. They also share a similar

focus. In the case of natural disasters, communication is centered on recovery and preparation for subsequent disasters. People who live in the same geographic area will be affected by the same natural disasters – although some will endure more loss than others. Individuals and organizations will consult with similar, if not the same, information sources and communicate with each other in the process. In this study this theory helps to establish that disaster communication is dependent on the passage of time. As time elapses from the disaster event, certain environmental factors direct the ways in which people and groups affected by the disaster communicate with each other.

Situational crisis communication theory. Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) suggests that professional crisis managers will take different actions and respond differently depending on the level of crisis responsibility and reputational threat posed by a crisis (Coombs, 2007). Evaluating the type of crisis, the prior crisis history and the organizations prior reputation the public will perceive the crisis in a certain way and attribute crisis responsibility to a certain party (Coombs, 2007). While SCCT pertains to man-made crises, it has been applied in the case of government officials' responses to natural disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina. A crisis in this respect can create threats to public safety, financial loss, and reputational loss for the organization. It might also result in loss of life and property loss. In the SCCT model, natural disasters are considered "Victim Crises" in that organizations will be assigned minimal crisis responsibility (Coombs, 2007). SCCT assigns responsibility to respond in a specific way depending on when, where, why and how the crisis takes place. SCCT provides another justification for responsibility, and recognizes the influence of responsibly to the way in which stakeholders and communicators relate to the crisis.

Networked crisis communication model. The networked crisis communication model focuses more on communication infrastructure and how it supports crisis communication processes (Utz, Schultz, & Glocka, 2013). The networked crisis communication model was introduced as a way to consider how internet communication can change the ways organizations and publics respond to crises. This would relate to how journalists use technology and social media to communicate with sources, audience and other media professionals. The networked crisis communication model often provides an understanding of how stories are shared with different groups and spread from the story source out to those groups. The model includes professionals and amateurs communicating about crisis and is therefore more in line with updated crisis communication models.

Social mediated crisis communication model. Similarly, the social mediated crisis communication model is another recent addition to the conversation about information sharing, technology and crisis (Austin et al., 2012). With the broader availability of mobile technology in a crisis or disaster, social structures are able to transcend the boundaries traditional media use to share information with the public. The term social mediated pertains to the use of social media technologies to discriminate information. For journalists and local residents this involves the use of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other sharing platforms.

These theories provide context through which a disaster communication study should take shape and provide a platform for specific disaster communication protocols.

Disaster communication research protocols. Within the context of disaster communication theories and models it is understood that disaster communication occurs

when a natural hazard or disaster (tornado, flood, earthquake, hurricane, typhoon, mudslide or the like) occurs and therefore it is limited to a geographically defined area that shares cultural identity. Disasters are also social phenomena in that they are dependent on the community and location in which they occur (Quarantelli, 2005). Therefore, any policy response to a natural hazard has the potential to result in change for a specific community.

Disaster communication involves responses immediately after the disasters are detected and the disaster does its damage (Clarke, 2003; Manoj & Baker, 2007). For example, Hurricane Katrina was a natural disaster, but the levees that broke on Lake Pontchartrain were a combination of bad engineering and an increase of water from the hurricane.

Crisis communication studies have also shown people trust those sharing information when it openly flows from the crisis manager to the public (Seeger, 2006). After Hurricane Sandy in New Jersey, October 2012, local journalists shared information about the availability of resources as well as step-by-step directions for contacting insurance agencies and state and local governments to have debris hauled away and begin rebuilding homes. These are just a few ways in which journalists have been vital in risk communication and disaster response. Furthermore, the role of journalists in crisis and disaster communication is changing because of the access people have to journalists through social media and the ability of ordinary citizens to learn and execute journalistic skills (Lewis, Kaufhold, & Lasorsa, 2010). Journalists are part of these models even if they are not specifically described; they are preforming actions that are closely associated with these models of crisis and disaster communication.

Narratives of Disaster Recovery

Crisis and disaster narratives have been found as records of community recovery (Wicke & Silver, 2009). Narratives are stories, and to understand the way in which a person experiences the world a researcher must orient her understanding of those stories (Kramp, 2004). Journalists record stories and therefore those stories contribute to an overall narrative about the natural disaster. Narratives as stories are the embodiment of our understandings of people and their experiences (Kerby, 1991; Kramp, 2004). Narrative inquiry is the methodological process of understanding a particular event within the context of a particular experience. Narratives are part of our lives in that life experiences – be they personal, professional, or social – are meaningful in a number of ways (Clandinin, 2006; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Each narrative has a plot, characters, and a narrator with a specific point of view (Kramp, 2004). Narratives begin and end. A narrative is a story and therefore is told and packaged with the end in mind. Examining narratives provides room to understand where journalists orient themselves within the profession of journalism and as citizens of their communities. It also provides context for the collective understandings of a community's recovery from that disaster.

Narrative research. Narrative provides a platform for grief and reflection. Victims and family members of victims welcome the presence and involvement of media outlets as a way to memorialize their loved ones (Scanlon, 2011). Often families of disaster victims interact with the news media and journalists. Journalists tend to cover news stories by writing human-interest stories about those affected by the disaster; this practice has been called "humanization" (Scanlon, 2011) or bringing human voices to otherwise linear and informative stories.

For this reason, narrative inquiry and a narrative approach to research provides an in-depth way to examine storytelling practices (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009; Gray & Lombardo, 2001; Riessman, 2010). Since disaster events are often remembered in storied form (Zelizer, 2007), studying narratives can help understand how these stories contribute to individual and cultural identities. Journalists write narratives as part of their professional work, and while journalistic stories are factual in nature, they follow literary patterns. Journalistic narratives use literary devices like characters, plot, and scene to convey these facts (Kitch, 2002). Journalists write the first draft of history and therefore contribute to collective understandings of adverse events (Zelizer, 2007). Journalists' narratives often become the public record and shape understanding of a natural disaster.

Narrative analysis is "a family of methods for interpreting texts that have in common a storied form" (Riessman, 2008, p. 11). Narratives provide context for how stories are understood and interpreted within culture over time (Foss, 2004) and can contextualize stories, metaphors, and other literary elements (Carr, 1986; Fisher, 1995). The stories people tell and do not tell are narratives (Riessman, 2008) and are key to understanding collective and individual identities (Yuval-Davis, 2010).

Narratives create a sense of what society values. Journalists report and reflect not only their personal narratives, but also the narratives of those they interact with. These narratives create a broader understanding of how the community processes and copes with natural disasters. Crisis narratives help communities to cope with the crisis and prepare for future crises (Yang, Kang, & Johnson, 2010). Narratives are often co-constructed between the creators of stories and the people they consult – journalists interview people and consult documents in order to share that information with the

public.

Narratives of local journalists. Local journalists recognize the tensions between being objective sources of information and citizens who are coping with the disaster. Journalists are capable of interacting with their communities, distributing information, and in turn publishing what they see and hear in a crisis or disaster situation (Austin et al., 2010). Although journalists are not the only source of information in a disaster, journalists continue to be a trusted source of information in a crisis and can provide vital risk information (Seeger, 2006). Local journalists are bounded to their communities and therefore uniquely situated to share narratives about the disaster recovery. As stated previously this relationship makes journalists stakeholders in their communities.

Crisis communication has sought to focus more on the ways in which people can network together to create better disaster response, this is in line with the Federal Emergency Management Association's focus on the whole community approach to disaster preparedness and response launched in 2012. The whole community approach seeks to get both public and non-profit organizations within a community to focus on similar goals for crisis and disaster response and recovery. This approach encourages communities to rally behind recovery narratives and think about long-term recovery.

Community resilience plans and studies in the last 10 years have focused on the ability of communities to bounce back after experiencing an adverse event (Aldrich, 2012; Norris et al., 2008). They have also identified key traits of those communities - including access to responsible media. Community disaster response researchers have focused on the importance of disaster management plans and crisis communication frameworks to identify adaptive capacities in communities. These adaptive capacities can

be harnessed to make communities more aware of risks and vulnerabilities. They can also

provide a framework through which communicates can respond to those risks and

unknown outcomes. In addition, crisis communicators have draw attention to the role of

social capital and social support structures in relationship to disaster preparation and

response (Arnberg, Hultman, Michel, & Lundin, 2012). Risk assessment is the process of

actively identifying what the possible challenges are given an adverse event as well as

what the possible social and economic outcomes might be after that event (Fischoff,

Watson, & Hope, 1984). Community resilience involves thinking of resilience as a

metaphor for a systematic understanding of how a community will respond to a disaster

and what will make them respond (Magis, 2010; Norris et al., 2007). Some disaster

preparation models like the Disaster Resilience of Place Model (DROP) (Cutter et al.,

2008) have identified the importance of not only of disaster preparations and responses

but also long-term mitigation of the disaster and how that changes the way people think

about future disasters (Sorensen, 2000). While models are helpful in providing a

community framework for crisis response, few identify the local news organization or

individual journalist as an integral actor in disaster planning, mitigation, and response.

 Researchers have made local journalists external players to disaster by grouping

them with national-level news media research has focused on how journalists actively

remove themselves even if they were involved in the event (Wenger, James, & Faupel,

1980). Some studies identify the role of the "media" but don't specify if the media in

question are national or local. Often the term media is used to describe a broader idea of

mediated technology rather than journalistic organizations.

The practice of grouping the news media into an ambiguous collective fails to identify a difference in the goals and concerns of national and local media. This definition of media does not consider that local news organizations are made up of local citizens who may have a vested interest in long-term community resilience, as they might own property and live in the communities they report on. Journalists are actively juggling the tensions of participant and observer, the duty to provide facts and interpretation. They are concerned about what it means to be a gatekeeper of information as well as an advocate for a particular cause or interest. They often have desires to, fulfill social purposes, help with economic or market purposes, or provide service to a particular group or organization. All these convictions often conflict with their obligation of service to journalistic ideals (Christians et al., 2009). Considering the work of journalists, the tension could provide opportunities to communicate certain narratives and contribute to community recover and resilience as defined by disaster communication. The next chapter will summarize the literature and introduce the research questions.

Chapter 5: The Conceptual Framework

The last three chapters presented scholarship on the roles of journalists, strategic communicative responses, and disaster communication. The roles of journalists in disaster communication were also clarified within disaster communication research and narrative research. The roles of journalists in disaster communication the goals of strategic communicators in disaster communication, and the purpose of narratives in establishing culture provides a conceptual framework for this study. This study investigated how journalists are performing the role of both professional journalists and community stakeholders. This section provides a summary of those strategic elements and how that literature from disaster communication, journalism and strategic communication research, and journalism ethics will relate to this study methodology. It also presents the five research questions for the study.

Local Journalists in Disaster Recovery

Within the context of this natural disaster recovery the intersection of the roles of journalists and the role of a strategic communicator often collide. The roles of the journalist include the watchdog, mirror, and marketplace of ideas (Craft & Davis, 2013). Local journalists who live in a community not only are geographically close to their communities; they also are local voters and property owners. They use local infrastructure and facilities. They also practice decision-making, and consider the interests of local readers.

Journalists see their role as society-maintenance. In additional to writing the first draft of history, journalism also creates a record of shared beliefs, helps the community to

gain emotional understanding in celebrations and times of mourning (Reigert & Olsson, 2007). Journalists who have adopted an involved approach to journalism, called "public journalism," in which they seek to not only inform, but also facilitate discourse and educate the public, have honed this role.

While the idea of public journalism was adopted by corporate news organizations in the late 1990s and early 2000s, news organizations continue to monitor online news and validate information and maintain ethical standards to minimize harm, seek the truth and report it, and practice independence, accuracy, accountability and transparency (Society of Professional Journalists, 2015). Also journalists approach their work with professional standards including authority, legitimacy, and credibility of sources, facts, and other information (Platon & Deuze, 2003; Schudson, 1999; Matheson, 2004). Therefore, social media has made the practice of validation more visible as in disaster reporting in that journalists and citizens often work alongside each other to provide information (Simon, Goldberg & Adnini, 2015). But journalists must continue to glean through the social media sludge to maintain professional standards.

Roles of journalists. Researchers have defined the role of journalists post-crisis or disaster as facilitative and monitorial. Local journalists are better connected to local resources than national journalists are. The facilitative role involves the interaction and exchange of information between journalists and sources. Facilitative exchanges are the main focus in the time right before and after a natural disaster. The monitorial role involves journalists acting as a check on local government and business practices, often investigative and long term. Monitorial roles often overlap with the facilitative role in the three weeks to six months following a natural disaster.

Strategic Communication

Strategic communication involves communication with certain goals in mind. The roles of a strategic communicator in a crisis is to share information with a public in order to reach a specific goal – in the case of a natural disaster that goal is to recover to a social, economic, and structural state that resembles what the community looked like before the disaster. Citizens who experience disaster have a desire for communities to heal, and recover. They develop strategies to change the way the community recovers. They seek to access resources and develop certain communication practices that emphasize these goals. In practices of strategic communication emphasis is placed on six relevant disciplines: management, marketing, public relations, technical communication, political communication, and information/social marketing campaigns (Hallahan, et al. 2007). All of these involved communicating "purposefully to advance its mission" (Hallahan et al., 2007, p. 4). As the field of communication research has begun to focus on advancing certain missions the paradigm concerning the role of communication has begun to change (Hallahan et al., 2007). While journalism specifically is not listed with these disciplines, it does interact with all of these disciplines as journalists seek to get information and report on their communities. Similar to how public relations has adapted to self report through social media, journalists are actively adapting to a paradigm that seeks to bring attention to certain concerns within their communities.

Journalist as Citizen

Journalists are a recognized part of the institution of the press, and therefore contribute to democratic progress within their communities. Journalism is recognized as an element of American society and democracy. Democracy at its very basic level

involves civil discourse and civic engagement (Putnam, 1993, 2002). Journalists

contribute to discourse by interviewing community members and translating their stories

into news stories. When those stories however become first-hand experiences, journalists

must balance their conviction to report with their connections to their own communities.

While a journalist's identity pertains to their profession, it also involves their geography

and humanity. Therefore, a journalist's identity is entwined with his or her personal

understanding, the role they perform within their organization, and the way they view the

institution of journalism. Ethics often parallels the concept of identity in that a person's

ethical understanding is often grounded in how he or she sees his or her responsibilities in

society. These often translate to the person's civic duty. There is a civic duty to uphold

certain principles in line with democracy and personal beliefs. Civic duty involves a

personal understanding of one's responsibility in society. For example, in the United

States civic duty entails the understanding that adults of a certain age should register to

vote, and then vote in the election. Another example of civic duty, is the obligation

working adults to pay their taxes in April each year. Journalists describe a civic duty to

"seek the truth and report it," "practice reporting with justice" (Society of Professional

Journalists, 2016) and an active participation in the concerns of society. Studies have

found that citizen journalism is participatory (Bentley et. al, 2005; Littau, 2007).

However, the reconceptualization of journalists as citizens provides a deeper

understanding of how journalists function in a community as citizen stakeholders.

Research concerning the accumulation of local knowledge and voting in local

elections has been linked to social capital models. Social capital increases in communities

where social organizations create networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate

coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit within the community (Putnam, 1995). In the social capital model involvement with local groups or organizations helps build trust among community members (Putnam, 1993). Civic engagement is often the way in which social capital is measured. There are three indicators of civic engagement as described by Putnam (1995): engagement in community activities, interpersonal trust, and life satisfaction. Civic engagement overwhelmingly looks for activities related to political or social involvement. In the 1990s and 2000s studies looked at public journalism, or the role of journalists actively engaging the public at large in civic discussion (Chaffee & McDevitt, 1999; Gade, Abel, Antecol, Hsueh, Hume, Morris, Packard, Willey, Fraser, & Sanders, 1998; Littau, 2007; Merrill, Gade, & Blevens, 2001).

Discourse and social involvement are linked to civic engagement and over time create social capital. Engagement in community activities, interpersonal trust, and life satisfaction are all indicators of civic engagement (Putnam, 1995). Civic engagement identifies activities related to political or social involvement, and since journalists are often reporting on issues of political or social interest, they are by default part of the conversation around civic engagement. Journalists who participate in civic journalism recognize their work as part of civic discourse (Gade et al., 1998; Littau, 2007; Merrill et al. 2001). In the tradition of public journalism, journalists work to create discussion where discussion has been absent by holding town hall style meetings, local events, and hiring a representative from the news organization to interact with community representatives (Littau, 2007; Merrill et al. 2001). Journalist's attitudes toward civic journalism (another term used to describe public journalism) have shown a tendency to recognize their work as part of civic discourse (Gade et al., 1998). The words "public"

and "civic" journalism have been used in relationship to each other. While public journalism contributes to democracy and can reform the press by providing accountability for the press, civic journalism is more concerned with developing public discussion and problem solving (Chaffee & McDevitt, 1999). However, the term public journalism will be used because the two terms are so often intertwined.

Public journalism involves audience members who seek information and bring ideas to their media experiences. Audience members are engaged in news stories to the degree they see themselves as part of the news discourse (Rosen, 1997, 1999). Public journalism is deeply rooted in the ideas of Joseph Pulitzer (1904) and James Carey (1987), who wanted journalism to bring about dialogue between news professionals and citizens. Public journalism also assumes the responsibility of journalists to provide the public timely information about matters of common importance (Rosen, 1999). As citizens, local journalists contribute to the viability and recovery of their local community. In the long term their civic involvement and journalistic work contributes to the community's overall disaster narrative.

The role of journalism in communities. When considering the role of a community or local journalist it is integral to consider what defines a community. Community has been used in historical contexts—a neighborhood or local group of citizens who live within certain geographic boundaries, with some sort of shared communion (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swindler & Tipton, 1985). In modern society, community is often not just people who share geographic boundaries but rather ties to a certain geographic are. The Internet has segmented communities online but also allowed those who have moved on from communities to reconnect with their old geographic

habitats and with them the people who remain there (Riley, Keough, Christiansen, Meilich & Pierson, 2006). While a community may be defined by its local geography, online engagement with that community might be part of the community as well.

Research Questions

The following research questions will establish an understanding of how a journalist's experiences a with natural disaster impact his or her work in light of the mental, physical and professional challenges he or she has faced. The questions will also investigate the journalists' perceptions of journalistic norms by focusing on the subjective experiences of journalists and if they have certain post-disaster goals in mind for their communities.

Five research questions were created to combine the literature within the context of the roles of local journalists. The research design drew from studies that have examined the roles of news and local journalists, in crisis and disaster contexts (Allan & Zelizer, 2004; Baker, 2001; Jemphrey & Berrington, 2000; Ladd, Gill, & Marszalek, 2007; Landau, 2007; Usher, 2009; Scanlon, 2011; Wicke & Silver, 2009). These studies used a combination of interviews, news texts, and observations to develop an understanding of how journalists worked in their communities. The following research questions were developed from this background research:

RQ1: How do local journalists describe the relationship between their professional roles and personal coping strategies after a natural disaster?

RQ2: How do local journalists explain stakeholder roles, and the goals for their communities after a natural disaster?

RQ3: How do local journalists practice professionalism and how does this influence their role in the community after a natural disaster?

RQ4: How do the narratives local journalists focus on after a natural disaster change during the recovery period?

RQ5: How do local journalists' goals resemble characteristics of responsible media in community resilience?

The next section will explain the research design apply this to the research questions.

Chapter 6: Method

Journalism research does not differentiate the role of local journalists and national news organizations after a natural disaster. From literature it is understood that the local journalist reporting during and after a natural disaster contributes to the communities' understanding of that disaster. However, scholars also understand that as local journalists, there is a responsibility to provide information of consequence during and after natural disasters.

Using case study methodology this study examined local journalists and their journalistic work in the eight months following flooding in Wimberley, Texas. Journalists were interviewed about their jobs as well as personal experiences after the natural disaster. Journalists were asked questions about how local journalists juggle being both a citizen and a professional journalist.

In case study methodology, all data falls into four basic categories, "observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials" (Creswell, 2012, p. 129). This study will utilize data in the interview and document category as part of the case study through the lens of narrative techniques. Within this methodology, triangulation provides context for thematic analysis by examining multiple sources for those themes (Creswell, 1998), it also provides strength for research dependability and credibility (Merriam, 1998). Sources of data used in triangulation can include interviews, reflexive journals, observations and textual analysis.

In addition, member checking can help to address the validity information by sharing it with study participants (Creswell, 2012). During member checks, participants

have the opportunity to give the researcher feedback and provide context for their statements.

Case study methodology also provides rich description, where a researcher writes out detailed responses from study participants (Creswell, 2012). The purpose of providing rich description is to address how what a researcher finds can be transferred to other contexts. Narrative methodology is a process of examining stories for over-arching themes that contribute to a greater narrative (Reissman, 2008). Borrowing from narrative methodology, this study sought to examine the work of journalists as well as their storied experiences. The lens of narrative provides an overarching understanding of the work and experiences of local journalists.

Research Design

This study explores the ways in which local journalists understand their roles in their communities by using a narrative case study methodology, meaning the study uses narrative techniques within a case study methodology. Narrative case study methodology has been used in a variety of fields to study cultural events and the narratives created around them (Cortazzi, 2014). This study combines case study and narrative research approaches.

Case study methodology. Case study involves the in-depth study of a person, organization, event, or community – a phenomena (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2013). Information is gathered from a variety of sources using several different methods – observations, interviews, document reading and analysis (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2013). Case study utilizes these other research methods to create a comprehensive study with a focus on rich data.

This case study concerns the phenomena of journalists reporting on the 2015 Wimberley Flood.

Case study allows a researcher to explore people or institutions, within both simple and complex relationships (Yin, 2013). It does not exclusively collect data at one level. Case study can allow for deconstruction and reconstruction of concepts and phenomena, help to evaluate programs, and develop interventions. Because of its flexibility and the stringency of a bounded system, case study methodology can dig deeper into information than survey or interviews can alone. There are two key interpretations of case study methodology that of Stake (1995) and that of Yin (2006, 2013). Each seeks to explore topics completely so that the make-up of a phenomenon is revealed, however, the processes they employ are different. Stake (1995) and Yin (2013) both come at case study through the lens of the constructivist paradigm – or the idea that truth is dependent on perspective and subjective human interpretation (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The case study approach helps to answer how and why questions (Yin, 2013). Case study also captures the real behavior of participants, and provides context for those experiences (Yin, 2013). In addition, the boundaries are not entirely defined between the phenomenon and the context of the study.

This study will focus on a Stake framework of case study methodology – where a unique situation is being examined in an intrinsic or instrumental way (Stake, 1995). Intrinsic case studies – which occur as a natural part of phenomena –are pursued specifically because the researcher sees them as interesting. It is assumed a case study will not be transferable but will instead provide insight for other studies. These intrinsic or instrumental case studies provide more depth, and are therefore suitable for gaining

insight into a bounded phenomenon (Stake, 1995). This study is instrumental in nature in that it seeks to provide context for the role of a journalist as citizen of a local community.

The boundaries of case studies help to define the scope of the research project but also help me to develop what is included or excluded from the study. The type of case study has to do with the overall purpose or goal of the study. If a researcher seeks to design a case that explores one or compares multiple cases, there are two different options. Yin (2013) states that case studies are either single or holistic cases with a combination of explanatory, exploratory, or descriptive approaches. Stake (1995) states case studies are intrinsic, instrumental, or collective. This case study is an intrinsic case study in which the primary interest is the case itself (Stake, 1995). The purpose of the study is not to understand something abstract, but rather something that exists in practice.

When conducting a case study, the unit of analysis is vital to the study. A case is something taking place within a certain set of boundaries (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The case is the unit of analysis (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher must ask herself a series of questions to determine what to analyze: Am I examining an individual? Am I examining a program? Am I examining a process? In the case of this study the individual journalist is the unit of analysis. Case studies can be limited to a select number of participants and are not limited by the quantity of participants (McLeod, 2008). Therefore, the number of journalists interviewed is not as important as the depth of those interviews. The depth at which the interviews are conducted provides complexity and detail to the case being studied.

Therefore, an individual case study framework guided the study's understanding of each journalist's experiences; however, each case was also part of a larger collective

case (Stake, 1995). This means there are two parts to the study, the first (within the case) will addresses the reactions and experiences of individual local journalists, and the second part of the case (across the cases) addresses the journalists as a group grounded in the institutions of professional journalism. The goal of this two-part case analysis was to understand how these journalists cope with post disaster conditions as human beings, and as journalists within the institution of professional journalism.

It is also important to understand what the case is not – this case does not seek to understand everything about local journalists but rather their experiences with natural disasters. Yin (2013) and Stake (1995) recognize that the establishment of boundaries can limit the information collected, and provide context for deeper questioning and analysis. A researcher should bound a case by time and place (Creswell, 2012); time and type of activity (Stake, 1995); and definition and context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For this study the time considers the three to six months following the flooding in Wimberley, Texas. The place is the areas in and surrounding Wimberley, Texas. The time and type of activity concerns local journalists doing journalism during this time. Furthermore, the case is defined within the contexts of journalism studies, strategic communication, and disaster communication.

As a single case, the study identifies individual journalists who have worked in Wimberley, Texas. However, these cases contribute to a multiple case study of local journalists working in Wimberley. Multiple single cases are combined and analyzed both separately (within case) and between subunits (between case analysis). A focus on two levels of analysis provides a richer context for the phenomenon. Cases are coded individually and as a group of cases. The main advantage of this approach is the ability to

identify similarities and differences between cases, and see the commonalities across them.

The strength of case study methodology lies in its ability to provide rich detailed information, provide insight into future research or practical application, and allow the investigation of subjects that might be difficult to study otherwise because they might seem impractical or unethical (McLeod, 2008). However, case studies can be limited. Case studies are often unappreciated for their lack of generalizability, the fact that the researcher's gaze (or bias) might influence the study, the fact that they care difficult to replicate, and take a lot of time to conduct (McLeod, 2008). But the purpose of case study is not to replicate, but rather to understand on a deeper level what is and is not going on within the context of the study. Case studies also use multiple sources of data to pinpoint themes by sifting through a thick collection of data. Each data source is a piece of the theoretical case study pie. They are related and provide context for each other, as well as my understanding of the phenomenon as a whole. Where they intersect they become a multi-stranded cord to provide more strength to the case and more understanding of the data.

Narrative method. Within the case study, this study will use narrative methodology to identify narrative structures within the individual cases. According to Creswell (2012) there are four primary types of narrative research. Narrative researchers collect stories, documents and conversations about the "lived and told experience of individuals" (Creswell, 2012, p. 70). These include biographical studies; autoethnography; life history, portraying one person's entire life; oral history, reflections on events or the effects of those events (Creswell, 2012, p. 72).

In all types of narrative research the researcher needs to approach the study through the process of developing research questions. Narrative research is more about the process of gathering data, because its methodology does not follow a strict step-by-step process. However, the process of data gathering includes the process of collecting stories and then "restorying" – the process of gathering, analyzing and rewriting – them into their position in the research (Creswell, 2012, p. 74-76). Narrative research can prove challenging in that it requires the researcher to gather extensive information from all participants, while maintaining the permission of the participant. In this gathering process a researcher must identify where she aligns from those she is researching or differs in her orientation. When the researcher does not work to segment herself from the story of the participants, ethical concerns may arise (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The researcher must position herself outside the story, while understanding that she is also the instrument for gathering information. Therefore, it is understood that the process of "restorying" changes the story.

Narrative has the potential to bring meaning to both the "abstract and the concrete, between cognition and behavior, and between symbolic and the material" (Riessman, 2008, p. 16). Narratives have also been found to help individuals make sense of lived experiences (Bold, 2011, p. 121). For the purpose of this study, narrative theory will be used to identify themes – or mini-narratives – within the larger text. Therefore, in the process of gathering data for narrative research, the researcher should first ask several reflexive questions (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000, p. 159):

(1) What do we notice?

(2) Why do we notice what we notice?

(3) How can we interpret what we notice?

(4) How can we know that our interpretation is the right one?

After answering these questions, the researcher then begins refining the research questions based on his or her answers. Research questions are then used to develop interview questions, which allow the researcher to connect with study participants as well as other case study materials like texts and observations. For this study, I used these questions to question myself in the practice of reflexive journaling.

In narrative research, interview questions should be informed by research questions, but not entirely limited by them. When creating interview questions, the researcher must also consider the potential for alternative interpretations to questions, and that questions might change as a result of the study process. In attempting to connect these questions to her reflections, the researcher should revisit the research questions during the research process. As data gathering leads to examinations of the data for themes and patterns in the messages, the researcher learns more about the phenomena she seeks to understand. Then the researcher identifies specific strategies, approaches, and actions within the narratives. Within case analysis involves comparing texts and data to themselves. In narrative it is also important to identify over-arching narratives across cases. Across case analysis examines the interactions of the texts and thematic narratives in those texts.

A narrative case study approach provides context for understanding stories that have a clear beginning and are confined to a storyline context. As natural disasters take place at a fixed place in time, narrative seems ideal for studying stories that are associated with them. As participants are given the chance to share their stories, their narratives are

recorded and "restoried" by the researcher. Narrative provides an ideal lens through which I developed research questions to use in the process of case study research. This process also provided a format and structure for interview questions as well as interactions with study participants.

The process of writing and reporting narrative information creates a focal point for the researcher to visit the literature that informed her framework and research questions. For this reason, a researcher must be "self-disclosing about their role in the research" (Creswell, 2012, p. 214). The meaning of the research is also dependent on the researchers relationship to the research. Therefore, the conclusions drawn from the research are inseparable from the researcher's interpretation of the research. Although case studies do not have a standard format, Stake (1995)'s approach to case study is recommended by Creswell (2012) and Merriam (1988). Stake's (1995) approach adopts a more introspective approach, which examines the intrinsic value of the case through the texts. Therefore, individual stories will be considered data through which the greater phenomenon of local journalists as strategic communicators and citizen stakeholders is understood. Narrative research methods allow for thematic analysis across data types and participants.

Study Site

For this study the unit of analysis is journalists who were working in the community surrounding Wimberley, Texas. Wimberley experienced significant flooding over Memorial Day weekend in May 2015. Wimberley was a small community with a recent natural disaster, and therefore fit the criteria in my research study proposal.

The area surrounding Wimberley, Texas has seen a variety of climate extremes in recent years from drought to flash flooding. Wimberley, located less than 100 miles outside of the Texas capital city of Austin, is a popular place for weekend vacationing. The majority of businesses in Wimberley are family owned shops, inns, and restaurants. Many people own second homes in Wimberley, near Lake Travis and other small Texas Hill Country Lakes. Wimberley is situated in the Texas Hill Country, made of hills of granite, limestone, and other local ores. The Hill Country is covered in Live Oak and Cedar trees with root systems that burrow deep into the rock formations. The lack of porous ground often creates flood conditions when large amounts of water accumulate in short amounts of time. I can remember a flood almost once every other year when I was growing up in the Texas Hill Country.

There are a number of news outlets that cover the Wimberley area they include the *The Austin American Statesman, Wimberley View*, Wimberley Valley Radio, KXAN Texas Radio, News 8 Austin, and Fox 7 Austin. Reporters from nearby San Antonio and Austin cover the area. But many reporters for Dallas, and Houston-based publications also call the area home because of its proximity to the Texas capital. There are three small town newspapers in the Wimberley area; several local radio stations; and it falls into two major television broadcast regions, for San Antonio and Austin.

Wimberley was a convenience sample, in that local news organizations covered the flooding that took place in Summer 2015. In addition, journalists were working in Wimberley after the flood. By considering the news coverage of the Wimberley Flood as my case study setting, I was able to identify smaller subcases (journalists' experiences) within a larger case study setting. In this framework I was able to conduct across case

analysis of the work and circumstances as journalists as citizens in the Wimberley, Texas area, but also understand each journalist as a case within him or herself.

Data Collection

There were several steps in the process of preparing this case study of local journalists. First, to prepare for data collection, I read, listened to and watched the local news stories about natural disasters. I read reports from local journalists all over the United States concerning those natural disasters and through about the feasibly of each potential study. During this process I became aware of the disaster in Wimberley, Texas. My personal understanding of the community of Wimberley, as well as the time which the disaster took place made it an idea case for my case study. I had the resources to evaluate Wimberley in the time period directly following the floods. Therefore, I took the opportunity to submit my proposal to study journalists who worked there, and after approval from the Institutional Research Board at the University of Missouri, I began contacting journalists.

Participants. Journalists were located through Google Alerts used to locate their online stories. I read each of these stories beginning on the weekend of the flood and identified a number of journalists to contact. More than 612 stories were collected through Google Alerts. Authors of these stories lived and worked in Dallas/Fort Worth, Austin, San Marcos, Corpus Christi, San Antonio, Houston and smaller Texas Hill Country communities.

The process of contacting journalists involved several steps. First, I collected and evaluated stories by local journalists. These articles were sent in a digest form to my email box, or located though the Google search engine. These searches began on May 21,

2015 and remained active throughout the analysis period. I conducted a thorough read of these articles, and then identified local journalists to interview. I took notes in a notebook and listed contacts in a spreadsheet. I also took notes on background information about Wimberley that I could use to inform my interviews with journalists. I also developed an understanding about how the community was responding to the disaster, where resources were lacking, and the stories that were dominant in both local and national news outlets. Finally, these articles were used to formulate questions about how the journalists went about doing their work in the post-natural disaster environment. Those questions were then combined with the initial interview protocols (Appendix A) to create a list of interview questions.

In the process of reading and analyzing stories for potential participants, I identified local journalists who covered the Wimberley flood. I approached interviews with background knowledge of the news organizations the journalists worked in, what occurred in their community, and then used that context to gain a better understanding of what the journalist reported on after the natural disaster.

Because of the focus of this study, the recruitment pool was limited to local journalists who worked for local newspapers and broadcast stations the Wimberley, Texas area. These journalists were initially located through Google alerts and searches, but were later located through conversations with local Wimberley contacts. To qualify for the study, journalists had to have lived in the geographic area of the community (including Austin, San Marcos and the Texas Hill Country) before the flood, and had to have reported on stories about Wimberley before and after the flood took place.

Interviews. After journalists were identified, I contacted journalists with a recruitment email, or telephone call and explained the study rationale, purpose, as well as potential involvement and time commitment. The goal was to interview enough journalists to reach a saturation point where the stories of those interviewed would be unique but also cohesive. Initially, I compiled a list of 20 journalists to contact. Of these I was able to interview 12 people, eight in person and four over the phone. Of the 12 interviews with journalists, four had been covering Wimberley long-term (meaning they had covered issues in Wimberley for at least three months before the flood). The other journalists began covering the stories as a result of the flood. Four of the journalists had never been to Wimberley before the flood, although they had heard of the town. Only two of the journalists I spoke with were female, and only one journalist did not work for a primarily print and online publication. Only one of the journalists had lived in Wimberley, although one journalist had an uncle who had lived in Wimberley and had visited him several times in the last year.

Before the interviews, all the journalists were informed of their time commitment as well as the study's purpose. All 12 journalists were asked to confirm involvement by verbal consent. Of the journalists, four were interviewed at least twice, as well as observed while at work during July and August 2015. I followed up with journalists over email and phone from August through December 2015 and conducted member checks with the journalists in October and December 2015.

In the process of interviewing, each journalist was formally asked 10 to 12 questions about their experiences living in the area where the natural disaster occurred. During observations and follow-up interviews, journalists were asked questions to give

context for the study. All of the formal interviews were recorded with the permission of

the participant. I took notes during the observations and follow-up interviews. While it

was not a requirement, the majority of journalists agreed to have their first names and

publications included in the study. In this study, journalists will be referred to by their

first names throughout the study.

An interview protocol was used to guide the formal interviews (Appendix A).

Interview protocols provided a tool, which helped me remember which questions to ask.

The interview protocol included what was said before the interview, a script for the

interview prompts to collect informed consent and prompts to remind the interviewer

what to ask the person she is interviewing (Furgerson & Jacob, 2012). The protocol

began with a prompt to ask the participant for his or her name and hometown as well as

how long he or she has worked at their current place of employment. Participants were

also asked to verbally consent to an interview after I read an oral consent document.

Following the informed consent process, I shared the purpose of the study and why I was

interviewing them. I then proceed to share stories about my experiences as a journalist

working at a newspaper in South Florida as a way to build rapport with the participant

and shared with them my personal experiences with floods in Texas. I then asked several

open-ended questions grounded in the theoretical frameworks outlined in the literature

review. Questions shifted from simple to difficult and pleasant to controversial when

needed. In addition to the list of prepared questions, each interview was flexible.

Questions often emerged during the interview that were previously not considered. The

openness to be flexible but remain on path is what Cresswell (2012) refers to as emergent

interview design. If the protocol is more rigid it could potentially limit the interviewee in

his or her response, therefore the protocol included a flexible more emergent design. This emergent design allowed for richness in the research findings.

Observations. Following the interviews, I was able to observe five of the journalists interacting with sources in Wimberley. I was also able to speak with several of the sources interviewed by journalists in Wimberley. After the interviews and observations concluded, I sent the informed consent document to them in email. I also reminded them of the informed consent document throughout the research process and at the conclusion of my study.

In addition to interviews and observations, I attended three town meetings and spoke with local residents candidly about the Memorial Day flood during my visits to Wimberley in July, August and September 2015. All people I spoke with were informed about the study and its purpose, although most of the information I gathered in these interviews was strictly for background purposes. I also began to observe interactions on the two community Facebook groups, where many news stories were posted. After observing these Facebook groups for about two months, I conducted two interviews with the women who ran the Volunteer Action Center in Wimberley and the associated Facebook group. The goal was to practice openness and interact with people on a level where they felt comfortable, but also ask questions that pertained to the study's interests.

All of the recordings as well as the interview transcripts, and email correspondence for the purpose of the study were secured in my possession. All interviews and recordings were stored in a locked file cabinet in my home or in a password protected file on my computer. Interviews were conducted so that only I knew

the identity of the recordings, but journalists were given the option to identify themselves if they desired.

In light of the ethical practices of interviewing, the goal was to allow the interviewees the option to speak freely about their experiences and not feel pressured to give a particular response. Each participant's interview content was labeled in accordance to their requests about identity, encouraging participants to speak freely concerning their post-disaster experiences. Their information was only coded based on the geographic location where they worked. This process means that some personal information had to be removed or changed in the interviewees' answers.

The goal of the interviews was to allow journalists the time to reflect on their experiences, and participants to speak what they are comfortable sharing, and end up with data with more depth (Bold, 2011). These included questions about where they were when the disaster occurred and where they interacted with people in the community after the disaster. Journalists would be made aware of resources for journalists who experience trauma as part of the interview process. I sent follow-up questions to the interviewees as needed as part of member checks. Member checks involve sharing your findings with your study participants in a way that allows them to provide feedback (Riessman, 2008). Their feedback was seen as an avenue to confirm, and clarify statements within the study's context. This process was then followed by a process of analysis.

Analysis

Following data collection, narrative analysis was used analyze the within and across case themes present in the news stories and interview stories of the journalists.

Narrative inquiry involves the process of identifying common threads throughout the information provided and then grouping those threads into similar and smaller thematic groups (Cresswell, 2012; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Riessman, 2008). At the conclusion of the interviews I began transcription of the interviews and my journals. Some files were sent to Datalyst transcription service to be transcribed. The interview transcripts were then evaluated and analyzed with a narrative lens. This means that different narratives and narrative elements were identified in the stories. Information regarding disaster response and recovery was also coded, as well as if certain disaster myths were adopted in local news stories. This process was organic and fluid in that information was constantly coded and recoded within the context of what has already been coded. Through this process the similar as well as unique components were identified and grouped together based on their similarities and contributions to the overall disaster narrative for each natural disaster. These findings were compared to the narrative thematic analysis of the news stories to provide greater context and comparison for the journalists' personal storied accounts. At this point, follow up questions were sent to study participants to clarify statements made during the interviews and observations. This served as a second member check for the study.

In working toward the goal of the study – to see how these journalists storied their disaster experiences, as well as their responsibilities in a post-disaster situation – narrative case study research provided context for the stories of journalists and their communities. In addition, I sought to identify personal beliefs, memories, and stories appear in each journalist's professional work. The research questions provided context

for the roles of individual journalists, as well as the similarities, differences, and anomalies that exist between these journalists.

The process of recovering from a natural disaster and subsequent crises provided an ideal platform for examining how journalists understand their roles in their communities. While this study cannot generalize experiences, it can help to understand the roles local journalists conceive and play during the time of disaster recovery in those communities.

In line with the auspices of narrative research, I wrote out detailed descriptions of the participants in the study (Creswell, 2012; Merriam 1998). I then connected observations of these descriptions both within and across the case. Following this written recording process, more member checks were conducted to provide more context and validity for the storied accounts of the natural disaster. Information gained from interviews and observations were triangulated from the multiple types of data gathered. When conflicting narratives were identified, I took the time to examine possibilities for these conflicting or differing narratives. Finally the analysis, and final dissertation document were shared with study participants. This served as a secondary member check. Information gained from these member checks resulted in a few minor adjustments were made in the document to reflect conversations with the study participants.

Preview

This methodological process began by presenting the data within the context of the study framework, and an illumination of the research questions one at a time. The next five chapters will present the findings from the study in line with the research questions. Chapter 7 will address how journalists saw their role in the community of

Wimberley, Texas after the flooding and during the long-term recovery and how they coped with the disaster. Chapter 8 will examine how journalists saw their roles as citizen stakeholders and will highlight any strategic goals the journalists sought to communicate. Chapter 9 will examine the professionalism and identity of the journalist and what that looked like for these journalists in the six months after the flood. Chapter 10 will provide an analysis of how they conceive their civic duty in their reporting narratives. Chapter 11 will examine how journalists' goals resemble characteristics of responsible media in community resilience. The discussion in Chapter 12 will develop a model from this analysis and will provide a context for how local journalists conceive and practice the role of journalist as citizen after a natural disaster.

Chapter 7: Roles of Local Journalists in Disaster

The first research question posed by this study asked *how do local journalists describe the relationship between their professional roles and personal coping strategies after a natural disaster*. Connection to a community is not always disclosed in news stories, and therefore I often began interviews with journalists and discovered half way through the interview that they did not fit my definition of a local journalist—a person who had lived in or near Wimberley and covered stories about the community both before and after the disaster. While all the interviews have informed my research, my study mainly focuses on the three journalists who had previously covered the town of Wimberley for their publications.

Local Journalists

This chapter begins with the experiences of the three journalists I observed but includes insights from my interactions with additional journalists and some of the perceptions of these journalists from Wimberley residents.

Gary Zupancic. This study followed one journalist, Gary Zupancic of the *Wimberley View* who has lived and worked in Wimberley for more than 20 years, although he's only been a working journalist there for two years. Gary had been a journalist in Ohio before relocating to Wimberley to teach at the local high school. His wife was also in journalism and education. After several years teaching high school students he decided to take a full-time position working for the *Wimberley View* and the *Dripping Springs News-Dispatch*. Gary was by far the most connected to the community, and had the most background knowledge about the circumstances of those affected by the

flooding. He had seen several floods in his time in the community including the Halloween Flood in 2013, and the aftermath of the 1994 Texas Hill Country flooding. He knew most everyone he came in contact with during my observations of him. On the Sunday before Memorial Day, he headed into town to prepare for a celebration and discovered the main bridge was out. There were helicopters and emergency response vehicles on the road. He and his wife left and found out later that day from a friend about the devastation to her home and several other homes along the Blanco River. They found out from the Austin television stations about those who died. On Tuesday Gary began meeting with people who had lost family members, homes, and businesses. His newspaper publishes weekly on Fridays and that is when his first stories ran.

Houston York. Houston York was a journalism student at Texas State University, in San Marcos, Texas, a town about 45 miles from Wimberley. Memorial Day weekend, Houston and had left town to visit his parents home about four hours south on the Texas Coast. He got a call from an editor at the *San Antonio Express News* asking if he would be willing to go to Wimberley to write about the flooding. Houston had done some freelance work concerning several stories about water rights to the aquifer in the Wimberley in 2014 and 2015. He drove to Wimberley on Sunday morning and also arrived where the bridge was washed-out by the flooding, and reported back to his editor. The editor asked him to go around the other direction and interview locals about their circumstances. He did this for several days after the flood. He revisited Wimberley four times to report in the next six months, although he had visited Wimberley personally to dine and float on the river for recreation. He was there when Texas Governor Greg Abbott visited immediately after the flooding. His stories concerned not just Wimberley,

but other parts of the Blanco River including the San Marcos area. Houston tweeted about his interactions and observations, and later in the semester reported on the challenges for communities along the lower Blanco River for the university newspaper at Texas State University, *The University Star*. Houston remains active on Twitter with his account @HoustonMYork and works periodically for a number of publications.

Sean Collins Walsh. Sean Collins Walsh had been working at the *Austin American Statesman* for a less than a year. He had lived in Pennsylvania before coming to work at the Statesman. His work in Wimberley had mainly concerned water rights and redistricting issues. Sean had attended a number of community meetings and was aware of the town and county government before the flood. Sean's editor assigned him to cover the flooding as a result of his understanding of Wimberley and connections there. A month after the flood he was re-assigned to write business stories but continued to write stories about Wimberley's recovery, often with a business focus. His first stories were reported from areas of refuge where residents had to be temporarily relocated after the flooding, either because they evacuated their homes or did not have homes to return to. These areas of refuge were at several local churches. About three days later these refuges merged into one shelter that at Wimberley High School. In late July, the shelter was relocated to the Wimberley Community Center. Sean covered stories about these events as well as an appearance in Wimberley a week after the event by Texas Governor Greg Abbott.

Others. In addition, I interviewed three reporters who were on assignment from the *San Antonio Express News,* who covered one or two stories in the month following the flooding. Their stories concerned short-term response in the initial recovery phases,

but provided rich description for how local residents responded to the flood. Stories addressed issues like displaced livestock and pets, memorial services, and volunteer efforts.

I also observed a photographer and an intern – both of whom were working alongside Sean Collins Walsh from the *Austin American Statesman* in July. They were doing a story about how businesses were faring as a result of the flooding at the end of the summer. Wimberley's tourism industry's main economic earning time is during the summer tourist season (May through early August).

I had several phone conversations with a television broadcast reporter for a local Fox Television station out of Austin. She gave me a lot of context for her work, but was not comfortable being interviewed or observed. She also was denied permission to participate any further by her news organization. She connected me to a few other journalists who also were not willing to participate.

While the first three journalists varied in their experiences with Wimberley, they all had extensive background knowledge. This differed significantly from the experiences of the *San Antonio Express News* reporters and the photographer who was assigned to Sean Collins Walsh.

Coping with Disaster

Coping with the experiences of the flood included interacting with sources and participating in fundraisers. Only Gary and Houston discussed this level of involvement: Gary participated in helping fellow church members and neighbors, and Houston helped people in San Marcos (further down the Blanco River) to move things out of their homes once the water subsided. This coping, and mental wellbeing, was harnessed through their

interactions with people in the community (Norris et al., 2007), and also within the context of previous disaster or crisis experiences (Wilkins, 1987).

During my tour of Wimberley with Gary, he mentioned several conversations he had with friends, neighbors and other local residents about how they were coping. He said several times he was able to maintain his composure, but expected at any moment he might break down. He wrote one story about someone who heard a woman floating down the river screaming for help, and after that had several times when he had to stop and think about what he was writing. He wanted to make sure his story was not just recording horror and trauma but rather providing local residents with context for what actually happened on the night of May 24. Gary lived in Wimberley and therefore his proximity to the issues as well as his personal experiences caused him to emphasize narratives. He said he actively chose to focus on stories that would allow for recovery and work towards long-term community rehabilitation. He was also able to mitigate his disaster experiences and the experiences of his neighbors. While Gary has been a journalist, and high school journalism educator for years he has never had any formal disaster or trauma journalism training. He is a local journalist with years of experience with his community and therefore a breath and depth of community knowledge (Bock, 2012; Carlson, 2007; Lewis, 2012; Örnebring, 2013). Because of this he was basing a lot of what he was doing off of what would be considered acceptable by his boss at the *View* and members of the community. He said many times that this meant acting on a gut feeling.

Houston drew from his experiences working Hurricane Katrina cleanup in 2005. He recalled a lot of his experiences after the hurricane while in Wimberley. He described an uneasy feeling in his stomach as he looked at the families standing near the bridge in

downtown Wimberley the night of the flood. He remembered having a similar reaction

the first time he encountered the destruction left by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Houston

said from his personal knowledge that many of the narratives from Hurricane Katrina

were not entirely accurate and failed to acknowledge the strength of many people after

the disaster (Tierney et al., 2006). He said this made him passionate about trying to form

a connection with the people he interviewed, rather than just considering them to be

sources. He said to be able to cope with what people told him he had to hold himself to a

standard of accuracy and integrity (Scanlon et al., 1985). This focus on authenticity and

accuracy was something Houston was passionate about. Even though he was a journalism

student, his two years of journalism training helped him to identify a coping mechanism

in practicing his profession with a sense of duty.

Sean mentioned that he saw some pretty emotionally difficult things after the

flood, specifically when he was walking alongside the Blanco River. He said he did think

about other things he had dealt with that were similar to this situation, but did not give

any specific examples. This process of using previous context for reporting harkens to the

ideas of previous crisis narratives forming the way the current crisis is formed (Riegert &

Olsson, 2007; Zelizer, 1992, 1993). Journalists interacted with individuals, authority

figures and other sources based on the decisions they make to engage certain people, and

with those people certain narratives.

Local Journalism

All of the journalists saw their primary role to observe and report what had

happened in the flood. They all identified with the role of journalists to observe and

report. The three journalists with a previous record of reporting in Wimberley all spoke

about to how the stories they had written about water rights in Wimberley involved multiple political points of view. While a number of Wimberley residents wanted to preserve water for local use, the political systems in place in Hays County often contradicted the desires of locals. This pre-flood community issue came up in almost every interview with the journalists as well as several conversations with a number of community members. Community members stated that they were frustrated with journalists who perpetuated tales of destruction and avoided deeper conversations about community efforts to overcome the challenges they faced. Other community members argued that the news media was not bringing enough attention to ongoing struggle of the community.

When I asked people what they meant by the "news media" there were varying responses, although only one or two mentioned the reports from local journalists. When I asked specifically about the local journalists I interviewed, community members overwhelmingly acknowledged that local journalists were not part of the national "news media," which they defined largely as broadcast and cable news media like NBC and CNN. Since all but one of the journalists I spoke with worked for a local newspaper, I asked local residents if they felt this differentiation was because of the difference in print and television news. Some people said possibly, but several admitted they got most of their news from Facebook posts of news stories from friends rather than directly from the news organization.

Locals had more connections to the two local journalists than the regional journalists. In fact, when I visited Wimberley in September, Gary spent a good portion of the football game speaking to residents casually, as well as working. Gary had

connections to local sources and an understanding of the local history that was unmatched by any other journalist. Gary was in his mid-50s to early-60s and was a college graduate of a journalism program in Ohio. He was the local high school journalism teacher for several years. This was true of all the journalists. All had some sort of journalism training and had been working in journalism for at least three years.

Gary argued the difference between what he does and what national journalists do is about the difference between a tree and a forest:

> Well, they are looking at the big picture. We are looking at the trees; they are
> looking at the forest. We are looking at how old a tree it was. That oak tree was
> about 50 years old and had real nice leaves, where they are like "it's a huge
> forest." You know, it's that type of thing. It's localizing it.

Gary recognized his role as a local journalist was to tell a very specific story that only local people would understand, and would have meaning after the national media had stopped reporting. He was there, embedded with the community so deeply he could not be entirely objective. Gary said he grew up in Cleveland, which he considers a large city. He said that unlike Cleveland, everyone knows everyone in Wimberley and many of them show up to the home Friday night football games, he said at least twice during our interviews: "Small town life is a lot different than the big city." His connection to his community was always at the forefront of his answers as he identified places by local names, and people by their first names and relations.

What does that small town life look like for a local journalist like Gary? Gary's relationships are based off of his experiences. He knows people in the community, and he knows their children. For several years, he worked with the high school journalism

students. He trained a number of students who went to college for journalism and now work for different news organizations. Several of his students covered the Wimberley Flooding for their publications. He spent 20 minutes or so discussing their achievements and how this impacted his desire to write each week.

Gary said he felt the idea of objectivity is not something that has to do with what he choses to cover or not cover, but rather the process of doing journalism. There is no way he can entirely remove himself from what was happening. At times journalists experience the disaster as citizens experience disaster.

Journalists in Disaster

When I spoke with the journalists about what their responsibility is after a natural disaster, all aligned with the idea that journalists should facilitate discourse and connect people to resources. They all said that journalism was necessary to record the stories of the community, and assist the community in moving past the initial disaster. All of them discussed a need to move to deeper stories in the three to six months after the disaster. In the six months after the disaster, the journalists all discussed a need to move back to their normal news coverage, with only discussions about the disaster when needed. Gary said that a majority of news coverage about the disaster in the first three months involved stories about volunteers and local fundraisers. For the regional papers the stories focused more on the appearances of politicians and celebrities at fundraising events, as well as concerns about funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). A number of stories in the *Austin American Statesman* discussed economic issues in Wimberley as a result of a loss in tourism money during the summer months.

Sean wrote a number of stories dealing with these economic challenges including the one he wrote after the day I observed him, but he also got some pushback from the people he interviewed for his stories as they were scared how the story would be told.

I didn't even talk to (the business owner). He told the intern and not me after I left the store. I mean all I was going to do was say the store was empty. I talked to the people there but I didn't get an interesting part.

He also talked about how the actual disaster event helped him to connect with sources starting with his first post-flood trip from late on May 24 to early on May 25, 2015. He told a story of being stuck at a church on one side of the Blanco River with people who could not get back to their homes because of closed roads. He could not dial out on his cellphone for part of his time there, and was put in a situation to discuss what was going on with some older women at the church. This ended up being very helpful for the stories he wrote in the next few weeks. The women gave him numbers of other residents and he was able to interview several local residents who had lost or damaged property.

Journalists as Citizens

There was a uniform concern among the journalists to do right by the community, provide comprehensive coverage and allow a variety of community members to speak. Although many of them interviewed community officials, they all spoke with people at the Volunteer Action Center, people who own businesses in the Wimberley square and other local residents. Several journalists spoke of specific sources they had before the flooding occurred. They all mentioned the importance of maintaining these contacts in the time after the disaster, as to continue their journalistic work.

There was a commitment to locating new sources of information as well as committing to long-term news coverage within reason (meaning they still have to answer to the demands of their news organizations and superiors within their news organization). Gary had the least oversight on his articles, as he was required to write three to five stories a week, most of which concerned high school sports at the Wimberley and Dripping Springs high schools. Sean Collins Walsh covered local politics and business so his stories already had a certain angle built into them, one that was primarily concerned with his beat. The *San Antonio Express News* reporters were instructed to write a story of general interest on Sundays for the Monday paper. Houston's stories had to be about Wimberley, however what they were about specifically was flexible. Stories were about disaster response, survivors, volunteers, and displaced animals. All the journalists went into reporting on the story already knowing people who lived in Wimberley or had been to Wimberley before even if they had not lived there.

Gary mentioned the efforts he and his neighbors had made to attend benefits and give a little money here and there because they considered it the right thing to do to help the community. In an interview in late July, he stated:

> You know, things are slowly creeping back to normal. I think that locally, the
> economy really depends on visitors, and I think people are still a little bit wary
> about coming and staying here even though there is no reason not to.

He felt an obligation to share what was still operational in his reporting so regional people would return to Wimberley in the last few months of summer.

Summary

This chapter provided a deeper understanding of how the journalists defined their role after the flooding and throughout the six months after the disaster. This time period in May to December 2015 created a challenge for the local journalists just as it did for local citizens. Journalists were invested in the discourse and recovery narratives of the community, but also in how those narratives fit with the purpose and goals of journalism as a whole. These often aligned with the goals of the citizens, to see the community recover and return to normalcy overtime but in a way that encourages civic discourse.

This section provides insight into how the journalists conceptualize their role in a local community after a natural disaster, and elaborates on research concerning disaster narratives and the ways in which journalists connect to local sources. What is clear here is that journalists see their professionalism as a way to cope with the intensity of traumatic events. They use these standards as well as their previous experiences as a lens to guide their decision-making about how to report and what to report. They also felt the pull of the traditional post-disaster stages of news coverage (Coleman & Wu, 2006). They felt inclined to move away from stories about death and destruction to stories that showed recovery and hope. The narratives developed by journalists are related to how they cope and think of their purpose and work. Local journalists think of themselves in a way that connects to the community narrative. They are at the same time present but also observing. They are recording the narrative but also seeking out a narrative from the community. Perhaps they are at once the recorder, historian, and storyteller. Not all journalists practice journalism the same, and often some journalists cater toward a specific audience based on their news organization's reach and content (Wall, 2015). For

example, Gary's position is very different than many of the other journalists who reported on Wimberley just because he lives there and has for a long time. Although the *View* is a small local paper, the paper does not have to be award winning to be reputable in Wimberley.

Another point about journalistic norms and news organization reputation can be seen with Sean. Sean has a certain reputation as a news reporter for a large newspaper, the *Austin American Statesman*, is recognized not only in Wimberley but also in the State of Texas. It is ranked 60th in circulation nationally. From observations of the newspaper online, readers often express their expectations of what the newspaper should write and not write, and let the reporters know when they do not live up to reader's standards. The *Statesman* also has 181,000 followers on Twitter at the time of this study.

Within the standards of journalism practice, journalists are asked to seek the truth and report it. Truth is realized through the presentation of facts. For the Wimberley journalists, this process of observation and reflection provides them with information for their stories, but also a way to cope with what they are seeing and interacting with. Adverse events like floods create a complex situation for local journalists in that personal experiences and interactions become part of the truth.

RQ1 asked, "How do local journalists describe the relationship between their professional roles and personal coping strategies after a natural disaster?" I found that local journalists personally cope with their experiences in natural disaster by using their work as a way to analyze the meaning of the disaster. Their professional work often functions as a coping mechanism for their personal disaster experiences. Local journalists cope with their experiences in disaster, by viewing and analyzing those experiences in a

journalistic way. The very process of asking questions, listening and writing allows journalists to process their personal experiences and emotional responses in a way that considers the narratives of individuals as well as the community. Journalists consider their relationship to the community as a professional relationship, but also demonstrated a concern for developing a narrative that considers the struggles of individuals in the community. Journalists relate to the disaster, and often transfer their experiences into their stories. What journalists see and hear, and the people they interact will become the facts and quotes in their stories. The realities of those they interview, what they see, and the experiences of journalists then transfer into the stories they write and report on in the community. The way journalists evaluate their professional relationship to their community aligned with their understanding of professional journalistic roles, but at times it created a tension.

Chapter 8: Journalists as Citizen Stakeholders

The challenges of newswork in the age of social media and 24/7 news often create unrealistic expectations for the roles of local journalists. Local journalists see their work as part of an effort to encourage public discourse and bring attention to certain issues that lack a voice in that discourse. This chapter examines how journalists saw their roles as citizen stakeholders and will highlight any strategic goals the journalists sought to communicate. This addresses the second research question, which asked: *How do local journalists explain stakeholder roles, and the goals for their communities after a natural disaster?*

In strategic communication and public relations, there has been a challenge to the understanding that journalism and communication are no longer a one way, but rather a two-way processes of communication in a post-modern society focused on the ethics of care and corporate responsibility (Coombs & Holladay, 2014). This two way process was clear in the conversations I had with local journalists and local residents. Journalists spoke of their efforts to interact with Wimberley residents in a respectful and empathetic way that allowed for minority and under-represented voices to be heard. For example, national news reports emphasized that the majority of homes destroyed by the flood were vacation homes, which made flood victims appear wealthy. Gary and Sean both saw this as a problem and worked to cover stories about families who owned local businesses destroyed by the flooding, noting that these business were the financial livelihood for both families. They wrote stories that directed readers toward a different narrative that was being under-represented by national news organizations.

While none of the journalists spoke of a specific agenda in their news reporting, several voiced concerns that people outside of Wimberley might not understand the circumstances of flood victims and survivors. The journalists recognized the vested interests of community stakeholders in rebuilding the community after the flooding. They also expressed concerns some voices would be eliminated from the conversation as the majority of residents returned to normalcy. They were strategic in the process to report on these underrepresented groups.

Journalism seeks to bring attention to the civic discourse while strategic communication seeks to direct that communication (Yang et al., 2015). The role of journalism and strategic communication in the recovery period (up to six months after the disaster) often overlap. Citizens seek to overcome the boundaries created by the natural disaster, with their goal being a return to better conditions or even normalcy (Norris et al., 2007). In Wimberly, there was evidence that these local journalists facilitated the discussion of the process of returning to normal, while public officials and other community stakeholders sought to write those discussions into reality. Engaged citizens sought to create a better outcome even after the disaster has dissipated. Inevitably the outcome was bringing others into the conversation as to help facilitate those conversations. Here we can see that journalists had goals, and community members had goals, and they worked toward those goals in tandem.

In literature concerning disaster communication, journalism and mass media are not synonymous, and therefore local news organizations often do not fall into the public's general understanding of news media. They see local journalists as local professionals rather than part of a larger mass media conglomerate which has no connection to their

community (Houston et al., 2012; Seeger et al., 2002). In the case of Wimberley, local citizens saw journalists who lived and worked in the community as more connected to the disaster than those who just flew in for the recovery. They could recall the news stories reported by the local journalists, and the names of the local journalists. Local citizens were often the sources for the news stories and reported their experiences to local journalists.

Using the literature as a lens through which to examine the responses of journalists and local citizens, I sought to draw some connections between the work journalists are doing and how these align with the goal-setting nature of strategic communication practices. While it is understood in scholarship that local journalists are often citizens and stakeholders within the community, what has not been thoroughly examined is how those journalists are often integral to recording the goals and ambitions of their communities in the recovery period. These purposeful actions are strategic and seek to bring about specific results for the community.

Each one of the Wimberley journalists spoke about goals for community recovery, and a focus on empathy rather than thoughtless reporting. They also spoke of the importance of providing access to information. Gary said between himself and his boss, they attended all of the FEMA and community meetings and provided information in summary form in the newspaper each week. Sean said he attended many meetings as well. Houston attended a few meetings and tweeted online about what was said in the community. In addition, volunteers who maintained the Facebook page shared stories and tweets on Facebook with displaced residents.

Journalists explained goals in line with their definitions of journalism as a profession but also stressed their obligations as human beings, and local residents. They knew they would have to work with people in the community on subsequent stories that did not involve the flood and so maintaining the best interest of the flood victims and community was beneficial to their long-term reporting. Also there was concern that non-local news organizations would not have the best interests of the community at heart, and would not provide the information locals need after the flood. This understanding of the role of local media definitely follows a specific frame or agenda concerning the role of local journalists as discussed in the previous chapter.

Repeatedly journalists said they did not see this desire to help the community as one that was out of line with their call to "seek the truth and report it" and "minimize harm" as discussed in the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics (SPJ, 2016) as well as other organizational codes. This relates to the Public Relation Society of America's ethical standards of honesty, expertise and loyalty. While they did not maintain the PRSA code—many mentioned loyalty, truth and honesty they held to. Honesty pertains to "adhering to the highest standards of accuracy and truth" (PRSA, 2016). Expertise means that they "acquire and responsibly use specialized knowledge and experience" (PRSA, 2016). Loyalty is what seems to fit the best of these three ethical traits in that it pertains to be "faithful to those we represent, while honoring our obligation to serve the public interest" (PRSA, 2016). The overlap here is astounding in that none of the journalists I interviewed would say they were practicing strategic communication or public relations, but yet their actions align with PRSA's description of ethical practices.

Citizen Stakeholder

Local journalists often have a social network densely populated in the area where they live and work. Their source of employ is highly intertwined with their source of social association. They live where they work or close to where they work. They attend local churches and are members of the community. Often they have worked at other local jobs in addition to their work as a journalist, or have neighbors that serve in stakeholder roles within the community.

In the case of local resident and journalist Gary, his membership at a local parish as well as work at the local high school had acquainted him with numerous families in Wimberley. He knew people who owned local businesses and recognized homesites destroyed in the flooding that belonged to people he knew. He knew things about these families that never appeared in any of the news stories I read. He knew which homes would be rebuilt and which ones would most likely not be rebuilt; he knew if the home was a permanent residence or vacation home. He also knew if they had received volunteer assistance and if they had attended FEMA and other recovery meetings.

Strategic goals. Strategic goals are defined as goals that are justified by specific communication paths or strategies (Hallahan et al., 2007); these pathways of communication are carefully calculated to produce a certain result. However even specific strategies do not always result in the desired outcome—especially in a media culture where two-way communication trumps the former one-way understanding of communication (Coombs & Holladay, 2014). Two-way communication involves access to information via internet communication, audiences and readers are increasingly able to interact with new organizations and authors. However, all the journalists interviewed for

this study discussed specific narrative goals for their stories. Three central themes of how journalists discussed these goals were in a desire to "illuminate issues," "encourage volunteer support," and "draw attention to long-term recovery."

Gary spoke of his goal to write stories about volunteer groups, which he continued to do through November. Sean worked to bring attention to businesses that might be hurting in hopes of bringing people to Wimberley, although that was not the sole purpose of his reporting. The three journalists from the *San Antonio Express News* expressed a desire to educate nearby communities about the needs of the people in Wimberley and potentially move them to share their time and resources with the community. Regional journalists were concerned the challenges of Wimberley might become less important to people if their news organizations stopped reporting on the town. In addition, they sought to interview people that had not been interviewed before, discover stories that had been neglected by national media, and provide more in-depth examinations of stories that pertained to long-term disaster recovery.

All of the journalists felt a physical presence or interaction with sources would allow them to direct their news stories better (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006). They all visited Wimberley in person. The three local journalists spent many days in Wimberley doing research and figuring out what stories might be getting lost. For Gary, this was less difficult than it was for Sean and Houston since they did not live as close to downtown Wimberley. In follow-up interviews Sean said he had been back to Wimberley at least once every other week since Labor Day Weekend.

The role of stakeholders in strategic communication and corporate crisis management is to invest in their organization or business (Freeman, 2010; Freeman, &

Evan, 1990; Rawlins, 2006). From this study, the actions of local journalists resemble those of community stakeholders.

There were clear step-by-step processes that journalists integrated into their newswork, as well as certain understandings of what was appropriate at certain times after the disaster. Many times these aligned with the crisis stages (Wilkins, 2010; Wilkins et al., 2013). First, they all discussed interviewing people about their initial reactions to the tragedy. Then they moved on to recovery stories that discussed the changes for the community as well as the challenges ahead. Sean, Gary, and Houston mentioned specific stories they covered concerning recovery. Each also acknowledged a time when citizens expressed a need for information, and when that changed to a desire for more narratively complex stories. Gary mentioned one story he covered during that time about a dog being stuck in a tree:

> Well, you know and it really wasn't just like a one-day thing. I mean it was the whole next week and the week after that were just bad stories after other bad stories, sad stories, lost pets. I mean it just trickled down, just like well we got a story about a dog, a Labrador retriever that was up in the tree I think for like two days. They found their dog and here it was somehow lucky enough to survive the flood by somehow getting washed to the tree and he just was up there for like I think it was like two days.

Sean mentioned a similar attitude toward the stories he was writing in the first month after the disaster as well. Sean wrote stories based on his experience writing about water rights in Wimberley, and so he focused first on the overflow in the Blanco River and Cypress Creek. Later he focused on local business owners.

Sean had been working on the "Save Our Wells" issue since March 2015, so his goal was to make sure this story did not get forgotten amidst the flood stories. He revisited his sources and even did follow-up stories concerning water rights in the area and how that related to the areas destroyed by flooding.

Houston's goals when he initially got to Wimberley were to focus on community rather than destruction:

> When I came out here, my focus was more in the community. I'm talking with people and how it impacted them. Because unfortunately for me, whenever I see the news media today, it's all—especially in disasters or events, shooting [and] things like that.

Houston here points to national-level media, specifically television media and how their agenda does not align with his. He clearly states his focus is a comprehensive representation of the community.

Second, they focused on the importance of a variety of sources, difficulty with specific sources and a desire to move beyond stories about tragedy and into stories about healing after three to four months following the flood. Third, they were all uneasy about dwelling on the deaths for too long, the importance of healing and "moving on" and even "returning to normal."

Gary wrote stories about youth groups who were in Wimberley to help, benefits, football games and other indicators of community resilience mentioned in Cutter et al. (2008), Houston (2012) and Norris et al. (2008). He said his vested interest was in sharing stories that were not necessarily being shared in the public discourse, which he defined as what friends and neighbors are talking about at cook outs and pool parties

during the summer not just what is being discussed at town council meetings. Gary said

the "moving on" attitude is difficult because people still want the help that comes with

news coverage, but they have fatigue from talking about all the sad things that happened

because of the flood. He said that balancing that in his stories and conversations was a

constant challenge. Sean also mentioned the struggle with this challenge concerning

"returning to normal." He wrote several stories about businesses in Wimberley and

received complaints that people did not see things returning to normal. Wimberley

residents did not consider the Wimberley's economic climate to be great the summer of

2015, as compared to the summer of 2014. He worked hard to get local sources to

elaborate on those struggles, but most of the local business owners were exhausted from

interviews and did not want to mislead people about their economic challenges. For many

business owners the flood created more challenges specifically because businesses are

not eligible for FEMA aid and grants. People with homes destroyed by the flood were

already rebuilding while many business owners were still waiting for information from

insurance companies, so the pace at which "returning to normal" took place varied for

different groups of residents. Sean worked to write stories that emphasized these facts.

Disaster Response

All the journalists spoke to the concern that national news organizations would

not provide the correct information to local citizens after the natural disaster. National

news organizations were not there to sit in on meeting after meeting at the community

center, where FEMA discussed debris removal deadlines and paperwork for volunteer

help. National news organizations were in Wimberley for two weeks after, and most of

their stories addressed the deaths of members of McComb, Charba, and Carey Families,

who passed away when the home, owned by the Careys, was taken down the river and smashed into pieces. Only one person inside the home, Jonathan McComb and his family dog survived. Three young children and five adults perished. National news broadcasts discussed the desire to locate survivors, the hunt for their bodies in the weeks after and a brief mourning period—each day with less time and space devoted to these stories. Local NBC affiliate KXAN reported several stories, which were then picked up by national media. Photos from the *Austin American Statesman* were shared via Associated Press and published all over the country as well. Since the McComb, Carey, and Charba families were from Corpus Christi, Texas, the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* covered many stories pertaining to Jonathan Combs and the memorials to the other lost family members.

The local journalists varied in their initial disaster response, but all of them discussed the desire to be empathetic with citizens of the community, critiquing the responses of the national media. Their critiques were very similar to the critiques from non-journalist citizens at the local diner and volunteer action center. There was a clear focus in interviews on dispelling rumors about disaster response, FEMA compensation, flood maps and long-term resources from the City of Wimberley and Hays County. Stories were written about temporary aid and other services (Scanlon, Osborne, & McClellan, 1996). There was also evidence of an access to resources focus in their news stories.

Gary, Houston, and Sean all viewed the destruction in Wimberley for the first time on May 25, although each one was aware of the flooding the night before. Each one had a different perspective on what their role was that day. Gary lives outside of town, far from the water, but came upon the downed bridge on his way to church. Gary also knew

he would have plenty of time to get stories out before his Friday deadline, so his concern was to let first responders do their work and help the people he knew before he had to head to work. Houston drove up from the Texas coast where he was visiting family and worked to find a way into town although two bridges leading into town were out. Sean began to call and email his contacts in Wimberley including the mayor, council members and others he had interviewed in the past.

They differed in their understanding of a journalist's job in the community. Journalists have to provide context, Houston said. Without context it doesn't help people to process the tragedy. Sean said that focusing on the sadness surrounding the Coombs family would not help the community move on. Gary said although the stories were tragic, the fact many of the people who died were not permanent residents of Wimberley, drew attention away from many of the survivors living in Wimberley in regional- and national-level news coverage. Gary said sometimes the long-term story is about those who are left to pick up the pieces, rather than those who lost their lives.

Rather than removing themselves from discussions about disaster response, journalists were part of these conversations in person and on social media. One specific conversation involved community members' concerns about community economic performance after the flooding, as 90 percent of Wimberley's commerce is related to tourism and the majority of tourism takes place in the warmer months of March through September. One journalist said he had received criticism that the majority of news stories failed to acknowledge that the downtown was not harmed by flood waters, that the damage was mainly to cabins and homes. He took this as a call to write more stories that discussed the ways Wimberley was doing well, and then he received criticism for his

"open for business" approach. He was frustrated that citizens did not realize that if people came to Wimberley to shop they would help the economy long-term, his concern was that a focus on death might scare people away.

For example, the 7A Cabins and Pioneer Town were very badly hit by the flood. The cabins had been on the Blanco River for more than 60 years and were owned by the Czichos family. In October, that family announced that they would not be able to keep the cabins operational because they could not fix them for the amount of insurance money they received. The cabins were sold in January 2016. The story of the challenges for these cabin owners only appeared in the *Wimberley View*. When the property was sold it also appeared in the *Austin American Statesman*.

Gary said he hoped that better warning systems would be created because many warnings are linked to local cellphones. "Those don't really help people visiting from out of town," he said. He said one of his early goals was to bring the attention of Hays County to this challenge because he knew improved warnings could make a difference in future loss of life.

There were other challenges when journalists decided to work outside of typical disaster narratives. One journalist discussed a challenge he faced when he wrote a story about two specific volunteer groups and where they were helping out. In letters to the editor, two citizens accused him of neglecting certain people and giving attention to others – he was frustrated because his goal was to bring attention to the continued need for volunteers in the Texas summer heat. Letter writers accused him of not giving enough perspective on the volunteers and only focusing on faith-based groups, however on the day he wrote the story the groups he interviewed were faith-based. He felt like the story

needed to show what was going on in a specific time period and therefore he interviewed the groups who were out on the day he was writing. He understood that just because a lot of groups have helped does not mean those groups are less important. However, his goal was to provide a snapshot of the volunteer support so people would know there was volunteer support, not measure how much support was enough or who was more supportive.

Journalists discussed their desires to cover what was appropriate and helped communicate the current state of people in Wimberley, as well as a desire to assist in long-term disaster recovery. I was surprised in interviews by how personable journalists desired to be with their sources. They often referred to people they interviewed like they would an acquaintance. In the case of Houston, he handed out social media profile information and interacted with sources on social media. Sean spoke with a conversational tone, and allowed the people he interviewed to ask him questions about the stories he was writing candidly. Sean had ideas of what stories he would write and sought out sources accordingly, but also allowed the story to take shape as he interviewed people. He also willingly answered those questions, although sometimes he did not know the direction the story would be going until he'd spent a whole day talking to people.

Summary

The strategic goals of journalists were to create discourse that led to long-term disaster recovery. Journalists were focused on stories that benefited the community as well as sought to challenge public understanding of the recovery process. Strategic communication literature indicates the value of stakeholders in the success of strategic communication practice. These journalists were community stakeholders.

The research question illuminates the goal-setting behaviors of journalists as well as their personal desires to bring attention to specific narratives inside of the crisis recovery time. The stories often correspond with local events that have been key indicators of community resilience, like concerts, festivals and sports events (Cutter et al., 2008; Houston, 2012; and Norris et al., 2008). This analysis begins to connect the roles of journalists to ideas from strategic communication in that journalists view themselves as integral to disaster response and recovery. What was even more interesting was how citizens on the Facebook group were intentionally sharing local news stories. An online search of stories after Labor Day 2015 (four months after the flooding), shows stories with a rebuilding and recovery narrative from Sean and Gary and their respective news organizations. Stories with positive narratives were shared and liked on the Facebook page by citizens.

Local journalists explained their goals for the community as doing work, which contributes to the community and individuals in that community building back to pre-disaster conditions. From the interviews, I found that local journalists have a desire to see the community they work and live in build back after a natural disaster. They had varying relationships depending on their geographic proximity to Wimberley. Gary lived in Wimberley where as Houston and Sean lived 45 minutes from Wimberley. The closer their homes were to the community, the stronger the journalists' desire for recovery narratives. The closer they lived to the disaster effected areas the more interwoven their lives were with the disaster circumstances of Wimberley residents, and therefore the way they interacted with the circumstances of the community was related to their relationship with the community. The closer they lived the more connected to the crisis they were.

The more familiar they were with the community the more personal the crisis and challenges of that crisis were.

Depending on the proximity of the journalist to the disaster, or people who experienced the disaster, the journalist may have more of a reason to move on from certain narratives. In our case, Gary was the closest in proximity to Wimberley and therefore he expressed the most concern for a change in the narrative. He emphasized a more positive narrative and desire for recovery in the time period three to six months after the flooding.

Chapter 9: Journalist as Citizen

The third research question asked: *How do local journalists practice professionalism and how does this influence their role in the community after a natural disaster?* The legitimacy of professionalism of journalists is sometimes questioned when social media allows for citizens to distribute information without mediators of information. However, journalistic professionalism largely dictates the identity and ethics that guide reporting decisions. This chapter examines the professionalism and identity of the journalist and what that looked like for these journalists in the six months after the flood.

Situational challenges cause journalists to choose certain practices over others but within the acceptable professional framework. In natural disaster reporting and the aftermath, journalists see a professional responsibility to report information accurately and in a way that assists the community in safety and recovery. These roles are often referred to as the facilitative and monitorial roles of journalism (Christians et al., 2008). Journalists also conceptualize these roles as part of their journalistic identities. An understanding of both professional and personal ethics steers the decisions which journalists make when choosing which angles to include in stories as well as which sources to contact.

Journalists see these three elements as directors of their journalistic practice and civic attachment to local natural disaster recovery.

Professionalism

All of the journalists interviewed had professional training from a journalism program or apprenticeship, but none had training in trauma or disaster journalism. Literature on crisis and disaster journalism reveals the public's expectation of the journalist to remove him or herself from the experience on a personal level (Himmelstein & Faithorn, 2002). However, in Wimberley, local journalists did not see their personal relationships and interactions in conflict with their professional observations and experiences. In disaster reporting, journalists concentrate on the professional auspices of reporting, verifying, editing and sharing information with the public (Himmelstein & Faithorn, 2002). These local journalists understood the challenges of disaster reporting, and understood the importance of professional boundaries, but at the same time did not see the boundaries as a hindrance to practicing empathy.

Professionalism allows journalists to produce trusted information, backed by a news organization considered accurate and trustworthy within a culture (Christians et al, 2008; Seeger, 2006). In Wimberley, these journalists understood their interactions with the community could directly influence the way the individuals they interacted with viewed their news organizations. They demonstrated a desire to clarify statements from sources as well as investigate rumors and hearsay. Each understood this process to be what made them journalists, and allowed them the authority of experience as well as expertise.

Journalism is a profession in that journalists have a specialized, standard set of skills regardless of what news organization the journalist works for – these include attribution practices, sourcing, transparency, and verification practices (Craft & Davis,

2013; Hermida, 2012). In this study's sample, the journalists were concerned about sourcing accurate information and verifying their information before sharing information in a published product and even on social media. Several journalists mentioned reading information online and then verifying it with a person either face to face or over the phone.

The journalists had varied understandings of how professionalism might get in the way of ethics and humanity after a natural disaster. Each journalist considered humanity as a factor in their work. These journalists naturally felt a professional obligation to remove their thoughts about the disaster, and expressed a desire to prevent personal thoughts or feelings from clouding the narrative they share in their published product. A journalist has a personal identity that may influence the way he or she interacts with others after a natural disaster. The point of view of the journalist cannot be discounted. All the journalists who participated in this study mentioned how personal impressions and experiences sometimes changed how they approached local residents or wrote stories.

Identity. What defines a journalist's identity is often a result of his or her previous experiences in the community and connections to the community. In addition, identity has to do with experiences that might be outside of professional work – from childhood, previous careers or other relationships. Personal beliefs and ideologies often determine how a person will understand their role, therefore personal goals and desires may be inherent in they way a journalist and citizen views their community's response and long term recovery process. In the case of the journalists we met, identities as a Texan, survivor, volunteer, concerned citizen and community member often interacted

with their desire to practice journalism professionally. Their knowledge from previous experiences was often present when making decisions about what to cover and what narratives to record. These identities created a tension between what a culture of professional journalism dictates and the realities of a person's relationship to a situation or environment.

Ethics. A person cannot separate their professional work from their personal identity in every respect. Surviving and recovering from a disaster involves the real and raw topics of life and death, loss of property, and income. These basic needs are the first thoughts of survival and recovery after a natural disaster. Journalists often have an understanding that professional practices and personal identities give different advice on how to handle interactions with those effected by disasters. Local journalists have more to lose if they offend a local source, sometimes this is not just professional reputation but also private reputation in the community where they live. Journalists must think about what will be considered reporting in good taste, and while some things are distasteful they might be more professional. Immediately following a natural disaster these decisions are easier to make – by facilitating access to resources, that will help people to get what they need to manage the aftermath of the disaster (Scanlon, 2006; Wilkins, 2010). However, after more time has passed, ethical decision-making is more difficult and less clean cut – some stories might provide certain survivors with more attention than others, or prioritize certain issues created by the disaster over others.

Each journalist interviewed for this study discussed a process of prioritizing the news coverage of a certain issue over another. This process was a constant challenge for local journalists, in that they were concerned about the ability of themselves and other

local journalists to assist the community and provide a trusted platform for civic discussions. In the process of deciding what is news, journalists form news narratives (Gans, 2004). Distasteful reporting, or drawing attention to the wrong issues could create distrust for the news organization and local journalists in general. Therefore, local journalists have more to lose if they compromise ethics to report a certain story or favor a particular narrative.

While only some of the journalists mentioned the SPJ Code of Ethics, they all referenced ethical standards of reporting they had learned in school. Each one pointed out that ethical standards were not clean cut all the time, but stated that as long as a journalist is being empathetic in their approach to reporting, they felt the ethics they practiced were caring and concrete.

In many ways Gary saw his job as being an observer, and maintaining a check on what was being said in community meetings. He saw his role as a journalist but also as a participant observer. He said it was his goal to make sure people knew when the meetings about flood assistance were being held, and provide a summary for those who could not attend the meetings. However, Gary said a volunteer was putting the FEMA meeting minutes up on the Facebook page after each meeting, which he thought was a better place for people to access that information than the weekly paper. Since the paper publishes only once a week it was not able to provide minute-by-minute or even day-by-day reporting. But Gary needed reporting material and since school was out for the summer they had a lot of space to fill in the newspaper. He used that as an opportunity to write stories about businesses and residents and how they were coping with the disaster. He said he wanted to focus on the positive things people were doing, rather than all the

sacrifices as a result of the flood. Two months after the flood Gary was focusing on his regular summer reporting about the upcoming school year, Wimberley High School sports and local summer camps, but also writing about flood debris cleanup and volunteer projects. When he went to a pool party in his neighborhood in August there were mixed emotions about his stories on the flood. Party guests said the paper was not reporting enough on the challenges Wimberley was still facing. But several other guests said they would be glad when there were no more flood stories and they were just ready to move on. His wife even told him that he was working a little too hard some days to report on the flood because people did not want to talk about it any more.

Summary

Local journalists consider their role in the community after a natural disaster to be both collaborative in that it assists people in gaining access to resources, and facilitative in that it provides a place where journalists and community members can discuss the challenges they face after the natural disaster. Local journalists see their role as function similar to the definition of public journalism. Public journalism is a process of journalism that contributes to democracy, by providing accountability for the press, develops public discussion and a problem solving approach to issues (Chaffee & McDevitt, 1999). It is understood that local journalists are not all the same and therefore their definition of their roles in the community after a natural disaster all differed. The desire to provide information to assist the community in rebuilding and practice empathy were consistent in interviews. Journalists found their journalistic role to be one, which provided factual information, sought out a variety of local sources, and listened to the concerns of local citizens. Local journalists' previously established relationships were as valuable in

understanding their role in the community as their conceptions of journalism and

professionalism.

Chapter 10: Narratives of Local Journalists

The fourth research question asked: *How do the narratives local journalists focus on after a natural disaster change during the recovery period?* This question addresses the idea that journalists are more than just reporters when it comes to the role of the local journalist in disaster response. Literature has focused two post-disaster phases in the six months after natural disasters; these phases focus on providing context for the disaster and initial disaster recovery.

Narratives

For this chapter, the study examined the narratives represented in the news articles and stories gathered through online sources, and compared those to the actions, and questions answered by the journalists. While there are a number of thematic narratives present in both the news coverage and the interviews, three that overlapped in the news stories and interviews were the "what is next for Wimberley?" narrative, the "need for assistance" narrative, and the "personal stories of recovery" narrative.

"What is next" narrative. In most of the news coverage of the Wimberley flood, there is an emphasis on the narrative "what is next for Wimberley?" This narrative carries through news coverage from the day after the flood to even six months after the flood. It resurfaces in stories concerning the challenges presented by the flood: for example, the sale of a property, the rebuilding of a home, or the concerns presented by other inclement weather events. Stories concerning the heavy rainfall in August and October 2015 contain boilerplate information about the Memorial Day floods. Boilerplate information restates the death toll, and acts as almost like a "highlight real" might in sports coverage

reminding the reader of the devastation. While regional publications often have boilerplate information almost word for word from previous news stories, the *Wimberley View* newspaper took special care to not copy the story word for word. Gary said this is because people who read the *View* see what the flood did every day. Residents drive by the twisted trees, and remember where homes used to be. He does too. The visual reminders are a daily reality check for he and his editor. Therefore there is no need for a boilerplate or recap.

Understandably, many of the regional reporters, as well as Sean and Houston do not make it to Wimberley and drive around town as often as Gary does. Websites like Examiner.com also provide this type of information, but mainly it is rewritten from other news sources and local social media posts. Identifying the "what is next for Wimberley" narrative as a narrative that carries throughout the news coverage, also provided a way to examine the thoughts and actions of local journalists. The presence of this narrative shows the way in which journalists have long-term concerns for the narrative of recovery in the community.

Need for assistance narrative. Within the "what is next" narrative there is also an emphasis in news stories on the need for both short-term and long-term assistance. This theme is what was labeled the "need for assistance" narrative. Within this narrative there is a focus on the needs of the community as well as access to those needs. Many articles pertain to FEMA and other government assistance. Articles overwhelmingly focused on volunteer efforts in Wimberley. Understandably Gary wrote a lot more stories about volunteer efforts, which, he emphasized, are still going on. It will be a long time before volunteers are no longer needed in projects around Wimberley. Many stories deal

with confusion over filing insurance claims, flood plain maps, and other types of assistance. Several stories sought to clarify the way that the National Flood Insurance Program and FEMA relief programs work. Money paid out from these programs is not pro-bono, they are loans with little or no interest and therefore if you accept assistance you will be required to pay it back. Interviews revealed concerns that the public might not get accurate factual information about assistance programs, so special attention was given to this information.

Personal recovery narrative. A third narrative involves "personal stories of recovery." Often these stories involve the survival stories of individuals who own local businesses or organizations, or even individuals. Sean and Gary focused on stories of this nature. Sean's stories dealt with several businesses in one story, while Gary often wrote stories about one business per story. In the story, background information is given, but the majority of the story focuses on how the victim is doing now. This was the most common narrative in both interviews and news stories.

Stories concerning the life of survivor Jonathan McComb surfaced in September and October. Jonathan made several visits to Wimberley during that time and was interviewed by 12 different regional and local news sources. *The Corpus Christi Caller-Times* wrote a number of stories about Jonathan, his family and friends who passed away in the home on Deer Crossing that was swept away May 24, 2015. This shows up in Gary's interview and Sean's interview when they talk about person-to-person interactions with people. I even saw Gary speak to Jonathan McComb in September when Jonathan made an appearance at the first Wimberley High School home football game. Gary wrote a story about Jonathan but focused the story more on Jonathan's appearance rather than

the tragedy he had been through. Gary said that dwelling on the tragedy would not help the community as much as focusing on the hope the community had to rebuild.

These three narratives dominated the news coverage in the two to six months after the flood. These themes were also consistent with the desires of local journalists to provide narratives that develop the current state of the community rather than just repeating the same facts and figures over and over (Jemphrey & Berrington, 2000; Wenger & Friedman, 1986). National-level media tend to revisit stories on anniversaries, whereas local media develop long-form narratives that provide historical context for the disaster and help the community to cope (Kitch, 2003). These local narratives provide a place where local citizens and journalists create a shared meaning and cope with the disaster they encountered as local stakeholders.

While the time since the disaster is still short in relationship to the three to five year long-term recovery period, journalists expressed intentional actions towards positive community recovery outcomes. Journalists placed emphasis on a positive long-term disaster narrative and hopeful community recovery narrative.

Disaster Phases and Narratives

An initial response to disaster takes place a day to two weeks after the disaster and involves connecting victims to resources (Houston, 2012). During this phase the reporting focused on who was missing, what was destroyed, and who had died. All of the journalists interviewed said these stories were the most difficult to write, and during this phase they all wanted to move onto more hopeful stories. Each journalist discussed a process of decision-making, which included deciding what to cover and what to not cover. They also mentioned the roles of other gatekeepers from their news organization.

A second phase, which involves mitigating the challenges the disaster has created, culminates with a return to normalcy anywhere from three months to a year after the initial event—news coverage during this time becomes more critical of government and local responses (Wilkins, 2010; Wilkins et al., 2013). Many of the journalists and community members I spoke with indicated a desire for a "return to normal" or "to move on" after the disaster within three months of the disaster. In follow-up emails many of the journalists indicated that things had "returned to normal" or "were getting back to normal."

Each of the journalist was aware these stories might contribute to long-term understanding about flooding, risk and diaster. However, they acknowledged that these stories were not necessarily a result of the details they reported, but rather the narratives that would develop from those stories. Gary, Sean, and Houston wanted to make sure that their stories were not only accurate but presented what the people of Wimberley were truly experiencing. Each one said he knew that although the flood was over, what they wrote had the potential to become the story of record. One journalist even mentioned some of his stories had already been sourced by other news sites, and had potential to end up on sites like Wikipedia.

Following a period of long-term recovery, communities experience anniversary and trigger events, which result in challenges for the community and reminders of what the community has faced (Houston, 2012). There was heavy rain and flash flooding in Wimberley on Memorial Day weekend and in early November. Several journalists who covered the flood wrote stories about these events. Since the study only examined the seven months following the May 24, 2015, this study is not able to see long-term

recovery in its entirety. There have been a few trigger events already – like the Labor Day flood and the discovery of a missing child's remains. Long-term recovery and learning take place anywhere from three to five years after the initial event and these are indicators of community resilience (Magis, 2010). This portion was not revealed in this study. While the term resilience was never used by any of the journalists, many of the stories they report on indicate a focus on planning and community resilience long-term.

Narrative Tensions

The pressure to move on to news stories with a specific focus intensifies in the first six months. The descriptions of journalists' interactions with local citizens and sources provide evidence of this pressure to shift a narrative in a specific direction. In strategic communication after a natural disaster, messages are created to help people relate to and process the disaster. As we can see from the stories, local journalists covered there are specific plots, characters, and a specific points of view (Kramp, 2004). In the case of Wimberley, the local journalists have a local point of view and therefore involves focused on goals and desires that are local. While in public relations and strategic communication practice, narrative plots are often referred to as "frames" (Hallahan, 1999). An emphasis on specific narratives is often the goal of public relations practitioners, but increasingly public relations is steering toward a more dialogue-driven practice of narrative formation (Holtzhausen, 2000). Dialogue-driven public relations practices emphasize the power of mediator and consumer storytelling as tools of communication and collaboration. No longer are the journalists and practitioners practicing formation, but rather they are circulating it and verifying it through a process of mediation (Holtzhausen, 2000). Using narratives in formal communication practice has

been critiqued as bad practice and cutting corners by journalism and public relations scholars, but both groups acknowledge the use of narrative is natural and authentic in crisis communication (Heath, 2006). In reality journalists set goals and write stories that align with those goals. Journalists often emphasize certain narratives to create a specific narrative arch, which then continues throughout the process of disaster recovery.

Summary

The interaction of professionalism, identity, and ethics indicate that journalists do have a specific strategy and framework in which they decide what to report on natural disaster recovery. Often their identity encompasses more than just professional journalistic practices. Identity includes an understanding that a person has influences that might change how journalistic practices are interpreted. These identities also involve belief systems and other elements that inform ethics and direct the journalist to narrate the community's experiences with the disaster and disaster recovery. A commitment to a narrative that emphasizes recovery could be evidence that journalists perform the duties of responsible media, and have a specific goal to create narratives that result in more resilient communities.

The narratives of local journalists focus on positive relationships and the contributions of community members to establishing a new normal, at least as good or better than pre-disaster conditions. Narratives written by local journalists were consistent with their goals for the community of Wimberley. Journalists wrote stories that discussed building the community back, recovery and resilience. These stories focused on volunteer efforts, fundraisers, the rebuilding on and sale of properties, sporting events and other community events. Narratives are stories, and when told by local journalists the stories

are less static than written texts, but also do not differ from the narratives in written texts. While the interviews provided more depth to stories, they were consistently inline with the story being told in the news texts. Resilience is often conceptualized as a metaphor for how a community will respond to a disaster and what will make them respond (Magis, 2010; Norris et al., 2007). Journalists in this study saw their relationship to the community as integral to how the community understood the flood story. They saw what they wrote as a contribution to that story, but not a limitation to it.

This chapter looked at how journalism practices and strategic communication ideas compliment each other as journalists respond to natural disasters with narratives that advocate for the communities in which they live and work. By examining how journalists integrate their strategic practices in the standards of journalistic professionalism, as well as their identities as citizens of the community in which they are reporting shapes those narratives. The study was able to reveal their understanding of their role as members of the responsible media. The narratives they favor during the recovery period are narratives of recovery.

Chapter 11: Characteristics of Responsible Media

The fifth research question asked: *How do local journalists' goals resemble characteristics of responsible media in community resilience?* In the case of the Memorial Day 2015 Blanco River and Wimberley flooding, journalists had a desire to see things return to normalcy, produce narratives that showed the community was coping and unified and that survivors were able to rebuild and return to normal. However, the interviews and observations only began to reveal how the journalists transfer their experiences into their work.   In the study's news stories, there were several reporting phases. The first phase involved informational stories that address the number of people who died, were evacuated and how many homes were destroyed. Stories also contribute to historical context for the flood, as well as provide information about how much rain fell on Memorial Day Weekend and what the level of the water was in the Blanco River as it passed through Wimberley on that Saturday evening. The civic duty of journalists was to do what was required both of them professionally and what was expected of them as local residents. This chapter examines how journalists' goals news stories and interviews compliment and contradict these goals and exhibit criteria of responsible media practices that contribute to community resilience. This study has already shown that responsible media is integral to community resilience, and local news media are the main long-term contributors to local disaster and recovery awareness. However, what do journalists do that makes them responsible? How do the local journalists who covered Wimberley practice responsible journalism?

Responsible Journalism

First, journalists are embracing different models or styles of journalism. Sean and Houston both used social media throughout their reporting, Gary took photos and video for the local news website. Integrating multi-media elements into the coverage, as well as using social media gave local citizens more interaction with the content as well as a way to contact the journalists online. All three journalists discussed how they were careful in the ways that they approached survivors; Sean mentioned the desire to let sources talk to him about what they were dealing with rather than just focusing all the questions he had for his story. Gary said he tried to listen rather than come to the story with a set agenda for what he would write. Houston expressed how he interacted with citizens on Twitter even after he wrote his first story, helping them to find information on other news and public information sites. None of them felt the pressure to report something first or get the story out on deadline because they all knew the story would be there for a while. Perhaps this is because they were publishing on an ongoing or far off deadline, and knew they could update content at any time.

Listening to the community is also integral to these journalists' interactions and reporting methods. As stated above, all the journalists spoke about listening to the concerns of people in the community. All three *San Antonio Express News* reporters spent time walking around and talking to local people in Wimberley before they decided exactly what to write their stories about. Gary was the only one who had ideas about what to cover concerning the flood informed by previous Blanco River floods, but mainly this was based off of his knowledge of the geography of the community and knowing who lived along the river. Gary knew those people would be hard hit and knew he would need

to go there. He had been in the community listening for a long time, so he did not have to start from square one.

Well-established relationships before a crisis can change the way that the crisis is covered (Burkhart, 1991). In the case of Gary, Sean, and Houston their previous relationships in Wimberley and the surrounding areas helped them to gain access to survivors. The stories around water rights from Spring 2015 and their previous interactions with town and county officials helped all three reporters to gain access to information faster. Gary had the most access as he had the most relationships with people in Wimberley. In addition, all three of them understood that community officials would be busy, and sometimes speaking to other sources with the same information might be a better way to get information. Houston used his Twitter account to post information from the Hays County responders and government news releases, as well as interact with officials from Hays County. Houston already followed those social media accounts and so he knew they would have a lot of the information he would need.

Reporting on the disaster in a way that respects survivors creates a narrative that is more constructive and less invasive narrative. Other narratives were present, and only began to surface three to six months after the flood. Two of the most recent articles I read by local news organizations, published in November 2015, were critical of the victims and survivors—these stories asked a question similar to "why didn't people get out faster?" The news organizations that shared this question often allowed the words to come from a soundbite or source they interviewed. In both cases, the person was asking it almost as if it was a rhetorical question, because no explanation was given. In November and December, stories about the need for flood sirens brought up concerns about the lack

of a warning system that would alert people through the cellphone emergency alert system. Even these stories did not bring up the "what if they had got out sooner" possibility. Therefore, they fulfilled what has been defined as a responsible media practice. Journalists were reluctant to discuss these themes as they were negative and dwelt on what if scenarios. All three journalists I observed and interviewed in Wimberley were focused on stories that would be more productive and illuminate ongoing issues in the community.

Consistency and accuracy in stories and reporting was a main goal the journalists expressed in their reporting. Their ability to clarify information was based on their knowledge of the area as well as their ability to get information out in a timely manner. Although the understanding of *timely* was different for all the journalists, depending on their publication schedule, their goal was to provide accurate regardless of the amount of time they had before publication. They also were careful to provide accurate information on social media if they used social media. Gary had the most time for clarifying information since his publication only publishes once a week, and also had the most established access to sources. All the journalists expressed a desire for consistency of facts and stories, and all of them made it their goal to verify information even if it had been reported by other news sources. The pronunciation of a name of a town and even the name of the Blanco River differed on CNN and the NBC News, as did the depth in feet of the floodwaters. Some local journalists saw these errors as unacceptable. They mentioned how these mistakes challenged them to provide accurate information they could revisit with each subsequent story. Several reporters said they knew that there was no substitute for getting it right the first time.

Diversifying the types of coverage can make a difference in how comprehensive the story is. Research has shown that restorative narratives can provide context for a community and help that community to cope (Kitch, 2003; Scanlon, 1998). Restorative Narratives don't pretend that a person is "fully recovered" or "all better." They recognize that it takes awhile to recover, grieve, rebuild, etc., and that there will be setbacks along the way" (Images and Voices of Hope, 2016). Among the journalists, there was an understanding that narratives, which contain a more restorative approach, can change public perception. However, the journalists thought this was partially because of their desire to cover positive stories.

While local journalists might not diversify their news stories in a way allows for alternative narratives, they do often focus on different groups of people. For example, Gary focused on survivors, volunteers, tourists, and local businesses in many of his stories but often the story only focused on a particular group. He rotated through these groups and sometimes they overlapped, but most of the stories dealt with the types of progress taking place in the recovery effort. Sean on the other hand was writing about local government and economic issues so often his stories remained within those particular frames. Houston had no bounds, as his reporting was mainly online and freelance. While Houston's assigning editors gave him requests for information, he was very free to write whatever stories he felt he needed to or gained access to. Other local journalists consulted their news organizations, and sought to apply advice shared by others at those organizations but in the end they were the ultimate gatekeepers concerning what would appear in their stories (eg. Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). The process of

decision-making was evident in journalists' interview statements, but often their decisions to cover things were informed by their personal experiences and passions.

Local journalists in practice may be advocating for the community out of their desire to instill social justice for the victims. But at the same time, educate those outside or those not directly affected by the natural disaster. What local journalists write provides information on how outsiders can help the town of Wimberley. Houston, Sean and the *San Antonio Express News* reporters saw this as more of a concern than Gary since Gary's publication's readership is the most localized. However, all of these journalists expressed a desire to accurately represent the needs of the community and educate those outside of Wimberley about the community's needs. That desire transferred in to the interactions they had with sources, as well as the time they dedicated to listening to those sources.

Sean for example spent time talking to many business owners in downtown Wimberley to get background information, before even pulling out a voice recorder. He wanted to make sure the person was willing to discuss things, and did not want to force them speak on the record unless they were comfortable.

The last thing mentioned in the role of responsible media is that media continues to identify gaps in assistance and any missteps in disaster response. Toward the end of the six-month period, a number of articles begin to report on response failures and ethical breaches to the Wimberley flooding, but rather stories focused on the slowness of insurance and government financial assistance. Both Gary and Sean wrote a number of articles about local politics that relate to the long-term challenges of Wimberley. News stories about the water rights issue that dominated local news coverage before the flood

began to resurface in November as well. These revelations are consistent with studies that have shown a return to normal news coverage in six months to a year after the natural disaster occurs.

Civic Duty of Journalists

While none of the journalists specifically used the words civic duty to describe what they were doing, they understood a duty to both a democratic conversation around the disaster, as well as one that provided context. Journalists discussed conversations with readers in person and online, as well as the obligation they felt to listen to how the community was dealing with the disaster. Several mentioned how a process of active listening informed what stories they decided to write, or what sources they decided to focus on. This approach is in line with the public relations and strategic communication concept of the ethics of care (Coombs & Holladay, 2007). In the news industry, the goal is to sell papers, but also serve the public's need for accurate information and each journalist interviewed discussed a degree of tension between writing stories that would be read and stories that would also serve the public good. In public relations the goal is to bring certain voices into public discourse.

Journalists consider the practice of ethical journalism to be a civic duty, which is in line with the concept of the facilitative role of journalism (Christians et al, 2009). Journalists work to define their work separate from the practices of public relations practitioners, however the fields differ only slightly. For example, the education of journalists and public relations practitioners vary only slightly. Journalists have often taken on additional jobs in strategic communication and public relations to make a living

wage (Yang et al. 2015). Journalists often engage in political and civic activities, or even perform educational or spokesperson behaviors (Limor & Himelboim, 2006).

In the case of this study, a journalist involved in civic engagement sees his or her duties inline with journalistic roles and the ethical standards established by journalistic organizations. Some local journalists remain involved in civic organizations or efforts outside of their work lives. The civic duty of a local journalist is to report on information of consequence, and therefore the civic duty of a local journalist is to report on local information of consequence to that local community. This mission becomes more defined when journalists produce stories and content, which emphasize specific narratives, particularly those of recovery and rebuilding. While reporting on stories, journalists also interact with local citizens and hear from those citizens the expectations they have from local news media. Similar to interactions on social media, citizens discussed their concerns about the news that would be created from interviews and stories overtime. Journalists explained how they used these concerns as motivators to pursue one narrative or another, and contribute to a particular news narrative. While this process may be subconscious, traces of this process surfaced in the news stories were produced by local journalists.

Obligations and expectations resulted in an emphasis on recovery in news stories. This recovery narrative became dominant and then dissipated as more time passed between the disaster and present. As recovery replaced destruction in the community the local news coverage began to focus on a more normative journalistic role, while reifying the recovery narrative as part of the disaster story. This understanding of a civic duty to

report and invest in that recovery narrative was present in all the interviews, although the tension between these two assumed responsibilities was also present.

Narratives provide a rallying point, and although each journalist adopts his or her own narrative when covering a natural disaster, the audience used those to create an over-arching narrative of the disaster. While none of the local residents I spoke with recognized one over-arching narrative, many expressed approval of stories with narratives of recovery and resilience. For example, many residents praised stories that supported the "Wimberley Strong" motto that was adopted in July. This motto was printed on banners that were displayed at many of the local downtown businesses, and shirts that were for sale in many of the small local shops downtown as well. The goal of "Wimberley Strong" is for people to not forget what happened, but rather remember things that can help them to do better when they face future adverse circumstances.

Other local residents said they considered the work of journalists who did not have local context to be unhelpful.

Characteristics in Practice

The very practice of local journalism is tailored to a local audience. Local disaster journalism involves the news value of impact and proximity (Gans, 2004). Therefore, journalism concerns the local, and challenges what is of local concern. This has been discussed at length throughout the last few chapters, but one thing that needs to be reiterated is the mindfulness of the journalists. All the journalists expressed concern that their reporting practices be helpful to the people of Wimberley rather than harmful and that they were able to focus on positive stories when possible. The *San Antonio Express News* reporters all wrote stories for the Monday paper with more of a "human interest

angle" and provided a window into the Wimberley community. Local journalists saw their journalistic practice as not just how they wrote stories but how they interacted with sources. Volunteers at the Volunteer Action Center agreed the approach of both local and regional journalists was much more mindful of the community. However, journalists from Dallas and Houston, just a little further away often came to the VAC volunteers with questions they could have found easily on the Internet, and took up the valuable time of citizens. The women at the volunteer action center said they were less willing to speak to non-local journalists after the media hype had died down.

In the study local journalists came from a variety of places, but all gathered in Wimberley for the same reason and therefore are bonded. What was really interesting was that the journalists often worked like sailors on different ships but in the same sea. They read each other's news stories, but also tried to cover news stories that were different from each other. They each had a desire to create a distinguishable and unique product that looked different from other journalists, but maintained a recovery narrative.

Local journalists resemble characteristics of responsible media, but those characteristics cannot be separated from the narrative focus of their work. The concern local journalists have for the purpose and interpretation of their work, and the process by which they do journalism was consistent with definitions of responsible media (eg. Houston et al, 2009). Journalists actively considered the critiques of community members, and friends as they interviewed, wrote, and developed their stories. They actively checked how they were developing stories, and thought about the reactions to those stories. They also considered how they would have felt had they lost a home or family member in the flooding and attempted to put themselves in the shoes of those who

were suffering. This active transfer of their personal relationship to the natural disaster

and the community's experiences fits the argument that journalists are not just reporting,

but also creating narratives that could possibly be more helpful to the community's

process of recovery.

This chapter examined how local journalism practices aligned with the definitions

of responsible media expressed in disaster communication research. The following

chapter will revisit and summarize the findings in relationship to the literature from

journalism, strategic communication, and disaster communication.

Chapter 12: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand how local journalists practiced journalism in ways that emphasized strategic communication practices in the six months following the Wimberley Flooding. Previous research on journalism in disaster and post-disaster contexts has primarily focused on national-level news coverage and the strategic responses of local stakeholders. Accordingly, five research questions were posed:

RQ1: How do local journalists describe the relationship between their professional roles and personal coping strategies after a natural disaster?

RQ2: How do local journalists explain stakeholder roles, and the goals for their communities after a natural disaster?

RQ3: How do local journalists practice professionalism and how does this influence their role in the community after a natural disaster?

RQ4: How do the narratives local journalists focus on after a natural disaster change during the recovery period?

RQ5: How do local journalists' goals resemble characteristics of responsible media in community resilience?

Using case study methods and narrative theory this study combined an examination of local news stories, interviews, and observations of local journalists, as well as conversations with community members to evaluate the role of local journalists in processes of community recovery and resilience following a natural disaster. The study evaluated the professional practices, coping, and goals of local journalists after a natural disaster.

Summary of Major Findings

Local journalists spoke candidly about their impressions and the challenges they faced balancing professionalism and personal experiences of the natural disaster. The first research question asked *how do local journalists describe the relationship between their professional roles and personal coping strategies after a natural disaster?* Local journalists practice journalism and strategic communication by integrating their understanding of journalistic roles and ideas about goal setting from strategic communication. They shared their personal impressions, as well as how they practiced journalistic professionalism. Some local journalists were closer to the community than others, but all worked to practice empathy as well as professionalism. They acknowledged a process of coping and reflection, although many of them did not have a time to discuss that process until they were interviewed for this study. Connections made with residents before the disaster are not disclosed in the news stories, but those connections gave local journalists access to information and context that national-level journalists did not have.

The second question involved understanding how journalists understand stakeholder roles. The question asked *how do local journalists explain stakeholder roles, and the goals for their communities after a natural disaster?* The understanding of the stakeholder was something the study participants gleaned from their own stories. Many of them saw the work they were doing as integral to how Wimberley was assisted after the disaster. Journalists spoke of their efforts to interact with residents and bring to light specific challenges the community faced. They emphasized a particular focus on

narratives that would empower residents, but at the same time illuminate the needs of the community to outside readers.

Third, the study sought to understand how the interaction of professional standards and stakeholder practices influenced how journalists practiced their work, and thought about their interactions with the community. The question asked *how do local journalists practice professionalism and how does this influence their role in the community after a natural disaster?* Journalists did not consider their work to be inconsistent with the normative roles of journalism, specifically the collaborative and facilitative roles (Christians et al., 2009). The local journalists in this study identified that there were challenges to these roles when you knew the people who were affected by the disaster, and in fact they actively sought to practice professionalism as a process of coping with their personal connections to the disaster. Also many of them discussed a desire and commitment to clarity of information in their stories, as well as their personal interactions with community members. Their role in the community is no longer limited by the capacities and boundaries are journalistic professionalism. They are practicing a role that concerns prioritizing certain narratives and caring for their community. They process of professionalism provided a platform for journalists to discuss personal concerns for Wimberley and its residents, and also allowed them to process the challenge through the familiarity of journalistic training and expertise.

The fourth part of the study focused on the narratives journalists used in their reporting, and if certain narratives were favored by journalists and the local community. The question asked *how do the narratives local journalists focus on after a natural disaster change during the recovery period?* Local journalists reporting on local

communities in the recovery phase of a natural disaster are uniquely poised to contribute to the narratives that form the way that community thinks about the disaster. Local journalists, specifically those who work in communities that experience natural disasters like Wimberley, must be understood as not just journalists but also as strategic communicators working towards a goal of community disaster recovery. The journalists often chose narratives that expressed a desire for the community to build back after the disaster, and abandoned ones that focused on destruction. The local journalists interviewed for this study consciously practiced their journalistic work within the frame of the ethics of care, reported with an emphasis on more recovery-oriented narratives, and often worked to avoid narratives that might stagnate community recovery. In addition geographic proximity also resulted in different relationships to the crisis. For example journalists who lived closer to the effected area were more likely to choose narratives of recovery as well as personal accounts of the crisis. The further a journalist lived from Wimberley the less likely they were to emphasize individual stories of community recovery.

Considering the circumstances of the disaster of the Wimberley Texas Memorial Day Weekend Flood, this study illustrates that local journalists have a connection to the communities where they work. It also further demonstrates that local journalists are citizens and stakeholders in their communities.

The final portion of the study focused on how journalists' goals align with media practices that are recommended in research on responsible media and its role in community resilience. The fifth research question asked *how do local journalists' goals resemble characteristics of responsible media in community resilience?* This study

showed that local journalists after a natural disaster create narratives similar to those of strategic communicators. Both professions transfer their experiences into a desire to see their communities build back better. This transferring of experiences represent the goals and strategies of local citizens and work to create narratives on behalf of the desires of the local community to recover from the disaster. This study presented the argument that local journalists do choose to report on certain narratives that emphasize rebuilding, recovery, and possibly contribute to resilience overtime. These journalists see these practices as inline with the standards of journalistic professionalism, and their identities as citizens of a local community. They do not see these two identities as ones that compete, but rather as two that compliment each other and help them to provide a more authentic platform for civic discourse about the natural disaster.

Therefore, this study asks scholars and practitioners to think of local journalists reporting after a natural disaster within the context of strategic community stakeholder—a citizen and a journalist, and recognize that those relationships are not exclusive of one another. Thinking of the journalist not just as a professional holding a command post, but a person who is willing to observe and interact with the aftermath of the disaster in order to provide a more comprehensive and just practice of journalism. Local journalists have an obligation to practice responsible journalism that provides context and with a narrative that respects the community's desire for recovery. As journalists incorporate strategic communication elements into their professional reporting practices, they are assisting in narrative formation, as well as coping with the disaster on a personal level. This study confirms the level at which journalists reporting after natural disaster have been evaluated

in previous studies does not entirely match the experiences and practices of local journalists.

Theoretical Implications

This study supports the notion that local journalists function as long-term contributors to local disaster awareness and recovery awareness in the post-disaster context (Houston et al., 2012; Seeger, 2002). It provides insight into how local journalists work, as well as how they think about their work. It also revealed certain narratives that journalists chose to adopt in their coverage, In the case of the Wimberley flood, journalists were more likely to discuss recovery in their news coverage. These stories tend to focus more on a positive outlook after the disaster, and a movement from destruction. Journalists may overlook issues that are negative in favor of recovery narratives, and later have to return to them. This study also found that local journalists were known around the community and therefore their work was more trusted by community members.

Journalistic involvement in the process of recovery supports the notions of journalistic professionalism and engagement as discussed by Gans (2004) and Christians et al. (2009). These direct contacts to readers, and experiences that are similar to readers provide a deeper context and understanding of the event and all it entails (Aldridge, 2007; Singer, 2010). In addition, local journalists have context for natural disasters because of their understandings of the community. Smaller communities like Wimberley may not entirely fit into the idea of command post journalism in that local journalists will not see consulting friends and neighbors as a conflict of interest if those sources are vital to what they are reporting (Sood et al., 1987; Wenger & Quarantelli, 1989). For example, Gary

Zupancic had connections to local sources and an understanding of the local history that was unmatched by any other journalist – which falls in line with what prior literature establishes about the local journalist (e.g., Edy, 1999; Kitch, 2003; Singer, 2010; Zelizer, 1993, 2007). He knew what the community would expect from the local newspaper, and from himself as a local reporter.

Theoretical model. In the collaborative and facilitative role of journalism in a post disaster situation, journalists practice strategic communication. The process of goal-setting and engaging citizens with narrative patterns that emphasize these goals provides a platform for public coping, critique and discourse about the natural disaster. In the process of natural disaster recover local journalists are strategic in that they recognize the community's desire to recover in the best way possible, but also acknowledge the challenges that community will face without a focus on recovery narratives.

Journalist As Citizen (JAC) Model

Figure 1

The *journalist as citizen* (JAC) model provides context for the discussion about local journalists, their roles, personal disaster coping, and journalistic practice. It also demonstrates how local journalists practice empathy and align themselves with goals of the community to build back better. This study clarifies the roles of local journalism in the post-disaster context. The study presents this through the *journalist as citizen* (JAC) model:

The *journalist as citizen* (JAC) model provides a new perspective on local journalist, as journalists who conceptualize their work as something that helps them to cope with the disaster as well as create narratives that help other citizens cope with disaster. Journalists have a desire for the story to benefit the community. They are strategic in their choice of narratives as well as their interactions with sources. They are also careful to identify stories that are being underrepresented in mainstream news coverage of the event.

From journalism and disaster communication literature we see that journalists can change the way that a community forms an understanding of a natural disaster. Local journalists are uniquely poised to provide information to local publics and stakeholders. They are known and trusted because community members recognize their previous history with stories in the community (Carr, 1986; Fisher, 1995; Kitch, 2003). The traits of journalists described in disaster journalism take into account the ways that journalists are familiar with sources and have established relationships with communities both personally and professionally (Quarantelli, 1987). Journalists as citizens understand the needs of their communities, and also can share information that informs the public.

Roles of journalists. The combination of journalism research, disaster journalism studies, and literature concerning the role of journalists as citizens presents an overlap of concepts and ideas that have not been brought together concerning the work of local journalists and the development of local disaster narratives. These three parts: journalism, disaster journalism, and the idea of journalists as citizens are integral to disaster response.

Journalism. The interviews confirm that journalists facilitate coordination and cooperation (Putnam, 1995). The focus on journalism roles, and the fact that roles may change based on geographic and relational closeness has not been investigated in relationship to natural disaster journalists or news coverage. Therefore this part of the model redefines the boundaries of journalism as it has been defined, and acknowledges that local journalists might have a different understanding of what it means to do journalism.

Disaster journalism. The main role defined in relationship to disaster journalism is the collaborative role (Christians et al., 2009). However journalists here discussed how their interactions with people became more collaborative and also discursive as more time passed from the disaster. This points to the fact that journalism functions differently in the time after a disaster than it does at other times. Also the public expects certain things of journalists in post-disaster news coverage it would not expect at other times. Local journalists did not see personal relationships and interactions as a conflict of interest with collaborative disaster reporting practices. Local journalists still work to report accurately and share that information with the public in the best way possible (Himmelstein & Faithorn, 2002). Disaster journalism contains specific narratives, and those narratives are often attached to specific disaster phases *(*Center for Disease Control

and Prevention, 2012). What is interesting in this study is that local journalists feel a tension to abandon certain disaster narratives that are less favorable toward the community.

Journalists as citizens. Journalists are people, and as people they might also be impacted by the natural disaster. It might affect someone whom they know, the town in which they live may have resources strapped as a result of the disaster. They cannot remove themselves from the community in which they live and work. Therefore, conceptualizing journalists as citizens focuses on highly participatory journalism, based on the interactions between journalists and citizens (Gans, 2004). In the case of this study, local journalists are citizens who are engaged in the community. They know what is going on in the community, and know how to get more information on what is going on.

Strategic communication. By adopting "ideas" from strategic communication, this study observed them in practice by local journalists. The second area of the model focuses on ideas from strategic communication.

Citizen stakeholder. As journalism and public relations are increasingly relying on similar patterns of sharing, less differentiation has been made between how professionals in these fields define and practice their work. The main difference lies in the definition of loyalty described by journalists—loyalty to the public, and strategic communicators—loyalty to a client or public (Coombs & Holladay, 2014; Yang et al., 2015). But in this model we understand that journalists consider the local audience to be their client or public and therefore a lot of natural disaster reporting is similar to strategic

communication practice, especially when it considers certain narratives to be preferred by the public over others.

Strategic goals. Journalists are not only workers who are sharing information, and practicing the command post approach to journalism (Sood et al., 1987), but rather seeking out stories that align with the goals of recovery. A command post approach to local journalism neglects the interactions of journalists with citizens. Alternatively, journalists interact with the community as community stakeholders and advocates for the community. This blurring of traditional journalism and advocacy roles has been discussed in relationship to practice of advocacy journalism. But advocacy journalism resembles strategic communication in that it recognizes the promotion of specific facts. Advocacy news organizations seeks to change the way that a certain audience thinks, or reacts to a specific issue. Strategic communication involves communication with certain goals in mind—and in this study the goals of journalists revolve around Wimberley recovering and a movement toward a return to normalcy. Similarly, citizens who experience disaster have a desire for their communities to heal, and recover. They help others access resources, and assist in certain communication practices that emphasize these goals. Local journalists in this study discussed management, local business marketing, and information/social marketing campaigns—which are three of the six commonly defined strategic communication fields (Hallahan, et al. 2007). Strategic communication communicates with purpose and a specific end goal in mind, and these journalists were doing just that.

Disaster response. Literature on disaster response and the role of journalists often describes the role of the journalist as dictated by the challenges of the disaster. Scholars

recognize that the news media will be present and actively engaged when a disaster takes place, but most of the literature discussing this has not included the perspective of local journalists. Rather the literature concerning journalists and disaster response looks as how public information officers can control the media, and contain any problems the media might create for the community (Seeger, 2006). However, best practices must include plans that are based on the relationships between journalists and other public communicators. Therefore in disaster response local media are integral to helping people to safety, distributing information, and verifying facts. The practice of local journalism is valuable in its on right because it provides context for local disasters.

These components come together to create a combination of the two concepts: the roles of journalists and strategic communication ideas.

Journalist as citizen. The journalist as citizen is a journalist who is dedicated to the community recovery, is engaged in their community, and is able to understand the challenges of that community, but also sees value in journalistic professionalism.

Journalism interacts with a number of other communication disciplines, and in reality journalists seek to get information and report on their communities through those interactions. Journalists are working to practice journalism that is professional, considers their personal and community identities, and the ethical frameworks that challenge traditional ideas of journalism and communication practices, but is mindful of community disaster recovery

Professionalism. Professionalism is integral to journalism practice. A local journalist must be professional, and he or she must hold himself or herself to professional standards in order to maintain trust (Seeger, 2006). The desire to clarify and confirm

statements, as well as speak to a number of sources was emphasized throughout the study. However the idea of professionalism differs depending on the audience, and therefore the professional experiences of local journalists are different than national parachute journalists. Journalists also use their professionalism as a way to ritualistically deal with the tragedy around them, a familiar process that can be applied no matter the story. Accuracy is a key component of journalistic professionalism as is verification, and these appear to be important on the local level not just for the sake of being professional, but also because the local journalist could remain in the community a long time after the disaster is over. Professionalism here encompassed the ethic of care approach to disaster reporting.

Identity. Journalists have professional and personal identities that are often at odds with each other, but with local journalists covering a natural disaster this is not always the case. Journalists drew from their personal experiences in the process of reporting as well as their understandings of local leaders, residents, and locations around town. While researchers have investigated the role conceptions of journalists, the dynamic identity of local journalists still merits more investigation. Local journalists identities are changing as a result of increased reporting and sourcing through social media practices, as well as the commitment of journalists to be transparent (Deuze, 2005). Journalists are identifying not only with other journalists, but local strategic communicators. The goals of local journalists favor certain narratives in the community discourse.

Ethics. Journalists often understand that professional practices and personal identities challenge each other. Journalists must think about what will be considered good and accurate reporting in good taste and getting people what they need to manage the

aftermath of the disaster (Scanlon, 2006; Wilkins, 2010). As more time passes, some narratives provide more of an ethical standing than others. Since the fields of strategic communication and journalism overlap concerning literature on ethical frameworks (see, e.g., Coombs & Holladay, 2014; Yang et al. 2015), journalists must acknowledge the role ethics can play in newswork. News narratives paint a picture of what is taking place. Therefore, accurate ethical representations can make or break the type of response and the resulting long-term disaster recovery. However, local journalists have more to lose if they compromise ethics to report a certain story or favor a particular narrative, which could be detrimental to a long-term recovery narrative.

This framework presents a landmark takeaway concerning the role of a local journalist as a citizen stakeholder in that there is little research on local journalists, and what research there is has not tapped into journalistic practice and the role conceptions of those journalists. Studies have examined the converging fields of journalism and strategic communication, but primarily through the lens of similar formal standards and codes like the PRSA and SPJ Codes of ethics. This study recognizes the value of personal and professional experiences, and how those might provide a deeper context for this convergence of journalism and strategic communication research and practice.

Local journalists see the disaster as it plays out in the many stages of crisis. They witness preparation, initial onset, and remediation of the crisis. They experience processing and long-term disaster recovery often from the inside. For this reason, local journalists are useful to the field of journalism and disaster communication in their own right. They are strategic in that they seek to create narratives that examine and illustrate the ways in which the community is building back better. They are keenly positioned

geographic orientation, understanding of risk in a particular area, and personal connections allow them to be part of the recovery conversation. Their role in recovery contributes to the community's disaster narrative and therefore to the recovery narrative. What local journalists do is interwoven into the recovery process of local communities because they are local citizens. As professionals and citizens they can share information about the community and allow the community to reflect on its recovery period by reading these narratives.

Local journalists have often conceived their role in the community as one that is attached to the concept of command post journalism, or local journalism that is written from a perspective that does not evaluate stories in depth (Sood et al., 1987; Wenger & Quarantelli, 1989). This research shows that local journalists covering their communities after natural disasters are going beyond the duties described in command post journalism. Local journalists are not just walking police officers as I said before, but are more like detectives. Detectives investigate, report, investigate, report, and eventually present a judgment or testimony in the hearing. Local journalists are stationed in a geographic location, but combine their journalistic duties and their personal attachments to the community as citizens when they are reporting. Their professionalism and coping coexist because they take place in the same time and space.

In addition, ethical considerations and responsible media practices align with each other through the contribution of the *journalist as citizen* (JAC) model of local journalism practice.

This project provides insights into what the practices of responsible local media look like in a community that has experienced a natural disaster. Although fewer and

fewer small communities have a local news organization, the practices of local journalists may not be all that different from other local stakeholders who are communicating online. Public relations and journalism share many common professional ideologies, and therefore it is not surprising that in a society where public relations professionals do not need the media to publish information, these roles might not be so clearly defined as they were in a more traditional media model (Yang et. al, 2015). While journalists have spent decades "moonlighting" in writing and publications careers outside of traditional journalism (eg. Yang et al., 2015), the idea a journalist as a citizen stakeholder is being strategic in the way they do journalism provides additional insight into the convergence of journalism and public relations. Journalists and strategic communication students are often educated in the same departments, and develop their careers alongside each other. In addition, journalists are no longer just writers; they are brand personas developed online (Kim, Baek, & Martin, 2010). Brand personas seek to sell news as a product by marketing the identity of the news organization or the journalists who work for the news organization. Therefore it is evident the blurring of the roles of journalist and strategic communicator is taking place in settings outside of disaster communication as well.

Practical Implications

Journalism and strategic communication educators should discuss the tensions that exist for local journalists covering a natural disaster. In considering the practices of journalists and other public communicators after a natural disaster, training is to emphasize the development of stories with narratives that focus more on local goals. Often local journalists are segmented from other journalists, as they maintain daily interactions with PIOs and other local communicators. From this study it is clear that

local journalists reporting after a natural disaster concern themselves with what it means to be a citizen and resident of the community where they work. Their connections to the community influence their desires for certain outcomes, and change their approaches to sources and the narratives they produce in their reporting.

Moving forward this study provides a deeper understanding of how local journalists report on natural disasters, but also experience and process those disasters. The position of the local journalist is one of a professional communicator with connection to the community. As a result, connections and geographic proximity might influence the ways local journalists view their work in the community.

In the last 100 years an emphasis has been put on clearly defining the differences in the journalism and strategic communication fields in education, though many of the skills journalists use in natural disaster reporting resemble the skills of strategic communicators. Many local journalists work for smaller news organizations and lack the resources to seek personal counseling, or instruction concerning best practices in natural disaster reporting. There are a number of organizations, like Poynter, The Dart Center for Trauma Journalism and Images and Voices of Hope that hold yearly training sessions for journalists who cover crisis and disaster. It would be ideal to begin to connect local journalists to these resources. One observation from the study is that local journalists must cope with the natural disaster not just because of their reporting, but because they are experiencing the aftermath of that disaster along with the community. Therefore, the relationship between journalist, stakeholder, survivor, and facilitator might be forced on many journalists just because of their proximity to the incident.

With these findings in mind local journalists and journalism educators should consider the ways journalists could be considered more strategic, advocacy oriented, and influential. For journalists this means understanding a dispassionate objective approach to local journalism might be unrealistic after a natural disaster. Similarly, when discussing the roles of journalism with journalism and public relations students, instructors should place more emphasis on the process of working in these conditions with an ethic of care approach rather than one of objectivity. The ethic of care has been used to describe strategic communication approaches which emphasize doing what is best for the most people involved, and in the case of disaster reporting this means considering the needs of the community before those of the news organization or a particular news agenda.

Also, increasingly strategic communication and public relations practice puts an emphasis on transparency during a crisis. Journalists would benefit from a more holistic approach to disaster reporting that includes an emphasis on transparency. From this study we know local journalists are strategic in their choice of narratives after a natural disaster might also require more transparency from local journalists about their attachments to and concerns for the local community. Developing training programs where local journalists can understand how to develop narratives that contribute to disaster recovery could help to strengthen disaster recovery in those communities.

Journalism educators should take note of the blending of journalism and strategic communication practice in natural disasters and use this as an opportunity to discuss with students the similarities between the roles of local journalists and other local communicators. These conversations could create a more relational understanding and solidify a more positive understanding of the interactions between these groups in natural

disaster recovery. If journalists understand their work resembles strategic communication strategies after natural disasters, they might be more open to responsible media practices where members of the media share useful information that can be trusted by the community in the process of disaster recovery and resilience (Houston et al., 2015). If pedagogy around this topic is adopted, journalism educators are uniquely positioned to provide guidance to a future generation of local journalists and public relations practitioners.

Limitations

There are limitations this case study. While there are more than 1,000 news stories about Wimberley from local or regional newspapers, this study mainly contained interviews with local print journalists. In addition, there are only eight journalists who were interviewed in this study sample. While the sample is small, it is clear that are not a lot of journalists who live in a region that would be considered local and actually cover this specific area. The population of Wimberley (2,582 in 2013) is not very metropolitan although it is not far from several metropolitan areas. San Marcos and Austin are less than an hour from Wimberley and San Antonio is an hour and a half driving distance. There are a limited number of local news outlets that specifically cover Wimberley. *The Austin American Statesman* includes Hays County and the Upper Blanco Water Conservation as part of its coverage area, however the coverage area for the larger regional papers includes more than 600 square miles. *The Wimberley View* specifically covers the community of Wimberley and its sister publication covers the community of Dripping Springs and is published only once a week. The Texas State University

newspaper also covered the flooding extensively because of San Marcos's proximity to Wimberley, and the number of Wimberley residents who work in San Marcos.

A second limitation is the inability to draw a direct connection to strategic communication practices, in that journalists don't see themselves as strategic communicators. Journalists therefore might have tailored their responses to differ from what they consider to be strategic communication practices. Journalists were never directly asked questions about how their practices resemble strategic communication, for concern that they might have changed their responses. Yet it is impossible to know if questioning these journalists about strategic communication might have revealed this relationship further, or changed how they responded to interview questions. Because of the relationship both historical and professionally between journalism and strategic communication, there is often an emphasis on the difference between the two disciplines rather than on their similarities. Social media has opened the relationships between journalists and sources. The previous boundaries concerning mediated communication are still present but are not the exclusive way that news is distributed and shared. In many ways, journalists do similar things to strategic communicators, and their practices are increasingly similar in the time period after a natural disaster. The fact that the new paradigm of journalistic practice and that of public relations practice often overlap merits attention, as both practices involve tailoring communication for specific audiences at specific times. This is demonstrated in the tension between journalists' ideas about professionalism and their desire to bring recovery narratives to the forefront of their news coverage.

Directions for Future Research

Scholars should continue to examine the roles of local journalists in post-disaster contexts. This study only began to evaluate the ethical challenges that might arise when local journalists begin to favor certain narratives over others, and what that might mean for definitions of ethics previously established by journalism and mass communication scholars. This ought to be the subject of further exploration. Audience perception studies have examined disaster news narratives, but it would be beneficial to address concerns about local news with local audiences.

In addition, this study did not examine the practices of citizens who used social media to behave like journalists. More analysis of the citizen reporting concerning the disaster, for example the postings on recovery on the Blanco River Regional Recovery Team webpage and crowd-sourced news pages like Examiner.com, might provide a deeper understanding into how other groups of stakeholders might practice journalistism or strategic communication. Research should evaluate additional natural disasters and provide in depth case study analysis to reveal how local journalists might differ in their post-disaster reporting practices.

Conclusions

In Wimberley, Texas local journalists practiced strategic communication in the six months following the Memorial Day Weekend Flood, in that journalists had a desire for the community to build back after the disaster. Therefore, the goals of local journalists after a natural disaster might be more like those of strategic communicators than studies have previously noted. Depending on the journalist's geographic closeness to the community, their journalistic work had a direct connection to their understanding of their

role as a citizen. For some journalists that closeness represents an empathetic relationship based on their personal disaster and crisis experiences. For others it involved their closeness based on the natural disaster's proximity to their loved ones' or to their own home.

This case study developed questions from the news stories written by journalists through a lens of journalis, strategic communication, and disaster communication research. By interviewing, observing and evaluating the narratives concerning the news coverage of natural disasters through a combination of journalism and strategic communication theories, the journalist as citizen theoretical framework was developed. By applying literature on disaster communication, journalistic roles, and strategic communication the study concluded that journalists often use certain narratives to work toward a goal of community recovery. This study developed a new understanding of what local journalists do. It began to understand how goal-oriented communication, can change the way journalists understand their profession and the roles as citizens. These findings developed into the journalist as citizen model, which states that the role of the local journalist after a natural disaster could resemble that of a strategic natural disaster communicator. The resemblance between these two fields is rooted in the stories of local journalists, who expressed a desire to help the community recover and to contribute to a narrative that demonstrates recovery within it.

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Appendix A- Interview Protocol

SCRIPTS – ORAL SCRIPT/PROTOCOL for initial email and phone interview

Email script:
Dear [NAME],

My name is Mimi Perreault, and I am a Ph.D. student at the University of Missouri School of Journalism. I am researching the ways that local journalists do their work after a natural disaster, and I would love to get your expertise for this study. I am using Wimberley, Texas and the recent flooding as a case study through which to evaluate the work practices and challenges local journalists face.

If you agreed to share your insights, I would like to interview you for about 30 minutes at your convenience. Your name and the name of the outlets you work for would not be identified anywhere in the research writing unless you are willing to allow me to share that information. Participating in an interview is purely voluntary and confidential.

If possible, I would also like to do a follow-up interview in person. I would like to observe how you do your work in the place where you work. If you agree, I would shadow you to see how you interact with other journalists, sources and people in the Wimberley, Texas community. This shadowing would take place with your permission and at your convenience.

Please let me know if you would be willing to share your expertise in an interview.

Thank you for considering the request.

Best,
Mimi Perreault
Doctoral Candidate
University of Missouri School of Journalism

If they agree to do it, next email:
Dear [NAME],

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate. I look forward to speaking with you.

Do you have availability at [LIST] times? Is there a better time that works for you?

I will be in the Wimberley, Texas area during late July and early August for in person observations and interviews. After our phone conversation we can figure out a time to meet in person.

I am attaching the oral informed consent document for you to review before we speak. You don't have to sign anything; I just want to make sure you have the information ahead of time.

Best,
Mimi Perreault
Doctoral Candidate
University of Missouri School of Journalism

<u>At beginning of initial interview, script:</u>
Hi, [NAME],
Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today. I really appreciate it.

First, I'd like to make sure you received the informed consent information I emailed you. The main points are that your identity will be kept confidential at your discretion—meaning you can retract your name and news organization from this study at any time. This interview is for research purposes, and of course, you don't have to answer any questions that you don't want to. Does that sound acceptable to you?

The goal of this research project is to explore the ways in which local journalists contribute to community recovery after a natural disaster. Your community was chosen as a case study because of the recent flooding that occurred in May. There are a few issues I need to cover, but beyond those I'm hoping we can have a fairly open and wide-ranging conversation. Also, please feel free to interrupt if you need to hang up. Sound OK?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Describe your professional experiences as a journalist.
2. How long have you lived in Wimberley, Texas/ how long have you worked here?
3. Do you follow a personal code of ethics? How does it compare to your organization's code?
4. Does your news organization have a plan for how to deal with natural disasters?
5. Did you feel prepared to deal with the flood? Why/why not?
5. What was your strategy/the strategy of your news organization for covering the floods?
   Probes:
   a. Who was involved in the process of deciding what to cover?
   b. What resources did you use?
   c. How did you find sources?
   d. Were you concerned about how you might be perceived by people you knew in the community?
   e. Do you feel like your job was clearly defined when the disaster happened?
   f. Did you feel pressured to pursue particular stories and sway away from others?
6. Describe how you felt you when reporting/covering this natural disaster.
   Probes:
   a. Describe the emotions you experienced.
   b. What actions did you take?
   c. What ethics frameworks guided your actions?
   d. What were your thoughts during this experience?
   e. How did other news people and citizens respond to this challenge emotionally?
   f. What actions did they take?
   g. How did you respond to those actions?
7. Describe your role in the community? Did that role change after the flooding? Is it continuing to change?

8. Would you consider this situation positive or negative? Why?
9. Did you feel pressured to tell certain stories and avoid others? If so by whom?
10. Do you think you should have approached your coverage differently?
      Probe:
      a. What would you have done differently?

Appendix B - Participants

Journalists interviewed and followed who agreed to be quoted by name.

Name	Publication	Residence
1) Gary Zupancic	*Wimberley View*	Wimberley, Texas (20+ years)
2) Houston York	Twitter, *The University Star*	San Marcos, Texas (2 years)
	San Antonio Express News	and Houston, Texas (10 years)
3) Sean Collins Walsh	*Austin American Statesman*	Austin, Texas (1 year)

VITAE

Mildred Frances "Mimi" Wiggins Perreault is a PhD candidate at the University of Missouri School of Journalism with a research appointment as a Research Associate at Appalachian State University in the Research Institute for Environment, Energy and Economics (RIEEE). She holds an M.A. in Communication, Culture and Technology from Georgetown University and a B.A. in Journalism from Baylor University. Her research explores the roles of strategic communicators and journalists in natural disasters and crisis communication. Specifically she has examined the roles of warning messages, and social media in disaster communication, recovery and community resilience. Perreault is married to Dr. Gregory P. Perreault, Assistant Professor of Multimedia Journalism at Appalachian State University, and is the mother of two smart girls, Evangeline (4) and Margery (1).