

Journalism and School Shootings in Finland 2007–2008

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JOURNALISM
AND SCHOOL SHOOTINGS
IN FINLAND 2007–2008

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Foreword

The following report is based on research conducted on school shootings at the University of Tampere Journalism Research and Development Centre in 2008–2009 and the consequent books published in Finnish. The lineup of the research team has varied somewhat over the years: altogether nine researchers and a number of research assistants have taken part in the project. Aside from research reports, the project has resulted in several articles and conference presentations by the team members, both in Finnish and English. The project has been made possible by financial assistance from the Helsingin Sanomat Foundation.

The primary basis for the study was the analysis of media texts and the actions of journalists in connection to two Finnish crisis situations: in November 2007, an 18-year-old male student shot eight people at Jokela High School until finally turning the gun on himself; in September 2008, a 22-year-old male polytechnic student shot ten people and himself in Kauhajoki¹.

1. See reports of the Investigation Commission: Jokela School Shooting on 7 November 2007; Kauhajoki School Shooting on 23 September 2008.

The objective of our analysis was to encourage discussion on the principles of media coverage in the current state of journalism that is marked by, among others, shifting relationships between journalism, sources, and the public, changes in journalistic presentation and work processes, and intensified competition between the media. Because of our objective, we have aimed the resulting studies – including this one – at a broad audience: journalists, scholars, decision-makers and the general public.

The project's starting point in autumn 2007 was the heavy public criticism received by journalists covering the Jokela shooting. Especially the young people and crisis workers who had experienced the shooting and its aftermath first-hand criticized journalists' activities in Jokela. In the following, we present the perspectives of all parties concerned but, above all, we examine the media coverage of school shootings from the perspective of journalistic ideals. Our analysis concentrates on both the journalistic texts published on the shootings, especially the ones that concern the depiction of the shooters and the victims, and journalists' action on the scene. Our entry point to both aspects is based on the study of the journalistic profession and journalistic ethics.

The report begins with a historical overview (Chapter 1) that examines how the development of the journalistic profession has affected journalists' self-reflection and their methods in approaching disaster victims. In Chapter 2, we briefly present the facts concerning the 2007 Jokela and 2008 Kauhajoki school shootings and in Chapter 3, we describe the implementation of our research. The media content concerning the shootings was

analyzed at length in the original Finnish-language reports and Chapter 4 briefly describes some of the key conclusions made in them. Chapters 5 and 6 deal with issues that were considered particularly problematic, e.g. approaching victims, their families, eyewitnesses (Chapter 5), and the portrayal of the shooters in the media (Chapter 6). The concluding chapter (Summary) discusses the future role of journalism in times of crisis.

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1.

Background: Development of journalistic profession and ethics in disaster reporting

The commercial press that developed in 19th century United States has since its inception focused on crime, scandals and disasters. The increase in accident reporting coincides with the period when news preceded political debate as the main content in newspapers (Schudson 1978). Reporting on industry-related explosions and sea and railway accidents was an essential part of newspaper content also in mid-19th century Finland (Salmi 1996; Pietilä 2008).

Disaster and accident reporting in the 19th century had several distinctive features. To begin with, description of the course of events was already typical of the genre. The coverage also included the exploration of possible guilty parties and causes

for accidents. As photography became feasible, the consequences of disasters were captured on film – the images of destruction were thus imprinted in the minds of the readers. In addition, news items were spiced up with eyewitness accounts and survival stories. All in all, accident reporting relied on commercialism: suffering sold newspapers already in the 18th century. The sinking of the Titanic brought on yet another element: seriality. (Salmi 1996, 28–36)

Our own experiences of the media confirm that these elements are also present in 21st century disaster reporting. While an in-depth analysis of the history of disaster reporting supports the everyday observations of the “constancy” of journalism, it also yields evidence to the contrary. Disaster reporting reveals various kinds of changes involving the journalistic profession and its ethics.

Slightly simplified, it can be said that the 20th century was a period that marked the divergence and specialization of journalism from other professions (Keränen 1984). In the latter part of the 20th century, journalism attained a position in western democracies that can already be referred to as *professionalism* (Hallin 1992; Heikkilä 2001; Nerone & Barnhurst 2003; Pietilä 2008, Nygren 2008). However, another shift in the profession’s development occurred before the millennium. Depending on the viewpoint, the process can be either seen as the erosion or the redefinition of the profession. The boundaries between journalism and other media-related work are fading away, and the specialization that once existed in editorial offices has begun to dissolve (Deuze 2007).

The development of ethical principles and self-regulation are an inherent part of the profession's maturation process. Journalistic ethics can on one hand be reduced to a deontological, duty-based "truth before everything" viewpoint and, on the other, to a teleological, consequence-based "the best likely outcome" viewpoint (Merrill 1997, 62–67). In times of crisis, the two positions often clash. Nowadays, Finnish journalists' ethical choices are also affected by a growing sensitivity not to upset audiences, advertisers or sources. According to studies conducted in the 1990s, Finnish and Swedish journalists are constantly walking on a tightrope between the ethical notions of absolute freedom of speech and considering the consequences (Ekström & Nohrstedt 1996; Heinonen 1995).

Development of Finnish journalism from the 1920s to the present

While researching the school shootings in Jokela and Kauhajoki, we have also examined how disaster journalism has changed in the past eight decades (Raittila & Koljonen). Our analysis concentrates on the way journalism deals with disaster victims, among whom we not only include the dead and the injured but also their families, eyewitnesses and those who escaped only narrowly. In all, we have examined eight disasters¹ that

1. The disasters we have analyzed in our study are the sinking of the steamboat Kuru at Lake Näsijärvi, near the city of Tampere in 1929; the explo-

are well-remembered in Finland because of the severity. To understand changes in crisis reporting, it is crucial to look at the general development trends that have taken place in the Finnish media landscape, among journalists and in journalistic ways of representation.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the Finnish news media comprised the mainly politically divided press and the newcomer, radio. There was hardly any competition between different media, and journalists were primarily self-taught “generalists”. The news format was not fully developed, and crisis news reports were long and without byline (cf. Pietilä 2008). By the 1950s and 60s, the crisis news format had become more condensed. In 1957, the gradual professionalization of journalism was concretely expressed by the ratification of the first ethical code for journalists, the “Journalist’s Etiquette”. This can be considered as the first step towards the self-regulation of the profession in Finland.

By the 1970s, Finnish media landscape had already gone through significant changes. Dailies, tabloids and magazines had increased their popularity, and television had become a central player in the field. Dailies were in the process of relinquishing their position as organs of political parties and orientating more towards independent and commercial journalism. The number of pages had increased, the quality and amount of photographs

sion of a storehouse in the city of Helsinki in 1937; the rail accident near the village of Kuurila in 1957; the plane crash near the village of Koivulahti in 1961; the explosion of an ammunition factory in the town of Lapua in 1976; the sinking of the ferry Estonia in the Baltic Sea in 1994; the bus accident outside the village of Konginkangas in 2004; and the school shooting in the town of Kauhajoki in 2009. All in all, over a thousand people died in these disasters.

had gone up, and competition between media had reached a new level. Bylines and distinctive, idiosyncratic voices were becoming commonplace. As a part of the professionalization process, ethical principles had become institutionalized and gained in strength. In 1968, the Guidelines for Journalists were ratified, and the Council for Mass Media (CMM)² was founded to oversee their compliance.

By the time of the sinking of the Estonia in the mid-1990s, competition between different media had increased, and journalism had also matured into a profession. Each media format had its own role to play – real-time communication was represented by radio and television. Journalistic expression was personified ever more clearly: in addition to television, anonymous reporting now became rare also in newspapers, and news stories were increasingly mediated through individual experiences.

In the disasters of the 2000s, the competition between media has become even more intense. The ubiquitous real-time presence of the media, made possible by the internet, has brought a new characteristic into the competition. By the time of the school shootings in Jokela and Kauhajoki (in the autumns of 2007 and 2008 respectively), different media companies' websites were already the most important first-stage means of publishing.

2. The CMM is a self-regulating committee established by publishers and journalists. Its task is to interpret good professional practice and defend the freedom of speech and publication. It does not exercise legal jurisdiction. The CMM is comprised of a chairman and ten members whose term of office is three years. Seven members represent areas of expertise in the field of media, and three represent the public. (for more, see: <http://www.jsn.fi/Content.aspx?d=50>)

Developments in crisis and disaster reporting

Three distinctive periods emerge if we consider the history of disaster reporting and related Finnish professional discourse. 1) From the 1920s to the 1960s, the journalistic profession and its ethics were still in a rather undeveloped stage. 2) From the 1970s to the 1990s, editorial offices were caught in a state of self-reflection and change. 3) Beginning from the 2000s, journalists have had to work in an increasingly commercial and competitive media field, which has forced them to redefine their relationship to professionalism and professional ethics.

The first stage of disaster reporting from the 1920s to the 1960s can be referred to as a period of *direct action*. During this period, the emphasis in journalism was on the duty to gather and publish information without paying much mind to the consequences. Ethical contemplation on the decisions made was rarely found among journalists. The names and pictures of the victims were published as soon as they were available, and newspapers did not have any scruples about speculating on possible victims or giving out detailed identification marks on unidentified corpses. At this stage, neither the victims' nor the bereaved relatives' right to privacy was seen as problematic.

In the era of straightforward disaster reporting, many survivors were interviewed in the newspapers' roundup stories. Apparently, the rationale at the time was simple: the more eyewitness names on the pages, the more objective the account (cf. Tuchman 1972). However, the victims' families were left on the background.

During the second stage of disaster reporting from the 1970s to the end of the millennium, old practices were replaced by new ones and the transitional period was met with conflicting attitudes among journalists. Journalists got closer to disaster victims: individual survival stories became sought-after material and the families of the victims were presented as symbols of unspeakable sorrow. The stories also contained elements from the previous stage; funeral reports and roundups were compiled from eyewitness accounts. After the sinking of the Estonia, the journalistic practice of describing a larger phenomenon through individual accounts was more obvious than ever before.

Journalism in the transitional period of disaster reporting can already be called professional. Practice had evolved from uninvolved reporting and inaccurate name guessing to emotive and dramatic storytelling. The story formats were now more polished, and newspapers also had a greater array of visuals at their disposal than in the previous decades. Professional self-reflection had also matured. On one hand, journalists self-critically contemplated on their role and the commerciality of the press. For the first time professional journals commented on journalism's "indulgence in sorrow". On the other hand, journalists argued for showing grieving families and interviewing shattered survivors by stressing the importance of the collective processing of the impinging sorrow and tragedy.

The latest stage in disaster coverage in the 2000s is characterized by instabilities that demand constant revision of action from journalists. On one hand, journalism has become more restrained: photographs of blanket-covered disaster victims of

the 1900s have now been replaced by symbolic images of death and mourning. In the 2000s, the names and pictures of the dead are published only after a few days delay, if at all. Survivor-witnesses are no longer available for journalists to interview to an extent they were before. On the other hand, journalism has become more intrusive: due to the increased popularity of narrative storytelling, more interviews of survivors, victims' relatives, and eyewitnesses are needed – and at a faster pace than before. Tabloids, in particular, have begun to create personal profiles of the dead that concretize the victim to the readers: “He was very well liked and a good supervisor”. Media companies are forced to compete with various forms of social media if they want to stay afloat, and the struggle for audiences factors in ethical considerations.

As a result of the mediatization of society, journalists and media content have attracted ever more attention and criticism. In crisis situations, this has manifested itself in the authorities' and emergency workers' more forceful protection of disaster victims from the media. Ordinary citizens have also reacted more critically to the motives of the media. When caught up in tragic events, people have tightly held on to their right to privacy (Saari 2005). This public dissatisfaction with the media has resulted in complaints to the CMM, as well as various spontaneous online petitions.

Journalists have vehemently defended their practices and put forward arguments as to why the victims and their families can and must be reported about. Journalists have also criticized the crisis workers and the authorities for hampering their work

and limiting their freedom of speech on the pretext of protecting the victims. But at the same time, the journalistic profession has sought for a way out of the confrontation. This has meant emphasizing the consequentialist notions of ethics in reporting: alongside doing their job as mediators of information, journalists now seriously reflect on their own and their colleagues' actions from the point of view of victims' families and the public. Whereas at the professionalization stage ethical principles and limits were defined within the professional community, now, due to public critique and uncooperative families, journalists must reconsider the situation.

2.

Two school shootings within one year

Gun violence has never been common in Finnish schools, despite the two prolific cases of Jokela and Kauhajoki. Until recent years, the only gun-related school death happened in 1989 in the town of Rauma in western Finland. The perpetrator was a 14-year-old boy who shot two of his fellow classmates.

Then, within one year, the situation changed dramatically. On 7 November 2007, in the township of Jokela in southern Finland, an 18-year-old high school senior entered his school at lunch time and began shooting, killing six fellow students, the school principal and school nurse. The shooter also attempted to set the school on fire but failed. In the end, he turned the gun on himself and died of injuries sustained later that evening.

The police investigations confirmed that the shooter had been planning his deed roughly for a year. He had been bullied at school and suffered from mental health problems. In his political and social views, he was very radical. The shooter had been active on internet sites related to school shootings and was known for his admiration for the Columbine school shooters. He was in a habit of uploading his own texts and videos on YouTube in which he presented his views and, just before the shooting, he updated his site with details of his impending strike.

Another school shooting took place on 23 September 2008 in the city of Kauhajoki, which is located approximately 300 kilometers north of the Finnish capital, Helsinki. A 22-year-old male polytechnic student came to school in the morning and killed nine classmates and the teacher who was supervising an exam. He lit several fires in the school building, shot himself and later died of injuries sustained.

There were many similarities in the modus operandi and the background of these two shooters. The Kauhajoki shooter had also been bullied at school, he had suffered from mental health problems, and he had clearly been planning his strike for a long time. He had also admired the Columbine shooters and, like his predecessor, uploaded shooting-related content on YouTube just before his rampage. He, like the Jokela shooter, carried out the attack with a gun he had lawfully acquired.

There was one big difference between the two events, though: The Jokela shooter managed to surprise the authorities, while the YouTube videos of the Kauhajoki shooter attracted the interest of the authorities before the incident. The police

questioned him in connection to the videos the day before the killings but, finding no sufficient grounds for revoking his gun permit, gave him only a verbal notice.

The Jokela and Kauhajoki school shootings were in many ways exceptional events in Finland but, from the viewpoint of the media, they had much in common with earlier accident and disaster news reporting cases. In terms of journalists' operations, the event presented merely a familiar work assignment in a new form, which was further marked by the change in the overall media landscape, especially concerning the internet and its increased role as a source of information and a publishing platform.

The rapid development of the internet in recent years has only strengthened the tendencies that have already been evident in Finnish disaster journalism: in comparison with the factual journalism of the earlier decades, the volume of accident and disaster reports in the media has increased, and the presentation now accentuates emotions and personal tragedies.

The growth of media awareness and media literacy among the public and, hence, the audiences' readiness to question how the crisis was covered, was also a new factor in the school shooting cases. Alongside the changes in the internet and other media, the atmosphere in Finnish society in relation to media publicity has changed. On one hand people want to keep personal sorrow out of the public eye but, on the other, and in particular among

young people, there exists almost a compulsive willingness to let the media invade their privacy e.g. in reality television programmes. These opposite trends were also present in the coverage of the school killings. Combined with commercial pressures, this has complicated the editorial offices' decision making concerning private and public information.

In Jokela 2007, the majority of journalists approached the survivors and victims' families in a way that was detrimental to their relationship with the locals. As a result, the local youth prepared a petition criticizing the behaviour and practices of journalists covering the case. The petition was handed over to the Finnish Government two weeks after the incident. The petition did not lead to any political measures but received widespread attention. Journalists were forced take up a defensive position with their audiences. In Kauhajoki, the vast majority of journalists had assumed an overly discreet way of reporting and, consequently, there was no public outcry, as had been in Jokela.

3.

Research implementation: interviews and media analysis

Although accidents and crimes have always formed a staple part of reporting in the media, and even if related journalistic ethics have been taught and discussed for decades in Finland, these themes were not considered much by journalism researchers before the sinking of the Estonia in the Baltic Sea in 1994. The disaster that claimed 852 lives was studied collaboratively by Finnish, Swedish and Estonian media researchers. The resulting report criticized the way journalists handled themselves when approaching the survivors and the families of the victims, and the way Finnish journalists put the blame of the disaster on the Estonian crew and – by extension – on the nation of Estonia (Raittila 1996, Raittila 1997).

The actual boom in crisis reporting and disaster journalism research started off a decade after Estonia. The media coverage of the Asian tsunami disaster has been researched thoroughly both in Finland and in international comparative studies.³ A Finnish study showed for the first time the rise of the community-based web services: citizens lost their confidence in official information sources and the mass media during the first days of the disaster and turned to web-based communities for up-to-date information on the disaster (Huhtala & Hakala 2007, 79–83, 144–148).

In the first decade of the new millennium, the treatment of criminal and accident coverage has also gained ground in Finnish media research. At the beginning of the decade, unusual accidents and homicides, such as the 2002 *Myyrmanni* shopping mall bomb explosion in Vantaa (7 deaths) and the 2004 *Konginkangas* bus accident (23 deaths), gave an important impetus for the expansion of the research field. However, the increased mediatization of society and hence the increased need to evaluate journalism as a social actor, can also be seen as contributing factors. Studies have shown e.g. how the presentation of brutal violence in Finnish tabloid journalism had increased from the 1980s to the 2000s although the number of serious offences had remained unchanged (Kivivuori, Kemppe & Smolej 2002, Syrjälä 2007).

3. Out of the 283,000 Asian tsunami victims, 178 were Finns. See national media research e.g. Huhtala, Hakala, Laakso & Falck (2005), Hakala (2006), Huhtala (2006), Huhtala & Hakala (2007). Jääsaari (2005), Kivikuru (2006), Mörä (2005), Rahkonen & Ahva (2005), Rahkonen (2005), Kuusela (2005), Honka-Kukkurainen (2006), von Frenckell (2007); international comparison e.g. Kivikuru & Nord (2009).

Before Jokela, no school shooting-related research had been done in Finland, but the topic has been widely researched, especially in Anglo-American universities. Cases that have given rise to great media attention have also become the focus of attention in research. Among others, such cases include the Columbine High School shooting in 1999 which claimed 15 lives⁴ and the Virginia Tech shooting in 2007, where 33 people lost their lives. The two most devastating school shootings in Europe have taken place in Erfurt, Germany (2006), where 18 people died and in Dunblane, Scotland (1996), where also 18 people died. There are two types of international studies related to school shootings.⁵ On one hand, sociologists and psychologists have tried to find reasons for the incidents and on the other, media researchers have focused on analyzing the event coverage.

Media researchers in the United States have drawn attention to the way school shootings are framed in the news by emphasizing different aspects of the events during different phases of reporting. They have also observed how the shooter or shooters are described in the news. (Chyi & McCombs 2004, Muschert 2009, Consalvo 2003) Studies show that in the late 1990s, the coverage of school shootings became much more widespread, powerful, and emotional (Muschert & Carr 2006, Killingbeck 2001, 198). This resulted in general anxiety among the people; something that did not go unnoticed by politicians who sought

4. The school shooting at Columbine has been an extensively studied event, and *The American Behavioral Scientist* dedicated two large numbers (Vol. 52: Nos. 9 and 10) to synthesize lessons of Columbine ten years after the tragedy.

5. The summary we present here on the international research in this topic is based on a somewhat more extensive summary done in Finnish by Laura Kangasluoma.

to exploit the situation to their advantage (Hancock 2001, 77, Killingbeck 2001, 196–198). The coverage also contributed to the fact that the cases were not dealt as individual human tragedies but, instead, they were increasingly described as problems reflecting broader societal problems (Muschert & Carr 2006, Muschert 2009). At the beginning of the new millennium, this trend declined and the focus was again placed on the community that experienced the shooting (Muschert & Carr 2006).

International research related to school shootings has focused mostly on news products, not so much on their reception or production. Glenn Muschert (2007, 74–75) has suggested that future research should be based on comparative studies between different types of cases in different countries, as well as different time periods and victims' experiences. Studying journalists is also necessary. Ann Jemphrey and Eileen Berrington (2000, 2003) realized this after examining British news media in Dunblane school killings and interviewing journalists on their experiences.

The coverage of Dunblane shooting was unusually sensitive because the case involved many small children in such a small community. Many editors had warned their journalists beforehand against causing more anxiety to the sufferers (Jemphrey and Berrington 2000, 477–478). However, in the competitive media field such warnings may well fall on deaf ears. Journalists arriving at the chaotic scene often experienced pressure from their editors to sensationalize the events further. This led to situations, especially concerning information gathering, in which ethical discretion and tact were forgotten, often at the

expense of those who were most affected by the event. Many journalists recognized the critique from the authorities and the public but often defended their actions by saying that they had to approach the victims' relatives because the authorities did not give any information. (Berrington & Jemphrey 2003, 228–229, 231–238, 242)

Due to technological developments, traditional communication modes in disaster situations are now joined by new ones. According to Douglas Kellner (2007), the texts of citizen journalists and bloggers are now on a level playing field with professional texts. Kellner argues that the new media played an important role in the Virginia Tech case: students used their mobile phones to send out information to editorial offices as the event was still underway, and the shooter sought to maximize his publicity by sending video material and images to journalists. In the Jokela and Kauhajoki shootings, this logic was taken a step further. In both cases, the shooters uploaded their digital material on social media sites for everyone to see before going on a rampage. From these sites the material then circulated in many different ways, creating its own “media disaster” (Sumiala & Tikka 2009).

After the Jokela and Kauhajoki shootings, we examined journalistic contents in the press, on radio and TV, and online. Our research concentrated on both nationwide and regional media. The main focus in both investigations was on the coverage of the event day and the following five days. The media contents were supplemented by interviews with journalists, authorities and media audiences. The purpose of the interviews was to take

notice of the actors' arguments for their decisions in different situations, make them think about their own actions and the actions of others in both shootings, and encourage the interviewees to reflect on the state of Finnish crisis reporting in general. The following table reveals the scope of the research data:

Table 1: Data for media analysis of school shootings

Data type	Jokela shooting 2007	Kauhajoki shooting 2008
Media content		
Newspapers	7	4 (+40)*
Magazines	4	4
National TV	5	4
Radio	–	1
Interviews		
Journalists	45	53
Authorities and crisis workers	15	5
Audiences	28	–

*Four newspapers – Helsingin Sanomat, Ilkka, Iltalehti, and Ilta-Sanomat – were analyzed in more detail. From the remaining 40 newspapers only the following day's front page was analysed.

Both our studies on the Jokela and Kauhajoki shootings examined the performance of journalists in gathering news material and particularly the problems related to dealing with victims, their relatives and eyewitnesses. The media content analysis concentrated on the journalistic content of the event day and the following couple of days. The main focus was on four themes: the role of the internet as a publishing platform in media companies, the portrayal of the shooter, the investigation of the causes on the shootings, and the presentation of sorrow in media.

In this report, we do not repeat everything that was published in the original Finnish-language reports. Instead, we focus on a brief media content analysis (Chapter 4), and in addition to it, we introduce two specific issues that gave rise to criticism after the shootings: the encounters between journalists and witnesses (Chapter 5) and the portrayal of the shooters (Chapter 6).

4.

Features of coverage in Jokela and Kauhajoki

The exceptional nature of the Jokela and Kauhajoki school shootings was reflected in the reporting – although in different ways in both cases. Jokela was special due to its historical nature: the shooting was the first of its kind in the world in which the shooter used internet discussion groups and chat rooms to express his thoughts and deeds. In addition, the Finnish media field was at a crossroads at the time. Previously, the internet had been considered as little more than a different platform for stories already published elsewhere, but by the end of 2007, the competition for news on the internet had already increased to a point where the big media houses were just waiting for a major news event to put their online desks to a stern test. Jokela just

happened to be that major event. The event date and location were also favourable to the media: the shooting occurred on a Wednesday morning when editorial offices usually have a lot of manpower, and the township of Jokela is only a half an hour's drive from the capital Helsinki where most of the large media houses are situated.

Jokela characterized by who was fastest in the web

Considering the above, it is not a surprise that the role of the internet was emphasized in the Jokela case. The change from the “old” mode of operation was drastic: one editor referred to it by saying that with Jokela, the Finnish media finally “*switched from deadline to online [reporting]*”. On the day of the shooting, all major media houses systematically published their news first online, including information about the shooter, the number of victims, and eyewitness interviews.

However, the competition for speedy delivery caused many problems in editorial offices (see also Juntunen 2009). Firstly, the information had to be verified as the situation was still in progress. The need for information was high everywhere, especially when all kinds of rumours about the event were circulating on internet forums. The situation at the scene was chaotic for a long time; the police, in particular, were slow and cautious in their announcements. Caught in a competitive situation, the

media opted for eyewitness information that journalists were acquiring from a limited area near the school where relatives, journalists, and witnesses were all gathered. Secondly, editorial offices followed unusually closely what their rivals were doing and updated their websites immediately as they became aware of new information received by others. This resulted in the uniformity of contents. The interviewees and perspectives were the same, almost word for word. The general reporting policy was also that eyewitnesses remained anonymous while the situation was still unclear. This was to protect the parents waiting for their children at the school. However, the strategy was not entirely successful: one father appeared in a few interviews and was later informed of his son's death.

Deviation from the policy was most apparent in the reporting of fatalities; the numbers varied a lot depending on the media. Many media houses chose to wait for the official number. This was partly because some of the high figures acquired informally from the authorities were simply not believed.

The identities of the victims were handled carefully. Although the police did not publish a name list, the identities were discovered by the media quite quickly. The names of the five deceased minors were not published in any media; their treatment was limited to tabloids' anonymous background stories which concerned the hobbies of the victims in question, etc. All dead adult victims were mentioned by first name, but only the school principal was covered in more detail, with her family's permission. The media had trouble especially when it came to publishing the shooter's name and reacting to the

material he had uploaded to the internet – online forums had already referred to this information less than an hour after the shooting had started (see Chapter 6).

Scarce materials for dramatic journalism in Kauhajoki

Although many journalists view the Kauhajoki school shooting more or less a copy of Jokela, the coverage differed from the outset radically from Jokela's media spectacle. In Kauhajoki, timely press briefings by the authorities clarified the situation, and the uncertainty of the events that was experienced in Jokela did not recur. But, at the same time, it made journalists' job more difficult. It was problematic to obtain any first-hand information on the shooting after the authorities had isolated the area and escorted witnesses out of the media's reach. Breaking one's own story thus became very challenging for journalists. There was no footage available on the rescue operation, and so TV stations resorted at times to the year-old footage from Jokela for illustrative purposes.

The initial coverage in Kauhajoki was distant and "authority-oriented". The restrained, and even impersonal, reporting was also partly due to the media's carefulness. Students' perspectives were published only on tabloid websites, and even there it was stressed that the initiative and the information had come from the students themselves. Thus it was made clear the paper

had not done anything that could have jeopardized the safety of those inside the school as the situation was still unfolding. A year earlier in Jokela, journalists had been criticized for having placed students at risk inside the school by calling and sending them text messages while the shooter's status had been unknown.

After the basic facts about the event became clearer, the coverage strategy differed from that of Jokela. This was largely because now the internet's status as a serious news medium had already been established. This time information related to the shooting was not automatically published first online but, rather, each media format had its own solutions. In the evening of the event, the biggest newspaper in Finland, *Helsingin Sanomat*, continued on the path it had chosen in Jokela: web publication first, without sparing material for the print version. Tabloids, on the contrary, published stories about the people and their sorrow on the pages of the print version and used the website only for references and wire stories on these themes. As a subscription newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat* experienced less commercial pressure to spare material for the next day's print version than the tabloids selling only single copies.

A year earlier, the Jokela case had brought both sorrow and shock to the fore, but in the case of Kauhajoki, the media highlighted public discussion. The criticism received in Jokela – as well as the fact that hardly any eyewitnesses came forward in the days after the event – certainly must have affected the reserved reporting style and the small number of sorrow-related stories. Two school shootings in less than a year forced journalists to ask the experts and politicians whether there was something

wrong in the country's social structures. The fact that the shooter had been questioned by the police on his firearms permit just before the incident was apt to shift the focus of coverage on firearms legislation and criticism of police performance. The special role of television also affected emphases: since neither dramatic footage from the scene nor eyewitness interviews were available, drama was produced by chiding politicians in live TV broadcasts.

In comparison with Jokela, the speed of the media coverage in Kauhajoki, along with the rapid public reflection on the causes of the shooting, is worth noting too. One particular TV channel had an expert already in the studio before the police press conference on the events had begun, and other channels quickly followed suit. Unlike in Jokela, the result was that after the event day there remained hardly any new thematic openings for the media.

The newspaper coverage marked a clear distinction between two castes: Only the big media houses had the resources to put aside material about the shooter and the people involved for the next day's issue. Others had to settle for a repetition of the event day, often garnished with some emotion. Sorrow was the most recurrent reported emotion, and tabloids' descriptions of it were the most dramatic. But if compared with Jokela, these reports were quite distant and cautious, both in text and images.

5.

The problem of approaching victims

After the Jokela school shooting, the media was put on the dock. The focus of criticism was not so much concentrated on the published stories but the practices of journalists and their encounters with the local youth. Both sides felt that the relationship had gradually worsened, and the locals openly expressed their hatred of the media. This was most poignantly manifested in a petition by Jokela youth, in which they criticized journalists' ways of approaching victims. The petition received wide and favourable publicity.⁶

6. As a protest against media, the petition of the Jokela youth was something quite unparalleled in Finland. However, confrontations between journalists and victims are commonplace in crisis situations. For example, in the aftermath of Columbine (USA) and Port Arthur (Australia), many of the surviving victims were disappointed with the media's performance (McLellan 1999, Scanlon 2006, Simpson & Coté 2006, Englund 2008).

Young people experienced the media as a pack of wolves that they were unable to escape. There was a multitude of journalists and cameras in such a small area that young people felt ordinary requests for interviews and news shots distressing. In this chaotic situation, young people and victims' relatives did not always realize they were talking to journalists. Confused and in a state of shock, they did not always remember who they had talked to and what they had said; they were simply asked questions to which they were unprepared to respond.

In their critique, the young people and on-the-scene crisis workers brought up e.g. the following problems:

- Student survivors were practically dragged by their sleeves and demanded interviews despite repeated refusals. Journalists' actions were regarded as repetitive, intrusive and oppressive.
- Interviews were used to extract details of victims and the shooter, and then used as material in creating tragic fates for audiences to consume. Young people were particularly offended by the fact that their words had been altered in the editing stage.
- People were filmed or photographed against their wishes and pictures were published despite refusals. Young people lighting candles in memory of the dead were disturbed by intrusive cameramen. Young people and victims' relatives felt they were not given a chance to grieve in peace.
- Journalists armed with flowers visited victims' homes in the hope of interviews. Victims' families were harassed with text messages and phone calls on the day of the shooting and several days thereafter.

- At the time when the shooter was possibly still alive, journalists called the school and sent text messages to pupils hiding inside, thus creating potentially dangerous situations.
- Journalists did not always clearly identify themselves and used informal discussions with survivors and relatives in their stories.

Most of the journalists interviewed after Jokela recognized the problems expressed in the petition in their colleagues' actions. However, they did not see any problem with their own action; rather, they wanted more concrete evidence of alleged abuses. For example, when it came to requesting interviews or taking photographs in public places, journalists regarded the criticism as unfounded and as an attempt to restrict normal journalistic practice. Journalists felt they were forced to seek information from the families because the authorities were not divulging anything.

The situation in Jokela was chaotic in every sense. Constructing a clear picture from eyewitness information was extremely difficult, and there was no authority that could have communicated what had actually happened. In addition to the silence of the authorities, communications problems between on-the-scene journalists and news desks complicated journalists' task further. The journalists doing fieldwork seldom received instructions from their bosses as to how to go about their business, nor were they kept posted on what the editorial offices had already discovered. Initially, however, communication was perhaps even too enthusiastic, to the degree that journalists

spent all their time on the phone. After the shooter's online materials were discovered by editorial offices, many journalists on site were left to their own devices and, consequently, they were much less aware of the overall situation than their colleagues in the office.

Similar event, different approach

Many editorial offices sent the same journalists they had used in Jokela to cover the Kauhajoki shooting; so at least the journalists were aware of the previous criticism and accusations. Some feared that their profession would again be pinned as a scapegoat. Regardless of what journalists thought about the Jokela criticism, it had been taken to heart.

Figure 2.1. Basic information about the Jokela and Kauhajoki shootings

	Jokela shooting 2007	Kauhajoki shooting 2008
Time and place	7 November 2007, 11:40 am. A municipality in southern Finland (c. 8,000 inhabitants). Half an hour's drive from Helsinki.	23 September 2008, 10:40 am. Town in South Ostrobothnia (c. 14,000 inhabitants). Two to four hours from Helsinki.
Situation at the scene	Confusion, chaos.	Everything is already in "order" as the main group of journalists arrives. The police have cordoned off the school area, action footage is impossible.
Shooter	Local high school senior. Family of the shooter is part of the Jokela community.	Polytechnic student, not local. Family of the shooter not from Kauhajoki.
Eye-witnesses and others involved	Escaped students mostly under-aged and within the reach of journalists.	Escaped students mainly adults and out of reach of the media.
Bereaved, families	Everybody from the same small municipality; many parents waiting for their children at the school with the journalists.	Victims' families not local and difficult to reach.
Authorities' information policy	Authorities' responsibilities in communications not clear. First public police announcement six hours after the shooting (official number of victims released).	Better police communications and announcements. Starting from 1:00 pm police press conference once an hour (number of victims was released at 2:10 pm and condition of the shooter at 3:30 pm).
Atmosphere and reactions	Locals were quickly united by their shared negative experiences of journalists, and this finally culminated in communal hatred of the media.	Experiences from Jokela and the resulting critique had affected everybody, including journalists, authorities, crisis workers, audiences.

There was no chaos in Kauhajoki, as had been the case in Jokela. One reason for this was distance: compared to Jokela, Kauhajoki is situated hundreds of kilometers further off from the capital area where all the big media houses are located. Second, having learnt from Jokela, both journalists and authorities were more prepared to handle a crisis situation. The authorities were on top of the situation before the main journalist group and camera crews arrived at the scene. In addition, journalists travelling to Kauhajoki were thoroughly informed on what to do and how to act in each situation.

Editors stressed the importance of discretion to field reporters practically without exception: Homes of the victims are off-limits. No one under the age of 18 is to be interviewed without permission from the parents. A calling card must be given to the interviewee. People in a state of shock are not to be interviewed. Victims' families arriving at the hospital are not to be interviewed. Photographers and camera crews were warned not to repeat the "Jokela mistake": in respect of the deceased, people lighting candles are to be filmed from a distance, and permission for the publication is asked afterwards. No close contact. Young people can be filmed only in such a manner that they cannot be identified.

But such specific instructions also caused problems for journalists. While the editorial offices stressed caution and discretion in interviewing the involved, they also wanted eyewitness accounts and human interest perspectives. Photographers were given instructions on discretion. The privacy of the pupils and

victims' families were not to be violated; however, editorial offices still wanted action footage and emotional shots.

While many journalists and photographers in Kauhajoki complained about the conflicting expectations, they also highlighted the importance of instructions. In a crisis situation, uniform work instructions facilitate coping with tasks. Also, information flows between editorial offices and journalists out on the field are important. (cf. Simpson & Coté 2006, 87, Englund 2008, 163–166)

From the chaos of Jokela to the clarity of Kauhajoki

Although Finnish journalists had had experiences of a number of cases classified as disasters in the early 2000s, they had precious little experience in covering such massacres as the two school shootings.⁷ This inexperience may have partly contributed to the problems journalists ended up having as they tried to interview the Jokela survivors (cf. McLellan 1999, 66). Many journalists and photographers characterized their attempts at making contact in Jokela as unpleasant. On the other hand, they consciously continued operating, aware that they had a job to do.

According to Englund (2008, 45–50), journalists' role in disaster sites is difficult from the start: They are the only

7. The bomb explosion in a shopping mall in Vantaa in 2002 can be considered as a similar kind of act of violence.

profession that is not on site to rescue victims or even to help conduct rescue operations. But the need for information and competition for news, however, forces them to approach those involved, and this may result in conflicts between rescue workers and journalists (see also Lundälv 1999, 79–86).

After Jokela, journalists adamantly defended their right to approach people in crisis situations and request interviews. Journalists did not accept the locals' arguments that people had been pressured into interviews and that refusals to co-operate had not been respected. Rather, some journalists at the scene admitted that the chaos could not be observed neutrally from a distant position – journalists themselves became emotionally involved, and their first instinct was to communicate informally with the locals.

In the aftermath of the Jokela shooting, both journalists and lay people wondered how to approach interviewees in crisis situations and what can actually be asked.⁸ There was consensus that in crisis situations interviewees must be approached discreetly. However, there were divergent views on the level of empathy suitable for a professional journalist.⁹ Can an interview be considered as therapy? Are journalists expected to offer condolences? Should journalists only ask about the facts, or do

8. In crisis situations, Finnish journalists have followed the common code of ethics (Guidelines for Journalists) and the shared communication guidelines for doctors and journalists. The guidebook by Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma (Brayne 2007) was translated into Finnish after the events in Jokela.

9. According to Englund (2008, 260–264), crisis journalists tread a fine line between the emphatic fellow human being and the good professional. In connection to this, it is possible to distinguish four different professional roles: The Witness, The Weasel, The Hack and The Rescuing Angel.

“how does it feel now” questions possibly capture essential and important aspects of a disaster? The same questions arise in most crises and, therefore, preparation for crisis reporting, for example by reading guides drawn up for that specific purpose (cf. e.g. Lundälv 1999, Simpson & Coté 2006, Brayne 2007), might clarify journalists’ own perceptions of their role.

Interviewing minors arose as a particular problem in connection to the Jokela shooting. Editorial offices were uncertain about suitable practices as to interviewees’ age, and under what conditions the information obtained from interviews of minors can be used. Since the common ethical code, the Guidelines for Journalists, only states that “particular discretion should be used when an issue concerns minors”, editorial offices had to decide themselves who is old enough to be interviewed and who is not. Some drew the line at 18 years, others at 16 or 15. Some did not have any policy on age, or the policy was decided on a case-to-case basis, and then there were those who had to invent a policy while the situation in Jokela was already unfolding. In practice, many journalists approached young people of all ages in Jokela. However, comments from minors were used variedly. Some did not use them at all. Some used them after having received permission from the interviewee’s parents. And some published minors’ comments without any concern for permissions.

These problems did not recur in Kauhajoki, since all the survivors from the school had been taken to a crisis centre and were thus out of the reach of journalists. Also, there was no

need to actually interview minors because the students in the school were mainly adults.

Journalists had thought about the age issue beforehand: when young people were approached, their age was verified and, if needed, permission for interviews was asked from the parents. Journalists explained they had specifically concentrated on identifying their profession and medium to ensure that everyone understood what was going on.¹⁰

Based on their Jokela experiences, journalists were prepared for aggression and hostile comments, but in Kauhajoki they faced people who either calmly or logically discussed the event or firmly but politely refused to comment. There were many refusals from interviews, but the kind of confrontation that took place in Jokela did not arise at any stage. Neither did the authorities and crisis workers see any major problems with journalists' behaviour at the scene. Publishing principles differed too: journalists recounted that after discussions with parents, certain kinds of interviews and pictures that had been published after the Jokela shooting, were not published after Kauhajoki.

10. Interviews of minors and permissions received from parents to interview minors raised a lot of discussion in connection to Finnish school shootings. These discussions overshadowed the questions on how journalists should take into consideration young people's special character as witnesses of traumatic events (cf. Dyregrov 1994, Simpson & Coté 2006).

Interviewing people in a state of shock

Since the sinking of the Estonia, crisis situations have evoked debate on when and how shocked survivors or relatives of the victims can be interviewed. Crisis psychologists point to studies saying that those who have survived a disaster, including their families, must be protected from publicity because the recovery from a near-death experience or the loss of a family member often begins with a state of shock. By protecting a person in shock, psychologists attempt to prevent subsequent psychological problems resulting from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).¹¹

In the psychological after-care for Jokela and Kauhajoki school shooting survivors, it was discovered that journalists' treatment of the situation had caused added anxiety among the relatives of the deceased, and this was slowing down the actual grieving process. According to the studies conducted by National Institute for Health and Welfare, a large portion of the pupils interviewed by journalists in Jokela and Kauhajoki have been diagnosed with an elevated risk of PTSD. The media's actions seemed to worsen particularly the condition of severely mentally traumatized and symptomatic young people. (Suomalainen et al. 2009, 18–19; Haravuori et al. 2009, 19–20)¹²

11. On shock, see Brayne 2007, 3–14; Dyregrov 1994, 90; Englund 2008, 91–108; Saari 2005, 35–73; Raittila 2008, 38–40.

12. Based on a survey study conducted by the National Institute for Health and Welfare, journalists requested interviews equally actively both in Jokela and Kauhajoki, the only difference being that in Jokela the number of those who acceded was three times bigger than in Kauhajoki.

Almost invariably, journalists consider that people in a state of shock should not be interviewed. Deviation from this principle, however, is considered possible in a situation where the need for facts is great and much-needed information is not available from other sources. Identification and definition of “shock” are not simple yes-no questions even to an expert, not to mention a layperson. Most of the journalists stressed their own life experience and knowledge of human behaviour as the basis for assessment. Despite the problems related to identifying a state of shock, journalists have chosen to hold on to the professions’ sole right in assessing the condition of information sources (cf. e.g. Salmela 2008, Jaakkonen 2007). Finnish journalists’ ethical code, the Guidelines for Journalists, explicitly states that decisions related to the contents of the communication “may not, under any circumstances, be surrendered to any party outside the editorial office.”¹³

“Shock” had been discussed so many times in relation to disasters that in Kauhajoki, many journalists already recognized its characteristic signs. It was known that a person in a state of shock can behave in a seemingly calm manner and give rational descriptions of the incident. However, there were still those who mistook shock for hysterical and emotional behaviour. Journalists also knew that obtaining interviews from crisis survivors is usually easier in a state of shock than in the following days. It is particularly this factor that makes the estimation of “shock”

13. The profession’s attempt to guard its independence in crisis situations is in many ways problematic. Smooth interaction with disaster victims requires open co-operation where journalists cede some of their authority to sources (Sykes et al. 2003, Simpson & Coté 2006).

so controversial from the point of view of a journalist. Some journalists agreed with crisis professionals' view, according to which the assessment of shock should not be made based on the victim's behaviour or speech but the nature of the event itself.

The janitor of the school in Kauhajoki, who fled the shooter at the scene and was interviewed by journalists very early on, serves as a concrete example of the difficulty of evaluating whether someone is in shock. The man gave a clear description of the events, but those who used his comments had a contradictory attitude towards the interviews. For one, the janitor's story made sense but, depending on who was asking, his story was always a little different.

The janitor's case was similar to that of the Jokela school teacher who was also interviewed by various media after the shooting: both were adult men working in a school, both faced the shooter and soon after the incident recounted their experiences to various media. The evaluation of the state of shock in both cases was not fully conducted because, due to their age and occupation, the men were automatically considered to be suitable for commenting on the events.

Grieving families given distance

Journalists across the world agree that the most difficult aspect in crisis reporting is the "death knock", i. e. approaching the victims' families (cf. e.g. Castle 1999, Simpson & Coté 2006).

After the Jokela school shooting, there was confusion about Finnish journalists' policy in this matter. Confusion arose because the majority of the media took it as their principle not to approach victims' families. However, in practice, many journalists approached Jokela victims' relatives by different means. Some rang the doorbell, others used the phone. It was thought in many editorial offices that sending a text message would be the least intrusive mode of approach; although dozens of text messages probably constitute intrusion for a person who has just lost a loved one. Most families refused requests for interviews.

Hardly any stories of victims' relatives were published. Some journalists admitted they contacted the Jokela shooter's family but received no reply. Journalists also visited the outside of the shooter's home. The pictures taken there led to two condemnatory decisions in the Finnish Council of Mass Media.

All attempts at contacting the victims' relatives were denounced by the public. Some journalists told they regretted their attempts for interviews, while others defended their actions by referring to the prevailing practices and the fact that nothing particularly unusual was done in Jokela. Although there was no lack of understanding among journalists for the pain and sorrow involved, they rationalized their actions as being part of their job.

Excluding two cases, Finnish journalists did not make contact with victims' families in connection to the Kauhajoki shooting. The most notable exception in "victim coverage" in the domestic media was by the regional newspaper *Ilkka*, which on the following Saturday published an interview of a victim's

parent and fiancé. The story was published with the names of the bereaved and illustrated symbolically.

The Swedish tabloid *Expressen* attracted most attention. In the two days after the incident, a journalist from the newspaper visited six families with his interpreter, offering condolences and requesting interviews. In three cases, the journalist visited the family before the authorities had managed to officially convey the sad news. *Expressen* managed to get one interview with one victim's grandparents with names and pictures. The newspaper, having systematically violated accepted practice in Finnish journalism, received the contempt of Finnish journalists.¹⁴

The police released the names of neither the victims of Jokela nor Kauhajoki, which is why newspapers reported on anonymous dead. Tabloids published several stories about the principal of the Jokela school, the school nurse, a single mother and young athletes. Such stories were few and far between in connection to the Kauhajoki shooting. In addition to the much-loved teacher, a few female students were remembered in a couple of individual articles, all of them without the victims' names and pictures. According to the journalists interviewed, the cautious policy in the construction of victim profiles was a result of the criticism received in Jokela. This policy revision can be considered surprising because in connection to previous disasters, journalists have vigorously stressed how important it is to present the victim's perspective.

14. It has been noted that in many crisis situations local journalists' performance is more discreet when compared to that of the so-called "parachute" journalists who remain on the scene only for a short while (Hadenius & Wennö 1996, Castle 1999, Simpson & Coté 2006, Englund 2008).

Over the top in Jokela, overly cautious in Kauhajoki

In Jokela, the interviews with eyewitnesses were justified by the need to obtain knowledge of the events and explore the causes of the tragedy. Interviews were also needed to make the stories more emotional and intense. In Kauhajoki, the facts related to the shooting became known relatively quickly and reliably. There was a need for eyewitness descriptions because the media did not want to rely entirely on information accessible to everyone. These descriptions were vital since they introduced human perspectives and drama to the news. Furthermore, interviews were important because the media wanted the locals' opinions on police performance – considering that the police had a chance to revoke the shooter's gun permit the day before the shooting but chose not to do so.

As no other eyewitnesses but the janitor could be found in Kauhajoki, the first day of reporting was considered quite unremarkable by many journalists. There was no adequate action footage on the incident, and there were no emotional close-ups of people in the throes of despair because no journalist wanted to go too close to the mourners. The working methods of Finnish journalists did not generate any criticism among the public and the parties involved. Journalists, and especially photographers, have pondered whether they were too cautious. Many journalists stated that hanging around the crisis scene was frustrating “as you really could not do anything.” On the other hand, some journalists were grateful they were not expected to

act more vigorously, and that the authorities set clear boundaries for their action.¹⁵

In the aftermath of the Jokela shooting, the media were seen to have overstepped the limits of good manners, whereas after Kauhajoki, journalism was thought to have come short in all respects. Such discrepancy indicates the pace of the changes taking place in journalism. While the Jokela shooting was understood as an individual or isolated case, the shooting in Kauhajoki caused journalists to focus more on the social and cultural frames of reference. Whereas in Jokela the victims' families were coaxed into interviews immediately, the families of the victims of the Kauhajoki shooting experienced far less disturbing by Finnish journalists.

15. Although restrictions given by the authorities are usually not well received, they can facilitate journalists' task in certain situations. For example in Dunblane, British journalists were expected to interview the families of the victims. Involuntary journalists deliberately approached the victims' homes in plain sight so that the police noticed them and, consequently, demanded that they leave (Berrington & Jemphrey 2003, 236).

6.

Publicity-seeking shooters burdening the media

The media portrayal of the shooters became an issue in both school shootings. The role of the media – and especially that of the internet – as a mediator of behavioural models was discussed both by scientists and members of the media. Scholars who have studied North American school shootings are talking about *cultural scripts* – i.e. behaviour models that can rise out of violent films, other media products, and earlier school shootings – as one of the key factors in the shootings (Henry 2009, 1260, Newman & Fox 2009, 1294; Larkin 2009, 1312, Kiilakoski, 2009, 41–43)

In addition to the relevance of the internet, another point in the media coverage of the shootings that evoked discussion

was the media portrayal of the shooters. The discussion covered such concrete questions as the extent to which the media should publish the shooters' web material (videos and images, etc.), and what stand to take on the pictures and names of the shooters.

Media fulfilled Jokela shooter's wish for renown

The 18-year-old Jokela shooter was depicted in the media as an intelligent student interested in philosophy and ideologies but, at the same time, as a little quirky and introverted young man. According to the media, the Jokela shooter did not have many friends and was bullied and discriminated against. He was interested in extremist movements and school shootings that had occurred in the United States – these he also researched and discussed on the Internet. In addition, he was interested in the Unabomber¹⁶.

The shooter developed his ideas and their implementation on the Internet by discussing the Columbine events. His online discussions bore clear indications of the glorification of the U.S. school shooters and his own impending death.

16. The "Unabomber" (University and Airline Bomber) is an American academic who engaged in mail bombings: from 1978 to 1995, he sent 16 bombs to targets including universities and airlines, killing three people and injuring 23. He argued that his bombings were extreme but necessary to attract attention to the erosion of human freedom. He was arrested in 1996 and sentenced to life in prison. (For more, see: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unabomber>)

The 1999 Columbine school massacre is considered as a turning point because, as a global media spectacle, it made the “violent hero model” an international phenomenon. The carnage turned into a mediated dramatic event where the media and popular culture created mythical killers out of two teenagers (Frymer 2009). The majority of the more than 20 school shootings worldwide between 1999 and 2007 were either copies of or had some other connection to the Columbine case. Jokela counts as one of these. (Larkin 2009, 1313–1317)

Before the tragic events in Jokela, the shooter pondered in his internet correspondence whether to take the gun to school or to a shopping centre. He figured that a school shooting would receive more publicity. (Kiilakoski 2009, 11–12)

In the evening before the fateful event, the shooter gave a hint of his possible death to his online friend. In the morning before the shooting, he updated several of his online profiles with unambiguous messages in which he, among other things, declared his disappointment with humanity, sent a message to his family and described the ensuing “Jokela High School Massacre”. The shooter’s media package also included images of himself and video clips in which he was shooting an apple. He turned his computer off at 11.28 am, rode his bicycle to school and shot his first victims at 11.42 am. The first online message concerning the shooting appeared on a computer enthusiasts’ online news site 11 minutes later. The shooter killed the last one of his eight victims only four minutes later, at 11.57 am.

The identity of the shooter became quickly known in online communities and soon after that in editorial offices.

Initially, the media considered the publication of the shooter's name very carefully. This was for two reasons: there was still no confirmation whether the shooter and the person on the internet were one and the same and whether the publication of his videos presented legal obstacles or put others in jeopardy. When no such obstacles were found, ethical and moral dilemmas concerning the publication were up for discussion. The internet was also constantly monitored in order to keep up with the rivals.

None of the mainstream media, however, published the shooter's name before the event day evening when the matter was confirmed by the authorities. Even after the confirmation of the identity of the shooter, not all media published the name immediately. For example, the Finnish public service broadcasting company YLE decided not to publish the name because, in their opinion, it did not add value to the news itself.

However, all the media we examined during the day of the shooting used the shooter's own material in their reporting in one way or another. The tabloids took advantage of his videos and texts more extensively than other media. Many of them published the pictures the shooter had uploaded to the web and linked his YouTube videos. While many social media sites removed the shooter's profile, including the videos, the information still remained accessible on the established media websites. Linking and publishing the web material was defended on the grounds that choosing not to publish the shooter's online material would have been tantamount to concealing essential facts related to a criminal offence.

The publication of the shooter's online material was also considered an important factor in the public debate on the causes of the shooting. The event was the first of its kind in Finland, so journalists reasoned that the shooter's texts and videos helped people to understand the backgrounds of the event, his motives and mental state.

Following the Jokela shooting, both the media and experts in different fields raised the question whether media publicity had created a mythical figure out of the shooter – a hero who would now serve as a role model and object of identification for potential future school shooters.

Media made Kauhajoki shooter seem contradictory

The Kauhajoki school shooting was seen as having clear connections to the Jokela case, and thus the role of the media in conveying different role models was stressed even more. The Kauhajoki shooter did not provide any ideological or philosophical justifications for his actions, but the two school shooters were connected by their experiences of having been bullied, and their contacts to the internet's hate communities. Also, both personally uploaded online content anticipating the murders. Immediately after the event, Finnish journalism referred to it as a copy of the Jokela shooting.

The online material uploaded by the Kauhajoki shooter was considerably scarcer than the Jokela shooter's media package. He had four videos on YouTube showing him practicing at a shooting range. The last YouTube video was uploaded to the site five days prior to the shooting. He had several pictures of himself posing with a gun on a popular Finnish social media site called *IRC-galleria* (IRC Gallery). The last updates to the IRC Gallery profile were made in the morning of the shooting at 10.15 am – that is, less than half an hour before the first shots. The file name of this last package was titled “*Kauhajoki Massacre*”, and it included three videos and pictures of the shooter posing with his weapon. One of these videos was particularly threatening. In it, the shooter points his finger at the camera and sends out a warning “*You will die next*”. Then he fires several shots towards the camera on the ground.

Only 40 minutes after the shooting had begun, at 11.24 am, there was already a reference to the shooter's YouTube profile on a Finnish computer enthusiasts' online discussion forum. Although the shooter's profile was removed from YouTube at 12.30 pm, it had already been disseminated on many servers and the material was basically free game for the media.

The Kauhajoki shooter and his online materials were presented more discreetly in the mainstream media than the corresponding material from the Jokela case. The depictions of the shooter varied a lot. In many cases, the shooter's videos were shown with his face blurred unrecognizable. The main regional newspaper *Ilkka* did not publish any of the shooter's pictures, or material from his website, and justified this by stating that “our

job is not to disseminate his misanthropic views and iconize him by publishing his pictures.” On the other hand, Finland’s biggest newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat*, freed up its entire front page – which is normally reserved for advertisements – for news about the shooting and the shooter got his name and face on it, too.

The media made the shooter seem contradictory: On one hand, he was presented as a brutal criminal who carried out a cold-blooded massacre. On the other, he was characterized as a very ordinary young man. When the killer was not demonized in the media but emphasis was placed on his normality, the discussion was steered towards finding societal causes for the act. Thirdly, the shooter was depicted as a victim of bullies, both in school and the army, and this opened the door into the possible causes of the murderous act. This perspective was widely criticized for showing excessive compassion on the shooter.

The fourth role allotted to the shooter was that of a hero. Obviously he was not presented as a positive hero in the media, but heroism can emerge through reader and viewer interpretations. These interpretations relate to the shooter’s own media texts and images of acts of violence, as well as the media’s depiction of them. For one person, a text is merely a piece of neutral news coverage that helps to understand the event but, for another, the ubiquitous flood of text and images may help to create a heroic image of the perpetrator. The repetitive presentation of the shooter and his deeds in the media may have helped to create a heroic image of school shooters in certain admirer groups. In particular, the shooter’s visual online material and

different ways of presenting it could have emphasized his role as a model for individuals in certain audience groups.

In both school shootings, the different depictions served to elevate the shooters in a way in the media: they were not just subjects whose offences were reported to audiences, but through the presentation of their online productions, they became by far the most prolific and frequently cited actors in the coverage of the two events (Hakala 2009, 66–73).

The overemphasis on the shooter's material in the Kauhajoki case was partly due to the fact that action footage from the scene was in very short supply. Police had cut off all access to the school, crisis workers had secured the survivors and victims' relatives, and only one eyewitness was available for interview. The shooter's online material was just about the only powerful visual material with which to illustrate the horrific event.

The absence of fresh visual footage could also be a reason why television news repeatedly replayed Jokela imagery in their reports on the Kauhajoki shooting, including pictures of students fleeing from the Jokela school and the shooter's own, uploaded content. For example, Finland's public service broadcaster YLE was very careful in showing the Kauhajoki shooter's videos, while at the same time it enlivened news broadcasts with dramatic compilations of the Jokela shooter's videos.

From deontological to teleological emphasis

School shootings have been called the “theatre of terror” – a media spectacle choreographed and directed by the shooter. The shooters’ efforts and successes in the management of the spectacle have increased cumulatively. In 1999, the Columbine school killers had a clear political mission and secured their fame after death by leaving behind recordings in which they justified their act. The police found the tapes but did not release all of them to the public because of the fear they might inspire copy-cats. At Virginia Tech in 2007, the school shooter halted his rampage momentarily to send his material to the NBC. The police were circumvented and the NBC published the tape, which continues to circulate across the internet even today. In Jokela and Kauhajoki, the shooters circumvented both the police and the media in uploading their content to the internet for everyone to see just moments before the shooting. (Altheide 2009, 1354–1355; Henry 2009, 1260–1261; Kellner 2007, Kiilakoski 2009, 25, 48–49; Larkin 2009, 1311–1312).

Journalism could not have prevented the Jokela and Kauhajoki shooters’ access to publicity, but the way journalism presented its case had a huge impact on how well the shooters’ media *strategies* worked. In particular, journalism had the possibility to influence the extent to which the shooters’ visual spectacle dominated media publicity.

The experiences from Jokela had made journalists aware of the problems presented by the publication of the shooter’s material. After the Kauhajoki shooting, self-critical reflection

among journalists increased even further. In a newspaper article, several editors agreed that the coverage of school shootings could provoke new cases.

The interviewed journalists' post-Kauhajoki reflections fall in between two extremes: at one end lies journalism's role as the vanguard of freedom of speech and its duty to mediate and criticize issues regardless of their nature, and at the other end the need to evaluate the consequences of journalism responsibly – particularly the use of the shooter's name and pictures and the potential costs resulting from the publication of his material. From the perspective of journalistic ethics, it was a balancing act between deontological (duty-oriented) and teleological (consequence-oriented) views (Merrill 1997, 62–67).

In our interviews, the journalists justified the publication of the shooter's name and picture with a deontological argument: journalism is compelled to tell the facts, and the seriousness of the crime, in particular, demands a thorough investigation of the background and facts. Practically all interviewees voiced their opinion that a news event this big, with several casualties, cannot be covered without publishing the name of the perpetrator. A further argument for publishing the shooter's name and picture was that his identity was, in any case, easily available for anyone in the internet.

Two questions were emphasized in connection with the publication of the shooter's name and picture: are the name and picture of the shooter correct, and is there any special reason *not* to publish them? Decision on the first issue was facilitated by the fact that the material was readily available on the internet, and the police confirmed the identity of the shooter.

The presentation of the Kauhajoki shooter's online material was also defended by the critical function of journalism: it was important to publish the same videos that had been available to the police officer who had reviewed the shooter's gun permit. Moreover, the publication of the videos was justified by the fact that it would help people to answer the question *why* and to understand the perpetrator and his personality. However, in the research interviews, journalists emphasized the importance of considering which videos to show and how to actually present the shooter in them. In almost all of the published video clips, the shooter's face was blurred in an attempt to render him into a nobody. However, it can be argued that blurring the face may have the exactly opposite effect on some viewers; it may actually further dramatize the news item and elevate the perpetrator's status.

In recent years, school shootings have been carried out mostly by young men. Masculinity is a part of the cultural script of school violence (Henry 2009, 1257–1262, Kiilakoski 2009, 43–47). Both the Jokela and Kauhajoki shooters were creating a masculine image of themselves in preparation for their media spectacles. Both shooters were small in stature, bullied and suffered from psychological problems. In their uploaded content, they made themselves look masculine and strong, and in showing this material to the public, the media – and especially the social media – actually perpetuated the shooters' model of masculinity.¹⁷

17. About masculinity in the news coverage of the Columbine school massacre, see Consalvo 2003.

Journalists' reflections also included the idea that the media could possibly refrain entirely from showing the school shooters' material. The ones who were opposed to the publication of the shooters' names and pictures reflected on the wider consequences of journalism. Arguments on the consequences were divided on several levels. The most common justification for *not* publishing the name and picture of the shooter was that by publishing the media personified the perpetrator and thus perpetuated the hero image and helped to develop role models.

The following four perspectives explain journalists' different views on the possibility of a role model formation:

1. Journalism has no effect on people who plan such things. Young people planning to commit mass murders do not receive their cue from the mainstream media but from online communities. According to some journalists, concealing the shooter's identity might actually do more harm in terms of possible copy-cats, the reason being that the media did not aggrandize the shooter's ideology or heroism but did quite the opposite. In this logic, online communities highlighted the "heroism" of the act, while journalism critically considered the shooter and his acts by stressing the evilness, sorrow and the victims' perspective.
2. Journalists' role as critical mediators of information must be unquestionable. It is not the journalist's job to consider people's motives in seeking publicity; rather, the job is simply to tell the relevant facts regarding an event so that the audiences can understand it and consider it critically.

3. It is possible that media publicity helps to create heroic images in the minds of some and generate a behavioural pattern for similar violence (e.g. in Finland there were hundreds of school shooting threats made after Jokela and Kauhajoki), but the case was simply too big to be ignored. The shooter received the publicity he wanted, but it was not given in a positive light. However, as it is possible that publicity may generate heroic images, and thus a role model, it is necessary to consider carefully *what* and *how* is published and how long the shooter's name and online content are sustained in public.
4. The formation of a role model is so obvious that the media should refrain from disclosing the shooter's identity in the future. Arguments in favour of not publishing highlighted e.g. the fact how suicides are usually not reported in the news, particularly those that might give rise to a behavioural pattern.¹⁸

The publication of images and videos was also discussed from the point of view of victims' families and the relatives of the shooter. The consequentialist view stressed the recognition of these feelings, which in turn influenced the consideration of what material was used or left unpublished. To avoid intrusion, journalists should avoid publishing gratuitous violence and gory details. In general, drawing on the people's "lowest instincts" was

18. Another example of deliberate self-censorship was the decision of the Irish public service broadcaster RTE to ban the members of the IRA and its sister organizations from broadcasting directly in 1971, a policy which was also adopted in a slightly more lenient form by the BBC in the United Kingdom in 1988 and which lasted until 1994 in both countries. (Horgan 2002)

to be avoided. This consideration included questions regarding the size and position of the shooter's picture.

Refraining from shooter emphasis taken as a sign of quality journalism?

Based on journalists' reflections, refraining from publishing the killer's name and picture would require a set of common rules. While rules were considered as a good idea, their implementation was seen as almost impossible because the news is, after all, business on a global scale. The Jokela and Kauhajoki school shootings were global news, and even if the Finnish media had not published the shooter's name and picture, the international media would have – and did.

But are the national media always forced to adapt to international rules? An interesting example is our neighbour, Sweden, where the journalistic ethical standards related to privacy are more stringent than in Finland. For example in 1986, during the murder trial of the Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme, Swedish newspapers and television did not publish the name or the picture of the person who was charged with the murder and subsequently acquitted (Hallin & Mancini 2004, 173). Concurrently, Finnish newspapers were publishing pictures of the person in question. An even more recent example is the decision of many a western media to refrain from publishing the Muhammad caricatures, although the pictures were readily

available on the internet for those who were interested (Eide et al. 2008).

Many of our interviewees thought that the publication of the shooter's name and material could have been done differently from what was seen in Jokela and Kauhajoki. Some journalists, well-seasoned in crises, said they had a completely new take on the issue: shooting-related pictures and videos should not be published in the journalistic media, even if they were available elsewhere online. Journalism's task as a mediator of information was still the main concern; however, the repeated presentation of the shooter was now reflected on from a new, consequentialist perspective.

Journalists' reflections compel one to consider the possibility that deontological and teleological ethics are possibly converging into a hybrid practice under which the data are collected as before, but what is published will be decided on a case-by-case basis and the style chosen is then explained to readers and viewers.

The news media are paying ever more attention in their routines to the wishes and presumed expectations of their audiences. There was little room for traditional scoops in Jokela and Kauhajoki; rather, every media told their audience practically the same things. In this type of a situation, it would be in the interest of an individual media to stand out from the rest, for example, in the manner school shootings are covered and how openly the operational and ethical choices are related to the audiences. One may consider this as outlandish journalistic self-censorship; another may understand it as a part of journalism's struggle to retain its special position in the age of the internet.

7.

Conclusion

For a little less than three years our research team has analyzed the media coverage of unspeakable acts of violence. With our study, we have tried to address both the journalists who cover these tragedies and the citizens who read about them. Since our study has a strong normative emphasis, our aim is to prepare both the media and the general public to face the next tragedy better.

Some background information is required to understand the actions of Finnish journalists in these tragic events. Roughly until the turn of the 1980s, Finland was a typical example of a so-called democratic-corporatist media system whose defining characteristics included wide newspaper circulation, regional stratification of newspaper markets, a powerful party press and

state-centred and state-regulated electronic communications. Despite the state regulation and party control, Finnish journalists have successfully protected their independence and developed their trade towards a profession. In the second half of the 20th century, Finnish journalistic professionalism was reflected for example in the high degree of professional organization, increase in education and training, development and maintenance of an ethical self-regulatory system and in the commitment to promote public interest and the achievement of an autonomous status. (Hallin & Mancini 2004, 143–197)

The development of Finnish society has, in the past few decades, caused rifts in the democratic-corporatist system, and journalistic professionalism has changed too. Now there seems to be less room for social responsibility, public interest and public service as media houses streamline their operations, raise profit targets and centralize ownership (Kunelius et al. 2009, 42–43). As a result, there are pressures towards the Anglo-American, liberal media model in which the logic of the profession is replaced by the logic of the market (cf. Hallin & Mancini 2004, Freidson 2001). The so-called *tabloidization* does not concern only the tabloids but also the journalistic field in Finland at large: news is personified, sensationalized and narrativized. Tabloidization directs media attention to celebrity sensationalism, victimizations and threats against the community and rituals and traditions that strengthen it. (Langer 1998, 31; Connell 1998, 12–13)

New communication technologies have also brought new challenges to established practices. On one hand, new technolo-

gies have turned journalism into a more fast-paced “instant gratification business” whose logic is much more compatible with principles of tabloidization than the traditional ideas of public interest or social responsibility. On the other, they have also put journalists to a new position: competition in editorial work is no longer only between journalistic actors as citizens have emerged as content producers in the web. As a result, journalists have to monitor ever more closely audiences’ needs and desires, while at the same time weighing their choices in a wholly different manner than before.

The performance of Finnish journalists in covering the school shootings can also be seen as a test of the current state of both the media and the profession. How purely can Finland’s media system still be considered democratic-corporatist? Does professional logic still guide Finnish journalists, or is it the logic of the market that now drives them forward? Do news criteria emphasize the traditional journalistic values of relevance and factuality or is priority given to features more closely related to tabloidization, such as drama and entertainment?

* * *

In the 2000s, narrative story-telling and a will to offer explanations have become increasingly staple elements of journalism in Finland along with the traditional informative duties. Accounts of individual human fates and different explanations for the underlying reasons in each particular disaster create awareness

among the audiences that simply cannot be provided by journalism that adheres solely to the cold, hard facts.

The media do not interview witnesses and victims solely for informative reasons. There is a great need to mediate their experiences and feelings as well. The manner in which journalists have strived for interviews in the wake of various disasters has attracted strong criticism. Based on our historical analysis, the coverage of victims of crime and disasters has become more restrained while criticism towards journalists has intensified. For example, before, the names and pictures of victims were published as they were available, but during the Finnish school shootings, the victims' and their families' names became public only in exceptional cases.

Although journalism conveys information more sensitively than before, its methods of presentation have become more "intrusive". Only a half a century ago, all the parties involved in accidents and crimes were interviewed but mainly played the role of impersonal information sources for large round-up stories. The "personification" of modern journalism means that the involved parties' stories are conveyed impressively and spiced up with close-up pictures. A statement given by an accident or a crime victim is thus more personal than before.

In the aftermath of the Jokela school shooting, journalists were not so much criticized for their pictures and stories but rather for their methods in acquiring their material. As victims' families had been coaxed into interviews and shocked, under aged high school kids practically dragged into the media spotlight, journalists were considered to have taken advantage of

defenceless people for their own commercial purposes. Negative experiences of the media quickly spread within the small community and finally cumulated into collective outrage.

The coverage of the Kauhajoki shooting differed radically from the Jokela media spectacle: victims' families were not harassed to such an extent as in earlier tragedies, and first-hand information and grieving friends were not chased irrespective of interviewees' condition. In Kauhajoki, reporters and photographers observed the sorrow and shock more from the sidelines. What eventually affected this different outcome was that the authorities had time to isolate the site, to protect the victims, and organize communications prior to the arrival of journalists. The discretion of editorial offices and also of individual journalists resulted in more cautious information gathering – hostile public reactions towards the media had to be avoided even at the expense of informative duties.

This adjustment in journalistic practices from Jokela to Kauhajoki explicitly contradicts the views of the triumph of tabloidization and the erosion of the journalistic profession. The corrective actions that were taken between the two school shootings support an interpretation that the notions of social responsibility and public interest have a surprisingly strong presence even in a commercialized journalistic culture. Another interpretation is that the journalistic profession, after contemplating the pros and cons of its work, has adjusted its self-regulation to fit the audience expectations.

* * *

The news coverage of school shootings can be incorporated into the discourse of terrorism (Altheide 2009), and the media's responsibility in handling the school shooters' messages can be compared to the handling of terrorist propaganda. Besides violence, both school shooters and terrorists aim at getting publicity for their cause. Journalists have defended the publication of the shooters' materials by pointing out the impossibility of not reporting about such heinous acts. Certainly, it was impossible not to publish any of the shooters' materials, but where does the line between necessary information dissemination and the publication of materials that may possibly incite further acts of violence go? After Kauhajoki, at the latest, editorial offices have stopped to think whether the two school shooters received exactly the kind of publicity for their acts as they had wanted.

When the media focus on the shooter as a person, it is not just about how it may affect other potential shooters but also about the overall depiction of the incident the media constructs. Whose perspective is more pronounced, the victims' or the shooter's? In the short term, the media have little influence on the next potential school shooter's plans. In the long term, however, the media has a role in shaping the social climate: by not putting so much emphasis on the shooter, the media can diminish the "heroism" factor inherent to school shootings.

Although the coverage on the shooter was less pronounced in Kauhajoki than in Jokela, the biggest change had taken place in the minds of the journalists themselves. In the aftermath of Jokela, many reporters and photographers hid behind their roles as impartial observers and defenders of freedom of speech.

However, after Kauhajoki, there existed a consensus among the profession that these publicity-seeking killers had taken advantage of the media to promote their deeds. Journalists were now willing to limit their own freedom of expression and compromise their role as truth-sayers in the hope that it would reduce the possibility of copy-cat cases.

Such journalistic self-criticism is to some extent contradictory to the current trends of development in the media. Pro-regulatory attitude, acceptance of social responsibility, and commitment to the common good are features that are not very compatible with the liberal media model as presented by Hallin and Mancini, or a profession that follows the logic of the market.

* * *

Journalism is at a crossroads in relation to other material published in the internet. Some see that the competition between web community contents and journalistic media content blurs the line between journalism and other media – Finnish journalists have assessed that this may result in the gradual breakdown of journalistic ethics (Jyrkiäinen 2008, 50–52). The fear is that the speed and ethical disregard of non-journalistic web content will lead, among other things, to the deterioration of victims' right to privacy. Internet communities and discussion forums publish quickly and efficiently all the information they receive without any regard to journalistic principles that have taken decades to form.

Journalism has to balance whether to publish information from a wide variety of different sources: will it end up using the most shocking material available or will it remain accessible only in the online communities? Competition for news may cause newsrooms to lower the bar in ethically problematic cases. On the other hand, the impending public criticism gives journalism a good reason to separate itself from the internet masses. It is precisely the separation from the wild content of discussion forums and web community sites that could strengthen the status of journalistic media in the eyes of the public.

Within the traditional media, the issue concerning the role of journalism in relation to the so-called “social media” is burning because, according to future estimates, e.g. print newspapers will never receive a very wide subscription base from today’s youth. The issue is not about which one of the two comes out on top, the traditional or social media. Both will in all likelihood continue to coexist and interact also in the future. Quotations originating from traditional media content circulate social media websites, and, at the same time, traditional media are increasingly using social media content on their own web pages. (Matikainen 2009, 107–111; Singer et al. forthcoming)

The same change that applies throughout the media world applies to crisis reporting where journalism maintains a pertinent role in information dissemination. However, while in the past journalism was *the* institution that reported the events and disseminated the information gathered from various sources to the audiences, in the future things look different. The internet and the mobile media will merge sources, audiences and journalism

into a network in which journalists can no longer retain their special role in dealing with information.

This development is, to a degree, already in effect but will gather pace in the coming years, meaning that the production of journalistic content will become “networked” and that the boundary between journalism and non-professional content production will become blurred. This development demands a choice from crisis journalism and from journalism in general: either accept looser standards in the reliability of information and the erosion of journalistic ethics, or separate journalism from other contents on the internet by polishing the aforementioned qualities.

* * *

Covering the two school shootings has been a trying task for Finnish journalists. Uncertainty of their own and the profession’s performance in both Jokela and Kauhajoki has made the difficult assignments even harder. When evaluating their own performance in both cases, journalists can be roughly divided into two schools of thought. The first school looks at the issue in a developmental light: Jokela is associated with chaos, unpreparedness and indiscretion, while Kauhajoki is seen as a picture of order, planning and reflection. The other school of thought believes that it has rather been a question of the limits of good journalism. In Jokela, journalists were boldly testing their limits on their own initiative, which led, in some cases, to ethically dubious results. Kauhajoki, in turn, saw cautious journalists

avoiding confrontation, which resulted in an ethically sound but distant and emotionally cold coverage. Irrespective of the school of thought, Finnish journalists are confused as to what shape their performance and role will take in future disasters.

In relation to crisis coverage, Finnish journalists are particularly confused as to how they should report on the victims and the causes – in this case, the shooters. The deeper we went in our analysis of disaster news, the more convinced we became that no one right answer exists to this problem. We agree with some media critics' views of taking distance: Grieving families are not to be visited immediately; narrowly escaped survivors are not to be sought for interviews regardless of their condition; and information about the shooters or their material is not to be disseminated to audiences as such. However, we also consider as equally rational the views that maintain that making the consequences and causes of a disaster understandable to audiences requires close contact and detailed information on the victims and the shooters. Taking distance and getting close are not actions that can be decided beforehand; they must be weighed on a case-to-case basis.

Crisis situations have revealed how demanding journalists' work can be. It is not about insignificant content production, amateurish interference or senseless "churning" of information. Perhaps the most important lesson for journalists about the school shootings has been that the profession must re-evaluate its position in crisis situations. This can be done both by separation and co-operation. Journalists should show more clearly why the profession is needed on a disaster site, what its

rights and obligations are, and who are regarded as professionals. As journalists make their profession's logic of action clear to themselves and others, they also have to open up to stimuli coming from outside the profession.

The basic tenets of the journalistic profession are the sanctity of journalistic independence and the role of the challenging watchdog that keeps check over the powers that be. However, it would serve journalists well to realize that in crises they are often dependent upon a number of other factors and that there is always demand for co-operative messengers who are not afraid to assume the role of the rescue dog. In disaster situations, a good journalist is expected to show chameleon-like adaptability – both the confrontational watchdog and the rescue dog with a sensitive nose are needed.

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