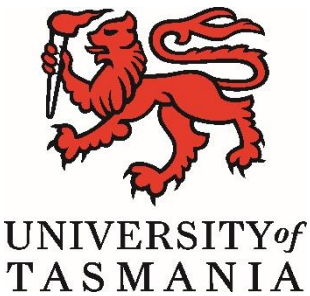

No Longer Anonymous: Surviving Trauma in the Media Spotlight

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Tasmania, November, 2019

ERRATUM

PhD Graduate: Fiona Reynolds

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Thesis Title: No Longer Anonymous: Surviving Trauma in the Media Spotlight

Date: 18 January 2021

MANUSCRIPT

Page	Original Content	Correction
P. 24	76 hours	65 hours
P. 48	Carlton	Carleton
P. 167	supermarket chain Coles	Cold Power laundry detergent
P. 171	*Bad Ground: Inside the Beaconsfield Mine Rescue* (2007)	*Bad ground: inside the Beaconsfield Mine rescue* (2006)
P. 177	*321 Hours* (representing the amount of time ...)	*321* (representing the number of hours ...)

EXEGESIS

Page	Original Content	Correction
P. 168	Wright, T 2007, *Bad ground: inside the Beaconsfield Mine rescue*, Pier 9, Sydney.	Wright, T 2006, *Bad ground: inside the Beaconsfield Mine rescue*, Pier 9, Sydney.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

This thesis (manuscript and exegesis) contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University of Tasmania or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis. To the best of my knowledge and belief, it incorporates no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the thesis, nor does the thesis contain any material that infringes copyright.

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The research associated with this thesis abides by the international and Australian codes of human and animal experimentation, the guidelines by the Australian Government's Office of Gene Technology Regulator and the rulings of the Safety, Ethics and Institutional Biosafety Committees of the University. The Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network's ethics clearance reference number for the research presented here is: H0011791.

Signature:

Date: 28 November 2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This was a project that required a great deal of trust and perseverance.

My sincere thanks to the University of Tasmania, specifically: Dr Nicola Goc, who I occasionally cursed for encouraging me to undertake a PhD, Dr Donald Reid for being both inquisitor and coach as primary supervisor, Dr Megan Keating for guidance in pulling the exegesis together, and Dr Claire Konkes for testing the research strength when the work became far too familiar to me. Adam Ouston's direction in how to turn the manuscript from a collection of stories into one clear narrative was invaluable. The generosity of Professor Graeme Turner, in not only taking the odd call when I felt the need to discuss his work, but offering encouragement, gave me confidence that the project was worthwhile.

My husband Peter and daughters Amelia and Lilian were the true believers—that one day I would submit the PhD and stop talking about it. You inspire and support me every day. I love you.

Finally, to the people who made this possible—the trauma survivors who agreed to participate—thank you does not seem enough. Each of you was prepared to again put yourself in a position of vulnerability. Your openness and generosity of spirit left an indelible mark on me. Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton, Michael Chamberlain, James Scott, Jacqueline Pascarl, Jandamarra O'Shane, Jenni Begg, Stuart Diver, Kay Danes, Bruce Morcombe, Denise Morcombe, Ron Delezio, Mercedes Corby, Douglas Wood and Todd Russell—your trust was key to my perseverance.

A NOTE ON READING THIS THESIS

The manuscript titled *Accidental Celebrity*, situated after the abstract, should be read before the exegesis as a stand-alone original work. It has been edited for length and publication, but has not yet been submitted to publishers or commissioned, when further professional editing, images, formatting, indexing and copyright clearance from newspaper publishers would be required.

The spelling used throughout aligns with Australian English conventions, with exceptions made for direct quotes and reference titles. The case used in the names of academic authors reflects how they were previously published.

The exegesis is referenced using Harvard author-date style, following the standard for most Australian Government publications. A bibliography is situated at the back of the exegesis.

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ABSTRACT

The term ‘accidental celebrity’ entered the Australian academic lexicon in 2000 as a way of describing ordinary people who become publicly well-known following a high-profile news event. Among this group are survivors of an unanticipated traumatic experience who are pursued by journalists competing for witness accounts. The media spotlight on the survivors’ private lives grows so intense and for such a prolonged period that they are transformed into celebrities. Although the notion of accidental celebrity has been adopted in subsequent international studies, little consideration has been given to the role individuals play in changing their status.

The aim of this practice-led project is to explore how prominent survivors may exercise agency in interactions with media. Underpinning the research is the structuration theory of British sociologist Anthony Giddens (1984), who argues that people are not powerless in relations with others but have the capability to think and act for themselves. Data is drawn from semi-structured interviews with 14 Australians who could be considered accidental celebrities. Each was a central figure in one of 11 high-profile news events—between the 1980 death of baby Azaria Chamberlain, taken from a Northern Territory desert campsite by a dingo, and the 2006 rescue of two Tasmanian gold miners, trapped underground at Beaconsfield for two weeks following a rockfall.

The perspectives of these individuals are brought together for the first time in order to provide insight into the involvement of survivors in the creation of news and other media content, from being regarded by journalists as newsworthy to represented as celebrities

and treated as commodities. By analysing the survivors' actions, this study finds they were never entirely constrained by institutionalised practices. The investigation of individual agency builds on two decades of research by Australian cultural studies academic Graeme Turner on the production of celebrity, which emphasises the institutional power of media. Turner, along with Frances Bonner and P. David Marshall (2000), coined the term accidental celebrity in their influential book *Fame Games*.

The original manuscript *Accidental Celebrity* documents the survivors' contacts with media and thoughts about their public profile, incorporating secondary material in the form of print articles to illustrate how their behaviour was reported. The capability of individuals to influence media is examined in the accompanying exegesis, which identifies six categories of action in a Taxonomy of Accidental Celebrity Agency. They are recognised as choosing to *tolerate* attention, *moderate* behaviour, *initiate* contact, *cooperate* on content, *delegate* to a third party and *dictate* the terms of involvement. By applying this new framework to the survivors' accounts, the different ways they seek to control their interactions with media are analysed.

The project, as a whole, extends academic research largely centred on journalistic practices and celebrity representation, to produce an explanation of actual behaviour, social experience and the ways ordinary people change their circumstances. It reveals how high-profile trauma survivors may act as free-willed individuals in relations with media, and the potential consequences of attempting to exert control. In doing so, the work offers a new, more nuanced and considered understanding of accidental celebrity.

ACCIDENTAL CELEBRITY

The inside story on trauma traded and anonymity lost in the media spotlight

By Fiona Reynolds

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TRAUMA TIMELINE

1980 **Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton and Michael Chamberlain**—Camping at Uluru when a dingo took their baby daughter Azaria

1992 **James Scott**—Rescued after 43 days lost while trekking in the Himalayan mountains of Nepal

1992 **Jacqueline Pascarl**—Son and daughter were illegally removed from Australia by her former husband, a Malaysian Prince

1996 **Jandamarra O'Shane (with mother Jenni Begg)**—Six years old when set alight in his Cairns school yard by a stranger

1997 **Stuart Diver**—Rescued after 65 hours buried under the Thredbo landslide that killed 18 people, including his wife Sally

2001 **Kay Danes**—Released with husband Kerry from 11 months' of torture and unlawful detention in Laos

2003 **Bruce and Denise Morcombe**—Thirteen-year-old son Daniel was abducted from a Sunshine Coast bus stop and murdered

2003 **Ron Delezio**—Two-year-old daughter Sophie was seriously injured when a car crashed into her Sydney childcare centre

2004 **Mercedes Corby**—Sister Schapelle Corby was arrested and imprisoned in Bali for drug smuggling

2005 **Douglas Wood**—Rescued after six weeks held hostage in Iraq by the *Shura Council* of the *Mujahideen*

2006 **Todd Russell**—Freed after two weeks trapped underground in the Beaconsfield Gold Mine with workmate Brant Webb

INTRODUCTION

She steps off a train at Sydney's Central Station and walks slowly towards me, seemingly oblivious to the crowd of rushing commuters. This could be just another face. But it isn't. I'm struck by how recognisable she is, yet also how ordinary. The middle-aged woman, well-groomed with short dark hair and glasses, smiles broadly, says a warm hello and then darts off to the bathroom. As I wait, another woman passing by stops and says somewhat excitedly: 'That was Lindy Chamberlain!' I'm surprised, though should I be? Questions fill my mind: Is the most publicly judged woman in Australian history about to have her personal space invaded? She didn't ask to become famous, but how much privacy can she now claim? Before I can respond, the passer-by continues: 'Are you her agent?' No, I say. I come from 'the other side'—the news business—although we each (agents and media alike) make a living out of someone else's trauma.

The passer-by walks on quickly, saying: 'I don't want to be a bother. Please just tell Lindy I've always admired her.' The familiarity with which she refers to a well-known stranger by her first name lingers. When Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton returns, I put a question to her, one I know I don't really need to ask: 'How often do people recognise you?' She smiles, seeming to know what had happened in her absence, without needing to ask.

We make small talk in a nearby hotel, getting to know each other a little before beginning another of the countless interviews Lindy has given over four decades, ever since a dingo

took her baby daughter Azaria from a Central Australian desert campsite. ‘I’m not very good at remembering names,’ Lindy confesses. ‘I asked my husband Rick to remind me what your name was and kept repeating on the train “Fiona, Fiona, Fiona” so I didn’t forget.’ ‘I’m not very good with names either,’ I say. ‘I’ve been repeating over and over “Lindy, Lindy, Lindy” so I didn’t forget yours.’ There’s a slight pause, then she bursts into laughter. Our little joke speaks volumes, both in terms of her good humour, and just how keenly aware we both are that her name has become ingrained in our national psyche. My nervousness about meeting a woman who has often been portrayed by journalists as hard and unrelenting evaporates. The friendly and relaxed person sitting in front of me—who laughs and cries openly—doesn’t seem to match her public image at all.

Lindy travelled from her then home north of Sydney to meet me and reflect on her encounters with media. Like the other trauma survivors featured in this book, she has neither asked for payment nor has it been offered; instead, what has brought Lindy here today is the opportunity to voice her views about a turbulent relationship. The so-called Fourth Estate rarely reports on the treatment of news subjects, unless self-righteously trying to score points by outing the behaviour of another outlet. This is the inside story, from the survivors’ perspective.

Each of the 14 Australians who agreed to be interviewed have a lot to say about what it’s like under the media spotlight, to feel helpless in the midst of intense media and public interest, and the personal impact of losing anonymity. In the pages that follow, these survivors of 11 unanticipated events that became national news—from the 1980 disappearance of baby Azaria to the 2006 Beaconsfield Mine rescue—speak frankly about moments that for some still feel raw, offering their insights into the dilemmas they faced when dealing with media. We hear of their interactions with frontline journalists, those

behind the camera lens, and the editors and other media executives calling the shots back in the newsroom. In the process, we learn they are exposed to commonly-held news values and media practices, despite their different backgrounds and unique situations.

None of the survivors were prepared for the media feeding frenzy, the way they would be portrayed, nor the frequency with which they would be publicly recognised, changing their lives forever. They were not completely powerless though. All of them had something media desperately wanted—a first-hand account of tragedy, disaster or conflict. That not only made them a bewildered target for voracious journalists, but placed them in a position to negotiate how interviews would be conducted, the details to be released and whether a price would be attached. In the middle of this wrestle for control were family, friends, support services and sometimes paid professionals.

Listening to their stories and reviewing media coverage has forced me to personally confront how for three decades I traded in trauma—from reporting a shark attack involving the daughter of a hometown family friend, to covering the loss and anguish of strangers caught up in the Thredbo landslide. I was a Federal political reporter in Canberra in 1997 when woken by the ABC's overnight producer and sent to the devastated New South Wales ski village. News of 18 people killed and one survivor, Stuart Diver, was sent around the world by the massive media contingent, of which I was a part. Ten years later, I was among the journalists who converged on the small town of Beaconsfield in my home state of Tasmania to mark the first anniversary of the mine rockfall. In between there were car crashes, bushfires, explosions and too many other terrible events to count.

What started out as a research project on the media experiences of high-profile trauma survivors, developed into this exploration of how and why ordinary people are transformed

into what academics refer to as ‘accidental celebrities’. Through an unanticipated event that dominates the news, individuals rise to public prominence. When the reporting focuses on the survivors’ private lives, they are treated as celebrities—traumatised people, traded as commodities. As Lindy sees it: ‘Some people set out to be a celebrity and others are because of what’s happened to them … both are celebrities, but the causes are different.’ For media, heart-wrenching tales of bad fortune are very good for business, which is why trauma survivors are deemed newsworthy. As journalists, we learn on the job that accounts of ordinary people facing the extraordinary can be packaged and sold to audiences as important news. On the other side of the coin, audiences help justify that editorial decision through increased print sales, broadcast ratings, online page views and social media engagement. Time and again, the old newsroom mantra ‘If it bleeds, it leads’ is reinforced. Over the years it’s become quicker and easier for media outlets to extract data showing they’re merely giving readers, listeners and viewers what they want: stories about human suffering. But what about the people experiencing that trauma—pursued by media to satisfy public curiosity while still trying to cope with their private pain? Journalists rarely question what’s in a survivor’s best interests. They’re only paid to get the story.

Too many times I have seen a personal and empathetic approach to trauma survivors give way to intrusion, manipulation and dishonesty. They’re the tricks of a competitive trade and every survivor in this book has had their privacy stomped on by strangers armed with cameras, microphones, telephones and notebooks. I call journalism a trade because anyone can gather and distribute stories without a tertiary qualification, trauma training, or a certificate in mental health first aid. You don’t need to belong to a professional body with the power to stop you practising if a complaint is upheld. Journalists voluntarily adhere to

ethical standards, fully aware that it's the content of their stories rather than the way they are gathered that influences ratings, sales and their careers.

I was taught from my earliest years as a newspaper cadet in the 1980s that the aim of the journalist is to get close to the 'talent' (subject), draw from them a compelling 'grab' (quote), and capture powerful 'shots' (images) that help the public connect emotionally with those who are suffering. Journalists are often accused of descending like vultures on the helpless, picking over their story before flying off to the next big event. They are seldom on the scene to observe the trauma themselves, so journalists seek accounts of the event from witnesses, authorities and those purporting to have inside knowledge or expertise, to explain to the public what happened. Speaking with the survivors is the ultimate goal, lifting the authenticity and impact of the coverage, before something new demands attention.

I have sought exclusive interviews with survivors of natural disasters, accidents and violence, participated in what media industry insiders call 'death knocks'—searching for witnesses—and broadcast camera close-ups of eyes that became teary after my questions forced the retelling of a traumatic experience. When I felt uncomfortable about the job, I told myself audiences want and need to know what's going on in the world so they can work out their place in it. When the victims decided to speak publicly, the uncomfortable feeling went away. They'd chosen to reveal the cause and extent of their distress and I was helping them, wasn't I? Somewhere along the line, the competitive spirit that's either inherent or drummed into most journalists took over and I was driven to beat other media outlets to the next angle, hopefully with my sense of humanity still intact.

Of course, I didn't only want audiences to learn what happened; I also wanted them to feel compelled to follow the story until I considered the news value had run out. In a very small

number of cases, that can take months or even years. While there are new angles to uncover and a willing, or at least compliant, subject, there is new news. The survivors I spoke with remained in the public eye long enough to become household names in Australia. Celebrity status rises and falls with media and public attention. Some are more recognisable than others today, arguably none more so than Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton:

> Right from the beginning people kept coming to me and saying this is never going to go away, there's [sic] too many things that are too interesting, this is going to be a film one day, this is going to be a book ... prophetic words. It has and it is, and it's multiple times over for all of them because it just grabbed the public's imagination and there were so many stories.

How could a young Pastor's wife foresee that from a family tragedy, her anonymity beyond a circle of family and friends would be lost forever? For most survivors of traumatic events, fame is short-lived. They are replaced in headlines after their fabled 15 minutes has expired. Yet Lindy has remained instantly recognisable to millions of people who were captured by the blanket media coverage of Azaria's disappearance and the Chamberlains' decades-long legal case. Naturally, her appearance has changed over the years, but, much like a close friend or relative, we could all follow these subtle transformations virtually as they happened thanks to Lindy's ubiquitous presence on television, in newspapers and magazines. The words 'Dingo baby mother,' crudely emblazoned on the front page of *The Sun* newspaper on 5 February 1981, would still prompt many Australians to assume the story is about Lindy. It's a tag that annoys her to this day:

Instead of saying Azaria's mother or a little girl or anything to do with her, it helped in the public's mind to take it into the realm of fairy tale, like, nothing is true and so you lost sight that this is the tragedy of a child's death.

SUN EXCLUSIVE

DINGO BABY MOTHER TELLS MY FAITH

Mrs Lindy Chamberlain

By WES CORNISH

DINGO baby mother Lindy Chamberlain who goes to Ayers Rock this weekend for the resumed inquest into the death of her daughter said today: "Life is not a challenge if one has faith."

Looking tired but calm, Mrs Chamberlain was speaking publicly for the first time since the Alice Springs hearing adjourned seven weeks ago.

With her husband Michael at her side she admitted, "We both have been very busy."

But they indicated a main concern was for other witnesses.

• Continued Page 2

(*The Sun* 5 February 1981, p. 1)

None of the survivors I spoke with planned to become famous like reality TV stars might. They didn't attract public attention after an achievement, in work or sport for instance, or attain a prominent position in the community. Their celebrity status happened by chance—the by-product of ongoing media and public interest following an unanticipated, traumatic event. The industry takes ordinary people and makes them well known in order to maintain

coverage when competition for ratings, sales, views and engagement scores is at stake. Almost anything can be, and is, packaged as news, with personal episodes the mainstay of entertainment-based magazines, some television current affairs, radio programs and websites. Jacqueline Pascarl understood that better than most accidental celebrities, having worked in media before her two children were abducted by their Malaysian Prince father. Still, her private life was just that, private, before she became the news.

Trauma is by its very nature personal, so it can be hard to identify when the line between private and public, news and entertainment, has been crossed. Think of it this way: reporting the impact of an event on an individual or family doesn't make them celebrities. Reporting on their relationships, and perhaps even their fashion sense, signal the survivor has reached such a high level of prominence that their everyday activities are now viewed by media as interesting to audiences. Schapelle Corby was the one convicted of drug smuggling and imprisoned in Bali, but her sister Mercedes shared the trauma and became a centre of public attention, undoubtedly propelling her to accidental celebrity status. Scrutiny of a survivor's private life makes them relatable and fascinating to the average person, whether they are hailed as a hero or held up as an object of derision. We can more easily imagine ourselves in the same extraordinary situation or even feel better about our own lot in life.

The irony is, these 'real' people are at times portrayed as fictional characters in a television drama. That's not to deny the role the survivors themselves play in what can become an ongoing production. By agreeing to participate in the creation of content, they provide a fresh angle to coverage and remain in the media spotlight. The survivors, often unwittingly, help transform themselves into accidental celebrities. The more high profile they are, the more journalists view their personal lives as newsworthy and pursue the next story, increasing their profile in a celebrity cycle.

Regardless of whether a survivor sought public attention or not, ultimately it is the journalists and editors, not the subject, who determine whether an event is newsworthy and how it will be told. Their power ranges from choosing the angle, details and images to be included, how much space or time is allocated, and the prominence given to the story. For the survivors, the immediate interest may be flattering. However, before long that feeling of being 'special' can, as we'll see, give way to confusion and even cynicism if they've been portrayed differently to how they see themselves.

Be warned, what you will read in the following pages may leave you questioning media practices, if you aren't already in the era of 'fake news', where misinformation peddled by unreliable websites and through social networks is tarnishing the traditional media industry. I accept that those in the news and information game haven't been all that high in the trustworthiness stakes anyway. Remember though, media aren't the only ones with an interest in the creation of accidental celebrities. The public has demonstrated an appetite for details on the private lives of ordinary people, by consuming celebrity stories. Then there is the promotions industry, which appears to be playing an increasing role in representing individuals who themselves may contribute to their prominence.

When we speak of 'the media', we also can't forget that different organisations make up the institution, competing on a variety of platforms, with outlets that tailor their style and content to distinct audiences. I haven't attempted to hunt down those organisations or individual journalists to justify their actions. Nor do I claim this is a textbook on how to deal with media in the event of a personal crisis. Every situation is different, from the nature of the event to the people involved. What follows is a behind-the-scenes look at how media and trauma survivors interact, from the perspective of those who were transformed into accidental

celebrities. I contribute my knowledge of media practices as a former insider, backed up by examples of relevant print coverage.

I didn't ask the survivors to recount, yet again, their already-well-documented traumatic event. Rather, you'll learn about the often fraught relationship between ravenous reporters and those who become news. Don't expect a lesson on ethics in a largely self-regulated industry. This is about basic trust and what is done with that trust. It is also largely about control; we'll look at privacy versus publicity, as survivors attempt to manage media intrusions and influence what the public is told about their trauma and personal lives. These survivors explain why they did or did not hire a professional agent and demand news organisations and magazines open their chequebooks for exclusive access. These decisions not only influence each survivor's transition from obscurity to celebrity, but also their role as a commodity in the commercialisation of trauma.

It is important to note that the choices of these survivors were made while recovering from emotional and sometimes physical injury, and with little if any understanding of how media operate. Most had no contact with journalists before they became the focus of attention, then found they were recognisable to strangers and are now still mentioned in news stories years later. I've been part of the celebrity-making machine, and couldn't help but wonder what portion of their earlier private 'self' was left after we gave them a public image they were expected to live up to whenever they were recognised by strangers at work, at the pub, down the street or even at a train station.

Psychiatrists explain that traumatic events overwhelm victims, rendering them helpless or powerless. Interacting with journalists, becoming 'news' and then losing control over how they are portrayed, can arguably cause further trauma. However, just as those working in

media can take power away from ordinary citizens, they can also empower them to share their stories, express an opinion on other events, and inform and educate the public. In the celebrity cycle, journalists often invite survivors to have a voice in community discussions and debate; a voice some use to garner support for a campaign, while others convert their high profile into an income-earning opportunity.

Accidental celebrity isn't a title they had heard or associated themselves with, although all had been called victims or survivors at various times. Never had they been asked which they preferred, until I posed the question. Each took time to pause and reflect before answering. Todd Russell, who was trapped by the Beaconsfield mine rockfall, would call himself a victim because 'we shouldn't have been put in the predicament.' Ron Delezio, father of burns survivor Sophie, considers his family to be both: 'We have survived and we are victims [of] something that's been an awful tragedy.' Likewise, Kay Danes says she was 'definitely a victim who survived,' after being tortured and detained in Laos. With barely a hesitation, the other eleven asked to be referred to in these pages as a survivor, representing what they consider to be strength and positivity. As we sit in my Sydney hotel room, having shared a few laughs, Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton is most definitive on this topic, and in fact sets the tone for this book:

> I've never been a victim. You're only a victim if you choose to be one. So I'm a survivor. And what's more, I'm a conqueror, because you either conquer what's happening to you or it conquers you.

1

ORDINARY PEOPLE, EXTRAORDINARY EVENTS

> I went crazy and thought Jandamarra had passed away. We looked out the [hospital] window and then we just saw the lights and cameras and everything just flashing, and the ambulance pulling up with Jandamarra—an invasion of privacy I felt. Our lives changed instantly, basically.
>
> - Jenni Begg

A panic-stricken Jenni Begg experienced the darkest moment of her quiet life in the glare of the media spotlight. Nothing could have prepared her for the unimaginable: a stranger walking into the grounds of the Cairns North State School with a can of petrol and setting alight her defenceless six-year-old son Jandamarra O'Shane. For an unassuming woman who had never sought public attention, 10 October 1996 was also the day she would see her family transformed by overwhelming media attention and community compassion. Jandamarra was flown south to Brisbane by a medical team, uncertain whether the boy would survive horrific burns to 70 per cent of his tiny body. There was no room on the jet for Jenni, so she and her daughter Alicia boarded a commercial flight. The 10-year-old was crying inconsolably after seeing her brother running on fire in the school ground. Jenni remembers

being confronted by images and descriptions of her son's suffering, shared with strangers sitting all around her:

> We saw it just constantly on the TV on the plane going down. [It] felt like I was dreaming … Is this really happening to us? It also made me shrink, you know. I just didn't want people to realise that I was the mother of the child—of Jandamarra. But when we got there, the amount of media, that just really blew me away again and I'd run and hide. They were sort of looking at us.

More than two decades later, Jenni still has flashbacks. Jandamarra—too young and critically injured—recalls little detail. His childhood memories are more like impressions. As I sat in Jenni's small work office in Cairns, Jandamarra listened intently while his softly-spoken mother shared their experiences, as if waiting for a new way to comprehend life in the public eye. The bond between the pair is obvious, not through outward expressions of affection but a nodding recognition of the trauma they dealt with then and continue to daily. Jenni told how they had no prior contact with media before the Royal Children's Hospital in Brisbane was inundated by journalists and camera operators. An aunt and uncle of Jandamarra—siblings of his father Tim—held high-profile public roles. Pat O'Shane was Australia's first Aboriginal magistrate, while Terry O'Shane was a leading figure in national Indigenous affairs. That wasn't Jenni's world though. She was focused on raising her young family until a random act of violence shattered their anonymity. The desperate attempts of doctors to save Jandamarra and the devastation felt by those close to him made the news nationally, feeding the public's attraction to ordinary people who face extraordinary events. The lengths to which journalists then went in the quest for new information only compounded Jenni's distress.

A Competitive Trade

Jandamarra and his family found themselves in the middle of a 'feeding frenzy', a term Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton and torture survivor Kay Danes use to describe their own media experiences. Competition between outlets, even within the same organisation, to gain access to survivors, obtain emotional interviews and capture gripping images leads some journalists to resort to questionable tactics. They quickly recognise that the more unusual the event, the more widespread the impact, the closer to home it happens, the more personalised the storytelling, the greater the coverage and audiences it is likely to attract. In this chapter, the survivors themselves each consider why they were deemed newsworthy and reveal the tricks of the trade employed by journalists pursuing witnesses for credible testimony and fresh story angles.

When I began my media career as a cadet journalist, there was no list of news values or catalogue of media practices to guide me. The issues and events that editors selected for coverage, from all the available options, told me what would most interest and inform the community. The newsroom's experienced journalists and photographers instructed me on who I needed to speak with when gathering facts and insights. Ways to gain access to 'talent' were mostly learnt from watching 'the opposition' at the scene of a crime or accident. Journalists assigned to breaking news about tragedies are then typically rewarded by their boss with the lead item, lifting their own public profile and standing among colleagues. One generation of journalists effectively hands to the next the 'knowledge' that trauma sells, controversy is compelling, pictures are powerful and the unexplained elements should be highlighted.

Competition is the primary factor driving this social conditioning, in my experience far outweighing any 'right to know' arguments and often, sadly, ethics guidelines. Even publicly-funded media, free of the commercial money-making imperative, need readers, viewers and listeners to remain relevant and worth the investment of taxpayer dollars. What can be regarded as 'news' may be very broad in that context, and it doesn't have to be produced by trained journalists as a public service. It's a commodity that can be created by anyone seeking to report events—from radio broadcasters and television program hosts to those with access to a website or social media account. Ordinary people might become news, but news is made by media to attract audiences. For the survivor of an unanticipated traumatic event, finding themselves suddenly the centre of intense media and public attention can itself be distressing. I could see it in the faces of those I chased for comment, but chose not to think too deeply about their perspective until now, when I begin unpacking their recollections of media behaviour as they became the news.

'The Bravest Boy in Queensland'

Jenni Begg believes Jandamarra was 'just at the wrong place at the wrong time' when Paul Wade Streeton walked into his school yard for reasons that remain a mystery. The boy who was 'fighting for his life' from horrific burns (*The Courier-Mail* 11 October 1996, p. 1) has 'grown big and ugly,' his mother teases. While 'the bravest boy in Queensland' (*The Sunday Mail* 19 March 2006, p. 3) accepts the physical scars, Jenni continues to struggle with the emotional ones. Jandamarra wasn't expected to survive his first night and she resolved not to leave her son's side, shunning the dogged media presence at the hospital and requests for interview. The mother recalls doctors and nurses being 'bombarded' by journalists demanding to be updated on his condition, then forced to act as a protective shield:

> We even had reporters disguising themselves as family or saying they were family, trying to come in. I remember security had to run and grab a couple of guys and just march them out because they sort of made it into ICU. I was just shocked because it was very high risk. [W]hen we had to go in we had to gown up, mask … and I remember just … gosh, just being really angry and infuriated.

When that trick didn't work, news gatherers tried a softer and more personal approach:

> There were a few reporters that came up and begged, absolutely begged, if they could ask questions. 'My job's on the line.' I found that quite surprising. I don't know if it's their way of making you feel sorry for them, to get the interview.

Jenni and Jandamarra's encounters with media in those early days reveal how journalists either operate as an indistinct member of a pack or as an individual who has switched off their personal moral compass to get the jump on everyone else for the story. Often, they're both—one eye on the pack, the other on the scoop. From staking out public areas and jostling for the best vantage point, to personally appealing to survivors for help, penetrating private spaces with long camera lenses, acting as a friend or hiding their true identity, the reporters' repertoire is varied. Pretending to be someone else in order to gain access to a survivor without consent is right up there on the scale of unethical behaviour, yet there are hungry news hounds who are prepared to cross that line.

'Dingo Takes Baby'

Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton has seen every trick of the trade while standing in the media spotlight for 40 years. The extremely unusual nature of the disappearance of nine-and-a-half-week-old daughter Azaria from an Uluru campsite in 1980 immediately catapulted the family to page one of newspapers around the country. Lindy and Michael Chamberlain's

subsequent false convictions, her imprisonment, a Royal Commission, the couple's divorce and four inquests ensured they remained accidental celebrities. The words 'Dingo takes baby,' splashed across the Darwin-based *The Northern Territory News* (18 August 1980, p. 1), would remind Australians of the event to this day. Before his death in 2017, Michael reflected on how the Seventh Day Adventist faith had sustained their strength but also media and public interest:

> Some have said that it's because you have the wrong people, at the wrong place, at the wrong time, and that makes a delicious formula for a big story, particularly when the event that occurs just is so unusual and so frightening and so tragic, and at a place which was iconic, and through people who are deemed by many to be different, perhaps peculiar, isolationist.

Police led the Chamberlains to believe that if they talked with media at Uluru about the dingo attack on Azaria, then drove home to the Western Queensland town of Mount Isa with their two young sons, by the time they arrived the public's fascination would have dissipated. Instead it intensified, with news crews arriving on their doorstep within half-an-hour of their return and others constantly calling. Lindy reminds me that was in 1980, before mobile telephones:

> We had to use our phone and six or eight calls out of every 10 were the media and we'd be saying, 'Will you please get off the line, I'm expecting calls in. Please respect our privacy!' … I was really glad when my parents and brother and sister-in-law arrived. They were able to take over the phone and give me some distance and relief, but my voice has never been the same since. I actually damaged my voice. You're absolutely craving news and you want to hear from your family and friends that were expected to call. Michael still had a church to run, and we still had congregation calling in on normal business, so we couldn't *not* answer the phone, and there was no such thing as caller ID then. These days you can look at the

> number and know it's the media, so you can ignore the call, but you couldn't then. Eventually it got to be such a problem that the phone broke and we had to get a technician around who said that the battery was dead. There's one in the mouthpiece. They said they'd never heard of a situation like that except once in a call centre, where the phone was being used all the time!

Lindy doesn't hesitate in stating that her privacy from that time on was 'absolutely non-existent.' She says she was even forced to resort to disguises in order to leave the house:

> The only thing I was ever grateful for was that when it came to five o'clock they'd had it, as well as me, and they gave up camping outside the house and left. Then I could let the kids go out and play for a while and things like that. I was glad that a lot of them were more stupid than me, so they only watched the front door and I could come and go in the back door … At one stage they had microphones on the house and listening devices and goodness knows what.

A Miner 'Miracle'

Audiences only occasionally witness the media pack in action through the lens of a television or stills camera, if editors consider it an interesting and relevant part of the coverage. These are typically edited snippets, providing little insight into the behaviour traumatised people encounter and the pressures they are under to perform. Coverage surrounding the 2006 rescue of Todd Russell and Brant Webb from the collapsed Beaconsfield Mine offered rare insight, perhaps ironically for want of something to report during the 14-day operation. 'A shantytown of media campervans inflated the town's population by 10 per cent, and residents are getting used to reporters wandering the streets looking for someone to interview, or a TV host standing alone in a park rehearsing a report,' *The Age* (4 May 2006, p. 8) observed.

When Todd and Brant clocked on for a night shift underground, they were ordinary family men leading unremarkable lives in a small North Tasmanian community. By the time they rose 925 metres back to the surface and stepped out of their steel cage, they were internationally recognisable. Images of the miners punching the air victoriously, inciting cheers from a crowd of onlookers, were captured by a wall of cameras and beamed live around the world. Although Todd and Brant didn't realise it at the time, they were well on their way to becoming accidental celebrities. Rescuers had given the pair a small amount of information about the interest in the extraordinary event. But the true extent of the media presence didn't hit Todd until he was escorted to an ambulance and taken to hospital:

> We knew that there was going to be a couple of cameras filming from the platform at the museum when we did come out. But they had that tarp and everything set up around it so that we had the privacy when we came out to the family, and then when they dropped the tarp, and all the people there, the cheering and everything—it was just overwhelming. And as you're driving out you see all the Winnebagos parked around and you realise then that this is not just your normal everyday media contingency—it's a worldwide thing.

The Australian, The Canberra Times, The Daily Telegraph, The Mercury, The Courier-Mail and *Herald Sun* (1 May 2006) all proclaimed the miners' survival from a rockfall that killed workmate Larry Knight a 'miracle'. Although, from the moment Todd was reunited with his then wife and three children, he felt trapped again—this time by media:

> We went home … there's just no privacy, you had them camping across the road, you had them camping up on the hill with those big telescopic lenses and stuff that they've got, taking photos—just trying to get an exclusive photo so they had something to put in the paper. I thought that was quite rude when you're trying to spend time with the family because you've

> been away from them for 14 days and the thought of losing them, all you wanted to do is be with them.

On his first night of freedom, Todd expected to go to the local pub, without hassle, to thank rescuers. Only now, Beaconsfield's Club Hotel was swarming with news crews. Todd devised a plan to take control of the situation, with the support of a policeman friend:

> We did a drive by and told them that I was going to be down at the hall to talk to all media for an interview in 20 minutes, so they all packed up and went to the hall and I went to the pub and had a beer with the boys and didn't even go to the conference. So they all sat up there waiting for a press release-conference type of thing and I didn't even turn up.

Todd couldn't avoid media altogether, and was greeted at the hotel by a couple of cameras and Nine Network CEO and personality Eddie McGuire, who offered him a beer in exchange for a few words. Four days later, Todd was followed by television cameras while attending a local football game with his family, finally barking 'leave me alone … have some respect' *(Sunday Herald Sun* 14 May 2006, p. 4). The survivor explains: 'You're trying to walk normally with your family or by yourself and you've got click, click, click, click, click all bloody day. Everywhere you go. It's a bit hard. Eventually you're going to lose your cool.' A police car was reportedly summoned to escort the Russell family away at half-time. 'If Mr Russell sought normality he found fame instead,' *The Age* wrote (14 May 2006, p. 9). *Sunday Tasmanian* (14 May 2006, pp. 6–7) headlined, 'From miracle man to reluctant celebrity' while *The Sunday Examiner* (14 May 2006, p. 5) described Todd as 'frustrated by media interest.' *Sunday Herald Sun* (14 May 2006, p. 4) interpreted his behavior as 'frustration at anonymity lost forever.' The message for Todd and other survivors is that you can be traumatised and not seek public recognition, but when it is thrust upon you, you'll be expected to willingly abandon your privacy.

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BEACONSFIELD: THE FUTURE

Chiefs face scrutiny over safety

MELBOURNE — Directors of the companies that own and operate Beaconsfield Gold Mine are expected to come under scrutiny about how much they knew about safety procedures at the mine.

The mine has been closed pending inquiries into the April 25 rockfall that killed miner Larry Knight and trapped Todd Russell and Brant Webb underground for 14 days.

The Anzac Day rockfall triggered by a seismic event followed another quake measuring 1.6 on the Richter scale on October 26 last year, after which mine operator Allstate Explorations reviewed mining practices.

The mine operators have promised to pay the 120 miners for another month but it may take months, if ever, before the site reopens.

Australian Workers' Union national secretary Bill Shorten said yesterday that miner managers and unions would have a better idea of the time frame for the mine's future by May 19.

Mr Shorten said he expected an inquiry into the accident would place directors of the mine's joint owners, Allstate Exploration and Melbourne's Beaconsfield Gold, under scrutiny.

"Do I think directors would have consciously compromised safety? No, but I'm curious to know how much the directors of the company actually knew about the mining methods and how much they acquaint themselves with the safety operations and how much they acquainted themselves with the changes after October of last year," he said.

Mr Shorten said that Mr Knight's family had a right to know the truth. "We shouldn't be afraid to hurt anyone's feeling in our search for the truth," he said. "We shouldn't compromise that, and the only way you can do that is to have the ability to have evidence tested under cross-examination."

Miners, many of whom had expressed concerns about mining practices at Beaconsfield before last month's tragedy, had refused to go down the mine again until new practices had been introduced, he said.

"I was surprised at the level of concern by experienced miners and their reluctance to go mining again in this hole with the current mining methods," Mr Shorten said.

Record gold prices have valued the mine's reserves at more than $400 million.

Talking tactics: Todd Russell heads for the players' huddle during yesterday's match. Pictures: Paul Scambler

Footy visit sees Todd frustrated by media interest

By PHIL EDWARDS

HE wasn't playing football but Beaconsfield mine survivor Todd Russell was still the star attraction at the Bridgenorth Football Ground yesterday.

Mr Russell made an unexpected appearance at the game only four days after his and Brant Webb's amazing rescue.

He spent about 20 minutes inside the clubrooms having a chat and a beer with acquaintances, including Bridgenorth Football Club president Denis Broomby and some of the players during the half-time break.

"I had a chat to him and told him it was good to see him here," Mr Broomby said.

"It was good for the club to see him and he is keener than ever to play football again and is looking forward to it.

"He wanted to have a beer and talk to a few of the boys — that's all he wanted to do."

Mr Russell told Mr Broomby that he wanted to get his life back to normal.

Driving his Ford Falcon car and towing a trailer with motorbikes, Mr Russell arrived at the ground with his wife Caroline and children at the end of the first quarter of the NTFA game between Bridgenorth and Bracknell.

He was immediately surrounded by the waiting media throng of mainland channels 7, 9 and 10 and ABC television crews who were at the ground in anticipation of his arrival.

Mr Russell refused any interviews as he left his car. "Leave me alone and give me some privacy, will you?" he said.

He then walked across the ground to listen to the quarter-time Bridgenorth huddle.

He chatted to one of his mates as he walked off the ground before seeking privacy from television cameras inside the clubrooms.

After leaving the clubrooms he went back to his car and left the ground with his family.

Mr Russell was Bridgenorth's prized recruit as full-forward this season.

Injured in a practice match before the mine rockfall, he is not expected to play for the Parrots for another six to eight weeks because of a knee injury which may require surgery.

"He knew the football scores and had asked his rescuers whether Bridgenorth won or lost while he was trapped in the mine," Mr Broomby said.

Plea for privacy: Todd Russell asks the media to give him and his family some space.

(*The Sunday Examiner* 14 May 2006, p. 5)

The Sole Survivor

Community complaints about the behaviour of some media representatives during the Thredbo rescue operation in 1997 were so widespread they became part of the disaster coverage. It was claimed that 'unidentified members of the press acted like vultures and that there had been an unsubstantiated charge that one media representative masqueraded as an emergency worker to gain information' (*The Daily Telegraph* 5 August 1997, p. 11). I was among the journalists at Thredbo, searching for witnesses in between regular updates from emergency services. While I didn't personally witness that extreme level of intrusion, it

doesn't surprise me. There was no separation on site between media, Thredbo locals or the families of the missing. Anyone could be approached by a reporter for information or comment as they stood on the slopes, longing for the rescuers to find some sign of life beneath the flattened lodges. Sole survivor Stuart Diver can only imagine the 'scrum mentality' at the village:

> A lot of it's hearsay for me because it was happening while I was still buried. I would say that a lot of it was way too much in people's faces, that there was nowhere near the level of compassion shown to any of these people who'd obviously […] lost friends or didn't know if their friends were missing or whatever. So I think that it was that same thing. It was way too early and there was way too much 'We've gotta get the story and we don't care who we talk to.' And I've seen some of the footage and some of the clowns that were on TV getting interviewed, who had nothing to do with Thredbo, just happened to be here on holiday … I think that's what really annoyed a lot of the locals.

When Stuart was pulled from the Thredbo rubble after 76 hours trapped beneath a concrete slab in freezing conditions, much of the media focus shifted from the landslide site to the Canberra Hospital. The then 27-year-old ski instructor's survival was declared a 'miracle' (*Sunday Herald Sun* 3 August 1997, p. 1) 'for which all Australians prayed' (*The Sunday Telegraph* 3 August 1997, p. 3). Stuart had drawn on physical strength and emotional willpower to hold his face above water that repeatedly flowed through two flattened lodges in the New South Wales Snowy Mountains. His wife Sally drowned beside him in their crushed ground floor bedroom, one of 18 people who perished.

Long after the village of Thredbo has returned to normal, Australians will remember the stories and images of courage and survival which came to them via a media lens. Yet the intensity and style of some coverage have been criticised. TONY STEPHENS and TONY SQUIRES report.

MEDIA SCRUM

For the

(*The Sydney Morning Herald* 6 August 1997, Features p. 15)

Stuart was recovering in hospital when he learnt from his parents, Steve and Annette Diver, about the concentrated media coverage he'd attracted, while shown small segments of rescue vision that were carried live to air on television and now replayed. Journalists and camera operators maintained a permanent presence outside, waiting to tell Australians not just what happened but how one man survived and was dealing with the enormity of the tragedy. As *The Age* (9 August 1997, p. 29) pointed out in an editorial, people are fascinated by disasters like Thredbo, not because they are ghouls but because there is 'something about them that touches our common humanity, our sense of community. There is something about them that speaks of the precariousness of life, its fragility, its unpredictability.' On reflection, Stuart can see why media were desperate for an account of his experience:

> It was a story that had a massive emotional connection … [T]here's been so many people killed and there was one survivor and I think that is media heaven for a story. So, you know,

> it wasn't complicated in any way. It was very simple—there was only one person you had to interview, one person who could tell the story and so I think that attracted a lot of people to it.

While Stuart was in hospital, he was largely sheltered from the media pressure. When released, he was shocked to find journalists and camera operators waiting for him or following:

> It's a total and … utter invasion of your life. You know, Sally's funeral, so they were parked out the front and they were trying to chase us up the road to find out where we were going to the crematorium … It's not just one or two. We went down the back laneway at Mum and Dad's place, I mean there's lots of them. There's not just one little rogue journalist doing it, they have that … pack mentality.

Trauma Strikes Twice

Stakeouts, aimed at capturing private people when they venture into a public place, are common media practice. It's a wait-and-see game, driven by the hope of a picture and interview opportunity and a fear of missing out. Sophie Delezio's family were not prepared to be confronted by journalists when she was lay critically injured in the Children's Hospital at Westmead in Sydney in 2003. The then two-and-a-half-year-old was among a group of toddlers at the Roundhouse Childcare Centre on Sydney's Northern Beaches, having an afternoon sleep before a visit from Santa, when a car crashed through the doors (*The Daily Telegraph* 16 December 2003, p. 1; *The Australian* 16 December 2003, p. 3). Sophie was trapped beneath the vehicle, suffering third degree burns to 85 per cent of her body, losing her feet, some fingers and right ear.

‘It was one of the biggest media things going through the hospital at the time—the switchboards were jammed and they had special security put in the hospital and it was in the papers all the time,’ Sophie’s father Ron recalls. His mind was a ‘blur’ and he barely left his daughter’s bedside. Hospital staff stepped in and protected the family from media, advising them they didn’t have to speak personally and publicly. Ron and wife Carolyn Martin released a statement, recognising the ‘brave efforts’ of those at the scene. The reporters were relentless, though, approaching Ron’s parents in the street for comment:

> My family were coming to me saying we don’t know what to do, we were walking along and all of a sudden the media has surrounded us. My parents are Maltese. They’re working class people—they don’t know what to do or what to say, might say something wrong, so they were scared, and I didn’t want them to be scared.

Exploiting the vulnerable is easiest if they have little knowledge of media practices. When Sophie faced the horror of another extraordinary and catastrophic road accident in 2006, the family had become media savvy, by then public figures. The five-year-old was thrown 18 metres when her pram was struck by a car on a pedestrian crossing. She sustained a brain injury, heart attack, punctured lungs, her jaw and collarbone were broken, numerous ribs were fractured, and her left lung torn. Sophie’s second triumph over trauma helped guarantee the family would never know the feeling of anonymity again.

The ‘Miracle Iceman’

A malnourished and seriously ill James Scott was hospitalised in Nepal, and theoretically far less accessible to local media, when found alive after 43 days huddled in a freezing mountain cave in 1992. *The Australian* (4 February 1992) featured a photograph of the hiker’s fiancé Gaye Ryan celebrating the rescue from back home in Brisbane under the front

page headline 'Miracle Iceman Found Alive in the Himalayas'. Within a day, the demand for interviews and pictures of James—from all around the world—escalated. His parents, Ken and Janet Scott, were kept awake by news crews in their street, while the medical team at Patan Hospital in Nepal relented to extreme pressure and provided some details of his condition. Medical superintendent Dr Frank Garlick tried to protect the privacy of his patient and for his trouble was dubbed 'not so Frank' by one writer (*The Sunday Age* 9 February 1992, p. 3). *The Age* (7 February 1992, p. 1) reported that a group of about 30 journalists were 'laying siege to the hospital on site,' with James struck by the now all too familiar 'rogue reporter':

> A journalist paid someone … at Patan Hospital to steal my medical records. To get them out they climbed up ladders outside to try and get photos and such. They'd hired security guards, so I was aware that there was all this kind of distress going on. I think the hospital staff worked very hard to keep me isolated from them because I was still very sick at that stage. But clearly there was this increasing pressure that something had to be done. I was somehow trying to work out how to manage this as it was all getting out of hand.

James recalls a journalist also tried to approach him for comment after hiding in the aircraft toilets on the flight home, almost two weeks after the rescue. When he arrived at Brisbane airport, ambulance officers held up a sheet to shield James from photographers and television cameras before a police motorcade rushed him to the Royal Brisbane Hospital. There a 'cameraman with a home video recorder was manhandled off the grounds by security,' according to one report (*The Courier-Mail* 15 February 1992, p. 2). Speculation about whether James's survival could be a hoax served to keep the coverage going while media waited for the 'miracle iceman' to tell all.

The intense interest and scrutiny were in stark contrast to the coverage of his disappearance. James was missing for 27 days before his parents notified their local newspaper, *The Courier-Mail*. With an engagement party for James and Gaye just a week away, the family wanted to let the 150 invited friends know what had happened, in a hurry. This was in the days before social media messaging and texting. A photograph and quotes from a 'distraught' Gaye appeared on the newspaper's front page the following morning (18 January 1992). No other media reported the search and after a single follow-up story, without new information, the man who disappeared in the mountains also disappeared from the headlines. The advent of instant global communications has made news more accessible. But to be blunt, one hiker lost overseas due to his own misadventure still isn't considered as interesting to local audiences as a walker missing in bushland near home or even an Australian tourist who is the random victim of violence abroad.

Held Hostage in Iraq

The 2005 kidnapping of Douglas Wood in war-torn Iraq became international news immediately, although the engineer didn't know it. Douglas's captors recorded a two-minute video of him and released it to Arabic television network Al Jazeera. The middle-aged Australian was seen pleading with then-Australian Prime Minister John Howard and United States President George W. Bush to withdraw troops from Iraq. The vision was broadcast an estimated three days after Douglas was taken hostage and in turn led news bulletins and papers. The dangerous and unusual overseas event was brought home, with *The Australian*, *The Courier-Mail* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* (3 May 2005) all headlining Douglas's words, 'Help me, I don't want to die,' alongside an image of the dishevelled man at gunpoint. Douglas's video plea forced the Australian Government to immediately intervene, sending an emergency response team to Iraq to secure his release. Then a second video surfaced,

showing Douglas begging for his life while two machine guns were pointed at his shaved and bruised head (*The Sun-Herald* 8 May 2005, p. 1), which in hindsight he recognises as highly newsworthy:

> I'm an Australian. I was obviously in a huge amount of trouble. I think from my point of view there was a little bit of luck in the draw that the terrorists chose to take me and get it out into the media, and then they did it again after they'd kicked me in the head and bashed me up a bit. One thing my father always said: attention begets interest and interest begets attention, and I think it's pretty true. In my particular case, all the ingredients were there—Australian boy, captured in a foreign land, needs our help, what's going on?

Douglas describes being on an 'emotional high' when after his rescue he began the journey from Iraq to Australia, although still recovering from malnutrition and dehydration. He remembers the 'media pack' being too heavy to leave his hotel on a stopover in Dubai, so all meals were sent in. At the airport, he was taken to a VIP room where security tried to shield him from intruders. 'There was an audacious reporter able to get in with his camera and try and interview inside this protected area and they eventually chased him out,' Douglas explains with a grin. While some media worked out which aircraft he boarded in Dubai and purchased tickets, Douglas says they were prevented from entering his cabin space as he'd been upgraded to first class. Unable to capture a comment on camera, journalists camped outside the Melbourne home of Douglas's brother Vernon, where he was staying. The freed hostage was almost as interested in how media operated as they were in his story, occasionally leaning out a car window to chat with news crews when travelling to and from the house.

Locked Up in Laos

Reporters can resist the compulsion to pursue survivors, but from my experience they rarely do when operating in a media pack. Survivors can refuse to participate in media coverage, but they rarely do when confronted by a media pack, whether because they find the attention flattering, frightening and/or unavoidable. Kay Danes is one who had no intention of speaking publicly after she and husband Kerry were tortured and unlawfully detained in Laos for 11 months. The couple just wanted to return to Australia in 2001 to see their three children. They remained out of the public eye while government officials negotiated a presidential pardon, but could not avoid media when taken to the airport to board a flight home to Brisbane, as Kay recalls:

> It's an emotional time, you've gone through all this, you've been released and all you're thinking about is, 'This is amazing, I'm going to go home to my children who I haven't seen for almost a year!' I get out of the car and straight away this journalist jumps in front of me, which felt quite intimidating to begin with because when you've been tortured and you've been held in an environment where you've got to bow down to people and stuff like that, sudden movements can really affect you because you don't know what the person's intent is. So she jumps in front of me without any regard of who's around her and she says: 'So how does it feel to be a convicted gem smuggler and what's your thoughts on the Laos government?' That just took my breath away and I didn't answer her.

It was on the aircraft that the Danes faced their first media interview. Kay remembers feeling a loss of control and disappointment when their lawyer invited a news photographer and journalist on board, as she and Kerry yearned for a time of quiet contemplation:

> I wanted privacy. I didn't want the guy across in the next aisle with his big … lens zoomed in on me … I was having this struggle to maintain composure as I had my face pressed up

> against the glass trying to find out where the prison was down below to wave, to see if my friends were waving up at me, because I knew they would be. I said to Kerry, you know, 'I wish he would just turn off that camera.' But we didn't know that you could say to him, 'Oh, could you turn off your camera?' We didn't know if he would even turn off his camera. That was a moment that we really wanted just for ourselves that we just couldn't have.

Corby Chaos

Mercedes Corby had neither help with nor hope of controlling her first interactions with media in 2004. She was staying in Bali when her sister, Schapelle, their brother, James, and two friends were detained at the Indonesian Customs Office in Denpasar Airport. Schapelle was held on suspicion of smuggling 4.1kg of marijuana into Bali in a bodyboard bag. Mercedes unwittingly rushed headlong into what she describes as a 'confused' and 'chaotic' scene:

> After I got there all the media came and they were putting their cameras through the windows and sneaking in the door and the police were taking them out—it was just crazy. And then when we left, we were just surrounded by packs all yelling at us and cameras in our faces and grabbing us. So that was the first night and then going to the police station they were just there every day.

Mercedes' memories of the first few days are dominated by the feeling of being 'scared' and feeling 'claustrophobic' while trying to make her way through stumbling camera operators and journalists, providing little comment as questions were fired at her. 'You're just surrounded. You don't know where to look. You don't know where to walk,' she explains. Schapelle was reportedly paraded by police in front of a waiting media pack at least three times in the first week following her arrest (*The Australian* 14 October 2004, p. 2). Mercedes

says even after her sister was convicted and sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment, the family's privacy wasn't respected:

> You're always worried who's sneaking behind, in the bushes taking sneaky photos … I've been out to dinner with my friends and it's been reported about what cars we came in, everything. We've been followed, we've caught media standing on our fence, we've caught them walking into the house, people in restaurants across the road have said that media have been in there with their cameras—even a shop across the road from our place, they were hiding in there once with their cameras and the shop people rang us up and told us that the media were inside the shop.

'Every Parents' Worst Nightmare'

Bruce and Denise Morcombe describe their first contact with reporters as 'soft,' two days after their 13-year-old son Daniel disappeared from a bus stop in 2003. A lone journalist from *The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), who lived near the Morcombes on Queensland's Sunshine Coast, walked up their driveway. Bruce found the journalist 'appeared more as a neighbour than a cold journalist just knocking on the door saying, "Here I am!"' The story, supported by a photograph of Daniel and another with his brothers Dean and Bradley, centred on how the Morcombes were 'living every parents' worst nightmare' (*The Courier-Mail* 10 December 2003, p. 9). Denise was scared about being interviewed but also relieved, after police warned what she could expect from news crews:

> When Daniel first went missing, we were told to be careful of the media, they'd be taking photos and filming you in the front yard with your dressing gown on and things like that, so you looked over your shoulder a little bit. That didn't really happen.

By the time Daniel's murderer, Brett Peter Cowan, was arrested almost eight years later, the Morcombes felt they had become friends with some journalists. They needed to cooperate with media and maintain a public profile to solve their son's case. The trade-off was relinquishing their personal privacy.

Public Plea to Prince

Jacqueline Pascarl was herself a television features reporter and producer, married to a journalist, when she reached out to media in 1992, hoping to enlist the public's help in locating her two children. Nine-year-old Mohammed Baharuddin (Iddin) and seven-year-old Raja Shahirah Aishah (Shah) were abducted during an access visit by Jacqueline's former husband, a Malaysian Prince. While publicity can never be guaranteed through media-controlled outlets, as distinct from social media today, Jacqueline's experience told her if she issued a press release and photographs of the children, the search would attract widespread coverage:

> I desperately needed and wanted them to be interested in the story for the sake of my children. And on their side of the coin, it had all the angles—it had the glamour of a royal family in the background, it had me who already had a small platform of public recognition.

Her local Melbourne metropolitan newspapers—the *Herald Sun* and *The Age* (13 July 1992)—both carried the account of abduction with the images. The mother's betrayal by her former husband then quickly captured national interest, with *The Australian* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* (14 July 1992) placing it on their front pages the following day. It was 14 years before Jacqueline and her children were reunited, during which time her trust in media was shattered:

> The worst thing I remember was realising that a photographer was filming and photographing me in my own house through my windows at night. And there wasn't a damn thing I could do about it because he wasn't on my property. You don't have a right to your own privacy within your own home, even if your curtains are closed. If they find a chink in the curtains, they can take a photograph of you through it.

As journalists, we can fool ourselves into justifying our actions by citing the public's right to information. Yet public interest—for the wellbeing of others—and the public being interested are two different things. In the vast majority of cases, people at large aren't affected by the event but rather interested in what's happening to other people, and what their experience says about our sense of humanity and community. The news coverage satisfies public curiosity, and perhaps concern, instead of serving a greater public good. I'll stop short of accusing journalists of being con artists because I'm frankly not sure who they're deceiving most—the survivors, public or themselves. You can be sure though, as long as editors and journalists think the public is interested in an event and the people involved, they will keep making the news, transforming ordinary people into accidental celebrities. For the individuals whose private lives become public, regaining some control of the situation often means negotiating with media.

2

LIGHTS, CAMERA, SPEAK

> We'd had no experience with the media, especially with perhaps 30 people interested in covering the story. Our dealing with police was zero, so to sit in a police station was not natural surroundings either. It was very controlled. It was well organised. But because that was our first major media thing, it was terrifying.
>
> - Bruce Morcombe

Bruce and Denise Morcombe were willing to do anything to get their son Daniel back, including face a crowd of strangers at a press conference. The Queensland couple feared something terrible had happened to the 13-year-old from the moment they realised he'd failed to return home after a shopping trip. Daniel's disappearance from a bus stop on 7 December 2003 sparked a massive search that stretched out from days to months and years, consuming the Morcombes' every waking moment. Bruce and Denise had to place their trust in the investigative skills and media advice of police, as well as the ability of reporters to capture public attention. They were desperate for information from someone who knew something about Daniel's whereabouts but hadn't yet come forward. Media outlets had the power to spread the message, increasing public awareness and support to potentially flush out clues.

The Morcombes are not the only survivors who chose to talk openly and publicly about their traumatic experience once news broke. Some felt an obligation to thank the public for the support they'd already received. Others hoped if they satisfied the demanding media pack by providing an account of what happened, it would disband. Most often, there are multiple reasons why people talk with journalists. Of course, anyone has the right to refuse. But media count on it only being a question of *when* and how a survivor will open up, not *if*. Apply plenty of pressure, try different tricks of the trade, and most people will relent, believing they have no choice. Journalists on the hunt for pictures and quotes won't stop to consider whether the individual they've placed in the spotlight is too traumatised to know what they're getting themselves into—whether they are in a rational state to provide informed consent, fully aware of the potential consequences of releasing details or speaking publicly. All of the survivors in this book eventually participated in media coverage. The level of access they granted and the control they felt they exerted through the process varied though, as we discover here.

Spreading the Word

The only contact Bruce and Denise had with media before Daniel's abduction was when promoting their lawn-mowing business. That in no way prepared them to pose for photos and answer questions from a pack of reporters while in shock and exhausted, unable to eat or sleep. Thinking clearly in order to understand and respond to police was challenging enough. I first met the Morcombes in 2003, in the loungeroom of their Palmwoods home, just north of Brisbane, as they sat with Queensland's Police Minister, being reassured that investigators were working hard to find their son. As media advisor to the Minister, I stayed in the background, observing without intruding on the couple's immense distress and confusion. When we met again, they were taking a break from the spotlight in a small

community outside Hobart in Tasmania. The Morcombes had purchased a second home where they may not have been entirely anonymous, but were at least recognised by fewer people than on the Sunshine Coast where Daniel was taken. While the sadness will always remain, Bruce and Denise are today in charge of their lives, media savvy and able to reflect on what it was like to suddenly step into the public arena.

The Morcombes recall little of their first interview other than the direct but 'soft' approach from a reporter for a one-on-one conversation at their home two days into the search. More vivid are memories of the first press conference, the following afternoon. The Queensland Police media unit organised a 15-minute sit-down with reporters to spread the word that Daniel was missing and ask for the community's help to find him. Bruce and Denise were driven to the nearby Maroochydore Police Station, where they tried to compose themselves before making a public statement and answering random questions. 'It was just media everywhere, cameras and microphones. We didn't know what was going on,' Denise explains. Reaching out to reporters for publicity in the midst of trauma is now an all-too-familiar scenario for Bruce:

> That was the typical media experience, one we relive whenever we see another family sitting between a couple of police officers appealing to the public for information regarding a lost loved one. We sort of look at that and say, 'We've been there; we've sat with the media glare on.'

Every parent's nightmare: what has happened to Daniel?

It was clear from the outset that Daniel's vanishing act was completely out of character

KIEL MOUNTAIN RD
Palmwoods

(*The Courier-Mail* 13 December 2003, p. 32)

Holding a press conference for all interested media is one of the proactive ways survivors can get their message out, whether that's publicising a cause, updating and thanking the community, or warning of risks and dangers. So often we see news crews turn up to staged events together, for fear of missing out on a story and audiences. The organisers take advantage of competition and the pack mentality driving decisions about newsworthiness. Press conferences also feed the voracious beast that may not go away until it gets what it wants: direct access to quotes and images that provide personal insight into the traumatic event. They both provide and contain interactions with multiple reporters. For those placed in front of the lights, cameras and microphones, it can still be a daunting experience, as the Morcombes point out. But what are the options? They could agree to a one-on-one interview with someone they hope they can trust to relay their story fairly and accurately. Alternatively, provide a written statement to media outlets. These methods enable people to control contact with reporters and avoid responding to often spontaneous questions hurdled at what's called a 'doorstop'.

Like most of the survivors in this book, the Morcombes relied on someone else to help make decisions about what media appearances, if any, were in the best interests of themselves and others. They followed every instruction from police to raise awareness of the search for Daniel, including participating in a re-enactment of their son's last known movements a week after he went missing. 'I was basically told what to say, given a piece of paper saying you've got to say you haven't seen Daniel for so many days, blah blah, bring him home,' Denise recalls. The Morcombes were prepared to sacrifice their personal privacy and become public figures in exchange for media and public help. 'I don't think there's any doubt, if Daniel's body had been found on day two, for argument's sake, we wouldn't have done any media at all,' Bruce says. 'The only reason for doing that was to appeal for information … to solve the case. One hundred per cent.'

Jacqueline Pascarl was personally convinced that holding a press conference was the best way to tell the maximum number of people in the shortest possible time that she was searching for her son and daughter. She describes media outlets as a 'vital lifeline' when Iddin and Shah didn't return from an access visit with their father. After issuing a press release and photographs of the young children to newspapers on a Sunday evening—four days after the disappearance—radio stations began calling just after 5am for interviews. Within hours, news crews arrived at the Melbourne home Jacqueline shared with then-husband Iain Gillespie. She now recognises she was sleep-deprived and didn't know what she was doing:

> I stood in the bathroom, first, and I was dry retching because my stomach was so empty and I was shaking … and crying, standing in front of the mirror and Iain [was] coming in behind me and saying, 'Come on, you've got to put make-up on.' I remember taking a breath and

> really wanting to smash my face in the mirror, and then I realised that I couldn't, so I straightened my shoulders and stuck my face on.

As media figures themselves, Jacqueline and Iain knew some of the reporters and crew who lined their loungeroom that day. 'We were walking over to them and they're all nodding and sort of trying to grimace-smile at me as if there'd been a death in the family,' Jacqueline recalls. She received hugs from those she knew. But when the press conference began, personal connections were set aside. The reporters were there to do a job. Jacqueline quickly realised she had no control over the questions and began to worry that she was so upset she'd be incoherent and forget to share information that could help identify and locate her children and former husband:

> I actually thought that the reporters were my friends, but they so patently weren't. On an individual basis yes, but not when they're in a pack, not when they're in a media frenzy. There's a collective absolution of guilt about being in a pack. Everyone was shooting questions at me, while I was trying not to cry. I was so incredibly naïve. Within days, I realised that I was open to being manipulated, that I was a sideshow. To hear the media talking, they would say that I'm a public figure and that I'm fair game. Though, to be fair, I've used the media to my own end and so it's a fair cop.

The Chamberlains are among the few survivors who became convinced that speaking about their loss was in the public interest rather than personal interest or simply because the public was interested. Michael Chamberlain said they would have preferred not to talk to reporters and gave it a great deal of consideration. Although in shock and grief, he says they ultimately decided there was a 'moral duty' to warn people that dingoes can be dangerous. Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton mimics reporters as she recounts the pitch:

> ‘We’d like to help you to do this because you said you don’t want to see this happen to anybody else, and we can help you get the warning out!’ That is the soft button every time when you’re in trauma, because you want to help. And then they said they’d be with us at a certain time and they also said they needed some photographs. As Michael was a photographer, he said he would do it. That was something which would help take his mind off it and to assist in getting the word out.

Lindy has observed that while some people can talk quite coherently—‘they know what’s happened and they need to talk to get the truth’—others can’t. She’s relieved to see some families, in the midst of trauma, make a statement asking media to give them space:

> These days they’re beginning to do that, but in our case you’d tell them no, I don’t want to talk to you, and they would land on your door and you’d answer the door and they’re there with their foot in the door with cameras rolling. So there does need to be, on the media, some sort of restrictions.

Michael considered once the ‘floodgates’ were opened, the only way to avoid media interviews was ‘to not be found—uncontactable.’ Even if a survivor doesn’t feel obliged to talk, they can easily be convinced that they will be pursued until they do.

Satisfying Demand

Ron Delezio and his wife Carolyn Martin were maintaining a vigil at daughter Sophie’s bedside, yet became aware of media scrums outside The Children’s Hospital at Westmead in Sydney. Journalists constantly requested updates on the toddler’s condition. Hospital staff organised written statements on behalf of the Delezios, before staging a press conference. Ron recognised the benefit, despite being nervous at first:

> My first reason to speak was sort of like a bit of a pact I had with the media—stop hiding behind the bushes and I will give you the information when something new has come up. And then it became a lot easier for me to speak to the media and realise that it was important … we were getting thousands of letters a day, thousands. At the hospital we had our own postman, only delivering to the hospital letters for us, and there were boxes and boxes and boxes every day. We knew how much people cared, so it reinforced the feeling inside of me that it was important to let the media know.

Journalists are also adept at convincing vulnerable people to participate in interviews by appealing to their sense of public duty or pointing out the personal benefit. Jenni Begg relented to media pressure for interviews for the same reasons as the Delezios. Roughly a week after her son, Jandamarra O'Shane, was attacked, she agreed to a press conference in the Royal Children's Hospital in Brisbane. Her rationale was simple:

> [To] put the media at bay, just to give our family that time as well. What also helped me to go out was the amount of letters … and so I felt we owed it to the people, all the love and support that was coming through, just to show face and just let them know how Jandamarra was going.

Jenni sat with her former husband Tim O'Shane under the camera lights, unable to concentrate on answering questions and wanting the press conference to end so she could return to Jandamarra:

> I was just thinking, 'My God how am I going to handle all these questions just flying at me?' But the reporters, I have to say, were respectful and allowed others to ask questions and gave me that chance to answer questions. I thank God the media relations people at the hospital gave a certain time and once that time was up we were able to leave.

While the press conference may be a staged environment, for some trauma survivors it doesn't mean they're personally in control. That's how Kay Danes and Douglas Wood felt when they each returned to Australia after being freed from captivity overseas. Firstly, they considered they had little choice but to respond to a round of reporter questions. Then they were told what they could and couldn't say by those looking to manage the press pack. Douglas doesn't remember being given an option by a lawyer, hired as his agent. Kay's lawyer convinced her and husband Kerry that one rushed press conference would satisfy all news outlets and avoid a string of interviews. 'My mum was sitting there at the table; she'd been waiting a whole year to see me … and I didn't even have time to sit down and have a cup of tea and say "How have you been going?"' Instead of resting and recovering with her children and parents in the intimate surrounds of the family home, Kay found herself confronted by strangers in an unfamiliar hotel meeting room:

> Our lawyer was planning all these media deals and we said no, no, no, we don't want to do that. The compromise was that we would have one media conference and we would speak to all media, of which there were about 200, in one room. It was quite shocking, because we were like: 'Wow, what's the interest?' Quite terrifying. I mean, you walk into a room and there's all these flashing bulbs and you're just like, 'What's going on?' Then there are news crews, three television cameras. It was just a weird feeling. 'Why are you all here?' We'd never been exposed to that before, and certainly from Kerry's point of view, being a soldier, he'd spent the best part of 20 years of his career avoiding media attention, and here he is now thrust into prime-time TV. It wasn't a comfortable experience for him, and he was quite guarded on what he was saying as well.

That press conference has 'plagued' Kay, who wanted to scream out that she and Kerry had been tortured in Laos—pistol-whipped and beaten—but didn't after being advised that might create diplomatic problems following their negotiated release by the Australian Government.

One journalist described it as ‘a performance which wavered between stand-up comedy and earnest protestations of innocence. At times, it seemed it was all a little much for Kay—who is being treated for post-traumatic stress disorder’ (*The Courier-Mail* 10 November 2001, p 3). Yet media pressed for the appearance.

Douglas Wood arrived in Australia from Iraq to be told he was fronting a press conference and couldn’t reveal many of the details of his hostage situation, for very different reasons than those given to Kay. Douglas’s brother Vernon was quoted as saying that, on medical advice, he had to be ‘protected from close and intrusive questioning’ (*Herald Sun* 21 June 2005, p. 5). Although, by this stage his family had signed a contract for him to share his story with the Australian public through a one-hour documentary-length exclusive with Network Ten. With Douglas’s full story going to the highest bidder, the press conference was a ‘free chance not to be missed’ by media, and so he was placed in front of what one newspaper insensitively described as ‘a firing squad of cameras’ (*Herald Sun* 21 June 2005, p. 5). While he apologised to the Australian and United States governments for a videotaped plea for troop withdrawals from Iraq, saying that was made under duress (*Geelong Advertiser* 21 June 2005, p. 3), Douglas describes the experience overall as one of ‘dodging and weaving’:

> I actually didn’t like that I was not supposed to say anything because by nature I’ll tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth and I didn’t like that I sort of had to be muzzled a bit. Anyway, we went out and sat on this great big long bench with my wife, two brothers and two sisters-in-law and answered a lot of silly questions. If I had a choice I would have said to my handlers, ‘Bugger you.’

The Australian (21 June 2005, p. 4) newspaper did observe that during the 15-minute press conference, Douglas’s ‘emotions swung wildly from elation, to vulnerability, to nostalgia’. That was the extent of recognition that here was a man still recovering from trauma. ‘They

were only interested in the story,' Douglas says in a matter-of-fact way. 'I think they take you as face value, here you are, you look healthy enough to me, you're fair game.' He concedes that even if it were left to him to decide how to manage the overwhelming media attention, he can't be sure he was in the right physical and mental state to make an informed decision:

> I think it would be about a month for my personality to re-emerge. I was very docile, going along with the flow, if you like. If my family wanted me to do something, I'd do it. If my wife wanted me to do something, I'd do it. It was only after a while I'd say, 'I don't want to do that.' But I'd been in this state for 47 days, where they'd come in in the morning and put a piece of bread in your hand and a bottle of water and you eat and that's not a rational, thinking-for-myself mentality. I probably would have been okay to give that interview back then when I first got here, to give my consent, but I'm not thinking about the highs and the lows and the pacificity of myself.

As kind and empathetic as Kay Danes found reporters and camera operators, she considers on reflection she should have spent at least a day with her family and been able to debrief with a psychologist before being peppered with questions:

> I don't think I was in the right mindset. I'd just come through a highly traumatic experience and my head was just spinning, and the whole thing was beyond our control. I remember sitting in that media interview, looking at everybody like they're aliens because we'd been in an environment for almost a year where you didn't speak English, you had to witness torture and you're suddenly plunged into this real world.

Limiting Contact

Even when a survivor believes they're not obliged to talk, they can easily be convinced that they'll be pursued until they do. 'It's just the way they make you feel … I know that sometimes I do have to give a line so that they leave me alone,' Mercedes Corby explains. 'I just have to do it for my own sanity sometimes.' She recalls having nowhere to hide when visiting her sister Schapelle, detained and later jailed on suspicion of trying to smuggle marijuana into the Indonesian island of Bali (*The Courier-Mail* 16 October 2004, p. 31). A week after the arrest, the producers of the Nine Network's *A Current Affair* program appealed to Mercedes's desire to protest Schapelle's innocence and explain to the Australian people that she'd never been in trouble before. Despite having had little sleep, barely anything to eat and no understanding of the way the media operated or how she would be portrayed, Mercedes felt comfortable. She says the crew explained what would happen, seemed compassionate, recorded the interview quickly and the alternative had to be worse:

> When we agree to an interview, it always seems more controlled and less stressful. When standing on the street, or in front of the prison, with a media pack yelling questions at us and following us, it is very daunting and we really have no control. With my experience now I would prefer an arranged interview.

One-on-one interviews are usually gentler than the all-in press conference or impromptu 'doorstop', where reporters fire questions over the top of each other. Not only is the pack mentality avoided, but a media outlet with exclusive access to a growing celebrity is not going to risk losing them to the competition or being publicly viewed as insensitive because of a grilling that causes upset. Sometimes they'll discuss the questions with the subject before, or allow edited responses after, affording the survivor a greater degree of power in

the relationship. Todd Russell was looking for a way out of constant media intrusions, at a time when he was struggling with the after-effects of a near-death experience:

> I got very angry so I couldn't actually deal with the media because I got to the stage where I was frightened that if the wrong thing was said or done I was going to hurt somebody. The last thing I wanted was to be seen in a photo punching a reporter or something like that—it doesn't look good and I just didn't want it. Obviously, we didn't realise that we were suffering from post-traumatic stress at the time, but it affects people differently.

Todd and fellow miner Brant Webb hired a media agent and negotiated an exclusive deal in the hope of regaining control of their lives. They were taking action themselves to shift the power balance with media. The first interview was given to the Nine Network's *A Current Affair* program. Todd has high praise for the way host Tracy Grimshaw conducted the conversation. 'She knew the questions that she needed to ask to get the emotional side out of us, but she also asked the questions that the public needed to hear as well,' he explains.

Himalayan survivor James Scott was thankful that his family turned to a media agent who negotiated one newspaper interview and another statement for television audiences to avoid a press conference that would have been mentally and physically overwhelming. Two weeks after he was rescued, the hiker was recovering in hospital in Brisbane when he recorded a 30-second clip for the Nine Network's *60 Minutes* program in the lead-up to a full paid interview with the late reporter Richard Carlton. James also took part in his first interview, with Eric Bailey from London's *The Daily Telegraph*, then owned by Conrad Black. The story was re-printed in Australia (*The Sun-Herald* 23 February 1992, pp. 1 & 3, and 1 March 1992, pp. 1 & 3). James says he appreciated being given the opportunity to recount what he'd experienced, uninterrupted, for three or four hours a day over about five days:

> When people have been traumatised, I think they need a lot of space to tell their story and a lot of respect towards what they're saying. Each word is important to them; each part is important, and those people that just allow people to ramble on and tell the parts that are important to them, are the ones who leave you feeling like your experience has been valued. Eric Bailey did that beautifully.

Like the Scott family, Steve and Annette Diver attempted to limit media contact with their son Stuart after he was rescued from the Thredbo landslide. They fronted a press conference themselves, hoping to placate reporters before Stuart recorded a short video statement of thanks to the Australian public and rescuers from his hospital bed—one camera, free of reporter questions, shared with all outlets. The reprieve was brief though. In a 24/7 news cycle, it's a challenge for media to continually provide audiences with new information, meeting a demand they in fact created. When the Divers found news crews were not satisfied, they hired a media agent who arranged exclusive media interviews. Stuart believed at the time he had no choice, although he was working with a psychologist to help heal after the loss of his wife, Sally, friends and visitors:

> I really shouldn't have been there talking about anything that went on in Thredbo until after I'd been through that treatment. Because it was only then that I was able to work out what had gone on within myself, have a balanced view of what was going on. I was probably only very lucky in all the interviews that I did, that I was very clear in what I wanted to get across, how I wanted to be portrayed, and what I wanted to do.

Today James Scott is a respected psychiatrist who frequently seeks informed consent from clients, encouraging them to carefully consider the risks and benefits before deciding to speak publicly about their experiences. Training has taught him that trauma survivors need to have the mental and physical strength to process information and the time to think about

it. He's reflected on his own condition after being rescued from the Nepalese mountains and recognises he could not have made a well-considered decision about whether to be interviewed, by whom and how:

> I don't think a person who is media naïve, who has been through a traumatic experience, is in the psychological space to know the ramifications of giving that interview, and what ramifications it might have for them ongoing as far as the way they will be perceived … to know where that boundary is between what should stay private and what can be public. When you're traumatised, that boundary becomes even less robust.

James and Stuart would today encourage news editors and reporters to be kind and empathetic instead of demanding and intrusive, aware they will have an impact on people who have been fighting to survive or suffered an immense loss. 'If this was your brother, if this was your mother, if this was your son, how would you want them to be treated?' James asks. Stuart adds: 'Slowly, slowly, is the way to go. Put yourself in the place of the person … and then you'll realise, someone who's just lost their wife tragically probably really doesn't want to be talking to you.' James is adamant if he had a choice, he wouldn't have spoken with reporters:

> You'd say we do have a choice, but I don't know if we do. I think there's enormous public pressure, you know. You see people trying to hold out and not comment on things, and these are people who are media savvy and they eventually bow to public pressure. I think people that have been through a significant trauma, they don't have the resource and resilience and experience to hold out. I think that there's a lot to be said for trying to avoid it if you can. Assuming that's not possible, I think the most useful thing is when you get a request just to kind of sit on it for a bit.

The average person has limited exposure to media practices, little knowledge of options for responding to requests for interview and certainly no training in when to answer a question directly and how to avoid others. Those who are recovering from a traumatic event, that has already stripped them of a sense of control, have arguably even less hope of navigating their way through a sea of news crews. Reporters don't always descend on survivors in a pack. Sometimes they come across as genuinely interested and caring individuals. However, both approaches can make the subjects of their attention cave in and speak publicly, even when they have a media agent acting on their behalf.

3

THE FACE OF TRAUMA

> The media wants you to respond in a way they think the public expects you to respond, and if you don't then that will make a headline because you are different. You are not operating according to the protocols of how proper people should react, although the media set these standards.
>
> - Michael Chamberlain

It's four decades since baby Azaria Chamberlain was taken by a dingo, propelling her parents into the media spotlight and what was to become the most celebrated case in Australian legal history. The Chamberlains were highly sought-after by news crews from the outset, not just for their testimony but their image. Michael Chamberlain, then a Seventh Day Adventist pastor, husband to Lindy and father of three, agreed to speak with any reporter who asked for an interview about the tragedy. He too wanted to capture the attention of audiences—not for commercial reasons, but to raise a public alarm about the predatory behaviour of dingos. What Michael and Lindy didn't anticipate was how their own behaviour would be reported and judged by strangers from that moment on. Their every move, word and expression became the subject of commentary as they tried to share their message, navigating the media

onslaught while dealing with the loss of their child. Images play a particularly powerful role in storytelling, as the Chamberlains discovered.

When traumatic events happen, media outlets immediately scramble to locate pictures of survivors and victims, typically hunting for private photos and teary interviews. Putting a face to the disaster, tragedy or conflict helps us comprehend the human impact. Photographs and video offer an air of authenticity. A glimpse into the everyday activities of a survivor—before their life of normality and anonymity was unexpectedly shattered—helps us connect with them emotionally, instead of just processing the information. Imagining ourselves in that position, relating to their pain and shock, leads us to want to know what happens next; how the survivor responds and recovers.

Images of ordinary people also reassures us that what is being reported is real, enhancing the credibility of coverage. Although, the words around pictures—captions, headlines, teasers and the story itself—are written to encourage readers and viewers to interpret them a particular way. The public persona built for an accidental celebrity may not be the same then as how the individual sees themselves. The way they 'perform' in public and are represented in broadcast, print and online is not always how they behave in private or truly reflect what they are experiencing. Traumatised people don't always follow norms of behaviour, whether deliberately or inadvertently. This chapter looks at the power of media to construct a narrative with pictures, the kinds of images that are taken and traded, and the role survivors like the Chamberlains play in their own portrayal.

The Power of Pictures

When nine-and-a-half-week-old Azaria disappeared from the family's camp site in the Central Australian desert in the winter of 1980, there were no mobile telephones, digital

cameras or internet services to record and transmit images in an instant. Just like today though, pictures were regarded as a powerful and widely trusted storytelling tool. The more the impact of a traumatic event can be personalised, the more audiences can identify with survivors, the more interested they usually become. The story, in turn, is elevated to a prominent position amongst other competing coverage. When the lack of accessibility to remote country denied media organisations from gathering early pictures of the Chamberlains, the couple were happy to help. Lindy explains:

> The newspapers said they needed photographs, and Michael said well he was a photographer, he could do it. That was something to sort of take his mind off it, and to assist in getting the word out … They insisted on black-and-white, and said there was black-and-white film at the store, so we went round and got that, or they flew it up and we picked it up. I don't remember. And Michael took the photographs and then he dropped them off.

The Chamberlains also released a photograph of Azaria as a newborn. Before long their willingness to assist media was viewed as eagerness to be on the news, while their composure aroused suspicion. Six months later—in February 1981—after the first inquest determined that a wild dog or dingo took Azaria, they stood on the steps of the Alice Springs courthouse holding a poster-size photograph of Lindy nursing the baby. The Chamberlains wanted to remind people that at the centre of the legal debate was a little girl, their daughter, and they believed the image would send that powerful message. They could not have foreseen it would be reproduced by media so often in the years to come as to be considered iconic, along with another photograph taken by Michael. Captioned 'Azaria standing on the base of Ayers Rock,' it was the last picture of the baby—Lindy holding her tiny hands the day she vanished.

Michael reflected on what the 'face' of trauma looks like, according to conventional wisdom, as he took a moment of quiet contemplation at a private bush retreat. Whenever he could, he

would drive to a camp site, surrounded by rolling hills, on the outskirts of his home town of Cooranbong in New South Wales. There he sat on an old chair, relaying his media experiences before sadly, and unexpectedly, dying as a result of complications from leukaemia in January 2017, at the age of 72. The man who became a household name in Australia had some contact with journalists prior to the intense interest that Azaria's disappearance attracted, although not as the central focus of a news story. He had his own radio program for six years, first in Tasmania during his early married life with Lindy, and then in Queensland. Michael was also a regular columnist with *The Cairns Post* newspaper in Far North Queensland.

Lindy says while their media association taught the couple what would become news, dealing with headline-hunting journalists was still 'a huge learning experience.' She points to the public 'backlash' she experienced over her appearance in a television interview when Azaria's intact jumpsuit was discovered, a week after her disappearance. Although she says she was reticent and uncomfortable about describing the behaviour of dingoes, Lindy explained on camera, 'They use their feet like hands and pull back the skin as they go and they just peel it like an orange.' Commentators described her demeanour as 'seemingly unfeeling.' She realises herself that it made her look 'hard':

> A lot of people were horrified that I could talk academically about the tragedy of my daughter's death … To me she's … more like she's asleep until Christ wakes her up. Whereas they imagined her feeling everything that happened to her after she was dead. And I've always said to people why should I put myself through that trauma and the agony when she couldn't feel anything. It had nothing to do with her alive and beautiful. That was all later, and it's one reason why I think her clothes, all messed up, don't mean a thing. They're just dirty clothes, with interesting information on them. Whereas when I was handed her

> bunny rug to ID, I cracked up in the box, so they had to wait for a while for me to get myself together, because it was clean and the whole emotional memory thing was totally different.

Lindy speaks too of the media and public attention affecting her emotional responses and subsequent portrayal. She explains how 'your face goes stiff' at times in the glare of strangers. When she did show vulnerability and distress, Lindy says the pictures often weren't used:

> Apart from our first news footage at the Rock, after that reporters told us outright when I broke down and cried, 'Sorry, we'll stop rolling … the public gets really upset if we show you crying. They think we're harassing you, so even if we keep filming we will later edit it out.' The public then thinks: 'The hard-faced bitch never cried.' And then after I got out of prison and the Royal Commission was coming, those shots were suddenly shown and it's like: 'Oh, we don't remember those pictures from back then. She wasn't nearly as hard as we thought she was. She was upset.'

Today, I'd be surprised to hear that a news crew has voluntarily turned the camera off in the middle of an emotional scene. Traumatised people are a commodity to media outlets. They aren't described in newsrooms as brutally as that, but highlighting the anguish and suffering of ordinary people is widely understood as an effective way to boost sales, ratings, page views and engagement. Public displays of emotion are, in effect, commercialised. Television, for example, uses what are called teasers or promos to attract audiences, and if a story or interview isn't sensational, then program-makers will often draw out emotion as the next best way to encourage people to tune in. Newspapers, particularly those known as tabloid, rely on large photos that capture human interest to entice readers. Lindy is particularly critical of the media's ability to manipulate images, making a subject look 'nice'

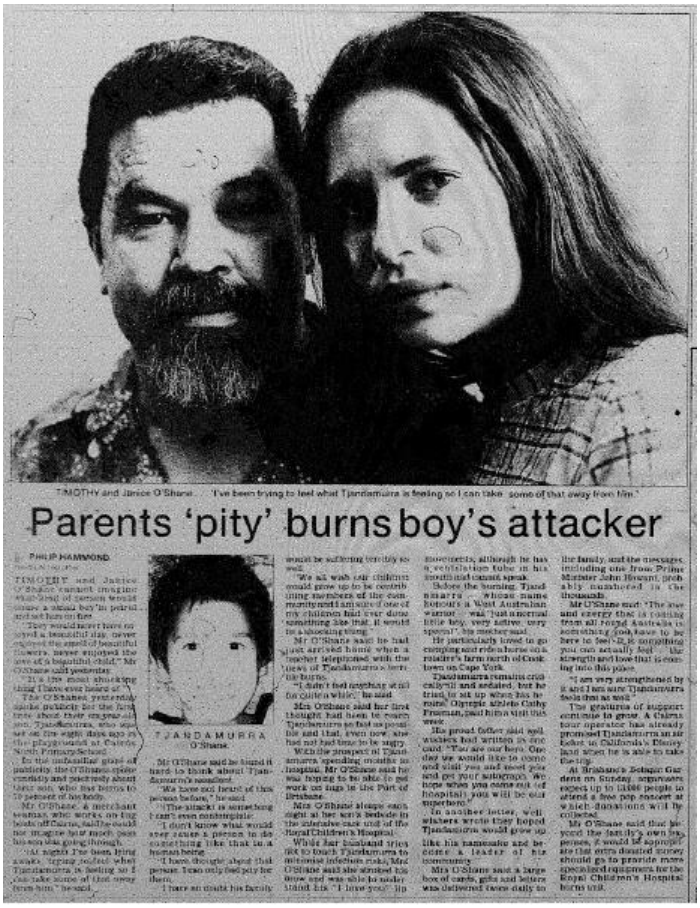
or ‘stupid,’ depending on whether they are ‘in favour’ or not. She is sure Australians were given an inaccurate ‘picture’ of her as ‘weird’:

> Of course, I was the cold-eyed killer and a bitch and all that sort of thing and then putting photographs through the wire not once but several times to deepen the shadows—you can make anybody look like a horrifying murderer like that because it just makes them look real creepy. And they admittedly did that more than once.

Creating an Image

Pictures captured by media are generally aimed at supporting a narrative. That may not always mirror who the subject feels they are or accurately represent their experience. Unless a trauma survivor realises how they’re being portrayed and objects before publication or broadcast, they’ve lost control. Jenni Begg was aware of the image she was helping create when her son Jandamarra O’Shane faced life-threatening burns, but felt powerless to intervene. Jenni and Jandamarra’s father, Tim O’Shane, were asked to pose for photographs comforting each other after appearing at their first press conference. That sticks in the woman’s mind as an awkward experience because she was in a relationship with someone else:

> Tim and I had been separated since Jandamarra was about two. They tried to make us out to be an item, a couple, you know, that we were still with each other. But then I thought, “Oh well, this is our child,” and yeah, just that once I allowed photographs to be taken.



TIMOTHY and Janice O'Shane ... 'I've been trying to feel what Tjandamurra is feeling so I can take some of that away from him.'

Parents 'pity' burns boy's attacker

PHILIP HAMMOND

TJANDAMURRA O'Shane.

(*The Courier-Mail* **19 October 1996, p. 3)**

Bruce and Denise Morcombe say they learnt within a week of son Daniel's disappearance that reporters and camera operators will go as far as to set-up or manipulate situations, adding a supporting element to a depiction. The Morcombes complained to one media outlet about a photograph of them taken at the overpass where Daniel was abducted. A member of the public had left a wooden cross and Bruce says before they realised what was going on, a reporter had asked them to hold it. 'Nothing wrong with that, but it paints the picture we're perhaps more religious than we genuinely are, and periodically up would come that photo,' he explains. Jacqueline Pascarl too regrets posing for pictures that were aimed at portraying her as a victim—anxious and waiting for news of her abducted children:

A lot of photographers would ask me to stand in the window and look longingly outwards or put my palms against the window and lean against it. Really, really trite, mostly turgid, supposedly poignant images which weren't me anyway, and so I just say no now.

Herald-Sun, Tuesday, July 14, 1992—Page 5

Two disappear on visit to 'royal' dad

HUNT FOR CHILDREN

By PHIL SKEGGS

AUSTRALIAN Foreign Affairs Department officials have been called into the search for two Melbourne children who disappeared on the weekend during an access visit with their natural father, a Malaysian prince.

The Australian High Commission in Kuala Lumpur was asked to inquire into the possible whereabouts of Iddin Gillespie 9, his sister Shah 7, and the background of Raja Bahrin Shah, who has been linked to the royal court of Terengganu.

A department spokesman in Canberra said yesterday it was not yet known whether the tho were in Malaysia, or whether they had left Australia.

But he said if the children were found in a foreign country, every legal avenue would be explored to fly and get them returned to Melbourne.

He said if a court application failed, the department would consider using diplomatic pressure.

The Federal Attorney-General's office yesterday confirmed Malaysia was not a signatory to The Hague Convention on Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.

The office has been trying to ascertain whether Raja Bahrin has any special immunity from prosecution if he is located in Australia.

State and federal police have been unable to find any trace of him or the children despite a close monitor of all air and sea port terminals throughout Australia.

Police were alerted on Sunday after Raja Bahrin, 37, failed to return the children to their mother, Mrs Jacqueline Gillespie, and stepfather television journalist Iain Gillespie by 12.30pm.

Mrs Gillespie was granted sole custody of the two children by a Full Bench of the Family Court in 1984. She fled Malaysia with the children in 1985.

Mr Gillespie said last night he had asked Foreign Affairs to inquire with Malay authorities about the children's whereabouts.

He said computer checks had not provided any clues as to whether they may have already left Australia using a combination of their Malaysian names.

Police were also hoping to gather some leads from records of faxes and telephone calls made by the prince from the Victoria Hotel in Little Collins St last Thursday.

"The federal police assure us they are doing everything they can and following every lead that they possibly can, but there has been no indication to date where they are," Mr Gillespie said.

According to a warrant for the children's return issued by Family Court Justice Joske last Sunday, Raja Bahrin is also known as Raja Kamarul Bahrin Shah, Raja Raja Ahmad Baharuddin Shah.

The children's Malay names are Raja Muhamad Baharuddin Ismail Shah Bin Raja Kamarul Bahrin Dan Raja Ahmad Baharuddin Shah (Iddin), and Raja Shahirah Aishah Binti Raja Kamarul Bahrin Shah (Shahirah).

Mr Gillespie said neither child could speak the Malay language and had lived with their mother in Australia almost all their lives.

A distraught Mrs Gillespie fears she may never see her children again because she knows her ex-husband has "unlimited resources" at his disposal.

She said he had also threatened to mount a "jihad" or Holy War against her during the custody case in the Family Court in September, 1988.

The prince's second wife, Nonie, said yesterday she was "very, very worried" about her husband and the children.

She said she last spoke to him by telephone three days ago, but he had not mentioned any plans to bring the children back to Malaysia.

A spokesman for the Malaysian High Commission in Canberra said it was not known how closely linked Raja Bahrin was to the royal court and they had not been requested by the prince's family to make any inquiries on their behalf.

● Rojo Bahrin Shah is the father of the missing children, Iddin and Shah.

● Anxious ... Iain and Jacqueline Gillespie wait for news of their children. Picture: KAINE PINDER

Lisa gears for babies

MULTIPLE Commonwealth Games gold medal swimmer Lisa Curry-Kenny picked up some maternity wear yesterday when she was outfitted in the $9000 Australian Olympic Games team uniform and kit.

The 30-year-old, who is contesting the 100m butterfly, 50m freestyle and two relays in Barcelona, could not get a regulation issue bra to fit her depleted bust.

"So I took a bra two sizes bigger so I can wear it when I'm pregnant again," said Curry-Kenny who is lining up for her third Olympics.

"I also took a bigger pair of sports knickers because they're nice and firm and they hold your belly in when you have just had a baby.

"People always look surprised when I say I'm going to have another baby.

"But there is no limit. I'm a mother and I love babies."

The mother-of-two said she thought she was pregnant two months ago, and she "freaked out".

"I don't know if I would have still gone to Barcelona, it would have depended on how I was feeling but thankfully it is not an issue," she said.

Curry-Kenny was one of 265 Australian Olympic athletes and officials outfitted over the past two days in what organisers described as a streamlined nightmare.

Mr Dougal Pleasance, a spokesman from the Wool Corporation which supplied $600,000 of the official clothing, said: "Athletes have the weirdest builds. They have giant shoulders, no waists, bulging thighs and no backsides.

"Then you get cyclists who have no shoulders and tree trunk legs and wrestlers who are short but huge all over."

— AAP

***(Herald-Sun* 14 July 1992, p. 5)**

Jacqueline and the Morcombes quickly discovered, however, that the careful, trickled-out release of personal photographs can help keep a story running—they serve as new information, like any other details or data. It's a strategy they used to effect as they sought public assistance in the search for their children. Jacqueline released school photographs of her son and daughter with a press release outlining how their father failed to return them after an access visit. When camera crews arrived at her home for interviews, Jacqueline recalls they wanted more:

> Some photographs I didn't let them use because they were personal. But I also had an enormous pin-board five-foot-by-five-foot square in our family room, which was littered with photographs over many years of all my kids plus really, really quite well known Australian people—identities in the media, that I tried to protect as much as possible—and released only a few images on advice which then would keep the story fresh. I was told 'Don't give too much; you need a new angle further down the track, save that for later, you know, birthday or anniversary.'

The Morcombes were told by police that the public needed to know what Daniel looked like if there were to be any sightings of him. The couple readily handed over photos that were then widely distributed and repeatedly used. The Morcombes were then careful when releasing more, as Bruce explains:

> If a media person asked for a couple of photos, we would selectively find one or two and keep the rest away because we knew that another—Seven or Nine or another paper or magazine—would knock on our door in the months or a year ahead. 'They've already used those photos, have you got a photo that hasn't been used before?' We always kept a few up our sleeve. I suppose it was us trying to use the media to our advantage and sometimes we would keep things back.

Trading Images

Family, friends and emergency services are regular points of contact for reporters looking for still or moving pictures of those swept up in a traumatic event but inaccessible. Often these sources will oblige, releasing private images as a public testimonial to a loved one. A photograph of Todd Russell playing football appeared across media outlets within a day of news breaking that he and two other miners were trapped in the Beaconsfield rockfall. There was an echo in the way the press described him—as a 'respected footballer,' 'top player,'

‘keen footballer,’ and ‘top bloke, player’ (*The Examiner* 27 April 2006, pp. 1 & 3; *Herald Sun* 27 April 2006, p. 4; *The Mercury* 27 April 2006, p. 3). Australians are known for being sports lovers, so these personal insights made Todd easy to relate to as an ordinary person. Newspapers went further in portraying Todd and fellow survivor Brant Webb as likeable by highlighting personal qualities. Those who identified themselves as friends of Todd and Brant called them ‘good blokes, all good family men’ (*The Australian* 27 April 2006, p. 4).

Kay Danes, on the other hand, was ‘horrified’ to see the image handed to reporters of her and husband Kerry from before they were detained in Laos. The couple’s personal belongings were locked in storage, leaving Kay’s parents with one option. But she says it wasn’t how they wanted to be represented:

> We’d sent this picture home to mum and dad from a ’fifties rock and roll fancy dress night and that’s the photo they used. I had my hair all done up, you know in curls and I had a polka dot skirt on and Kerry had his hair all flicked back with oil and he had on a black leather jacket—we looked like a couple of crims and that was the photo that was always on the news and in the newspaper. The journalist tried to do something creative with it, so they split us down the middle, and where they cut it my hair looks like it’s sort of gone up to the side like bloody George Jetson or something. And it’s just like, ‘no way, are you kidding me?’ They’ve used this photo all across the nation and here I am dressed like this—my friends are going to be, like, ‘what the hell are you wearing?’

Some survivors acquiesce to requests for pictures from the traumatic event or while recovering, in the hope that it will satisfy persistent demands for access. Others feel they have an obligation to keep the public informed due to the already high interest in their story. For both reasons, cameras were given a limited opportunity to capture images of Stuart Diver laying in a hospital bed, thanking his rescuers, while also being provided with a photo of the

moment he was pulled from the Thredbo landslide rubble. Stuart says he granted paramedic Paul Featherstone permission to release the rescue picture, not realising at the time that it would be archived and regularly reproduced to this day:

> He [Featherstone] took 36, or whatever it was, photos that day. They told me they were just for their own use, to work out what was going on during the rescue, to see what happened. When he took the film to be developed, every other photo was destroyed except that one photo in the middle. There was only that one photo. Then he called me, and said, 'Do you mind if we release that?' I said, 'No, no, no, go for it,' because I thought, you know, they had no other photos. So they put that one out and that became the iconic photo. Now the problem with that photo is, that's all fine and well, but if you're a parent or whatever of one of the people who died here, that photo, every time it's out there, brings you back to that day one. If you've dealt with it then it's all fine, but if you haven't, it's usually a traumatic experience. And that's the problem with pictures.

Jandamarra O'Shane was shielded from media, with visitor access also limited because he was at great risk of infection. His father Tim instead shared photos with news outlets and later his mother Jenni did the same. 'I had to take some shots for *The Courier-Mail* when he first started to learn how to walk. I can remember getting down on the ground and taking some and they turned out pretty good,' she explains. The way Jandamarra would be seen by the public was therefore determined by his parents. However, they found they had no control over the distribution of pictures, soon learning that the outlets to whom they gave photos would trade them with others. 'You get a few pictures taken and it's like they'll use one and they'll like give another person another and you get all these newspapers just to have a look at the photo shoot,' Jandamarra explains, adding with a grin, 'I just liked looking at myself.'

Family pictures of Schapelle Corby helped audiences identify with her as an average Australian before she was arrested in Bali for drug smuggling. What the Corbys didn't realise is that private images they owned would instantly become public property, shared across media organisations, permanently available online, and reprinted in books written by others. Schapelle's sister, Mercedes Corby, says that's now a source of regret:

> One thing we did really wrong was the newspapers would ask for family photos of Schapelle when she was young and we'd give them to them. Or they would come to the house and take a photo; they're still around now and anyone's just using them. You know, they're everywhere. Now if we ever give a photo, we tell them one-time use only.

The face of trauma becomes a commodity when pictures can be traded, as many in this book found. When the survivors and their families choose not to open up their private photo albums, media will go to other potential sources. The harder the pictures are to secure, the more valuable they become, enabling people to profit from the suffering of others. The Diver family refused to release pictures of Stuart before the Thredbo landslide, but reporters found another supplier, as Stuart himself reveals:

> There was a photographer in town, one who works here year-round, and he gave to one of the media outlets all of the photos he had of all of the victims, everyone in there … No he didn't give them away, we know he sold them ... Otherwise they wouldn't have had any photos. And the only photo they had of me, I was guiding a walk near Kosciusko, I've got a big straw hat on, which was fine, it didn't worry me—it doesn't worry me because I was alive—but all the photos of whether it was Sally or the other victims, yeah, it absolutely pisses people off.

Stuart urges reporters and editors to think through how and where they're sourcing images, particularly of deceased people. Today, social media accounts and websites are immediately

trawled through for images that can be downloaded and published or broadcast in an instant. Pictures, no matter how they're gathered, are then shared or copied across media outlets. Stuart points out that relatives and friends are traumatised, already feeling a loss of control, and don't always want a public tribute to their loved one:

> Some families don't mind it because some families obviously give the media their photos of their daughter or whoever; that's what they want. I guarantee you the photo that the media buy off the local photographer is always the worst, and they always look terrible and they'll be from Facebook, out drunk at three in the morning; that's the photos they get now … The visual has a much bigger impact than obviously just word.

The family of Queenslander James Scott gave *The Courier-Mail* newspaper photos of the hiker to accompany a story aimed at alerting friends to his disappearance in the Himalayan mountains. After James was found, the media demand for photos of his recovery became intense. How did he look after 43 days cold, hungry and isolated? Was he really as ill as doctors said, amid claims that his survival was a hoax? The Scotts saw no benefit in allowing images to be taken of James outside an exclusive media deal. Simply satisfying public curiosity wasn't a good enough reason for them to welcome media into the hospital. When photographers found they were also unable to penetrate the tight security that had been placed around James, he says his friends were approached:

> They claim that they were offered $1,000 to take a photo when they were coming out from visiting me, things like this. Some reporters were very nasty, too; you know, rang up and said, 'What can you tell me about James Scott and his character?' They all [James's friends] described feeling intimidated by the guy who was doing this. I think it was a terrible violation, just contacting my friends. I thought that was appalling.

Mercedes Corby is convinced that Indonesian authorities did accept invitations to profit from the arrest of her sister Schapelle:

> You'd see sneaky photos taken. It's like some that we knew that the police took with their phones and obviously they were selling it to the media. Then there were all the other photos, and all pretty much bad ones. I know it sounds stupid to be caring about the photos in the newspaper, but it all makes it so much harder when 500 photos are taken of you and they pick the ugliest one out of the whole lot. I know it seems—what's that word—vain, but it does get annoying.

Expressing Emotion

Most of the survivors I spoke with felt that journalists were 'tear hungry,' making some wonder whether instead of eliciting public empathy, they became a source of public entertainment. Photos of Bruce and Denise Morcombe were accompanied by phrases such as 'red-eyed from tears and lack of sleep' (*The Courier-Mail* 10 December 2003, p. 9), with Denise 'trembling and holding back the tears' (*The Australian* 15 December 2003, p. 3). While Bruce has always maintained his composure to ensure the message to the public is clear, Denise points out she has been the subject of numerous camera close-ups. 'They always went for my eyes,' she explains. 'They always had the camera right on my eyes. Because my eyes told the story. That's one thing I do hate, so I'd wear glasses. They didn't get the tears very often.' Today, the couple recognise that matching the words and pictures creates the most powerful portrayal. Often that's been pre-determined, according to Bruce:

> Many times a journalist will do a story, like a print journalist with a magazine or paper, and the photographer sometimes isn't there when the story's being done; they'll come in the afternoon or the next day, with a brief of the style of photo. And they'll say: 'Put your arm here!' We'd have the smile on our face, for family portraits you smile, and they'll say 'No,

> I don't want you to smile, we want you to look a bit glum, a bit sad.' We're trying to smile and have a bit of a joke to get through the day, but that's not what they want photographed.

Denise recognises that while police hoped her displays of emotion would compel witnesses to provide much-needed information on Daniel's whereabouts, reporters and editors also expected the couple to show signs of personal pain and suffering. It isn't enough for a traumatised person to simply share their story. Audiences can best relate to the extraordinary experience of an ordinary person if they not only describe the impact but demonstrate it physically. Posing the same question multiple times in different ways is one of the techniques reporters can employ in their hunt for tears. Jacqueline Pascarl experienced that first-hand as she struggled to hold back her emotions, concerned the reporting of her first press conference would focus less on what she was saying and more on how she was saying it:

> I knew enough instinctively that if I cried, the message and the description of my children and everything that the public needed to know from me about my kids to help me find my kids, would not get to air. I couldn't afford to cry and that was the sole aim of many of those interviewing me. Three or four of the journalists present kept asking me the same question over and over again, rephrasing it, and I remember breaking down in tears and trying to ask them to button off the cameras, to stop filming me, and they didn't. They said they'd buttoned off. The journalists put their mics down, but the cameras kept rolling on me, sobbing.

Leaving long pauses after answers so the survivor can dwell on their trauma, break down or feel compelled to continue talking, is another effective tactic to draw out emotion. Like other reporters, I learnt on the job how to read body language and trigger tears from interview subjects at the right time. A gentle physical gesture of comfort, such as a hand on the arm of the survivor, will often work if questions—including the cringe-worthy 'How do you feel?'—don't. All the while, cameras are capturing close-ups of sad or teary eyes and

quivering lips. Mercedes Corby felt reporters also tried to make her family express anger, then 'They'll cut out the questions to build you up, or what they've done and then they get their great footage.'

If trauma survivors don't want to be passively manipulated by media, then the first question they need to ask themselves is: Am I emotionally ready to front reporters? Even when they think the answer is yes, they can never be certain how their mind and body will respond in the midst of a painful and distressing event or soon after—from seemingly irrational to emotionally devoid. Mercedes Corby unintentionally ran headlong into the situation Jacqueline Pascarl desperately tried to avoid—losing her message in an outpouring of emotion. When Schapelle was convicted of smuggling cannabis into Indonesia and sentenced to twenty years in prison, there were 'wild scenes in the packed courtroom,' as Mercedes and their mother, Rosleigh Rose, began yelling that the judges got it wrong (*The Australian* 28 May 2005, p. 1). She agrees with reports that when she stepped out of the court and into a media scrum, she then 'struggled to cope' (*The Courier-Mail* 28 May 2005, p. 5):

> We had a statement written out and it was given to me. I'm going to be the one to say the statement, I'm going to try and be calm and collected. I already had that thought in my head, but it just didn't happen. Halfway through I just lost it and started screaming, screaming, it's really embarrassing. It's on YouTube actually, but you can hardly understand me, I was just screaming. I wish that didn't happen, but my body just took over, I couldn't control myself.

Kay Danes and Douglas Wood both discovered, unexpectedly, their personal triggers for tears. Kay is aware that when she and Kerry returned from Laos, reporters pushed in interviews to get 'to the heart of the matter.' She says she initially tried to avoid talking about

the separation from their three children, but doesn't regret when the impact of the family being pulled apart was evident on her face:

> Because I hadn't yet dealt with that aspect of the trauma, I would just break down. I could visualise seeing my children going off on the tuk-tuk into the dust, waving goodbye and I'm standing there waving as well and that was always a really traumatic experience for me to articulate in an interview. But there were many moments like that, and it seemed to me that they really did want to draw all that out. That's not to say it's a bad thing, because I think if you want to reach people, you have to have emotion. You have to have them come on the journey with you, so that they can really get the experience of where you were at, where your mindset was, what you were feeling, what you felt when your children were torn away from you.

Within a day of Douglas's arrival in Australia from Iraq, Network Ten began filming a one-hour television special. Douglas says he was barely conscious that his movements were constantly being recorded by television cameras when, at a cocktail party, he was surprised by a visit from his daughter Christina Bjergo, son-in-law Karl and grandchildren Alie and Nicholas. When then seven-year-old Nicholas said he'd play a song on a grand piano, tears started streaming down Douglas's face for the first time. He had a flashback to his captors telling him they knew he had a grandson, which he interpreted as a veiled threat.

> Sandra Sully, being a good reporter, is always digging, needling me trying to get emotion out of me and I'm not giving it to her and then she got it. Nobody likes to listen to a robot and if you're not showing all your emotions sometimes you are a bit robotic. Boys in my generation were told don't cry. You're strong … it's a weakness … that's part of the male bullshit that Australia tended to drum into its kids. I think today they're a little bit more sensitive.

Not all trauma survivors feel manipulated by media into showing emotion. 'I just cried anyway,' recalls Jenni Begg, of the time when her son Jandamarra lay critically ill in a hospital bed. Others accept it's part of letting the public into their lives when they agree to interact with reporters and camera operators. Ron Delezio says he was comfortable expressing how he felt about his daughter Sophie's struggle for survival to the hundreds and thousands of people across Australia who were sending well wishes:

> It's something that I've always thought was good, to be yourself and if you're emotional about it, let yourself be emotional about it…I think the media thought that it's better if I did … you know get a few tears for their audience. But, I must admit, I don't hesitate now to show my emotions and probably in that respect I've fallen into their lap, but I don't care—I am who I am.

Stuart Diver, on the other hand, recognises he shut down his emotions during media interviews in the months after the Thredbo tragedy, reverting to 'pure survival mode.' He explains: 'It's like a switch in your brain and it says must do two-hour interview with this person, click and away you go.' Stuart was also adamant that he didn't want to cry on camera, instead putting on a strong and positive face for his family and friends who were suffering. He soon found that when reporters can't prompt survivors and their loved ones to pour out their emotions, or what they express isn't considered typical for someone in that situation, their reaction will be questioned. 'For that I copped a bit of a backlash, just from the public, who said that I was cold-hearted because I didn't show any of that sort of emotion,' Stuart recalls. He now regrets not letting his face reveal the compassion and love he was feeling:

> It was detrimental to me in that I was not showing my true emotion there because I didn't want to, and then later on I'd go and cry for three hours in the shower because, you know, you just had to let it all out that way. But probably it would have given people a truer picture

> of who I was, and I did actually have an emotional side, if I had—not necessarily cried—but definitely shown more emotion. To control my emotion so much definitely took a mental toll on me.

Jacqueline Pascarl believes that, 'Because I didn't cry on cue every time they tried to get me to cry, the reporters started getting skeptical about me or they didn't think I had any trauma going on.' The demeanor of James Scott's sister, Joanne Robertson, also came under media scrutiny after the search that she initiated located him alive. Joanne read a statement about how finding her brother was the happiest moment of her life, although one newspaper wrote: 'Why the long face and camera shyness?' (*The Sunday Age* 9 February 1992, p. 3). While recognising Joanne had been through an ordeal, news crews failed to acknowledge the family was now overwhelmed by persistent reporters and didn't appreciate the attention.

For similar reasons, Todd Russell couldn't convey the relief, elation and thankfulness media outlets expected of a trauma survivor after he escaped an underground tomb in the Beaconsfield mine. He was angry that he'd been trapped by a rockfall and then relentlessly pursued by cameras, invading precious private time reuniting with his family. Todd imagines that's the expression the public saw on his face in the days following his rescue, although they may not have understood why:

> For the people that know me personally, they obviously know my strengths and where I come from, but the last thing I wanted to do is been seen as a sook and crying and stuff like that. They might see me as a heartless person that doesn't show emotions, but what goes on behind closed doors is completely different to what you see in the public eye.

At times, survivors may barely recognise themselves in media coverage, even when they've been an active participant. The Morcombes say they have never been comfortable seeing

their faces in publications or broadcasts. ‘I don’t think I can ever get used to what I look like in the paper or on the TV,’ Denise explains. ‘I suppose you see yourself as someone that looks different to what you really look like, and the way your voice sounds.’ Mercedes Corby describes feeling self-conscious: ‘When I see pictures of myself, I just don’t want to see them, they’re all crap. I just wish that I never had to have my photo taken, ever.’

4

STORYTELLING AND TWISTING

> I knew I was stupid. I didn't need others telling me that, but they did have a right to say it. The hoax they didn't have a right to say. I think that caused further trauma. You know, it really is sad that for a while there I thought that I wish I hadn't been lost and that I wish I'd never been found. That's terrible to get someone to that state where you wish you were dead. It escalated the distress acutely.
>
> - James Scott

Imagine you survive 43 days alone in the freezing mountains of Nepal without food or shelter, defying all expectations of what a human could endure, only to face media speculation about whether you'd staged a hoax. James Scott knows what it feels like to go from being the 'miracle iceman' one day to 'James the joker' the next, with journalists fuelling public doubt. Trust and truth can easily become casualties in the media's relationship with both survivors and audiences. Survivors may participate in coverage believing they are in a position of control, but soon realise journalists and editors have the ultimate power during the gathering of a story and when the report is published or broadcast. Media don't just present facts, they tell stories. But whose version of events are they telling: the survivor's or one they construct? Images are one element in creating a narrative, as we've

just seen. Now let's look more broadly at how media construct news, in order to complete the picture.

In the competitive scramble to report on traumatic events, snippets of 'evidence' are stitched together to explain what happened and who was affected. Testimony can be plucked from almost anywhere—family members, friends, official sources, even casual acquaintances of the survivor and strangers deemed by journalists to be 'experts'—to provide insight. Media will even copy—or 'lift,' as it's commonly called—information from other media organisations or social networks. The race to be first can prioritise speed of delivery over fact checking. Complex stories can easily be distorted when condensed to fit broadcast time and publication space constraints.

Sometimes the narrative is decided in the newsroom and journalists go about gathering information to fit that frame. Details can be manipulated or taken out of context by a process of selecting what to include and what to leave out, anywhere along the production line from gathering to editing. The way reporters and editors create the coverage is aimed at attracting audiences while also influencing how they view the event and the people involved. It is almost impossible for someone to identify when a story is being told or twisted without inside knowledge or a point of comparison. Rarely are the survivors given the opportunity to check what is about to be printed or go to air, even when they do engage in the process of producing news.

To a traumatised person, factual inaccuracies, misleading information and misrepresentation can feel like a betrayal of trust. 'You get very finicky about even tiny factual errors when you're traumatised,' James Scott explains. 'They say you went right on a mountain track when you went left, and you get very cross.' Still carrying the physical effects of his

trauma—poor eyesight and balance from a vitamin deficiency—James walks with a slightly unsteady gait as he leads me from the waiting area at his workplace to a private room. There he shares that his family had no contact with media before becoming the focus of public interest and that experience in itself has had a lasting impact.

Framing the Famed

James was a 22-year-old Queensland medical student wearing a straw hat and sandshoes when winter snow covered his hiking trail in the Himalayas. Lost and isolated, he clung to thoughts of his family and faith in God until spotted from a helicopter and winched to safety. James's sister, Joanne Robertson, had refused to give up the search when others lost hope. That's the basic storyline. The drama built around those facts by journalists, and the powerful influence the Scott family perceived that had on public opinion, would compound their distress and hurt. James recognises that while he was physically helpless—malnourished, dehydrated and unable to look after himself—he also had no control over how his story would be told.

James believes misinformation about his survival was reported because of a 'vendetta to disprove the story.' He says after he agreed to an exclusive interview with London's *Daily Telegraph*—re-printed in the Fairfax-owned Australian press—the rival Murdoch newspapers and some broadcast stations hunted around for 'spoiler stories,' keeping the sensational coverage going while the public was still interested. Rumours began to circulate that James had actually spent 43 days 'living it up' in a Nepalese village (*The Sunday Age* 9 February 1992, p. 3). The search for answers led newspapers to interview people who weren't anywhere near the Himalayas when James was saved, yet cast doubt on his ability to survive so long sustained by just two chocolate bars and melted snow.

The Sunday Mail

$1.00 FEBRUARY 9, 1992 WEATHER Brisbane: Humid with rain periods. Forecasts, Page 57.

MOTOR SHOW WHEELS GALORE GREAT CARS GIVEAWAY TV SCENE

STUPID TRIPS STOP

Doctor defends Brisbane's Himalaya superman

IT'S NOT A HOAX

Ex-judge to probe Trident

By PETER HANSEN

RETIRED Supreme Court judge Mr William Carter, QC, will head the Operation Trident inquiry.

The Criminal Justice Commission late yesterday announced Mr Carter had accepted the appointment to head the independent investigation into allegations surrounding the big police operation that broke up a huge car stealing racket in 1989-90.

Mr Carter would choose his own counsel to assist him. Terms of reference were expected to be settled by the end of this week.

Operation Trident lasted for seven months and at first was hailed as a huge success.

Police brought 802 charges against 91 people, but police methods and the form of an indemnity granted to an informant working under cover for police drew scathing criticism from some Supreme Court judges.

The judges said some methods amounted to entrapment and terms of an indemnity promising no prosecution for offences the informant might commit while collecting evidence for police amounted to an open licence to commit crime.

Serious allegations were made that police took an active role in the theft and dismantling of cars, to trace them through to receivers and to identify principals in the gang.

The Police Commissioner, Mr Newnham, has said that while some aspects of the operation could have been handled better, police acted within the law and under legal advice and, to some extent, CJC supervision.

Mr Carter is a former head of the Police Complaints Tribunal.

Trident forum, Page 6

Sensei Dr Greg Story ... the karate instructor who taught James Scott to struggle to survive "to the slightest spark of consciousness"

"THE story of James Scott is not a hoax," says Dr Frank Garlick, medical superintendent of the Patan Hospital, Kathmandu, where the Brisbane medical student has been recovering after 43 days lost in the Himalayan snow.

"The hospital has been subjected all week to intrusive electronic media breaking all barriers, filming through windows and manoeuvrering at visitors to the ward, he said.

"They may have paid money to guards to get details," said Dr Garlick in an exclusive interview with The Sunday Mail.

"But no, the survival story is not a hoax. It is amazing what he's been through and has come through, and he continues to improve.

"There is nothing very startling, except the remarkable fact of his survival and progress.

"James Scott is not yet up, but he is taking soft solids."

Dr Garlick was keen to confirm all that had been said about Scott's survival was true. There was no suggestion of a hoax.

"No one at the hospital is receiving anything, but we feel that our primary moral obligation is to the lad, and to the family, who asked that no more bulletins be issued.

"It is his life. It is his spirit that has helped him to survive, it is him we are helping to recover and we will not do anything to endanger that.

"A very natural curiosity brings a lot of pressure on the family, when the simple fact is that he has survived and is improving, and that is enough for now.

"All the facts are not in. We have got to be patient and wait until he is fit enough to tell the story properly."

Media interest has kept the phone ringing through the night for the past week because of the five-hour time difference.

Dr Garlick, a Queensland University graduate, took early retirement from Royal Brisbane Hospital to take the position at Patan.

He had worked in Vellore Christian Medical College and Hospital, south India for 13 years and said he was attracted to work again in South-East Asia. He was professor of surgery in Vellore and then director of accident and emergency at Royal Brisbane Hospital — both invaluable experiences, he said, for incidents such as this.

His wife Dr Val Garlick runs the TB clinic at Patan Hospital and worked in the development of the breast clinic at Wesley, Brisbane.

James Scott would have fought for survival to the end had he not been rescued after 43 days lost in the Himalayas, his karate master said yesterday.

Sensei Greg Story, chief instructor at the Australasian Karate Dojo Renbukan in the West End, said Mr Scott's training in this martial art was dedicated to preparation for life-and-death situations.

Mr Scott, 23, is a black belt trainer in traditional karate.

"The ordinary person looks at the newspaper and reads 'here's a person who has lasted 43 days on ice and this sort'," Dr Story said.

"But they are looking at the end product, one manifestation of a process that has been going on in his development for five or six years.

Continued Page 3

James Scott ... "all that has been said is true"

Goss pledge to Queensland

PREMIER Wayne Goss yesterday pledged to introduce even tougher new travel guidelines for MPs to spare Queensland any repeat of the anguish of the past few months.

An emotional Mr Goss said he considered the entire travel perks affair had caused serious harm to the institution of parliament, but he vowed there would never be a repeat performance.

"I'm very frustrated it's been left hanging again, but the first thing is that I'm determined to tighten the guidelines even further so that this State of Queensland never has to go through this sort of mess again," he said.

In a bid to put the damaging fiasco to rest, Mr Goss went on prime-time television on all stations last night to defend the Government's handling of the affair.

He said some MPs "did some pretty stupid things" in the previous Parliament.

But he said the guidelines had since been tightened — and would be again.

The advert, recorded on Thursday night and paid for by Labor Party funds, will screen over the next few days.

But despite Mr Goss's assurances — and claims by all three party leaders their own people are in the clear — there are still major questions to be resolved.

Two of the biggest perks originally identified by the then Auditor General, Mr Vince Grote, in 1989, concerned an MP who hired a four-wheel-drive for 23 days at a cost of $3622 and another member who racked up $4120 flying between Townsville and Melbourne with his wife over Christmas.

Neither appear to have been addressed, as they do not much figures in the CJC report released on Friday.

As well, the Criminal Justice Commission's refusal to distinguish between justified journeys and those that were beyond the pale has meant the affair has still not been properly defused.

Contending this, Mr Goss said the CJC had tried to walk the tightrope between respecting natural justice and appeasing public concerns — and had failed to do either.

"The process failed to abide by the legal principle of natural justice and it failed to respond to public pressure properly — it was a compromise," he said.

Mr Goss said he was sick of the point scoring, but he lashed out at the Opposition parties who he said had been left wonder the biggest cheat.

"I'm feeling very confident tonight," he said.

"The National and Liberal parties scored a lot of points and demanded the names come out, and they got what they asked for. Now they can wallow in it."

Liberal Leader Joan Sheldon returned the compliment, claiming ministers named in the report had yet to clarify trips throughout Australia and New Zealand, as well as others to well-known holiday spots.

But despite her attack, Mrs Sheldon was still unable to give an unsure audit undertaking that her predecessor, Denver Beanland, was "in the clear".

Mr Goss meanwhile strenuously defended Sport, Recreation and Tourism Minister Bob Gibbs, some of whose travel coincided with holidays.

"Just because you went to Proserpine over New Year, it doesn't make it questionable," he said.

"It's a question of what you did. He travelled with members of a tourism committee. They travelled to Airlie to look at tourist facilities — they went to a number of wineries and hotel stays.

The travel perks affair has claimed the jobs of former Opposition leader Russell Cooper, former Cabinet minister Terry Mackenroth and Kim Mitchell, and former Deputy Speaker Clem Campbell.

Mr Goss conceded the travel perks saga had ended on a disappointing note, with questions unresolved, but he said there was little point in continuing by publishing more documents.

It was now time to get back to work, though he expressed his sadness at the real harm done to the Queensland Parliament.

"I'm very disappointed so much damage has been done," he said.

Parts Row, Page 2

THAT'S LIFE

DOMESTIC cats have discovered the Bliss pleasures of sucking on kiwi fruit vines, which appears to make them hallucinate, an expert said, in Hamilton, New Zealand, a group of cats got high on kiwi fruit cuttings. They were found rubbing their faces against the end of a sheaf of kiwi and rolling on the ground, and their pupils were dilated. The effect lasted about 20 minutes before the cats returned for another hit.

THE TOP SPORT OF OUR SUNDAY MAIL

Another Ahern is making a splash in public life — former Premier Mike's little girl Christina. The ex-lord mayor's aiming for an Olympic swimming career. — Page

BILLY THE KID GUNS DOWN S.A.

BILLY The Kid's back, and it's bad news for South Australia. Craig Michael returned to Queensland's Sheffield Shield side from international duty and gunned down the Cree Eaters with a devastating 6/50, to send them staggering to a first innings total of 130. — Page 51

(*The Sunday Mail* 9 February 1992, p. 1)

James acknowledges no one outright said he'd perpetrated a hoax, but questioned whether it could have been. The Brisbane man's karate master publicly defended him, saying James had gained a black belt and through that the mental discipline to survive, while the medical superintendent at Patan Hospital, Dr Frank Garlick, was reported as saying there was no suggestion the 'miracle' was in fact a 'hoax' (*The Sunday Mail* 9 February 1992, p. 1). Words like 'speculation' and 'suggestions' help reporters avoid the need for substantiation, while

denials provide an angle to an otherwise flimsy story. James says he first heard about the questioning from family and friends as he lay in hospital, recovering from his ordeal:

> Nothing's worse than if you've been through a trauma and you get the sense that people generally aren't interested or aren't sort of concerned about your welfare … I know there were a few people who were kind of experts in the field of medicine who approached the media saying that they wanted to give a contrary view to what was being reported and their offers to be interviewed were declined. So, I think that the media had set an agenda at that time to pursue a line.

James is no longer the naïve and trusting young man he was in 1992. Having survived to marry, raise three children and develop a successful career as a Brisbane psychiatrist, he prefers to focus on his blessings rather than past bitterness towards some sections of the media. Although, James does have his own 'healthy scepticism' about how news is made:

> I still believe that it's an amazingly good news story. It's a story of hope and love and faith and what family can do when they pull together, what a community can do when they pull together. But I think that got trashed by some in the media and I think that leaves one feeling a bit jaded … I mean, I was traumatised, so a lack of empathy just leaves people struggling.

Australians have arguably never seen different opinions, rumours and speculation more publicly canvassed through media than following the disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain in 1980 and the arrest of Schapelle Corby in 2004. Stories were told and twisted, captivating audiences, until as a reader, viewer or listener, it was almost impossible to distinguish fact from fiction. Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton says she felt powerless to stop coverage of court proceedings that emphasised some legal arguments and ignored others. She knows only too well that without context or balance, even a factual account or other evidence can easily be presented in a misleading way, shaping public opinion:

> Like, 'Car awash with blood,' in my case, when in actual fact at the most we're talking about half a teaspoonful, or a teaspoonful, of what turned out not to be blood anyway, throughout the whole of the car. So the use of emotive words in court or news cases I think is wrong … Where the individual reporter had written something quite innocuous I was told over and over again, Rupert [Murdoch] came through the newsroom and said 'Change that headline, I want this bit out!' and you'd get these big headlines and then you'd read the article and at the bottom when approached the Chamberlains refused to comment. But they've got a frontpage thing and the fact that they've approached you and you've said no comment, that's an interview. So you're damned if you do, damned if you don't. It's the [question of whether] to smile or not to smile, either way. And it was right at the beginning when Murdoch was starting to turn his newspaper into big business that was a product to sell as opposed to telling the news.

Lindy is convinced that some media organisations pre-determined the angle of their coverage and were reluctant to sway from it no matter the evidence. Like James Scott, she maintains people have the right to express their personal opinion. What incenses her, though, is when that opinion leads to selective news coverage, with rumours sometimes reported as fact, painting her as a woman who could murder her baby daughter. Lindy says other times stories were simply 'made up':

> I've been told a number of times, 'Oh, look, I've taken that out but the editor put it back in.' Well it's incorrect so tell the editor to take it out. I've been struck with the number of times editors wanted a certain thing and said, 'Oh, you know, it's not strong enough, it's not emotive enough, so let's give them some words to say and put them in,' literally in quotes, from the person. That's lying.

Mercedes Corby, too, has found that even when a reporter appeared to be listening and striving for accuracy, the family ran the risk of the details being twisted by editors and

producers they'd never met. Journalists are, after all, answerable to their bosses who have the final say. Mercedes explains she and her sister Schapelle were on the receiving end of fabricated quotes and headlines over which they had no control. On one occasion, a reporter questioned her about Schapelle's potential early release from prison. Mercedes provided one quote, which she says wasn't used:

> She rang me back and she said, 'Oh, I've been asked by the editor would we be overstepping the line if we put the headline: "Schapelle too scared to hope"?' I made it clear that Schapelle had not said it, and she was not to quote her. But, anyway, they ended up making quotes: 'Schapelle said from her cell last night that she was too scared to hope' … There were a couple of quotes that were directly from Schapelle and they had never spoken to her … Please don't beat up the story and the headline.

Lindy has learnt that many newspaper readers skim the headlines, so from a business point of view it makes sense to write a few pithy words aimed at capturing the attention of audiences. She points out that people can be easily fooled by a headline. On returning to the campsite for the first inquest, Lindy found herself laughing when someone made a funny comment and a camera operator nearly tripped over, putting her hand up to her face. The reporter and headline-writer instead implied she was crying, with the words 'Azaria Anguish' on top of the words: 'This picture shows the strain on Lindy Chamberlain as she relives the night her baby Azaria disappeared at Ayers Rock [sic]' (*The Sun* 11 February 1981, p. 1).


THE Sun

AZARIA ANGUISH

ORDEAL OF MOTHER...

SPOTS IN TENT 'COULD BE BLOOD'

YOUR HEALTH IN THE STARS: P 14

LILLEE WRITES FOR THE SUN: BACK PAGE

(*The Sun* 11 February 1981, p. 1)

There were few places she could go to escape photographers, even Darwin Prison, where she was serving what began as a life sentence for the murder of her daughter, was no refuge from the press. One news crew captured what they either thought, or pretended to readers, was a photo of Lindy hanging washing on a clothesline. In fact, it was another prisoner, Kathy, with a guard (*The Age* 25 January 1984, p. 3). Michael Chamberlain found reporters regularly breaching their own editorial standards:

> Fair reporting is checking your source, checking the motives for your source and getting a second opinion if you think that something isn't quite right. But the biggest problem with

the media is they shape so many people's lives, irreversibly, and that creates more and more suspicion and mayhem.

THE AGE, Wednesday 25 January 1984 3

Even in prison, a mother's work is never done

Darwin is steaming and monsoonal rains will hit later in the day, but Mrs Alice Lynne Chamberlain (right) still has chores to do.

But the boredom of her prison routine has been broken by a visit from her husband, Pastor Michael Chamberlain, their three children and family friend and solicitor Mr Stuart Tipple.

Traffic charge review could cost $250,000

By AILEEN BERRY, law reporter

A decision to have the Victorian Supreme Court review rulings by a magistrate in which traffic charges against more than 115 people were struck out could cost the State Government more than $250,000.

If the Attorney-General, Mr Kennan, plans to review every case in which Mr Edward McGowan, SM, ruled that Elsternwick traffic court had no jurisdiction, his department might have to fight a separate Supreme Court action in each case.

With the cost of briefing senior counsel to appear for the Government at around $1000 and up to $2500 a day, the legal battle could soon run into hundreds of thousands of dollars.

As well, the Government would have to bear the cost of lawyers from the Crown Solicitor's Office preparing for the court action, and the loss of fines — said to be up to $100,000 a month — from the Elsternwick traffic court.

On 11 January, Mr McGowan ruled that he could not hear a traffic case brought to the Elstenwick court by a member of the traffic operations group, because the court had not been proclaimed as a traffic court in the Government Gazette.

Six days later, the court was properly proclaimed by the Executive Council and published in the Gazette, enabling the court to hear cases brought by members of the police force from the date of the proclamation, 17 January.

But on Monday, Mr McGowan struck out all 77 traffic cases before the court, after Mr Jack Hammond, who appeared for one of the defendants, successfully submitted that the police traffic operations group had no authority to put traffic informations to the court until after 17 January, when the formal proclamation took effect.

Yesterday, Mr McGowan struck out another 37 cases despite further argument form a senior police prosecutor, Inspector Allen Bowles.

With the case struck out for lack of jurisdiction on 11 January and the 77 struck out on Monday, this brings to 115 the number of drivers who have been spared prosecution.

In 1977, Mr Justice Crockett of the Victorian Supreme Court ruled in Riddle v. Ingram that where two or more informations are heard together and orders made in respect of each, each order must be treated as a separate order for the purpose of order to review proceedings, even though the attack in each case against the correctness of the magistrate's order is precisely the same.

The State Government would almost certainly be arguing the same case in respect of each of the 115 cases so far struck out and also in respect of the 200 that Mr McGowan has said he plans to strike out in chambers. This could increase the cost of proceedings brought by the Government.

Mr Kennan said yesterday that the Government was "absolutely determined" that none of the traffic offenders would be let off. He said the Government would be taking the matter before the Supreme Court "as a matter of urgency".

Although an order to review the rulings seemed the most likely course to take, the opinion of counsel was being sought on whether a writ of mandamus (judicial review) would resolve the problem more quickly.

A writ of mandamus is a prerogative writ issued from a superior court to prevent an inferior court or its officials from exceeding the limits of its legitimate sphere of action, or of compelling the inferior court to exercise its functions in accordance with the law.

Liberals fear Sinclair backlash in by-election

From MICHELLE GRATTAN, chief political reporter

CANBERRA. — The fear of a protest vote against the new National Party leader,

ious to gain a toehold in the northern NSW area to help them if a new seat on the north coast is created after this year's redistribution.

Richmond was held by Mr

doctor, Dr Brian Pezzutti, 37.

The NSW Liberal chairman, Mr John Valder, said: "We want to be sure that we maximise the non-Labor vote in Richmond for

versy over the election of Mr Sinclair as party leader after the damaging criticism of him in the Cross report, and the fact that the Nationals' candidate, Mr Charles Blunt, lives outside

(*The Age* 25 January 1984, p. 3)

Jenni Begg complains she too has been misrepresented. Seven months after her son Jandamarra O'Shane almost died, Jenni spoke for Mother's Day 1997 of the despair she felt being away from her Cairns home while treatment was ongoing in Brisbane (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 11 May 1997, p. 3). She remembers feeling like she wanted to 'disappear' when she read the published article:

> It implied that I wanted to commit suicide … That just really devastated me because I had everything to live for, and regardless of going through the hardships, I still needed to be there for my children. I was just having a bad time and it was putting a lot of pressure on my children at the time, too.

Delving into the personal lives of trauma survivors has become a hallmark of not just feature reporting but news storytelling because it brings out the human interest value, attracts audiences and helps them comprehend the impact of an event. Thredbo landslide survivor Stuart Diver recognises the intent but believes too often reporters and editors cross a delicate line between reporting the facts and dramatising the personal impact:

> There's no need to dig … Still to this day I just don't understand why the grieving relative, or whoever the person who's been through the trauma, is still the focus of attention when, in reality, they are such a limited resource of information. There are so many other people involved within those traumas who have so much more information that would be so much more beneficial to a story than the crying, grieving relative.

Unreliable Sources

When the people at the centre of a major event are inaccessible, or don't want to talk to freshen up the story in time for every news deadline, it is inevitable that other sources are going to be used. Journalists aren't going to tell their news editors they couldn't get a yarn. Malcolm and Vernon Wood, the brothers of Douglas Wood, ran a well-planned media campaign to secure his release from Iraqi hostage takers, urging government intervention (*The Australian* 3 May 2005, pp. 1 & 4) and pleading with the captors to set him free (*The Australian* 5 May 2005, p. 1; *Herald Sun* 5 May 2005, p. 1; *Geelong Advertiser* 5 May 2005, p. 9). Six weeks is a long time in the news business, though, and with no information on Douglas's condition, reporters chose to go around the official sources. They found different

people to interview—many we might call 'bit players' in the drama—digging for details of the engineer's earlier private life, tracing his past in Australia, the United States and then Iraq.

Douglas was portrayed as a stocky, well-liked 'character with a rollicking laugh and plenty of stories' who loved a cold beer (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 3 May 2005, p. 1). From old Geelong College school friends to drinking buddies at a North California bar, reporters tracked down people who remembered the 'gregarious Australian,' a 'larger than life globetrotter,' to whom they gave a better chance of surviving than most because of his Christian upbringing (*The Daily Telegraph* 4 May 2005, p. 9). When Douglas was freed, he marvelled at the work of reporters in Australia and America:

> I was amazed finding out that they'd actually gone down to a little Baghdad restaurant—probably too high a word—a little food place in the slum area where I went to have lots of meals. The Iraqi guy that used to serve the coffee and sit behind the counter barking orders, he knew all about me, and he was able to share that with the people of Australia through the eyes of the reporter. And to me that was very good journalism—creative and discovering and they did the same thing—they went back to the community I lived in in northern California and hunted around, found an ex-girlfriend and a photo of me with a big beard.

Not all sources can be considered reliable though, and the risk of inaccurate reporting is arguably heightened when journalists talk to people on the periphery of the event. Kay Danes became personally frustrated and angry about being falsely portrayed as a gem smuggler when she and her soldier husband Kerry were detained by the secret police in Laos. That may have been out of Kay's control while imprisoned, but she took the unusual step of tracking down and confronting one freelance journalist after returning to Australia:

> There weren't even any bloody gems missing. Where do you people get this stuff from? The whole media started on a press release that was given by the secret police Colonel who abducted my husband. Where's the credibility in that? I think there was one story that I had 160 kilos of sapphires in my underwear and dragging my two children across the border, things like that. My husband actually had leave, he was approved by the Chief of the Army to work in Laos, and some idiot from Defence was quoted in the newspaper that he didn't have leave and that he would face a court martial upon his return to Australia. So, unfortunately, that person's identity was protected so I, to this day, do not really know who said that. But I'd love to grab him by the jugular because these things impact.

Although the couple appreciate that keeping their plight in the public eye was critical to securing their release, the story was developed without any input from the people who knew best what was going on—them. Kay says in an attempt to help her and Kerry, the best her parents, Ernie and Noela Stewart, could do was exchange information with reporters waiting outside their Brisbane home:

> Dad would go out every morning and say, 'This is what we've heard, have you heard anything?' My dad would give media interviews hoping what he said would secure our release but when I look back, when we got out a year later and you're looking at those interviews and you're like, 'Jeez, he really had no idea what was happening, and how could he?' This was really frustrating because we knew what the real story was, the Australian Government knew what the real story was, and it seemed like everyone else [was] just like grasping at straws, [it] was really, really frustrating and we even got angry on a couple of occasions.

Todd Russell found it frustrating that reporters asked questions of people who weren't directly involved in his rescue from the Beaconsfield Mine rockfall in 2006, or even at the site. During the 14 days he was trapped underground with workmate Brant Webb, reporters

filled newspaper columns, broadcast bulletins and online sites with information pieced together from numerous people within the local community, mining industry and elsewhere. Todd says he trusted those in media to get the story right, but when he emerged and saw the coverage, he realised that chunks of it were misleading or just plain wrong:

> Obviously they've got to sell newspapers, so they've got to put something in the newspapers. They couldn't wait until we came out to get the true facts, but if they had just concentrated [on] management or something like that to try and get a story … but I understand that management weren't talking that much, so they had to try and get stories from wherever they could. The trouble is, they ask the questions to the wrong people. So people are making claims [about] something that may have never happened because they weren't there. They're just assuming what was going on. One person says something, another network adds their little bit to it, a little bit more, a little bit more, a little bit more, and by the end of it I'm married to the Queen because they all add that little bit just to make their story a little bit more special.

Todd was surprised that throughout the coverage of the rescue, the public was told he and Brant Webb could stand up in the cage and move around when in fact they couldn't. He says it's because of mistakes like that, the miners decided to speak directly to Australians in an interview aired on the Nine Network:

> We told … the truth so that people got the right side of the story. I think by doing that, it actually showed a lot of people exactly what the media is like by the way they mislead certain stories. Whether they believe us, or whether they believe the media, [is up to them] but I know who I'd believe.

Still, one newspaper predicted a week after the rescue that the 'tabloid tackiness' would only worsen as a 'deep vein of exploitation' had been opened. 'Look out for Webb's third cousin's

hairdresser's next-door-neighbour selling her story of how Webb and Russell were experimented on by the aliens who live at the bottom of the mine,' a columnist wrote (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 17 May 2006, p. 3). Mercedes Corby is aware reporters approached everyone from neighbours to staff and students at the TAFE where Schapelle was a beauty therapy student before her arrest. Of most concern to Mercedes, though, was seeing old quotes from the family resurrected, presented as recent and 'scrambled together' with other information in the desperation to create a new story. 'They put a little bit here and there,' she explains, with a degree of frustration. Mercedes points to false reporting that Schapelle was given day release from prison in Bali, adding:

> Often we were never contacted for fact checking or ... the media allowed people with a vendetta, non-credible sources, to say lies without fact checking, often with payment. They just wrote it—stories with made-up sources, sneaky photos.

The Corbys sometimes concluded that it was better to speak to a media outlet in the hope of ensuring the facts were correct, knowing reporters would write about Schapelle regardless. Still, Mercedes says they ran the risk of a spoiler story—an attempt to discredit the coverage of a competitor by running a contrary, often negative, article or slant. She witnessed that when the family tried to explain how 4.1 kilograms of marijuana came to be in her sister Schapelle's boogie-board bag at Denpasar Airport in Bali:

> None of us know 100 per cent how the marijuana got into Schapelle's bag. Our side, we think it was airport workers in Australia. So, I suppose we've been saying look at the baggage handlers … but then you've got other journalists that try and blame it on pretty much every other member of our family, our father for one, who passed away, and our younger brother. But it's definitely quite sad when these journalists just have their own opinion, or they're guessing, or there's speculation and it's definitely reported as if it's true. There's no

> defamation for the deceased. So there's a couple of journalists who have really used that to their own advantage.

Ron Delezio has found speculation, misrepresentation and inaccuracies particularly hurt those whose emotions are running high. Although, he accepts no matter how official the source, they all make mistakes and, sadly, none can be fully trusted to get the story right:

> Some people talk about [how] Sophie's had hundreds of operations. She hasn't had hundreds of operations; it's really a technicality. What we do is if Sophie has an operation needed on her legs or under her arm and neck, we try to save them up and do six or seven all in one go. So, six or seven operations within the one operation. She's been in theatre probably three or four hundred times but a lot of those times were bandage changes. The media aren't to know the technicalities of the medical practices.

The impact of every error can be compounded when repeated across media outlets, whether because the story is shared within a network, among sister publications or copied by rivals. Fiction masquerades as fact, spreading like a disease and then archived, so even when corrected in subsequent coverage, there is the high likelihood an error will recur when an old story is dragged up. Jandamarra O'Shane's name was misspelt Tjandamurra from the first stories that identified him as the 'burns boy' after her was set alight in a random school yard attack. He and his mother, Jenni Begg, suspect family members may have provided the wrong spelling to authorities or reporters while in a state of shock and distress. Jandamarra says that despite personally asking reporters to use the correct spelling, an estimated eighty per cent of the time it's still been wrong, years after the event—a mistake so basic he shakes his head almost in disbelief:

> I think there's just a mindset to [how] it was spelt the first time. When we were in Western Australia, I was doing a story because they had a play about who I was named after—

> Jandamarra—and the woman actually showed me the notes that she took down and they were right, but they still managed to misspell my name.

Owning the Story

Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton fears that unless she signs a contract for an exclusive and can check the whole story, no matter how accurate a reporter has been in the past, she can't trust that what is published or broadcast will be factually accurate. Stuart Diver also insists on checking all copy when he's given an interview:

> Journalists have to understand that they are in a definite position of power, and I think that's probably what sometimes attracts certain people to journalism: they are in a position of power, they can change people, they can change the world by what they write or what they report. I think that journalistic integrity is the ability for them to realise that. So, therefore, use it to do good, or use it to report well, rather than going down the, 'I must get a story for commercial reasons,' or, 'I must get a story because this is the angle I want to take, and that's the line my news organisation or I want to push.' So I mean, in reality, people want the facts, they want to be told the facts … let's respect our viewing audience or our reading audience and give them the actual truth rather than just making it up for whatever reason. There's just so much made up, in reality.

The survivors I spoke with agree that by the time a retraction is printed or broadcast, the damage has already been done. Lindy explains, any correction or apology will be buried in 'two lines in the back of the paper somewhere that most people don't read,' instead of being given the same prominence as the inaccurate report. Kay Danes adds, 'It's almost like journalists have all the power [in] that they can write the story, but then when they get it wrong we don't have any power to then go and make them change it or make it accountable and that is a little bit frustrating.' Rarely has Mercedes Corby felt she has been given a right

of reply: ‘If there is a journalist that does come out and correct the facts or they do another story, it’s nowhere near as big as the damaging story.’ Jacqueline Pascarl further warns of the impact false and misleading information can have on public perceptions. ‘There will always be a percentage of the population who believes what they read,’ she explains. ‘Even my friends sometimes have read things about me in the media and they’ve believed it until they [have] come and asked me.’

Jacqueline penned two books—*Once I was a Princess* (2006) and *Since I was a Princess* (2010)—to ensure her two eldest children read her perspective on their abduction, along with the Australian public. First, she tells how their Malaysian father failed to return them from an access visit, then Jacqueline recounts the reunion with her children fourteen years later. The desire to set the record straight is cited by several of the survivors as the main reason they provided a full account of their traumatic experience in a book. It is an understandable attempt to regain some control over the way they’ve been represented in public, after suddenly and unexpectedly being afforded a high profile.

Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton released an autobiography, *Through My Eyes* (1990), ten years after Azaria was taken by a dingo, in order to provide a personal insight, correct misconceptions and address wild rumours. She later created a website, providing an accurate timeline of events while making it clear that she holds individuals in positions of authority directly responsible for her wrongful imprisonment, while selective reporting of court evidence separately influenced public opinion. Michael Chamberlain co-authored with Lowell Tarling his account *Beyond Azaria: Black Light, White Light*(Chamberlain & Tarling 1999) and many years later followed up with *Heart of Stone* (2012).

Similarly, Stuart Diver felt that constructing a timeline of the 65 hours he was buried under the Thredbo landslide would provide an accurate record of the rescue and recovery effort. When he felt ready—two years after the event—he began writing down his experience, drawing on his psychologist's notes. Stuart's media agent spotted an opportunity to publish, so he teamed up with journalist Simon Bouda, who interviewed police and emergency services based on the coronial inquest files they gathered. The result was the book *Survival* (1999), which Stuart says informed him about what had happened above the surface:

> There was no factual account. I just knew, from being in town, the rumour and innuendo and stuff that was going around the village alone, and I can imagine, well if that then spread across everywhere else, there's a lot of factually incorrect stuff out there. And I wanted to put a few things straight … it's a really good account of what went on in that part of my life.

Todd Russell and fellow mine survivor Brant Webb shared their full version of events with journalist Tony Wright out of frustration with what Todd considers to be invasions of privacy and inaccurate reporting. Together, they wrote *Bad Ground: Inside the Beaconsfield Mine Rescue* (2007): 'It's getting the true story out there because of the betrayal of the media over the journey—what's written in that book is 98 per cent correct,' Todd says of the book. Kay Danes wanted to tell the public what she experienced in Laos, her own way, in *Standing Ground* (2009): 'Mainly because of all the mis-reporting,' she explains. 'Just so that people could understand from our perspective what we saw, what we felt, and the way we saw the whole thing unfold.' For much the same reasons, James Scott wrote *Lost in the Himalayas* (1993) with his sister Joanne Robertson:

> I think we felt it was not portrayed correctly in one single item. I mean, Eric Bailey (London's *The Daily Telegraph*) did a good job, but it was kind of in one newspaper and it was gone. And stuff kept dribbling out, sort of was this true and this? From my point of view,

> the story was buzzing around my head—as tends to happen when you're traumatised—and I just thought [about] putting it down … I wouldn't need to keep remembering all the things ... I thought it was a wonderful story. I still think it is a miracle. I'm a Christian, and whenever my faith starts to wane, as it does sometimes, I go back to thinking there's no scientific reason as to why I should have survived.

James says he was contacted by hundreds of people around the world after the book's publication, telling him the story gave them hope when they faced personal difficulty. Likewise, hope was the central message of two books detailing Sophie Delezio's struggle for survival from horrific burns: *Sophie's Journey* (2008) and *A Letter to Sophie* (2009). Her father, Ron, feels they served a community good, after receiving feedback from people battling an accident or illness. 'They say, "We're going through depression, and I kept on thinking about Sophie and what she's gone through, and if she can get through this, I can get through this,"' he explains. The Delezios worked with author Sally Collings, while Bruce and Denise Morcombe wrote *Where is Daniel? The Family's Story* (2014) in partnership with true crime writer Lindsay Simpson. Although the Morcombes believe overall media reported and represented their ordeal fairly and accurately, they still saw the need to present their perspective in one full account, publishing soon after Cowan was found guilty of Daniel's murder. Making the news, from the details, images and angle, through to its placement amongst other coverage, invariably reflects the perspectives of reporters and editors. For the Morcombes, their book at last gave them the opportunity to 'have some control,' with 'final editorial rights.'

5

AGENTS AND OTHER GO-BETWEENS

> If you break your leg you don't go down to the local Mitre 10 and buy some plaster and just plaster it up yourself. You go to a doctor and you get it x-rayed. You should surround yourself with the best professionals you can in that time.
>
> - Stuart Diver

Stuart Diver was emotionally shattered, physically weak, and vulnerable to demands from a horde of gung-ho reporters when he was pulled from under the rubble of the Thredbo landslide. Medical teams could only treat the trauma to Stuart's body and mind. The threats of injury to his privacy and portrayal were far outside the expertise of Canberra Hospital staff and family members, who were themselves overwhelmed by the intense media and public interest. Stuart had endured unimaginable physical and psychological suffering, but who was going to protect him from pressure to freely share his experience and personal life with media so they could commodify it without restraint?

Stuart still calls the Thredbo village home, more than two decades after the devastating event that changed his world forever. It is both a source of sadness and comfort; the place where he lost his first wife and several friends is also where he feels surrounded by love and support

as he raises his daughter Alessia alone, following the death of second wife Rosanna from breast cancer in 2015. As the resort's general manager, he walks past the site of the landslide every day, knowing 'the trauma will be there forever.' Stuart greets me at the Thredbo Alpine Hotel with a relaxed smile, then hunts for a quiet corner of the public lounge. Soon after we begin talking, he points out that although his rescue was broadcast live across Australia, his family didn't own a television when he was growing up. He could not have been expected to have any understanding of media practices; reporters counted on that in their pursuit of the story. What editors didn't anticipate was those around Stuart recognising he needed help as he was pulled from anonymity.

When a media agent steps in to handle the interests of a survivor, a wave of disapproval typically washes over the reporting—the story can shift from portrayals of heroism and triumph over adversity to one of greed and attempts to capitalise on misfortune. Somehow the agent needs to be paid, so from that point on, one-on-one exclusive interviews at a premium price seem inevitable. Yet, as you'll see, much of the public debate about the use of agents ignores the primary motivation for hiring help: not cash or publicity, but *control*. More than making money or becoming famous, the survivors I spoke with counted protection from intrusion and frustration over inaccurate coverage as the main reasons for calling in a professional.

Of course, not all signed an agent to act as a human shield. But most of the survivors acknowledge they needed a third party to guard their privacy, provide sound advice or directly handle media approaches. Those who offer survivors unpaid assistance may still negotiate restricted access. Granting exclusive interviews is an effective way to limit media contact with someone who is too traumatised to make an informed decision on who to trust with their account of events, let alone face a barrage of questions from multiple outlets.

Stuart says he was advised by the late media agent, Harry M. Miller, that signing contracts with news organisations would provide some peace from a persistent press, even if they didn't pay for the story:

> The only real way that the media understands to go away is when you get someone like Harry in and you do an exclusive. Then they know that they have no chance of you talking to them at all, and they don't get the story. The day that that exclusive was signed with Channel Seven and *Women's Weekly* or whoever it was, the media went away. That was the end of it—see you later. Some people say that it makes them even more ferocious to get the story, but in my case they just left us alone. That was the end of it. Gone.

Enter the Agent

From the time word spread around Thredbo that Stuart was heard calling from beneath the concrete and mud, emergency services and medical teams tried to shield his family from an onslaught of requests for interviews, photographs and personal details. It was another 11 hours before Stuart was freed and rushed to Canberra Hospital. Reporters and camera crews immediately set up camp outside. The now retired Salvation Army Chaplain, Lieutenant-Colonel Don Woodland, put the tragedy and resultant public attention into perspective for Stuart's parents. A year before the Thredbo landslide, he counselled those devastated by the Port Arthur massacre. Stuart says Lieutenant-Colonel Woodland strongly recommended the Divers find someone to manage media contact, even if that was just to organise a press conference to satisfy journalists with one appearance:

> He basically said you will not be able to do it yourself. He knew the loss I'd had and the trauma I'd been through, and our family, and he knew that if I had to continually do interview after interview after interview and it wasn't controlled it would destroy me.

The Salvation Army placed a call on behalf of Stuart and Sally's families to Harry M. Miller, a high-profile agent who sat on the charity's Media Advisory Board. The Sydney-based businessman already envisaged that Stuart was being pursued by a pack of what he described in his memoir titled *Confessions of a Not-so-secret Agent* (2009) as 'bloodthirsty media hounds.' The Diver family gave no indication Stuart wanted to make money out of his ordeal although media were vying for the exclusive. Still, the press put them on notice:

> It is ironic that in the end Harry M. Miller's involvement will probably add to the poor image of the media, since in the public mind media managers and the media are indistinguishable. The Diver family, thrust inadvertently into the flare of public scrutiny, can be excused for wanting an expert to manage its sudden fame and to help it through the constant demands ahead. And if that is as far as Mr Miller's role extends, well and good. The worst thing which could now happen would be for a bidding war to erupt and for Mr Diver's miraculous rescue to be cheapened in the process (*The Canberra Times* 6 August 1997, p. 8).

Stuart summoned the strength to record a statement of thanks to rescuers—distributed to all media outlets—before Miller arrived in Canberra and reporters were told requests for interview needed to go through him. On the first day, the agent received more than 200 calls seeking access and information. 'All we are trying to do is take some of the weight off the family with the demands of the media inquiries,' Miller was quoted as saying, before adding: 'We're starting to look at the real story and how and when it can be told' (*The Daily Telegraph* 5 August 1997, p. 7).

Miller was already representing Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton when the Australian media turned Stuart Diver into a household name. The Chamberlains were most likely the country's first accidental celebrities to hire an agent when they signed Miller in 1986, more than a decade before the Thredbo disaster. Lindy had already endured two inquests, a murder trial,

more than three years in jail, two appeals against conviction, and six years in the media spotlight. ‘After Lindy came out of jail was when the heat was on,’ Michael Chamberlain explained. Lawyer Stuart Tipple indicated he couldn’t continue to handle reporter requests and Nine Network reporter Mike Lester introduced the idea of a media agent as the couple were about to face a 14-month long Royal Commission. He then spoke with Australian entertainer Graham Kennedy, a famous client of Miller.

Hiring a media agent was an unusual step for an accidental celebrity in the 1980s, although it was not widely reported. Under the headline ‘Lindy gets a business manager,’ *The Northern Territory News* (5 May 1986, p.3) described Miller as the ‘show business manager’ who would ‘handle their commercial interests.’ The focus of the story was on offers for book and movie deals, with Miller reported as saying: ‘I can well understand the bewilderment experienced by the Chamberlains that when facing the ordeal of this forthcoming inquiry they also have to make decisions in the most complex of commercial areas.’ There was no mention that news outlets might need to start paying for interviews and have restrictions placed on their reporting. The implications weren’t yet widely understood.

Lindy remembers with a broad smile the sense of relief when Miller took over the media inquiries: ‘I’ve said Harry Miller was just like having a human Alsatian that kept them at bay. He loved that description.’ Finally, she felt her privacy was being protected as media were made to ‘behave.’ Miller referred in his book to holding off reporters desperate for access to the Chamberlains as an ‘unexpected twist’ in his entertainment industry career. He went on to represent not only Stuart Diver, but Himalayan mountain survivor James Scott before him.

James clearly recalls the moment he first met Miller in 1992. The Christian lay seriously ill in Patan Hospital in Kathmandu when the brash businessman walked in. What happened next still makes James smile today:

> He had a white handkerchief over his face because half the people there had tuberculosis. So he's: 'Mate, mate, they're all fucking bastards, they're fucking all fucking bastards.' So he's: 'Don't fucking talk to any of them, let me handle it, I'll get it all fucking under control, no fucking worries.' So that's how we got Harry. He sort of took off as quick as he came—scurried in and scurried out.

James's family hired Miller on the advice of a journalist friend and the public relations department at the University of Queensland, where his father Ken had been a professor. The intense media interest had become overwhelming, but the university didn't want to act as the third party for fear it would be seen as benefiting from a student's misfortune. Miller, observing from a distance, was waiting for the call to put in place what he calls 'crisis media management'. It was at the Yak and Yeti Hotel in Nepal that he first met James's sister, Joanne Robertson. She'd organised the successful rescue mission with little help from Australian authorities, only to be confronted by invasive and pushy media. 'Joanne, I think, was quite antagonistic towards Harry initially, and Harry was sort of, "Look, I'm here because your parents asked me to be here … it's not where I want to be really either,"' James recalls. From the time Miller was appointed, the Scott family and staff at Patan Hospital directed all media inquiries his way, which James says sheltered them and enabled Joanne to rest:

> It was night and day. Suddenly everything just went quiet, everything calmed down and the frenzy stopped. It suddenly brought some order into this terrible chaos … I was being cushioned by everyone, but for the family it brought immense relief.

James was to face much greater scrutiny and criticism than the Chamberlains for hiring a media agent. The motive for an unknown Brisbane medical student securing the services of a nationally well-known ‘entertainment entrepreneur’ (*The Courier-Mail* 7 February 1992, p. 1) was questioned. Newspapers deemed Miller so publicly recognisable that they didn’t need to use his full name. Melbourne’s *The Age* (7 February 1992, p. 1) headlined: ‘The Iceman—a Harry M Classic’. Media outlets began demanding James explain how he had survived amid speculation that a deal had been struck to sell the first interview to one media outlet (*The Courier-Mail*, 8 February 1992, p. 7). Reporters supposedly felt ‘anger at what was rapidly becoming high farce … Even before Harry M stepped in, as far as the press was concerned, Scott would have been easier to reach had he stayed under the rock ledge’ (*The Sunday Age* 9 February 1992, p. 3).

THE AGE

150th

The council: born at a bad time

How the Melbourne Map was made

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A walk in the green forest

DIGEST

Russian coup brewing: economist

Government ‘pork-barrelling’

Angry Kimer pushed to tears

MPs nude in pictures, court told

Inquiry on pension blunder

AFL clubs claim harassment

The Iceman: a Harry M classic

Belfast killings spark fear of endless carnage

COME AND SEE WHAT'S BLOWN IN FROM EUROPE

(*The Age*, 7 February 1992, p. 1)

Miller fronted a press conference to make clear he was approached by the Scott family to alleviate the constant media pressure, and was directly asked: ‘How much money is there in this for you?’ (*The Age* 15 February 1992, p. 12). It’s an ironic question, given media outlets trade in trauma for audiences and profit. Stuart Diver referred to Miller in our conversation as: ‘Mr 25%’—the agent’s expected fee for any financial deal negotiated on behalf of a client. Representing ordinary people who become highly newsworthy undoubtedly helps build an agent’s personal and professional profile, potentially placing a premium fee on their services while helping bring in new business. When Stuart signed with Miller, newspapers headlined: ‘Survivor Becomes Another Miller’s Tale’ (*The Canberra Times* 5 August 1997, p. 1) and ‘Harry M. Miller signs up survivor’ (*The Australian* 5 August 1997, p. 5).

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THREDBO TRAGEDY

Rescuers race time to beat rain

By TRUDY HARRIS

RESCUERS digging for survivors of the landslide were racing against time yesterday as rain and snow were expected to hit the Thredbo area tomorrow or Thursday.

State Emergency Service officers were preparing to lay metres of plastic over the rescue operation to protect the site which could partially collapse if rain falls on to the unprotected area within the next 48 hours.

Rescuers are still searching for eight people listed as missing, including Sally Diver, wife of Stuart Diver who remains the sole survivor of the tragedy after being rescued on Saturday.

His condition continues to improve in Canberra Hospital, with Dr Bob Dunn saying he was in a stable condition.

"The treatment of his frostbite is continuing. There was minor surgical treatment to his cuts and abrasions ... any decision as to when Stuart will be leaving the hospital will be made after an assessment of his condition, on a day-to-day basis," Dr Dunn said.

At the site of the rescue operation, crews fear possible weather changes.

"The reports are that the weather could close in on us and of course that presents a range of problems for us," police commander Charlie Sanderson said.

State Emergency Service divisional commander Peter Cluque said the earth on the hill was fine granite which had no structure, making it extremely dangerous and slippery in wet conditions.

"The plastic sheeting could also be extended down the hill covering the rescue operation, allowing workers to continue searching for survivors, protected underneath the plastic.

Rescue workers were using heavy machinery yesterday to clear the remaining debris before cutting through the massive concrete slabs.

Commander Sanderson said cutting through the slabs, stacked like a deck of cards would expose the inside of Bimbadeen Lodge, possibly revealing more cavities and survivors.

He said rescuers were heartened by a message of thanks from Governor-General Sir William Deane following a memorial service at the Thredbo chapel yesterday.

Commander Cluque said workers had removed trees on Sunday night that threatened to topple on to nearby Schuss Lodge the building next to where the Carrinya once stood, following advice from engineers and geologists. He said Schuss Lodge was now considered safe although it, along with neighbouring lodges, remained evacuated yesterday.

Another body was expected to be removed from the rubble late last night, bringing to 16 the number of bodies recovered. Rescuers are still searching for a further eight people reported missing.

Asked whether survivors were still possible, ambulance superintendent Allan Deitz said: "One must hope that there are, but obviously as time goes on it's getting more and more difficult."

Police were keeping notes and photographs of the victims when they were located, including identifying nearby possessions.

Elements of danger ... rescuers fear rain and snow will make their work more treacherous — Picture: BRETT FALKNER

WHAT THE WEATHER HOLDS

Today	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Dry, cold night, mainly sunny day, light NE winds	Dry, cloud increasing, N to NW winds freshening later in day	Rain, fresh N winds turning W to SW. Chance of snow later	Clearing. SW winds easing

(Source: Bureau of Meteorology)

Diggers taught to hasten slowly

By JOHN ELLICOTT

FIREMEN tunnelling and working their way through the Thredbo rubble in the search for survivors and to retrieve bodies are using for the first time skills learned from Scotland's Lockerbie air disaster.

It was a case of "take your time to hurry", said senior fire brigade rescue instructor Terry Munsey, one of the first rescuers on the scene of the Thredbo landslide and due to start work again today at 4am.

"We had no choice but to be careful. The scene was very unstable, movement was always imminent and there were large boulders poised to fall down on us," he said yesterday.

The two teams of Urban Search And Rescue squad members working at Thredbo received their skills at an intense two-week Canberra training course in 1995.

Strathclyde fire officers who were involved in the search for survivors among the debris after part of a Pan Am jumbo crashed into their village of Lockerbie in 1988 conducted the program.

USAR members were required to perform practical tasks — sometimes for up to 24 hours in duration — learning to select safe debris for removal, tunnelling, vertical and horizontal manoeuvres and learning to crawl slowly across collapsed sites.

At Thredbo they used those techniques to work their way through spaces which at first were only a hand's breadth in diameter.

"We assessed the site with a rubble crawl and looked for entry points such as visible holes or fissures and proceeded from there, shoring up with timber as we went," station officer Munsey said.

"Most of the debris on the first day had to be dug out by hand."

USAR members have dug tunnels up to 10 metres in depth in parts of the nightmare of debris at the Thredbo landslide.One of the USAR team members, Steve First, was the first to find survivor Stuart Driver using the USAR calling and "Fire brigade rescue overhead, can anyone hear me?" — a call learned at the Canberra training course.

Station officer Munsey said the place where Stuart Diver was found was full of mud and "other things". "It was very small and had very little light. Claustrophobics do not seek USAR accreditation in the fire brigade. Rescuers learn to "breathe out" while tunnelling to push themselves through the

Harry M. Miller signs up survivor

By JOHN ELLICOTT, AMANDA MEADE, STEPHEN LUNN and CHRISTOPHER DORE

CELEBRITY agent Harry M. Miller said yesterday he would represent Thredbo landslide survivor Stuart Diver as the story of his rescue attracted worldwide interest, including from the three big US television networks.

Although Mr Miller said on Sunday he hoped "no deal(s)at agent goes near anyone" from the Thredbo tragedy, he said yesterday he had taken on Mr Diver as a client after a request from Mr Diver's family.

The story of Mr Diver's rescue achieved record ratings for television stations — adding 200,000 extra viewers to one network's Saturday night news bulletin.

The request for Mr Miller's assistance came late on Sunday as numerous media organisations tried to secure interviews with Mr Diver.

Mr Miller's name was mentioned to the Diver family by a Salvation Army officer at Canberra Hospital, where Mr Diver is recovering from his 65-hour ordeal.

The officer had known Mr Miller from his work on the Salvation Army board of directors. Mr Miller's Sydney office said.

The office yesterday was flooded with at least 200 requests from media outlets including the American CBS, NBC and ABC television networks and British newspapers wanting to secure an interview with Mr Diver.

Mr Diver's story is also being sought by channels 9 and 7, and newspaper groups including News Limited, publisher of *The Australian*.

When asked on Sunday about representing Mr Diver, Mr Miller told *The Australian*: "I would be staggered in the face of what's going on that even the Australian media would become involved in some kind of bidding war. It would be ghoulish to do anything."

But yesterday Mr Miller said in Canberra he had accepted the family's request to represent Mr Diver.

Mr Miller said it was unfair for the Diver family to be harassed when they were clearly grieving and in distress and he would look at making decisions on media requests, possibly by tomorrow. "Whether it's two days or four days or six days, I don't know," he said.

"I think that ... we'll just try and calm it all down for a minute ... wait and see."

A spokesman for News Limited said yesterday: "News Limited group publications are interested in the Diver story but as of yet no formal negotiation had been entered into."

Both Channel 9 and Channel 7 said they wanted to secure Mr Diver. They had also held informal talks with Mr Miller.

Channel 9 news and current affairs director Peter Meakin said "no talk of any money had been entered into" and was "out of the question" in the present circumstances.

Ratings for the television networks skyrocketed on Saturday. Channel 9 news in Sydney attracted about 200,000 more viewers than on its previous Saturday, while all-day coverage of the rescue on Channels 7 and 9 attracted unprecedented ratings for Saturday. Between 5pm and 5.30pm on Saturday at the time of Mr Diver's release, Channel 7 recorded a national audience figure of 1.4 million compared with 1.1 million for Channel 9.

News analysts said Mr Diver's story would be worth at least $200,000 — the figure believed paid by Sixty Minutes to secure an interview with the "chocolate bar" survivor from the Himalayas, James Scott.

Mr Miller ... 'wait and see'

Nation thanks search crews

By KRISTINE GOUGH and STEFANIE BALOGH

A FLOOD of letters and faxes from across the nation congratulating the rescue teams in Thredbo on their efforts is helping to buoy the morale of crews.

A letter thanking the emergency teams and offering support for those affected by the tragedy was published today

families of victims.

"Thredbo is enormously grateful to the rescuers," Mr Osborn said.

"You couldn't begin to imagine the volume of offers and support that have flooded in and this (the fund) is a vehicle for the community to do something."

volunteers we have been watching the Thredbo disaster on television and would like to express our admiration for the courage, bravery and determination that you have shown us," the letter read.

"We are very proud of your efforts and send our deepest

A legendary pairing.

(*The Australian*, 5 August 1997, p. 5)

Chasing Control

News organisations don't readily accept being prevented from having direct contact with the talent, and if the go-between is an agent, the negotiations for access to the inside story often become more complex. A wrestle for control typically ensues. In all of the media deals Miller negotiated for Stuart and Lindy, there was a power of 'veto,' giving the survivors the ability to strike out incorrect words and phrases. He boasted in his memoir: 'I'm probably the only producer who has always maintained, no matter what the cost or tactic, total control over what the media write. And that drives the media crazy'. Yet allowing survivors to review copy is a price reporters and editors will often pay for exclusive access, regardless of whether they're represented by an agent. Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton built fact checking into contracts as well as a 'one-use-only' clause on images after being the subject of reams of reporting that she argues was false and misleading, often based on rumours:

> One or two other people have had this privilege since, but I was the first person in Australia allowed to look at what was written before it went to air or into a newspaper. If they're intending to do the facts, you don't care. And I think they know if they want to say I'm a fat little lady who doesn't appeal to them, I mightn't like it but I won't change that because they're allowed a personal opinion. But if they write the facts wrong though I will change it because it affects history as well as me.

Stuart's deepest concern was ensuring publishers and broadcasters did not misrepresent the 18 people who died at Thredbo or their families:

> One of the big parts of doing exclusives with Harry was that we had total editorial control of every story we did. That was basically unheard of at that point in time. So they could not print a photo, could not do anything. People go: 'Oh that's a bit controlling, what didn't you want to tell them?' The reason is because every single story they did had facts that were

> incorrect: they had ages that were wrong, they had names that were wrong. So we had to edit it for them. And to this day I'm still correcting pretty well every single journalist I've been involved with.

Miller continued to act for Stuart and Lindy until he retired in 2009—nine years before his death. The survivors are today still listed as clients of the Harry M. Miller Group, now known as HMMG, owned and run by the founder's daughter Lauren Miller Cilento. Michael Chamberlain had long parted company with the man he described in his book *Heart of Stone* as 'Australia's shrewdest and most powerful entrepreneur in media management'—around the time he and Lindy divorced in 1991. James Scott's association with the agency waned when he chose to drop from public view in the year after his rescue. But if the feeding frenzy took hold again, he is certain he would try to enlist professional help.

The Beaconsfield miners could be considered the ones that got away for the Harry M. Miller Group. There is little doubt the self-confessed 'showbiz impresario' wanted them in his stable of accidental celebrities, almost a decade after Stuart Diver became a household name. 'Harry M. Miller, he was actually making contact with my wife, wanting her to sign an exclusive contract with him,' Todd explains. 'We hadn't even been found alive.' Within three days of rescuers hearing the miners' calls from underground, reports on their extraordinary survival turned to the world-wide media attention they could anticipate when finally freed.

The Sydney Morning Herald (4 May 2006, p. 6) speculated on who might represent the men, with 'all eyes' on Harry M. Miller, who 'would surely love to add the Beaconsfield miners to his trophy cabinet.' The newspaper added: 'the lack of an agent to negotiate with is frustrating attempts to start talks with relatives,' implying a third-party deal maker was inevitable. *The Australian* (4 May 2006, p. 15) too mentioned Miller's experience and quoted

him as saying: 'That situation down there is going to need some management. Not so much keeping the press away, just managing the thing. People don't understand how relentless the mainstream media can be and this is a fantastic situation.' News outlets were jostling for the rights to the 2006 'miracle,' and Miller was publicly giving the Russell and Webb families advice: 'Shut up. Button up … because down the road … it will have to be managed in a way' (*The Australian* 4 May 2006, p. 15).

The day after the miners emerged from their tomb, Miller was reportedly in Tasmania, encouraging television network bosses to put forward an offer for the exclusive (*The Australian* 11 May 2006, p. 15), although he hadn't been hired to act on their behalf. Todd says he and Brant quickly came to the realisation that they couldn't personally deal with the media pressure and needed to reclaim the privacy of their families:

> It just got to the point where we needed to … it was getting bigger than *Ben-Hur*. Then there was talk of this TV exclusive … there was money and stuff like this being thrown around. The last thing we wanted was to be dealing with contracts and negotiations and all that sort of thing, so it was easier for us just to put it in someone else's hands. It just made our lives so much easier.

The miners interviewed Miller as well as Max Markson, who was described as a 'celebrity wrangler' (*The Australian* 4 May 2006, p. 15). But Todd says he was not impressed:

> Max Markson came in offering to write out cheques for $100,000 there and then, put money into our bank accounts before everything—just out to try and buy us and that's not what it was about. We wanted someone that was going to look after our interests and look after our personal side of life by dealing with the media, not us having to worry about it.

The far lesser-known Sean Anderson from 22 MGMT—a Sydney-based company that represented media personalities like David Koch from Channel 7's *Sunrise* program—also travelled to Tasmania, hoping for the opportunity to secure the miners' business. He put on a 'very professional front,' according to Todd. Four days after 'The Great Escape,' Anderson was chosen as the miners' agent (*The Sunday Age* 14 May 2006, p. 9). By then Todd and Brant had already spoken publicly, appearing on the Nine Network's *Footy Show*, featuring a charity concert broadcast from Beaconsfield (*The Mercury* 12 May 2006, p. 1).

Anderson stated from the outset the priority wasn't to see what the story was worth (*The Daily Telegraph* 15 May 2006, p. 7). This was about control, giving Todd and Brant editorial control over their first exclusive interviews. Still, the Nine Network's then parent company, PBL Media, paid handsomely for an exclusive combined television and magazine contract that prevented the miners from speaking with any other media organisation for twelve months. Todd describes that deal as a 'godsend,' conveying a message to reporters from other outlets that they should give up the pursuit of an interview while he also had the right to check the accuracy of the stories to which they contributed. 'The Beaconsfield Miners' are still listed as clients on 22 MGMT's website today, and Todd says his only regret is not hiring an agent as soon as they entered the media spotlight:

> The best thing that we ever did was sign a manager. People in the media circus didn't really come and bother us because everything then had to go through our manager, even though you still had the odd one or two sneaking around the corner or sitting down the main street of Beaconsfield just waiting for you to go and pick your mower up or go and get a newspaper—just so they could get a photo of you.

Other Third Party Support

Not every high-profile trauma survivor delegates media contact to a paid agent. But all those I spoke with relied on a third party of some description to act as an intermediary, providing advice and support in handling interactions with journalists. Lawyers have effectively operated as agents. Other survivors were shielded by family. Media are most accustomed to dealing with police and medical staff following trauma events. These authorities can quickly find themselves the unofficial spokespeople for survivors. There's an unwritten understanding that journalists need timely and accurate information to satisfy public interest. However, that established relationship doesn't guarantee competition between media outlets for access to the survivor will decrease, and any attempt to control contact can still be seen by news crews as preventing them from doing their job.

In the middle of the first wave of a media feeding frenzy, the Corbys trusted only their close circle of family and friends and represented themselves instead of hiring an agent. Mercedes Corby recognises that in the days and weeks after her sister Schapelle was arrested on drug smuggling charges in 2004, the family had no idea how to handle media. 'We didn't know what we were doing, and I don't think we even realised what we were thinking,' she explains. The Corbys became sandwiched between a legal team urging them to speak publicly, police telling them not to, and media requesting a running commentary. Gold Coast entrepreneur, Ron Bakir, assumed a role representing the Corbys publicly after offering financial support and bringing lawyer friend, Robin Tampoe, to help the defence. When Schapelle was convicted, Bakir—cheekily referred to in media as her 'white knight' (*The Courier-Mail* 2 April 2005, p. 1)—and Tampoe had a public falling out with the family and exited the scene. The Corbys accused them of damaging the case, by claiming prosecutors solicited for bribes, and of trying to profit from their misery (*The Courier-Mail* 22 June 2005, p. 1; *The*

Australian 25 June 2005, p. 9). Mercedes describes herself as the unofficial spokesperson from then on:

> They [the lawyers] honestly made everything worse … [Bakir] just loved the media … and when we sacked all of them, because the media had already made a rapport with them—they were going out for lunch with the media all the time—they were able to use their contacts to turn on us.

At that point, Harry M. Miller was publicly touted as likely to represent the Corbys (*Gold Coast Bulletin* 30 May 2005, p. 8). Miller was also described as a 'celebrity agent,' either as a measure of his prominence or the high profile that had already been attained by the Corbys (*The Advertiser* 31 May 2005, p. 7). Schapelle herself was referred to in the press as having become an 'unlikely celebrity' (*The Australian* 2 June 2005, p. 16). Mercedes says Miller was actually the first of the agents to attempt to sign the family, several months after the arrest. Although he recalled the Corbys ringing his office at the time (*The Sun-Herald* 28 August 2005, p. 10), and being asked again, after the conviction, to make contact (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 22 June 2005, p. 18).

The Sydney Morning Herald (1 June 2005, p. 3) was convinced the Corbys were poised to hire Miller, reporting he was about to fly to Bali. The headline 'Enter Harry M. stage left,' alluded to his career promoting theatrical tours and the drama that surrounded Schapelle and her family. Miller later said he'd been inundated with requests from media around the world to sign deals, although he wasn't their agent: 'I've had more sightings around Bali than Halley's Comet gets every 70 or so years … I have people asking me "How was Bali?" or telling me they saw me up there. I've never been to bloody Bali' (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 22 June 2005, p. 18). According to Miller, the first rule of crisis management is to

shut up—the same advice he gave to the Beaconsfield miners a year later—but that's a strategy the Corbys could not adopt:

> I spoke to the mother, I spoke to the uncle but what became very clear, very quickly, was that they simply could not stop talking. I asked them to zip up … but like they used to say in the old days, it was as though the entire family had been vaccinated with a gramophone needle. (*The Sun-Herald* 28 August 2005, p. 10)

Mercedes considers banning the family from speaking publicly was unrealistic; they faced intense media pressure every time they visited Schapelle and believed it was in her interests to counter inaccurate prison leaks. The Corbys were also not prepared to cede what little control they had to Miller or anyone else. Mercedes found dealing with agents, in itself, stressful:

> My experiences weren't good. I found them very pushy and it was like our ability to say yes or no, they wanted to take that away from us … Not that we had too much control, but I felt like they didn't really understand just how [hard] it is to walk through a media scrum and not say anything. It was always the print, the newspapers and the TV stations, were always around us. I just don't think we could've completely ignored them just to do a story for money … For us, the most important thing was to fight for Schapelle's freedom and work on her case. I found someone like an agent wanted the media to be first priority.

Mercedes had to learn to stop, think and provide short statements to reporters in order to get the message out—in Australia and Indonesia—that Schapelle was innocent. The one person whose advice she came to trust was journalist Kathryn Bonella, who produced stories for the Nine Network's *60 Minutes* program on Schapelle's arrest and conviction. The journalist then left Nine and moved to Bali to help Schapelle write the book *My Story* (2019). Bonella and publicity agent Stephen Moriarty reportedly brokered story deals for the Corbys in the

past, although 'Mercedes is running the media show' (*The Australian* 10 February 2014, p. 23).

Douglas Wood's media campaign for freedom—in Australia and Iraq—was led by brothers Malcolm and Vernon Wood, with professional help on the side. For the six weeks he was held captive, calls were directed to Canberra-based public relations specialist Neil Smail ('Putting the best spin on a kidnap,' *The Australian* 23 June 2005, p. 18). He became involved via contacts, providing advice free of charge, along with Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs. Malcolm, the youngest of the four brothers but based in Canberra, took on the role of spokesman though (*The Daily Telegraph* 18 June 2005, p. 33), ensuring the Australian public and potentially Douglas's captors could relate to a distressed family rather than a 'spin doctor'. Within three days of news that Douglas had been rescued from his kidnappers, the Wood family approached Melbourne-based lawyer, Mark Klemens of Profile Talent Management to act as an agent ('Lawyer to the stars helps Wood control his tale', *The Australian* 23 June 2005, p. 18). Douglas was preparing to travel from Baghdad to Melbourne, and feels he had no choice in the decision to hire an agent under a 12-month contract.

Stories were already circulating that Douglas planned to sell his tale (*The Australian* 18 June 2005, p 5). Klemens's public comments reinforced that intent, explaining there was worldwide interest. 'We are going to be looking for opportunities from a media perspective and potential endorsement opportunities,' he said (*Sunday Herald Sun* 19 June 2005, p. 1). Klemens saw his role as helping the family 'with media and other commercial inquiries' because they didn't have the expertise or desire to field them (*The Age* 21 June 2005, p. 11). *The Australian* (23 June 2005, p. 18) observed that during Douglas's 47 days in captivity, 'his family pursued a softly-softly' media strategy. 'Once he was freed, however, phase two

of the family's remarkably sophisticated media management strategy swung into action'. In the same article, Klemens defended his client against public comments that he was profiteering from his Iraq experience:

> Douglas didn't choose to be kidnapped. He has not worked, obviously, for … 47 days. He's lost income. He is not a man who has any money at all and he has significant health problems, which are expensive. When opportunities present themselves he has to consider them.

The former hostage says he was personally willing to talk with media, didn't intend to make money from his ordeal, and wasn't happy working with an agent who told him who he could speak with and when. 'Maybe I felt that he's opportunistic; he only wanted what he could get and he was only interested in money, and I'm not that interested in money,' he explains. Kay Danes was also not impressed to find others making decisions for her and husband Kerry. While the Danes were detained in a Laotian prison from 2000 to 2001, Sydney-based lawyer Ted Tzovaras and Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs worked to persuade government officials to release the couple. When, after 11 months, they were free to return home to Brisbane, Kay says Tzovaras began planning deals, engaged a media advisor and organised a press conference. She looks back now and resents being told when she could speak with reporters and what to say in order to avoid further diplomatic tensions:

> I wanted to just be free. And coming from a place we'd just spent 12 months in prison, your freedom is essential, it's the most critical element … free to make my own decisions and saying what I want to say. So I don't ever want to be put in that position again.

Kay felt the situation was completely out of the couple's control and so, after that first press conference, they 'batted' on their own, choosing to answer questions from reporters when they called. She says they were never interested in hiring an agent, although in hindsight

their family did need support from someone who had experience dealing with trauma survivors and media:

> We could have been with someone that actually had a bit more empathy for what we'd just been going through as opposed to: 'Ok, I'm going to help these people get through it and then I'm going to get paid whatever amount.' So it just seemed to me when we came home that certain people viewed us as cash cows, because they never listened to our instructions anyway. If I wanted to make money out of my product and flog it for all it's worth, then I suppose it would be smarter for me to get an agent so that they can promote the hell out of me. But that's not what I'm about.

Instead of an agent or lawyer, it was the Queensland Police media unit that provided what Bruce and Denise Morcombe consider to be 'crucial' assistance. In 2003, then-Senior Sergeant Julie Elliott began fielding media inquiries, providing statements and organising press conferences for the Morcombes. As months of investigation turned into years, the public campaign to find Daniel gained traction and the couple's profiles rose. 'We didn't know anything, so Julie Elliott was helping us get through that,' Denise explains. The Morcombes were never approached by an agent, in part no doubt because the tragedy unfolded over time. The couple also wouldn't have considered hiring one to shield them from reporters or negotiate exclusive access. 'We were in a different space where we needed the media,' Bruce says. Denise adds, 'We needed … to keep Daniel's story out there and they [reporters] knew that.'

When Jacqueline Pascarl's two children failed to return home from an access visit by their father in 1992, she too saw media as allies. The Federal Police repeatedly advised her that the best way to get the children's images in front of the public, in the hope they would be spotted, was via the media. But Jacqueline, a television reporter, and her second husband

and journalist Iain Gillespie, already knew that. Beyond the initial decision to seek media coverage, Jacqueline says she was too distressed to determine how to best deal with reporters clamouring for the story, so Iain assumed the role of media adviser:

> I could not have got the media ball rolling without having a third party—my then-husband—as media adviser to begin with. But if I had my time over again, and I was Miss Maturity with this insight, I would never have had a third party between myself and the media at a time of trauma unless I had already worked out a game plan and knew what was going to be happening.

Jacqueline explains that while she needed a 'buffer zone,' it shouldn't have been a member of the family who was also distressed; rather someone who could 'draw a line in the sand' and say:

> 'No, she's not doing three to five interviews, she'll do two. She'll do one print, one radio, one TV and they're all in there together and if you miss it you miss it, tough. Don't care about your deadlines.'

Nor would she hire a media agent, believing the support needs to come from someone who truly understands trauma. Jacqueline later engaged a literary agent when she wrote of her experience, as did Ron Delezio and Carolyn Martin. The parents of Sophie Delezio relied on the media unit at The Children's Hospital at Westmead to liaise with reporters on their behalf when she was critically injured from a car crash in 2003. The Delezios participated in numerous controlled interviews, satisfying requests for updates on Sophie's condition and providing insights into their private lives. Ron acknowledges the couple encouraged media interest in their daughter beyond the initial reporting, believing they had a duty to thank strangers for their compassion and let them know about Sophie's recovery:

> Not that we had to encourage it as far as their wanting to find out stories, but we controlled it, we gained the respect of the media and we were able to use the media for the right purposes.

The Delezios' profile helped them promote the Day of Difference Foundation they established after Sophie's release from hospital in 2004, raising funds for research into pediatric burns and related diseases. It was only when later criticised publicly by his estranged eldest daughter, Catherine Delezio, that Ron released a statement through a media agent, Max Markson (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 24 February 2009, p. 2).

While media relations staff at the Royal Children's Hospital in Brisbane provided some assistance to Jenni Begg when her son Jandamarra O'Shane was critically burnt in 1996, it was the boy's high-profile aunt and uncle who took control of the media feeding frenzy. New South Wales Magistrate, Pat O'Shane, and Indigenous rights campaigner, Terry O'Shane, are the older siblings of Jandamarra's father Tim. Jenni remains grateful for the role they played:

> I thank God that we did have them because I just basically said, 'Look you deal with the media' … They were the voice and the face of the media, and it helped me heaps at the time. Family from my side sort of didn't agree with it, or some didn't like it, and I just told them: 'Look, they're taking a lot of the heat off me and I don't care what you think, I really appreciate what they're doing.' Pat was there with us and she left everything to come and spend some time with us.

The support Jenni and Jandamarra received from hospital staff and family members was never criticised by reporters. They weren't viewed, or portrayed, as attempting to gain from the trauma. Jenni recalls being approached by the manager of Australian former professional rugby league footballer and coach, Wally Lewis, when Jandamarra was ready to leave

hospital in Brisbane. By then the media attention had eased and the family thought the gaggle of reporters had moved on. Jenni says they soon learnt Jandamarra's remarkable survival had not been forgotten and his return home to Cairns in Queensland's Far North was enough to reactivate the coverage:

> I do regret not taking him up on the offer. I believe that he'd probably have been able to control the media a lot better for us and, you know, having the skills and screening them. Whereas, when they'd approached us, not having that expertise, and they were preying on our emotions, we feel obligated to.

Survivors rarely know who to trust when they're experiencing trauma which can be emotionally devastating and long-lasting. The feeling of helplessness is typically exacerbated when they are confronted by an overwhelming media presence. In that situation, should they relent to every request for interview, demand a degree of privacy or delegate control to someone else, trusting them to represent their best interests in dealing with pushy reporters? Stuart Diver looks back and maintains he had no choice but to hire professional help when he had no understanding of media practices and couldn't make an informed decision on whether to speak about his experience publicly and how:

> People always think with Harry it was about the money, but a lot of the time it wasn't. It was about protecting his client to make sure that they had to do the least amount of interview time and, at the end of the day, happy days if they got the most out of it.

6

CASH FOR EXCLUSIVE COMMENT

> I don't mind taking money because [the media] have made so much more out of me than I have … They've probably made more out of me in a day than I've made altogether. And they've taken away my right to a livelihood by making me so well known that I can't get a job and I've had to do something.
>
> - Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton

From the time media recognise an ordinary person's traumatic experience as newsworthy and begin their pursuit of survivors, competition for the story ensues. These are the questions I have asked myself as a journalist: Is the survivor likely to speak publicly? How can I encourage them to provide their account of an event—to me first and preferably only to me? An exclusive guarantees access to the talent or story angle ahead of the pack. Commercial editors will weigh up whether dollars need to be offered as an inducement to speak and secure the exclusive, asking: What is the story worth when considering the likely financial return? Publicly funded broadcasters—the ABC and SBS—may cover expenses but won't use taxpayer funds to pay incentives to news sources, so the playing field for media isn't even. To the survivor, that may be an interesting side point, but largely irrelevant when protecting their own interests.

The issue here is control, not money. Signing an exclusive—paid or unpaid—is one way a survivor can send a signal to media outlets that an ongoing pursuit is futile, potentially easing the pressure of stakeouts and constant requests for interview. Like some deals mentioned in the previous chapter, interviewees may also insist on the ability to check copy for accuracy, in the hope of controlling how they will be represented publicly. There is always a risk though, that dictating the terms of involvement with media will in fact lead to a negative portrayal. Chequebook journalism, as it's called, is a media practice. Yet journalists publish or air criticisms of those who accept cash in exchange for exclusive rights to their story, if not instigate a backlash.

Ethical objections to paid exclusives centre on the practice limiting and potentially corrupting the free flow of credible information, which essentially restricts audience access to accurate and full accounts of events. The only way a survivor's insights are then available to all audiences is if those outlets that didn't win the bid follow the coverage of a wealthier competitor that did. Other concerns revolve around the potential for the seller to stretch the truth, making the story more valuable to buyers. Those I interviewed say their story did not change because they were paid. From my experience, people don't need money to mislead or shape their accounts to create a good impression of themselves, and recollections of events can be unintentionally inaccurate, particularly when witnesses are traumatised. Let's not forget that reporters also get it wrong. Here we look at the reasons survivors enter into exclusive arrangements, what they and media get out of chequebook journalism, the fallout some individuals face and the different deals struck by those who don't have agents.

Chequebook Journalism – A Survivor's Critique

Accidental celebrity wasn't a career choice for Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton. She didn't plan on her high-profile status, nor did she foresee depending on media and public appearances for income. The blame for her transformation into a saleable commodity, according to her, can be laid at the feet of editors and journalists. Lindy and Michael Chamberlain are credited, unofficially, with being Australia's first accidental celebrities to participate in chequebook journalism. The couple entered this ethical minefield after Lindy was released from prison in 1986. There were bills to pay, not to mention everyday living expenses. They were also facing an ongoing legal battle and media pestering that consumed all their time. Their first paid interview was with the Nine Network's *60 Minutes* program; a deal that also included an appearance in *The Australian Women's Weekly* magazine (March 1986). The fee went straight towards the Chamberlain's mounting legal costs, although Lindy points out almost half was taken in tax. Soon after, they hired media agent Harry M. Miller, who advised the only way of 'controlling' media was to engage further in paid exclusive interviews.

Following her divorce from Michael in 1991, Lindy says she and their three children survived by sharing her parent's pension until the Northern Territory Government compensated them for wrongful conviction and imprisonment the following year. While the payout—widely reported as $1.3 million—cleared many of her debts, Lindy says she still had no income:

> Paul Everingham [Northern Territory Chief Minister at the time] said in our case: 'You shouldn't pay the Chamberlains; we've given them a chance to make money off the media.' Well, excuse me, you didn't ask me if I wanted to make money off the media, I was quite happy where I was.

Today Lindy estimates she's participated in more than 50 paid exclusives, recognising the role she has played in commercialising her experience. She's seen competition for access to survivors intensify over the past three decades, along with the practice of media outlets bidding to be first with the story. Commercial television networks are pitted against each other while popular magazines and tabloid newspapers, focused heavily on personalised storytelling, are also willing to part with cash as they vie for audiences. At the same time, media agents have a skill for negotiating combined deals, or selling separate print and broadcast rights, with other potential spin-offs. Many of those who become high profile after an unanticipated trauma must now navigate their way through the unfamiliar world of financial offers and public appearances or 'performances'. Lindy argues that the real ethical issue arises when publishers and broadcasters do not offer payment, instead expecting survivors to open their private lives to public scrutiny for free:

> They're making a huge amount of money out of these people by increased circulation, increased viewing, increased ratings, increased sales, so they pay their reporters to get it, they pay their editors to edit it, their printers to print it etc. All down the line, everybody is paid for their part. And yet there's a big fuss made about chequebook journalism. That's one thing that, to me, stinks because it's always the disgruntled one that makes the big thing about chequebook journalism, tries to make the person look dirty for doing it, as opposed to it's something that's always done.

Outlets that missed out on an interview may run spoiler stories and accuse the survivor of seeking to profit from their sudden high profile, even though they were the ones that thrust an ordinary person into the public eye, as Lindy explains:

> We'd been told many times, 'Oh, you're selling your dead daughter, making money off your daughter's death, therefore did you do it for publicity.' It's a damned if you do, damned if

> you don't … It never covers the grief and everything that you go through to get to that spot, or the nerves and the hassle and everything else in doing it—never covers it.

She believes, in an ideal world, media bosses would factor in a fee for accounts of events of significant community interest and consequence, accepting that it is a standard cost of doing business, much like freelance pictures, printing and copy. While Lindy recognises that a fixed rate may be difficult to enforce, she doesn't think trauma survivors should have to ask for money in exchange for their story:

> It's all very well saying there's a public fund for victims of crime or whatever it is. Even with that, there's specific amounts, [trauma] to go through, you may or may not fit, you've still got payments going out … you may have to pay a lawyer or you may have to pay a media consultant if you've done it the wrong way and got the wrong person to help you. Or you might have to pay for a secretary or a bodyguard … unforeseen expenses, ones that weren't your fault but are created by the situation you're in. But the media is now using you as part of their product to sell.

Then there are the lost wages and future job opportunities, resulting from ongoing demands on their time dealing with media, lawyers, doctors and others, as well as potentially false public perceptions. One common misconception, Lindy says, is that those in the media spotlight, including trauma survivors, are financially secure, if not outright rich:

> You can't work properly, like when Rick got engaged to me and the media crawled all over him, his boss told him to take time off without pay to sort himself out. We'd just bought a house, he'd just taken on a family and suddenly he's without a job … Rick was offered $10 an hour for consulting when it should have been a minimum of $60 an hour because he was supposedly 'rich.' [Apparently he] didn't need money; he was 'only working to keep himself occupied'. Well we all wish! So it's a double-edged sword in that when we were broke and

> couldn't get a job, being asked to do paying interviews kept us in food and helped pay some of our legal expenses and all sorts of things.

Money and the Motive

Beaconsfield miner Todd Russell risked a media and public backlash when he personally outed the practice of paid exclusives to a mass audience. He and Brant Webb hadn't yet signed an agent or a media deal when they appeared on Nine Network's *The Footy Show* (11 May 2006) to thank rescuers, crossing live from a benefit concert at the Beaconsfield Community Hall. When then-host and Nine CEO, Eddie McGuire, strayed close to asking the men what it was like to be trapped, Todd simply replied: 'Tell me how big your chequebook is and we'll talk'. The local Beaconsfield audience erupted in applause—it appeared one of their own was going to make sure media companies weren't the only ones profiting. But Todd says the line was scripted. 'Eddie McGuire told me to say it,' he recalls. 'It wasn't a phrase that I came up with … He just thought it was funny at the time, I suppose.' Todd reveals it was also agreed he and Brant would not talk about their fortnight trapped underground, retaining the value of the exclusive, which McGuire was still trying to secure.

The chequebook reference could have been an intended warning shot from Nine to rival networks which were still vying for the exclusive, but it was Todd who felt the impact. There were no surveys capturing public opinion, just criticism and unsubstantiated claims from commentators, likely drummed up by newspapers that were out of the running. 'Good luck to the survivors, I hope they make a pile selling their amazing story. But am I alone in thinking such crude, brazen comments devalue both the rescue effort and the miners' tales?' said one writer (*Sunday Herald Sun* 14 May 2006, p. 30). An un-named 'expert' was quoted as saying there was increasingly negative sentiment towards Todd and Brant after the comment. 'No one likes to hear about people being greedy,' he told News Limited (*Herald*

Sun 15 May 2006, p. 15, *The Mercury*, 15 May 2006, p. 3). 'People like to see victims, but these two don't seem like victims. They are still a bit overweight and still look very healthy.' A columnist for *The Australian* (17 May 2006, p. 15) leapt to the miners' defence. 'The least the boys could have done was shrink to Olsen sister [sic] size and develop a few exciting festering wounds,' she wrote.

It wasn't Todd who first raised the prospect of being paid by media to recount his experience. He and Brant were still trapped underground when one television network source was quoted as predicting, 'It's going to be the hottest story of the year,' with the men 'expected to join the rare few to be paid a six-figure sum for their tale' (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 4 May 2006, p. 6). One newspaper (*The Australian* 4 May 2006, p. 15) tried to benchmark the miners against other famous accidental celebrities, listing what it believed to be earnings from the sale of their stories: Lindy Chamberlain (1986 $250,000), Thredbo survivor Stuart Diver (1997 $250,000), Himalayan survivor James Scott (1991 $250,000) and Iraqi hostage Douglas Wood (2005 $400,000).

The question of just how much Todd and Brant's story could command led to $250,000 being bandied about for one interview (*The Age* 5 May 2006, p. 4), with up to $2 million for a combined magazine, television, book and movie deal (*The Australian* 4 May 2006, p. 15). Media agent Max Markson, who was eager to sign the miners when they surfaced, estimated the pair could sell their story to a local media company for about $1 million, with another $500,000 from overseas contracts, on top of book deals and time on the speaking circuit (*The Australian Financial Review* 10 May 2006, p. 5).

Headline writers had plenty of fodder to work with as they waited for the miners to surface, declaring chequebook journalism: 'A minefield for TV networks' (*The Age* 5 May 2006, p.

4) as the ‘Media circus comes digging for gold’ (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 4 May 2006, p. 6). *The Australian* liked the metaphor so much that it consistently used it before and after the miners’ agent Sean Anderson finalised negotiations: ‘Networks dig for buried gold’ (11 May 2006, p. 15) and ‘Nine chiefs lead the gold rush’ (18 May 2006, p. 15). *The Canberra Times* appeared to side with Todd and Brant in a media and public debate over the benefits and drawbacks of paid exclusives:

> The capacity to sell your story to the highest bidder is merely an inevitable by-product of living in a market economy … A person’s story is simply another commodity … The media outlet that tells their story will make a lot of extra money. And in the tussle for the extra revenue with a media outlet, the miners win hands down. (10 May 2006, p. 17)

It was reported that the Nine Network’s parent company Publishing and Broadcasting Limited ultimately paid $2.6 million for the story—'the most expensive chequebook journalism deal in Australian history’ (*The Australian* 25 May 2006, p. 13). The investment was spread across a television special with *A Current Affair* host Tracy Grimshaw and an interview with the miners and their families in *Woman’s Day* (29 May 2006, pp. 1-7). *The Australian Women’s Weekly* (June 2006, pp. 1, 20-25) and *The Bulletin* (23 May 2006, pp. 1, 20-25) had follow-up coverage. Senior executives were said to be calling advertisers, personally, in an attempt to recoup the money (*The Australian* 18 May 2006, p. 15). Todd built a new house at Beaconsfield and, after being taxed 48 cents in the dollar, invested the rest (*The Mercury* 21 April 2007, p. 1). He’s comfortable placing a value on describing his suffering, accepting a fee as compensation for interrupting his recovery and further eroding his anonymity to tell his story, ‘as it was, 100 per cent’:

> The way I see it, we went through a traumatic experience and they offered to pay us. While we were stuck underground there was no mention of exclusive stories and all that type of thing. If it wasn't me it'd be somebody else.

How do media organisations know these ordinary people are worth investing in to then place a value on their story of survival? Certainly, the more newsworthy journalists and editors regard the survivor, and the fewer interviews they have granted, the more desperate media outlets and popular magazines become to secure the exclusive. In some cases, earlier sales and ratings had already told news and entertainment bosses they'd be on a winner. The live broadcast of the Beaconsfield Mine rescue on Channel Seven's *Sunrise* attracted more than one million viewers nationally at 7.30am, in a timeslot that averages just over 400,000 viewers. The Nine Network's exclusive interviews with Todd and Brant—in the two-hour *Great Escape* Sunday night television special and follow-up coverage on Monday night's *A Current Affair*—were both ratings winners. 'Nine strikes ratings gold' became the headline (*The Australian* 25 May 2006, p. 13), with the interview reportedly attracting a peak audience of more than three million viewers (*The Mercury* 5 June 2006, p. 5). Even *The Bulletin* magazine (23 May 2006, pp. 1, 22-26), which was part of the miners' media deal, splashed 'Gold rush'. So while reporters will highlight any suggestion a trauma survivor could profit from their experience, that is precisely the motivation of media bosses who engage in chequebook journalism, as *The Australian* (11 May 2006, p. 15) explained:

> Russell and Webb have been sucked into the media bidding war that, on the face of it, may just be about telling their tale to a fascinated nation. But for the networks and their magazine and online stables, the miners represent eyeballs and numbers on a ledger. It is easy to be cynical, but the cold facts are that the networks and magazines want to maximise their revenue, and the story of Russell and Webb is a revenue driver.

The ABC network in the United States reportedly spent $60,000 on flights and accommodation for Todd, Brant and their wives Carolyn and Rachel, so the miners could participate in a 10-minute interview on *Good Morning America* with host Diane Sawyer (*The Mercury* 5 June 2006, p. 5). An estimated 5.2 million people tuned in to hear their story of survival and rescue (*The Mercury* 3 June 2006, p. 11)—the level of audience interest justifying the media investment.

(*The Bulletin*, 23 May 2006, p. 1)

When Stuart Diver was pulled from beneath the Thredbo village rubble, 1.4 million people watched it live on Seven between 5pm and 5.30pm, with a further 1.1 million tuning in to

the Nine Network. Nine and Seven's nightly news bulletins had already rated well leading up to the moment he was freed. When the Diver family signed media agent Harry M. Miller to handle the overwhelming number of requests for interviews, newspapers began to focus on how much money Stuart might make from an exclusive deal. While the *Daily Telegraph* (5 August 1997, p. 7) headlined 'Harry M has a story to sell,' rival publication the *Sydney Morning Herald* (5 August 1997, p. 8) noted 'Bidding war breaks out for Stuart Diver's story.' The newspaper quoted a magazine executive: 'when you get one of the big guys' involved, like Miller, the price tends to go up.

Miller himself revealed that Stuart's story was attracting the greatest level of media interest since the survival of James Scott in the Himalayan mountains. Rival media agent, Max Markson, commented: 'This is obviously a very tragic situation but this is a story everyone wants to hear. It is also a story which the media should be paying for. I don't think anyone would begrudge Mr Diver making a bit of money out of it.' Still, Stuart's reliance on an agent to shield him from reporters was portrayed by media as 'moving the story from a thing of joyous passion to a thing of promotional caps. Diver has gone from a rock to a hard place' (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 6 August 1997, p. 15).

Before long the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported 'a palpable wave of disapproval rippled across Australia' when Stuart hired Miller to broker a deal, with an 'instinctive revulsion … because it is not just a story of survival but also of the terrible death of Sally, Stuart Diver's young wife, and the 18 victims at Thredbo' (14 August 1997, p. 11). The claim was not backed up by evidence. Miller was reminded of comments he made before being signed—that it would be inappropriate for media to buy Stuart's story because it was an ongoing tragedy (*Herald Sun* 4 August 1997, p. 3, *The Daily Telegraph*, 5 August 1997, p. 7). Stuart Diver and Harry M. Miller had been not-so-subtly warned against chequebook journalism

by newspapers that no doubt wanted the exclusive and may have paid, but recognised they couldn't compete with commercial television stations and popular women's magazines. When trauma survivors are given a public profile, which is then traded for audiences and profit, the commercial benefits can flow three ways—to them, their agent if they have one and those in the media industry who effectively buy and sell their name and image.

The Australian Women's Weekly's then editor-in-chief eventually negotiated a deal for the print rights, estimated to be worth $100,000 (*Herald Sun* 14 August 1997, p. 3), while the Seven Network won the television exclusive and more than two million people tuned in to watch Stuart recount his ordeal on the now defunct *Witness* program (*The Australian* 28 August 1997, p. 3). The interview was also edited for Seven's *News* and current affairs program *Today Tonight*. Miller stated that Stuart would not be paid for his television appearance. Instead, the then ski instructor was employed as a special commentator at the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan—a trump card only Seven held in the battle with the Nine Network (*The Age* 12 August 1997, p. 7). Stuart smiles while describing the deal as 'a Harry special.' He recognises it could be perceived that they were trying to avoid further negative public commentary over selling the story. Although Stuart says he 'never had any qualms at all about taking money,' nor does he feel that he needs to apologise to people who have never been in his situation:

> I am firmly of the belief that if you're going to make money out of someone else's tragedy, and that's what they're all going to do, then you have to pay for that. It's just not a free service. No one gives what they've got away for free. I've given interviews to non-profit organisations where there was no money involved—I flew myself to have an interview with people. So I've done interviews external of that exclusive money. But if you are a commercial entity—a magazine, a television station or whatever—you're paying for it. And

> I will not talk to you unless you pay for it … you're only doing that show for people's voyeurism … not as a public service, not to inform the public … purely to sell the advertising.

Contracts typically have non-disclosure clauses, but that doesn't stop other media guessing the value and terms of an exclusive. Stuart was widely thought to have received around $250,000 from his first contracts and a further $100,000 from American ABC's *Prime Time Live* program for an interview (*Herald Sun* 17 November 1997, p. 3). Stuart warns estimates are often false:

> It's never as much as they speculate. One agent will always inflate it by twice to try and get the business to go to him, which is absolutely what happens. He will try and pressure all the other ones into going with him. Then all the other media outlets will always try and make it look like Channel Nine or whoever paid twice as much as they should have for the story. It's guaranteed it's always twice because I know some confidential agreements that were done, *a la* Beaconsfield etc., and I know the official amounts, and I know the amounts that were spruiked around the media and they're usually about half that. So that's what I work my sums on.

Paying Another Price

For accidental celebrities, the re-telling of their traumatic experience isn't all that's bought and sold. So is their identity—their name and face—along with details of their personal lives. Stuart was certainly a commodity when he agreed to front the camera for the Olympics, and provide insights as an experienced ski instructor, not just interviewed as a survivor. Less obvious indicators are clauses in some contracts, which not only give a media outlet first option on the story but also prevent the survivor from speaking with anyone else for a period

of time. Todd Russell discovered the consequences of agreeing to be the exclusive property of the Nine Network for 12 months:

> I made a mistake—I did an interview for a show on the ABC, a tribute to Matthew Gill [former Beaconsfield mine manager], and Channel Nine kicked up a stink. They were really shitty because I'd done this interview and wasn't supposed to. I went to Sean [Anderson] and the way I got out of it is that we'd done a lot of interviews over and above what we were contracted to do and weren't paid. But I got myself into quite a bit of trouble.

Todd had signed a deal that limited media contact, then found he too was controlled. Media will negotiate additional terms if they believe the biggest asset is the 'talent' rather than their account of an experience, and that property needs to be protected. When journalists can't gain access to either, we see them use the resources at their disposal—the outlets—to apply pressure. Those that miss out can turn particularly sour, as James Scott discovered. Media outlets bombarded his family with financial offers for the exclusive while he was still in a Nepalese hospital, physically unable to speak to media, as he recalls:

> They first approached my wife Gaye—my fiancé at the time—and asked her to sign these documents and they'd pay for her to fly to Nepal [so] they could get some photos of her … (we were just students) … and then that was leaked. You know, news stations were offering $80,000 and this and that. Contracts were being put before my family in no time. Huge money.

James's father, Ken Scott, told reporters that Harry M. Miller had been hired, stating: 'It's a big story and we were just handing out our story for free. We've got to protect the interests of our son and he's got to get something out of it' (*The Age* 7 February 1992, p. 1). The day after, media speculation began that the hapless hiker was going to receive 'a large sum of money' from a current affairs program for an interview (*The Courier-Mail* 8 February 1992,

p. 7). When a deal wasn't immediately sealed, one newspaper implied that James was holding out for financial gain, with the headline 'The ice man's story is on ice, for a price' (*The Sunday Age* 9 February 1992, p. 3).

THE SUNDAY AGE — NEWS 3

As the media fights for an exclusive, a fellow trekker tells how the incredible journey began

His mate took the high road to safety

By Neil Breen, Brisbane

THE trekking companion of Brisbane medical student James Scott told yesterday how he found the truck to safety just an hour after the pair parted in a snowstorm.

Mr Scott was lost in the Himalayas for 43 days after turning back to Phedi from where he and Mark Fulton had set out earlier that day.

He survived in an ice cave by eating snow until his rescue last week.

Speaking for the first time in detail about the episode, Mark Fulton, 22, an electrician from Ayr, recalled when he and Mr Scott parted.

"James made an on-the-spot decision to turn back," Mr Fulton said.

"He was desperate to speak to his family and girlfriend on Christmas Day and that's why he went back. It wasn't so important for me to be back in Kathmandu on Christmas Day so I pressed on, found the trail within an hour and made it to our destination on time."

Mr Fulton met Mr Scott, 22, of St Lucia, in a tea house at Chipling on 28 December, and together they decided to tackle the Gosainkund Trail, a little-known track around the base of the Himalayas used by villagers and tourists.

They had planned to reach Kathmandu on Christmas Eve in plenty of time to phone loved ones.

Mr Fulton said the pair thought the 35- to 40-kilometre trek from Chipling to Dhunche would take about three-and-a-half days to complete. After that they planned to hitch a ride to Kathmandu.

"The trail is ... perfectly safe, about two metres wide, easy to follow and there are plenty of huts along the trail where you can get a bed for the night and a feed," Mr Fulton said.

"I wouldn't have trekked it on my own but, since I had met James, I thought I would go with him," he said.

After the first day's trekking, Mr Fulton and Mr Scott stayed in the one-hut stop of Mangendish.

During the next day, on 21 December, the pair passed the township of Gopte before stopping for the night at Phedi.

"Phedi is slightly better than Mandengish. There are two huts there, one for the owners and one for the guests," Mr Fulton said.

"The next day we had to cross the edge of the mountain and when we woke there was light snow cover on the ground.

"We asked the guy at the boarding house if it was safe to cross and he said it was, as long as we left today, and not tomorrow.

"Neither James nor I were prepared for snow. We didn't expect it to be snowing. We didn't have the right shoes or wet-weather gear, but we set off and were confident we'd be all right."

As they climbed the slope the snow became heavier, and visibility was down to between 50 and 75 metres.

"There was about two inches of snow on the ground and we lost the trail," Mr Fulton said.

"Visibility was so low we couldn't see the top of the mountain — we didn't even know what direction we were heading. If we could have seen the top of the mountain, we would have made it easily.

"After about an hour, James said we could spend all day on the side of the mountain and that he was going back ... I told him that I was going to press on. I didn't think for one minute there was any danger for James and I wasn't worried at all.

"It seemed a formality to turn back to Phedi. I don't know what happened to him because I wasn't there, but my guess is that the snow was heavier lower down, making it impossible for him to find his way.

"I zig-zagged up the side of the hill, and about 30 hour later found the patch. I went up and over and I was gone," Mr Fulton said.

"From there everything went according to plan. I bunked down for the night at Shingumpa, the next morning I was in Dhunche and I caught a wood truck back to Kathmandu and was there on Christmas Eve."

Mr Fulton said that when Mr Scott and he parted on the trail, Mr Scott had only one chocolate bar and no matches. "He had his kit bag, with plenty of clothes, and a sleeping bag," he said.

"We were trekking from guest house to guest house and they always had food. It seems silly to carry food as extra luggage when plenty can be bought along the way."

When he arrived in Kathmandu, Mr Fulton looked for Mr Scott but he had not arrived. Mr Fulton left for Thailand on 27 December.

"I didn't just leave without worrying about him. James had a friend waiting for him in Kathmandu, he told me he'd be waiting for James.

"The first I heard that he had not returned was on 19 January when I called the airlines to confirm my flight home. They told me I had to contact the Australian Embassy immediately.

"When I called, they told me what had happened. I thought: 'Well that's it, he's dead, he's gone'. It was a great relief to hear he had survived."

Sunday Sun

He was a day-trekker: James Scott on the morning of his disappearance. Right: Mark Fulton, Scott's companion, found the trail within an hour.

The ice man's story is on ice, for a price

By Di Webster, Kathmandu, Saturday

BINAYA Guru-Achariya has never heard of Harry M. Miller. The 31-year veteran of Nepalese journalism was told this week that his daily inquiry about the condition of Australian trekker James Scott, now in a Kathmandu hospital, would be answered by a man he had never heard of in a city at the other end of the world.

He was understandably bewildered.

"Has King Birendra come back into power?" he asked Patan Hospital's medical director, Dr Frank Garlick.

Until his powers were severely curtailed two years ago the king was Nepal's absolute monarch. He banned political parties and imposed severe restrictions on the press.

A handful of foreign media representatives who had flown to Kathmandu hoping to see Scott, 23, the so-called Miracle Iceman, shared Binaya's anger at what was rapidly becoming high farce.

James Scott is alleged to have spent 43 days lost on the freezing, isolated slopes of the Himalayas with nothing but two chocolate bars and an unlimited supply of snow to sustain him.

He was dramatically rescued from an ice-locked cave last Sunday and taken to the Kathmandu hospital. He had reportedly lost 38 kilograms in weight.

Even before Harry M. stepped in, as far as the press was concerned, Scott would have been easier to reach had he stayed under the rock ledge.

His hospital bed has been under 24-hour police guard, and his fiercely protective sister Ms Joanne Robertson, to whom Scott is said to owe his life, imposed a media blackout that would have done King Birendra proud.

A local reporter's request for an interview with Ms Robertson was rebuffed by a hospital official with a curt "she's not in the mood".

Dr Garlick, a softly spoken and deeply religious man, found himself in the uncomfortable position of PR man, protecting the interests of not only his patient, but also those of a flash entrepreneur in far-away Sydney.

"Now I must have your complete agreement," Dr Garlick told a press briefing. "There are to be no pictures, cameras must be turned off and no questions are to be asked."

Dr Garlick, dubbed "Noise Frank", was about to present the elusive Ms Robertson, who would read a statement to the media.

He said Ms Robertson was "emotionally labile", a state she did not want shown on camera. A photographer's offer to take a "happy" shot was refused.

Ms Robertson appeared looking far less formidable than her reputation and delivered a stoic rendering of her statement. "Seeing James in the helicopter as it landed in Kathmandu was the happiest moment of my life," she said.

Ms Robertson did not look like a happy person. The 27-year-old veterinarian had clearly been through a nightmare, but her brother was found alive and, by all accounts, his prognosis is good. Why the long face and camera shyness?

Was James doing as well as Dr Garlick's bland daily statements suggested?

By the end of the day rumors were rife: James had gone stark raving mad, he was about to die, he was busy being interviewed for 'A Current Affair', he had actually spent 43 days living it up in a Nepalese village.

Scepticism, even outside media ranks, was surfacing, helped along by experts in the field.

Colonel Narayan Singh Pun of the Royal Nepalese Army piloted the helicopter that eventually hauled Mr Scott to safety.

Pun said he had never experienced anything like James Scott's ordeal in 18 years of search and rescue operations in the area.

He said that given the weather conditions — it was -18 degrees celsius when Mr Scott was rescued — and lack of food, a person would normally be dead within 10 days.

Unlike some trek leaders, who simply don't believe the survival story, Colonel Pun and Australian officials have no doubt it is genuine.

"He was very weak. He had lost a lot of weight. I could see bones sticking out of his face," Colonel Pun said of his first meeting with Mr Scott in the helicopter.

All costs connected with the search for Mr Scott, estimated at $50,000, were met by the trekker's family, Australian Ambassador Les Douglas said.

Those costs will be recouped at least two-fold with the Harry M. Miller deal.

"It is a big story and we were just handing out our story for free," James Scott's father, Professor Ken Scott, said from Brisbane this week.

"(James) has got to get something out of it."

James is not the only one "getting something out" of his ordeal. Rescue leader Carl Harrison was wooed by and reportedly struck a deal with 'A Current Affair', which has been locked in a fierce bidding battle with its Channel Nine stablemate, 'Sixty Minutes'.

Valuable video footage and still photographs taken of Scott from the rescue helicopter by Kathmandu resident Mr Tam Crees were said to be "under lock and key".

European reporters, less accustomed to cheque-book journalism than their American and Australian counterparts, had long since dropped off the story in disgust.

And by the end of the week, Nepali journalists were no doubt looking back with fondness to the dark days of King Birendra.

(*The Sunday Age* 9 February 1992, p. 3)

Miller negotiated a television exclusive with the Nine Network for its *60 Minutes* program and a print exclusive with London's *Daily Telegraph*, reprinted in Australia *(The Sun-Herald* 23 February 1992, pp. 1 & 3, and 1 March 1992, pp. 1 & 3). Both interviews were delayed until about three weeks after the rescue, when James had returned to better health in Brisbane. 'Channel Seven offered by a long stretch the most,' James recalls. 'The thing that was most appealing about the *60 Minutes* offer was that there was no timeframe or shape at all … take your time to get well, no pressure, the money's not worth it, just focus on getting well. I think that was good advice at the time.' The survivor agreed to record a 30 second

video clip for *60 Minutes*—before the full interview—when other media outlets began running stories questioning whether he really could have survived the freezing mountain conditions. James draws a direct link between granting exclusive access and the hoax speculation, describing his hometown Brisbane-based newspaper *The Courier-Mail* as 'very angry' that it missed out on an interview:

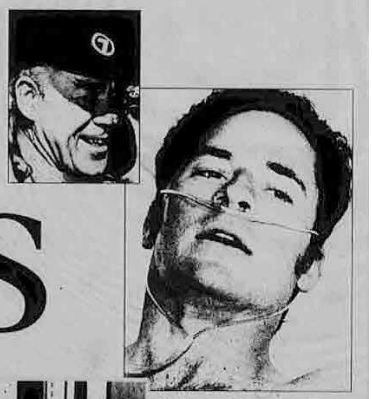
> I think people didn't expect me to sell the story. I think that was taboo back then [1992]. As soon as that was signed, the negativity started. *The Courier-Mail* really hit hard; they were bad sports about it. You know, they really took it badly that the Murdoch Press didn't get the story, that Conrad Black got the story. Now, why we went with Conrad Black and not Murdoch I don't know. I suspect it came down to money and offers but I don't know. If I was more savvy … if I was doing an exclusive now—which I don't think I ever would again—I'd probably go with the main paper in my town. So in the Conrad Black press it was the hero survivor blah blah blah sort of thing, and in the Murdoch press he was a dickhead to get lost and he's probably making enough anyway. So you had this polarisation.

James and Gaye inadvertently placed themselves in the middle of warring magazines too. While they offered all media a photo opportunity at their wedding so the event wouldn't be associated with money (*The Sun-Herald* 14 June 1992, p. 3), the couple did accept an inducement from *Woman's Day* magazine (20 July 1992, pp. 12-13) to report on their honeymoon. James feels 'a bit sorry' they were motivated by concern over their financial future, recognising it'd be easier to turn down offers today. 'I'm well, I'm fit, I can probably work for another 30 years,' he explains. 'Back then I wasn't back studying [medicine] … had a lot of Doubting Thomas's around me.' *New Idea* (27 June 1992, p. 107), which missed out on the exclusive, ran a spoiler piece the next week, again raising doubts that James had indeed survived in the Himalayas for 43 days because he emerged in 'good health,' according to one of the rescuers.

THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD
THURSDAY, AUGUST 14, 1997

An ordinary person does something extraordinary and the world wants to know. But these days the story comes at a price. **JANE FREEMAN** looks at the hero business and one family who survived it.

The selling of heroes



In the spotlight . . . (top) yachtsman Tony Bullimore, Thredbo survivor Stuart Diver and the "Iceman", James Scott, his sister Joanne Robertson and his parents.
Photograph by GREG WHITE

WHEN Thredbo survivor Stuart Diver hired celebrity agent Harry M. Miller to broker media deals, a palpable wave of disapproval rippled across Australia.

One letter writer to the *Herald* snapped angrily: "A weekend columnist commented on the insensitivity of those skiing within sight of the rescue team at Thredbo. However, surely this pales with the news that Stuart Diver and his family have already signed up a top agent to negotiate sale of his story for as much as possible, while his volunteer rescuers, the real heroes, are still digging for bodies."

There is an instinctive revulsion against the idea of profiting from Diver's story, because it is not just a story of survival but also of the terrible death of Sally, Stuart Diver's young wife, and the 17 victims at Thredbo.

Even Harry M. Miller, talking to *The Sunday Age* on August 2, said: "It would be ghoulish and disgusting if any used-car dealer agents or any of the media tried to buy or sell this man's story . . . This is all so tragic and awful that if anyone goes sniffing around this story it would be just awful. The people who have died overshadow this whole affair."

But, according to those who know what the Diver family are going through, they would have had little choice but to call in a professional agent to handle the media.

In 1992, 23-year-old Brisbane medical student, James Scott, the so-called Iceman, survived 43 days in an ice cave in the Himalayas and was discovered after an epic, unrelenting helicopter search orchestrated by his sister, Joanne Robertson.

Robertson, a 33-year-old veterinary surgeon living in Brisbane, says watching the story of the Diver family from afar, she understands why they called in Miller.

"I get really upset when I see reports that claim the Divers are trying to make money. I know exactly what pressure that family is under. The pressure you are put under is incredible; it was just as stressful for us, if not more stressful, after James was found alive because of the way the media behaved."

Robertson says her family turned to Miller because they didn't know how else they could get the media under control and get James back to Australia.

"If I was doing it all over again, I would hire Mr Miller again. Given the aggressive nature of the press, I don't see how anyone in the extremely stressful situation which I imagine the Divers are in now is able to cope without some help."

In Nepal in 1992, Robertson was already exhausted by the time she found Scott, who was desperately ill. "I thought he was going to die before I could get him back to Australia," she remembers. "He was emaciated, severely malnourished and I was stuck in a Third World hospital (in Kathmandu). All I wanted was for James to get home safely and we always told the media we would give them a story; we just wanted a breathing space for him to get better."

Robertson says it started with the media jamming the one phone line into the hospital, then they arrived in force. About 30 journalists from the United States, Europe and Australia gathered outside the hospital. She had to nurse Scott herself (because he was a non-Hindu, the nurses would not touch him), find him food and water, and sleep on a wooden plank on the floor. On top of that, she had to physically push cameramen out the hospital door.

"I just had no idea how invasive the media would be, no idea of the levels they would stoop to. They scaled the walls to get pictures, they bribed the nurses to show them James's medical charts. When we were flying home we had a *Courier-Mail* journalist hiding in the toilet of the plane. We even had to take James through the morgue at Singapore to escape the media."

At the same time, Scott's father, Professor Kenneth Scott, says he and his family were being harassed in Brisbane, with media crews trying to physically drag him out of his house, or thrusting contracts under his nose, saying they would fly him to Nepal if he would sign a deal. He and his wife, Dr Janet Scott, had freely given interviews to all the networks, but the scrum continued.

"They thought that because they were offering money they could do what they wanted," says Professor Scott.

He went on Channel 7, appealing for the media to give James time to recover — to no effect. Eventually he talked to the publicity department at the University of Queensland, where he works, and they told him one of the few people who could handle the situation was Harry M. Miller. Once the Scotts signed with Miller, Robertson says, the pressure on the family lifted enormously, mainly, she believes, because the media don't like having to deal with a professional.

Professor Scott says James was paid about $100,000 by *60 Minutes* but, by the time he had paid his rescuers, the hospital in Nepal, the Tax Office and Miller, he was left with very little.

James Scott found even arranged media exposure could be painful. After he signed with Miller, media hostility led to stories claiming he was a hoax. Then the *60 Minutes* interview turned ugly when reporter Richard Carleton criticised him for his foolhardiness in trekking in snow country in sandshoes and accused him of lying about living on chocolate bars. In the end, Scott terminated the interview. Perhaps jaded by his taste of celebrity, Scott went on to quietly finish his medical degree and married his fiancee privately.

Even Tony Bullimore, the British lone yachtsman who survived under his yacht for 89½ hours before being rescued, turned his back on the media hysteria. Seven was said to have paid Bullimore $150,000 for his story and even hired security guards to ward off other journalists. But, following the *Today Tonight* special, Bullimore said he wanted to get back to the quiet life. Seven, too, was disappointed. The *Today Tonight* exclusive on the reunion between Bullimore and his wife Lalel was outrated by Nine's *A Current Affair*.

Unlike Scott and Bullimore, Stuart Diver's story is not a straightforward feel-good yarn. There are death and heartbreak interwoven with his survival and, in acknowledgment, media outlets have wielded their chequebooks more surreptitiously.

When Seven won the story, it did so by offering Diver a job with the network — he would become a "special commentator" whose work would include covering the Winter Olympics in Japan in February. The network said it would keep an "open mind" about his function at the station, although it might include such special events as Carols by Candlelight (comparing up disturbing images of Diver as the station's resident network hero).

Because of this arrangement, Seven's managing director, Gary Rice, was able to say it would be "inappropriate" for Diver and his family to receive money for the appearances. Miller declared that "Mr Diver would receive no payment for his appearance on the network" (while still ensuring his client's — and presumably his own — financial gain).

Max Markson, a Sydney promotional agent, describes the deal as clever. "It was a very smart move on Seven's part. They can pay him $250,000 over 12 months, instead of the $30,000 or $40,000 someone would normally earn in that job, but they can say he is not getting paid for his story."

Lee Burton, a media analyst from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, says the concept of a network getting "exclusive" access to a story is ethically dubious. She contrasts the "sale" of the Diver story with the survivors of the Port Arthur massacre, who gave their story freely and focused attention on the victims, rather than the survivors of the tragedy.

"If news is about letting the audience know, then it should be about freedom of access to information and exclusivity limits people's access . . . in the end these kind of glossy stories end up trivialising the event. Over the years, the other stories of people who died will be lost and it will become the Stuart Diver avalanche," she said.

"I don't want to criticise Stuart Diver, but what they [Seven] are doing now is selling a commodity. It's become a question of money and greed. Seven will be selling spots in their current affairs shows and news, perhaps for more money than their regular spots. They will want to make as much money out of him as they possibly can. In the end, it's prone to be the victim who is exploited.

"But I wonder how good a commodity he is really going to be — is he going to be articulate and interesting? What kind of television presenter can he be? How long can they keep saying 'and this is presented by Stuart Diver, Thredbo survivor'?

"I find this hoitsiation quite absurd. He is being marketed as a hero, whereas he is really a survivor who has been lucky enough to stay alive."

THE other question prompted by the Seven deal is whether anybody who has just survived such a traumatic event can make long-term decisions about their future. Diver has even, apparently, committed himself to attending the Winter Olympics.

While Seven says Diver will only take up his special commentating job when he is "fully recovered", according to a Seven spokesman that will probably mean starting the job within the month.

Dr Richard Morris, an intensive care specialist and medical commander of the Thredbo disaster, has already said that Diver's full recovery, both in terms of spirit and body, will take up to 12 months.

There is a likelihood that he will have some symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a psychological condition characterised by depression, disturbed sleep, nightmares, headaches, temper outbursts, impaired learning and memory, social withdrawal, loss of appetite, panic attacks — even "survivor guilt".

Dr Richard Bryant, the director of the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Research Unit attached to the University of NSW and Westmead Hospital, says that PTSD is more likely to occur when the trauma has been prolonged, which leads to a greater drain on the victim's resources and a greater sense of uncontrollability.

"If the trauma is accompanied by a significant loss, like the loss of a wife, you can find the disorder causing anxiety. The bereavement, especially if it occurs unexpectedly in a very unpleasant way, can lead to depression and those two can interact," he said.

"To really see how someone is coping, you have to wait for the dust to settle, especially when someone has been the focus of national attention. It may be a while before they can focus on their own reaction, especially when that person has been bereaved.

"It's only when the media moves on somewhere else and the person is yesterday's news that the reaction sets in."

> The pressure you are under is incredible. It was just as stressful for us, if not more stressful, after James was found alive because of the way the media behaved.
>
> JOANNE ROBERTSON

(*The Sydney Morning Herald* 14 August 1997, p. 11)

James believes the criticism he faced stemmed more from attempts to control access through exclusive coverage than being paid for his story. Although, no outlet would pay for an interview if it wasn't an exclusive that could draw audiences away from competitors. The family's justification—that they needed to recoup some of the costs of a search they personally funded—was a fact only revealed by James's sister Joanne Robertson in their book *Lost in the Himalayas (1993)*. Several years later, in an article on chequebook journalism headlined 'The Selling of Heroes' (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 14 August 1997, p. 11), Professor Ken Scott revealed his son banked very little of the $100,000 he received from *60 Minutes* after paying rescuers, the hospital in Nepal, tax and Harry M. Miller. James remains comfortable with the initial deals:

> The family outlaid over $50,000 so there was no way I was going to be able to pay that back myself for some years … I don't think anyone expected a dime back … they thought it was money well invested to get me back. It made me feel better being able to pay people back. If the Australian government and taxpayers had outlaid hundreds of thousands for me and I'd been found then I think I'd be quite sensitive to those criticisms, whereas I do know how much the family spent, I do know how much friends spent, and I do know that they got paid back.

When Douglas Wood was rescued after 47 days held captive in Iraq, his ability to profit from the story became a 'moral question' (*The Age* 21 June 2005, p. 11). *The Australian* (18 June 2005, p. 5) headlined it was 'Time for media to pull out their chequebooks' while the *Sunday Herald Sun* (19 June 2005, p. 1) had Federal Government sources revealing 'taxpayers spent up to $10 million attempting to secure his release'. Douglas was predicted 'to become a highly paid celebrity' (*Sunday Tasmanian* 19 June 2005, p. 1). He was described in one newspaper (*Sunday Herald Sun* 19 June 2005, p. 1) as a 'Hostage for sale,' with his story

expected to be worth about $250,000 as a package for the Nine Network's *60 Minutes* and *Woman's Day*, or the Seven Network's *Today Tonight* and *New Idea* magazine. Despite all the signals that a backlash was looming, Vernon Wood defended his brother's right to make money. 'I can't deny that Doug may want to benefit,' he said. 'Doug is not a well man, he's an ageing man and if in the fullness of time he can get some reward, I can't deny him that opportunity' (*The Age* 20 June 2005, p. 1).

After Douglas was reunited in Australia with his then-wife Yvonne Given, agent Mark Klemens confirmed a deal had been signed with Network Ten. The news was captured in the headlines 'Kiss before cashing in' (*Herald Sun* 21 June 2005, p. 1) and 'Chequebook hostage' (*The Age* 21 June 2005, p. 11). The Seven Network later revealed it did not bid because a press conference with Douglas during the week had 'devalued the story' (*The Australian* 27 June 2005, p. 4). Ten reportedly paid up to $400,000—'the biggest deal in the history of Australian chequebook journalism' (*The Age* 21 June 2005, p. 1)—prompting the Federal Opposition to suggest Douglas repay the cost of the rescue mission (*The Courier-Mail* 21 June 2005, p. 3).The print rights were sold to *New Idea* for what was speculated to be up to $100,000 (*The Age* 22 June 2005, p. 3).

Media buyer Harold Mitchell predicted Network Ten could earn up to $500,000 in advertising for the Sunday-night special, then sell the television package to networks overseas (*The Age* 21 June2005, p. 1). When the world exclusive was watched by 1.22 million viewers—a disappointing figure, rating behind other Network Nine and Seven Network programs—*The Australian* (30 June 2005, p. 22) splashed 'Wood's chequebook outing a low point in journalism.' A poor timeslot, the wrong audience demographic—when Ten has typically targeted younger audiences—and cynicism towards Douglas were blamed (*The Australian* 30 June 2005, p. 22; *The Age* 30 June 2005, p. 7).

Commercial television networks and popular magazines are businesses, expected to deliver a return on investment to shareholders through ratings or sales. *The Sydney Morning Herald* (4 May 2006, p. 6) observed that while writing cheques to the Chamberlains, Stuart Diver and James Scott 'all delivered good returns … Wood is a textbook example of how it can go wrong—his interview was a ratings disaster given the $400,000 cost.' The vast majority of newspapers stated or implied that was the sum Douglas 'was paid,' 'accepted' or 'made' out of the deal, with only one acknowledging production and marketing costs were factored in and his actual payment was at best half of that (*The Australian* 28 June 2005, p. 7; *The Australian* 30 June 2005, p. 22). Douglas reveals how the television network recovered some of the outlay for making the one-hour documentary:

> We never really received all the money anyway. That's part of the funny thing. So here's the cost of flying my family out here to be part of the movie, sending us all off to Daylesford to hide out for a couple of days—they gave us a bag of food and stuff so we can cook inside the house and not go down the street. The first thing they do is they chop out of that the cost of making the film including the costs for bringing my family out and sending us off to Daylesford. Then of course you've got to pay taxes.

After that Sunday-night special aired, Douglas was described in *The Age* (27 June 2005, p. 1) as someone who 'had not quite engendered the instant public sympathy his plight should have guaranteed [with his] nagging worries about mercenary behaviour'. 'Poor old Douglas Wood: accidental national hero one day, opportunistic expat the next,' another newspaper wrote (*Herald Sun* 28 June 2005, p. 18). Yet the now retired engineer had no home, furniture or even clothes in Melbourne when he was flown back by the Australian Government, after living in the United States and Iraq for more than 30 years. Douglas says his exclusive deal with Network Ten mainly helped with expenses:

> At the end of the day, you don't end up with much, if anything, and of course I still had a house in former Soviet Georgia, I chose to pay the landlord rent while I was away and pay the families of my dead assistants—I chose to give them money. It doesn't bring their husband and father back, but it's the least I could do.

Douglas speaks with a tinge of sadness about being portrayed as what he calls a 'greedy bugger grabbing money,' adding 'I end up bearing the brunt of it. They [the media] don't get to kick the manager around.' Media also rarely reflect on their own practices. Audiences play a role too, by boosting ratings, sales and views to ensure a good return on investment. Today Douglas wishes he'd never accepted cash in exchange for those media placing restrictions on him while others stood on the sidelines criticising:

> I would have preferred that I had never had an exclusive arrangement. I could say whatever I wanted to whoever I wanted, and even if he [Klemens] got the top dollar at Channel Ten, it wasn't the right message to get out to most people.

More than Money

The Delezio family has never used an agent to secure media deals, yet Sophie's father Ron estimates they've personally negotiated more than a dozen payments in exchange for exclusive interviews, without reservation. Survivors don't need to employ someone to act on their behalf, although it may take them longer to realise the value of their story to media outlets, initially responding to offers rather than proactively seeking a lucrative contract. It must also be said that while some trauma events attract instant national coverage, interest in the personal lives of other survivors beyond their local community or state grows over time. As the Delezios' gained more widespread public recognition, so did the requests for exclusive interviews, mainly from popular magazines. Ron Delezio says he and wife Carolyn

Martin learnt what their name and image was worth to media outlets wanting to attract audiences:

> I'm more savvy to the value they have on these stories—on getting an exclusive story from someone like us—to be able to sit with them and say 'We're happy to give you this, but how much are we getting out of it? I need to rebuild our lives.' I also understand that the journos get paid for what he or she is doing, so they've got their job, the newspapers are a profit organisation to make money. You've got the other part: people need to know what the stories are—that's okay.

Ron was unable to work as a plastics machinery importer while Sophie was undergoing intensive treatment, so negotiating exclusive interviews became necessary for their financial survival. They almost lost their home and had to pay for care of their son Mitchell, who is two years older than Sophie. Looking back, Ron doesn't feel he needs to make excuses for accepting money from media outlets:

> Carolyn and I were both in hospital for six and a half months … it took over four months before they could say Sophie was going to live. I couldn't have just walked out of the hospital and say to Carolyn, 'Okay, I'm off to work, you let me know if you need me or give me a ring if the doctors ask you whether we should switch the machine off.' I don't think anyone should have to handle a situation like that by themselves. It was 24 hours-a-day being with Sophie, not only through the times where she was touch and go as far as living, but also after that … having to learn how to deal with the injuries … managing the physiotherapy, managing the process to be able to come home.

Sophie's second accident happened four days before Todd Russell and Brant Webb were rescued from their underground tomb at Beaconsfield. Ron reveals that amid the media feeding frenzy and heightened competition for exclusive interviews, the family saw an

opportunity. While Todd and Brant did a deal with the Nine Network and *Woman's Day*, the Delezios signed with the Seven Network's *Today Tonight* and *New Idea* (*The Australian* 17 May 2006, p. 15). Ron has no qualms:

> Nine were trying to get the story because they'd just had the story with the miners, and they wanted the double story with Sophie's second accident. I remember sitting there with Eddie McGuire working out a contract. I had no question about the value of our story. I knew he wanted Packer to see him get the two big stories at the time. I knew it was worth a lot of money to him. So I'm not going to say you can have that story for nothing.

The Delezios undoubtedly risked being portrayed as seeking to benefit from a traumatic situation. Yet they did not face the same questioning or criticism as Todd Russell and Brant Webb. 'Perhaps they were seen as ranking highly enough on the victometer to get away with it,' one columnist mused (*The Australian* 17 May 2006, p. 15). A child who will be forced to endure a life-time of medical treatment does arguably engender a higher degree of public compassion than two tough miners whose long-term injuries were not readily visible. Mercedes Corby says she was always more concerned with covering the cost of her sister Schapelle's care and building a new life for her than how the family's decision to accept media money would be portrayed:

> Sometimes magazines might make an offer. We'll decline, and they'll actually go ahead with the story anyway, and it's not to our liking. I don't know whether it's to show us, 'Look, we can do it without you and look what's going to happen,' but it's happened quite a few times when we've said no … So if they offer you a bit of extra cash, why not? We've needed it, it definitely does help. Years ago, we had legal fees, we had all the airfares, I work but I would have to pay my kids' schooling, which was expensive. Schapelle had a thousand dollars a

> month for medication. There's no way we could've done it actually without that bit of extra help.

New Idea ran seven exclusive feature stories between 11 December 2004 and 23 July 2005 on Schapelle's plight, with comments from either Mercedes, their mother Rosleigh Rose, or supporters pleading for her release. Corby family members were in particularly high demand for interviews in the months leading up to and after Schapelle's two-hour court judgement on 27 May 2005. The 'gripping spectacle' was televised live in Australia on the Nine, Seven and Sky News Networks, attracting high ratings and record numbers on digital news sites (*The Australian* 2 June 2005, p. 16). Rosleigh was reportedly 'whisked away from the court by Channel Nine for a paid exclusive interview' following the conviction and sentencing (*The Australian* 4 June 2005, p. 21). As with all of the survivors in these pages, the Corby's have never revealed the terms of any contract, including the monetary value. After they sacked their legal team, Gold Coast lawyer Robin Tampoe—who says he and friend Ron Bakir quit—appeared on the Nine Network's *Sunday* program claiming Rosleigh pocketed more than $100,000 while Mercedes made $30,000 for an exclusive with *New Idea* during the trial. He publicly stated that he was 'sickened' when he found out about the interview, after being asked by Mercedes to 'hold her sister's hand' while she ran outside (*The Australian* 27 June 2005, p. 6; *The Daily Telegraph*, 27 June 2005, p. 12; *The Courier-Mail*, 27 June 2005, p. 5). Years later, one newspaper (*The Sun Herald* 3 June 2012, p. 56) under the headline 'Corby cashes in … again,' claimed *New Idea* had a long-standing agreement to pay for stories after it 'climbed into bed with the family,' and more specifically 'Mercedes Inc—or MINC, as some have tagged her.' Mercedes says that whole episode was twisted to make her 'look bad':

> Schapelle had said to us, 'Please don't come to the holding cell.' … She can't speak anyway unless she comes to the bars and they all get the pictures of her …We just were not expecting that the prosecution would ask for a life sentence … It was just shocking to hear, so as soon as the court was finished I pretty much just ran out bawling my eyes out and I just ran up the road to where our car was and sat in the car because I didn't want the media to get me when I was bawling … He [Tampoe] said that I ran out to do an exclusive interview … no one had any idea how I was feeling at that time.

Mercedes is angry too at false reports that the Seven Network was preparing to pay $2 million for an exclusive interview with Schapelle after her release from prison (*The Courier-Mail* 12 February 2014, p. 3). Mercedes estimates she's personally negotiated at least a dozen paid exclusives with popular magazines and television current affairs shows—none anywhere near that value. She also points out they've declined more opportunities than they've accepted, after refusing to pass control to a media agent. 'If we feel it's not the right time, we just say no; there's no thinking about how much is being offered,' Mercedes explains.

Jacqueline Pascarl has given exclusives for free to reporters she knows and trusts, and still faced criticism from rival media outlets that missed out, accused of 'cashing in on her grief' (*Sunday Herald Sun* 9 April 2006, p. 23). Jacqueline has been paid for exclusives twice, with the proceeds ear-marked for a specific purpose. The first interview was with *The Australian Women's Weekly* on her former life in Malaysia (September 1992, pp. 8-11, 49). Jacqueline maintains her whole purpose was to boost a Gillespie Children's Fighting Fund to secure the return of her eldest son and daughter:

> That money didn't go to me. It went directly to the legal fees which would be well in excess of between $250,000 and $300,000. And then the loss of income and loss of house, selling

> off assets, selling off antique tables to pay for everything, selling off my grandmother's heirlooms.

It was the lack of life insurance, as well as the desire to both ensure her youngest two children had 'a small nest egg,' and raise awareness of the warning signs of ovarian cancer that led Jacqueline to sign a second paid exclusive 17 years later (*Woman's Day* 14 September 2009, pp. 30-31). She'd been diagnosed with the disease and then allowed the Seven Network's *Sunday Night* program to report on her surgery. 'It wasn't a huge sum at all; well under what I had thought that my death would have been worth in the media,' she explains. 'A front-row seat to rummaging in my belly as tumours are pulled out—I thought it would have been worth a lot more, but it wasn't.'

Jenni Begg participated in two paid exclusive interviews with the Seven Network—the first with the now defunct *Witness* program while her son Jandamarra O'Shane was undergoing treatment for horrific burns, and the second on returning home to Cairns (*The Australian* 28 August 1997, p. 9). 'It was mainly just to get our story out there and hope that we'd be left alone. Plus, at the time too, we thought of Jandamarra's future with medical expenses and his education,' Jenni recalls.

Kay and Kerry Danes accepted money once—an exclusive with *New Idea* (24 November 2001) when they arrived home from Laos and were reunited in Brisbane with their children. Kay says the couple used the modest funds to repatriate another prisoner home to Canada and, at the end of the day, the amount wasn't all that much. 'When you compare it to subsequent Australians being detained and some of the dollars being thrown around and thrown at them, it's just mind-boggling,' she explains.

While Bruce and Denise Morcombes were a commodity to media outlets in the chase for audiences, at no time did they seek to commercialise their tragedy—sharing their story freely with reporters instead of benefiting financially. Besides, news bosses knew of their desperation to keep public attention on the search for their son Daniel for almost eight years. For that the couple escaped criticism levelled at other survivors who limited media access. Drawing on an old phrase, reporters weren't going to bite the hand that was feeding them, particularly when the subjects of their attention were still experiencing a major trauma event.

Daniel's twin brother, Bradley, was in demand after keeping largely out of the media gaze. He accepted 'a couple of thousand dollars' for one story, according to Denise, putting the money towards a return trip to England. 'It made him happy having a bit of a holiday … he's had a bad childhood, growing up, his teenage years weren't there,' she adds. Bradley spoke with the *Australian Women's Weekly* (September 2011, pp. 44-48) about his regret in not going with Daniel the day he disappeared. The story ended with the website address for the Daniel Morcombe Foundation, established in 2005 by the couple to educate other children about personal safety.

It is the promotion of the Foundation that the Morcombes have sought in return for participating in exclusive interviews, including one with the Nine Network's *60 Minutes* program. Bruce explains: 'So while we didn't get any direct payment, we did make it known, just a gentleman's agreement—there was no contracts—that a substantial part of the story will be on the Foundation and they honoured that.' Both sides cooperated and the deal was not reported. They are not alone in wanting publicity for a cause and trying to calculate how to attract the biggest audience. The hype of an exclusive—paid or unpaid—can elevate a story's prominence. The Morcombes do admit to being 'a little jealous' of others who have been offered financial deals, although Bruce maintains they have no regrets:

> We wouldn't be holding our heads up in the public arena as we do now if there was the smear of money. I think people appreciate we did it for the right reasons—to find Daniel, find those responsible, and now we're doing our work for the Foundation—and it was never a money issue. But I would've liked some. So I'm not sure how you'd balance that. We would do it for free anyway. We did it for the right reason and we're proud of that.

It is standard practice to pay prominent people in the arts, media, culture or sport for exclusive interviews. Yet media expect when an ordinary person is transformed into a celebrity following a high-profile news event, they should provide open access, purportedly in the public interest. The trauma survivors I spoke with all eventually realised that trauma will be traded as a commodity whether they have a media agent or not, or accept money in exchange for their stories. The motives for seeking professional help and doing deals shouldn't need to be questioned and then defended, unless journalists and editors are simply seeking to maintain the coverage to attract audiences which, ironically, helps commercial outlets bring in revenue.

7

PRIVATE LIVES, PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT

> I would like to say that the role of the media in society should be to inform, to champion the underdog, to right wrongs and to bring information that will better our lives, that will make us richer for it—not financially. I think media now is entertainment. I expect to be entertained when I read a magazine, depending on the sort of masthead that it is.
>
> - Jacqueline Pascarl

Jacqueline Pascarl had a deeper understanding than most trauma survivors about how storytelling styles varied between media outlets when she became the focus of coverage. The former television news features researcher and reporter was clear on the expectations of different audiences and the role she would play in attracting those eyes and ears. Still, Jacqueline considers she was only learning the money-making side of media in 1992 when her children—nine-year-old Mohammed Baharuddin (Iddin) and seven-year-old Raja Shahirah Aisha (Shah)—were illegally removed from Australia by their Malaysian Prince father. She invited media into her Melbourne home as part of a public campaign for her son and daughter's return, but hadn't contemplated her private life having commercial value. Before long, Jacqueline's name and image spread from hard news pages, websites and broadcasts to popular magazines and commercial current affairs programs, squeezed

between feature stories on other celebrities, health and lifestyle. She was a tabloid target, with the power to grab audience attention by sharing the 'story behind the story'.

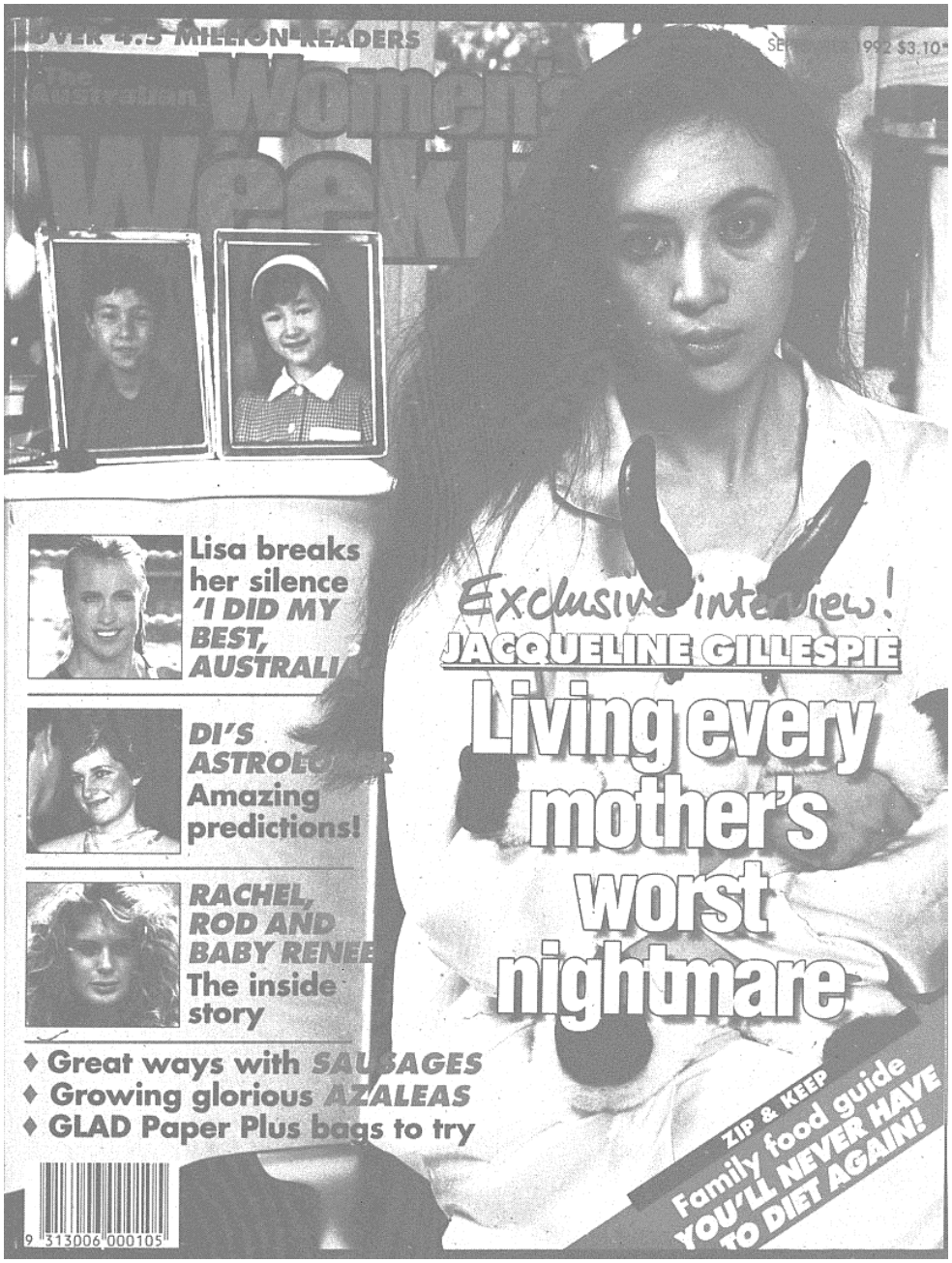
Each of the survivors I spoke with opened up about their private lives, loves and losses to strangers—the Australian people—through magazines and in some cases commercial television current affairs programs that unashamedly elevate relatable human interest over public interest and easy-to-read entertainment over information. While some survivors were featured within weeks of their initial trauma, others first appeared months and years later. They were no longer ordinary people caught in a newsworthy event, but accidental celebrities whose personal details became public knowledge. The transformation from anonymity to celebrity, which typically begins in news media, is fairly easy to identify by looking through the glossy pages of popular Australian women's magazines, aimed at predominantly female readers who flick through the pages during their leisure time. Those who started their public life as news headlines find themselves positioned alongside gossip about television personalities, movie and sports stars.

As the survivors acknowledge in this chapter, they participate as commodities—their character and relationships used to capture the attention of audiences wanting a break from traditional 'hard' news. In a media environment where celebrity sells, we see the emotional family elements elevated, with details embellished, quotes fabricated and spoiler stories created by competitors that miss out. Ultimately though, the survivors' trust in tabloid media outlets that both herald and reinforce their celebrity status diminishes as they struggle to control the way they are portrayed publicly.

Cementing Celebrity

Jacqueline relaxes on the couch, surrounded by family photos, as she plainly states, 'I sell magazines, or I won't.' Her trauma developed into an international news event overnight. Then, after the initial flurry of coverage and as new information dwindled, she began sharing private details with outlets that trade on personalised storytelling. Jacqueline explains how she hoped participating in magazine interviews would keep her campaign in the public eye, garnering support for the legal fight to get her children back. Her face and name dominated the cover and inside pages of *The Australian Women's Weekly* (September 1992, pp. 1, 8-11, 49) two months after she first grabbed the news headlines. The magazine's front-cover headline screamed 'Exclusive interview! Jacqueline Gillespie: Living every mother's worst nightmare.' The young woman was pictured holding a soft toy next to framed photographs of her son and daughter, enabling the readership to connect and empathise with her. Alongside were smaller captioned images of other more readily acknowledged celebrities.

The paid feature, spread over five pages, was written under the headline: 'Why I had to escape my life with a Prince.' Although they were not Jacqueline's exact words, she did tell of her marriage to Prince Raja Datuk Kamarul Bahrin Shah, alleged abuse while living as Malaysian royalty, how she returned to Australia and gained legal custody of their children, then realised they'd been abducted during an access visit. It was 14 years before the prince and princess returned to Australia as adults to see their mother. Another three years later, Shah gave an interview to *The Australian Women's Weekly* (May 2009, pp. 49-52) about her wedding, with dual celebrations in Malaysia and Australia. The magazine clearly considered it could generate interest in the story, even if audiences didn't recognise Shah and may not have remembered the case. Jacqueline's celebrity status had arguably waned, but was now revived.



(*The Australian Women's Weekly* September 1992, p. 1)

Soon after, *Woman's Day* (14 September 2009, pp. 30-31) led with a story on Jacqueline, headlined 'I can't lose my kids a second time'. Again, this was not a direct quote, although that was implied. Underneath was an old photo of Iddin and Shah embracing Jacqueline after their reunion and another with their father, alongside a larger image of Jacqueline with her youngest daughter Verity and son Lysander, then aged eight and six. At a glance, readers

could easily believe that Jacqueline was again estranged from her children. Instead the new information was her diagnosis and treatment for ovarian cancer, providing a fresh angle although the kidnapping case was so heavily re-told that the focus of the story was split. The abduction was, after all, the reason Jacqueline shot to prominence, while her latest misfortune could be packaged and sold as a timely new angle.

Jacqueline concedes that she participated in feeding a cycle of media coverage that became less about informing the public and more about creating a 'personality'. The by-product of media and public attention was a loss of privacy, which she tried to counter by retaining some control over information about her private life:

> It's partly my own fault. I've written two books. So I wear that, I understand that, I'm not complaining but it's just a matter of fact. You know, for years I didn't even date in Australia when I was single. People didn't even know I was separated [from Iain Gillespie] because I didn't want people to know. It would have affected my ability to apply to see my children repeatedly under Islamic law if I was a single person. So I only dated overseas.

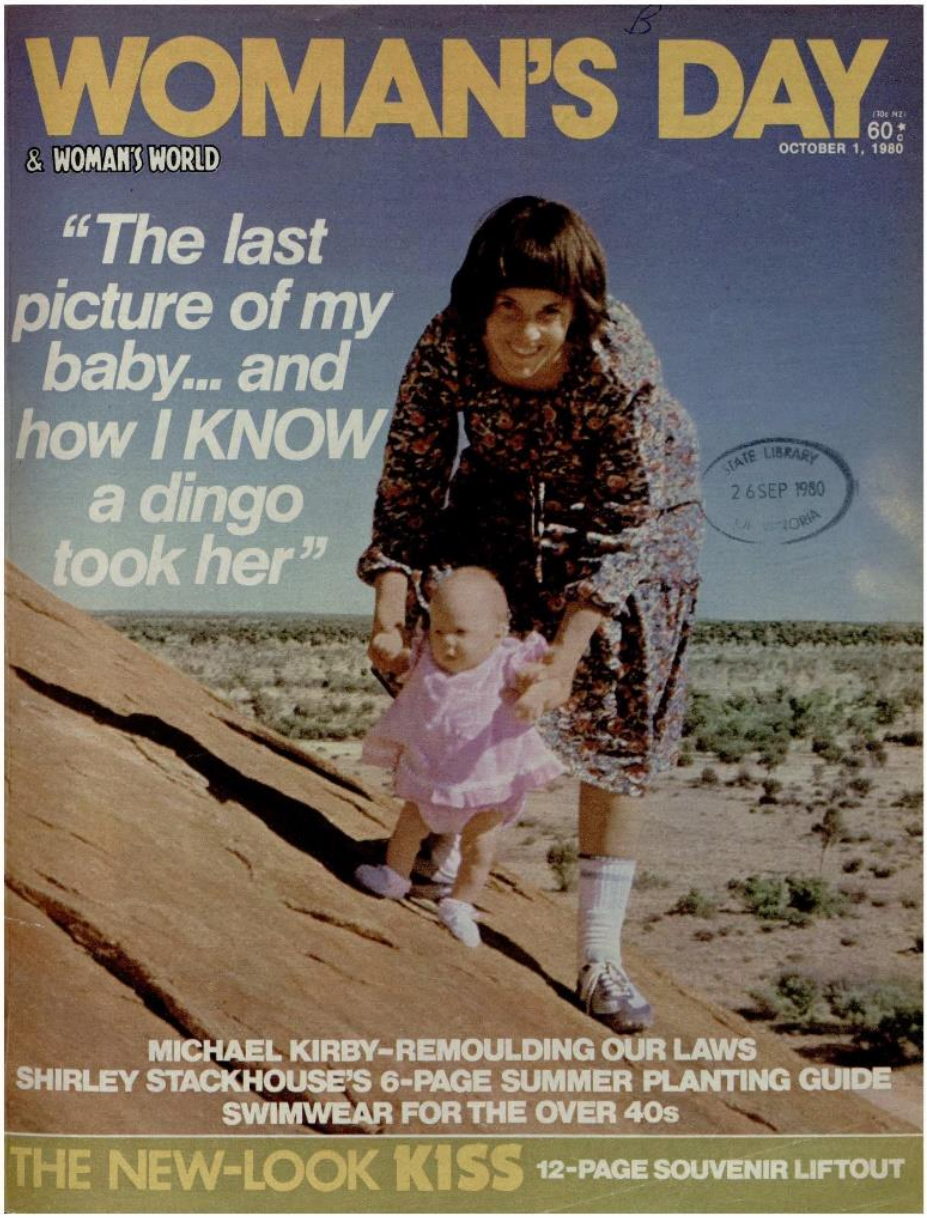
Bruce and Denise Morcombe feel they had no choice but to welcome all media into their family, including the tabloids. When news coverage of the police search for their 13-year-old son Daniel had failed to uncover leads and was starting to fade, the couple captured national attention and a broader audience by giving readers of *Woman's Day* (16 February 2004) a glimpse into the terrible loss experienced by an everyday family. The headline 'KIDNAPPED! Twin's desperate plea: Bring my brother back,' was the first time the Morcombe family's public appeals were carried by a magazine, two months after he disappeared. Bruce and Denise were pictured leaning protectively over Daniel's twin, Bradley. Inside was another photo of Daniel, Bradley and their eldest son Dean in school uniforms. They recounted how a normal day turned into heartbreak, with the spot where

Daniel was last seen becoming a shrine. As the campaign gathered momentum, Bradley and Dean tried to slip further into the background, while Bruce and Denise continued to deliberately create stories to hold the public's attention, effectively selling their celebrity status.

Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton has witnessed first-hand the shift in media content towards entertainment over 40 years. She recognises that editors are responding to what they perceive as an audience appetite for trauma stories, including violence and disasters:

> The public eats it up. The public demands it so they are as responsible for the change as the media because the media is putting over what the public is demanding of them. And if their news is boring or uninteresting you flip the channel to the next one, you don't read that magazine, you read the other one. So, what you're getting and the decline in news value and an increase in entertainment value, is what you're demanding and they're supplying.

The once-titled *Woman's Day & Woman's World* (1 October 1980, pp. 1, 6-7, 12) must have anticipated a sales boost from the now iconic image of Lindy holding the hands of Azaria so she could stand supported on the base of Uluru. Six weeks after the baby disappeared, the mother and daughter were already so well known to the public that the magazine did not identify them by name, only through the full-page photograph and headline: 'The last picture of my baby … and how I KNOW a dingo took her.' This was purported to be a direct quote, although Lindy didn't say those words during the interview. Rather, the phrase was manufactured by editors to support the image and entice people to buy the magazine, believing they would receive new information.



(*Woman's Day & Woman's World* 1 October 1980, p. 1)

On the inside pages were images of Azaria, Lindy with baby clothes beside an empty cradle, the family together and in church. Lindy and Michael spoke about their beautiful daughter, the events at Uluru and being branded murderers. The young woman reportedly sobbed as she addressed rumours and gossip, which she described as being the 'victim of a medieval witch-hunt' and an 'incredible character assassination.' Lindy now reflects on how 'really

disgusted' she felt when she saw the article and realised the magazine had taken 'poetic license,' which was then used as evidence in the first coronial inquest:

> The police were on at me, saying I'd lied about what Azaria had worn. It just went on and on and they called her [reporter Liz Hickson] in as a witness and she's like: 'No, no, Lindy didn't say that,' and she said: 'I've got my notes here,' and she read from the transcription. And they said: 'Well if she said that, why did you say this in your article?' and she said: 'I didn't, the editorial staff added colour.' So they had me kissing her bare toes—I'm thinking, It's minus degrees you idiots, but they didn't stop to think, they thought it was nice colour. So it created major problems. This was right about the time when all the rumours were starting, people are going: 'Look what she said in there and it's in quotes.'

Lindy quickly learnt to insist on contracts that gave her the right to check facts. When she was released after almost three years in Darwin Prison, the Chamberlain family gave what was billed as a 'WORLD EXCLUSIVE' to *The Australian Women's Weekly* (March 1986, pp. 1, 4-13, 15-17). Again, the entire front page was dedicated to the case, with a photo of the Chamberlains and their three children, Aidan, Reagan and Kahlia. The editors clearly regarded this story alone as interesting enough to sell the magazine, teasing with the headline: 'Extraordinary interview: LINDY CHAMBERLAIN speaking freely for the first time strong … talkative … passionate—what the public doesn't know of her nightmare years.' The size of the coverage itself was extraordinary, running over 13 pages, reinforcing the family's celebrity status. The Chamberlains were portrayed as everyday people in the series of articles tracing Lindy's time behind bars and the impact of separation from her family. There were photographs of her playfully hugging her children and cooking as Michael watched on—the stereotypical wife and mother. In this part of celebrity culture, magazines must highlight how well known their subjects have become to the Australian

public yet how ordinary they are too, encouraging readers to imagine themselves in the same situation.

Relatable Relationships

When Kay and Kerry Danes returned to Australia after 11 months unlawfully detained overseas, *New Idea* (24 November 2001, pp. 1, 10-13) placed on its front page a small image of the Brisbane woman cradling her eight-year-old son Nathan, with the words 'LAOS JAIL HORROR: Inside the emotional family reunion'. The magazine secured the first one-on-one interview. The story's hook was Kay's time separated from their three children, which was given priority over the hard news story of incarceration to an audience more interested in personality-centred soft news. Film and music celebrities, Nicole Kidman and Robbie Williams—most recognisable to those glancing at the magazine stands—dominated the front cover. They provided the star power while Kay was an accidental celebrity—someone female readers could relate to, although they would never experience an ordeal like hers.

Kay's husband, Kerry, who had also been locked up and tortured, was relegated to *New Idea*'s inside pages and quoted only in relation to the company he worked for and their imprisonment. By contrast, Kay was clearly represented as a mum, talking mainly about the impact on loved ones. References to family typically feature strongly in women's magazines, with female survivors described as mothers, wives, sisters and daughters—often situated in domestic situations—while male survivors are framed by their relationship with women and family. The Danes were pictured hugging each other, reportedly 'wrapped in the soft arms of their three children,' in Brisbane under the headline 'Exclusive: Heartbreak and homecoming.' Photographed with Kay were her mother, Noela Stewart, and sister, Karen, highlighting a family bond and the role of the women in caring for the children while

separated from their parents. The Danes soon realised they needed to protect the privacy and mental health of their two daughters and son. That meant not allowing them to be a used for someone else's entertainment, so Kay rarely let media have contact:

> They [the media] would ask to have pictures with the kids but we would always go and ask the kids what they felt like and most of the time they didn't want to be involved in it. Sometimes we just said no straight out: 'No, it's not good, just let the kids recover … they had been through quite a traumatic experience.' Sahra was only 11 and one journalist said to her: 'How did it feel when your mum got taken away from you?' That's just not a good question to ask an 11-year-old.

Blanket news coverage ensured Douglas Wood was already publicly recognisable when he first appeared in a popular Australian women's magazine, two months after he was taken hostage in Iraq and two weeks after his release. It was the reunion with Douglas's family in Melbourne, secured exclusively by tabloid media, that reinforced his profile as an accidental celebrity. Touted as a 'Douglas Wood Exclusive,' *New Idea* (2 July 2005, pp. 1, 10-13) carried a front-page pointer photograph of the middle-aged man hugging his wife, Yvonne Given, alongside the recycled image of a gun pointed at his head while held captive, which reminded audiences of his news profile. Again, much like the Jacqueline Pascarl headlines, the tag line, 'My agony and the wife who got me through,' were not words Douglas uttered, but they did set the tone. Rather than feeling he'd been misrepresented or that the coverage was invasive, Douglas was comfortable with the attention: 'I give a lot of credit to the editors or the sub-editors that actually put the headlines on. I think they are amazing how they capture it and put a little spin on it.'

The four-page spread carefully wove details of Douglas's personal life with the story of his captivity and rescue. The engineer was described as 'back in the loving arms of his wife

Yvonne,' alongside images of the couple kissing and of him playing the piano, surrounded by his brothers and their wives. *New Idea*'s editors had apparently determined that the already well-documented political machinations behind his return to freedom would not hold as much appeal to female readers as the family reunion.

We can see the same storytelling techniques—the types of angles chosen and details emphasised—in other women's magazines, which negotiated the first interviews with Thredbo landslide survivor Stuart Diver and Beaconsfield miners Todd Russell and Brant Webb. *Woman's Day* (29 May 2006, pp. 1-7) had the 'EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW: Miners and their families,' taking up half of its front page with photos of Todd and Brant with their wives and children and a manufactured quote: 'Love pulled us through.' The following six pages recounted their ordeal and determination to be reunited with their wives and children. The miners spoke about how that was all they had in common—vastly different in personality and interests. Wedding photos, images from their release and brief quotes from Carolyn Russell and Rachel Webb rounded out the feature.

The Australian Women's Weekly (September 1997, pp. 1, 4-11) carried the 'WORLD FIRST' with Thredbo landslide survivor Stuart Diver. Beside a front-page image of the handsome ski instructor was a direct quote: 'There was a massive roar then Sally screaming and me screaming.' Readers were promised he 'relives his 65 hours buried alive.' The inside story centred on how the spirit of his wife, who died beside him, gave Stuart the will to live. Under the page banner 'The miracle of Thredbo' was the headline: 'Sally's love kept me alive'—something Stuart didn't say in the story, although it did convey the correct sentiment as he recounted the strength of their love, accompanied by photos of their wedding and on the ski slopes together. He told how when he was pulled from the hole, all he had left of his former life was his wedding ring, clearly visible in the front-page image. Stuart's parents,

Stephen and Annette Diver, and Sally's mother, Margie Donald, spoke too about their sorrow and joy. The survivor hoped the interview would help the families of the Thredbo victims understand what had happened.

Stuart's accidental celebrity status was reconfirmed five years later as he was preparing to marry long-time Thredbo resident Rosanna Cossettini. The couple planned to keep their wedding private, even from Stuart's media agent, until a Sydney-based newspaper found out a week before the nuptials. The 'sole survivor' was still deemed newsworthy. Knowing the media pack would be on its way, Stuart and Rosanna sold the inside story to *New Idea* (27 April 2002, pp. 1, 10-13), which helped cover the cost of security. Rosanna's breast cancer diagnosis soon after the wedding, and the birth of daughter Alessia eight years later, also made headlines, with *Woman's Day* (18 October 2010, pp. 1, 18-21) snaring the family exclusive. Stuart explains media 'were going to do a story on it, so we said "Well, we may as well do a story … then we can at least get some nice photos and whatever from them and control it."' He also saw an opportunity to encourage readers to never give up hope, explaining that the couple's chances of having a child were thought to be slim.

Eighteen months after Rosanna died, Stuart shared with Australians his experience raising Alessia alone (*New Idea* 19 September 2016, pp. 29-30). Then came the 20th anniversary of the Thredbo landslide. Stuart participated in several interviews, providing insight into how he continues on for his daughter (*Woman's Day* 24 July 2017, p. 34). Each feature story over the years has included that now iconic image of the survivor being pulled by paramedics from the landslide rubble, reminding readers who he is and what he has already been through.

Media will typically attempt to create an emotional connection between audiences and survivors to continue holding attention after it's been captured by bold headlines and images.

Woman's Day (3 May 2004, pp. 1, 22-24, 26) initially featured Sophie Delezio five months after she suffered life-threatening burns from a freak car accident. The magazine boasted a 'WORLD EXCLUSIVE' and 'FIRST PICS' on its front-page pointer, with photos of her and another critically injured toddler Molly Wood. The girls were simply referred to as 'Molly and Sophie' above the headline 'DAYCARE TRAGEDY KIDS: The smiles we've all been praying to see.' The parents shared their personal experiences over four pages, with Sophie's mother, Carolyn Martin, saying: 'You never think it's going to happen to your family but you look around this hospital and you see it happens to a lot of people.' There were photos of Sophie in her hospital bed, with her mother, father Ron Delezio and older brother Mitchell by her side. *The Australian Women's Weekly* went on to report 'BRAVE SOPHIE: At home with the girl who won our hearts' (August 2004, pp. 1, 42-45, 47-48) and 'EXCLUSIVE: Sophie Delezio's brave first steps' (November 2004, p. 1, 40-43, 45-46). Coverage of the toddler's second terrible car accident led with 'Prayers for Sophie' (*The Australian Women's Weekly* June 2006, pp. 36-38). By then she was readily identifiable to audiences through first name only.

Years earlier, Jandamarra O'Shane attracted similar magazine headlines to Sophie. *The Australian Women's Weekly* (August 1997, pp. 1, 18-20) featured the boy, his mother Jenni and her three other children, living in Brisbane close to medical care. The front-page pointer, 'SO BRAVE!' was a powerful portrayal, one that would have both influenced how the boy was perceived and reflected public sentiment. The same month, *Woman's Day* (11 August 1997, pp. 1, 10-11) carried a page one pointer, 'Jandamarra back at school', for a double-page spread. The six-year-old was photographed in a pressure suit, to compress the grafted skin to his body, when released from hospital. It was 10 months after he'd suffered horrific burns and Jenni is pleased she waited instead of relenting to media pressure: 'I think it should

be when we're ready, on our terms, and not when it's the heat of the moment, so that we can be more prepared.'

Sour Grapes and Spoilers

Competition between media—particularly tabloids—drives unethical newsgathering and storytelling practices, including the creation of content aimed at spoiling the coverage of a rival. James Scott and Mercedes Corby know what it feels like to not only have their personal lives pored over but used in a print sales or broadcast ratings war. James and Gaye Ryan invited photographers to capture them outside the Cairns church where they were married, five months after he was found alive in the Himalayan mountains (*The Sunday Telegraph* 14 June 1992, p. 11). James believed it would be 'a nice end-point to the story' that provided both newspapers and women's magazines with an opportunity to update audiences on his recovery. Only *Woman's Day* (20 July 1992, pp. 12-13) was granted an interview, a few days later, rewarding the couple with positive coverage. Under the headline 'The Iceman's tropical honeymoon: Exclusive,' the magazine showed James and Gaye kissing and hugging. 'The scene could be straight from the pages of a romantic novel—newlyweds strolling along an idyllic tropical beach, arms entwined, lost in love and their shared dreams,' read the opening paragraph. Gaye was quoted extensively, recounting their wedding day and sharing with readers the couple's plans for the future. Few details of James's trauma were provided—simply calling him 'the iceman' was enough to remind Australians who he was.

A week later, rival *New Idea* (27 June 1992, p. 107) published five smiling wedding photos with the headline 'Iceman melts Gaye's heart,' then proceeded to question James's survival story. It described a 'dark cloud' that hung over the couple's happy day. Colonel Naranyan Singh Pun, the leader of the Nepal Army helicopter unit who was in charge of the rescue

flight, was quoted as saying James 'didn't look like a person who hadn't eaten for 43 days.' Denied an interview with the newlyweds, the magazine recycled an earlier statement from Gaye to reporters that 'people don't seem to believe in miracles any more.' The Scott family contacted Colonel Pun and were effectively told the magazine had fabricated the story, according to James. He may accept that as accidental celebrities they were fair game, but still found the story distressing. James recalls: 'I wrote to the editor of *New Idea*—I was feral about it—and said, 'How dare you?' I never got a response to that letter.'

New Idea clearly sought to 'own' the Schapelle Corby story, securing early exclusive interviews with her mother, Rosleigh Rose (11 December 2004, pp. 16-17), and sister, Mercedes Corby (29 January 2005, pp. 16-17). Mercedes revealed details of her visits to Schapelle in prison and provided insight into her own personal life with her Balinese husband and children. The magazine carried five more exclusive articles in the month before and two months after Schapelle's 27 May 2005 drug smuggling conviction—from tracking down her 'secret' ex-husband to interviewing a friend who travelled to Bali with her on that fateful trip. While the Corbys were relying on the publication to keep the campaign for Schapelle's release in the public eye and help fund her care, *New Idea* was pursuing other dramatic story angles that would set its coverage apart from competitors.

The merger between news and entertainment is most evident, I would argue, in commercial television current affairs. The private lives of the Corby family have provided plenty of fodder for these outlets. Mercedes herself was used as an audience winner for tabloid television, accused of being a drug-taker and runner by a former best friend. Jodi Power's interview with the Seven Network's now defunct *Today Tonight* aired at the start of the official ratings period in February 2007, three months after it was recorded. Two million Australians tuned in on the first of three consecutive nights, making it the top program in the

timeslot (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 15 February 2007, p. 3). Power was reportedly paid about $100,000 for the interview, private letters and family photos, including one of a teenage Mercedes with a smoking pipe shaped like a penis.

As the second part aired, Mercedes mounted a counter-attack on the Nine Network's rival show *A Current Affair*, then both programs brought in body language and human behaviour experts to examine each other's interviews (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 15 February 2007, p. 3). Mercedes observes: 'They just have to try and outdo each other.' *The Courier-Mail* (16 February 2007, p. 2) newspaper and news.com.au jumped in on the action, running online opinion polls which supposedly showed between 79 and 84 per cent of respondents believed Power was telling the truth.

Mercedes had written to the Seven Network, warning against broadcasting the allegations, saying, 'People will not believe that the media can get things wrong. Lies become fact. I know it will be good for ratings, but this is our life' (*The Sunday Telegraph* 18 May 2008, p. 90). She then successfully sued for defamation, receiving an undisclosed payout. Mercedes had admitted in court during her defamation case to smoking 'a few puffs' of marijuana and taking three small portions of an ecstasy tablet when she was young (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 30 May 2008, p. 1). She remains disappointed that a private moment in the past was 'dredged up' to portray her negatively today:

> I was 17 years old, smoking marijuana with a paper bag on my head with a homemade little pipe. I went through the teens. Sometimes you do things that maybe you shouldn't have but all of Australia's going to see about it 20 years later.

Until she began dealing with the producers of television current affairs programs and magazine reporters, Mercedes' understanding of the term 'tabloid journalism' was 'just

gossip about the stars, you know movie stars.' Now she considers all media believe their role is to entertain. She argues no matter what the family did, they were never able to satisfy the voracious media beast:

> The media have told me that Schapelle sells, so they're always asking for things, you know they don't really care how it's going to affect her. They're really just caring about the ratings, the readership, the sales. There's the lot—the magazines, the newspapers, the news—the whole lot of them … sometimes people just treat you like you have no idea and they're just taking you for a ride and you know exactly what they're trying to do instead of just being more forward and not so pushy.

Broken Trust

Trust can be a casualty when heading down the tabloid entertainment path—not only between editors, journalists and the survivor, but also audiences. While the stories have all largely pushed a positive message of hope and determination over despair and adversity, Ron Delezio recognises magazines are part of a commercial sector that produces news and information for profit, so media generally 'love exaggerating … they capitalise on everything … that's all part of the entertainment, all part of the show.' Still, he was shocked and distressed when his daughter Catherine from his first, teenage marriage, spoke out in the weekly magazine *Grazia* (2 March 2009, pp. 24-26) about her troubled life while estranged from the father she claims wanted to present a perfect family front.

It was a story 'likely to stun Australians who know of only half the tears the Delezio family has shed,' the writer proclaimed, revealing Ron also had an older son John. Catherine told how she'd been sexually abused as a child by a man who lived nearby, became a ward of the state, street kid, mother at 16 and was facing drug charges. She revealed that she was at

Sophie's bedside after the child care centre crash and, following the second freak accident in 2006, decided to separate from her family again, writing to Ron, 'you do not love me as a daughter the way a father should.' His public statement in response expressed love for Catherine while pointing out the article was untrue (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 24 February 2009, p. 2). It is the publisher Ron holds responsible:

> The magazines rub their hands together and 'Oh, fantastic, we're going to use this and make money out of it.' They don't really care that it hurts people like myself, exploiting my daughter, who I feel very sorry for, to get to a stage of letting everyone know in Australia.

The Delezios are now more 'wary,' 'on guard' and 'careful' of sensational reporting, 'to make a bigger story, a better story,' according to Ron. Although, they continue to appear in tabloid stories to promote the Day of Difference Foundation in support of other critically injured children. So too do Bruce and Denise Morcombe, who need editors on side to publicly push the Daniel Morcombe Foundation's child safety message, despite magazines being their least trusted medium. Bruce describes them as 'totally ruthless … they're like animals after a carcass, they just want that story and they have no sympathy or couldn't care less once they've gone.' He considers reporters who don't live in their corner of South-East Queensland have little empathy. Denise adds: 'I think some of the magazines used us to sell their magazines, as a big sob story to sell more.' The Morcombes point to the actions of one publication to illustrate the point. *The Australian Women's Weekly* (September 2011, pp. 44-47) featured Bradley the month after Brett Peter Cowan was charged with Daniel's abduction and murder, and eight years after he disappeared. The article was full of family photos while readers were told Daniel's twin brother 'opens his heart' as 'the nightmare never fades.' The Morcombes soon found they had no control when, during the photo shoot, they received a

call from police saying they believed a shoe belonging to Daniel had been found. Bruce says the couple were then too upset to be photographed:

> We weren't in the right space to do that story with that magazine, so basically we declined on the spot and as we were doing that I remember the photographer who had the fancy big lenses, he had the camera on his hip, like low down, and you could hear it going click, click, click, he was capturing and they used one of those photos. They printed it as black and white. We didn't give them approval to use that photo.

While Kay Danes considers the reporting of her imprisonment with Kerry in Laos informative, given the serious political situation, today she doesn't read magazines like *New Idea* or *Woman's Day*. She says she's simply become more aware that facts are distorted:

> Social justice stories and prisoner stories that are just nothing stories. They're based on someone making a good story, not necessarily letting the truth get in the way … I know for a fact that stories have been sold and they're not exactly wholly true stories. There's a lot a fabrication in those stories so I personally don't trust anything I read in these particular magazines.

Kay points out that even television interviews can be spliced and manipulated. Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton agrees, personally viewing many television programs as entertainment, even when they purport to be news-based:

> It's got comedy in it, it's got reality—you go from sobbing to laughing and back again. It's all mixed up because a news program is now as much entertainment as any other—in fact some of them are far more entertaining than the sitcoms they put on.

Todd Russell estimates that: 'probably 80 per cent of [the reporting on the Beaconsfield rockfall] was informing and the other 20 per cent was entertainment.' Stuart Diver is a little

more skeptical, believing media outlets have 'lost their way' instead of fulfilling an important role in society:

> I think that basically it's an entertainment industry. Even [what] they call news … would be 90 per cent there to entertain. If you actually sat down and counted the minutes and the amount of true information you actually got from any of those stories, it would be very minimal in most cases. That's why my story lasted for so many months afterwards, because it had the entertainment factor. The information was all given out. We all knew basically what happened. So then it's got to become entertainment. There's a lot of stuff I see on TV of the trauma survivor etc being interviewed and it's just an absolute load of crap. And you're not getting anything out of them … all you're getting is 'Gee I feel sorry for that person because they're sitting there bawling their eyes out.'

The difference between newsworthy subject and celebrity-commodity may appear as fine as the line between information and entertainment. In fact, they blur, with no clear distinction, just shifts in where editors and reporters place emphasis when creating stories about traumatic events and survival. What the public is interested in isn't always the same as what's in the public interest. How does learning about someone's past loves, innermost pain or seeing a photo of them with a smoking 'bong' more than 20 years ago contribute to the welfare of the general public? Media outlets calculate, from past sales, ratings, views and engagement scores, that exploring the private lives of ordinary people already in the news will give people what they want. Specific audiences are targeted and catered for, like enticing females to buy magazines by publishing sensational stories about women and family men they can relate to. Unfortunately, trauma survivors are also common tabloid targets in the process of creating public entertainment.

8

PRODUCTS, PUBLICITY AND PERFORMANCES

> I give speeches, not quite as much now as there were … different groups and I'm quite willing to tell my story. I start it off with a little bit of a video introduction … a little bit of play on my childhood, growing up, running around the world, living in the Philippines, Czech Republic, Georgia, Armenia, America, worked in all the states of Australia, then ended up obviously in Iraq and then 'please don't shoot me, I don't want to die.'
>
> - Douglas Wood

Always outgoing and admittedly up for a chat, Douglas Wood welcomed attention from the media and public, seizing opportunities to share his personal story. From surviving captivity in Iraq to speaking on the celebrity circuit in Australia, the former engineer turned towards the public spotlight, not away. Network Ten had the first call on his account of six weeks guarded by extremists, beaten and forced to plead for his life before a dramatic military rescue. Douglas's paid participation in the one-hour television special and a *New Idea* magazine spread fed public interest in his private life, confirming his accidental celebrity status. The decisions he made after that reinforced that he was also a commodity, with a personal profile—beyond news of his traumatic experience—that could be promoted and traded, as long as he remained newsworthy and widely recognisable.

Douglas is among a small number of ordinary people who experience the extraordinary and transcend their role as a newsworthy subject. Once afforded a high profile by media, trauma survivors will often be invited to make public appearances which serve to reinforce their prominence. They enter a cycle of media attention, public fascination and commercial returns that continually underpins their celebrity-commodity status. Some survivors are unexpectedly presented with opportunities to leverage off their sudden fame, while others consciously pursue ongoing publicity after the first flurry of interviews and attention, loaning or selling their image and name for a public cause or personal gain. At that point, the circle of those who stand to financially benefit widens beyond the survivor themselves, their agent and news media outlets to others in the entertainment, business and charity sectors. They even encounter strangers cashing in by co-opting their identity to create and sell a product without their input or permission.

A survivor can become a 'brand', then struggle to control how it is used. At the same time, the potential financial gains, beyond being paid to perform, come from developing a public persona that appreciates their value. The window of opportunity is typically narrow though. More traumatic events happen, survivors are pursued as witnesses, and media and public interest in their personal lives help turn once anonymous citizens into new accidental celebrities. Unless the story is unfolding and/or a survivor continues to make public comments and other appearances, they will typically be replaced in the media spotlight by someone else. Douglas makes the point: 'They [media] are only interested as long as they think you're interesting to the public.' In the midst of controversy over his paid interviews, one newspaper coolly noted there is a market for survivor accounts of tragedy or near miss:

> Audiences want first-hand insights; they want to know what happened, how did the person survive, what went through their minds, how are they coping—all the while hoping they

> never experience anything similar. So they'll watch the interview, read the article, buy the book, see the film. Those affronted by what they see as profiteering can ignore the spectacle. (*The Advertiser* 29 June 2005, p. 19)

The Celebrity Cycle

Douglas had only made a few small appearances in the sports pages of his local newspaper as a young man before he became the focus of media headlines around the world in 2005, as a 63-year-old engineer kidnapped in Iraq. Today Douglas lives a quiet life in a non-descript unit in suburban Melbourne—in contrast to the clicking cameras and protruding mics of a heavy media contingent that greeted him in Australia when he was freed. He remains positive, jovial and engaging despite suffering ongoing health complaints, including optic nerve damage from being bashed while in captivity, as well as the eye disease glaucoma, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes. Douglas recalls a couple of approaches from documentary makers in Australia and the United Kingdom to re-enact his ordeal, but 'they haven't quite come back.' When the invitations rolled in to speak to different groups—from sports clubs to community organisations—even years after the event, Douglas didn't hesitate in accepting. He says he's always finished by explaining his simple survival technique:

> I'd go through all the songs I used to sing. Particularly Elvis Presley's 'I Want To Be Free.' I just felt a … positive message. So, I'd lie there and it's got a line in it—'I look at the window, what do I see, I see a bird up in a tree.' And in this room I'm in, it's [blanked] off so I can't see out of it, but I imagine that there's a tree outside and there's a bird in that bloody tree who's singing 'I want to be free!' I sang that over and over, along with the 23rd Psalm—'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.'

A speaking tour was reportedly part of an original marketing plan developed by Douglas's lawyer and agent, Mark Klemens, which also included a book deal and beer endorsement—neither of which eventuated (*Sunday Herald Sun* 19 June 2005, p. 1). Douglas started writing a manuscript as a record of his experience, while thinking he could also 'make a couple of bucks.' Klemens began negotiating with potential publishers but Douglas says somewhere along the line they all lost interest, and although he finished the book, he didn't take it further:

> My manager was messing with it. He was busy on ghost writers and I don't want a ghost writer. There's something about a ghost writer that slants it and maybe detracts from the reality. You know, if it's a story about me I'd like it to be my story. One of the agents we saw in New York was talking about a million dollars, which is hard to say let's not do it, and he eventually turned it down because his ghost writer wasn't available.

Realistically, the moment has passed. Publishers need a product they can market, and old news isn't going to sell without an attention-grabbing fresh angle or, at a minimum, a continued high level of public recognition. The timeliness of Douglas Wood's story and interest in his life was at its peak when he first returned from Iraq. Media outlets will only maintain a survivor's high profile if they think it will help them fill news and feature holes, attract audiences and, in the case of commercial organisations, make money.

Douglas says although he wanted to share his story more than profit from the pain, there were moments early on when he felt he had no control over plans to use him as a commodity. He remembers laying in a Baghdad hospital asking Nick Warner, the head of Australia's rescue team, how the Cats (Geelong Football Club) were going in the Australian Football League and whether he could have a can of VB (Victoria Bitter). The good-humoured questions were widely reported. 'I didn't even know I was being taped, but that [went] all

around the world,' Douglas recalls. He was later invited to be guest of honour at a Geelong Football Club lunch—a public appearance which earned him and the Cats positive publicity (*Geelong Advertiser* 4 July 2005, p. 9). Douglas was not so impressed though by a more overt plan to make money by attaching his new-found star power to another product when the beer manufacturer Carlton and United Breweries (CUB) sent a slab to his brothers:

> But my manager tried to push it, so you have this greedy side, and you're never sure if [he's] not interested or he's hanging out for too much money. But as I understand it, Carlton United basically said: 'Hey, we've got all our free publicity already, why do we need any more?'

The management of CUB said the company wanted to 'help along the celebrations' but would not be asking Douglas to appear in advertisements. Marketing experts warned such a move could be seen as exploitation, and CUB quickly stated it had no desire to 'commercialise his experience' (*The Canberra Times* 19 June 2005, p. 5). That kind of behavior didn't 'sit with the values of the brand' (*Herald Sun* 18 June 2005, p. 7). The Geelong Football Club, on the other hand, thanked Douglas for choosing to wear their tie in public appearances. Survivors walk a fine line when their marketability hinges largely on the strength of public empathy, yet they could be represented through media as attempting to make money distastefully from their misfortune. While society seems to accept those who achieved celebrity—for instance through sport or the arts—trading on their prominence, those for whom fame was attributed by media are expected to remain ordinary, retaining the perceived authenticity and relatability that made them a sought-after commodity in the first place.

Commercial Opportunities

High-profile trauma survivors may receive a myriad of offers, paid and unpaid, that could maintain their public profile—from public speaking to attending events, supporting charities or appearing on celebrity-based television shows. Ultimately, they have to consider their personal values, aspirations and reputation. Endorsing or advertising products is particularly risky, as James Scott discovered in 1992. The Himalayan hiker says when Harry M. Miller had stitched up deals with mainstream media, the agent turned his attention to other ways for James to make money from his tale of endurance:

> Harry said: 'There's got to be money made out of the sleeping bag and you know—what underclothes, thermals did you have?' He then asked: 'What sleeping bag did you have?' It was kind of a lightweight thing, maybe it was Myer or Kmart, and Harry goes 'Ugh.' So all he had in the end was the chocolate bars and even that went sour so I … was never going to be a money spinner. Harry kind of learned that after a while.

Miller (2009, pp. 248-252) revealed in his memoirs that he received a call from the makers of Mars Bars in the United States, offering $500,000 if James said it was their product that kept him alive. The problem was the chocolate was Cadbury Dairy Milk. So Miller decided to see whether Cadbury Schweppes would make a similar offer. James says the possibility of making money out of a product endorsement placed him in an 'invidious position,' but his family felt they needed to explore options to recoup the personal costs of the search and rescue:

> Harry Miller had said: 'There's so much fucking money to make out of chocolate bars, I'll make you a fucking millionaire! All you need to do is don't mention the name of the fucking chocolate bar, leave the rest for me.'

When asked the brand of chocolate by London's *The Daily Telegraph*, during an exclusive print interview, James wouldn't say. Miller was still trying to reach a deal with Cadbury's. He believed he had an agreement with the Nine Network's *60 Minutes* program that James wouldn't even be questioned about the chocolate in his first proper television interview—a paid exclusive. Reporter Richard Carleton asked anyway, James refused to answer, so Carleton and producer Allan Hogan called Miller. James recalls Carleton 'going red in the face' as Miller shouted at him down the telephone:

> The interview started again, and Carleton said 'Ok, we're all clear we won't ask the brand of chocolate bars, that's off limits, we'll keep going,' and the interview changed. Suddenly it was this very adversarial interview: Is it really possible that you could have survived? Are you sure it was 43 days? Did this really happen to you? Surely someone with that amount of intelligence wouldn't be stupid enough to put themselves in that situation? You know, it was just this complete sort of attack … it went on for 20 minutes and I was just sort of deflecting questions and answering honestly and then he said: 'And what brand of chocolate bar was it that you had?' And at that moment I thought you're dead—I was going to kill him. And I tried to get up and there was a golf club—I was going to clobber him to death—I just had no balance, no eyesight … my brain had been damaged from vitamin deficiency and I couldn't get to him—I would've killed him. And I called him a cunt … all on camera. And I got sort of carted away … and that's a breakdown.

Years later it was reported James's 'credibility went out the window' at that moment. 'Many viewers thought that if Scott was not willing to be honest about this, perhaps there were other parts of his incredible tale that should also be questioned,' one newspaper recalled (*The Advertiser* 12 November 2011, p. 47). Certainly, James describes that as his worst interview experience:

> I think once you start being shifty and saying, 'Well, we might be able to make some quid out of Mars Bars,' then you're on thin ice. It was a hard lesson, but it was a good one for me about staying true to what's important ... It was stupid. I was very clear about why I survived—that the faith in God, closeness of family and friends were the big factors, karate training and medical knowledge were important but less effective, but probably all four were needed to survive. And obviously there was my sister Joanne and there were a lot of people driving Joanne—she was just the right person, coordinated a very complex search and such.

Mars ended up receiving free publicity, with Miller unable to nail down a contract. 'It kept getting widely reported Mars Bars so Cadbury's was saying "Well, look everyone thinks it's the Mars Bars so why would we then say it was Cadbury's?"' James recalls. Seventeen years later, reporters were still writing that James survived on a couple of Mars Bars (*The Daily Telegraph* 29 May 2008, p. 28; *Herald Sun* 2 August 2008, p. 27).

Chocolate may have been the best endorsement opportunity, but it wasn't the only one Miller was exploring at the time. James names the supermarket chain Coles and Carlton Cold beer as other brands interested in being attached to his name and image early on. He went along to a Carlton Cold function at Miller's suggestion, mixing with celebrities, but says it felt 'all very superficial':

> By that stage I thought, 'Well, if you're going to be a reputable medical practitioner you can't go around endorsing beers.' About a year later, Harry's company contacted me … they said: 'This is the idea: you're going to get rescued and you want to look good and your clothes are all dirty and of course you've got some Cold Power.' They said, 'You know, they're offering you big money.' And I was in the neurology ward at the time because I remember my pager goes off, and they asked if I was interested and I was thinking, 'Are you insane? You really think I would be?' They said 'Ok, we were just running it by you.'

James looks back now and regards even considering endorsements as a 'mistake' that made him look greedy, instead of reflecting his personal values which would dictate he didn't try to turn his near-death experience and the trauma of his family into a money-making opportunity. Although, he's not the only high-profile trauma survivor to be enticed by the potential for easy dollars in exchange for loaning their name and image. In a state of trauma, making decisions in full knowledge of the possible consequences is extremely difficult and survivors typically trust the advice of others, whether a media agent, family member or someone else who is looking after their interests.

Todd Russell was twice poised to advertise products after being rescued from the Beaconsfield Mine in 2006. Although his agent, Sean Anderson, was handling the negotiations, Todd is not sure why they 'fell over on the death knock of signing the contract.' Work-wear company, Huski, was reported to have paid an estimated $100,000 for the pair to endorse their jackets (*The Mercury* 21 April 2007, pp. 1-2). Any potential deal with the maker of the health drink Sustagen, fed to the miners while they were trapped, was shelved along with a national advertising campaign after the miners commented in their first Nine Network interview that they 'wouldn't feed it to their dog [sic]' (*The Australian* 25 May 2006, p. 16). Stuart Diver estimates that soon after he was pulled from the Thredbo landslide, about 15 different endorsements were offered:

> There was a couple of food lines. There was a couple of energy bar-style lines. There was a car company, straight after basically, so when all the main interviews were happening—that was strike while the iron's hot. We declined every one of them. I didn't endorse anything just because it wouldn't have worked. And it was funny, because at the end of the day, if you want lucrative—if you're in it to make money—that's where you make the money, in

> endorsing stuff. So we obviously were not, in our arrangements with Harry, purely in it for the money because otherwise he would have recommended that I do all those endorsements.

Charitable Support

Jacqueline Pascarl turned down an offer from an international telephone company. However, she has participated in endorsements to support the international humanitarian aid work she embarked on after the abduction, helping raise about $40 million in relief while also establishing a child literacy project. Jacqueline says these were never personal financial arrangements:

> I did South African Airways. They gave me a jumbo jet to airlift aid resources—aid relief—to Africa and I had to say they were Africa's number one airline in all the interviews. So I did that. And I did something similar with Lauda Air when they airlifted to Bosnia for me, and Johnson & Johnson, in terms of endorsement saying they were fabulous for giving me product to give to women in war zones because they had no sanitary pads or napkins.

Jacqueline launched Operation Angel to support women and children in war zones as well as during natural disasters such as fire and flood in Australia. She has received several commendations, held roles on a variety of charitable boards and was appointed a patron of CARE International. Jacqueline recognises that in becoming the 'public face' of various organisations, she has in effect traded off her public profile to garner support for other causes, which in turn helps her maintain a level of public recognition:

> I'm really fortunate because the platform of the notoriety of the abduction gave me the ability to call a magazine and director directly and say 'I'm trying to airlift humanitarian aid to the Balkans, are you interested in a story if I write for you?' So I've used that as leverage

> unashamedly for other people. I've used my celebrity—if you can call it that—I used whatever my profile is, to build schools, to run aid missions.

The former features reporter also lectured on international parental child abduction in Australia and overseas after producing an award-winning documentary on the subject, *Empty Arms—Broken Hearts*. Kay Danes participated in a documentary on hostage survival, used as a training tool for Australian Defence Force personnel who were being deployed to armed conflict zones. She considers she's used media to challenge public policy overseas, more than they've used her to create news:

> I think with your profile you can actually do more and other people want to be associated with you and you sometimes ask yourself why would they want me to be like their ambassador, because I just see myself as being the same old me? But then they tell me that my profile could help push this along for them. I'm quite grateful and humbled, and if it's for a good cause I'll get behind it. People know now what I do … I was anonymous before, but now you see me.

It is not uncommon for high-profile trauma survivors to support charities and other causes, and none of the survivors I spoke with objected to being used as a commodity where there was a public benefit. Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton has supported several groups, including being patron of Justice WA. James Scott has helped raise funds for different organisations; the straw hat he wore in the Himalayas was donated to an auction raising funds for the Royal Brisbane Hospital. In contrast to the negative media and public reaction survivors face when they endorse commercial products for their own gain, supporting others less fortunate is usually welcomed. It can be represented as repaying the community for its support, enabling the survivors to portray a positive image. Stuart Diver recognises he's still a commodity, but

he feels in control of these situations, identifying benefits all round—for himself, media and the charity:

> It works beautifully. If I only come out once a year to do interviews or twice a year to do interviews for a certain charity, then I will always get—because everyone wants to know what I did for the last 12 months—I'll always get a quick interview and away you go.

Like Stuart, Todd Russell has used the public's fascination with his life beyond Beaconsfield, and the media connections he made while becoming an accidental celebrity, to assist others. He and fellow mine survivor Brant Webb appeared two days after their rescue at a concert raising funds to support other mine workers and the family of Larry Knight, who was killed in the rockfall. They crossed live into a special edition of the Nine Network's *Footy Show* (11 May 2006). A donation from the proceeds of each copy of the book *Bad Ground: Inside the Beaconsfield Mine Rescue* (2007), written by journalist Tony Wright, was committed to the Russell Webb Legacy. The charitable foundation, aimed at supporting young people in the local community, was announced by Todd and Brant as their 'first priority' (*The Daily Telegraph* 15 May 2006, p. 7) and launched with the book (*The Mercury* 31 October 2006, p. 9). While Todd was warned by reporters and editors against profiting from his experience through exclusive interviews, products and promotions, he found support for attempts to help others:

> The media have been good to me in ways, they've helped us out dramatically. We've run charity auctions for kids with cancer and all that type of thing. Through high-profile people, we've managed to get some good items to auction off to make money for these kids. On that side they've been fantastic.

Bruce and Denise Morcombe also look to media for help with fundraising, agreeing to interviews in exchange for raffle items, photographic montages or videos for Daniel Morcombe Foundation events. 'You scrub my back and I'll scrub your back … never money, it's more a favour,' explains Bruce. Some of those deals have been made with the Seven Network's Queensland news presenter Kay McGrath, who is also Foundation patron. Daniel's killer may now be behind bars, but the couple continue to lead education and awareness raising activities as committee members, appearing at events around the country, while also aiming to provide support for young victims of crime.

Ron Delezio has moved away from his official role with the Day of Difference Foundation he and Carolyn Martin established after their daughter Sophie's first car accident. Carolyn remains a director. Over the years they have been approached to be patrons of different organisations. However, Ron says the couple's focus has always been on ensuring Day of Difference is successful, which means maintaining a high profile:

> We use ourselves as a commodity for our charity. We use our images, we use the fact that we're well known to promote our charity. I can—in most cases—get a foot in the door into a lot of business places where I'm trying to get them to support our charity.

Ron's public profile and contacts also gave him the opportunity to twice stand for Federal election for the Liberal Party in Sydney seats, then as an Independent in the New South Wales Parliament (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 20 July 2010, p. 7; *The Australian* 7 September 2013, p. 7; *Manly Daily* 1 March 2017, p. 3). 'I think people have a natural understanding and confidence in me and that's only come from my involvement with the media,' he explains. Although Ron was defeated each time, like other trauma survivors, he has developed a personal brand he can leverage off.

Expanding Media Career

Stuart Diver's high public profile could have led to a media career after agent Harry M. Miller negotiated a special commentating role for the ski instructor at the 1998 Winter Olympics in Japan—part of an exclusive deal with the Seven Network. 'From very early on he thought "This guy's got some potential: he can talk, it might be good, maybe I can get him a job with Channel Seven Sport,"' he recalls. No one asked whether he wanted an ongoing public role. After an 'awesome time' recording stories with the now defunct *Today Tonight* in the lead-up to the Olympics, as well as commentating at the event, Stuart explains he stepped away from the role:

> The Olympics was an unbelievable experience too and then at the end of it the EP [Executive Producer] said, 'We'd love to have you come and do some more work with Channel Seven.' I asked him what he had in mind, and he said 'Well really we are a football-based station; we'd love to have you get on the around the grounds commentary team or whatever you want.' I told him that I'm not interested in football, but thanks very much. People tell me I should have jumped at it, it would have been unbelievable, it could have led to this and that. But I … could not see myself doing it.

Todd Russell loves football and was thrilled to be given the opportunity to assist former great Wayne Carey coach the All Stars team against Victoria in the E. J. Whitten Legends game, a month after the 2006 mine rescue. The following year he was among the 'celebrity' players in the annual charity event, kicking a goal in the televised game before leaving the ground with a knee injury.

The producers of the reality television shows *I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here* and *Celebrity Apprentice* clearly thought viewers would be interested in seeing more of

Mercedes Corby when they invited her to take part. But she says she could see no benefit and declined:

> What are they going to call me when they put the name of who you are? Like, what's my title? I just don't think I could put myself through more scrutiny. As much as it might be a bit of fun and you know my uncle, he was telling me to do *Celebrity Apprentice*, he's saying because people will get to see who you really are. But then again you just don't know how things are turned and I would be definitely be putting myself out there for more scrutiny.

Concerned to protect her reputation, Kay Danes rejected the offer to appear in an internationally distributed television series. British production company Raw TV tried to convince the Danes to share their experience of imprisonment and torture in Laos with viewers of the show *Banged Up Abroad.* While Kay is eager to let more people know about human rights abuses, she says she has to be selective:

> I turned them down, and they're telling me that I'll get global exposure because this is with National Geographic and the Discovery Channel and it goes all across the world and I'd become a household name. And they told me all this, and you'll be famous and Hollywood will pick up the story from our story and they'll probably make a movie of your story. I told them no. I didn't want to be lumped into their series because it's a series on people travelling abroad, doing something wrong and getting locked up. And we didn't do anything wrong. So I didn't want to get involved in that.

Douglas Wood had few reservations about leveraging off his profile—only limited physically. 'They wanted me to go *Dancing with the Stars*, but I told them I can't dance,' he recalls with a wide grin. 'I've got rheumatoid arthritis. I would have loved to have been on it.' Instead, five months after he was freed from hostage takers in Iraq, Douglas and his then wife, Yvonne Given, appeared on the celebrity special of a short-lived Australian game show

called *Temptation*. This appearance earnt the couple a spot in the social pages of a local newspaper (*Herald Sun* 19 November 2005, p. 106), which reported the former engineer's health had improved and that he was 'on the public-speaking circuit.'

It has become more common for survivors to reinforce their accidental celebrity status by registering as a public speaker, which enables them to be paid for sharing their story without overtly touting for commercial opportunities. Jacqueline Pascarl says she continues to derive part of her income from public speaking, and had a stint as an 'agony aunt' solving the personal dilemmas of *The Sun-Herald* (25 March 2012, p 37) readers. Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton relies on media interviews, appearances at conferences and other events for her livelihood. Stuart Diver finds it hard to resist invitations to address charities he respects, although he says there's little personal benefit as it will often lead to a fresh round of media interviews. Kay Danes, on the other hand, has found that participating in interviews will lead to public speaking engagements. One moment in the public spotlight effectively triggers another, and it's there in those less public engagements that she can talk about important issues that impact on community. Ron Delezio is a registered public speaker, trying to impart a message of hope and faith to anyone who will listen. Todd Russell says he prefers sharing his story with mining industry people than taking part in media interviews these days, finding it cathartic:

> I don't only touch on my side, I talk about safety and the importance of going home at the end of every day for your family and that type of thing, but I think it releases a lot of the pressure because you're talking about it all the time, whereas if you don't talk about it, things build up.

Character Control

Tales of survival from traumatic events that captured not only media attention but the public's fascination are often recounted in a book, as we saw in an earlier chapter, with the most high-profile then re-told in a movie for television or the cinema. For the person whose experience will be dramatised and sold to audiences, exerting control over their characterisation presents a new challenge, beyond dealing just with news media. Survivors enter the world of entertainment, where the line between fact and fiction becomes blurry. There may be financial benefits, but the trade-off can be the accuracy of the portrayal after many have invested energy into faithfully recounting their experience to the public. Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton thought she'd be able to set the record straight and earn money by writing the autobiography *Through My Eyes* (1990), a decade after Azaria was taken by a dingo:

> I was paying for my family out of thin air and it was a way to keep body and soul together. And, of course, I also had the misconception that it would be fairly easy and you made money out of writing books. Firstly, it was hard. And secondly, you don't make any money out of books. Well you might if you're J.K. Rowling. But, yeah it's rare to grab the public like that.

The book's title was co-opted by the producers of an Australian television mini-series, broadcast on the Seven Network over two nights in 2004. Lindy was played by actress Miranda Otto and recalls participating in a full day of media interviews with the cast. She'd already had some experience promoting the 1988 film *Evil Angels*, released as *A Cry in the Dark* outside Australia and New Zealand, within months of the Northern Territory Supreme Court quashing all convictions and declaring the Chamberlains innocent. *Evil Angels* was based on John Bryson's 1985 book of the same name, and this time Lindy was played by Meryl Streep.

There have been numerous other adaptions, including a 1983 Australian television movie *Who Killed Baby Azaria?*, which told the Crown's case while Lindy was serving a wrongful prison sentence. She was not consulted about an opera simply titled *Lindy* by Australian composer Moya Henderson (2002), but did authorise the play *Letters to Lindy*, inspired by the more than 20,000 pieces of correspondence she received from members of the public (*New Idea* 18 July 2016, pp. 1, 22-23). Australian bluegrass band the Rank Strangers even produced a song titled *Uluru*, calling for the Chamberlains to be compensated.

Todd Russell and Brant Webb's struggle through adversity was also captured in song. The miners and their wives provided vocals for Australian band Unitopia's recording of *321 Hours* (representing the amount of time the miners were trapped underground), while American rockers the Foo Fighters wrote an instrumental tribute titled *Ballad of the Beaconsfield Miners*. The miners had listened to recordings of music from Brant's favourite band after he asked for them to be sent underground while they awaited rescue. Todd was more focused on the way their story would be told in a 2012 dramatisation of the rescue for the Nine Network, titled *Beaconsfield* (*The Mercury* 11 August 2011, pp. 7-8):

> They [the producers] asked for our input and they said if we don't use your input we're going to use the media's coverage to cover the story and make the movie from the media's side of it. That waved a red flag to me because throughout the journey it's never been 100 per cent correct, and the last thing we wanted to do is see a tele-movie come out that wasn't right. To be able to spend the amount of time we did with the producers working behind the scenes with the actors and the staff, it was amazing. As hard as it was for us to relive all that again, and like for me I was there when they were shooting the behind the scenes at home—the home side of it, which Carolyn and I had never spoken about—and seeing their re-enactment of it, it was very hard. I had to leave. I went and sat by myself and shed a few tears. I had to recompose myself before I went back.

Todd, who was played by Australian actor Lachy Hulme, was later reported as saying the movie makers gave them control over their story (*The Sunday Examiner* 27 November 2011, p. 4). Stuart Diver was consulted early about the made for television movie *Heroes' Mountain*, released in 2002. The screenplay was based on the book *Survival* (1999)—Stuart's account of his time trapped underground, written with journalist Simon Bouda. Beyond giving his permission to tell the story, Stuart says he had little further involvement:

> I sat down with John Misto, who was the guy who wrote the screenplay … There has to be some element of creative license because obviously it's a telemovie, it's not a documentary. There was nothing in there that was harmful in the way that anyone was portrayed, or that changed anything.

Mercedes Corby had a very different reaction to a film following the trial and guilty verdict of her sister Schapelle, billed as a documentary. She says the family was convinced by their first legal team to participate as a way for them to tell their story, but it all turned sour:

> I think for about 10 months they pretty much followed us around. It got very annoying at times but they were our friends. They gained our trust. We were supposed to have a contract but everything was just verbal. Then we were meant to get the contract signed but things kept coming up, and when we really started asking for it we got excuse after excuse after excuse, and so I just pretty much cut them off. They couldn't see Schapelle and I got very wary and then she [director Janine Hosking] just finally told me that there was no contract. So she sold the documentary to HBO and that wasn't too bad. It was more of what we thought the documentary would be about. That was called *Ganja Quee*n. And then they sold it to Channel Nine in 2008 … and it was called *The Hidden Truth* and it was a bit different, a bit more cut up, you know definitely they tried to make it look more sinister to our family. She completely did us over.

Former Corby family lawyer, Robin Tampoe, was struck off by the Queensland Supreme Court the following year for misconduct after claiming in the documentary that he 'invented' the baggage handler defence and the family believed it. He also released information about the criminal convictions of family members, disclosed to him by Mercedes, arguing he didn't have a solicitor-client relationship with the Corbys because he was retained by businessman Ron Bakir (*The Australian* 12 June 2009, p. 3). The day before Schapelle Corby was released from prison in February 2014, the Nine Network screened a telemovie Schapelle, based on the book *Sins of the Father*, which argued her father Mick put the drugs in her bag. The Corbys took legal action and were successful, receiving compensation while unsold copies of the book were destroyed (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 26 April 2013, p. 24). Years earlier, two different publishers asked Mercedes to write a book, but she turned them down. Schapelle had already released *My Story* (2019) with the help of journalist Kathryn Bonella, and Mercedes says she knew it would take time and energy. 'You have to go back through everything and you're still putting yourself out there a lot more,' she adds.

Unexpected Spin-offs

After years in the media spotlight, the Corbys undoubtedly became commercial products, with the potential to personally trade on their high profile while others also attempt to make money from their name and image, even strangers. When Bakir stepped forward to help the family fight for Schapelle's release, he registered the company Schapelle Corby Pty Ltd—of which he was sole director and shareholder—and the domain name schapellecorby.com.au. He insists they were set up on the family's behalf, while they say they weren't informed. After a public split following Schapelle's conviction, Bakir moved to deregister both (*The Daily Telegraph* 25 June 2005, p. 9). Around the same time, a Sydney-based business group attempted to register the name Schapelle Corby for the rights

to produce and sell books and movies about her, while two brothers cleverly, and almost comically, sought the trademark for a Corby line of luggage (*The Courier-Mail* 4 June 2005, p. 5). They claimed a percentage of those profits would go towards the appeal costs. Both were unsuccessful. There are further reports of Schapelle's name and image being used for everything from t-shirts and g-string underwear to dog jackets and mousepads (*The West Australian* 18 June 2005, p. 8). Less intentional was the rush on sales of a $12 t-shirt bought by Todd Russell from a Launceston store and worn during his exclusive interview with the Nine Network's *A Current Affair* program and in *Woman's Day* (*The Mercury*, 27 May 2006, p. 1).

THE MERCURY

MONDAY, MAY 22, 2006

www.themercury.news.com.au $1.00

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THE GREAT ESCAPE

EXCLUSIVE

THERE FOR EACH OTHER: Miners Todd Russell, left, and Brant Webb last night as they relive their underground ordeal at the Beaconsfield Gold Mine. Picture: CHANNEL 9

Courage unlimited

FLASHBACK: A golden moment as the two miners reach the surface after their rescue.

Todd Russell and Brant Webb last night finally revealed the full, harrowing story of their 14-day ordeal trapped nearly a kilometre underground at the Beaconsfield Gold Mine. In a riveting, two-hour television interview, the pair told how they felt they were trapped like "caged rats" as they were buried up to their armpits in rubble, feared they would be blown up by their brave rescuers, wrote love letters to their families and, amazingly, made a contingency plan to cut off their legs with a Stanley knife.

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(*The Mercury* 22 May 2006, p. 1)

When a survivor effectively becomes a brand, they can easily lose control over how their persona is used. Comedic writer and performer Dan Ilic drew more public criticism than anyone else who attempted to cash-in on the Beaconsfield rescue hype. His 50-minute musical, focusing on the way media portrayed the event more than two years after, was performed at the Melbourne Fringe Festival. Ilic was forced to shorten the name to *Beaconsfield: A Musical* and remove the words 'In A-flat Minor' out of respect for the family of Larry Knight who died in the rockfall (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 8 October 2008, p. 5).

The ABC also experienced a bad taste backlash after another traumatic event was used for satire in an attempt to attract audiences. Chas Licciardello from *The Chaser* television program joked in a promotional radio interview that the way to make roads safer would be to 'get Sophie Delezio off the road' (*The Daily Telegraph* 15 June 2006, p. 28). That was after the child's second accident and her father Ron certainly did not see a funny side. 'Sophie was still in hospital at the time, so I made a complaint … and they apologised,' he recalls.

Survivors gradually recognise that when they become celebrities they lose control over the use of their identity, not just by news media but more broadly. A myriad of commercial businesses, charities and other enterprises can benefit from leveraging off an individual's public recognition. The survivor may choose to participate and attempt to influence how they are represented, but they're not always given the option. To put it crassly, they become a product on the open market.

9

FROM CELEBRATED TO CYNICAL

> I think some people see you're in the media as though you want to be in the media for your own glory. I know that some people, they do treat you like, 'Oh, I saw you on television!' I look at that and say: 'Well yes, and this is what the story was and this is why.' They say: 'Bloody Ron's there again, must be doing this because he loves himself.' Unfortunately you've got to let those people go.
>
> - Ron Delezio

From electrician and teacher to household names, Ron Delezio and his wife Carolyn Martin were ordinary people propelled to public prominence in the midst of trauma. Ron settles back in a big lounge chair in his Sydney home to explain what it was like to be transformed into an accidental celebrity through shocking and unforeseen events. His daughter Sophie has grown up in the media spotlight. There were reports on her survival following two car accidents, her return home from hospital (*The Daily Telegraph* 21 June 2005, p. 1), the joy of being able to attend kindergarten (*The Australian* 21 July 2006, p. 5), her year 12 formal (*Woman's Day* 1 October 2018, pp. 1, 36-38), then applying to London universities (*The Australian Women's Weekly* April 2019, pp. 1, 20-24). More than 15 years after the Delezios

first entered the headlines, media still consider their personal lives of great interest to Australians.

For those who are used to being nameless and faceless in a crowd, suddenly finding they are recognised and renowned can be both exciting and confronting. The first flurry of interest, when deemed by journalists to be newsworthy, often boosts a sense of self-worth. However, that 'special' feeling can quickly turn to cynicism and disillusionment when someone believes they've been treated unfairly—not just through the mistakes and misrepresentation we learnt about earlier, but deliberate media moves to change the narrative. As we discover in this chapter, being thrust into the public eye also exposes trauma survivors to community gossip and commentary over which they have no control. The shine from awards is dulled when followed by questioning and criticism from strangers. A survivor can swing between having an abundance of new friends to feeling isolated. The average reader, listener or viewer takes their cues from the media coverage. The amount of reporting is the first sign of how deserving someone is of attention. Although, Ron now has a different perspective:

> We were in hospital for six-and-a-half months for the first injury, and one-and-a-half months on the second. But we had plenty of media, so we had people from all over Australia feeling sorry or giving us words of kindness to say how much they cared and how much they're praying for Sophie. And not only in Australia, but 19 other countries around the world. A number of times we've been front page at the *Tokyo Times*. Whereas these other people have had a similar thing happen to them, [but] because there wasn't much media, just a couple of lines, no-one knows about it, no-one knows how much they've suffered and no-one was there to support these people. Whereas we had all the support in the world.

That Special Feeling

Often survivors, their family and friends will keep newspaper and magazine clippings. There is a certain novelty associated with suddenly seeing themselves or someone they personally know become famous, even if it only lasts a short time. Stories also serve as a public record of the survivor's experience, much like an archive. The Delezios have retained copies of stories, alongside what Ron describes as volumes of medical files and photographs from Sophie's operations and throughout her recovery:

> We've had people collecting all the newspaper articles and stuff like that. When we've done something on television, the television stations have always given us a copy if it was in the news or whatever. We've got scrapbooks … we don't go over them ourselves at all but they're there for Sophie if she wants.

In the months after Azaria Chamberlain was taken by a dingo, supporters across the country sent Lindy and Michael dozens of newspaper articles, which they saved along with personal cards. 'We don't have anything else of Azaria but we'll have this as a memorial because we don't have a grave—sort of screwed-up thinking when I look back at it now,' Lindy says in hindsight. While she was in prison, 'a team of ladies' cut out and filed the stories, filling five or six filing cabinets. The other survivors I spoke with, and their immediate family members, all collected clippings. Many were placed in scrapbooks or folders. Bruce Morcombe says he and Denise have 'every newspaper story we could ever lay our hands on' as a diary of the search for their son Daniel, creating a personal timeline. Occasionally Jandamarra O'Shane's mother, Jenni Begg, has a look through what she refers to as 'memorabilia' and reflects. 'You remember the time, the moment, where we were, how things were back then,' she says of the traumatic period that otherwise seems like a blur.

Todd Russell has an edition of the book *Bad Ground* and other collectables set aside for each of his three children. The mementos he personally cherishes have come from rubbing shoulders with people who achieved celebrity status rather than finding fame as a trauma survivor. Todd never thought it possible that he'd have one-on-one time with his idol, American country music great Kenny Rogers. The miner sang Rogers' signature hit 'The Gambler' to keep his spirits up while underground. When Rogers heard, he wrote to Todd saying he hoped they'd have the opportunity to meet some day. More than two years later, when the singer-songwriter was performing in Melbourne, Todd contacted his manager (*Herald Sun* 29 October 2008, p. 11). It's a moment he'll never forget:

> I actually sang with Kenny Rogers … in the Palais. I've actually got a T-shirt in my trophy room there signed by him: 'To Todd, you're the best duet partner I've ever had. Your friend Kenny Rogers.' He's a brilliant guy.

It is through his media involvement that Todd has also met well-known Australian country music singer and songwriter Lee Kernaghan, and dined with former Australian Rules footballer Jonathan Brown, who he describes as a 'great guy'. Sophie Delezio's favourite famous person as a child was Pope Benedict XVI, and at the age of seven she was blessed by the Pontiff in Sydney as he thanked volunteers who ran the World Youth Day event (*The Daily Telegraph* 22 July 2008, p. 1). Sophie personally asked the Pope to make Mary MacKillop a saint, based on her family's belief that the Australian nun's intercession saved Sophie's life. Two years later, the Delezios travelled to Rome to witness the canonization of Saint Mary Of the Cross, who was recognised for the miraculous recovery of grandmothers Kathleen Evans and Veronica Hopson from cancer (*Woman's Day* 25 October 2010, pp. 42-42). While the two women kept their identities secret until close to the event, limiting their media appearances (*The Sunday Times* 17 October 2010, p. 8), Sophie led coverage on the

Nine Network's *60 Minutes* program (*The Sunday Telegraph* 10 October 2010, p. 7) and sat in the front row at the ceremony (*Herald Sun* 18 October 2010, p. 4).

Built Up and Torn Down

Being put on the proverbial pedestal doesn't mean a trauma survivor is always celebrated, as those I spoke with discovered, to varying degrees. Ron Delezio recognises his family opened their personal lives to scrutiny, but didn't anticipate being exposed to accusations and judgement. He was honoured after being named Australian Father of the Year by the Australian Father's Day Council (*The Daily Telegraph* 2 September 2006, p. 9). Having the respect of the community is important to Ron:

> I think a lot of people applaud the way we've handled it and the way we've stuck by our family. We've kept together, we've shown our love together, we've done whatever we can for our family.

His parenting was later publicly criticised by his daughter, Catherine Delezio, one of two children from Ron's first marriage (*Grazia* 2 March 2009, pp.24-26). Catherine was described as the 'less-celebrated daughter' when she again told of the breakdown in their relationship after spending 13 months in prison for supplying drugs. Ron issued a statement, saying she chose to be estranged from the family, and he has a close and loving relationship with his eldest son John (*Sun Herald* 26 December 2010, p. 3). Today he speaks with a tinge of sadness about the impact on his self-esteem:

> It really hurt to see that I was exploited like that to the stage where I'd walk up the street with my head down because I didn't know what people thought of me. Some people read something in the paper and say it must be true, and I had to physically say to myself: 'Ron, you've done nothing wrong other than trying to teach your daughter what's right or wrong—

> lift your head up.' And I had to really feel myself trying to push my head back just to walk up to the shops and say to myself: 'Ron, you're a good person and you don't deserve this.' People can look at that and believe the story and say 'Ron must be a bastard.'

The experience of being built up and then torn down publicly is one James Scott will never forget after surviving 43 days lost in the Himalayas. He describes his wife Gaye as 'quite phobic of the media,' and sister Joanne Robertson as 'very hurt and very angry for a long time,' following speculation that he'd staged a hoax. James rode a wave of emotions from an unpredictable media clamouring for his story, then annoyed when they missed out on the exclusive. He points out he was traumatised and in need of safety, support and predictability:

> I came back from Nepal and I felt very guilty. I felt stupid for what I'd done. I didn't think what had happened was particularly remarkable and then with all the media attention I kind of thought, 'Gee, there's something special about this, you know clearly to get this much interest.' So I think I did get a sense of specialness at the time but then the gloss was taken off pretty quickly.

Kay Danes has felt at times distracted from her work as an advocate—writing and speaking about social justice and international human rights issues—by the need to protect and defend her reputation. She received the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in 2014 for her service to the community through social justice and human rights, but that came after 'lazy' and 'foolish' journalism tarnished the honour of being a finalist in the 2012 Queensland Australian of the Year. Kay suspects her local newspaper, the *Bayside Bulletin*, sourced inaccurate information about her wrongful imprisonment in Laos with husband Kerry from Wikipedia, where users create and edit pages without central fact checking:

> The article started: 'You'll remember Kay Danes, most notable for her arrest in Laos, accused of gem smuggling and blah, blah, blah' … How embarrassing—I've just been taken

> back 10 years to Kay Danes the gem smuggler, and it was just horrific ... I got really angry at the paper and I thought, 'You bastards!' … I finally felt like I'd restored my reputation and now you've just taken me back.

Douglas Wood has also seen survivors face 'a lot of what we call tall poppy syndrome'—a tendency to discredit or disparage people who have become prominent. He transitioned from private citizen to public figure without even realising. Douglas was, after all, held hostage in Iraq, beaten and deprived of contact with the outside world while featuring daily in Australian news headlines. The glow of new-found public recognition didn't last long when he was finally freed and flown to Melbourne. Douglas was 'surprised and maybe a bit hurt' at the interrogation he received from reporters over supposed inappropriate and coarse language after calling his captors 'arseholes' and saying 'God bless America' instead of 'God bless Australia' to his rescuers, despite taxpayers helping fund the mission (*The Courier-Mail* 21 June 2005, p. 3; *Herald Sun* 24 June 2005, p. 21). For those statements he won't apologise:

> Some of the media chose to think I'm a bad guy. What else do you call people who beat you, starve you and were planning to hack off your head? The 'God bless America' comment was made to a group of American hospital staff immediately after my rescue and before I even knew of any Australian involvement. I'd been rescued by the Iraqi Army who had been trained by and were still monitored by the US. I later learned of the Australian taskforce and was not only impressed but humbled.

It was the public reaction Douglas heeded most, when he suggested he might return to Iraq to pursue business opportunities (*Geelong Advertiser* 21 June 2005, p. 3) at the same time as it was confirmed he'd sold his story. One letter to a newspaper editor called the engineer a 'privateer profiteering from war' (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 23 June 2005, p. 15), with

another stating if he returned to Iraq he would be 'nothing more than a self-focused macho fool in pursuit of the almighty dollar—US of course' (*The Canberra Times* 23 June 2005, p. 16). Douglas believes that public criticism was simply in response to the reporting:

> I eventually backed off saying I couldn't do that once I got to feel the sentiments of the people at large (*The Age* 28 June 2005, p. 2). The family are good people. They'd gone through a lot while I was over there, and I couldn't put them back through that. So I've given up any ambition of going back there … At least get a couple of million bucks back, but it's all poof and you've still got to pay taxes.

Douglas then found his work prospects in Australia were also damaged by his high profile:

> I was trying to get a few jobs after I came back and I started feeling that they wanted to talk to me about who I was, not because of my job background and capabilities, and it pissed me off a bit … More like something out of the zoo. More a curiosity angle, less of the serious job applicant. So I gave that up.

From 'Incredible Woman' to 'Bogan Barbie'

Mercedes Corby ran her own business manufacturing swimwear and ballet clothes in Bali, but didn't seek new customers for fear Australians, in particular, had 'formed a bad opinion' and would not want to deal with her. She experienced, arguably, all of the highs and lows of gaining a high public profile while campaigning for her sister's return to Australia. Seven months after Schapelle Corby was arrested, and just days before she was convicted of importing cannabis into Bali, Australians 'in the dozens' were reportedly taking plastic bags full of toiletries to Kerobokan prison, 'almost like no Bali holiday is complete without a visit' (*The Courier-Mail* 21 May 2005, p. 14). 'Some are genuinely concerned for her plight.

Others want to get close to the celebrity so they can tell everyone at home they met "her,"' one newspaper wrote (*Herald Sun* 21 May 2005, p. 31).

At the same time, depictions of Schapelle as 'the girl next door' and a 'surfie chick' (*The Courier-Mail* 19 May 2005, p. 11) were being challenged in media coverage by reports on her family's 'colourful' history. 'Meet the Corbys: A dad with a drug record, a brother in jail …' headlined *The Australian* (21 May 2005, p. 1). While Mercedes' brother, Clinton Rose, was imprisoned for offences including break and enter and stealing, her father, Michael Corby, confirmed that in the early 1970s he was caught with two grams of marijuana and fined—nothing like the 4.1 kilograms Schapelle was accused of trying to smuggle into Bali. 'I think they [the reporters] just lost what the real story is, and we've just become characters,' Mercedes explains.

The eldest Corby child, who was once portrayed as an 'incredible woman' and the 'sister from heaven' (*Gold Coast Bulletin* 6 August 2005, p. 17), has also been ridiculed through media for ferociously defending her family and personal reputation. Mercedes was reported as charging at the media scrum when police led Schapelle into the courtroom for trial, six months after her arrest. Multiple photographs and slow-motion footage of her swinging a handbag were shared with Australians in an instant and reproduced in print (*Gold Coast Bulletin* 15 April 2005, p. 4). Mercedes then apparently 'erupted with abuse and fury' from the front row of the public gallery when Schapelle was convicted and sentenced to 20 years in prison (*The Courier-Mail* 28 May 2005, p. 1).

Those events were dragged up again in 2007 when the Seven Network's *Today Tonight* program aired Jodi Power's defamatory allegations that Mercedes had been a drug taker and runner. The falling out between the friends was reported in *The Daily Telegraph* (16

February 2007, p. 29) as if it were a sporting contest or a television drama, headlining 'Season of drama on The Corbys.' The article continued: 'Mercedes Corby—the star improver this season. Mercedes has come a long way from the buck-toothed, fake Prada bag-wielding lunatic we saw two years ago.' That sparked a media debate about fair reporting, with *The Bulletin* (27 February 2007, p. 24-25) arguing *Today Tonight* had 'unleashed a pile of hate and hung it out for the dogs … treating the Corby family as if they were white trash.' Although Mercedes successfully sued *Today Tonight*, she recognises the damage was done:

> Pretty much everything they said on that was lies, it's still there on the internet … the people that seen it are still going to remember that … it's sort of quite traumatic in itself having to deal with the whole of Australia … all these nasty things being said about you.

In 2014, Mercedes and brother Michael Corby Jnr reached a financial settlement with the publisher and author of the book *Sins of the Father*, rumoured to be worth around $340,000, after launching legal action over assertions they were involved in drug-related activity (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 30 August 2014, p. 12). The book was pulped by court order. By that time her father had passed away, and with no defamation protection for the deceased, she couldn't hold public and commercial media outlets accountable for what they said about him.

There was also nothing Mercedes could do when one reporter labelled her the 'Bogan Barbie' and another declared 2008 'The Year of the Bogan' after she participated in a *Ralph* magazine photo shoot and interview (*The Sunday Mail* 21 December 2008, p. 69; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 December 2008, p. 14). With Schapelle's encouragement, Mercedes stripped down to swimwear for the eight-page feature of the now defunct monthly men's publication (January 2009, pp. 1, 64-72). She was 'joining the likes of models Miranda Kerr and Jennifer Hawkins' on the front cover, as *The Australian* (15 December 2008, p. 7)

pointed out. Without doubt, after four years in the media spotlight following Schapelle's arrest, Mercedes had a highly recognisable name and face. Mercedes reportedly received $50,000 (*Herald Sun* 10 January 2009, p. 85), though the figure was unconfirmed. 'It was really good money and we needed it,' she says, explaining the payment went into a term deposit for Schapelle. Mercedes thought the photoshoot was fun, although 'it didn't do me too many favours.'

(*Ralph* January 2009, p. 1)

One female columnist (*The Sunday Mail* 21 December 2008, p. 69) asserted Mercedes 'didn't get her gear off for the money' after being awarded the *Today Tonight* pay-out, instead questioning whether she had a 'fame addiction.' Under the headline 'Cover up Mercedes, it's embarrassing,' the journalist wrote: 'MEMO Mercedes Corby: put your tits away. Nobody really wants to see them. Your family's foibles are taking on the proportions of a Shakespearean tragicomedy.' She went further, quoting readers on a News Limited website as saying 'Mercedes? More like a Datsun 240B,' and 'Fame and fortune from being the sister of a convicted drug smuggler; they should shoot them and put an end to this media circus.' Mercedes blames reporters for inciting viciousness like that from people she has never met:

> At times you get to the bottom of the news story and people can have their comments and a lot of it's pretty bad. A lot of them say really nasty things about what people look like. There's just some really nasty comments, actually. Online it is easy to be a hater, and people can say whatever they like usually without any consequence.

The Court of Public Opinion

Jacqueline Pascarl describes cyberbullying, with 'the boots laid in' by strangers, as a disturbing and unexpected symptom of becoming well known. She says even when she was recognised for humanitarian and aid work—nominated four times for Australian of the Year and awarded with the Humanitarian Overseas Service Medal—her motives were questioned by sections of the media and members of the public:

> Sometimes you get people coming up to you being nice, so the feedback … from the public is always 100 per cent positive to my face. But then this horrible blogosphere has opened up a window that I never knew existed and I find it really disturbing ... I'm scared by the vitriol

> that seems to have surfaced through social media … I wish I hadn't known ever that it was there. I didn't know people really hated me, just for being me.

Bruce and Denise Morcombe had a small taste of that too, when they posted on Facebook a photograph of themselves at a barbecue hosted by the Governor-General before the announcement of Australian of the Year in 2012. The couple had been named Queensland Australian of the Year and were in line for the national honour. Among the comments of 'lovely photo' and 'hope you go well tomorrow,' was one asking whether they were celebrities or victims. The Morcombes interpreted that remark as suggesting they were attention-seeking by working to protect children after surviving the tragic loss of their son Daniel. 'You try not to have negative comments hurt you, and you can dismiss it pretty easily … We thought 'You pig' and deleted it,' Bruce says.

Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton was subject to an untold amount of cruel remarks until the tide of public opinion swung towards her when exonerated. She describes a feeling of relief as people started realising she wasn't the monster they initially thought:

> Overseas the case is famous because the phrase 'The dingo's got my baby' has gone into comedy … And of course it's been world news … regularly covered in the US, Africa, India, Europe, and you think, 'Why?' I still sit back sometimes and think, 'How could that possibly be me? That's the lady off the media.' Bit unreal.

Whether infamous or famous, Lindy has encountered a by-product of becoming well known: strangers want to get close to her. She has formed some meaningful and lasting friendships with people who offered their support, while adding:

> A few have just wanted to know me because they wanted to be near somebody famous and say 'My friend Lindy.' One or two I've had come to an end because the behaviour was not appropriate.

Stuart Diver jokes that he gained a 'a lot of fake friends and I'm not even on Facebook, for obvious reasons.' Similarly, Todd Russell became frustrated by what one newspaper described as 'a lot of people who made a look-at-me meal out of the Beaconsfield disaster' (*Sunday Tasmanian* 12 October 2008, p. 18):

> They tell everybody they're mates with me. One guy in particular, all we did was fight—fight, fight, fight—and then he goes and does an interview on TV, 'Yeah, Todd's my mate,' rar, rar, rar with this and with that. I just can't handle people like that ... Yeah, don't pretend you're my friends now just because something's happened to me and I've got a bit of profile.

Himalayan hiker James Scott found his story of survival 'brought out some odd people':

> I was pretty careful not to take on fair-weather friends, and there was plenty of people who made attempts to meet me ... But they don't hang around long, especially if you don't encourage them. I had a doctor who was desperate to treat me after hearing about my injuries and such and she subsequently got deregistered. She was a quack.

The extent of the media's power in not only representing ordinary people as celebrities, but influencing community opinions and expectations of that individual, staggers most trauma survivors. In swinging coverage between positive and negative portrayals, journalists can maintain audience interest. That's not a difficult strategy to spot. However, the impact of the reporting on public perceptions and the reach of a survivor's celebrity status may only be recognised when they are confronted by the sentiments of strangers. In the following

chapters, it becomes apparent that each person responds differently—from supporting others experiencing trauma, to retreating from the spotlight.

10

A FRATERNITY OF THE FAMOUS

> We're all connected in some way, that we've gone through something, we want to make it easier for the next person that comes along. It's like a fraternity.
>
> - Kay Danes

From the moment Kay Danes and her husband Kerry were freed from a Laotian prison, it seems she was destined to advocate for social justice and human rights. The previously unknown Australian felt compelled to speak publicly and 'shine a light' on others detained overseas and potentially forgotten. Kay went from working in administrative roles to becoming an internationally recognised author and speaker, with a personal website and ongoing public profile. She's addressed several United States Congressional forums, presented at international conferences and contributed to academic discussions on global issues, as well as travelled through war-torn Afghanistan on an aid mission.

Media outlets played a significant role in Kay finding a voice and an audience, although the transformation from private citizen to accidental celebrity was at times disorienting. As the survivors revealed in earlier chapters, ordinary people who experience trauma like her rarely have knowledge of media practices or understand how they might control interactions with

journalists and potentially influence the way they are portrayed. They learn all of that while in the public eye, sometimes with the help of a go-between. Even when journalists move on to creating new accidental celebrities, they often return for comment when similarities can be drawn between traumatic events. Kay is among the survivors who reach out with offers of support, sharing their knowledge to ease someone else's trauma and pave an easier path into public life. There's some comfort too in recognising they're not the only ordinary person to face a life-changing experience, as we discover here.

Prior to hitting the news headlines, Kay's only interaction with journalists was when publicising charity fundraisers she helped organise. From their prison cells, the Danes heard that they were household names in Australia, as diplomatic negotiations for their freedom dragged on. The couple were depicted as accused gem smugglers. The truth was more sinister: the secret police claimed initially that the Danes stole the jewellery and gems from a sapphire mine—where Kerry's firm provided security—as part of a corrupt plan to seize control of the $2 billion operation. With Kay and Kerry inaccessible to media, her parents, Ernie and Noela Stewart, found themselves in the media spotlight while caring for the couple's children in Brisbane. The eldest, Jessica, had already returned to Australia for school, while Sahra and Nathan saw Kay taken away by the secret police as they tried to escape across the Thai border following Kerry's arrest. Three days later, the children were flown home by Australian Embassy representatives. Kay and Kerry would not join them for another 11 months, after being interrogated nightly, beaten and pistol-whipped.

Reaching Out

There are only a limited number of people who can truly understand what the Danes went through—the trauma of imprisonment overseas, followed by intense media and public

interest. Those people are other detainees. Kay found herself gravitating towards Australians facing a similar situation after her release. She feels they have a connection and can offer support to each other—privately, publicly or both. Kay has never forgotten receiving an offer of assistance from a recognisable stranger, who was imprisoned in Yugoslavia on spying allegations:

> Care Australia worker Steve Pratt [jailed in Yugoslavia] initiated contact with my family because he saw them going through trauma, and offered his assistance. So I'm actually doing the same thing, and other people as well do the same.

Among those Kay has contacted are photojournalist Nigel Brennan, who was held for ransom by Islamist insurgents in Somalia; Terry Hicks, whose son David was accused of providing material support for terrorism and detained by the United States in the Guantanamo Bay detention camp (*Gold Coast Bulletin* 30 July 2005, p. 61; *The Sydney Morning Herald* 3 February 2007, p. 13); and the family of former Australian soldier, Robert Langdon, who faced death row in an Afghan prison. Each case was covered extensively by outlets in Australia, which supporters hoped would aid their campaign for release. The involvement of someone as prominent as Kay helped bring attention to their plight because she herself was still deemed newsworthy by reporters and editors.

Kay flew to Bali with Schapelle Corby's now deceased father, Michael, in late May 2005, to assist the family as they prepared for the Indonesian Supreme Court to hand down its verdict. Kay later released her travel diaries exclusively to *New Idea* (18 June 2005, pp. 20-11), detailing how she sat in court when the guilty decision was read. Her own experience of imprisonment overseas—four years earlier—was recounted under the headline: 'Stay strong, Schapelle.' Kay was photographed with Schapelle's sister, Mercedes, and described her as 'a tower of strength, holding everyone together. She keeps going no matter what.'

When Bruce and Denise Morcombe learned of the 2007 disappearance of three-year-old Madeleine McCann from a holiday apartment in Portugal, they couldn't help but compare themselves with the British girl's parents Gerry and Kate. By then, their son Daniel had been missing for just over three years. 'We seriously just looked at the TV frozen, thinking "My God, that's us!" We've actually met the McCanns and there were some common threads there, for sure,' Bruce explains. Denise continues: 'We just sat there talking for hours and it was like we'd known each other forever.' The Morcombes describe a shared understanding of what each other is going through and feeling of sorrow for them, as many survivors do when the next traumatic event hits the headlines.

The McCann's experience was most heavily likened to that of the Chamberlains, with journalist Malcolm Brown, who covered Lindy and Michael's trial, identifying 'ominous parallels' (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 13 September 2007, p. 8). Lindy appeared in an interview on the Nine Network's *A Current Affair* program, urging the public not to judge the traumatised couple, who had sought her advice:

> There is no textbook to say: 'This is how you handle it, this is what happens next, this is the way you can go through it.' It doesn't happen. All you can hope for is that you learn to swim and you don't get too many gulps of water while you are doing it.' (*The Daily Telegraph* 13 September 2007, p. 1, 10-11)

Lindy describes feeling 'sick' when she hears of a dingo attack. She relates to the trauma and knows the intrusive behaviour that will follow:

> I can look at something the first time it hits the news and say, 'Oh, the media's going to go for them … I know when it's going to make a headline, and no one should be that knowledgeable about the media and not working in it.

When nine-year-old schoolboy, Clinton Gage, was mauled to death and his seven-year-old brother Dylan extensively bitten by dingoes at a campsite on Queensland's Fraser Island in 2001, Lindy made contact with their parents through her agent:

> I didn't think it was appropriate to contact them personally because I'm too well known and if the media found out, the next thing it would be 'Lindy Chamberlain talks to Clinton Gage's parents.' I said to them: 'I don't know if there's anything I can do to help, there's probably not, but if there is and they want to talk, I'm here.'

Jacqueline Pascarl says she will never forget a brief phone call she received from Lindy—as one mother to another—after her two children were illegally taken from Australia by their father, a Malaysian Prince:

> She said: 'You do what you do for your children, you're damned if you do and you're damned if you don't.' And that has played in my head like a mantra for 20 years—over and over and over again. Damned if you do and damned if you don't; you just do what you need to do. And that has been my outer strength and I've never ever had the opportunity of telling her that face to face, and I would give my eyeteeth to sit down with her and tell her just what that did for me. She probably doesn't even remember. I doubt if she does.

Jacqueline then found a determination to use her knowledge as a former reporter to promote parental child abduction cases (*The Sunday Age* 2 July 1995, p. 5) and directly assist other trauma survivors suddenly thrust into the public eye. 'It's as though I have an absolute duty if I can help someone who's facing a media maelstrom through no fault of their own, then I will,' Jacqueline explains, describing trauma as 'really lonely.' When Melbourne student, Britt Lapthorne, disappeared in Croatia in 2008, Jacqueline became what she calls 'the buffer zone,' fielding inquiries from journalists on behalf of the family. She was reported to be a 'family friend,' commenting: 'Friends of the family all over Melbourne will keep their porch

lights on for Britt' (*Herald Sun* 8 October 2008, p. 7). Britt's remains were discovered 18 days after she went missing. Jacqueline still becomes emotional when she sees people dealing with trauma in the media spotlight:

> I get a catch in my throat and I want to start sobbing. Then I want to see if there's any possible way that I can reach out and help. Not because I want to be embroiled in it, but if there's any way … if there are any positives for them for me being involved or giving them some pointers or running interviews for them. I don't always do it, only if it's appropriate. Are you inappropriate, are you playing God, is there an element of liking to be in the middle of, you know, a hot issue? I have thought of that sort of stuff.

Stuart Diver isn't one to make direct contact with other survivors, although he has spoken over the years with Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton. They share an agent. 'There's that little affinity that goes through there,' Stuart explains. Those involved in the Thredbo landslide rescue and recovery operation have asked Stuart to talk with survivors of events they later attended. He says they all know the long-term ramifications of developing a media profile:

> I always feel great sorrow for them because I know what they're about to go through. The ones that are articulate and seem to either have someone managing their media for them or know what actually they're doing, which is about two percent of them, I have no problem with, but the rest of them, truly I feel sorry them because I know that basically they are going to get reamed by someone, and somewhere along the line they ... will come across not looking at all how they would want to.

Drawn Together

Whether survivors make contact with each other directly or not, media will seek to highlight associations or make comparisons in the search for a new story angle and to elevate the

significance of the event, potentially extending coverage and an accidental celebrity's public profile. The reporting will often suggest to audiences how they should view individuals and interpret what's happening to them. 'There's a great deal of Lindy Chamberlain about Schapelle Corby. 'Everybody "knows" whether she did it, destructive rumours waft around her continually, and by any judgment she should be found not guilty,' noted *The Herald Sun* (17 May 2005, p. 19). According to *The Sydney Morning Herald* (27 May 2005, p.16): 'every step of the Corby case has played out before the cameras. But, unlike with the Bali defendant, Australia rarely saw Chamberlain show emotion.'

The Chamberlain and Corby cases were vastly different—one an overseas drug arrest, the other a baby's disappearance in the Australian outback. Later, one woman would remain a convicted criminal and the other exonerated. The strongest similarity was the media and public interest they attracted, transforming them and their families into accidental celebrities. Schapelle was described as joining Lindy 'on the podium of famous Australian women who've been behind bars' (*Gold Coast Bulletin* 15 April 2005, p. 21). Without acknowledging the role of media in creating a hierarchy, *The Australian* (28 May 2005, p. 1) surmised: 'Corby's plight has spawned a public fascination deeper than any since Lindy Chamberlain was wrongly convicted.'

Lindy was invited to offer public support to the Corbys through the pages of *New Idea* (11 June 2005, pp. 1, 8-11). Her open letters to Schapelle and the Australian people were printed as a 'World Exclusive'. Lindy advised Schapelle: 'The public will get over its frenzy … Remember that the media is a business and please get yourself a good media agent. You need someone who can guard your interests fiercely and leave you able to deal with what is important.' Instead, as we know, the Corby family continued to field inquiries from reporters themselves, with Mercedes the main spokesperson. The magazine described the media

scrums and 'outpouring of emotion' as 'a flashback to the frenzied scenes that surrounded Lindy's ordeal.' Lindy drew her own parallels in her published letter to the Australian public:

> Schapelle is only five years younger than I was when I was thrown into the media spotlight and the courts through no fault of my own. I had hoped Australians had learnt a lot about judging since then, but it appears they have not … I've read some criticism of Schapelle for shedding tears. When I cried it was edited out of the TV coverage, when I tried to stay neutral I was called a 'hard face bitch' or 'an actor.' Schapelle cries and she is called a drama queen! Once again the word actress is being bandied around. Come on, give her a break.

Mercedes Corby doesn't consider her family part of a fraternity like Kay Danes. She does, however, think 'poor you' when she sees someone suddenly appear in the news through misfortune:

> I feel sympathy for them, definitely, especially when they're being attacked, because I just know what the media are capable of … The sad thing … if there was one good thing to come out of what happened to Schapelle, then Australians would understand what happens if you smuggle drugs. But since that happened to Schapelle, there's been so many arrested Australians bringing drugs into Bali.

James Scott also mutters 'You poor bastard' whenever he sees others in the midst of a feeding frenzy: 'I feel a lot of sympathy for them, but I also think that hopefully it will be a storm in a teacup, time will go on and it'll get by them fairly quickly.' James regrets being lured back into the news by a persistent press seeking comment on the latest trauma event. His 43 days trapped in a Himalayan cave was not obviously comparable to Stuart Diver's 65 hours underground at Thredbo, other than they both faced sub-zero temperatures. Yet 'the Iceman,' as James was dubbed, was drawn to publicly remark that he wasn't surprised by Stuart's rescue, was optimistic and praying there would be more survivors (*The Sunday*

Telegraph 3 August 1997, p. 7). James says just when life was returning to some normality, this represented another 'blast' of interest:

> After the interview which I did about Stuart, I thought, "Oh gee," because I used to get really shitty when people commented about my story … I don't think I said anything bad, I just thought I probably should just shut my mouth … I'm just not going to do any more of this. And so it was kind of like that was it.

When Beaconsfield miners Todd Russell and Brant Webb were found alive underground in 2006, James received a minor mention in coverage, but it was Stuart who reporters turned to for reaction. 'I think Stuart might have taken over that role from me, so I'm very grateful to him,' James says with a wry smile. Under the headline 'Survivors in famous company,' one newspaper noted: 'As survival stories go, Stuart Diver has held the record for almost a decade. But now the man whose name is synonymous with surviving against all odds has some company' (*The Courier Mail* 1 May 2006, p. 4). The ski instructor didn't conduct interviews, providing only a brief message of support: 'My thoughts and warm regards are with all the families and everybody involved' (*The Daily Telegraph* 2 May 2006, p. 4). Stuart points out he's not an engineer and every situation is different:

> Any time anything collapses in the world, or people get buried they'll always call to try and get my expert opinion on how the people may be feeling. It's just bizarre, and so the Beaconsfield one: they wanted to get me down there and were going to get me to do an interview with them while they were still buried. So they thought that would be a good idea. I thought, possibly not. So you can see why I said no. And they were offering large amounts of money for me to fly down. I said all I'll do, and this was through Harry [M. Miller], I'll talk to the respective wives and families and tell them how I think the media should be managed. That's all I did, and then I said: 'When they get out, tell them one of the first things

> they should do, after they've said hello to everyone, is to not to talk to anyone but give me a call. I'll be able to point them in the right direction.' Which is what happened, but then someone else got in their ear and changed them around.

Almost four and a half years after the Beaconsfield gold mine rescue, 33 men were winched to safety following 69 days trapped 600 metres beneath the surface of the San Jose gold and copper mine in northern Chile. Todd and Brant were enticed to appear on the Nine Network nationally as footage of the rescue aired. Nine's exclusive rights to the miner's story had expired, so the network reportedly signed them on a short-term contract for the duration of the rescue operation in Chile, again preventing them from speaking with other media (*The Examiner* 14 October 2010, p. 7). Todd talked of the need for the Chilean miners to receive counselling. The statements were all fine but the fact that the media got them from Todd was a mistake, according to Stuart Diver:

> I looked at it and, in all honesty, I felt sorry for them. To me that's the media absolutely at their worst. It's a disgrace ... Those guys should not be on TV doing that sort of stuff because it adds nothing to the show except you've got some guys there who said, 'Yes I was buried.' ... It's like me, what am I going to add to it? I could get on. I could make up the best bullshit ever and get on there and pretend I'm expert about everything, and I've done enough work with the psychologist that I could well and truly get on there and be articulate and tell everyone everything. But it's not my role, you know, seriously.

The next month reporters again turned to Todd and Brant for comment when a methane explosion at the Pike River coal mine in New Zealand trapped 29 workers underground. This time the Tasmanians kept a lower profile, only quoted in a local newspaper offering their best wishes to the rescuers and families of those missing (*The Mercury* 23 November 2010, p. 4). Todd says he was not going to speculate on the likely outcome, when he believed the

miners would not have survived, and will no longer agree to be interviewed about mining accidents:

> All we wanted to do was have our life back, move on, spend as much time as we could with the family and enjoy life. But unfortunately, whenever there's a mining accident anywhere in Australia or overseas, you've got the media ringing, asking what your thoughts are like you're an expert on what's going on. Every scenario is different: ours is different to the Chileans, and the Chilean one's different to the one in New Zealand—the Pike River. I knew the outcome of the Pike River Mine was never going to be any more than what it is now, and that's the reason why I never elected to comment on it.

Douglas Wood learns about other trauma events, like the Beaconsfield disaster, through media coverage and says he can't help but ask whether he was better off or worse off. When he saw a Canadian-New Zealand man had been taken hostage in Iraq in late 2005, it was like a replay of his own experience a few months earlier. Harmeet Singh Sooden was similarly freed by multi-national forces four months later, but not before Douglas directly urged the man's family to talk to the captors through the media and engage with the Islamic community (*Herald Sun* 9 December 2005, p. 34). Seven years later, Douglas and Nigel Brennan both speculated publicly on what Australian teacher and former soldier, Warren Rodwell, would be experiencing while held captive by terrorists in the Philippines for 15 months (*Herald Sun* 6 January 2012, p. 9).

Not long after Sophie Delezio's first accident, her father Ron met a little girl who was terribly burnt seven year earlier. Brittany Tasker-Gilbert was only a few months older than three-year-old Sophie when she unwittingly set fire to her body with a discarded box of matches. The message from Brittany to Sophie was 'Don't give up!'—an echo of the message Ron has since sent others (*The Daily Telegraph* 20 October 2004, p. 3).

Jandamarra O'Shane also reportedly offered his love and support to a young girl set alight in the front yard of her home: 'I want to pass on my love and prayers to her.' Ten-year-old Samantha Green was doused with methylated spirits and set on fire by a man who lived in the same street as she played with friends outside her home in the Queensland city of Townsville, a year after Jandamarra was randomly attacked further north in Cairns. Neighbours who ran to her aid were hailed as heroes, as was Jandamarra's school principal (*Herald Sun* 24 July 1997, p. 1). Another seven years later, when nine-year-old girl Sarah Allan was set alight while playing in a Sydney park, *The Courier-Mail* (16 July 2004, p. 10) reminded readers what Jandamarra and Samantha had experienced.

Lesson Learned

Taking the time to make informed decisions about when and how to interact with reporters and editors is the basic message from all of the survivors in these pages to others who may join their fraternity. Kay Danes believes a better understanding of media practices would have made interacting with journalists and editors less overwhelming, enabling her and Kerry to have a greater influence over the way they were represented publicly:

> Do it where you're comfortable. And if you don't feel comfortable, just tell the person, the interviewer or the journalist, that you don't feel comfortable and have the courage to stop. Don't feel pressured or intimidated into telling your story. Some people must tell their story, some people don't have to tell their story, and it's all about being in a comfortable place, in a comfortable environment where you feel safe.

Mercedes Corby says walking past media without commenting still feels awkward, but she can now resist the pressure of endless questions and stop and think before responding. The family is also much more careful about which reporters they speak with. Jenni Begg, mother

of Jandamarra O'Shane, advises anyone facing a similar situation to 'Be strong, because I find that they [reporters] can play on your vulnerability, your weakness.' Ron Delezio urges trauma survivors to ask for help and speak publicly only when ready:

> I think you often feel as though you have the spotlight on you and it's very hard to say 'No, I'm not going to answer that,' without trying to give a reason why. You don't have to answer that, you don't have to answer anything if you don't want to. I think that's got a lot to do with confidence. At that stage I didn't have a clue what was right to be said or not to be said.

Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton recommends a cautious approach while seeking independent advice:

> Don't say anything. Ask your family and friends not to say anything until you're ready to sit down and think about it or even write out a statement. Just keep it like this: 'Thank you for your concern but the family needs space at the moment.' Then sit back and try and contact somebody—anybody—that's gone through something like this before you, to see what they've got to say, if they can give you any tips and in the meantime educate yourself sensibly as to what the media is, how it works … so that you're a little more savvy.

Douglas Wood would not hire an agent again, preferring to be unrestrained and totally open to reporter requests, while Jenni Begg wishes she'd hired a go-between who understands media, rather than relying on family members who were also traumatised. 'I really would advise to get somebody to handle the media for you and to give you the space to make the right decisions until you're ready to have more control over the situation,' she says.

Jacqueline Pascarl considers it important that the person advising a survivor—not someone in the family and not necessarily an agent—has dealt with trauma before. Beyond that, 'You don't have to expend all your energies doing media unless it's absolutely 100 per cent

necessary … And change your phone number!' Lindy says at the very least someone else needs to take the calls, and she'd hire an agent again, without hesitation. Stuart Diver believes he made the best decision in enlisting the help of a professional, warning no survivor can educate themselves on all the tricks of a competitive trade:

> The media are not going to stop having their scrums … They [survivors] will end up bitter and twisted somewhere along the line about how they were portrayed, or they didn't get paid for the interview, they didn't realise they could have … people always do in the end. A lot of the media prey on people when they're at their lowest ebb or they've just been through something … And they just take them for a ride. I am yet to be convinced that there is any real benefit to the majority of society to talk to someone, especially in the traumatic time immediately afterwards.

It's a sentiment echoed by Todd Russell: 'Don't say nothing. Appoint a manager … Probably get an agent quicker than what we did last time … Have him [sic] answer questions.' James Scott would again hire an agent to take control of 'chaotic situations,' believing even those who are media savvy eventually bow to public pressure and feel obligated to speak. He would avoid commercial opportunities, though, focusing on ensuring the story is told well and accurately, by seeking the opportunity to check copy and images before publication or broadcast.

Kay Danes didn't realise she could ask to see stories until years after she hit the headlines, and agrees that this fact alone eased concerns of continual misrepresentation. Like most survivors, she also recognises her role in shaping a portrayal, stressing that it's important to interact with reporters in a genuine way, one that isn't 'staged.' Bruce Morcombe adds that authenticity is the key to being represented and perceived fairly and accurately:

Don’t pretend, be the person you are and just answer questions as honestly as you can because I think the public see through lies and see through fakeness. We’ve been terribly uncomfortable many times, but we’ve just been Daniel’s parents and that’s all we’ve ever tried to be, nothing special.

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PUBLIC IMAGE VERSUS SELF-IMAGE

> In the beginning it wasn't bad, but now if people were to say who they think I am, they'd probably think I'm a drug addict, I'm a bogan, just a handbag-swinging nut … I'm just not that person. I'm not a drug addict. I'm not a bogan.
>
> - Mercedes Corby

There are days when Mercedes Corby barely recognises herself in media coverage. She tries not to mull over how she and other members of her family have been portrayed and viewed. It's often too 'upsetting' and 'embarrassing.' Mercedes shot from obscurity to fame, and even infamy, as the loyal big sister of Schapelle Corby and unofficial spokesperson for the family. Mercedes, her Balinese husband, Wayan Widyartha, and their children, were on an extended holiday on the Indonesian island in 2004, preparing for her 30th birthday celebration, when Schapelle was arrested on arrival at Denpasar airport. The family stayed to fight for her sister's freedom, helping research the case while taking Schapelle food and medication each day until she was paroled in 2014, after almost a decade in Kerobokan Prison. Wayan became the parole guarantor and the following year Mercedes moved back to Australia's Gold Coast with their two sons and daughter after the couple separated. She

returned to bring Schapelle home in 2017. Throughout the trials and tribulations, camera operators and reporters have chased, commentators have opined, and the public has judged.

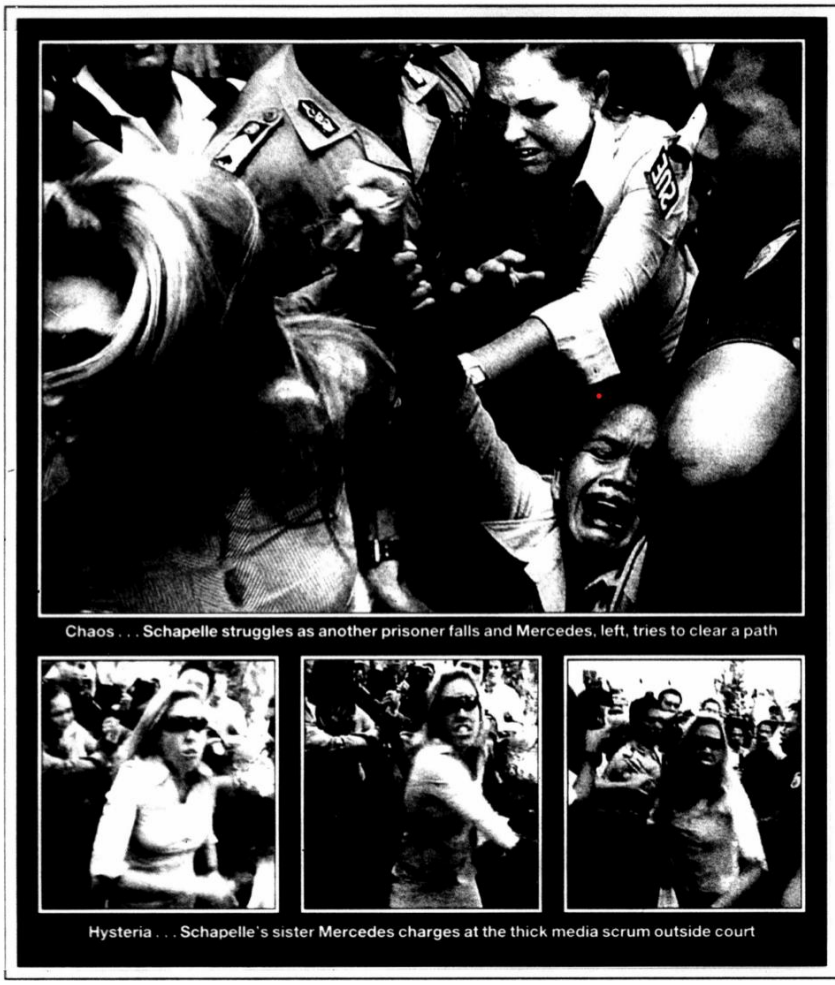
Rarely are those in the media spotlight given any control over the personal information and images outlets select to create a profile, as we've already heard. The judgements journalists and editors make about the background of a trauma survivor, what type of person they are, and whether their behaviour matches community expectations, will affect the descriptions used as part of an overall representation. That, in turn, influences public opinion. Mercedes traces the way she and her family have been viewed by strangers back to 'made-up lies,' exaggeration or 'beat-ups,' and a lack of fact checking. 'We're more often than not portrayed in a different light … as somebody we're not,' she says. As a result, the Corbys believe their public image differs from how they see themselves—their own self-image.

Unrecognisable to Herself

I first met Mercedes in Bali while on a family holiday, a few months after interviewing her on the telephone. She accepted an invitation to join my husband and two daughters at our hotel for lunch and a swim, arriving on a motorbike with the youngest of her three children. Mercedes indicated she felt a little self-conscious; it was only then that I realised I'd placed them in the middle of mostly Australian tourists. Still, she didn't complain, and the accidental celebrity appeared to go unnoticed by those poolside. Mercedes had already told me that she's never sure what people think when they recognise her:

> There's new people I've met and they're actually really taken aback and they will say, 'Oh my God, you're so different to what I thought you would be like—from what I've seen in

the media.' So new people I meet are really quite shocked because their opinion of me, before they knew me, was completely different.



Chaos . . . Schapelle struggles as another prisoner falls and Mercedes, left, tries to clear a path

Hysteria . . . Schapelle's sister Mercedes charges at the thick media scrum outside court

Sister 'waded in swinging'

by Tony Wilson

SCHAPELLE Corby's sister Mercedes has told how she swung her handbag to stop the Indonesian media from crowding her sister in dramatic scenes outside the Denpasar court yesterday.

Both Schapelle Corby and a female Indonesian prisoner, who were handcuffed together, fainted outside the court.

Speaking to *The Gold Coast Bulletin* last night, Mercedes Corby said the Indonesian media were crowding and intimidating the two women as they were being led by police to the courtroom.

"She has always hated that awful walk into court and she could barely breathe today (Thursday) and then they (Schapelle and the other prisoner) both fainted.

"They hit the deck and the Indonesian press guys were just trampling that poor Indonesian girl and that's when I waded in swinging, and I think I was screaming at them to leave her alone," she said.

"The police officer had to take the handcuffs off and carry Schapelle into the court and the other girl was carried in as well.

"It was just crazy and they (the Indonesian media) wouldn't back off. The other girl's wrist was cut from the handcuff and all the pushing on the ground.

"Inside it was worse. You couldn't breathe and I thought I was going down as well.

"The Indonesian press were crowding around Schapelle inside as well as she sat there and then she just went hysterical and started screaming and then she fainted again and I just jumped the rail to get to her. I hope it didn't look too bad on the TV.

"I hardly know what's happening at the moment. I've just about had it and Mum and Dad are not good either, especially after today."

(*Gold Coast Bulletin* 15 April 2005, p. 4)

Mercedes admits she's lost her temper defending her sister more than once, and ponders how that impacted the media portrayal and public perception of her. If she could go back to 2005 when Schapelle was convicted and sentenced to 20 years in prison, and be 'calm and collected' instead of screaming, she would. Mercedes can now laugh at images of her from a month earlier, when she swung a handbag at camera operators and reporters as Schapelle was led into the courtroom for trial. At the time, she couldn't understand why she was seen as the 'bad person' for physically trying to protect her sister:

> Schapelle was handcuffed to another Indonesian prisoner and the Indonesian girl fell to the ground and Schapelle was screaming—her head, she was being pushed down to the girl—and the media were scampering all over this Indonesian girl. I think they forgot she was there. Schapelle fainted and they had to pick her up, but the cuffs were cutting into her hand, and the other girl's, and the media were walking on this Indonesian girl, so I walked in and tried to stop it. Instead I had to end up screaming and swinging my handbag to try and stop the media … telling them to leave her alone. She had shoeprints on her pants. She'd been trampled.

Since the conviction, Mercedes has continually been referred to as the sister of a convicted drug smuggler. While that's factually correct, she believes it 'sounds bad,' reinforcing the public profile media constructed for the family based on who reporters thought they were in private, without really knowing them. Mercedes has successfully sued for defamation over accusations she has been involved in drug-related activity. However, she couldn't take action on behalf of her father, Michael Corby, who passed away from cancer before he was publicly implicated. 'They [the media] never mentioned he was a coal miner all his life … they tried to make out he was a drug smuggler … forget that he worked hard,' Mercedes says. She has also been upset by depictions of her mother Rosleigh Rose:

> Mum's been called mother of six to three different fathers. When it's written in a story that's quite a negative story and it's trying to paint a picture of some type of big bogan family, lowlifes. In that context it's definitely trying to change public perceptions. But my mum does have six—there's six of us kids—and there's three different fathers, but for us it doesn't matter. We know why my mum and dad separated. But yeah, people who don't know mum and reading all the other lies before that lie would have a different picture of it. Mum doesn't really let anything like that get to her; it probably gets to me more than her.

Mercedes says her family has become closer as a result, no longer believing anything that is published or broadcast. Despite friends telling her to pay no attention, the coverage has undoubtedly impacted how she feels about herself and interacts with others. Mercedes is 'more self-conscious, a bit paranoid' and less trusting, especially of new people. 'You still need people, and I know if I was sitting back watching some of the things being said about us, my opinion would probably not be that good either,' she says. Mercedes sought to explain her upbringing, the circumstances surrounding Schapelle's arrest, and the impact on her personally in a feature written with the help of journalist and friend Kathryn Bonella (*Sunday Telegraph Magazine* 15 April 2007, pp. 13-14, 16-17):

> I've been broken a few times, where my strength vanishes and I collapse into a lifeless heap on the floor … One thing that angers me is when reporters who've never met me or my family call us uneducated or unskilled, even 'trash.' They know nothing about us. For the record, my father is a well-educated and smart man; he's an electrical engineer and has had good jobs all his life. There are Corbys who have university degrees. My mother has worked very hard all her life to support her family. These people don't know us. They don't know that I finished school, went to college, speak four languages fluently and am learning a fifth.

Typecasting the Traumatised

Media outlets don't have the space or time to dedicate to providing a complete picture of an individual's character and background, even if they want to. Audiences arguably only skim coverage anyway, latching onto those elements of most interest, gathering an impression and moving on. Pithy labels are the starting point for typecasting people in the public domain. Journalists typically draw on archetypes that are easily understood by audiences, such as villain or hero, victim or survivor, and highlight behaviours which reinforce the representation. Previously anonymous individuals may have difficulty contradicting a public

image or reconciling it with their self-image. While I refer here to survivors, which most favoured as a descriptor, the reality is no person neatly fits into one or even two frames. Himalayan hiker and now psychiatrist, James Scott, laments how those in the media spotlight are most often represented as 'very two-dimensional characters':

> I was portrayed in a black and white sense, either very good or very bad, and I think I'm well and truly neither ... I'm somewhere in between ... Like most people, I think I'm a complex person and the media failed to really capture that.

Todd Russell agrees: 'As Mum used to say: "Got a good Toddles today." And other days I'd be cranky and shitty and she'd say: "Oh, we've got a bad Toddles today." I'm just like any other person.' The man who is commonly referred to as a 'Beaconsfield Mine survivor' was lauded as a hero after his rescue. So too was Stuart Diver, known as the 'sole survivor' of the Thredbo landslide. Hero isn't a label that sits comfortably with either of them and one they tried to dismiss, praising their rescuers as the heroes while they were the lucky ones who survived a disaster when others perished. Stuart found escaping the hero persona almost impossible though:

> The media created that persona. I always say there are two Stuart Divers. They created that Thredbo Stuart Diver ... that larger than life, strong physical person, mentally tough and robust who could get through anything. It definitely wasn't the soft, you know the real Stuart Diver. The media wanted that hero type person, that survivor, and that's how I'm portrayed there and will continue to be forever in that light because that's how people saw it on TV; that's what's imprinted in their mind.

One newspaper (*The Newcastle Herald* 6 November 1997, p. 10) did argue that the word hero was 'diluted' after the Thredbo landslide. However, journalists still bandied it around

at Beaconsfield almost 10 years later, while questioning whether hero best described the survivors or volunteer rescuers, and who should make money out of any media deals.

'Celebrity' is also far removed from how Stuart and Todd see themselves. 'It's just a word that grates so much on me because it is just linked in so many ways to superficial people who want to be their own celebrities,' Stuart explains, referring to the entertainment industry. 'With Facebook and Twitter and everything else, everyone can be a celebrity … it just has connotations of Kim Kardashian. A public figure maybe, but not celebrity.' Although Todd recognises he became well known, with details of his private life made public, he doesn't want to be anything other than the 'normal country boy' he was before the Beaconsfield Mine rockfall:

> I wouldn't say we're celebrities and, in a way, I wouldn't say we're saleable items. The way I see it, we were just two very lucky men that went through an ordeal together and survived it and came home to our families.

To these survivors, the reason they became well known distinguishes them from the more common varieties of celebrity. Ron Delezio continues to draw the line at the tag, although the family's resilience and triumphs have been widely celebrated:

> People have called us celebrities. We're not celebrities, we're not on television promoting ourselves for ourselves. We might be well known because of what's happened to Sophie and because we've started a charity, I ran for politics … but we're not celebrities.

During the first of two campaigns for Federal election, Ron described as 'offensive' the suggestion that he was a 'celebrity candidate' who had been 'parachuted' in by the Liberal Party to the Sydney seat of Banks. 'I'm only well known because of a tragedy I had with my daughter,' he said at the time (*The Manly Daily* 25 August 2010, p. 7). Ron is otherwise

comfortable that his family has been portrayed 'fairly well' and true to who they feel they are. The Delezios have without doubt sought to maintain the image of an ordinary family faced with extraordinary struggles. 'We don't want the kids to think they're precious or that Sophie thinks she's precious,' Ron stresses. Overwhelmingly the descriptions of him—as a road safety advocate or child safety expert—are positive. He is particularly happy with the way daughter Sophie has been consistently portrayed, citing one article (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 4 June 2004, p. 1) as an example:

> I saw a lot of stuff that I thought: 'Jeez, that's nice.' I remember a story about Sophie saying, if she was any tougher she'd rust. And I thought that's bloody good, it's probably true. She's a strong little girl.

Bruce and Denise Morcombe are relieved to be called child safety campaigners after years of only being referred to as 'parents of murdered Daniel Morcombe' or worse, parents of the 'slain schoolboy.' Still, the way they are personally characterised and perceived hasn't changed. Denise says Bruce is known for being quite stern; regularly described as 'stoic'—the husband and father trying to be strong throughout the ordeal for the sake of his wife and children—while she is 'distraught-looking Denise.' 'We're both portrayed as pretty serious, I would think, but we like a joke and a laugh,' she adds. The couple regularly witness the surprised look on people's faces when they flash a big smile. Bruce says their portrait by artist Shane Bowden, entered in the 2012 Archibald Prize, is a reflection of their public image, rather than self-image:

> The pose he asked us to do is perhaps this thought of what we look like and what the public think we are … looking up at two giants effectively and Denise is looking at me for perhaps strength, again I'm looking quite tall but with that really game face … that's what the

> public's image of us probably is and certainly is his image of what we are—stern-faced, game-faced serious couple and well, I don't think we are.

A social commentator gained that impression of the Morcombes too, as he saw them on the news entering or leave a court or police station—during times of great stress rather than moments of escape. Bernard Salt wrote about how he had never met the couple, but felt he knew them, 'like I feel I know Michael and Lindy Chamberlain.' He could relate to Bruce and Denise because of the 'apparent ordinariness' of this 'everyday Australian couple.' 'That's the resonance of this tragedy,' Salt explained:

> We project ourselves into the situation and we imagine how we would react. We empathise. We too feel pain ... Whenever I see Daniel's mum, I see a face that is haunted … I see the look of a woman who has not ceased to think, to ache, to grieve for the loss of her son every minute of every day since the moment he disappeared … I see a different experience in Daniel's dad. I see a man dreadfully pained. But I also see a man of courage and strength. I see a man of dignity and purpose who projects unwavering love and support for his partner and of quiet determination to secure justice for his son. (*The Australian* 26 April 2014, p. 16)

The trauma of almost losing her son, Jandamarra O'Shane, and the subsequent media pursuit and public interest, almost drove Jenni Begg to a nervous breakdown. Yet she consistently saw her family portrayed as extraordinary. 'For me, like a super mum, but I was just simply doing what any other mother would do for her child and family,' she explains. Jenni witnessed the coverage shift from emphasising the trauma of Jandamarra's burns to his incredible recovery, from innocent victim to a 'brave' and 'inspirational' fighter who was always smiling. When the truth didn't fit the narrative media wanted to create, she feels journalists simply ignored it:

> I can remember trying to tell the media once that Jandamarra was struggling but they still put it like he was doing good with his school work … always the hero. That used to really get me cranky, putting him up there all the time … I'm stuck with it, dealing with all that.

Jacqueline Pascarl accepts that she will never lose the references to 'kidnap mother' and 'former Princess,' but she has tired particularly of one description the media refuses to let go of: former ballet dancer. 'I don't define myself as a former ballet dancer,' Jacqueline explains. 'I used to be a ballet dancer when I was 17, but I've got a whole life as a woman, as a mother, as an aid worker, as a lobbyist, as a filmmaker.' Overall, she believes the public has a positive perception of her as someone who has 'fought and fought and fought.' She estimates 80 per cent of that has been shaped by media through the story gathering and editing process, attributing the remaining 20 per cent to her public speaking and other appearances:

> Everyone has some sort of understanding of who I am or even if they don't at the very first point of contact, by the second time they meet me they will have googled me. And so they have a preconceived notion and that's one of the things that I say when I speak to people publicly: 'Everyone put your hands up if you've heard of me, you think you know something about me, you have preconceived ideas and let's go from there.'

Public Perceptions

Many of us see the public image as representative of who someone is in private, rather than recognising it's not exactly the same. Even when we think we know a person well, we are never privy to their inner-most thoughts, nor do we ever truly understand what drives them. A survivor may also present a different version of themselves to strangers, subconsciously performing a role in public or deliberately trying to keep personal details private, which can

inadvertently distort perceptions of their character and behaviour. A trauma survivor's high profile is enough to set them apart from others—relatable as an ordinary person, yet captivating as a celebrity.

Stuart Diver says within an hour of meeting someone, they realise their perception of him is different to 'what I really am' because they only saw 'part of the picture.' Those who know him well have joked about the disconnect between Stuart's private and public persona. In simple terms, he 'wasn't the guy that they knew who'd been down the pub … and they used to always say, when those guys come in, get them to come and interview me. I'll tell them exactly what you're like.' Stuart recognises his friends felt in many ways the portrayal was superficial rather than real, although he takes some responsibility for that by controlling his emotions in early interviews, rather than present as someone to be pitied after others had died. 'It was more like that soldier who'd returned rather than some guy who had just lost his wife,' Stuart explains.

Todd Russell let his frustration at the media pursuit be known after returning home to his family. While he states: 'I don't give one flying whatever what people think of me—you might think I'm arrogant, that's your opinion,' he clearly does care about the accuracy of his portrayal. Todd feels news crews often failed to take into account the personal impact of his traumatic experience when judging his behaviour:

> Come and live with me. Come and live with me for a month and see whether they can put up with the way I am, through the stresses of the media and the mood swings that I had back then. If they had to live with me like Carolyn and the kids did, they'd understand why they should treat and respect people and honour their privacy.

It was when watching news reports at the end of a day in court that Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton realised the disconnect between her public and self-image. Although, she admits she was rarely able to show the fun, playful side of her personality, particularly a sense of humour. She says lawyers advised that her demeanour could be interpreted the wrong way by people who didn't know her:

> Even in court funny things have happened and everybody else is allowed to laugh but our lawyers have said, we know you Lindy, when these funny things happen I don't care who else laughs, you are not allowed to because this is about your daughter and you cannot laugh, it doesn't matter what happens.

Lindy has found over the years when people meet her for the first time, their judgement is challenged as they realise she is not humourless and hard-hearted, but funny and sensitive. It only took Hollywood actress Meryl Streep half-an-hour to work that out when preparing for her role in the 1988 film *Evil Angels*, according to Lindy:

> She watched all my interviews, she'd watched news footage, they'd [the movie producers] given her a heap, everything they could lay hands on … and then she's like, 'Oh damn … I've got to go right back to the drawing board ... I had you right off pat and you're nothing, absolutely nothing like what I thought.' And she said: 'I've got just this tiny little window and you're this whole huge plate glass, open picture and so damned complicated, it's not fair … you can go from laughing to crying in a split second flat.' It's just this whole area that the public has never seen.

Kay Danes knows only too well how a simple description and narrative will take precedence over a more complicated explanation of the facts. She and husband Kerry were freed after 11 months detained in Laos, only to find people thought they were accused gem smugglers. Kay says trying to overturn that public image has been frustrating:

> I've had people come up to me and say: 'I thought you did it, I'm not sure now whether you did or didn't, but I think you may have.' I'm like: 'Mate, come to my house, come see where I live, come and have a look at my bank accounts.'

Jenni Begg has been left 'stunned' by strangers telling her they wanted to kill Jandamarra's attacker and set him on fire. Jenni knows her faith in God helped her through and is happy that she never expressed malice towards Paul Wade Streeton. Although, she remains disappointed that her Christian beliefs were never reported as the reason why she was able to forgive:

> We have people come up to us and some are angry and say: 'How could you?' and you share with them if it wasn't for our faith there's no way in the world. I did go through those moments of hating Paul, I wanted revenge on him and things like that … I can remember, I was listening to my Christian music, taking all the clothes off the line, thrown them over my shoulder and the Lord said: 'It's time' … and I just dropped to the ground because I knew it was time for me to forgive Paul for that.

Constant appearances on the television, radio, in print and online undoubtedly placed a strain on some of the Morcombe's personal relationships. Most of their friends from before Daniel's disappearance became more distant for several years after. Bruce surmises that a lack of understanding about why he and Denise were fronting media, instead of 'letting it go,' led to reduced contact. 'They sort of just kept away because they thought that we were a bit hoity toity for them,' Denise adds. 'They thought we were celebrities and always in the media. It wasn't like that for us.' Bruce concedes, in one respect, their friends were right: 'We didn't have to do what we did, but we did it initially to find Daniel and we continue to do it for the good of the Foundation.' Ron Delezio's family also experienced relationships drifting apart. He says while there were friends who 'didn't know how to deal' with the

trauma from Sophie's accident, others appear to have viewed their public profile the same way as some of the Morcombes' friends:

> We've got friends that we don't really treat as our close friends anymore because we've got a big beautiful house and they think, 'Well that was all on the back of Sophie's accident.' We'd be very happy to swap with them, thank you very much, and have the house we had before.

Ron reveals that although the family has taken an open approach to media and relinquished a lot of their privacy, they haven't disclosed everything that has happened in their lives. Their regular visits to a psychiatrist, to help deal with the 'constant battle' of life after Sophie's accidents, is one aspect they rarely talk about: 'We don't go into those things because they're very private things and I don't want people to feel sorry for us,' Ron says. Mercedes Corby and Jacqueline Pascarl are thankful for strong support networks, believing there is very little of their private lives that has not been reported or publicly scrutinised.

For a trauma survivor who has reporters digging around for intimate details, retaining any part of a private life can be challenging. James Scott believes that almost three decades after his rescue in Nepal, some people still imagine him to be a medical student, not the psychiatrist he became. 'So I think I've maintained a good private life, but I've just had to work at it and be careful, you know just have to keep saying no,' he says of his media involvement. Douglas Wood is aware people are convinced he lives in Geelong where he grew up, not Melbourne, enabling him to retain 'a fair bit' of privacy. Todd Russell estimates he's kept about 70 per cent of his personal information out of the public eye, while Stuart Diver cannot be more specific than saying an 'enormous amount' has never been released:

> I am still an intensely private person, yet if I feel that there is any benefit to being public in any way with what's going on in my private life I will definitely do it … In some ways my life does look very public, but there's a hell of a lot I don't even know about myself yet.

Stuart laughs about that, although he is also well aware that maintaining a private life, where events and thoughts are only shared with close family and friends, isn't the same as enjoying undisturbed privacy. Continued media interest and public attention in a trauma survivor can periodically interrupt their everyday existence. Any shred of personal information, broadcast or published, not only returns them to the moment of their trauma but ensures their ongoing recognition as an accidental celebrity.

12

NO LONGER ANONYMOUS

> We're not the same people. I mean, as silly as it sounds, sometimes you want to go to the supermarket and leave your trolley next to your car. You have to look around, you have to go and put it back in the trolley bay … You have to drive with a smile … You have to be perfect.
>
> - Denise Morcombe

The life of relative anonymity that Denise and Bruce Morcombe once enjoyed now seems so long ago. In almost every respect, the Queensland couple has led two lives: a purely private one before Daniel's abduction and murder in 2003, eroded by the public profile they have built with media since. The Morcombes were ordinary people raising three sons on the Sunshine Coast, unknown to anyone outside their circle of family, friends and acquaintances. Since Daniel's disappearance, they have become recognisable to strangers in all corners of the country. The case ran for just over a decade—from the search, to arrest and conviction of the boy's murderer. Bruce recalls identifying: 'All we've got is the media. The strongest ally, or the biggest tool in our arsenal is the media—they're going to solve the case.' Denise continues: 'I suppose if we hadn't interacted with the media, the publicity wouldn't have gone out that far and we don't know whether Daniel's case would have been solved.' At the

same time, the couple sought public support for a child safety campaign they developed, helping reinforce their high profile.

The Morcombes' accidental celebrity status grew over time, while other survivors I spoke with were swept up in a single event that received saturation coverage nationally, placing them under a spotlight so bright their names and faces were burned into the memories of Australians. Whether a survivor has willingly remained in the public eye, feels their privacy was permanently snatched from them, or has managed to reduce their profile, they all crave being able to lead a 'normal' private life, as they reveal in this final chapter. For those who once felt anonymous in a crowd, becoming well known can force a lifestyle change, or at the very least impact the way they behave when carrying out otherwise mundane activities for fear of how they will be perceived and portrayed. Only those who dropped relatively quickly from public view—because they were no longer deemed by media to be newsworthy or stopped interacting with reporters—believe they are close to regaining an everyday existence; no longer pursued by media and largely unnoticed by strangers. Although, they cannot control or be sure of that.

A Life Changed

Just as Denise and Bruce Morcombe could never have anticipated the trauma they would suffer and survive, they did not imagine they'd become accidental celebrities, having to monitor how they behave when in the public eye. The couple say that they are recognised every time they go out in the community. People stare. There are second glances. 'We always kept our faces, ourselves out there to keep Daniel's name out there and the Foundation out there, and that's now stopped our privacy because everyone knows who we are,' Denise explains. While she is not as shy as she once was, that doesn't mean Denise is comfortable

with the public attention. ‘We have been mobbed … it’s a bit overwhelming,’ she adds, recalling one trip to Cairns in 2011 for Child Protection Week:

> When we got to Cairns, driving with the trailer on, we got a little bit lost and then I think we must have gone up the wrong street and I said to Bruce: ‘Don’t worry about it, we’ll just go up the one-way street, we’re the Morcombes now.’ We turned into the park at the Esplanade at Cairns, the Mayor was there and there would have been several hundred people and we had that many photos taken.

Despite buying a property they could retreat to in Southern Tasmania—far from Queensland where they are best known—Denise and Bruce were soon identified through continuous news coverage of the investigation and expansion of the Foundation nationally. Often they see people study their faces and suddenly ‘click’ when they realise who they are, or strangers approach the couple and ask why they know them. While the encounters are mostly friendly, it’s a constant reminder to the Morcombes that they are the parents of a murdered boy. ‘You can’t enjoy anything,’ Denise says, admitting she has difficulty listening to well-meaning people telling her they know how she feels because they’ve also experienced a personal loss. ‘It’s like a club,’ Bruce adds, explaining there are certain phrases that irritate him too:

> Probably the thing that I find uncomfortable is, and it happens almost every day, is someone not so much giving you a hug or shaking your hand and saying keep up the good work—sometimes adult males with teary eyes are doing that—but when somebody says ‘Sorry for your loss’ as they’re shaking your hand.

The Morcombes tried to shield sons Dean and Bradley from that level of public recognition as teenagers by limiting their contact with media. The boys themselves chose to give interviews rarely, although photographs of them with Daniel were released as part of the campaign. ‘I suppose they [the public] wouldn’t know how the boys have coped and things

like that—we haven't told people,' Denise explains. 'I mean, people wouldn't know if the boys went to counsellors or if they were upset about things. That's nothing to do with the public.' As young men, Dean and Bradley have been ready to relinquish a little more of their privacy, participating in a couple of magazine articles to satisfy media and public interest and promote the Foundation, with Dean also becoming a committee member. They remain largely in the background, though. For Bruce and Denise, there is no return to anonymity: 'I suppose you'd like to go back to that person that you were,' Bruce explains. But while the couple lead the Foundation, he expects they'll continue making public appearances:

> We try and balance it up with a period of not being in the media spotlight, we purposely structure into our diary, I suppose, a period where we're not going to schools or we're not doing something or launching something so that for a period of a couple of months or six weeks or something there is nothing newsworthy about us. So we try and withdraw from that because we're quite concerned that we'll be over-exposed and because people will be sick of us. So we try and always balance that as much as we can.

Ongoing Recognition

Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton refers to celebrity as 'the other life'—a public life she tries to keep distinct from her private life. While Lindy contributes to supporting her family financially by selling stories and speaking at events, 'you go home and you're just a mum or wife or renovator or whatever it happens to be again.' No matter where she travels, Lindy rarely escapes being identified by her name or face:

> I've never had an urge to be famous or be in the spotlight or anything like that. So not being able to be just the person next door, having that taken off you, is a nuisance to say the least … Often when I think I'm not recognised, and you'll be in a store and you think nobody knows me in here, and you may make a purchase and go to leave and they say 'thank you

> Lindy.' So you get a range of people rushing up to you and throwing themselves at you and hugging you and talking to you, to people hiding behind shelves—it's true—and anything in between … The thing that I really dislike about all this, is if I've done a magazine interview and I have to go to hairdressers or a doctor's office and it's sitting there and I keep thinking: 'Can I hide that under something?' I hate that.

In his home town of Beaconsfield, Todd Russell is no celebrity; at least to those who know him personally as a 'local' instead of the 'miracle' miner who survived a rockfall. 'We're just Average Joe people that live in a country town and go about our daily business,' he explains. Strangers are the only ones Todd finds point him out, even if they don't approach:

> It just got to the stage where I'd just walk down the street and I don't look sideways. I'd walk past people whispering, 'There's that Todd Russell.' I just got used to it in the end, and even now, people are looking at you and staring at you and talking about you.

Todd and Thredbo landslide survivor, Stuart Diver, were both hailed as heroic after their physical and mental strength enabled them to 'beat the odds' to survive disasters that were extensively reported nationally and internationally. The scale of media coverage, how the men were each portrayed, along with the widespread use of their images and names, guaranteed they would remain well known for years to come. Both have also continued to make public appearances. Todd says he's met thousands of people as a paid celebrity speaker and has always tried to be respectful, stopping to talk with those who are keen to shake his hand. He understands that the Beaconsfield mine accident and rescue was 'in their living room 24/7, so they feel a part of it.' Although, he admits to being more overwhelmed by the public attention he still draws when trying to lead a private life:

> Some mates and I went to Melbourne for a weekend and we were sitting in a pub in Mickleham having a feed and this guy was quite intoxicated and he walked past and he come

> back and he said, 'Ah, I don't mean to be rude my friend but are you that guy from the mine'? And he was with another bunch of guys that were really intoxicated too and in my defence I just turned around and said: 'I think you've got me mixed up with somebody else.' I didn't do it to be rude, but I knew that as soon as I said yes, that I'm going to have 10 intoxicated guys hanging around me and I was just wasn't in the mood for it. I just wanted to have a good time, a couple of beers and a feed with my mates and then go back to our room.

To be easily identifiable in a crowd of unfamiliar people, treated as extraordinary while feeling ordinary, can undoubtedly be disorienting. Stuart admits the 'public adulation' that comes with a high profile plays to the ego, although he realises it's a 'superficial bullshit thing,' magnified by the way he was represented in the media coverage:

> As I walk down the street either people come up and shake my hand, get me to touch their baby, do whatever it is. Politician-style, touching babies, and it still goes on ... You don't want me touching the baby. But that's the insane world that we live in, that you can have me, who's just technically still a ski instructor from Thredbo, who went through something in their life, can be built up through various means, and I've been party to it as well, into this thing, this other entity.

Stuart moved from the mountain resort to Merimbula on the New South Wales South Coast for five years with his second wife, Rosanna, thinking he'd be anonymous. He found within three weeks, 'Every single person in that town knew I'd moved there.' They returned to Thredbo where he's working and raising their daughter Alessia alone after Rosanna's death. 'It's a good place to do it because no one asks questions and everyone knows who I am anyway,' Stuart says. Only visitors to Thredbo take a second glance at the 'sole survivor.' 'I've got a name tag on so therefore they'll put two and two together,' Stuart explains. 'Generally speaking I'll hear it when they're three paces past me.' Just as the landslide

changed Stuart's life, claiming his first wife Sally and 17 others, so too he says, has the media exposure:

> The only thing I can work out after all these years is because of the emotional attachment of that one picture people have … they're obviously going to remember my face. But it's actually name recognition. I think I've only been able to locate two Stuart Divers in the entire world. There's only seven Diver families in Australia, so it's a very uncommon name. Funniest question, they always ask: 'Are you *the* Stuart Diver'? My response is: 'Yeah, there's not many of us.' How many Stuart Divers do you reckon live in Thredbo? Like seriously, you've told them where you live, you've told them your name.

While living in Bali, caring for her sister Schapelle, Mercedes Corby was perhaps understandably stopped every day by Australian holiday makers who saw her as a familiar face. The impact of that was feeling she could not be herself in public. 'It's either they recognise me straight away or it's, "Gee, did you go to this school?" and they try to figure out where they know me from and then it hits them,' Mercedes says, adding that at times she's felt quite taken aback:

> Tourists come up and ask to have their photo with me. I've even had people ask for my autograph. I'm like, what is that? And I don't know what to do, when people ask for my photo, I don't really want to take the photo with them but then I'm worried that they'll think, 'Oh, she's a rude bitch.' It's really hard. What do you do? So often I'll just stand there and smile for the photos, feeling really uncomfortable … You just want to have a normal life but it's hard when you think everybody's judging you and you don't know what their opinions are.

Ron Delezio concedes his family could have retreated from the spotlight, but didn't, inevitably leading to a loss of privacy. Stories about Sophie occasionally reference Molly

Wood, the other toddler horribly burnt in the child care centre crash. Molly's family has otherwise dropped from public view while the Delezios have actively maintained their profile. Sophie's second accident in 2006 prompted another wave of news stories and Ron himself has been keen to pursue a political career. 'I've got a long way to go in the media with the things I want to do, like as far as the media helping me achieving things I want to do,' he says, explaining that name and face recognition are important. Still, Ron points out it isn't easy when 'everywhere you go' you're considered a familiar face:

> I think it would be nice to go somewhere and not be recognised, not that I'm recognised like the movie stars or anything. Everyone knows who Sophie is when they see her, or most people do. With me, it's like they either know who I am or it's like when I go into a shop for the first time ever and they say, you're back again and I say, I've never been here in my life because they know me, they just think it's someone who's come back to their shop.

Jacqueline Pascarl and Kay Danes may have dropped from public view had they not each become international authors and advocates for humanitarian causes. 'Blending in' was essential to Kay and husband Kerry while working in security. Media coverage of their imprisonment in Laos changed that. Now Kay has an experience to share and her voice is heard on human rights and social justice issues, which she considers a positive outcome:

> I'm not saying I'm anyone notable or anything, but I'm certainly not completely anonymous … Even if you're in a supermarket people go, 'Oh, your face is so familiar!' and they keep trying to place where they know you from. You'll just say, 'I've just got a familiar face,' and then they've gone and told someone and they come back and they go, 'You're that lady that was locked up in prison!'

Jacqueline spent 14 years campaigning until reunited with her two eldest children, during that time leveraging off her profile to advance humanitarian aid and literacy projects. She likens her encounters to what others in the sphere of celebrity might commonly report:

> I'm never a stranger to people. It would be seldom. You would have to have been living under a rock or have been a fetus … I was shopping with my eldest daughter and she had sunglasses and her hair tied back and I had sunglasses and no makeup on purpose and people recognised me by my voice. People come around behind me in the supermarket and remember me by my voice, so it's just something I live with now.

James Scott has always been surprised when strangers recognise him out of context—going about daily life or work in Australia, not hiking in Nepal. 'People are amazing, their memories: "I know you, you're the guy that got lost in the Himalayas,"' he recounts. 'Some people have the ability to remember faces, it's just striking.' Similarly, Douglas Wood recalls with a grin being 'pretty hot' when he returned to Australia from captivity in Iraq: 'They say, "I think I know you," and some people say, "has anyone told you that you look like Douglas Wood?" I say, 'Yeah!"'

Familiarity and Family

Just as trauma can be shared by family and friends of those directly impacted, so too can public recognition. A survivor may accept they can't control being watched by strangers, and feel they need to be careful how they behave in public, but it seems much harder for them to accept their loved ones also being subject to that level of scrutiny. Mercedes Corby wants her three children—Wayan, Nyeleigh and Nyoman—to be proud of their family but not attract unnecessary attention. She says that balance was particularly difficult to strike when they were young:

> Just simple things like in the supermarket like in Australia. I've got three kids and the kids are being naughty … normally I would probably yell at them, 'You kids!' So what do I do because I feel people are judging? They're going to [say], 'Look at her, she's yelling at her kids.' Or if I do nothing, 'Oh, she lets her kids run riot.' It's just little things like that really I shouldn't care about but I do. Lucky I speak a different language so I tell my kids 'If you don't behave I'm going to get you.' It's like, I just don't know, because I'm worried about what … and I'm always thinking of the two sides because I feel our family can't win no matter what we do.

Todd Russell's concerns for his three children runs even deeper. 'This world's a funny, funny place,' he explains. 'You look at these celebrities where people attempt to kidnap their kids for ransom. All that sort of thing goes through your mind when your kids are put into the spotlight like that.' While Todd likens the familiarity faced by a high-profile trauma survivor and their family to that of an AFL player or Australian cricketer, Douglas Wood points out they are also subject to much the same pressure:

> A footballer's not just going to play football. Somewhere or other he's [sic] put on this pedestal and supposed to be a role model and not drink and get drunk and all this sort of funny stuff. But at the end of the day he's just a bloke [sic] that happens to have the skill of kicking a ball around.

Douglas himself loves a beer, although since his rescue in Iraq and return to Australia, he's been conscious not to get drunk in public. 'I just go and say I've had enough, don't need any more,' he says. Douglas shares the same fear as other trauma survivors: that they'll be viewed negatively. In the words of Todd Russell, they can be 'recognised for doing the wrong thing':

> That's the trouble with being such a high profile person: you've got to be on top of your game 100 per cent because as soon as you're seen doing something wrong and someone catches it on a telephone or something like that, they think, 'Well, we would make some money out of this,' and then they go and sell it to a network. Next thing you know, you're back in the spotlight again for all the wrong reasons. That'd be my fear.

Stuart Diver jokes about the potential to 'tarnish the brand' just so he can drop from media headlines and be publicly forgotten. In all seriousness, though, he considers it important to 'maintain the integrity of that Stuart Diver'—the one in the public domain—and points to the average person's ability to upload photos onto social media in an instant as a further threat to the privacy and representation of ordinary people who are easily identifiable:

> I would much rather be able to go back to my old life and just go and drink a couple of beers with the boys and do whatever and not have to concentrate ... because of that perception of who you are versus the actual reality of who I am … There is a continual—whether it's real or perceived—there is a continual invasion of your privacy, whether it's your subconscious because you think someone's interested or whatever, it still has an effect on your life.

That's a sentiment shared by Jenni Begg, who tried to raise her son, Jandamarra O'Shane, and his siblings within an ordinary family environment, despite the media attention. They joked: 'Hey, be careful the media doesn't get hold of this!' if she tried to pull any of the children 'into line.' Jandamarra credits his family with keeping him grounded:

> There'd be a lot of people come up to me and say, 'Oh mate, just tell them who you are, you know, say you're Jandamarra O'Shane and you can get this or whatever.' But it didn't really work out that way—not that I ever tried it. It's just that I think mum and other family members told me don't do that, I was still just a normal kid.

Kay Danes and Jacqueline Pascarl also recognised that their children's ability to lead a normal life while growing up would help them recover from trauma. Kay rarely allowed media to have contact with Jessica, Nathan and Sahra after she and husband Kerry were released from a Laos prison. Most of the time they didn't want to be involved anyway. 'I haven't talked too much about what the kids have gone through because to me that's their right to privacy and if they want to tell people how they feel, it's their right, it's not my right,' Kay adds. Jacqueline found protecting her children, Verity and Lysander, from public scrutiny was harder than keeping them away from reporters:

> My children get picked on at school because of my media appearances … their parents see me in the media … and that brings up a discussion about the kidnap and my husbands or a boyfriend I might have had.

Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton knows only too well the impact celebrity can have on children raised in the media spotlight, without seeking attention or understanding how to deal with it. She explains that when most parents go to a school fair, they're referred to as the mother or father of a child. For her children it was the opposite. They will always be Lindy's sons or daughter. She says her eldest, Aidan, is 'angry' with media for the negative attention and making money out of his family. Lindy repeats Aidan's comment that, 'I'd really like to be known for something other than the rock people.' Reagan 'doesn't care' because he believes he's not as well recognised as a Chamberlain. Then there's Kahlia, who was born while her mother was wrongfully imprisoned. Lindy says she questions what a normal life is, because being Lindy's daughter is normal to her, as much as she asserts she's her own person:

> She used to get very upset with that, which is one reason she doesn't say she's Kahlia Chamberlain. She tends to call herself by her first names. She signs everything with the

> Chamberlain off. She's had dingo jokes told in front of her and jumped in feet first, 'That's my mother you're talking about!' It's like, 'Oops.' The person involved apologised, actually.

Lindy hyphenated her surname when she married Rick Creighton—a link between him and her children. She also realised that even if she stopped using Chamberlain, media and the public would continue to refer to her by that name, so joining names was the easiest option:

> When I'm with Rick I'm simply Mrs Creighton and hopefully they don't call him Mr Chamberlain. Rick gets Mrs Chamberlain and her partner. I'm sure they think I'm out for a dirty weekend, which is a bit of a grin to us. It's regularly, 'Oh, you're Lindy Chamberlain's husband!' So I'm still Lindy Chamberlain, regardless of whatever else I am.

Anonymity Lost

Mercedes Corby is certain she would have to change her distinctive first name to have any chance of returning to anonymity, now that she is home in Australia with sister Schapelle. The volume and concentration of coverage centred on her private life, not just the legal campaign, makes her question whether she could ever wander through a crowd completely anonymous: 'Maybe with time?' James Scott is grateful that his name is fairly common, believing 'Anonymity's priceless.' The psychiatrist found minimising his public profile—by rejecting requests for interview—has made his job easier. James doesn't want clients to see him as a 'miracle' man or celebrity, and points out the 20th anniversary of his rescue in Nepal passed in 2012 without a media mention. In fact, he didn't realise himself until a week-and-a-half later. James thinks people rarely recognise him today, with younger generations having no memory of his story of survival:

> I see a lot of people. I have been going to swimming clubs, netball games and other activities seeing the same people for years—most would never know that about Nepal. At work, I

> meet new people every day. They only know me as a psychiatrist. I live my life just doing things and people who work very close to me don't realise this kind of event, the six weeks I had, and there's no need to because it doesn't really affect what I do today.

Although Douglas Wood enjoyed a high-profile life, he acknowledges he's rarely mentioned in coverage these days and therefore not as well remembered or readily identifiable to the average Australian. 'At the end of the day, just another bloke,' he surmises. Jandamarra O'Shane has felt obligated to let people know how he's recovered and would now prefer to protect his own son from the intrusive impact of ongoing media coverage and public recognition. 'We've been thinking for quite a while now that it's time to say no, maybe one final thing and then that's it,' he says. 'I don't really want my son to see me on TV so much.'

While the Daniel Morcombe Foundation is promoting child safety, the boy's parents Bruce and Denise will be in the public eye. They said goodbye to anonymity when Daniel was abducted and murdered in 2003, as did Ron Delezio when his daughter Sophie was almost killed after a car crashed into her childcare centre the same year; the work of the Day of Difference charity goes on. Kay Danes and Jacqueline Pascarl continue to maintain a public profile through their websites, public speaking and writing in order to champion humanitarian and social justice issues. Kay reasons that she now only needs to be in the media enough to enable a positive contribution:

> I've known plenty of people who have gone through traumatic experiences and they've just slipped away into oblivion. But then I've known people like myself who have just plodded along, not become millionaires out of the situation. Then there's others who have gone through an experience and then have engaged publicists and agents and doing the circuit and made a career out of it. So I think, for me, I'm personally happy with the way things have panned out, I don't need to be famous, I don't need to be a celebrity, I just need to be credible.

Todd Russell and Stuart Diver have both become selective about when and how they share their story—whether it's speaking at conferences, events and to reporters, delivering a message, providing an update on life beyond the Beaconsfield rockfall and Thredbo landslide, or marking a private event. Even if Todd were to shun public appearances, he can't envisage a time when no one will know who he is, outside his family, friends and community. 'You're never going to become anonymous again … because every now and again there'll be an article in the paper and your photo will be in there,' Todd says, pointing to a story on the death of his mother Kaye, 'internationally known' as the mother of the Beaconsfield mine survivor (*The Examiner* 23 November 2011, p 11).

Stuart is certain that he can 'never ever slip back into anonymity because of what happened, the event, but definitely because of how I was portrayed in the media in those ensuing months and years.' The 'hero' survivor says he is often forced to relive the landslide over and over again: 'When I go somewhere they don't ask me about Stuart Diver the ski instructor or Stuart Diver the jogger or the mountain biker. They ask me about Stuart Diver the person who survived in Thredbo.' He does take some responsibility, though, for putting his name and face back in the public domain to support charity, which in turn reignites media interest:

> I've tried it lots of times all the way through and I always, every two or three years, I always have a shot at saying, 'All right I'm not going to do any interviews, not going to talk to anyone, I'm not going to do any public speaking. I'm going to go back to just being absolutely, totally anonymous.' But you just can't do it because then another request will come through and it might be from a charity that you quite like and then you'll go and do that … So you're in a catch-22 situation because you're trying to do it for a good thing.

Each of the other survivors I spoke with express a determination to turn their personal trauma into a public benefit. It seems to help them make better sense of what happened—an answer

to the question: Why me? Laws have been changed, awareness campaigns launched and, they hope, others prevented from suffering the same misfortune. Their willingness to talk about their media encounters came from a desire to share what they learnt—about making the news, the price of fame and being in the public eye—while discovering whether others had a similar experience. In the process they educated me about what it's like to be on the other side of media practices that can be both harmful and helpful.

I can never really comprehend what these survivors have been through; no one can truly understand except them. What I do know is they're not victims. They may not have been fully in control; whoever is? But each can today reflect and rationalise the decisions they made as they were transformed from ordinary person to accidental celebrity, from private citizen to public figure. Some are willing participants in the maintenance of their public profile. Others, who were grateful to see the media and public interest fade, ironically risk the spotlight returning by agreeing to be interviewed for this book. Then again, as Stuart Diver explains:

> Like being on the stage, there is always a light there … It's very dim but it's still there and if it gets to the point where they think there's a chance of a story, they'll crank it up again and away they'll go.

Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton has accepted that the public domain is where she'll stay, almost 40 years after her face and name first hit the headlines. If there were a hierarchy of Australia's accidental celebrities, Lindy would without doubt be on top. Even if she rejects every interview request and public speaking invitation, someone, somewhere will not just recognise her, but feel they know her. Media outlets won't let go of Lindy either. She knows the story of how her baby daughter Azaria was taken by a dingo, and her fight for justice, will continue to be told:

We've been well warned by the media that the story is too good to leave alone. You're here now, you're part of Australia's history, it will in hundreds of years still come up, like Ned Kelly.

END

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EXEGESIS

Introduction

Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton has spent most of her life in the media spotlight, since a dingo took her baby daughter Azaria from a campsite at Uluru (then called Ayer's Rock) in the Central Australian desert. Before the evening of 17 August 1980, she was an everyday young mother of three and wife of Seventh Day Adventist pastor Michael Chamberlain. Today, she is a household name with an agent and personal website, who commands appearance fees and rarely ventures anywhere in Australia without being recognised by strangers. Chamberlain-Creighton's personal life continues to attract media and public attention, although what became the most celebrated case in the nation's legal history ended in 2012 when a Coroner ruled that a dingo was responsible for Azaria's death. Long before then, the woman who was wrongfully convicted of killing her baby was transformed from an ordinary person into an 'accidental celebrity' (Turner, Bonner & Marshall 2000).

Chamberlain-Creighton directly contributes to this practice-led study as one of 14 Australian trauma survivors from 11 high-profile news events—between the 1980 disappearance of baby Azaria and the 2006 rescue of two Tasmanian gold miners trapped underground for two weeks following a rockfall. It is the first time all of these individuals have been interviewed for one investigation. Each offers an independent account of their interactions with media over a prolonged period, from when they were regarded as newsworthy to represented as celebrities and treated as commodities. By privileging the

perspectives of survivors and analysing their involvement in the creation of news and other media content, the project aims to answer the question:

> How do trauma survivors exercise individual agency in interactions with media when transformed into accidental celebrities?

The work was inspired by a personal desire to discover whether those who suddenly and unexpectedly become public figures, at the worst time in their lives, share similar media experiences. That basic inquiry developed into a detailed exploration of the role individuals may play in their celebrity status, filling a research gap between journalistic practices and celebrity representation. I consider my industry knowledge—gained from 30 years reporting and managing teams in print, radio, television and online journalism—a significant strength when undertaking a project that is comfortably situated within the field of media studies. It also required me to set aside any preconceived notions of how a trauma survivor should behave and be treated as a newsworthy individual. I could not presume they were either manipulated for commercial purposes or manipulative when seeking public attention themselves. Rather, my task has been to objectively analyse the rationale and consequences of their actions.

The research is underpinned by the structuration theory developed by British sociologist Anthony Giddens as a way to understand the relationship between human agency and social institutions. The research also represents a practical application of his notion of agency, explaining how individual action reproduces and changes the social structure, which consists of rules and resources that also govern action. Giddens (1984, p. 9) argues in his book *The Constitution of Society* that, '[a]gency refers not to the intentions people

have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place (which is why agency implies power)'. An agent is one who exerts power or produces an effect. People are understood to be neither completely independent nor constrained by the practices of institutions (Stones 2005, p. 14). Rather, they are knowledgeable about their social circumstances and can behave differently in power relations with others; for instance, when trauma survivors interact with journalists who are gathering news. It is clear from the insights of this study's participants that, as agents, they have not been entirely powerless when encountering institutionalised practices that, in their view, intrude on and publicise private struggles to attract audiences.

Semi-structured interviews with the participating high-profile survivors provide the core material for two complementary components of the project:

- An original book-length, non-fiction manuscript titled *Accidental Celebrity* documents the survivors' contact with media and thoughts about their public profile.
- The capability of individuals to influence media through their actions is examined in this accompanying exegesis.

I draw on my knowledge of media practices to place the survivors' experiences into context, with secondary material in the form of select newspaper and magazine articles illustrating how their behaviour was reported. My manuscript reaches beyond the widely-marketed book *Any Ordinary Day* by Australian journalist Leigh Sales (2018), who interviewed people about their recovery from trauma, addressing media coverage but not the attribution of celebrity status. *Accidental Celebrity* provides an account of the celebrity-making process—

from newsgathering to commercial opportunities—and the personal cost of losing anonymity. The investigation of individual agency in the exegesis builds on two decades of analysis by leading Australian cultural studies academic Graeme Turner (in particular 2010c, 2014b; 2000) on the production of celebrity, which emphasises the institutional power of media. Turner, along with Frances Bonner and P. David Marshall (2000), coined the term 'accidental celebrity' in their influential book *Fame Games* to describe ordinary people who, to some extent, have no control over media interest in their private lives following a high-profile news event.

This study demonstrates how survivors may act as free-willed individuals in relations with media. Their interactions are identified through the creation of the manuscript and developed into a framework that recognises the different ways those who become accidental celebrities seek to exert control. The dynamic relationship between survivors and media can be understood by applying six categories of action, presented here under the Taxonomy of Accidental Celebrity Agency which I have developed. Those in the spotlight may choose to *tolerate* attention, *moderate* behaviour, *initiate* contact, *cooperate* on content, *delegate* to a third party and *dictate* the terms of involvement. Through this analysis, the nature of the individuals' interactions with media, the potential consequences of their actions and, therefore, the role they may play in their status become evident, leading to a new, more nuanced and considered understanding of accidental celebrity.

Definitions and Parameters

The manuscript was written as a stand-alone publication, although the terms used and their meanings are consistent throughout the project as a whole. Defining these helps to establish the parameters of my study. While the manuscript explains key media practices and enables the participants to discuss the personal impact of being pursued by journalists and represented as a celebrity, the accompanying analysis explores the interactions between trauma survivors and media.

For consistency, throughout the project I refer to the participants as high-profile trauma survivors. They are recognised as ordinary people who became news subjects and could subsequently be called accidental celebrities, although the duration and reach of that status varies (Marwick & boyd 2011b, p. 140; Redmond 2014, p. 7). Canadian academic Carrie Rentschler (2011, p. 133) encourages reporters to let those who experience trauma decide how they would like to be publicly represented in media coverage—as a victim, survivor or neither. *Oxford English Dictionary* (2019) defines a victim as 'one who suffers some injury, hardship, or loss, is badly treated or taken advantage of.' In contrast, to survive is 'to continue to live after (an event, point of time, etc.), or after the end or cessation of (a condition, etc.).' By directly engaging with the research participants through an interview process, I was able to establish how they choose to be identified. The majority describe themselves as survivors and express discomfort about being labelled celebrities, preferring to be portrayed and regarded as 'normal' people—ordinary despite facing extraordinary events.

In discussing high-profile trauma survivors, it could be implied that they are a collective. In fact, they are recognised as autonomous individuals; that is, 'separate and coherent' agents of knowledge (Dyer 2004, p. 7; 2007, p. 87) whose capability to act 'is born, sustained, and/or extinguished within the ongoing process of relationship' (Gergen 2009, p. xv). The word trauma refers to physical or mental injury. Psychological trauma can be shared by family and friends of those directly involved in an event, conceivably impacting how they relate to others. Trauma leads to a feeling of powerlessness (Herman 2015; Rogers, Leydesdorff & Dawson 2004). However, it may be accepted that people have at least some capability to think and act for themselves (Giddens 1979). I focus on the mostly conscious or intentional choices they made and actions they took to influence media behaviour.

Media is a very broad term which encompasses the content and distribution mechanisms through which information is communicated. It is also commonly used to refer to the people who collectively create and distribute content, to outlets such as newspapers, television and radio programs, on print, broadcast and online platforms (including social networks). This mass media is now recognised as a social institution (Silverblatt 2004). Not all that is produced can be considered news, with a variety of content tailored for diverse audiences through different styles of presentation (Allan 2004; Fulton 2005). Content created by media ranges from recorded and live interviews to stories and posts, interactive videos and static pictorials, to commentary and analysis. The trauma survivors I interviewed all rose to prominence as subjects of news coverage before featuring in other media content. When transformed into celebrities, survivors can also become products of the publicity and promotions sub-industries, which contribute to generating content (Rein et al. 2006; Turner, Bonner & Marshall 2000). The paid agents (alternatively called managers)

who negotiate these commercial opportunities are only referenced in the study where their third-party involvement directly influences interactions between survivors and media.

Trauma survivors primarily interact with news journalists, camera operators and occasionally with media executives who commonly hold the role of editor. However, job titles vary across platforms and organisations. To ensure clarity for the reader, I refer to 'media' as the people who supply content to outlets, specifying roles where pertinent. Journalistic practices are discussed, with media practices encompassing a broader range of routine activities. The analysis addresses the institutional power of traditional broadcast and print media, while recognising that actions only happen through people (Layder 2006).

I acknowledge that ordinary (non-media) people seek and find celebrity through the entertainment industry, most notably reality television (Bonner 2003; Couldry 2004a; Curnutt 2011; Deller 2016; Hill 2015). Online media—in the form of personal websites, social networks and video-sharing platforms—has also become a means for individuals to increase their visibility (Djafarova & Trofimenko 2019; Hou 2019; Khamis, Ange & Welling 2017; Marwick & boyd 2011b; Senft 2013; Turner 2014b). By creating, editing and sharing their own content and opinions, individuals can represent themselves publicly instead of being subject to the institutionalised media practices (Couldry 2015, p. 386). The capability of survivors to exercise agency through social networks and their own websites is outside the scope of this study, due to the 26-year timeline of the news events under examination. I also do not examine why most authored a trade book about their experience, or propose to interpret how individuals are perceived by audiences, which would shift the research focus away from interactions with media practitioners.

Ordinary people are represented as accidental celebrities after becoming involved in high-profile news events. They are drawn into contemporary celebrity culture when the boundary between public and private lives is dissolved, and their personal information is elevated in media discourse (Bonner et al. 1999; Turner 2014b; Turner, Bonner & Marshall 2000, p. 12). Intimate details on trauma survivors are particularly sought-after to 'improve the news commodity' (Rentschler 2010, p. 466) in the competitive chase for audiences. Once manufactured as a celebrity, the trauma survivor is marketed and traded as the commodity (Turner 2010a), with fragments of their personal lives becoming part of a public persona (Marshall 2016). The ordinary individual effectively loses their anonymity, described by psychotherapist Janna Malamud Smith (2003, p. 45) as a state of privacy:

> To be anonymous is to be unidentified, unnoticed: a walker in a city, a member of a crowd. With the absence of recognition can come a liberating privacy ... In an anonymous state, we are alone because we don't stand out or invite identification. No one interrupts us, we believe that no one notices us—though that is not certain.

American historian Daniel Boorstin's (1992, p. 57) definition of a celebrity as a person who is known for their well-knownness continues to be widely cited. First published in 1962, the phrase refers to the fabrication rather than achievement of fame. In the context of this study, celebrity may be considered 'a name which, once made by the news, now makes news by itself' (Rein et al. 2006, p. 17) The term accidental celebrity has been adopted for a diverse range of studies (Di Salvo 2016; Lange 2017; Middleweek 2017; Redmond 2014; Rein et al. 2006; Schultz 2012), although none discuss the agency of high-profile trauma survivors. As accidental celebrities, people are arguably impermanent public figures, easily

replaced by others deemed newsworthy by media competing for audience share in a continuous cycle.

While I consistently refer to traumatic events—to mark the start of news coverage and the survivors' rise to prominence—I accept that trauma can result from a cluster of life experiences instead of being solely caused by a single event (Erikson 1994; Harvey 2012; Rogers, Leydesdorff & Dawson 2004). For some of this study's participants, the event was ongoing, prompting continual or return coverage, while others are commemorated or referenced in mass-media years after the disaster, conflict or tragedy that saw them become famous. Several survivors chose to enter or remain in the public eye, despite various theories on celebrity production and consumption depicting these individuals as overwhelmed and unwilling media subjects, for whom fame is typically short-lived (Marshall 2010; Redmond 2014; Rein et al. 2006; Rojek 2001; Turner 2010b; Turner, Bonner & Marshall 2000). The exercise of individual agency is revealed through first-hand accounts which, until now, have not been present in academic research, leaving a vacuum in the analysis of ordinary people who become well known.

The next chapter outlines the project's methodology and how it is applied to the creation of the manuscript and analysis in the exegesis. Giddens' structuration theory is then explained to ensure a clear understanding of his conception of agency and how it supports this research. The existing media and celebrity studies literature is reviewed before the project is situated in the discipline of media studies, beginning with consideration of how celebrity status is attributed to ordinary people through reality television and online exposure. I outline how my work relates to the celebrity research and writings of Turner

(since *Fame Games* in 2000) and the more recent publication by Sales, while acknowledging that most of the participants have separately told their story in their own way.

The Taxonomy of Accidental Celebrity Agency is explained in the discussion by examining the actions of survivors drawn from the manuscript. The analysis does not trace the process of celebrification, but offers a detailed understanding of the involvement of individuals in the creation of content that reinforces their public recognition. We can then appreciate how survivors and media—beyond those identified in this study—influence each other through a continuous flow of action, at times seeking to exert control and shift the balance of power in an independent relationship. The project, as a whole, explains actual behaviour, social experience and the ways ordinary people change their circumstances.

Chapter 1: Methodology

1.1 Introduction

The methods employed in this project developed gradually as the inquiry moved from gathering the survivors' personal insights to the application of theoretical concepts and an analysis of individual actions and consequences. This approach was driven by the initial, broad aim—to explore the media experience of high-profile trauma survivors—and the production of an original manuscript with accompanying exegesis. They are distinct but complementary works, both requiring the participants' reflections and my personal observations based on experience working in the media industry. Semi-structured interviews with survivors who were transformed into accidental celebrities constituted the primary source material, with relevant newspaper and magazine articles collected as secondary source material. A contextualised reading of academic literature helped identify the research gap within media studies. Giddens' structuration theory was examined in depth, with key concepts applied to a reading of the manuscript in order to analyse how trauma survivors may exercise individual agency in interactions with media. The methodological tools, detailed here, were consistent with other related studies (Gearing 2013; Palmer 2018; Turner, Bonner & Marshall 2000).

1.2 Participant Selection

As the core purpose was to examine the agency of individuals in media interactions, I considered there would be no project without direct personal insights. The study is not a statistical analysis that requires a large number of participants, nor would conclusions be

drawn about media practices and competition, which would require interviews with journalists and other practitioners. The routinisation of newsgathering and distribution is well established (Lowrey, Parrott & Meader 2011; Perloff 2019; Westlund & Ekstrom 2019). Rather, the research presents and analyses the experiences of a small group of high-profile trauma survivors who have first-hand knowledge of the transformation from private citizen to public figure as an accidental celebrity (Rubin & Rubin 2012, p. 70).

I was guided on the ideal number of participants by qualitative research found in the field of psychology. Steinar Kvale (1996, pp. 102-103) recommends the number of interview subjects be around 15 ± 10, guarding against knowledge that is too generalised while making it possible to 'investigate in detail the relationship between the individual and the situation.' Identification of trauma survivors from varied backgrounds was necessary in order to properly analyse their media interactions without unintentionally distorting the results (Rubin & Rubin 2012, p. 62). My observations of survivors who became high profile, having closely followed coverage for many years, enabled me to draft a list of potential participants. However, I do not believe I embarked on the study with any bias or conflict of interest, as I had not interviewed any of the participants immediately following a traumatic event. The contact details for the survivors were obtained through their personal websites or a third party with whom they have an ongoing and close relationship, such as a family member, lawyer or agent.

Invitations, sent by email or post, contained an Information Sheet outlining the project and providing researcher contact details, a Consent Form to sign before interviews commenced, the interview questions, and media industry codes of ethics and practice

guidelines, current at the time the participants were approached (see Appendices A to D). My media background was fully disclosed in the invitation letter, as I recognised the importance of establishing and maintaining trust with the survivors throughout the research process. Most responded directly to the invitation, with follow-up calls made to third-party contacts of others to ensure receipt. The fact that they would be named in the study was communicated to the survivors. Each of the participants had been interviewed by media; most had sought publicity or participated in writing a book about their traumatic experience. However, as survivors can feel compelled to tell their story, it was important to ensure they took part in this study voluntarily, without inducement or coercion, and their consent was informed (Weerakkody 2009, p. 76). Invitations were rejected by five high-profile trauma survivors. I was satisfied that 14 participants from 11 different traumatic events would meet the project's requirements. The research method afforded those who did participate in an interview the right to withdraw at any time up to submission of the project for examination. None took that option.

1.3 Harm Minimisation

The purpose of the study, main features of the research design and possible risks and benefits from participation were reviewed and received full Ethics Approval from the University of Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee in June 2011. I consulted the Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research before approaching Jandamarra O'Shane and his mother Jenni Begg. Language was not a barrier and my invitation to have a community representative present was declined. I did not approach anyone who is under the age of

18, has a cognitive impairment or is highly dependent on medical care.

Further precautions were taken to avoid any negative repercussions for survivors. Only people who had experienced their initial trauma at least three years prior were approached. The Information Sheet acknowledged that as participants they could feel some anxiety as they would be asked to critique the media and in doing so express their personal feelings and thoughts. However, they were not required to recall specific details of their traumatic event. Instead the focus was on their interactions with media, including positive experiences with journalists and editors. The survivors were invited to nominate a quiet location and time for the interview, have a support person of their choosing with them and take a break during the interview.

I am not a medical practitioner or psychologist and could only be guided by the survivor and her/his reaction during the interview process to determine whether the questioning was adding to or creating any trauma. However, I completed a Mental Health First Aid course before approaching any potential participants and this adequately equipped me to be aware of the signs of trauma or distress as a direct result of the research process. Contact details for two confidential counselling services were provided, with the data I gathered then held in a secure location to protect its use.

1.4 Source Material

My experience as an interviewer, gained as a journalist, assisted in preparing a single set of semi-structured questions that were posed to all participants either face-to-face or on the telephone in 2012 (see Appendix E). The 'script' was prepared under headings, with the

questions open-ended, encouraging the survivors to think about the context in which they were answering and discuss media interactions rather than the trauma they experienced (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). While the same basic questions were asked in order, to provide qualitative data for comparison between participants, I was free to probe any new lines of inquiry or interesting points introduced by the participants (Weerakkody 2009, pp. 167-168). This technique enabled me to obtain an understanding of the survivors' behaviour (Silverman 2014, p. xxii). My experience as a journalist helped when conducting the interviews, ranging in duration from two hours to six and held over one or two sessions, depending on the participants' available time and engagement level. Audio recordings were transcribed, with each individual receiving their pages for review and correction. This is a more formal structure than ethnographic conversations (Turner, Bonner & Marshall 2000, p. 24-27; Weerakkody 2009, p. 178). Participants were periodically informed of the project's progress and invited to provide updates on their media experiences before completion.

There is a documented history of Australian media studies built around semi-structured interviews. The technique was used to examine the impact of news reporting on survivors of traumatic incidents (McLellan 1999, 2003), including the Thredbo landslide (Bilboe 1998), the effect reporting the Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria had on media practitioners (Muller 2011), and why survivors of the 2011 Queensland flood disaster spoke to media (Gearing 2013). These investigations did not involve the search for, or analysis of, media and other texts as secondary source material. My approach to gathering insights most closely resembles that of Turner, Bonner Marshall (2000), who pieced together the

development and practices of the promotions, publicity and public relations industry in the production of celebrities.

Turner et al. wrote their book *Fame Games* (2000, pp. 23-27) after conducting analysis 'from the inside' (interviewing 20 professional agents and managers, along with three leading magazine editors) and 'from the outside' (extracting information from popular business and trade press, industrial training manuals and text books). They then considered all of the material within the context of their personal knowledge of the Australian media—a research method I followed. The approach of melding interview with observation led to the creation of Todd Gitlin's (1994) landmark book on television production in the United States, *Inside Prime Time.* Gitlin's method was cited by Turner et al. and credited with inspiring a study on how ordinary people in the New York City and Mid-City area responded to the media spotlight (Palmer 2018). *Becoming the News* was based on interviews with 83 ordinary people who appeared in newspapers, mainly between 2009 and 2010. Academic and author Ruth Palmer included relevant excerpts from coverage raised by the study participants.

None of the abovementioned research questioned both media and subjects. Just as Turner et al. only interviewed those working in the publicity industries and not their clients, and Palmer spoke with ordinary news subjects and not journalists, I chose to privilege the perspective of the accidental celebrity, which had not been the focus of in-depth study. Like Palmer (2018, p. 19), I argue that news subjects rarely have a voice in journalistic and academic writing that focusses on how media practitioners think and work. She directly addresses suggestions that 'taking subjects' word for what happened' was a study

weakness by explaining that journalistic practices did not need to be tested and verified through interviews with media sources as her project centred on subjectivity. Similarly, my study of agency aimed to explore whether the participants felt they had the capability to act independently and exercise free choices, not only focus on the actions they took.

Obtaining the participants' reflections on media interactions relied on what Giddens (1984, p. 7) describes as discursive consciousness: the ability to express their knowledge. To some extent, I trusted the accuracy of their reflections. Although, accounts of specific events and coverage were cross-referenced through secondary source material—published reports as well as newspaper and magazine articles—to ensure a sound interpretation (Rubin & Rubin 2012, p. 201; Weerakkody 2009, p. 178). The 26-year timeline of the traumatic events highlighted in this study, combined with changes in the media market, negated my ability to survey media content from the same source, as other studies have done (Bonner et al. 1999; Turner, Bonner & Marshall 2000). While some programs and publications have ceased, there have been new entrants, in particular digital services and continuous television news channels. I note online and broadcast content where relevant in the manuscript, with the predominant inclusion of articles published in newspapers from the participants' home city or region, as well as nationally and in popular Australian magazine articles (see Appendix F). Some of the participants' claims, and the context I provide as a media practitioner, may still be contested, although this is likely to come down to a matter of opinion.

1.5 Manuscript Creation

Once I gathered the source material, my interest was in ensuring the participants' insights were accurately and comprehensively recorded in the research output. Part-way through writing what began as a conventional thesis, I realised that the survivors' voices were not dominant within the monolithic text format. In early 2016, with the support of the University of Tasmania, the project moved to a practice-led project consisting of a creative work and complementary exegesis. The new approach—authoring a non-fiction, book-length manuscript—better enabled me to privilege the participants' personal stories and contextualise them through my own knowledge of media practices. The participants' interactions with media were then analysed in the exegesis.

It became apparent during the writing phase that I needed to strive for enhanced self-awareness, recognising that the manuscript would be produced in large part by constructing meaning with the survivors who contributed data through interviews (Connolly & Reilly 2007, p. 522; Finlay 2002, p. 531; Fontana & Frey 2011, p. 696; Koven 2014; Wood & Kroger 2000, p. 72). An awareness 'of self and the impact of one's own intellectual baggage and life experiences on the research process'—from the development of interview questions through to final analysis—is useful in guarding against distorted findings (Grbich 2004, p. 60; 2013, p. 10). As researchers, presenting findings based on knowledge, we are encouraged to question what we know and how we know it. The conventional method of inquiry—verifying facts through published reports and sourcing specific media articles referenced in the interviews—helped guard against unconscious bias as the researcher. Extracts from other coverage were included in the manuscript to further

illustrate media and public interest in the traumatic events, the survivors' personal lives, as well as how their actions were represented. I acknowledge that as the final interpreter of the material, this placed me in a dominant position in the power relationship between the researcher and the researched.

Different participants lead a chapter in *Accidental Celebrity* built around a specific theme as the 73,000-word manuscript traces their transformation from private citizens to public figures. It was expected that the intensity of media interactions and depth of insight offered by each participant would vary, leading to some being cited more than others in the study's manuscript and exegesis. They are referred to by first name in the manuscript, reflecting a more personal storytelling style in line with trade publications (Sales 2018). However, for the exegesis I adopted the formal and objective academic approach of referring to participants by surname (Goc & Bainbridge 2008; Pearse 2006; Turner, Bonner & Marshall 2000).

1.6 Exegesis Analysis

The exegesis analyses the survivors' interactions with media, which were identified through the creation of the manuscript. It also proposes a framework through which to understand the different ways those who become accidental celebrities may seek to control contact and, in turn, content creation. The project is informed by academic studies into both trauma reporting (media studies) and celebrification (cultural studies), as a means for understanding the construction of the mediated subject. The analysis draws on Giddens' structuration theory, most comprehensively outlined in his book *The Constitution of Society* (1984), as a conceptualising methodology. It enables me to develop and clarify concepts

which can be used as tools with a clear aim in mind: that is, to answer the research question:

> How do trauma survivors exercise individual agency in interactions with media when transformed into accidental celebrities?

Highlighting the capability of individuals to exercise agency in power relations challenges broad assumptions that accidental celebrities are produced by mass media operating largely external to, and even coercive of, the subjects of their attention. Through Giddens' theory, the complexity of interactions between survivors and those in traditional media, who may facilitate their public prominence, can be analysed and explained. This is an alternative to current approaches to the study of journalistic practices in trauma reporting, celebrity representation and power. Sociologist Nick Couldry (2015, p. 386) argues that 'celebrity studies needs social theory (to give form to its important insight that celebrity matters for the fabric of social and cultural life).' Structuration as a social theory does not prescribe a methodology. Rather, it offers a set of concepts which could be regarded as theories within theories (Llewellyn 2003).

Giddens (1989) has been critical of researchers who use structuration theory for empirical research instead of as a 'sensitising device' (Turner 1986) for identifying lines of inquiry. However, he has never stated clearly how the perspectives of research participants could be analysed by applying his theory. Sociologist Rob Stones (2005, p. 2) notes: 'The works applying concepts from the logical framework of structuration theory that Giddens approved of were those that used them more selectively, "in a spare and critical fashion".' While structuration cannot be applied rigidly, social theory researcher Derek Layder (2006,

p. 155) points out that it can be drawn upon when a scholar 'feels that small bits, or whole chunks of it would prove illuminating or helpful for a particular analysis.' Several media studies have taken this approach (Larsson 2012; van Rooyen 2013; Wiggins & Bowers 2015) rather than adopting other methods that support more wide-ranging examinations of how social systems function.

The benefit of using Giddens' theory is that it positions the subjects of media and public attention as individuals with agency and power. It provides both context and scope for an examination of how ordinary people may function as they become high-profile figures—initiating, complying with and resisting media contact which may serve to reinforce institutionalised practices. In conducting this research, I take criticisms of Giddens' theory into account (Archer 2010; Craib 1992; Sawyer 2005; Thompson 1989), with care not to over reach when interpreting those ideas that may be ambiguous or open to alternate meaning, such as rules and resources.

The key concepts, which I extract and reference most heavily when discussing the participants' accounts of interactions with media all relate to their exercise of agency. However, in line with Giddens' theory, I do not suggest that individual agency is more important in society than structure. The concepts prioritised in the analysis are:

- Agency—actions and consequences from the survivors' perspective.
- Structure—rules (in the form of news values, norms of behaviour and media guidelines) and resources (as media-controlled platforms and outlets).
- Practices—institutionalised through routinised relations between survivors and media.

This theoretical base takes the project beyond simply identifying the impact of journalistic practices on the subjects of media and public attention, into a deeper consideration of the role trauma survivors play in their own high-profile status and what it means to be an accidental celebrity. My own extensive background working within the news media industry enabled me to question the study's participants on their encounters with media and interpret the consequences of their actions through a review of print coverage. The methods employed support an analysis of power relations that regards the survivors as individuals who exercise agency, not perpetual victims in processes that produce news and celebrities.

Chapter 2: Theory

2. 1 Introduction

Giddens presented and refined structuration theory over eight years (1976, 1979, 1984) as a way to understand human agency and social institutions. He does not see people as entirely independent agents (the subjective view) or constrained by powerful impersonal social structures and institutions beyond their control (the objective view). Rather, the sociologist sought to combine agency and structure in a theory which recognises the equal contribution of both to social life (Stones 2005, pp. 14-15). Giddens (1979) argues that individuals are knowledgeable about their circumstances, with the capability to think and act for themselves, as well as be affected by their social environment. This concept of agency underlines the different ways trauma survivors may participate in media coverage, while being transformed into accidental celebrities through institutionalised practices that publicise and commodify their private lives.

As a 'general ontology of human agency in the world' (Inglis & Thorpe 2019, p. 226), structuration connects knowledge and experience (phenomenology) to an interpretation of social events (hermeneutics) (Stones 2005, pp. 4-5). Giddens (1984, xvi) describes his work as social theory, situated in the context of the post-war critical theorists who integrated the broader social sciences into their studies of society. Michel Foucault's archaeology and Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the habitus both address agency and structure (King 2010, p. 255) from a structuralist stance, while Erving Goffman (1959, 1974) attempted to balance the two poles by exploring subjectivity through the study of face-to-

face interactions. Although the different theoretical perspectives converge at particular points, as outlined further in this chapter, Giddens not only connects the notion of human action with structural explanation, but characterises them as interdependent.

Giddens' thinking was most influenced by the 'founding fathers' of sociology from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Emile Durkeim and Max Weber. Durkeim (1982) focussed on structural functionalism, where individuals are guided by elements of collective life called social facts, or societal norms, values, and structures. Weber's (1968a) social action theory, by contrast, suggests that we need to understand the motives behind the actions of individuals in order to explain how societies change. Giddens (1984) stands apart from both Durkeim and Weber because he views social life as a balance between human agency (micro perspective) and societal structures (macro perspective). He sought to unite individual actions and social forces in one approach which regards power not as a resource, exercised only by people with intent, but as relational. Giddens argues power is evident in interactions between actors (individuals) and collectives (groups):

> We should see social life, not just as society out there or just the product of the individual here, but as a series of ongoing activities and practices that people carry on, which at the same time reproduce larger institutions. (Giddens & Pierson 1998, p. 76)

The concept of structuration has been used as an overarching conceptual theory and analytical tool in several media studies, mainly to understand how content is produced for audiences (Hunter & Di Bartolomeo 2019; Larsson 2012; van Rooyen 2013; Webster 2011; Wiggins & Bowers 2015). Marlie van Rooyen (2013) investigated the interaction between translators as agents and the structure supporting translation at the South African

Broadcasting Corporation. Andrea Hunter and Jacqueline Di Barolomeo (2019) analysed how people are using crowd-funding campaigns to create feminist online magazines and other spaces for storytelling that doesn't appear in mainstream media. I apply Giddens' work on structuration to a more direct relationship—between individual media subjects and the practitioners who report high-profile news event and celebrify individuals in order to attract and feed the public's interest. Structuration theory is used as a means of exploring how high-profile trauma survivors exercise agency in interactions with media, which depend on access to information when creating content, while at the same time controlling what audiences receive. It is not a methodology, but a way to analyse individual behaviour and media practices in an institutionalised environment. I consider Giddens' definition of agency before turning to the concept of structure (constituted by what he calls rules and resources) and a discussion of how the two are interdependent.

2.2 Survivors as Agents

Giddens does not regard agency as being 'contained' within the individual, instead placing importance on the meaning and understanding people derive from interactions with others (Emirbayer 1997). Layder (2006, p. 182) further explains: 'The very notion of agency draws attention to the fact that human beings are not simply hapless victims of social circumstance.' Nor are agents completely free. Through the first-hand accounts of this study's participants, documented in the accompanying manuscript *Accidental Celebrity,* it is clear that while trauma survivors may become the subject of news headlines without any personal media interaction, they have the choice whether to craft a written statement, be interviewed and/or supply images. As agents, survivors can recreate and reinforce social

conditions as well as shape their relationships and change their circumstances. All humans can act and action implies power, as Giddens (1984, p. 9) emphasises:

> Agency concerns events over which an individual is the perpetrator, in the sense that the individual could, at any phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently. Whatever happened would not have happened if that individual had not intervened. Action is a continuous process, a flow…

Under this theory, action depends on the ability of an agent to 'make a difference' to a process, such as newsgathering, a course of events or pre-existing state of affairs by influencing the causal powers deployed by others. Individuals can alter the balance in a power relationship, characterised as the 'dialectic of control' by Giddens (1984, pp. 14-16). Actions identified in *Accidental Celebrity* as dictating the terms of media involvement, such as limiting access or insisting on copy checking before publication or broadcast, would shift the balance towards a survivor. Journalists who then consider they have been constrained in their ability to perform their job may seek to influence the process by reporting negotiations and contractual terms.

When relations are organised as regular social practices they represent a social system (Giddens 1979, p. 66; 1984, p. 17 & 25). Established media practices are therefore underpinned by power relations, in which notions of trust, compliance and resistance must be considered (Giddens 1984, pp. 86, 176; Stones 2005, pp. 114-115). In this context, one person—whether a journalist or survivor as a news subject—never holds complete power and another is never totally powerless. A survivor cannot be forced to speak publicly or disclose personal details, just as a journalist is not compelled to write a story they have

been offered or necessarily in the way the person who initiated contact would prefer. When they do interact, they trust the information provided and reported will be fair and accurate.

Giddens (1984, p. xxii) argues that people are knowledgeable about their circumstances and with knowledge they have 'the capacity to understand what they do while they do it,' then rationalise actions to help make sense of them. He introduces the concept of 'practical consciousness' to describe the knowledge and reflexive monitoring of agents which is seen in routine actions, like those involved in gathering information for a story. People do not always recognise what they know or why they do things in a certain way (van Rooyen 2013, p. 497). The ability to verbally express knowledge, referred to as 'discursive consciousness', was relied upon when interviewing the participants of this study about their interactions with media, the reasons for their actions and the consequences of their behaviour (Giddens 1984, pp. 3-4).

Actions people take with intent, based on knowledge of the circumstances at the time, often have flow-on unintended consequences—events which were not within an individual's control (Giddens 1984, pp. 8-10; Ritzer 2012, p. 523). James Scott believes limiting access to one journalist after he was found alive in the Himalayan mountains led to speculation in other media outlets that his survival was a hoax, as he explains in *Accidental Celebrity*. However, Giddens suggests that most actions are in fact unconscious, not directly motivated, so action most often precedes intention. People then reflexively and continuously monitor their activities, thoughts, physical and social contexts (Ritzer 2012, p. 523). Mercedes Corby regrets spontaneously losing her temper with media and

members of the Indonesian legal system—screaming and swinging a handbag—after seeing the newspaper images of her trying to protect her sister and accused drug smuggler, Schapelle Corby.

2.3 Structure and the Media Institution

Through action, people produce and reproduce structural rules and resources which cannot be separated within the social system (Giddens 1984, p. 25). Rules may be laws or unwritten codes and norms of behaviour, providing signification (meaning) and legitimation (norms) (Giddens 1979, p. 82). These would include industry codes of ethics and practice guidelines, socially constructed news values as well as the normative expectations of journalists on how news subjects should behave. Rules are enabled or supported by resources, which are materials referred to by Giddens (1984, p. 16) as the 'structures of domination built into social institutions' for exercising economic and authoritative power or control over people. In media, I understand resources to be the outlets through which content is distributed. Practitioners not only control the distribution of content on traditional media platforms (allocative power), but have the capability to persuade ordinary people to participate in coverage and audiences to engage with that content (authoritative power).

Rules and resources form a structure to govern the scope of our actions, although they are not entirely constraining as they exist only through human interactions, according to Giddens (1984, p. 169). People have the capability to transform their social circumstances based on their control over resources. 'Society only has form, and that form only has effects on people, in so far as structure is produced and reproduced in what people do,' Giddens

(1998, p. 77) later explained. This goes to the core of his structuration theory—the 'duality of structure', where neither the individual agent nor structure is more important in society than the other (Giddens 1979, p. 5; 1984, p. 25). Richard Whittington (2010, p. 112) identifies this mutual dependence as one of the theory's defining features:

> Structuration happens as agents draw on the various rules and resources of their systems; as they do so, they either reproduce or amend the structural principles that organised their activities in the first place.

As structure is reproduced through the repetition of acts by individual agents, such as conducting and participating in media interviews, it must be considered a medium of human agency as well as an outcome of the practices of agents (Stones 2005, pp. 4-5). It is also through routine or 'patterned' interactions that structures become institutionalised (King 2010, pp. 253-255). Institutions, in effect, represent the reproduction of rules and resources over time and across different geographic situations (Giddens 1984, p. 375). Therefore, media is maintained as a culturally and economically powerful social institution by individuals. Layder (2006, p. 173) reminds us that institutions do not have a 'life of their own'; rather 'social life is 'made to happen' by social actors.' This provides context for Couldry's (2015, p. 386) view, put forward separately, that 'the social' is an 'open-ended site of struggle' where media institutions 'for at least a century have used celebrity for the instrumental end of selling content and the broader legitimating purpose of embodying "the media's" supposed ability to speak for all.'

2.4 Critiques and Alternative Theories

Giddens does not tackle the question of precisely how action and structure sit together, although he considers 'social structures, institutions and systems do not exist independently of the reasons, motivations and reflexive behaviour of actual people' (Layder 2006, p. 173). His depiction of a dynamic and interdependent relationship between agents as they each take action is central to the ongoing utility of structuration theory, making it adaptable to a wide range of subjects. Layder (2006, p. 156) lists the development of the nation-state and citizen rights, class analysis, evolutionary theories of society, surveillance and war as among the topics explored in this way. The philosophical and, in part, abstract nature of Giddens' work has also left it open to criticism (Stones 2005, p. 7). These range from its 'looseness' with ambiguous concepts (Thompson 1989), to the fragmentation that results from incorporating ideas from multiple other theories (Craib 1992), and the perceived 'conflation' of the agent with structure (Sawyer 2005, p. 125).

The alternatives theories of Foucault, Bourdieu and Goffman each contain elements that appear to be reflected in Giddens' thinking, before he branches off into structuration. Foucault (1980, 1982), like Giddens, viewed power as relational, arguing that it is exercised between individuals or groups of individuals. Although, Foucault considered people act based on rules of behaviour (structure) rather than their actions becoming institutionalised. The transformation of human beings into subjects, produced through discourse within a social network, is a theme in Foucault's analytics of power:

> There are two meanings of the word subject: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identify by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to. (Foucault 1982, p. 212)

Bourdieu (1977, 1984) acknowledged that people can act with conscious intention, similar to Giddens' notion of 'practical consciousness'. However, unlike Giddens, he did not view reflexivity as a significant driver of social action because practice is not a product of free will. To Bourdieu, it is the result of socialisation, with his concept of habitus referring to the subconscious, internalised social structure that shapes perception, understanding, evaluation and decision-making. In essence, habitus would dictate that trauma survivors only reproduce structural rules and resources, learning to want what they are conditioned to believe is possible, rather than acting as agents to influence media practices.

Goffman (1974) maintained social structure always comes first, before subjective consciousness is introduced as a factor. He aimed to bridge the gap between structure and agency by focusing on the interactive nature of subjectivity. Goffman and Giddens shared an understanding of the 'self' as emerging from a reflexive process. However, Goffman saw subjects perform or present themselves in response to others, while Giddens argues individuals employ knowledge as a resource for constructing a more desirable self.

One of Giddens' strongest opponents, social theorist Margaret Archer (2010, p. 228), maintains that through the 'duality of structure' we cannot tell where the agent ends and structure begins or vice versa, preferring they be seen as independent. For Giddens, there is no specific end to structuration. He discusses agency first, as a place to start, not because it is more important than structure (van Rooyen 2013). I adopt the same approach in my

application of his theory, drawing primarily on the perspectives of individual trauma survivors when analysing power relations between the subjects of media attention and those operating within the structural rules of a social institution.

A colleague of Giddens, John B. Thompson (1989), expressed concern about the lack of clarity around what has been referred to as rules, while others like Ian Craib (1992) complain that readers of the theory need to guess his meanings because of a focus on social practices and lack of depth around social structures. However, the visible patterns of relations between agents and the reproduction of practices, seen in the way institutions function (Giddens 1984, p. 19), is what makes Giddens' theory applicable to my project, related to the practice-based activity of creating news and other media content. I do not consider the need to apply a 'quadripartite cycle', as developed by Stones (2005) in defence of Giddens' theory. While Stones revised, clarified and expanded key concepts so they could be used for a more thorough, systematic view (pp. 9, 84-115), Giddens' articulation of the exercise of agency in a structured social context is clear enough for the purposes of this research.

Journalism has largely been studied within the Marxist paradigm of dominant groups exercising material and intellectual control over others through media (McNair 2003). Couldry (2012, pp. 12-14) sorts the research into examinations of industries, audiences and texts. In Giddens' view, Marxist accounts do not fully explain the ways in which agents are able to take action within social systems. Studies on celebrity by Turner (2014b) and Chris Rojek (2001) have primarily focussed on accounts of the institutional function of the phenomena, particularly cultural, rather than the agency of individuals. Marshall (2014, pp.

20-22) has engaged with Weber's notion of 'charisma' for insight into the kind of power celebrities embody. Weber (1968b, p. 329) wanted to account for how authority in political order is derived from the leader, defining charisma as a 'certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he [sic] is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman or at least superficially exceptional qualities.' While Marshall (2014, p. 22) recognises 'charisma' as a way to understand the nature of celebrity power, he notes:

> [S]ome modifications would be necessary in order to explain the contemporary condition of accepted domains of irrational or emotive forms of power (i.e., the celebrity) as part of a larger system of rationality. These modifications may be too radical to fit into the original Weberian model.

Giddens' structuration theory offers an appropriate theoretical frame through which to view interactions, analysing individual actions and social forces. I turn now to a survey of existing academic literature, providing a structured view of previous research relevant to an examination of power relations between high-profile trauma survivors and media, within an institutionalised setting.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This research recognises from the outset that pain and distress have become an entrenched 'part of a public and media-dictated discourse' (Rogers, Leydesdorff & Dawson 2004, p. 5), to the degree that journalism is arguably 'saturated with tears and trauma' (Kitch 2009, p. 29). Traumatic events fill news outlets daily, whether depicted as tragedy, violence, death, conflict or disaster. The media spotlight invariably shines on ordinary people who can provide testimony; their lives suddenly and unexpectedly changed forever. Putting faces and names to events enables readers and viewers to relate to survivors and their emotional experiences (Irawanto 2018; Kitty 2005, p. 174; Rentschler 2011, p. 466). When the private lives of individuals are laid bare publicly through concentrated coverage, they become accidental celebrities, whose identity may be traded as a commodity (Turner, Bonner & Marshall 2000). It is in this transformation that we see trauma reporting intersect with the production of celebrities, as journalists both recognise and reinforce the newsworthiness of survivors in the competition for audiences, leading to the reproduction of institutionalised media practices.

This chapter examines academic characterisations of the relationship between high-profile trauma survivors and media. Attention is first centred on journalistic practices in the creation of news content, which have dominated relevant media studies discussions. I then highlight what the existing literature tells us about the representation and commodification of ordinary people as celebrities, crossing into cultural studies. We may interpret that

traditional broadcasters and publishers are in a dominant position in the production of stories and celebrities—determining which events to report, the details and images to be included, and ultimately how subjects will be represented through outlets they control. However, the actions taken by this study's participants, revealed in the manuscript *Accidental Celebrity*, demonstrate how survivors are capable of exercising their own form of agency, seeking to control interactions. It is clear that as free-willed individuals they influence, and respond to, the actions of media in different ways, playing a role in the creation of content and their accidental celebrity status.

3.2 News Values and Trauma

Operating as individuals or a collective, those working in media may at any time determine that ordinary people are newsworthy and deserving of public recognition. All of the trauma survivors interviewed for *Accidental Celebrity* were selected as the subject of headlines through a high-profile news event. Theories on 'what makes news'—why some events are reported and others aren't—have been conceptualised in linguistics and media studies for more than 50 years (Bednarek & Caple 2017). Still of relevance today is the overarching view that news values are an unwritten set of criteria influenced by knowledge gained on the job, external pressure groups and newsroom ideology, with stories presented to an assumed audience (Allan 2004; Hall 1981; Hall et al. 1978; Hartley 1982). As Brian McNair (2006, p. 6) puts it, '[n]ews is still what news always was: a socially constructed account of reality.' Under Giddens' theory, news values constitute rules, reproduced by journalists after reflexively drawing on their personal knowledge, as well as the external context of audience responses to coverage. It is evident through my research that news values are

inextricably linked to journalistic norms of behaviour, influencing routine practices such as a newsgathering. Here I look at news values as structural rules before considering how they intersect with agency, as seen in interactions between journalists and survivors.

Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge (1965) were the first to take an academic approach to the process of news selection, by attempting to identify and define the values that influence the publication of news stories. They presented a shortlist of 12 factors to predict which events may receive coverage. News values can be considered 'the qualities that make a news item 'newsworthy'' (Cotter 2010, p. 67). Galtung and Ruge's work has informed or inspired many subsequent attempts to identify news values and relate them to the production process (Bednarek & Caple 2012; Bell 1991; Brighton & Foy 2007; Chibnall 2001; Conley & Lamble 2006; Harcup & O'Neill 2017; Harrison 2006; Jewkes 2004; Masterton 1998, 2005). While dependent in part on a media organisation's culture, lists of news values reflect 'relatively consistent criteria' (Allan 2004, p. 58). Matthew Ricketson and Caroline Graham (2017, pp. 24-27) distil them down into the nine most commonly identified: *impact*, *relevance*, *proximity*, *prominence*, *timeliness*, *conflict*, *currency*, the *unusual* and *human interest*. Prominence can otherwise be referred to as *celebrity*, which Deirdre O'Neill (2012) suggests now dominates news across the UK press.

Studies that define news values have also sought to explain the journalistic process behind their selection. While considered a landmark study, Galtung and Ruge produced a narrow examination of three international crises; day-to-day coverage of lesser events were outside the study's scope; they did not consider how dramatic photographs and other visual elements could affect the written material; and focussed only on 'events' when many

news items are not event-based but are manufactured (Curran & Seaton 1997; Harcup & O'Neill 2017; Tunstall 1971). The principal limitation in Galtung and Ruge's theory was the assumption that news exists before journalists make their selections based on values. They considered a gatekeeping process then determines which information is let into the newspaper or bulletin and which is kept out. Academics have since challenged this notion.

Jackie Harrison (2010, p. 248) argues that some events are 'self evidently newsworthy because they have certain characteristics', while journalists also learn how to recognise news values. Academics with news industry backgrounds place the emphasis on media sifting through all of the available coverage options, highlighting those they consider to be of greatest interest to audiences (Avieson 1992; Bell 1991; Conley & Lamble 2006; Masterton 1992, 1998, 2005). It is noted in *Accidental Celebrity* that high ratings for the live television broadcasts of the rescue of Stuart Diver from the Thredbo landside and the Beaconsfield miners indicated to journalists that follow-up stories would attract strong audience numbers. Media act both reflexively—based on the audience response to previous stories—and with intention. In breaking news, journalists tell audiences what they should care about (Hurst 1991, p. 24), sometimes interrupting the normal flow of news to broadcast live, in effect creating a media event (Dayan & Katz 2009).

Australian journalist and academic Murray Masterton (1992, 1998, 2005) identifies *interest* as one of three news values—alongside *timeliness* and *clarity*—that must be identified before a piece of information can be treated as news in any type of publication or broadcast. Simply explained, a news story must contain new or newly available information that is of interest to a substantial number of people and can be clearly understood.

Masterton (1998, p. 90) considers interest to be 'who cares?' information. The 'who' is not specified, although he clearly refers to audiences. The identification of interest sets Masterton's theory apart from others (Chibnall 2001; Gans 1980; Jewkes 2004). All three core elements are supported by Masterton's (1992) 'Big Six' news criteria, which were internationally recognised by news media practitioners as determining the level of newsworthiness: *consequence* (importance/impact); *proximity* (nearness); *conflict* (disagreement); *human interest* (stories about people); *novelty/unusualness* (bizarre, the rare); and *prominence* (about prominent people).

Masterton's definition of news values remains current and is applicable to my practice-led research on individual agency, considered in the context of ongoing newsworthiness. However, the view of Galtung and Ruge (1965) that the greater the extent to which an event can be written to satisfy the news criteria, the more likely it is to be reported as news, still resonates. News may be created with or without the participation of those involved, as most of the traumatic events included in this study were first reported before the survivors made a public statement. Their experiences were personal in nature and extraordinary, providing media with an opportunity to highlight the human interest and novelty value, enhancing the newsworthiness. Michael Chamberlain reflected in *Accidental Celebrity* on the news values media emphasised when his daughter Azaria was taken by a dingo:

> Some have said that it's because you have the wrong people, at the wrong place, at the wrong time, and that makes a delicious formula for a big story, particularly when the event that occurs just is so unusual and so frightening and so tragic, and at a place which was

> iconic, and through people who are deemed by many to be different, perhaps peculiar, isolationist.

By reporting on the survivors' private lives, transforming them into high-profile figures, media were able to rely increasingly on prominence as a news value to maintain coverage. It is apparent that what was then published or broadcast did not necessarily constitute news or journalism—an approach identified by Masterton (1998, p. 88). I accept Helen Fulton's (2005, p, 221) argument that 'virtually any utterance on any topic can be restated in the discourse of "news" and therefore turned into a news item.' With the advent of social media, information can be presented as news in personal narratives or casual conversation (Khamis, Ange & Welling 2017; Marwick & boyd 2011a; Senft 2013; Sidnell 2010, p. 228). Traditional media-controlled outlets push the news value boundaries too. An example of this is Mercedes Corby's 2009 bikini-clad appearance in the men's magazine *Ralph* (January 2009, p. 1)—arguably of interest to the target demographic, easy for readers to comprehend and timely because Corby was already featured in general news coverage. The pictorial spread and interview would not have been possible though without her involvement, demonstrating the agency of survivors in creating content, which I now explore further.

3.3 Survivors as News Subjects

News subjects have been described in media studies as people who are represented in the product but who do not necessarily speak to journalists (Pritchard 2000, pp. 39-40). While a fair description, I question whether it has also served to limit discussions about the different ways individuals may participate in coverage, canvassed in *Accidental Celebrity*.

An abundance of studies on media ethics in the 1990s were followed by a series of text books for journalists on how they could make decisions when conflicted by news values and newsroom norms of behaviour (Healey 2019; Masse 2011; Simpson & Cote 2006). The potential impact of news reporting on ordinary people, in particular those who are traumatised, has been widely canvassed (Kay et al. 2010; Rentschler 2011; Walsh-Childers, Lewis & Neely 2008). Although, these earlier studies do not analyse in any detail the capability of individuals to exercise agency when confronted by the media spotlight.

While sociologists with an interest in media have debated how to provide a theoretical account of the diverse range of news activities and audiences (Couldry 2004b; Hobart 2010; Swindler 2001), the practice-led approach focusses on the specific actions of journalists and editors, and how subjects respond (Healey 2019). We are told that survivors may feel pressured to comply with demands to speak personally and publicly about their experiences (Kay et al. 2010; Palmer 2018). Certainly, Jenni Begg, mother of burns survivor Jandamarra O'Shane, hoped that agreeing to a media press conference would deter journalists from trying to enter her son's hospital room, as she explains in *Accidental Celebrity*. Journalist and academic Ian Richards (2005) stresses that survivors may be so overwhelmed they cannot make an informed decision or appreciate the possible consequences of their actions. Interacting with journalists can reinforce norms of behaviour and news values, in effect encouraging reporters to continue invading a survivor's privacy in the pursuit of fresh story angles. News subjects may take action to avoid becoming involved in coverage or choose which information to release and withhold. However, interactions are an inevitable part of social life, as Giddens (1984, p. 54) points out:

> Each individual has the right … to maintain a distance from others by preserving bodily privacy and an integrity of self. But the self has to submit to social engagement, given that this is done with the proper deference to the tactful recognition of the needs of others.

Interactions are a negotiation between people who are most often strangers, with trust and mistrust developing in response to agency rather than role expectations (Seligman 1997). Trust emerged as an important consideration in this project when discussing how trauma survivors and journalists produce and reproduce established media practices. I understand trust to be a way to act, although we cannot be certain of others' behaviour. People demonstrate reflexiveness when basing determinations of trustworthiness on knowledge—the person's or social object's reputation from a record of past deeds, their current performance and their appearance of trustworthiness (Sztompka 1999). These long-established notions of trust remain valid today.

Annette Baier (1997, p. 611) argues that when people entrust they hand over something they value to another who has 'discretionary power' in protecting it. When an individual agrees to be interviewed or provide an account of an event, they entrust journalists with their reputation, personal information and in some cases their relationships with family, friends and community. The relationship is clearly one of interdependence when journalists trust survivors to give them full and truthful accounts of events. Bruce and Denise Morcombe accepted police advice and engaged with media, participating in interviews in order to enlist public help in finding their teenage son Daniel, placing their trust in both investigators and journalists. Roger Simpson and William Cote (2006, p. 55) have advised journalists that survivors trust they will not be exploited or their mental health further harmed, the reporting will be accurate and they will be fairly represented. If they ask to be

left alone then they are trusting media representatives with the care of their valued autonomy (Baier 1997, p. 610).

A series of prominent overseas studies reveal a sense of helplessness or powerlessness experienced by survivors as a result of media intrusion into privacy, factual inaccuracy and the way they were represented in news coverage (Alvis-Banks 2008; Deppa 1994; Englund, Forsberg & Saveman 2014; Glad et al. 2018; Harrison 1999; Irawanto 2018; Shearer 1991; Walsh-Childers, Lewis & Neely 2008; Walsh-Childers, Lewis & Neely 2011; Wellman 2018). Ruth Palmer (2018, pp. 4-5) perhaps best sums up the central arguments in her US-based study on how ordinary people respond to the media spotlight:

> [O]rdinary news subjects' experiences, varied as they are, follow a consistent pattern: subjects gradually give up control over their stories to journalists, only to be held accountable by the public for how they are represented in the news. Unlike public figures, who have resources that can help them influence journalists, ordinary folks who become the focus of mainstream news attention usually have little power in their relationships to journalists and media outlets.

A considerable amount of academic literature has been written in Australia about journalistic practices in reporting on disasters, conflict and tragedy, as well as the negative personal impact media's pursuit and portrayal can have on people typically described by researchers as 'victims' (Bilboe 1998; Ewart 2002; Gearing 2013; Harrison 1986; McLellan 1999; Middleweek 2007; Muller & Gawenda 2011; Simpson 2001). John Harrison (1986, p. 4) asserts that 'personal privacy becomes the second disaster victim', after investigating tensions between journalists reporting the 1986 Moura mine disaster and members of the

small Queensland community. His observational case study describes the 'distasteful' practice of 'deathknocking' homes in the chase for interviews with grieving relatives of the 12 men who were killed.

Trina McLellan (1999) spoke with people affected by the 1996 Port Arthur massacre and industrial deaths in Australia, identifying a lack of control over privacy, factual accuracy and representation as three main areas of concern and potential harm. Among numerous other books and papers written about the Tasmanian tragedy, (Altmann 2006; Scott 2006), Lindsay Simpson (2001) developed a personal case study of her experience reporting on Port Arthur. She questioned the practical application of the MEAA's Code of Ethics clause relating to intrusion into grief. Jacqui Ewart (2002) later called for a reconstruction of journalistic practices following her interviews with reporters on media coverage of the 2001 Tulka bushfires in South Australia.

Interviews with media professionals and community members informed the findings of a study on the ethical considerations of journalists and impact of reporting on survivors of the 2009 Victorian Black Saturday bushfires, conducted by the Centre for Advanced Journalism at the University of Melbourne (Muller & Gawenda 2011). Former reporter Amanda Gearing (2013) recorded the experience of survivors and rescuers from the January 2011 flash floods in Toowoomba and the Lockyer Valley, in Queensland, for her investigation into why people accept or reject invitations to speak with media after a natural disaster. More recently, research on the psychological impacts of shark-bite events shows how survivors are more likely to have symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) if they are also attacked by media (Taylor et al. 2019).

Studies on trauma reporting over the past two decades have commonly emphasised that becoming the subject of news coverage can be harmful or even re-traumatising (Kay et al. 2011; Maercker & Mehr 2006; Rentschler 2011; Sykes et al. 2003). Survivors are recognised as 'twice victimised' when large numbers of media are first drawn to a major tragedy (Walsh-Childers, Lewis & Neely 2008). A traumatised person may feel their privacy has been invaded and their experience misrepresented. The news framing theory of David Tewksbury and Dietram Scheufele (2009, p. 17) explains that journalists act subconsciously when 'choosing images and words that have the power to influence how audiences interpret and evaluate' information. Loss of control over depictions of a survivor's experience has been described as the 'second wound' (Rentschler 2011), with inaccurate and sensational coverage leaving many feeling disappointed, frustrated and exploited (Kay et al. 2010). Yet enabling traumatised people to tell their stories in their own time and in their own way can be a 'form of powerful advocacy journalism' (Joseph 2016, p. 211).

American writer Jon Krakauer, in an interview with Robert Boynton (2005, pp. 167-168), affords news subjects no agency, warning they lose all control when talking to a journalist or providing them with information, because those working for media institutions will tell the story how they see it, not how the subject wants it told. However, as Giddens (1984, p. 14) argues, there is always the possibility of 'acting otherwise'. I interpret that as media never holding complete power. A survivor does not have to reinforce the structural rules that determine newsworthiness by tolerating perceived media intrusion. They may resist journalistic practices, such as press conferences, and negotiate alternatives to moderate the behaviour of journalists, as Stuart Diver did when he recorded a public statement after his Thredbo landslide rescue.

Many (for example Hirst & Patching 2005; Richards 2005; Wellman 2018) point out that it is not uncommon for a third party to act as an intermediary for trauma survivors in their interactions with journalists, particularly when the individual has little knowledge of media practices. The intervention may come from their circle of family and friends, police, health and legal services or a professional agent or manager, who handle media inquiries and sometimes act as a spokesperson. The survivor could be perceived as handing their individual agency to someone else, although Giddens' structuration theory offers a more nuanced perspective. This is an act at least initially intended to control access to someone who is traumatised, with the release of personal information potentially restricted and checked for accuracy before publication or broadcast. Unless constrained by contracts with a third party and media, the subject retains the capability to reflexively act otherwise as their knowledge of media practices grows, their objectives change or they are influenced by an external context, such as a negative public response to their actions.

Academic discussions on trauma reporting do not adequately canvass how survivors themselves may initiate media contact. Although, we learn in *Accidental Celebrity* that Jacqueline Pascarl requested news coverage to help find her two abducted children. This had the unintended consequence of media camping outside her home, expecting regular updates. When acknowledging the discursive power of survivors through traditional rather than social media, which provides more direct access to resources, researchers place the emphasis on survivors co-operating with media. They recognise people may choose to provide a public testimonial for a loved one or seek ongoing media attention to garner public support for a cause, push for legislative change, police action or a desired legal outcome (Breslin 2007; Greer 2017; Palmer 2018; Rentschler 2004; Wellman 2018).

Ron Delezio, father of car accident survivor Sophie, reinforces this point in *Accidental Celebrity* when he says: 'We use our images, we use the fact that we're well known to promote our charity,' referring to the Day of Difference foundation his family launched to raise funds for research into paediatric injuries. The Delezios attempt to influence ongoing media coverage by appealing to news values and media norms of behaviour, ultimately reinforcing celebrity making practices.

3.4 Celebrity Representation

Research on celebrity is wide-ranging across disciplines, with the contemporary schools of thought found in cultural and media studies (Bonner 2015), building on works from history (Boorstin 1992), sociology (Alberoni 1972; Gamson 1994; Gitlin 1980) and English (Braudy 1997). Leo Braudy's *The Frenzy of Renown* (1997) traced the notion of the public personality back to the early 17th century when people were regarded as famous for their achievements or for holding an elite social position. Among other influential works, Richard Dyer (1979) examined film stardom, connecting fame to the search by audiences for the 'real' person behind the role, while Joshua Gamson (1994) expanded the fan-star consideration to other industries such as sport and politics. Turner (2010c, 2014b; 2000) became a leading figure in the field, blending research and theory on the production of celebrity in Australia by exploring both the practices and power relations at play.

Turner's work provides a foundation for studying the transformation from trauma survivors as news subject to accidental celebrity. He surmises that visibility through media today is not necessarily dependent upon achievement or position, with the contemporary celebrity someone whose private life will attract greater interest than their professional life (Turner

2010b, 2014a, 2014b). Turner sees this as the result of shifts in the cultural power and representation of celebrity, which combine journalism and entertainment. Evidence can be found in the commercialisation of the experiences of ordinary people through reality television (Ouelette 2016; Ouelette & Hay 2008) and high-profile news events (Marshall 2010; Redmond & Holmes 2007; Rein et al. 2006; Simpson 2001; Turner, Bonner & Marshall 2000). While trauma is a personal experience, most survivors do not become celebrities. The news media normally 'careen from one trauma to another', moving on to the next big story when coverage of the event is over (Moeller 1999, p. 1). Gamson (2007, p. 141) cites a *People Weekly* report (1988 , p. 88) which acknowledged, 'fame's spotlight darts here and there, plucking unknowns from the crowd, then plunging them back into obscurity.'

Sociologist Todd Gitlin (1980) recognised in his book *The Whole World is Watching* that media processes create celebrities. Scholars have subsequently sought to understand those processes, broadly agreeing that celebrity status is not the property of individuals (Langer 1998; Marshall 2014; Rojek 2001; Turner 2010b). Rather, it is a product or consequence of the way individuals are treated through media practices (Giles 2000)—as a constructed public representation (Rojek 2001; Turner, Bonner & Marshall 2000, p. 16). Turner (2010b, pp. 310-311; 2014b, p. 10) characterises celebrity in four ways: a commodity, manufactured, managed and traded by the promotions, publicity and media industries; a genre of media representation, with interest shown in private rather than professional lives; the discursive effect of those representations, changing the cultural meanings of the individual; integrated into a form of social relations and identity through community conversations and gossip.

A body of literature (Carey 2002; Franklin & Pilling 1998; Hirst & Patching 2005; Rooney 2000; Sparks 2000; Turner 2014b) has traced an ineluctable shift away from genuine news and information, towards entertainment and the commodification of individuals in media over the past four decades, influenced by the commercial pursuit of audiences. This steady retreat from investigative 'hard' news in favour of 'softer', 'lighter' news stories with entertainment value has been referred to as 'newstainment' (Hirst & Patching 2005) or 'newszak' (Franklin 1997). It is also a hallmark of what is more widely known as tabloidisation, found most commonly in popular newspapers, women's magazines and some commercial current affairs programs (Lumby 1999), privileging image-dominated personalised storytelling and cementing a celebrity culture (Turner 2010b). Turner (2006b, p. 154; 2010c, p. 12) draws the various approaches together, explaining that through celebrity making practices, once anonymous individuals are 'discovered', 'suddenly extracted from their everyday lives and processed for stardom.'

3.5 The Accidental Celebrity Category

Academic attempts to categorise celebrities in terms of the cause or nature of their fame, their social meaning or the power they possess have led to the creation of different taxonomies (Turner 2014b, pp. 23-26). Rojek (2001, pp. 17-20) developed one of the most widely adopted, identifying three distinct forms of celebrity status: 'ascribed' based on lineage or bloodline; 'achieved' as a result of an accomplishment such as in sport or film; and 'attributed' to an ordinary individual who has no special talent but whose fame is the result of 'the concentrated representation of an individual as noteworthy or exceptional by cultural intermediaries', particularly media, but also including agents/managers. Sub-sets

of attributed celebrity have been identified, based on the catalyst for a rise to public visibility and duration. Rojek (2012, pp. 20-21) describes those with staged authenticity and a short-lived media career as 'celetoids'. Previously anonymous people regarded as 'famous by chance' after experiencing good fortune, such as winning the lottery, or being involuntarily caught in tragedy or disaster, also fall into the category (Chadwick & Mullaly 1997). John Langer (1980, p. 23) long ago identified 'ordinary people going about their daily affairs, caught in unenvisioned occurrences which are promoted into newsworthy events' as constituting a news group of 'victims'. They have been referred to elsewhere as 'ordinary celebrities' (Simpson 2001).

Creating another taxonomy that reclassifies or further separates celebrities seemed of little value in a study focussed on analysing the agency of a cohort of ordinary people who become a product in celebrity news (Turner 2014a, p. 151). Instead I have co-opted the term 'accidental celebrity' from Turner, Bonner and Marshall (2000, pp. 77, 111 & 168). They sought to 'capture the moment when a private citizen suddenly moves into the realm of celebrity status' through the overwhelming glare of media and public interest (Marshall 2010, p. 40; Marshall, Moore & Barbour 2015, pp. 288-289). Accidental celebrities are described as ordinary people who are involved in disasters or controversies that are treated as high-profile news events. They find themselves 'inadvertently celebritised' (Turner, Bonner & Marshall 2000, pp. 77 & 170), taking 'a seemingly unintentional route to high visibility' (Rein et al. 2006, p. 81). Among them are what Turner et al. (2000, pp. 77, 110-114) alternatively call 'accidental heroes'—people like Thredbo survivor Stuart Diver. How they and other academics define accidental celebrity requires a more nuanced approach, I would argue, as not all survivors are reluctant celebrities. Douglas Wood, for instance,

indicates in the manuscript *Accidental Celebrity* that he was willing to speak with journalists, while Jacqueline Pascarl and the Scott family initiated contact. The traumatic events were unanticipated, but for a small number of this study's participants, the media coverage was expected, even if they find interacting with journalists uncomfortable.

Just as celebrity categories are not clear, Sean Redmond (2014, p. 7) rightly draws attention to the fact that celebrity status constantly shifts with media and public attention, as does the individual's discursive meaning. Someone who is unknown may become well known then fade back into anonymity or obscurity, while the high profile of others will be maintained and traded. The reason an ordinary person rises to prominence may not be what keeps them there. As I found evidence of continual or return coverage, and ongoing references to individual survivors in mass-media, I began to agree with Alice Marwick and danah boyd (2011b, p. 140) that celebrity cannot be considered a 'bright line that separates individuals.' Rather, it is a 'set of circulated strategies and practices that place fame on a continuum.'

Irving Rein et al. (2006, pp. 83-84) argue that for most accidental 'national' celebrities, 'high visibility is short lived and its rewards are significant.' They offer one major qualifier: '[t]he media will draw out the saga if it continues to sell and new developments occur.' Recognising that people will be well known for varying lengths of time, Rein et al. attempt to identify timeframes for high visibility, although they do not examine how news subject can influence the process. From one day to one week, the media spotlight and public attention remains fixed on individuals when a news event becomes an unfolding drama. One-year personalities are more than media curiosities and have the potential to become

a permanent brand, although they typically reach a peak of public recognition and over the following years it fades. The majority of accidental celebrities I interviewed fall into this category. A small 'elite' retain visibility for a whole generation, according to Rein et al. In other words, they become permanent celebrities—otherwise regarded as heroes, idols and icons. Marshall and Turner (2014, p. 16; 2014b, pp. 21-22) refer to those who roughly correspond with the accidental celebrity, but are fabricated into icons through a process mainly out of their control, as 'quasars'. Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton is arguably one such person, although Rein et al. (2006, p. 84) warn that 'predicting who will gain a lock on the memory channel is not easy.'

Marshall (2010, 2014, 2016; 2015) provides one of the most useful extensions of celebrity research into a consideration of individual agency through his study of the public persona. He argues that Italian sociologist Francesco Alberoni (1972, p. 75; 2007, p. 65) under-estimated the cultural influence of celebrities when he described them as a 'powerless elite … whose institutional power is very limited or non-existent, but whose doing and way of life arouse a considerable and even a maximum degree of interest.' Marshall (2014, p. 12) draws on the early work of Dyer (1979) to emphasise celebrity is 'not entirely in the manipulative hands of the media or other obvious institutions of power', but the result of a negotiation between the public, media and celebrity themselves. He considers celebrities emerge from 'a legitimation process that is connected to the people'—dependent as individuals on institutions for elevation to the public sphere, while also standing in for the people as a 'voice of power and influence'(Marshall 2014, p. 244). The individual may be empowered with a public profile that enables them to speak out about issues (Lumby 1999, p. xiii). Kay Danes, for example, uses the high profile she was afforded after 11 months

detained and tortured in Laos to advocate for social justice and human rights, becoming an internationally recognised author and speaker. Discourse, in this context, can be considered a means of expressing power (Rojek 2001, p. 36).

When applying Giddens' conception of agency to the processes that transform ordinary people into celebrities, we recognise individuals must in some way contribute through interactions with media, opening windows into their private lives. While some trauma survivors choose to step into the media spotlight, the actions of others which see them rise to prominence most often precede intention. People then reflexively monitor and rationalise their actions, taking into account the social context, which in turn influences future behaviour, as Giddens conceived. After presenting his structuration theory, the sociologist concentrated on explaining further how our notion of self, or self-identity, is reflexively made. Giddens (1991, p. 75) concludes that all activity is the subject of social reflection, and that 'we are not what we are, but what we make of ourselves.' The reflexive self exists in 'a state of continuous construction and reconstruction' in an ever-shifting structure of social relations (Gergen 2000, p. 7; Lyotard 1979, p. 15). The construction of a public persona is enmeshed in studies of celebrity, underpinned by Goffman's (1959) theory that individuals present a version of themselves to the world. An exploration of the notions of 'self' and social identity are beyond the scope of the project's analysis. It should be noted, however, that persona studies shifts the focus from collective agency to individual agency; what Marshall, Christopher Moore and Kim Barbour (2015, p. 290) describe as 'an individual pattern of negotiating one's way through institutions and discourses.'

3.6 Celebrities as Commodities

The study of celebrity—whether centred on its production, cultural meaning, or economic and discursive power—invariably leads to consideration of the commodification of the individual. Media create and use celebrities to attract audiences, sell products and therefore make money (Franklin & Pilling 1998, p. 120). Put simply by Rein et al. (2006, p. 17), a person with high visibility is 'someone whose name has attention-getting, interest-drawing, and profit-generating value.' The creation of celebrities for content has been identified by Turner (2014b) and Gamson (1994) as a commercial strategy for media organisations since at least the 1980s. 'Instead of marketing the celebrity developed elsewhere, the media now discover, produce, market and sell on their celebrities from scratch,' Turner explains (2010b, p. 314). While audience consumption of celebrities is outside the project's parameters, the commodification of individuals is relevant to an analysis of their interactions with media. Specifically, the financial and other deals that high-profile trauma survivors negotiate, which demonstrate the exercise of agency. For the celebrity, their 'ultimate power is to sell the commodity that is themselves' (Turner, Bonner & Marshall 2000, p. 12).

The words 'celebrity' and 'fame' 'imply a standing out from the crowd and the ability to command attention or receive a premium for services' (Rein et al. 2006, p. 5). Turner et al. (2000) have used the term 'celebrity-commodity' to describe how the individual is the product of an economic process, with a commercial value that is realised and traded through their own agency, the actions of media and contribution from the promotions industry. They investigated how the areas of publicity, public relations and promotions

operate before concluding that they have become part of the media industry, embedded in the economy and sharing in the production of celebrities. Turner et al.'s (2000, pp. 112-113) insights focus largely on the use of agents/managers by individuals, not only for privacy protection by 'cutting a deal with one or other of the major players,' but to influence the way a media subject is publicly represented and commodified:

> While these agents may now be a necessary form of assistance to people who become the accidental objects of media interest, no one pretends that the service they provide is anything other than a commercial opportunity.

Increased competition for exclusive news stories over the past four decades, combined with the desire of the subjects to assert control over the flow of information and representation in media coverage, has opened up the 'ethical minefield' of chequebook journalism (Tanner et al. 2005; Turner, Bonner & Marshall 2000, p. 175). John Avieson (1992) interpreted the practice of paying sources to speak to nobody else as a clear indication that news is a commodity. Other scholars argue the consumer desire to 'possess' famous people—learning about their private lives—means the individual is a commodity (Franck & Nuesch 2007, p. 226; Grabosky & Wilson 1989, p. 112; Rojek 2001, p. 15). Both schools of thought apply to high-profile trauma survivors, as Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton indicates in *Accidental Celebrity*:

> I don't mind taking money because [the media] have made so much more out of me than I have … they've probably made more out of me in a day than I've made altogether. And they've taken away my right to a livelihood by making me so well known that I can't get a job and I've had to do something.

By limiting the number of media outlets a survivor has to choose from in telling their story, their account is not available to the entire media audience. This exercise of agency, attempting to exert control, invariably means that wealthy media organisations will obtain the best news stories (Knightley 1990), not those with the most industrious journalists (Hurst & White 1994). Media executives who write the cheques regard it as a business expense (Hirst & Patching 2005), expecting a return through increased ratings, sales and views. As Boorstin (1992, p. 74) recognised, 'in the creation of celebrity somebody always has an interest—newsmen needing stories, press agents paid to make celebrities and the celebrity himself.'

Turner et al. (2000, p. 111) argue that chequebook journalism, as an established media practice, 'makes a mockery' of the ideal of news media performing a public service role, subverting what others have referred to as the public's right to know (Avieson 1992, p. 45). Media ethicists describe chequebook journalism as a potentially corrupting influence (Hurst & White 1994; Sanders 2003; Tanner et al. 2005). Their concerns centre primarily on the credibility of the information received—whether the waving of a chequebook 'encourages greed on the part of the seller' (Hurst & White 1994, p. 195) and leads to information being embellished (Sanders 2003, p. 115). However, newspapers have obtained information through financial deals for at least 250 years (Hirst & Patching 2005) and scholars provide no direct evidence that chequebook journalism corrupts the quality of information or that higher payments encourage the source to deliberately colour their accounts. The subject's concern must be whether receiving a payment results in their negative representation by those media that missed out on the exclusive story (Tanner et al. 2005, p. 183). In *Accidental Celebrity*, Douglas Wood reflects on being portrayed as a

‘greedy bugger grabbing money’, when he was paid for exclusive media access, adding ‘I end up bearing the brunt of it. They [the media] don’t get to kick the manager around.’ By applying Giddens’ theory, we can see that media—particularly the commercial sector—draw on norms of behaviour (rules) to attach meaning to a survivor’s actions, then use their allocative and authoritative power (resources) to convey that to audiences.

The financial gains for the celebrity, beyond receiving what some consider a form of compensation for pain and suffering (Hurst & White 1994), come from developing a public persona that appreciates their value. According to Gamson (1994, p. 58), for celebrities to construct a viable career, they ‘need advice about how to market themselves—much in the way a manufacturing business will use specialists to help them develop a marketing plan, a system for modifying and improving the product and a strategy for building and maintaining consumer loyalty.’ Rojek (2001) similarly argues that celebrities only gain public recognition and enduring appeal through assistance from third-party intermediaries, who include agents, publicists, photographers and even cosmetics experts. However, his theory does not recognise that an individual’s accidental celebrity status can be maintained through direct media interactions, without intervention from third parties.

3.7 Principles Versus Practice

Ordinary people who become high profile can expect little support from industry codes of ethics and practice guidelines when interacting with media. The institution is largely self-regulated in Australia and adherence to standards is voluntary for individual journalists. By employing Giddens’ theory, a clear picture of the tension that exists between stated media principles and unwritten news values and norms of behaviour can be found. The

transformation from trauma survivor to accidental celebrity further complicates what individual news subjects should expect when interacting with journalists and editors. While media principles are not under examination in this study, the lack of enforceable rules to counter the dominance of practitioners provide useful context when examining the agency exercised by news subjects in power relations.

Media studies academics have long recognised that journalists face a serious ethical dilemma when reporting on trauma survivors who are newsworthy but at the same time vulnerable (Erikson 1994; Hurst & White 1994; Richards 1998; Sykes et al. 2003). The Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma (2011), established in the US, encourages journalists internationally to do 'no further harm' to 'people caught up in tragic events.' However, successful implementation of the principle relies on individuals being educated in how it applies to their practice, encouraged to comply and be fully aware that transgressions have consequences (Tanner et al. 2005, p. 50). News values and norms of behaviour, evident in the processes of gathering and distributing content, encourage some journalists to 'push the boundaries' or 'bend the rules', particularly following a disaster (Ewart 2002; Richards 1998). Ethics can also give way to time pressure as journalists strive to supply information to dedicated television news channels and digital online and mobile platforms in a competitive and continuous news cycle.

In Australia, media ethics are voluntary. Practitioners do not need a tertiary qualification, nor are they compelled to belong to a professional body (Crowley-Cyr & Cokley 2005), such as the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA), and instead subscribe to uphold its now 20-year-old formal Code of Ethics (2019). The union broadly expects members to

‘never exploit a person’s vulnerability’ and ‘respect private grief and personal privacy.’ The Australian Press Council (APC), which is funded by print media proprietors to guide journalists and editors (Spence et al. 2011, p. 187), specifies in its Statement of Privacy Principles (2011):

> Members of the public caught up in newsworthy events should not be exploited. A victim or bereaved person has the right to refuse or terminate an interview or photographic session at any time.

However, when the individual becomes well known publicly, print media may rely—consciously or unconsciously—on other cues for action. The APC (1996, p. 29) has long considered that ‘public figures must expect a lesser right to privacy than other citizens,’ which it has since sought to explain:

> Public figures necessarily sacrifice their right to privacy, where public scrutiny is in the public interest. However, public figures do not forfeit their right to privacy altogether. Intrusion into their right to privacy must be related to their public duties or activities. (Australian Press Council 2011)

The APC appears to be referring to those who hold public office, although that is not spelled out. At no point does the body address what ordinary people should expect in interactions with media when the flurry of interest in the news event is over but not in their private lives. The MEAA’s Ethics Review Committee (1997, p. 40) describes those associated with a newsworthy event, often a tragedy, ‘non-celebrities’. Yet it questions why individuals should not be able to ‘commodify their suffering’, referring to participation in chequebook journalism, which is a characteristic of celebrity (Turner 2010b, 2014b; Turner, Bonner &

Marshall 2000). The MEAA's Code of Ethics (2019) acknowledges the practice of exchanging money in return for access by encouraging disclosure of any direct or indirect payments for interviews, pictures, information or stories. The union effectively recognises audiences should be made aware of the power relations between high-profile news subjects and media in the creation of content. However, it is evident from the reporting of chequebook journalism included in *Accidental Celebrity* that it is those media shut out of the deals that expose the practice.

Findings of breaches of the MEAA Code of Ethics are not published or broadcast by offending media who control the outlets, and penalties are rarely invoked. The APC is reactive, only responding to complaints from people who are not satisfied with the response they have already received from a publication. If it chooses to investigate, the complainant must sign a waiver agreeing not to take legal action against the newspaper or magazine (Tanner et al. 2005, p. 55). When unethical behaviour is identified, blame is 'never directly apportioned so no one takes personal responsibility' (Hurst & White 1994, p. 255), even though journalists and their colleagues have agency to think for themselves and act differently. The APC effectively has no powers of compliance or enforcement and is only able to request that the media outlet involved publish the adjudication (Salter 2007, p. 281). Under the Broadcasting Services Act, television, radio and online operators have registered codes of practice which cover all activities, including news and current affairs (Pearson & Polden 2011, p. 423). However, those developed by the commercial television sector (Free TV Australia 2019) and Commercial Radio Australia (2018) do not address reporting practices.

Media practitioners, as individual agents, must decide how they will behave when interacting with trauma survivors—whether to produce or reproduce institutionalised practices and industry guidelines, which can seem in conflict. They may give primacy to their own 'moral compass' (Kovach & Rosenstiel 2001, p. 181), applying personal values to the performance of their job (Merrill, cited in Itule & Anderson 2007, p. 400). However, actions can always be rationalised, as Giddens explains. Journalists are paid to get the story and are rewarded, potentially through career advancement, when they succeed. Newsroom debates about intrusion into privacy are unlikely to happen when an organisation's culture places greater importance on producing content and attracting audiences than the manner in which the information was gathered (Richards 1998, p. 157; 2005, p. 4).

For trauma survivors who are transformed into accidental celebrities through a high-profile news event, exercising agency means complying with or resisting institutionalised media practices rather than relying on industry codes and guidelines for protection. In the next chapter, I look at what we already know about the capability of ordinary people to influence media when they are willing to raise their profile. A survey of research into accidental celebrity, as well as the involvement of this study's participants in other academic and more widely-marketed literature, identifies the research gap.

Chapter 4: The 'Accidental' Research Gap

4.1 Introduction

The transformation of ordinary people into celebrities through media can be traced back to the late 19th century, when newspapers began publishing images of individuals (Turner 2014a, p. 146). With the 'explosion' of new television formats and online platforms since the 1990s (Teurlings 2001; Turner 2006a, p. 155), Couldry (2003, p. 102) declared that ordinary people had never been more visible in the media, nor their own utterances ever reproduced with the same faithfulness, respect and accuracy. The demand for ordinary people who want to become stars has also expanded, along with the supply (Turner 2006b, p. 155). By 2004, Turner (2010c, 2014b) began referring to the increased participation of ordinary people in celebrity culture, primarily through reality television and social media online, as 'the demotic turn'. The willingness and capability of individuals to turn themselves into media content that he describes has been the focus of ongoing academic study (see Hill 2015; Khamis, Ange & Welling 2017; Marwick & boyd 2011b). Not as well researched or understood is the role ordinary people as news media subjects play in their accidental celebrity status.

This chapter explains how my exploration of the agency of trauma survivors aims to contribute to the discipline of media studies. I consider where the manuscript *Accidental Celebrity* and the complementary exegesis sit within a range of existing trade publications and academic literature. Reality television and social networks, while outside the scope of my inquiry, provide useful context for a project that explores the role of ordinary people in

the creation of media content and a celebrity profile. Interviews I conducted with a cohort of high-profile Australian trauma survivors offer further insights into the influence of individuals when confronted by the institutionalised power of media. These first-hand accounts are absent from other scholarly work centred on news events and celebrity culture, and can mainly be heard in separate trade books about their individual life-changing traumatic experiences.

The survivors' rise to public prominence canvassed in this project's original manuscript distinguishes it from the widely marketed book *Any Ordinary Day* by well-known Australian journalist Leigh Sales (2018) about people who faced life-changing traumatic events. The exegesis builds on Turner's analysis of the production of celebrity, since defining accidental celebrity in a collaboration with Bonner and Marshall (2000). *Fame Games* was described as a contribution to media studies, amid some debate about where celebrity studies is situated—whether as a sub-set of media or cultural studies, or within both as a conjoined disciplinary field (Bonner 2015). Turner went on to document major shifts in celebrity making in *Understanding Celebrity* (2014b) and *Ordinary People and the Media: The Demotic Turn* (2010c)—often cited in this research and more broadly—as well as a series of journal articles and book chapters.

Throughout, Turner (2014b, p. 23) 'deals with celebrity as a media process.' Taking Turner's lead, my work is positioned in media studies, analysing how trauma survivors interact with media in the process of celebrification. Although, cultural implications are not within the parameters of the investigation. These high-profile news subjects have been largely overlooked in a field that has concentrated on either the impact of journalistic practices on

individuals following events or the willingness of others to be media objects, actively participating in their transformation to a position of prominence. The project negotiates between ordinary people and celebrity, unwitting news subjects and eager entertainers, the exploited and the empowered, filling a research gap. Turner's key findings and theories are included here as both reference points and a base for my extended work.

4.2 Ordinary People, 'Real' Celebrities

Ordinary people have undoubtedly been a focus of considerable academic study, although most of the attention has been on explaining the popularity and cultural significance of contemporary modes of production (Collins 2008) rather than the long-established practice of creating accidental celebrities. Couldry (2004a) writes about the transition from ordinary (non-media) to celebrity (media)—individuals outside the media acquiring a media form—in reference to reality television personalities. The transformation of trauma survivors who are thrust into the spotlight through a high-profile news event can be understood in the same way. Gamson (2011, p. 1062) surmises that, 'the emergence of reality TV and of the Internet … has pushed ordinariness into the cultural forefront.' These pathways to public visibility indicate how ordinary people may participate in the production of celebrity by interacting with mass media beyond traditional news and information services, placing my research in context.

There are numerous examples of ordinary people seeking public recognition through television entertainment by appearing on a diverse range of game shows, talent contests, docu-soaps and talk shows (Bonner 2003; Couldry 2004a; Curnutt 2011; Deller 2016; Hill 2015; Turner 2014b). *Big Brother* and *Survivor* are among the forerunners to a long list of

programs that promote un-scripted, real life situations, creating the 'reality celebrity' (Curnutt 2009). In the digital era, we have seen the emergence of 'micro-celebrities' (Senft 2008)—a term now widely used to describe those with online exposure (Djafarova & Trofimenko 2019; Gamson 2011; Jerslev 2016; Marwick 2013a; Marwick & boyd 2011b; Senft 2013; Turner 2014b). While there has been a proliferation of personal websites and blogs which enable people to represent themselves, social media has empowered otherwise unknown individuals to develop a 'following' through platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter and YouTube (Khamis, Ange & Welling 2017).

Micro-celebrities do not have to rely on 'gatekeepers' to generate interest in their personal lives by revealing private information; they can promote themselves, sharing views and images to build a social identity (Kim & Chock 2015; Zappavigna 2016). Research by Alice Marwick and danah boyd (2011b) on Twitter practices supports Theresa Senft's (2008) view that social media takes the process of celebrification—through the circulation of stories and images—out of the control of media organisations, in effect 'trickling down' to individual users. Marwick (2013b, p. 114) calls the product of these efforts 'internet-enabled visibility'. Individuals, often described as 'social media influencers', now develop their own fan base to bring target audiences to content and advertisers (Hou 2019; Khamis, Ange & Welling 2017; Van Dijck 2013), exercising economic and discursive power through mass media.

Mingyi Hou (2019, p. 551) most recently found that while YouTube vloggers (video bloggers) have 'more agency over their profile compared with traditional celebrities, they still need to answer to many industrial forces which make their celebrity status possible in

the first place.' Multi-channel networks (MCNs) act as third-party intermediaries for vloggers, providing technical, promotional and advertising support, similar to an agent or manager in traditional media, in return for a share of revenue (Hou 2019; Lobato 2016, p. 351). The professionalisation and monetisation of content on legislated platforms that began as 'virtual villages' for amateur content makers (Kim 2012) has led Hou (2019, p. 534) to warn that social media may become 'a new locale for industrialised celebrity manufacturing.' While ordinary people have the capability to perform their celebrity online, Turner (2016, p. 87) argues they cannot 'operate completely outside the existing industrial and economic structures.'

The practices involved in producing and finding fame through reality television offer a clear example of the institutionalised economic and cultural power of media faced by potential celebrities, including trauma survivors. While the existence of reality programs is dependent upon the recruitment of eager individuals and their 'performance' in line with the show's brief (Collins 2008), media control the resources—from the recording and editing through to the distribution—placing them in a dominant position. Anita Biressi and Heather Nunn (2002, p. 48) assert that reality television identities 'acquire massive media visibility but possess very little in the way of institutional power or control.' It is a statement supported by Deborah Halbert's (2003) investigation into publicity rights, revealing the exploitative contracts offered to reality television contestants in the US. She describes the 'powerlessness' of individuals to broker deals that enable them to determine their public image and build an ongoing career. Agency here is contingent on the capability of individuals to influence the causal powers of media.

Turner (2010b, p. 316) contends that if reality celebrities feel empowered through self-exposure, that is simply a by-product of being used. He challenges theories that the proliferation of celebrity without achievement is a democratising force, first put forward by Braudy (1997). Academics went on to argue that tabloid formats such as talk shows—included in the reality television genre—provide a space where ordinary people are empowered to speak on their own behalf and air social issues (Lumby 1999, p. xiii), with their actions and statements afforded a privileged authority within discourse (Langer 1998). This break from elitism is what John Hartley (1999, 2004) calls 'democratainment'. The rise of self-promotion through social media networks has reinforced the view that we are witnessing the democratisation of celebrity (Driessens 2013). However, Turner (2010b, p. 316; 2010c, p. 172) insists the accelerated 'use and disposal' of celebrities in response to demand is a sign of increasing commodification, not democratisation, even in the digital domain. The trend is demotic, not democratic, according to Turner (2010c, p. 16), because while ordinary people may exercise agency by turning themselves into media content, celebrity remains a 'systematically hierarchical and exclusive category':

> No amount of public participation in game shows, reality TV or DIY celebrity websites will alter the fact that, overall, the media industries still remain in control over the symbolic economy, and that they still attempt to operate this economy in the service of their own interests.

Turner (2014b, p. 25) and Rojek (2001, pp. 20-21) place accidental celebrities in the same category as reality television stars. They are what Rojek (2001, 2012) refers to as 'celetoids'—a form of attributed celebrity with an authenticity that is staged and media career that is short-lived. Redmond (2014, p. 7) more recently describes accidental

celebrities as 'ephemeral, the length and reach of their fame limited to the size of the accidental event that first thrusts them into the spotlight.' When referring to celebrities in general though, he explains they 'always exist as *blended* constructions where their status and discursive meaning constantly shifts.' Changes are not only dependent on the event, but the form of media and role an individual is seen to be playing, according to Redmond, indicating that individuals may act to build a longer-lasting public profile. Evidence of this can be found in the way the trauma survivors in this study interacted with sections of the broader media institution, such as the promotions and entertainment industries, after becoming publicly recognisable through a high-profile news event.

While ordinary people who are eager to become reality celebrities may choose to be represented by an intermediary—an agent who primarily books work for the 'talent', or a manager who can help build their career—some trauma survivors turn to the promotions industry initially for protection from media (Turner, Bonner & Marshall 2000). This is an important distinction. However, James Scott, Douglas Wood and Todd Russell reveal in *Accidental Celebrity* that hiring an agent/manager quickly led to product endorsement opportunities as a way to commercialise their traumatic experiences. Endorsements and appearances at public events help prolong a celetoid's high profile (Rawlins 2018, p. 428), beyond the news coverage, along with book and movie deals.

High-profile survivors may be drawn into the online content and reality television spaces too. Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton and Kay Danes created personal websites to share the facts of their cases, rather than traditional media completely controlling their public representation. Content on the pages also serves as a promotional tool. The Morcombes

and Delezios feature prominently on websites publicising the charities they established—the Daniel Morcombe Foundation and Day of Difference. Bruce and Denise Morcombe at times request print media include the website address on the bottom of stories, inviting public support. It is apparent that the public profile of these survivors has been extended through their later role as campaigners or advocates—what Redmond (2014, p. 7) would call a 'blended construction'.

The Morcombes have found that while social media empowers them to communicate directly with the community, it also exposes individuals to criticism from strangers. One person questioned whether the couple were victims or celebrities when they were nominated for an award. The survivor who plays a role in their accidental celebrity status by interacting with journalists beyond the initial event, may face both public and media questions about whether they remain ordinary, often levelled at reality television stars. Wood and his former wife Yvonne Given happily appeared on the celebrity special of a short-lived Australian game show called *Temptation*. However, Corby and Danes turned down reality television offers. 'What are they going to call me when they put the name of who you are? Like, what's my title?' Corby explains, uncertain about how her social identity would change.

Trauma survivors must be careful when considering prolonging interactions with media, as the publicly perceived authenticity of an ordinary person can be threatened by celebrity status. Reality television normatively frames people as both ordinary and extraordinary (Rawlins 2018, p. 430) to capture the attention of audiences (Bennett & Holmes 2010; Holmes & Redmond 2006) who enjoy trying to separate the real from the manufactured

(Collins 2008, p. 102). As Turner (2010b, p. 315) explains: 'Underpinning much of the suspicion of celebrity is the sense that it is fundamentally phony and inauthentic.' Film stars, as constructed public identities, encourage us to question what people are really like in private, according to Dyer (2004, pp. 13-14). Yet he sees our 'selves' as simply separated into public and private people, neither of which is false or more real than the other. They remain the same person 'inside' no matter how changeable their circumstances and behaviour. This is what Dyer (2004, pp. 7-10) calls 'the irreducible core'. In *Accidental Celebrity*, the survivors reflect on how they believe their self-image differs from their public image, although the construction of persona and the impact on audience reception are beyond the scope of this research.

4.3 Contribution to Media Studies

Given the extensive media coverage the participants in this project attracted, and the high profile they attained, it came as no surprise to me that some were included as case studies in a number of earlier academic articles and publications (for example Bainbridge 2009; Middleweek 2017; Turner, Bonner & Marshall 2000). However, it is not obvious from a scan of the literature that any of the participants have personally contributed to media and cultural studies research until now. Certainly, this is the first time one project has included insights from a cohort of Australian accidental celebrities, gathered separately for collective analysis. I argue that in the absence of direct contact with these individuals, their interactions with media could not be fully explored. Rather, they have been open to academic interpretation and representation based largely on observations.

Numerous Australian investigations into the impact of reporting on survivors of traumatic events have examined journalistic practices (Bilboe 1998; Ewart 2002; Gearing 2013; Harrison 1986; McLellan 1999; Middleweek 2007; Muller & Gawenda 2011; Simpson 2001). However, these studies do not extend to the production of accidental celebrities and, instead, attention is centred on media coverage of trauma rather than the creation of celebrities. Those survivors who were interviewed about their media interactions remain situated as news subjects and none became nationally well known, like the participants in my project. Research within the field has not considered how ordinary people are transformed into accidental celebrities. The survivors are also portrayed as being acted upon by media rather than the research questioning how they exercised agency.

A citation of every mention of every high-profile survivor in previous publications would serve little purpose in demonstrating the value of my research. However, an overview of the key works provides a foundation for the project. It should be noted, therefore, that the traumatic events which enveloped Stuart Diver (Bilboe 1998), and Michael Chamberlain and Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton (Middleweek 2007), have been examined from an ethical news reporting perspective. A year after the 1997 Thredbo landslide, Wendy Bilboe (1998) compiled reports of unethical media conduct based on interviews with nine residents of the New South Wales ski village and 25 journalists and camera operators who were at the site. Diver was not among the contributors, and was only mentioned in the context of the traumatic event itself.

The disappearance of baby Azaria Chamberlain in 1980 has spurred countless academic studies (Bonner 2015), many unbeknown to her mother. ‘I’m still surprised at how many

things they've researched out of it—I never would have thought there'd be a lot of gay rights research into it,' Chamberlain-Creighton explains in our interview (2012). Retrospectives have pored over the details and cultural significance of the long-running and historic legal case (Howe 2005), described by Belinda Middleweek (2007) as an Australian media event. She examined the phases of the news story, drawing comparisons with coverage of the arrest and prosecution of Schapelle Corby in Indonesia. The study aimed to detail the role of news practitioners, their changing views and the extent to which the media exerted prejudicial influence. While Michael Chamberlain pointed me to this study, his voice is not evident in the work.

Turner et al. (2000, pp. 77, 110-114 & 168) introduced the category of accidental celebrity in the context of a study on the production of celebrity. Although, the section in *Fame Games* that set out to identify the way individuals and their agents/managers have handled a 'media feeding frenzy' is titled 'accidental heroes'. Diver and Scott were case studies for how ordinary people become publicly well known following a high-profile news events and turn to professional help. Turner et al. (2000, p. 173) argue, '[w]hile intrusive activities may be thought defensible to some extent for public figures, they are not in the case of accidental celebrities.' The authors identified public recognition as a separating principle:

> Since the distinction between ordinary people and celebrities is the principal way in which individuals are categorised by the media, when individuals emerge from their ordinariness for one reason or another (good fortune, bad fortune, valour or criminality), they are treated as if they have crossed the line into the other grouping whether or not this is appropriate or beneficial to them (or to us). (Turner, Bonner & Marshall 2000, p. 170)

Turner et al. do not strengthen their findings by acknowledging the range of strategies and practices that move ordinary people up and down on a continuum of fame. However, through a content analysis of select Australian television programmes, newspapers and magazines, they describe 'ordinary citizens' like Diver as notable sources of celebrity stories, which are forming a greater proportion of news and current affairs (first published in Bonner et al. 1999). Data from 1977 was compared with a survey conducted over two weeks in each of February and July 1997. The specific dates were not noted despite the Thredbo landslide happening on 30 July 1997. Still, the results appear to confirm earlier theories that human interest and prominence are increasingly highlighted by media as news values. The second stage of the research touched on the commodification of accidental celebrities as part of an examination of the role of Australia's media-related promotions industry in creating and commodifying celebrities.

The Chamberlains are identified in *Accidental Celebrity* as most likely Australia's first high-profile trauma survivors to employ an agent/manager, when they hired Harry M. Miller to provide a shield from media intrusion into their everyday lives after Lindy was released from jail. In *Fame Games*, Diver and Scott are noted as clients of the 'impresario manager', who did not just represent personalities like an agent but often took a public role when orchestrating deals to shape careers. 'Some of the more interesting clients have not emerged from the entertainment industry directly but have sought assistance when they have become the unwilling object of media attention,' according to Turner et al. (2000, p. 77). Miller described in his interview the business of 'crisis management control'—protecting accidental celebrities from unwanted intrusion into their private lives by restricting media access; at the same time recognising that their story of survival and

identity could be bought and sold (Turner, Bonner & Marshall 2000, pp. 111-113). The work of agents/managers underlines that there are limits to media power (Turner 2007, p. 203), although the actions of Diver and Scott have not been adequately recognised in research as exercising agency and exerting control:

> The only way such a person [Diver] could control their media representation was by fully engaging with the celebrity industries that produce it: by hiring a manager and surrendering control of the situation to a media professional who would entirely commercialise all media access. (Turner 2007, p. 197)

Turner et al.'s (2000) study offers some revealing insights into the functions and activities of agents/managers in the promotions industry. However, the perspective of the clients has remained in a vacuum, with the findings inevitably restricted to an examination of their use of third-party intermediaries rather than direct interactions. The agency of accidental celebrities and motivation for trauma survivors to seek outside help and engage in chequebook journalism has been subject to academic interpretation more broadly. Diver, Scott and Chamberlain-Creighton, along with Russell and Wood, are all recognised in literature as high-profile news subjects who hired agents and were paid for exclusive media access (Bainbridge 2009; Goc & Bainbridge 2008; Hirst & Patching 2005; Hurst & White 1994). None were interviewed, restricting the ability of researchers to venture beyond already well-documented academic and media accounts of the commodification of ordinary people as celebrities, while occasionally drawing on quotes from the survivors' own publications.

Nicola Goc and Jason Bainbridge's (2008) article on 'The Beaconsfield mine disaster and the evolution of chequebook journalism'—published prior to *Fame Games*—reads like a narrative of events. They interpreted Russell's comment 'Tell me how big your chequebook is and we'll talk' on the Nine Network's *Footy Show* (11 May 2006) to the program's host and network CEO Eddie McGuire, as the survivor 'brokering a deal on national television … openly offering himself as a news commodity.' However, in his interview for *Accidental Celebrity*, Russell explained the line was scripted: 'Eddie McGuire told me to say it … It wasn't a phrase that I came up with.' Ultimately, McGuire signed the exclusive with Russell and fellow mine survivor Brant Webb, brokered by their agent/manager Sean Anderson. Goc and Bainbridge (2008, p. 103) attributed the deal to 'the celebrity CEO' matching 'the 'power of influence' normally wielded by the celebrity with genuine economic power' as McGuire was the one writing the cheque. Paul Chadwick and Jennifer Mullaly (1997) cite Diver and Chamberlain-Creighton as examples of previously anonymous people who found 'fame by chance' through a newsworthy crime, tragedy or disaster. The work did not examine in any depth how trauma survivors are transformed into accidental celebrities, touching only briefly on interactions between individuals and media.

Since the term accidental celebrity entered the academic lexicon in 2000, it has been included in Turner's (2007, p. 196; 2014b, p. 25) subsequent work on the production of celebrity. Accidental celebrity has been adopted as a category across a range of other studies, including in anthropology (Lange 2017). Rein et al. (2006, p. 81) use the notion to describe national visibility that is short-lived—'people who have committed a sensational crime, participated in an unusual event, or won a major contest.' Redmond (2014) refers to those who are '[t]hrust into the limelight because of an incident or event outside of their

control, they become newsworthy for a distinctly limited period of time.' Others apply the term to case studies, including research on the 'accidental celebritization' of South African athletics star Caster Semenya (Schultz 2012) and the sudden high profile of whistleblowers Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden (Di Salvo 2016). More recently, Middleweek (2017) has mounted an argument for a sub-set of accidental celebrity—the 'deviant diva'– after conducting a qualitative content analysis of news articles on the Chamberlain-Creighton and Corby cases. None of the studies have explored the role of individuals in creating their accidental celebrity status, connecting the two dimensions of previous research which have predominantly focused on the participants as either ordinary people or celebrities, not both.

4.4 Sharing Personal Perspectives

The desire to tell their story their way drove most of my participants to publish their own account of their traumatic experience. Through this act, their relationship with audiences would not be mediated. They explained to me they felt it important to control factual accuracy and the way they would be represented. Of the 11 cases I researched and brought together in one manuscript, participants have independently written, co-authored or authorised books about eight. Jandamarra O'Shane and Jenni Begg have never embarked on a manuscript, while Wood did not publish his and Mercedes Corby provided input into her sister Schapelle's autobiography instead of writing her own. The intent behind each of the survival stories was placing on the record the timeline of their traumatic and life-changing events and conveying the impact, which is not the aim of my manuscript. The writers mention to a much lesser degree—some barely at all—their media encounters and

the interest they attracted from the public. As trade publications, they were all marketed for a wide readership. Media contact, coverage and the use of agents/managers were mentioned only when and where the authors considered them relevant to their experience of trauma and survival. The publications were never intended to be retrospectives on the agency survivors may exercise in media interactions.

Even a collective reading of the survivors' books provides only snippets of insight into what it is like to be transformed from an ordinary person into an accidental celebrity. Their capability to exert control in the relationship with media is largely open to reader interpretation. One sentence summed up Danes' realisation of the extent of coverage she and husband Kerry attracted following their release from imprisonment in Laos and boarding a plane back to Australia. 'We were front-page news!' recalls Danes (2009, p. 380-382). She went on to describe facing more than 200 reporters at a press conference in Brisbane when their Sydney-based lawyer Ted Tzovaras 'ignored our request for privacy. He insisted we had an obligation to fulfil.' Jacqueline Pascarl (2006, p. 334), on the other hand, initiated media coverage in a bid to find her two children, illegally taken to Malaysia by their father, then openly wrote in her memoir: 'I could feel myself losing control' after a journalist 'used every trick in the book to trigger my tears.' Diver (1999, pp. 182-183) shared his perspective on bowing to pressure to speak about his ordeal after being pulled from the Thredbo rubble:

> [T]he media interviews began in earnest … the interviews controlled my life for the rest of the week … Dad [Steve Diver] was always in control of the situation and he set a timetable where every hour I would get a break for 30 minutes, a breather.

The family had hired agent Harry M. Miller to handle the overwhelming number of incoming media requests and offers, which led to exclusive contracts. 'Harry said he would be dealing with Dad on everything and that he already had a couple of ideas about what to do,' Diver wrote (1999, p. 172). Here the survivor indicated that early interactions with media were delegated to Miller, but the family retained agency. Accounts of the traumatic events experienced by the Chamberlains, Russell and Scott also provide a brief personal perspective on the use of agents/managers. 'Having a celebrity agent was a necessary evil; we had tried going it alone with the media, and had ended up lambs to the tabloid slaughter,' recalled Chamberlain (2012, p. 312). The Chamberlains preceded Diver and Scott as the first accidental celebrities to sign with Miller. 'From then on Harry dealt with the press, and we thankfully ceased to be annoyed by them—most of the time anyway,' Chamberlain-Creighton wrote in her autobiography (1990, p. 581).

Scott's sister Joanne Robertson noted in their book (1993, p. 187) that 'everything quietened dramatically' when the family took action to restore a sense of control. Although, '[t]he media did not like the intervention of Harry Miller, probably because he makes their job more difficult.' More specifically, Scott considered media objected to Miller negotiating exclusive access, leading to questions about whether his survival was a hoax. 'The influence the media had over the public and the power they possessed shocked all those who were close to the family,' he added (Scott & Robertson 1993, p. 195).

Russell and Webb 'rejected the approaches of several of Australia's leading celebrity agents' before settling on the lesser known Sean Anderson from 22 Management (Wright 2007, pp. 314-316). The men publicly shunned the celebrity label, preferring media portray

them as normal or ordinary men. Yet the authorised account of the disaster declared '…in the months after they became international celebrities.' Chamberlain-Creighton (1990, p. 745) has openly acknowledged she is a 'celebrity'. She learnt to use the power that came from the status, maintained by ongoing media and public interest, in attempts to control her interactions with media:

> Like it or not, the only way to guarantee that the truth alone is told is by a legally binding contract, and for a legally binding contract money has to change hands, even if it is only one dollar. It is as simple as that. There is nothing mercenary about it. If you do one interview you are able to control it and it also stops an uncontrolled 'feeding frenzy' of all the other media. (Chamberlain-Creighton 1990, p. 747)

While Chamberlain-Creighton is more explicit than any of the other survivors about her personal role in the commodification of celebrity, the insights are brief and interspersed with details of her legal fight and the toll on family. It is difficult to gain from the autobiography a true sense of her agency over events. Although, it is clear that those survivors who wrote about hiring an agent/manager considered they were taking action to shift the balance of power with media.

A reading of Diver's account reveals another way trauma survivors can attempt to exert control in relations with media—not only checking copy for accuracy but also determining how much of their personal life would be publicly revealed. 'Since the disaster there are two Stuart Divers. One is the public Stuart Diver that I allow people to see; the other is very private and rarely do the two meet,' he explains in his book (1999, p. 196). This is a clear

indication that the survivor sees himself as remaining an ordinary person while also an accidental celebrity, even if those are descriptions he does not use himself.

4.5 Extending the Trauma Narrative

While in the final stages of drafting my manuscript, numerous family and friends asked whether it would be the same as *Any Ordinary Day* (2018), written by well-known Australian journalist Leigh Sales. The question was perfectly understandable. A publicity campaign surrounded the wide release of Sales' book about people who faced life-changing traumatic events that became news headlines—at face value, the same concept. Two of the people Sales' featured—Scott and Diver—were also interviewed for my research. I explained that my focus was different—exploring not the impact of trauma on individuals but the transformation of survivors into accidental celebrities.

Sales refers directly to Scott's book *Lost in the Himalayas* (1993) in the body of *Any Ordinary Day*, while Diver's *Survival* (1999) is included in the notes as a source of background and information on the Thredbo landslide. The journalist interviewed both men for her account of ordinary people who faced 'the unimaginable, from terrorism to natural disasters to simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time'. Sales was inspired to research and write after airing a series of bad news stories in 2014 and experiencing pregnancy complications that almost claimed her life and that of her second son. She has blended her personal story and knowledge of journalistic practices with the insights of those who have experienced tragedy, and condensed research on the way the human brain processes fear and grief. In

a similar way, I draw on my media experience to place the survivors' insights into context. Neither of us profess to be a psychologist and the curiosity that drove her questioning resonates:

> I have an acute understanding of how journalists behave from inside the industry, but I have no idea how it feels to be the person on the other end of a story, when everybody in the community wants to know what happened to you, and journalists are fighting to land your exclusive interview. (Sales 2018, p. 82)

Sales' interview method also relied on journalistic skills. 'I know how to craft a line of questioning that helps them open up. I'm a strong listener and I follow up what people are saying. I can connect dots and identify interesting anecdotes,' she explained (2018, p. 25). Each of the seven stories re-told in *Any Ordinary Day* had been front page news. However, not all of the trauma survivors became accidental celebrities, whose personal details were a source of continued coverage well after the event. This is where our works begin to diverge. I approached ordinary people who were celebrified after surviving trauma in order to identify their agency in media interactions across each thematic chapter. Sales selected people whose story of suffering would be largely contained within one chapter to illustrate a specific trauma theme—from being blindsided by the unthinkable to the importance of support systems and learning to go on.

Resilience is Sales' overarching refrain, finding 'strength, hope, even humour' among those she interviewed. It is therefore not surprising she did not label them 'victims'. I adopted the use of 'survivor' as preferred by the overwhelming majority of participants, including those we both interviewed (Diver and Scott), as they saw strength and positivity in the

term. Sales resisted that description, explaining why she instead chose to call them 'people':

> So often we refer to people like James Scott and Stuart Diver as 'survivors'. I'm not sure that's the best word. Survival implies an experience over which you triumphed, as if it's in the past. In the aftermath of something life-changing, it's not one event that you must survive, it's thousands of moments every day. (Sales 2018, p. 229)

While Sales' book centres on an understanding of recovery from the psychological effects of trauma, with Diver a key contributor to that understanding, she does tilt her work towards media studies at different points. Her personal reflections on journalistic practices and the commodification of trauma stories are mainly contained in a discreet chapter titled 'The Eye of the Storm', featuring the media intrusions and coverage Scott confronted. Here Sales re-told the Himalayan hiker's near-death experience, the intense media interest, and how his family reached out to Miller for help as financial offers started rolling in. Miller also recounted acting as an intermediary for Scott, Diver and Chamberlain-Creighton in his memoir *Confessions of a Not-so-secret Agent*:

> They are people who never sought the public spotlight, but because of events that would forever shape their lives and the public's awareness, they have accepted it, dealt with it and get on with it. (Miller & Holder 2009, p. 255)

Miller and Sales both stopped short of addressing the notion of accidental celebrity or identifying the agency of survivors. The farthest Sales ventured was in reference to Walter Mikac, the Tasmanian pharmacist who lost his wife Nanette and two daughters—six-year-old Alannah and three-year-old Madeline—in the 1996 Port Arthur massacre:

> One of the reasons that somebody like Walter becomes an unwitting celebrity is that the community is morbidly fascinated to see how people cope with something that they couldn't personally imagine enduring. (Sales 2018, p. 63)

Two books have been dedicated to stories of courage and recovery from Port Arthur (Altmann 2006; Scott 2006), with another examining storytelling surrounding the tragedy (Voumard 2016). Mikac did not participate in the creation of those works, having co-authored his own book (1997). He did speak with Sales though for a chapter on the power of emotional bonding to aid recovery, by connecting with people after loss. He became an advocate for tightening gun laws and helping child victims of violence. Sales (2018, pp. 61-62) drew from her interview that after 'initially feeling vulnerable, gullible and exploited … he figured out how to set limits and turn interviews towards issues on which he wanted to focus'. These are actions that demonstrate the exercise of individual agency. She also identified Mikac as part of a cohort of ordinary people who became high-profile—all coincidentally featured in my manuscript *Accidental Celebrity*:

> The devastating experience turned Walter into one of the most famous faces of tragedy in Australia. It's a group nobody would ever want to join, and yet once you're a member, the public never allows you to leave: Bruce and Denise Morcombe, Lindy Chamberlain, Stuart Diver. (Sales 2018, p. 53)

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

Throughout this research, I have viewed the participants not as 'victims' of a dominant media institution but individuals who exercise agency in interactions with journalists and editors. The manuscript *Accidental Celebrity* privileges the perspectives of high-profile trauma survivors, revealing the pressure tactics and manipulation each faced, as well as the commodification of their experiences and public image. They recount being pursued by persistent media at a time when their world already felt out of control, of deciding who to trust and how much of their private lives to make public, of financial offers and public recognition, of attempting to remain in the public eye or retreat. However, as the participants' inner strength and understanding of media practices grew, so did their ability to intervene and negotiate. They could more effectively shape their relationships with media operating within a highly competitive environment and assert greater influence over the processes involved in the creation of news and other media content. In writing *Accidental Celebrity*, I sought to be objective, conveying a struggle for control over access to their private lives and the way the story would be told. In discussing the work here, my starting point is a recognition that trauma survivors always have the capability to act, leading to the development of a Taxonomy of Accidental Celebrity Agency. As Layder (2006, p. 182) notes, people are 'not simply hapless victims of social circumstance.'

Anthony Giddens' (1984) conception of agency, as the capability of individuals to change their circumstances, is applied to an analysis of the participants' interactions with media—

primarily journalists working for traditional broadcast and print organisations. The reasons for their actions and consequences of their behaviour are also explored. I recognise that while behaviour is influenced by structural rules and resources, survivors are never entirely constrained nor in complete control. Giddens was not definitive when outlining the meaning of rules and resources under his structuration theory (Thompson 1989). For the purposes of this study, I interpret rules as norms of behaviour, news values and media guidelines, while resources are the material means for distributing content, which I refer to as media-controlled platforms and outlets. Interactions between trauma survivors and media are a negotiation, reflecting power relations. By identifying and then analysing the actions of this study's participants, I aimed to answer the question:

> How do trauma survivors exercise individual agency in interactions with media when transformed into accidental celebrities?

Evidence is drawn from the first-hand accounts in the *Accidental Celebrity* manuscript, where the participants reveal the institutionalised practices of media and rationalise the way they personally behaved. I sought to develop a framework that explains the role individuals play in the creation of content and, therefore, their celebrity status. What emerged was a Taxonomy of Accidental Celebrity Agency. I found that those in the spotlight may choose to behave six different ways when interacting with media:

> *Tolerate* attention (endure or allow to happen)
>
> *Moderate* behaviour (make less intense)
>
> *Initiate* contact (start a course of action)

Cooperate on content (work or act together)

Delegate to a third party (entrust a task to another)

Dictate the terms of involvement (prescribe things to be done)

Meanings for the categories of action were developed based on *Oxford English Dictionary* (2019) definitions of the key words. I recognise that some actions do not fall solely into one category as they relate to other actions, just as themes explored in the manuscript, such as celebrification and commodification, cross over chapters. The taxonomy does not represent a chronological order of action or purport to be a scale which enables us to measure the capability of individuals to act. A trauma survivor may never cooperate with media or dictate the terms of involvement. Alternatively, they could initiate contact, then tolerate media intrusions before delegating interactions to a third party. As Giddens (1979) explains, people are affected by the social environment while also capable of thinking and acting for themselves. Trauma survivors will be both influenced by media and seek to change the course of events in a shifting power balance, where trust and mistrust develop in response to agency (Seligman 1997, pp. 55, 63 & 165).

Giddens' (1984, p. 9) understanding that 'action is a continuous process' also helps explain how people can be seen to oscillate between what he calls acts of compliance and acts of resistance. People do not always behave one way or the other. For instance, an individual could agree to an interview but attempt to change the way it is conducted; cooperate with media when they see a benefit in doing so and retreat from the spotlight at other times; or provide information to one outlet and not others. References to compliance and resistance

in this analysis do not suggest that people only act in response to media, as their agency is found in 'events over which an individual is the perpetrator.'

5.2 Taxonomy of Accidental Celebrity Agency

The taxonomy brings together specific actions previously identified in studies on trauma reporting or the production of celebrity, while highlighting gaps in our understanding of the agency of high-profile survivors. Academic literature recognises that news subjects often feel pressured to talk about their experiences and the reasons they comply (Gearing 2013; Kay et al. 2010; Palmer 2018), but does not acknowledge that some individuals initiate contact with journalists or examine the reasons why. It has simply been shown that people may choose to provide a testimonial to a loved one or later seek ongoing attention for a cause (Breslin 2007; Greer 2017; Rentschler 2004). Celebrities are also represented as having the power to speak out on issues (Lumby 1999).

The taxonomy offers a more nuanced and considered understanding of accidental celebrity. Turner et al. (2000) coined the term to describe ordinary people who, to some extent, have no control over media interest in their private lives following a high-profile news event. Many of this study's participants conveyed in the manuscript that their personal details became public without their direct participation in coverage. While social networks potentially empower people to create a public persona and maintain a following today, media control traditional broadcast and print resources that produce celebrities when journalists consider the public would be interested. Celebrity status was attributed to the trauma survivors as news subjects (Rojek 2001, pp. 17-20), transforming them from ordinary (non-media) people to celebrities (Couldry 2004a). As there are individuals who

sought the spotlight, I would argue that not all were unwilling objects of media attention. I found that each contributed to the creation of content, reinforcing their celebrity status and demonstrating agency in the process. While some have attempted to drop from public view, others retain a high profile by continuing to interact with media.

Turner et al. (2000) detail how some accidental celebrities turn to a professional agent/manager for protection and sign exclusive deals. The intervention has been portrayed as 'surrendering control' to a third party who would commercialise their experience through media practices such as chequebook journalism (Turner 2007, p. 197). However, my findings challenge that assumption, by revealing that delegating interactions was a conscious act intended to exert control. While the use of an agent/manager invariably led to chequebook journalism, I found that was not the reason some survivors were criticised by media. Rather, it stemmed from attempts to dictate the terms of involvement in coverage, whether the individual was represented by an agent/manager or not. This is where my study builds on Turner's account of accidental celebrity, while providing a structured way to understand not just the nature of interactions between this study's participants and media, but those of other high-profile trauma survivors. Included among them could be domestic violence campaigner Rosie Batty, whose son Luke was murdered by his father in 2014, and Sally Faulkner, who has sought media and public help since 2015 to retrieve her two children from her ex-husband in Lebanon.

The following discussion of the six categories within the Taxonomy of Accidental Celebrity Agency does not incorporate every media interaction of every person quoted in *Accidental*

Celebrity. Rather, specific actions, which are included in the manuscript and illustrate the participants' agency, were selected as samples for analysis.

Tolerate attention

Survivors of traumatic newsworthy events are highly vulnerable to approaches from media, particularly when they have little if any knowledge of journalistic practices. Put simply, they may not be in a strong enough physical or mental state to make a conscious decision to interact with media or recognise the potential consequences, even if they think they are (Richards 2005). Through *Accidental Celebrity,* we learn how most of this study's participants became a subject of media coverage before they had the opportunity to decide whether to engage with reporters. They endured the attention, without any say in their portrayal, and sometimes allowed it by complying with requests for access and information or, at least, not resisting when journalists made direct contact. While I found that Mercedes Corby tolerated attention because she did not believe she could avoid media, Kay Danes instead felt compelled by the actions of a third party and Douglas Wood was willing to interact.

Corby tells how she was confronted by individual journalists and camera crews, effectively operating as a media pack, after her sister Schapelle Corby's arrest and conviction for smuggling marijuana into Bali. She might have expected privacy, but says she felt powerless with nowhere to hide from what became a high-profile news event. Corby occasionally responded to questions rather than awkwardly trying to pretend media weren't there. 'It's just the way they make you feel … I knew that sometimes I did have to give a line so that they'd leave me alone,' she says. 'I just had to do it for my own sanity sometimes.' Each

reprieve was brief as Corby herself, without realising, encouraged the continuation of media stakeouts—an institutionalised practice—through her participation.

Danes and Wood both encountered journalists when returning to Australia after being held against their will and tortured overseas. The Laos prisoner and Iraqi hostage each indicate they felt they had no agency, not because they had already been the subject of extensive media coverage that propelled them to accidental celebrity status, but because lawyers had been appointed by family to negotiate with journalists on their behalf, effecting acting as media agents. However, accounts of the survivors' behaviour reveal they personally tolerated media, with Danes interacting reluctantly and Wood readily.

Danes concedes she and husband Kerry did not resist when the lawyer arranged for a journalist and photographer to sit near them on the flight back to Brisbane. The intrusion was unwelcome, but the couple rationalise that they were not aware they could object. The MEAA's Code of Ethics expects its journalist members to 'never exploit a person's vulnerability,' although compliance is voluntary. Wood was comfortable with the level of interest he attracted, describing a reporter who tried to make contact with him in a restricted airport area as 'audacious'. When news crews waited for the former engineer to make an appearance outside the Melbourne home of his brother, he sometimes obliged by leaning out a car window when entering and leaving the property.

While Danes and Wood may not have intended to participate in coverage at that point, their actions enabled media to capture images and gather direct quotes. Giddens tells us that people monitor their activities and social environment, and always have the capability to act differently based on knowledge of their circumstances. Danes demonstrated this

when she agreed to participate in a press conference soon after arriving in Australia, as a compromise to avoid further interviews. Although, on reflection she considers the couple remained too compliant:

> I don't think I was in the right mindset. I'd just come through a highly traumatic experience and my head was just spinning, and the whole thing was beyond our control.

Moderate behaviour

Whether acting as a lone journalist or in a media pack, engaging in a conversation or firing questions at random, reporters are adept at making contact with people they consider newsworthy. While some survivors initially tolerate attention, exerting limited influence over newsgathering practices, others explain in *Accidental Celebrity* how they intentionally tried to shape the relationship. Small acts of what Giddens would call resistance can be seen in the way they seek to moderate media behaviour, changing the course of events. Todd Russell actively deterred advances, while other survivors tried to satisfy a voracious media determined to gain their personal account of events. Ron Delezio provided a written statement while Stuart Diver's comment was video-recorded and Jenni Begg participated in a press conference. By exercising agency, they aimed to reduce the intensity with which they were being pursued. Denying or negotiating access and controlling the release of information are signs that survivors have a degree of power in relations with media, even when they did not choose to be deemed newsworthy. However, if the strategies they employ contribute to the creation of content, routine newsgathering practices are reinforced.

Russell was overwhelmed by international media interest when he emerged from two weeks trapped in the Beaconsfield mine. Although, his actions demonstrate that survivors cannot be forced by the weight of media numbers to speak publicly, nor can they completely constrain journalists from pursuing them for an account of their experience. Russell met friends at a local hotel the evening of his rescue after drawing hordes of reporters away by falsely promising a press conference at the nearby hall. Yet he failed to avoid a couple of cameras and Nine Network CEO and personality Eddie McGuire, who soon convinced him to appear live on the *Footy Show*. Four days later, camera crews waited for Russell and his family to arrive at a local football game. When followed around the ground by television crews, he could not tolerate the intrusion, barking 'leave me alone … have some respect.' The incident was widely reported. Russell's behaviour in an effort to control interactions, engaging in a power struggle with media, is in contrast to that of Corby who initially tolerated the media pursuit.

When comparing Russell's early media experiences with those of other trauma survivors, it becomes clear that the capability of news subjects to moderate media behaviour is at least partly dependent upon their public accessibility. Russell was vulnerable to media stake-outs as he tried to resume a 'normal' life in his Tasmanian home town, while Diver, Delezio and Begg were all shielded from direct contact while in hospital. Still, when each survivor became aware of the large contingent of journalists and camera operators demanding an account of their experience, and the impact that was having on family, friends and hospital staff, they acted.

Diver was not well enough to answer questions the day after his rescue from the Thredbo landslide. His family was not familiar with news values or media practices, although they were aware of the circumstances and believed the pack was unlikely to leave Canberra Hospital until journalists received the first-hand account they were after. The negotiated compromise, recommended by support services the Divers trusted, was for one camera to record the survivor delivering a short statement of thanks to rescuers, for distribution to all media outlets. In a 24/7 news cycle, with the recovery mission at Thredbo ongoing and Diver himself still considered highly newsworthy, the controlled video message only had currency for a day before reporters again sought access.

A distraught Begg had no intention of interacting with media following the random attack by a stranger on her six-year-old son Jandamarra O'Shane in his Cairns school yard. Likewise, Delezio's only focus was maintaining a vigil for his critically ill daughter Sophie after the two-year-old was struck by a car at her Sydney childcare centre. Both families could be portrayed as eventually bowing to media pressure by agreeing to speak. Although, I would argue they demonstrated agency in primarily attempting to moderate the behaviour of journalists while also using the resources of media to send a message of thanks to the community for its support. To Giddens, power is relational to the extent that one person or group's power is dependent on the power of another. Begg consciously participated in a press conference organised by the Royal Children's Hospital in Brisbane. The Children's Hospital at Westmead in Sydney wrote a statement on behalf of the Delezio family before also staging a press conference to ensure interactions were controlled. Delezio says the family then issued regular statements:

> My first reason to speak was sort of like a bit of a pact I had with the media—stop hiding behind the bushes and I will give you the information when something new has come up. And then it became a lot easier for me to speak to the media and realise that it was important … we knew how much people cared, so it reinforced the feeling inside of me that it was important to let the media know.

Initiate contact

Trauma survivors do not often have a say in whether media find out about their life-changing event. Information about people caught up in disasters, accidents and crimes is typically released by police and emergency services or spreads through impacted communities. Academic studies on high-profile and traumatic news events and accidental celebrity all situate the subjects of media attention as being pursued by reporters for their personal insights rather than seeking coverage (Bilboe 1998; Ewart 2002; Gearing 2013; Harrison 1986; McLellan 1999; Middleweek 2007; Muller & Gawenda 2011; Simpson 2001). Most are unwitting participants in the creation of news and other media content, but not all. Jacqueline Pascarl and the family of James Scott reached out to media for help in communicating with the public following their unanticipated traumatic event. They initiated interactions, prepared to reveal personal details in order to draw on the resources of the media for their own purposes. This demonstration of individual agency, in attempting to influence media, had the unintended consequence of an intensity of interest they neither anticipated nor could control.

Pascarl thought she was knowledgeable in media practices when she consciously invited journalists into her home in 1992. She worked in the industry as a commercial television

features reporter and was at that time married to journalist Iain Gillespie. Pascarl's private life had never been public though. While she had what she describes as a 'small platform of public recognition,' I would argue Pascarl was an ordinary person rather than a celebrity when her two children were illegally removed from Australia by their Malaysian Prince father. Her media background gave her an appreciation that traditional media have control of the resources and therefore power to persuade people to participate in coverage, distribute content and attract audiences. However, she had little understanding of the scope of a news subjects' actions as she had only seen one side of the relationship.

Pascarl believed that by sharing her story with news outlets—in the days before social media—her children would be found and returned. Her actions, supported by Gillespie, were similar to those of an agent/manager in the promotions industry, distributing a press release and photographs of Iddin and Shah, then holding a press conference. What Pascarl did not anticipate was seeing her capability to influence newsgathering practices, and her trust in media, diminished through the behaviour of journalists. She observed the power balance was weighted in favour of media when journalists operated as part of an institution (collective) instead of approaching her as individual (subjective) journalists who would afford her some control over interactions:

> I actually thought that the reporters were my friends, but they so patently weren't. On an individual basis yes, but not when they're in a pack, not when they're in a media frenzy. There's a collective absolution of guilt about being in a pack. Everyone was shooting questions at me, while I was trying not to cry. I was so incredibly naïve. Within days, I realised that I was open to being manipulated, that I was a sideshow. To hear the media

> talking, they would say that I'm a public figure and that I'm fair game. Though, to be fair, I've used the media to my own end and so it's a fair cop.

Unlike Pascarl, Scott's family had no exposure to media before also initiating contact in 1992. The then Brisbane medical student had been missing in the Himalayan mountains of Nepal for 27 days when his parents Ken and Janet alerted their local newspaper, *The Courier-Mail.* The family's intent was to quickly let friends know what had happened, as an engagement party for Scott and fiancé Gaye Ryan was just a week away. Their actions demonstrated knowledge of the circumstances and the power of media. The newspaper complied with the request for coverage, drawing on rules and resources when deeming the disappearance of Scott newsworthy enough to place on the front page (18 January 1992, p. 1), with a small follow-up story the next day.

When Scott was found alive after 43 days huddled alone in a cave, the family was happy to celebrate the 'miracle' publicly. They spoke with reporters across the country, who were then eager to run the extraordinary story of survival. The family had shown a willingness to interact and soon found themselves besieged by media outlets. The Scotts struggled to assert an expectation of privacy as the pursuit of first-hand accounts grew more intense, prompting unethical media practices. Scott tells in *Accidental Celebrity* how reporters tried to sneak into his room in Nepal's Patan Hospital. The family initiated contact with media and, as an unintended consequence, built an expectation they would comply with future requests, only to resist when overwhelmed.

Cooperate on content

When an individual's traumatic experience becomes a high-profile news event, media will invariably encourage them to cooperate in the creation of content. The academic literature acknowledges people may provide a testimonial for a loved one or use the discursive power that comes with their public profile to promote a cause (Breslin 2007; Greer 2017; Palmer 2018; Rentschler 2004; Wellman 2018). While these actions are identified in trauma reporting, cooperating with media has not been examined from the perspective of the individual exercising agency. The Chamberlains became convinced that assisting with coverage was in the public interest when their daughter Azaria was taken by a dingo, while the Delezios and Morcombes recognised both a private and public benefit in continuing to cooperate years after their initial trauma.

Michael Chamberlain had only minor contact with journalists before Azaria's disappearance in 1980—hosting his own radio program and writing a regular newspaper column. He gained some understanding of news values, but had little exposure to newsgathering practices, expected norms of behaviour for media subjects or the power of media to influence community attitudes. This was at a time when arguably public awareness of media practices was not as high, before the days of live broadcasting and digital media. The Chamberlains believed that speaking with newspapers about the tragedy at Uluru would help warn others about the predatory nature of the dingo. In *Accidental Celebrity*, Michael Chamberlain says interacting with reporters—taking photographs at the scene, providing quotes and an image of their baby—was a conscious decision based on a

sense of 'moral duty'. Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton now rationalises how media guaranteed the couple's cooperation:

> 'We'd like to help you to do this because you said you don't want to see this happen to anybody else, and we can help you get the warning out!' That is the soft button every time when you're in trauma, because you want to help. And then they said they'd be with us at a certain time and they also said they needed some photographs. As Michael was a photographer, he said he would do it. That was something which would help take his mind off it and to assist in getting the word out.

Their role in the creation of content had unintended consequences though. Chamberlain-Creighton says the family were viewed by media as too eager to participate. The cooperation, along with their composure, aroused suspicion, leading to speculation they were responsible for their baby's disappearance and death. They were not conforming to the victim archetype. When the Chamberlains no longer cooperated with every request for comment, as the media interest grew and they became the focus of the police investigation, they faced questions about what they were hiding. 'So you're damned if you do, damned if you don't,' says Chamberlain-Creighton in *Accidental Celebrity*.

Bruce and Denise Morcombe never faced suspicion after their son Daniel disappeared in 2003, and have continued to work cooperatively with media as a way to reach the public, with the support of police. The couple were unaccustomed to being in the spotlight but were prepared to sacrifice their personal privacy in exchange for help solving 13-year-old Daniel's abduction and murder. Unlike Pascarl, the Morcombes did not initiate contact with media. They were approached by a journalist two days after the disappearance. 'I don't

think there's any doubt, if Daniel's body had been found on day two, for argument's sake, we wouldn't have done any media at all,' Bruce Morcombe says on reflection. 'The only reason for doing that was to appeal for information … to solve the case. One hundred per cent.' The Queensland couple initially provided media with a photo of Daniel in the hope it would prompt a public sighting. As the investigation dragged on, for almost eight years, they learnt how to be strategic in the way they interacted with journalists, gradually releasing more personal information to maintain the news value, as Bruce Morcombe explains:

> If a media person asked for a couple of photos, we would selectively find one or two and keep the rest away because we knew that another—Seven or Nine or another paper or magazine—would knock on our door in the months or a year ahead. 'They've already used those photos, have you got a photo that hasn't been used before?' We always kept a few up our sleeve. I suppose it was us trying to use the media to our advantage and sometimes we would keep things back.

Their actions demonstrate that rules and resources, which exist through human interactions, are not always constraining. The cooperation between the Morcombes and media is most evident in the promotion of the Daniel Morcombe Foundation the couple launched to educate people about child safety. They have agreed to interviews, some exclusive, in exchange for help with fundraising or promotion. Securing ongoing media coverage—whether sought by the survivor or media—becomes a matter of negotiation and trust. A trauma survivor in this situation wants to use media resources while also retain some control over interactions.

Delezio and his wife Carolyn Martin have taken a similar approach to the Morcombes in order to promote the Day of Difference charity they founded after their daughter Sophie's accident. They quickly learnt that maintaining a high public profile helps them bring in public support for care and research into paediatric injuries. Working cooperatively with media has been the key. Delezio believes they needed to be the public faces of the foundation until it was established:

> We use ourselves as a commodity for our charity. We use our images, we use the fact that we're well-known to promote our charity. I can—in most cases—get a foot in the door into a lot of business places where I'm trying to get them to support our charity.

He makes no apologies for leveraging off the family's prominence to also attract media interest in stories that can be sold for a personal benefit. Delezio estimates they have negotiated more than a dozen payments in exchange for exclusive interviews, without the use of a media agent. He was unable to work while Sophie was undergoing intensive treatment, so negotiating the sale of stories became necessary for financial survival. Through interactions with media, the Delezios gained an understanding of news values, norms of behaviour, the media practice of chequebook journalism and distribution of content. This enabled them to carefully demonstrate agency while cooperating, without the potential adverse consequences of negative publicity.

Delegate to a third party

Overwhelming media and public interest and a lack of knowledge about journalistic practices may lead trauma survivors to delegate interactions to a third party, at least initially. They place their trust in a go-between who can handle inquiries, negotiate access

and at times act as a spokesperson. Third-party intermediaries are relatively common, with trauma survivors advised and protected by family, friends and support services such as police and health workers. Although, the academic and media focus has largely been on the use of professional agents/managers who take a visible role in the creation of an accidental celebrity-commodity. In *Fame Games*, Turner et al. (2000, p. 77) portray news subjects who hire professional help, like Scott and Diver, as the 'unwilling object of media attention.' Turner (2007, p, 197) later described the survivors as 'surrendering control' to an agent/manager. However, I found through an analysis of the accounts in *Accidental Celebrity* that Scott and Diver, along with Chamberlain-Creighton and Russell, demonstrated individual agency when they sought the intervention of a third party. This was an act intended to increase their control in power relations with media.

Miller was an entertainment industry manager and promoter when he was hired to represent the Chamberlains—his first accidental celebrity clients. The then couple signed Miller to act on their behalf in 1986 when lawyer Stuart Tipple could no longer handle the volume of media requests leading into a 14-month long Royal Commission. The Chamberlains' move, although unusual at the time, was not widely reported. *The Northern Territory News* (5 May 1986, p.3) noted that Miller would handle the Chamberlains' 'commercial interests', with no indication that the activities of media would be constrained. Chamberlain-Creighton reflects on the sense of relief that her privacy would be protected when Miller took over as the primary contact for journalists: 'I've said Harry Miller was just like having a human Alsatian that kept them at bay. He loved that description.'

Protection from intrusion may be the primary motivation for a trauma survivor turning to a third party, however, if media view the intervention as potentially limiting their capability to gather and distribute content, they have the resources at their disposal to place the individual under greater public scrutiny. Media openly criticised Scott's lack of accessibility while hospitalised, guarded by family and doctors. Reporters supposedly felt 'Scott would have been easier to reach had he stayed under the rock ledge,' implying Patan Hospital medical superintendent Dr Frank Garlick was a barrier to information by dubbing him 'not so Frank' (*The Sunday Age* 9 February 1992, p. 3). The family's decision to hire Miller to act as a go-between had the greatest impact though, according to Scott:

> It was night and day. Suddenly everything just went quiet, everything calmed down and the frenzy stopped. It suddenly brought some order into this terrible chaos … I was being cushioned by everyone, but for the family it brought immense relief.

While media interactions were delegated to Miller, Scott retained his agency with the final say over which interviews he'd participate in and the details he'd provide. He chose a television exclusive with the Nine Network for its *60 Minutes* program and a print exclusive with London's *Daily Telegraph*, reprinted in Australia (*The Sun-Herald* 23 February 1992, pp. 1 & 3, and 1 March 1992, pp. 1 & 3). This was a conscious decision to interact with media outlets separately, or what Giddens (1984, p. 283) refers to as subdividing resources. Scott rejected other commercial deals presented by Miller, and before long severed ties with the agent.

Miller went on to represent Diver, on his first day fielding more than 200 calls from newsrooms seeking access to the Thredbo survivor. Diver explains in *Accidental Celebrity*

how the now retired Salvation Army Chaplain, Lieutenant-Colonel Don Woodland, advised his parents to seek professional help, having seen the impact of media on those devastated by the Port Arthur massacre the year before:

> He basically said you will not be able to do it yourself. He knew the loss I'd had and the trauma I'd been through, and our family, and he knew that if I had to continually do interview after interview after interview and it wasn't controlled it would destroy me.

Woodland recognised the possible consequences of interacting with journalists while Miller understood the roles and responsibilities of those working in media and the institutionalised practices they follow. Miller was quoted as saying, 'All we are trying to do is take some of the weight off the family with the demands of the media inquiries' (*The Daily Telegraph* 5 August 1997, p. 7). Media themselves may recognise that an ordinary person would find accidental celebrity disorienting, particularly in the midst of trauma. However, any actions journalists perceive as constraining them from gathering a newsworthy story are typically met with strong resistance, as one newspaper signalled when alluding to the likely result of the negotiations Miller would lead:

> The Diver family, thrust inadvertently into the flare of public scrutiny, can be excused for wanting an expert to manage its sudden fame and to help it through the constant demands ahead. And if that is as far as Mr Miller's role extends, well and good. The worst thing which could now happen would be for a bidding war to erupt and for Mr Diver's miraculous rescue to be cheapened in the process. (*The Canberra Times* 6 August 1997, p. 8)

In contrast, Russell and workmate Brant Webb were still trapped almost one kilometre beneath the surface of the Beaconsfield mine when *The Sydney Morning Herald* (4 May

2006, p. 6) noted, 'the lack of an agent to negotiate with is frustrating attempts to start talks with relatives.' The newspaper speculated on who might represent the men, indicating a professional deal-maker was inevitable. Four days after the rescue, the pair signed Sean Anderson from 22 MGMT. Russell's regret was not delegating media contact to an agent sooner:

> The best thing that we ever did was sign a manager. People in the media circus didn't really come and bother us because everything then had to go through our manager, even though you still had the odd one or two sneaking around the corner or sitting down the main street of Beaconsfield just waiting for you to go and pick your mower up or go and get a newspaper—just so they could get a photo of you.

Russell's intentions were soon publicly questioned by media though, as he began negotiating an exclusive deal for his story. Media will generally accept liaising and even negotiating with a third party as long as the power balance does not shift too far in favour of the subject. Interactions must be seen as facilitating the provision of information and contact with survivors, rather than dictating the terms of involvement.

Dictate the terms of involvement

Celebrification and commodification may be empowering for a trauma survivor who realises they have something media want—insights into their personal life. Turner et al. (2000, p. 12) consider the celebrity's 'ultimate power is to sell the commodity that is themselves.' When demand for content is high, the supplier has an opportunity to dictate the terms of their participation in processes such as newsgathering. As Giddens (1984, p. 14) explains, action depends on the ability of an agent to 'make a difference' to a process.

The Delezios have demonstrated that ordinary people do not need a professional agent to negotiate exclusive interviews, paid or unpaid. Their capability to act is only limited by knowledge of their circumstances, the rules and resources. However, there can be consequences when attempting to control interactions with media, as the experiences of Diver, Corby, Chamberlain-Creighton, Scott and Russell indicate.

Media trade on a survivor's traumatic experience and public profile to attract audiences. Hiring a paid agent signals the individual is prepared to participate in their own commodification, if for no other reason than to recoup the costs of the professional protection. The practice of media paying subjects for exclusive stories and access, commonly referred to as chequebook journalism, draws journalistic and academic commentary when high-profile news events happen. Outlets that missed out on an interview may run spoiler stories and accuse the survivor of seeking to profit from the high profile they facilitated, even though media may line up to pay and industry codes of ethics do not object to the practice. *The Sydney Morning Herald* (14 August 1997, p. 11) reported 'a palpable wave of disapproval rippled across Australia' when Miller began negotiating on Diver's behalf. Corby handled deals for her family and found the issue wasn't money changing hands though, but power:

> Sometimes magazines might make an offer. We'll decline, and they'll actually go ahead with the story anyway, and it's not to our liking. I don't know whether it's to show us, 'Look, we can do it without you and look what's going to happen,' but it's happened quite a few times when we've said no … So if they offer you a bit of extra cash, why not? We've needed it, it definitely does help.

Chamberlain-Creighton has helped identify in *Accidental Celebrity* the media's real objection to exclusive deals—not commodification, but control: 'it's always the disgruntled one that makes the big thing about chequebook journalism, tries to make the person look dirty for doing it, as opposed to it's something that's always done.' Dictating the terms for involvement in coverage shifts the power balance towards the ordinary person, although as media control the resources, they retain the final say in how someone will be represented. Similarly, Scott sees a connection between granting exclusive access and the hoax speculation he faced, describing his hometown Brisbane-based newspaper *The Courier-Mail* as 'very angry' that it missed out on an interview:

> They really took it badly that the Murdoch Press didn't get the story, that Conrad Black got the story. Now, why we went with Conrad Black and not Murdoch I don't know. I suspect it came down to money and offers but I don't know. If I was more savvy … if I was doing an exclusive now—which I don't think I ever would again—I'd probably go with the main paper in my town. So in the Conrad Black press it was the hero survivor blah blah blah sort of thing, and in the Murdoch press he was a dickhead to get lost and he's probably making enough anyway. So you had this polarisation.

Miller negotiated for Diver and Chamberlain-Creighton a power of 'veto,' giving the survivors the ability to strike out incorrect words and phrases which could impact the way they were represented. The move effectively gives an individual some control over media resources, diminishing institutional power. Miller (2009, p. 235) boasted: 'I'm probably the only producer who has always maintained, no matter what the cost or tactic, total control over what the media write. And that drives the media crazy.' Yet editors will allow survivors to review copy if it means gaining exclusive access, regardless of whether an agent is

involved in the negotiations. We can interpret that media regard fact checking as having less impact on structure than being denied an interview. Diver insists on checking all copy after he's given an interview, concerned to ensure the 18 people who died at Thredbo and their families are not misrepresented:

> One of the big parts of doing exclusives with Harry was that we had total editorial control of every story we did. That was basically unheard of at that point in time. So they could not print a photo, could not do anything. People go: 'Oh that's a bit controlling, what didn't you want to tell them?' The reason is because every single story they did had facts that were incorrect: they had ages that were wrong, they had names that were wrong. So we had to edit it for them. And to this day I'm still correcting pretty well every single journalist I've been involved with.

Chamberlain-Creighton fears that unless she signs a contract for an exclusive and can check the whole story, no matter how accurate a reporter has been in the past, she can't trust that what is published or broadcast will be factually accurate:

> One or two other people have had this privilege since, but I was the first person in Australia allowed to look at what was written before it went to air or into a newspaper. If they're intending to do the facts, you don't care. And I think they know if they want to say I'm a fat little lady who doesn't appeal to them, I mightn't like it but I won't change that because they're allowed a personal opinion. But if they write the facts wrong though I will change it because it affects history as well as me.

Like the Corby family, she has also built into contracts a one-use-only clause on images. Family pictures of Schapelle Corby helped audiences identify with her as an average Australian before she was arrested in Bali for drug smuggling. What the Corbys did not

realise was that private images they owned would instantly become public property, shared across media organisations, permanently available online, and reprinted in books written by others. That is now a source of regret to Mercedes Corby, who has attempted to take back control:

> One thing we did really wrong was the newspapers would ask for family photos of Schapelle when she was young, et cetera, and we'd give them to them. Or they would come to the house and take a photo; they're still around now and anyone's just using them. You know, they're everywhere. Now if we ever give a photo, we tell them one-time use only.

Even when a trauma survivor negotiates a contract with media, they are not entirely independent agents and media are not totally constrained. Contracts are rules designed to govern the behaviour of individuals, with trust giving way to legal control. Russell discovered the consequences of agreeing to speak with no other media than the Nine Network for 12 months as part of a multi-million dollar contract for exclusivity:

> I made a mistake—I did an interview for a show on the ABC, a tribute to Matthew Gill [former Beaconsfield mine manager], and Channel Nine kicked up a stink. They were really shitty because I'd done this interview and wasn't supposed to. I went to Sean [Anderson] and the way I got out of it is that we'd done a lot of interviews over and above what we were contracted to do and weren't paid. But I got myself into quite a bit of trouble.

5.3 Shifting Status

Giddens tells us that interactions are an inevitable part of social life (Giddens 1984, p. 54). In developing the Taxonomy of Accidental Celebrity Agency, I questioned whether there could be an end to a trauma survivor's interactions with media and celebrity status after

being afforded a high public profile. Interacting with media does not guarantee a trauma survivor accidental celebrity status. Many victims of crime or tragedy do not open their private lives to public scrutiny—through their own actions or the newsgathering practices of journalists. Others experience what American artist Andy Warhol described as '15 minutes of fame' (Guinn & Perry 2005). It stands to reason that a trauma survivor who becomes an accidental celebrity may not retain that status, particularly when media no longer identify news value, particularly audience interest, in their personal lives (Rein et al. 2006). This may happen at the conclusion of a legal case, when there are no new developments in a controversy or media consider the individual has recovered and returned to a 'normal' life.

A survivor can take action to resist involvement in further coverage—from not responding to calls to declining requests and offers. Michael Chamberlain noted in *Accidental Celebrity*, once the 'floodgates' were opened, the only way to avoid media interviews was 'to not be found—uncontactable.' However, Chamberlain continued to interact with media until his death, even if not directly. The telephone rang regardless of whether he picked it up, a decision had to be made on whether to participate in a story, and media regularly mentioned him in reports—with or without comment—because he was deemed newsworthy.

Chamberlain-Creighton has accepted that after decades in the public domain, even if she were to reject every interview request and public speaking invitation, her face and name would still be recognisable. Journalists will continue to pursue her, believing audiences remain interested in her private life. While the reporting attracts interest, her prominence

will be maintained and therefore newsworthiness. In this way, structure is a medium and outcome of the practices of agents, as explained by Giddens (Stones 2005, pp. 4-5). Diver recognises the interdependent relationship between media and news subjects, and the ongoing role he plays in the creation of content and his accidental celebrity status. He occasionally chooses to use his name and face to support charity or provide a message of hope to the community:

> I've tried it lots of times all the way through and I always, every two or three years, I always have a shot at saying, 'All right I'm not going to do any interviews, not going to talk to anyone, I'm not going to do any public speaking. I'm going to go back to just being absolutely, totally anonymous.' But you just can't do it because then another request will come through and it might be from a charity that you quite like and then you'll go and do that … So you're in a catch-22 situation because you're trying to do it for a good thing.

Scott believes people rarely recognise him today, particularly younger generations. Within a year of the rescue he began rejecting interview requests and has not sought public attention as the Himalayan survivor. Douglas Wood acknowledges he is rarely mentioned in coverage, nor has he tried to rebuild his profile. Their high-visibility could be considered short-lived, as is the experience of most accidental 'national' celebrities, according to Rein et al. (2006). However, Scott did accept an invitation to speak about his media interactions for this project and share his traumatic experience in Leigh Sales' book *Any Ordinary Day* (2018). He demonstrated agency in choosing to again interact with media, contributing to content and potentially raising his public visibility. Other survivors, like Chamberlain-Creighton and Diver, have never sought to end the association or, as in the case of the Delezios and Morcombes, actively work to maintain their prominence.

Conclusion

This project was dependent on interviews with high-profile trauma survivors, providing the material for both the manuscript *Accidental Celebrity* and the accompanying exegesis. I considered that only through first-hand accounts could I gain a deep understanding of the media experiences of ordinary people who are suddenly and unexpectedly thrust into the spotlight. What I found was a complex relationship in which individuals are not entirely powerless, but seek to exert control over interactions, influencing the creation of news and other media content and, in turn, their celebrity status. During the research process, it became clear that accidental celebrity cannot be tightly defined in terms of the reach and duration of public visibility. The concluding chapter summarises how the project contributes to the media studies field, the major outcomes and findings.

While conducting the research, I was consistently drawn to the work of Turner. With Bonner and Marshall (2000), he introduced the term 'accidental celebrity' when delving into the role of agents/managers in protecting and promoting the interests of individuals otherwise described as 'accidental heroes'. Their study also demonstrated how interviews, combined with a scan of relevant texts and personal industry knowledge, is an effective research method. Turner (2010c, 2014b) went on to explore further the production of ordinary people as celebrities, reaching into reality television and the online space. However, the long-established media practices involved in taking private citizens involved in high-profile news events and making them publicly well-known was not examined from the perspective of the individual.

News subjects have been interviewed for Australian studies on the impact of trauma reporting, but none could be considered celebrities and the research did not extend beyond the media's pursuit and portrayal of 'victims' (Bilboe 1998; Ewart 2002; Gearing 2013; Harrison 1986; McLellan 1999; Muller & Gawenda 2011; Simpson 2001). Academic literature on celebrification does reference some of those who participated in my project—mainly in the context of practices such as chequebook journalism—although it is not apparent that researchers spoke with any directly (Bainbridge 2009; Goc & Bainbridge 2008; Hirst & Patching 2005; Hurst & White 1994; Middleweek 2017). Turner et al. (1999; 2007; 2000) used Thredbo ski instructor Stuart Diver and Himalayan hiker James Scott as case studies for discussions centred on representation and commodification without the survivors' direct input. Diver and Scott were interviewed by Australian journalist Leigh Sales for her book *Any Ordinary Day* (2018). However, Sales' overarching theme was recovery from trauma. None of the works have focussed on exploring the agency of trauma survivors in interactions with media when transformed into accidental celebrities. I aimed to fill that gap through the creation of the manuscript *Accidental Celebrity* and an analysis of the involvement of individuals in media practices.

The manuscript gave 14 Australians the opportunity to reflect on what it was like to receive extensive national attention after being involved in one of 11 extraordinary events. They talk about being pursued by relentless reporters, turning to family and professionals for protection, doing commercial deals, and realising they had lost their anonymity. Throughout, the survivors reveal attempts to control an otherwise overwhelming situation. Woven into the narrative are my personal insights, based on 30 years working in media, and extracts from print articles which illustrate how their behaviour was reported. The

manuscript led to a narrower exploration of the capability of individuals to influence media and change their circumstances, contained in the exegesis.

Drawing on Giddens' (1984) structuration theory, the survivors were situated as people with the capability to think and act for themselves, never entirely constrained by institutionalised media practices. This enabled me to analyse how individuals exercise agency, beyond specific actions like hiring an agent/manager, signing commercial deals and speaking out for a cause which have been previously canvassed. In order to understand the different ways power relations between media and survivors are manifest, I devised a Taxonomy of Accidental Celebrity Agency, comprising six categories of action. It recognises that individuals may choose to *tolerate* attention, *moderate* behaviour, *initiate* contact, *cooperate* on content, *delegate* to a third party and *dictate* the terms of involvement.

The reasons individuals interact with media and the potential consequences of their actions both contribute to and are highlighted by the taxonomy. It acknowledges that survivors may make the first contact with journalists, rather than always responding to approaches, in acts of resistance and compliance. The taxonomy also challenges Turner's (2007, p, 197) assumption that in reaching out to a third party like an agent/manager for help, survivors are 'surrendering control of the situation.' The survivors' intentions in delegating interactions indicate that they wanted to exert control rather than relinquish it to another person. After analysing the ways in which the actions of individuals were represented in coverage, I argue that media criticisms of survivors who hire agents/managers or engage in the practice of chequebook journalism are not based on principle. Rather, these criticisms are a response to media's loss of control over the story when a survivor dictates

the terms of involvement in coverage. As news subjects and celebrities, they are effectively shifting the balance in power relations with journalists and editors. The focus I have placed on individual (or 'subjective') power rather than organisational and institutional (or 'collective') power has enabled me to produce an account of the actual behaviour as well as social experience.

This project, overall, presents a new, more nuanced and considered understanding of accidental celebrity by providing insight into the role high-profile trauma survivors may play in the creation of news and other media content, as well as their celebrity status. Each participant meets the definition of an accidental celebrity as an ordinary person who was 'inadvertently celebritised' (Turner, Bonner & Marshall 2000, p. 170), taking 'a seemingly unintentional route to high visibility' (Rein et al. 2006, p. 81) 'because of an incident or event outside of their control' that is treated as newsworthy (Redmond 2014, p. 7). However, they were not entirely acted upon by media following an unanticipated traumatic event. While some of those I interviewed were 'the unwilling object of media attention' (Turner, Bonner & Marshall 2000, p. 77), others stepped into the spotlight; some sought to return to anonymity, and others continue to participate in stories and public events years after they rose to prominence. As Giddens (1984, pp. xxii & 169) explains, people are knowledgeable about their circumstances and the structural rules and resources we see in media practices only exist through human interactions.

It is apparent to me that the public visibility of accidental 'national' celebrities has, similarly, been over-emphasised as short-lived by academics (Redmond 2014; Rein et al. 2006). By identifying these individuals, questioning their reasons for interacting with media and

examining news and other coverage, it is evident that while some survivors like Douglas Wood may drop from view, Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton became an icon through a series of events. It cannot be assumed that celebrity is attributed once, just as trauma can result from a cluster of experiences (Erikson 1994). This helps explain how the status of a high-profile trauma survivor may shift on a continuum of fame (Marwick & boyd 2011b, p. 140). It is also important to understand that their discursive meaning can change (Redmond 2014, p. 7). The Delezios and Morcombes will always be trauma survivors, however, their ongoing celebrity can now be attributed to their advocacy for child safety and critical care. Neither employs an agent/manager, which leads us back to the question of individual agency in the transformation to accidental celebrity.

The analysis of survivor accounts in the manuscript reveals that the reach and duration of celebrity is only in part dependent upon journalists continuing to identify news values, particularly audience interest. While accidental celebrities are represented as noteworthy by media and the promotions industry, as cultural intermediaries (Rojek 2001, p. 18), Goffman (1959) tells us that in the construction of a public persona, people present a version of themselves to the world. Therefore, we must consider the role trauma survivors may play in the creation of their celebrity status. The taxonomy has proven a useful tool for analysing the agency of this cohort of ordinary people for whom fame was attributed following a high-profile news event. It promotes greater recognition of the capability of individuals to influence content creation through their actions. I believe the framework could be applied to further studies on interactions between media and subjects who did not anticipate becoming involved in an event deemed newsworthy; for instance, lottery

winners and others who experienced good fortune, whether their accidental celebrity status is short-lived or enduring.

I recognise that some of this study's participants do not consider themselves celebrities, as they argue that title belongs to film, television and even sporting stars. They acknowledge they became well known, but prefer to be regarded as ordinary or 'normal' people. Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton does not deny she is famous, although for a different reason to those who achieved the status, as she points out in the introduction to *Accidental Celebrity*. There she makes clear that through the devastating death of her baby daughter Azaria to a dingo, her decades-long legal fight for justice and the continuous media and public attention, she was not entirely without agency:

> I've never been a victim. You're only a victim if you choose to be one. So I'm a survivor. And what's more, I'm a conqueror, because you either conquer what's happening to you or it conquers you.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

'No Longer Anonymous: Surviving Trauma in the Media Spotlight'

Invitation

You are invited to participate in a research study into the impact of the media on trauma survivors.

The study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of a PhD by Fiona Reynolds under the supervision of:

Dr Nicola Goc, coordinator, Journalism, Media and Communications;

Prof. Ralph Crane, Head of School, School of English, Journalism and European Language.

1. What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose is to investigate the impact journalistic practices and subsequent news coverage had on people who came under the media spotlight after experiencing an unanticipated traumatic event.

The study will focus on at least 12 high profile case studies. The news content that followed each trauma event will be analysed and the people at the centre of the coverage will be interviewed.

This will form the basis of an examination into how people experiencing trauma interacted with the media and the impact that may have had on them. This study will analyse whether their attitudes towards the media changed as they made the transition from private to public citizen.

It will ask what lessons news personnel can learn from people who experienced trauma – from journalistic practice to news decision making and principles/guidelines.

2. Why have I been invited to participate in this study?

You are being invited to participate in this study because you can provide a valuable insight into the media's impact on people who are the focus of public attention while experiencing trauma.

You are among a small number of people who have had to deal with an intense and ongoing media focus, and therefore public scrutiny, in effect becoming a 'household name' while recovering from emotional shock.

The research only involves people who experienced the original trauma at least three years prior to being invited to participate.

3. What does this study involve?

You are being asked to recount your experience with the media by participating in one main interview, and a possible follow-up interview.

The researcher will examine the news coverage following your trauma event, before conducting the interview. However, you will not be asked to recall the trauma event itself, only the subsequent media attention and coverage. The interview questions and existing guidelines for news personnel have been enclosed for your consideration. These questions will be posed by researcher Fiona Reynolds in two audio recorded sit-down sessions, preferably face-to-face, at a quiet mutually-agreed place that you will be invited to nominate.

The total commitment is likely to be half a day. You have the option of not taking a break between the two sessions, holding both sessions on one day or over two days. A short follow-up interview may be required at a later time. If at any time you feel anxious or uncomfortable you may ask for a break.

You will be identified in the research/completed study.

It is important that you understand that your involvement is this study is voluntary. While we would be pleased to have you participate, we respect your right to decline. There will be no consequences to you if you decide not to participate. If you decide to discontinue participation at any time, you may do so without providing an explanation.

You will be offered the opportunity to review and correct transcripts of your interviews. The information gathered in the interview/s will be used as part of a doctoral thesis and may in future be published.

All of the research data will be kept in a locked cabinet in the School of English, Journalism and European Languages for six years from the time the research project began and will then be destroyed.

4. Are there any possible benefits from participation in this study?

Journalists routinely interview people who experience trauma. But there has been little academic study on the impact of the interaction and news coverage on the trauma survivors. Audiences also rarely see how the media operates behind the scenes because it is consistently unreported.

You will be given the opportunity to critique journalistic guidelines and practices, and then provide advice to news personnel on how to deal with people in a way that does not add to their trauma. This will be the foundation for the study's findings.

This study may lead to increased awareness of harmful approaches to trauma reporting. There is the potential for the results of this study to prompt changes to journalistic guidelines or training, or be used in further studies.

5. Are there any possible risks from participation in this study?

There are no specific risks anticipated with participation in this study. However, it is possible that you could feel some anxiety as you recall your interaction with the media. For

this reason, you will be given the option of having a support person – of your choosing - present during the interview/s.

At any time you feel anxious or uncomfortable, you may ask for a break. You may also withdraw from the study at any time until the thesis has been submitted to examiners for consideration.

Should you wish to receive confidential counselling, please contact Lifeline Australia on 13 11 14 or Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636 or infoline@beyondblue.org.au

6. What if I have questions about this research?

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this study please feel free to contact either Fiona Reynolds on 0428 675035 or fiona.reynolds@utas.edu.au, or Dr Nicola Goc on (03) 6226 2473 or Nicola.Goc@utas.edu.au. Either of us would be happy to discuss any aspect of the research with you. Once we have analysed the information we will mail/email you a summary of our findings. You are welcome to contact us at that time to discuss any issue relating to the research study.

This study has been approved by the Tasmanian Social Science Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study should contact the Executive Officer of the HREC (Tasmania) Network on (03) 6226 7479 or email human.ethics@utas.edu.au. The Executive Officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. You will need to quote H11791.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this study.

Appendix B

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: **'No Longer Anonymous: Surviving Trauma in the Media Spotlight'**

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1. I have read and understood the 'Information Sheet' for this project.

2. The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.

3. I understand that the study involves the investigator analysing news coverage in which I featured.

4. I agree to participate in an interview, held on one to two days, about my personal interaction with, and attitude towards, the media. I understand that a short follow-up interview may be required at a later time.

5. I have received the interview questions and existing guidelines for news personnel with the Information Sheet.

6. I understand that participation involves the risk that I may feel uncomfortable and/or become anxious in recalling traumatic events.

7. I understand that at any time I can request to take a break from being interviewed.

8. I understand that I can choose to have a support person with me throughout the interview/s, if I feel that support is necessary. I can nominate the support person. Should I require confidential counselling I may contact Lifeline Australia on 13 11 14 or Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636 or infoline@beyondblue.org.au

9. I understand that all interview recordings and transcripts will be securely stored on the University of Tasmania premises for six years from the time the research project began and will be destroyed after that time.

10. I agree that any questions I have asked the interviewer have been answered to my satisfaction.

11. I understand that I will have the opportunity to review and correct transcripts of my interviews. I agree that my responses to interview questions may be published as part of a PhD study or in academic literature in the future.

12. I agree to be identified in the research and the completed study.

13. I understand that I will receive no payment or other material benefit in exchange for my participation.

14. I understand that I may withdraw at any time without any effect, and if I so wish, may request that any data I have supplied be withdrawn from the research up until the time the thesis has been submitted to examiners for consideration.

Name of Participant:

Signature: Date:

Statement by Investigator

☐ I have explained the project & the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation

If the Investigator has not had an opportunity to talk to participants prior to them participating, the following must be ticked.

☐ The participant has received the Information Sheet where my details have been provided so participants have the opportunity to contact me prior to consenting to participate in this project.

Name of Investigator

Signature of

Investigator

Name of investigator _____

Signature of investigator _____ Date _____

Appendix C

INDUSTRY CODES OF ETHICS AND PRACTICE GUIDELINES

Main Menu

- Home
- Inquiry Desk
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- About the Alliance
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- Freelancers
- Contact Us
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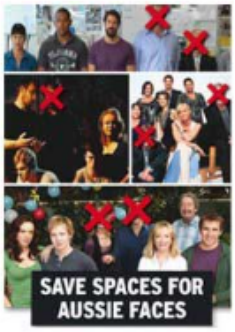
Professional Programs

The Alliance supports our members through professional development programs. Find out more here.



Most Popular

- NSW agent contacts
- VIC agent contacts
- Equity Rates Summary Sheet 2011
- Freelance Rates
- Film & TV Crew Contract

Media Alliance Code of Ethics

Respect for truth and the public's right to information are fundamental principles of journalism. Journalists describe society to itself. They convey information, ideas and opinions, a privileged role. They search, disclose, record, question, entertain, suggest and remember. They inform citizens and animate democracy. They give a practical form to freedom of expression. Many journalists work in private enterprise, but all have these public responsibilities. They scrutinise power, but also exercise it, and should be accountable. Accountability engenders trust. Without trust, journalists do not fulfil their public responsibilities. Alliance members engaged in journalism commit themselves to

Honesty
Fairness
Independence
Respect for the rights of others

1. Report and interpret honestly, striving for accuracy, fairness and disclosure of all essential facts. Do not suppress relevant available facts, or give distorting emphasis. Do your utmost to give a fair opportunity for reply.

2. Do not place unnecessary emphasis on personal characteristics, including race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual orientation, family relationships, religious belief, or physical or intellectual disability.

3. Aim to attribute information to its source. Where a source seeks anonymity, do not agree without first considering the source's motives and any alternative attributable source. Where confidences are accepted, respect them in all circumstances.

4. Do not allow personal interest, or any belief, commitment, payment, gift or benefit, to undermine your accuracy, fairness or independence.

5. Disclose conflicts of interest that affect, or could be seen to affect, the accuracy, fairness or independence of your journalism. Do not improperly use a journalistic position for personal gain.

6. Do not allow advertising or other commercial considerations to undermine accuracy, fairness or independence.

7. Do your utmost to ensure disclosure of any direct or indirect payment made for interviews, pictures, information or stories.

8. Use fair, responsible and honest means to obtain material. Identify yourself and your employer before obtaining any interview for publication or broadcast. Never exploit a person's vulnerability or ignorance of media practice.

9. Present pictures and sound which are true and accurate. Any manipulation likely to mislead should be disclosed.

10. Do not plagiarise.

11. Respect private grief and personal privacy. Journalists have the right to resist compulsion to intrude.

12. Do your utmost to achieve fair correction of errors.

Guidance Clause

Basic values often need interpretation and sometimes come into conflict. Ethical journalism requires conscientious decision-making in context. Only substantial advancement of the public interest or risk of substantial harm to people allows any standard to be overridden.

RT @jonty98: The Aus has corrected last week's yarn about the MEAA and detention centres: http://t.co/AbOdxaFs. Sign the petition: http: ...
Monday, 16 January 2012

Did You Know?

All Australian workers have the right to join a union. Whether you work in a large or small business, in an office or outdoors — there is a union to represent you.

2010-11 Annual Report

The 2010-11 Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance Annual Report is available here.

APC Australian Press Council

General Statement of Principles

The Council has published the following General Statement of Principles. Along with the Statement of Privacy Principles, the General Statement is applied by the Council when providing advice or adjudicating on individual complaints.

General Principle 1: Accurate, fair and balanced reporting
Publications should take reasonable steps to ensure reports are accurate, fair and balanced. They should not deliberately mislead or misinform readers either by omission or commission.

General Principle 2: Correction of inaccuracy
Where it is established that a serious inaccuracy has been published, a publication should promptly correct the error, giving the correction due prominence.

General Principle 3: Publishing responses
Where individuals or groups are a major focus of news reports or commentary, the publication should ensure fairness and balance in the original article. Failing that, it should provide a reasonable and swift opportunity for a balancing response in an appropriate section of the publication.

General Principle 4: Respect for privacy and sensibilities
News and comment should be presented honestly and fairly, and with respect for the privacy and sensibilities of individuals. However, the right to privacy is not to be interpreted as preventing publication of matters of public record or obvious or significant public interest. Rumour and unconfirmed reports should be identified as such.

General Principle 5: Honest and fair investigation; preservation of confidences
Information obtained by dishonest or unfair means, or the publication of which would involve a breach of confidence, should not be published unless there is an over-riding public interest.

General Principle 6: Transparent and fair presentation
Publications are free to advocate their own views and publish the bylined opinions of others, as long as readers can recognise what is fact and what is opinion. Relevant facts should not be misrepresented or suppressed, headlines and captions should fairly reflect the tenor of an article and readers should be advised of any manipulation of images and potential conflicts of interest.

General Principle 7: Discretion and causing offence
Publications have a wide discretion in publishing material, but they should balance the public interest with the sensibilities of their readers, particularly when the material, such as photographs, could reasonably be expected to cause offence.

General Principle 8: Gratuitous emphasis on characteristics
Publications should not place any gratuitous emphasis on the race, religion, nationality, colour, country of origin, gender, sexual orientation, marital status,

disability, illness, or age of an individual or group. Where it is relevant and in the public interest, publications may report and express opinions in these areas.

General Principle 9: Publication of Council adjudications
Where the Council issues an adjudication, the publication concerned should publish the adjudication, promptly and with due prominence.

Note [1] "Public interest"
For the purposes of these principles, "public interest" is defined as involving a matter capable of affecting the people at large so they might be legitimately interested in, or concerned about, what is going on, or what may happen to them or to others.
Note [2] "Due prominence"
The Council interprets "due prominence" as requiring the publication to ensure the retraction, clarification, correction, explanation or apology has the effect, as far as possible, of neutralising any damage arising from the original publication, and that any published adjudication is likely to be seen by those who saw the material on which the complaint was based.

August 2011

Australian Press Council
Phone: (02) 9261 1930 or 1800 025 712 **Fax**: (02) 9267 6826 **Email**: info@presscouncil.org.au
Web: www.presscouncil.org.au **Mail**: Suite 10.02, 117 York Street, Sydney 2000

APC Australian Press Council

Statement of Privacy Principles

The Council has published the following Statement of Privacy Principles. Along with the General Statement of Principles, the Privacy Principles are applied by the Council when providing advice or adjudicating on individual complaints.

Privacy Principle 1: Collection of personal information
In gathering news, journalists should seek personal information only in the public interest. In doing so, journalists should not unduly intrude on the privacy of individuals and should show respect for the dignity and sensitivity of people encountered in the course of gathering news.

In accordance with Principle 5 of the Council's Statement of Principles, news obtained by unfair or dishonest means should not be published unless there is an overriding public interest. Generally, journalists should identify themselves as such. However, journalists and photographers may at times need to operate surreptitiously to expose crime, significantly anti-social conduct, public deception or some other matter in the public interest.

Public figures necessarily sacrifice their right to privacy, where public scrutiny is in the public interest. However, public figures do not forfeit their right to privacy altogether. Intrusion into their right to privacy must be related to their public duties or activities.

Privacy Principle 2: Use and disclosure of personal information
Personal information gathered by journalists and photographers should only be used for the purpose for which it was intended. A person who supplies personal information should have a reasonable expectation that it will be used for the purpose for which it was collected.

Some personal information, such as addresses or other identifying details, may enable others to intrude on the privacy and safety of individuals who are the subject of news coverage, and their families. To the extent lawful and practicable, a media organisation should only disclose sufficient personal information to identify the persons being reported in the news, so that these risks can be reasonably avoided.

Privacy Principle 3: Quality of personal information
A media organisation should take reasonable steps to ensure that the personal information it collects is accurate, complete and up-to-date.

Privacy Principle 4: Security of personal information
A media organisation should take reasonable steps to ensure that the personal information it holds is protected from misuse, loss, or unauthorised access.

Privacy Principle 5: Anonymity of sources
All persons who provide information to media organisations are entitled to seek anonymity. The identity of confidential sources should not be revealed, and where it

is lawful and practicable, a media organisation should ensure that any personal information which it maintains derived from such sources does not identify the source.

Privacy Principle 6: Correction, fairness and balance
In accordance with Principle 3 of the Council's Statement of Principles, where individuals are a major focus of news reports or commentary, the publication should ensure fairness and balance in the original article. Failing that, the media organisation should provide a reasonable and swift opportunity for a balancing response in the appropriate section of the publication.

A media organisation should make amends for publishing any personal information that is found to be harmfully inaccurate, in accordance with Principle 2 of the Council's Statement of Principles. The media organisation should also take steps to correct any of its records containing that personal information, so as to avoid a harmful inaccuracy being repeated.

Privacy Principle 7: Sensitive personal information
In accordance with Principle 8 of the Council's Statement of Principles, media organisations should not place any gratuitous emphasis on the categories of sensitive personal information listed in Principle 8, except where it is relevant and in the public interest to report and express opinions in these areas.

Members of the public caught up in newsworthy events should not be exploited. A victim or bereaved person has the right to refuse or terminate an interview or photographic session at any time.

Unless otherwise restricted by law or court order, open court hearings are matters of public record and can be reported by the press. Such reports need to be fair and balanced. They should not identify relatives or friends of people accused or convicted of crime unless the reference to them is necessary for the full, fair and accurate reporting of the crime or subsequent legal proceedings.

August 2011

Australian Press Council
Phone: (02) 9261 1930 or 1800 025 712 **Fax**: (02) 9267 6826 **Email**: info@presscouncil.org.au
Web: www.presscouncil.org.au **Mail**: Suite 10.02, 117 York Street, Sydney 2000

Suggested ways news personnel can minimise further harm when working with victims and survivors

You may be fairly new to reporting traumatic news or you may simply feel you've more to learn about such assignments. The following quick tips are drawn from Australasian and international research by Dart members (journalists, journalism researchers and health professionals) for your information. See our website - www.dartcenter.org - for more details and examples.

- People who have experienced deep trauma or who have lost someone close in sudden, violent circumstances have a right to decline being interviewed, photographed or filmed and news media, and their newsrooms, need to respect that right. Exercise the principle of doing no further harm.
- Above all, be accurate and do not feign compassion, it can't be faked. Offer sincere condolences early and in considerate, supportive terms. Use a supportive phrase like "I'm sorry this happened to you" rather than the more abrupt "How do you feel?" or the discordant "I know how you feel" which will immediately lose credibility.
- Witnesses and survivors are likely to be in shock, at least in the immediate period after a disaster, and may not be in a fit state to be interviewed, filmed or photographed - indeed, to give anything like informed consent to an interview, so go easy on them. Avoid "devil's advocate" questions or questions that might imply blame or that they could have done more.
- Even though a large number of news media will be chasing stories and fresh news angles at this time, resist the "pack" mentality, especially when media throngs are covering a subsequent development, event, arrival, etc. Pool resources where possible to limit demand on individuals and communities.
- Often these people will be experiencing deep conflict and perhaps confusion. For news media to focus on that as-yet-unresolved mental or emotional conflict can be destructive to victims, survivors, witnesses, their families and friends as well as to unseen others who might have experienced similar or worse situations.
- Invite these people to be interviewed or photographed and provide a supportive atmosphere for that interchange, rather than coerce, cajole, trick or offer remuneration them to get co-operation - especially don't thrust the additional burden of negotiating an "exclusive" onto grieving families.
- Respect their choice to have someone with them or to appoint a family or external spokesperson or even a media advisor and don't pay out on them for making such choices. Most likely they're being bombarded with media requests and have little choice but to seek help with, or limit, demand.
- Try to make your approach as respectful and gentle as possible, despite your pressing deadline or a newsroom impatient for your copy or images. Treat these people as you would like to be treated if the situation was reversed ... this is particularly critical if you are an "out-of-towner", as your radar may not be as attuned to local sensitivities as it could be.
- For the families of victims and survivors, their loss, grief and concern is intensely focused and personal - it will also have its own timeline which may mean you'd get a far better story or image if you held off a little with those immediately affected ... that doesn't stop you from speaking to others who are not so closely affected, including officials, chaplains, etc.
- If you get a knock-back, leave a contact card and tell them they can call you if they want to talk later, but don't use leveraging techniques with victims, survivors, witnesses or their families to get them to agree to an interview or photograph. Do not blackmail people into co-operating on the basis they will help others. Let them decide.
- Avoid, wherever possible, being the one to relay news of a death to an individual or family. The appropriate authorities should do that and relatives have a right to receive such news in private. If you are asked for additional details about the tragedy that they may not yet have, consider carefully your response and try to think you would feel if you were in their situation. You may want to suggest they check they with others. You may decide to share some but not all you know, but don't repeat unconfirmed information.

- Remember victims, survivors and their families and friends are struggling to regain control in their lives after a devastating experience ... allow them to have some say in when, where and how they're interviewed or photographed/filmed. Include them in any decisions you can - for instance, read back their quotes or replay raw tape, allow them to suggest which photo/s of a deceased or badly injured relative should be used, etc. Let vulnerable interviewees tell you when they'd like to take a break, whether they want you to put your notebook down or to turn off recording equipment so they can say something they don't want used. Check whether it's ok to ask a tough question.
- If someone breaks down, give them time to compose themselves before asking: "Are you ready to go on?" Resist filming or photographing individuals in a distressed or emotional state (even readers/viewers with no connection to tragedies are critical of this clichéd technique). Choose powerful, reinforcing images to illustrate the story and the victim's worth to their family and/or community.
- After a disaster or multiple-fatality event, stories do not need added sensation - rely on good, solid, factual journalism and a healthy dose of sensitivity. Be wary of recycling particular images of individuals, especially graphic ones. Also beware of choosing "tragic images" as page or screen icons. Often this will be a family's last image of a lost loved one and it may not be pleasant.
- Thoroughly check and re-check facts, names, times, places, etc., because such errors are painful to these individuals, families and their colleagues and cause unnecessary stress.
- Remember people you speak to in these circumstances are rarely media-savvy. Try to explain the media process and how your story/picture/footage is likely to be used. Also explain that it may be reshaped prior to publication, or afterwards, or not used at all. Be honest if you know something is likely to run more than once. [Many will take steps to ensure vulnerable family members such as children or the elderly are informed of, or shielded from, such reports.] Encourage them to ask questions while you're there to answer them and to call you if they have a question at a later stage.
- Beware of over-reliance on good "talent". Articulate survivors, witnesses and family/colleagues can find themselves unwittingly and uncomfortably elevated above others affected. In turn, others in their communities can become resentful that one individual or family is getting the lion's share of attention. In small communities this can cause long-term, even irreparable, rifts in relationships.
- With more than 150.000 confirmed deaths to date and tens of thousands of people from dozens of countries still unaccounted for, this story will run for some time and will test the resources of newsrooms around the globe, so pace yourself and become aware of the symptoms of direct and vicarious/secondary trauma (see www.dartcenter.org/resources/selfstudy/index.html and www.dartcenter.org/resources/selfstudy/3_photojournalism/ani.html) and take responsibility for interacting supportively with traumatised people as well as for your own self-care (www.dartcenter.org/tips_tools/journalist.html). In these ways you'll help minimise further harm.
- Despite the difficulty and sadness that you might encounter, this can be an opportunity for personal and professional growth if you choose it to be.

DART CENTRE for news media & trauma Australasia

These tips have been brought to you by national & international researchers, educators and experts associated with The Dart Centre for News Media and Trauma - Australasia (DCA)

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Appendix D

'NO LONGER ANONYMOUS: SURVIVING TRAUMA IN THE MEDIA SPOTLIGHT'

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

FIRST SESSION:

PRIOR UNDERSTANDING OF MEDIA

How did you view the media before you had any contact with journalists?

What did you consider to be the roles and responsibilities of media?

Tell me about the circumstances or nature of any involvement or contact you had with media prior to the traumatic event that put you in the spotlight.

How would you describe that experience?

Prior to your involvement with media, what was your understanding of the term 'tabloid journalism'?

Prior to your involvement with media, what was your understanding of the phrase 'in the public interest'?

Prior to your involvement with media, what was your understanding of the phrase 'in the media spotlight'?

Prior to your involvement with media, what was your understanding of your right to privacy?

Prior to your involvement with media, what media platform - print, television, radio, online, popular magazines – did you regard as the most trustworthy? Why?

CONTACT, CONSENT AND CONTROL

Why do you think media organisations were interested in your story?

How much consideration - immediately after your trauma - did you give to whether you would talk to the media?

Please describe the first contact you had with media directly following the traumatic event?

Was that initial contact at your instigation or at the request or behest of media?

How did you find that experience/what was it like?

When you did choose to speak to the media, can you explain why and how?

To give informed consent to be interviewed, what mental and physical state do you think someone would need to be in?

Do you now consider you were in the right mental and physical state to give that informed consent?

What were your expectations of your interaction with the media?

Can you describe the way journalists or news organisations approached the interview?

How much consideration did they give to your traumatic situation?

What did you observe about how the media approached others involved in your case?

From the time you first spoke to media, how much did you feel you could control whether you spoke again?

How much control did you feel you had over how your story was told?

Were you made aware of, or have any regard to, media deadlines or time pressures?

At any point in the process did you feel that you could withdraw from dealing with the media?

Did you at any time withdraw from the process?

On what grounds would you have said no to an interview? If you did say no, what was the impact or effect?

Tell me about the best question you were asked or the best experience with the media?

Did that involve representatives from a newspaper, television, radio, online, magazine or a combination?

Tell me about the worst question you were asked or the worst experience?

Did that involve representatives from a newspaper, television, radio, online, magazine or a combination?

Do you consider the age or apparent experience of the media representatives made a difference to the way you, or others, were approached or treated?

If you have appeared before a press conference, how would you describe that experience?

How much have you felt overall that journalists or interviewers really listened to you?

How important was it to you that a reporter or interviewer emphathised with you?

How important was it to you that a good rapport be established with a journalist, interviewer or media organisation?

Did developing a good rapport with a journalist make any difference to how you answered questions or whether you responded to further media requests?

Did that rapport in any way make dealing with the media easier or harder?

How much impact could, or did, a good rapport with journalists have on the dispassionate or impartial reporting of your case?

What did you observe about the way media organisations or journalists interacted with each other? Examples?

Tell me about any assistance or advice you received from a third party (such as police, a lawyer or agent) in how to handle the media?

How valuable, or otherwise, was that assistance?

What or who helped you most in dealing with the media?

What role do you think leaked information plays, or could play, when it comes to developing a relationship with the media or the public (through the media)?

Why do you think people would agree to, or offer, exclusive information or interviews to the media?

COVERAGE AND REPRESENTATION

How much control did you feel you had over how you were portrayed or represented in the media?

Does that matter?

Do you think the reporting of your situation imposed or reflected either media or public expectations of how you should have responded to trauma?

What did other people say to you about the way you have been portrayed in the media?

How do you feel you have been portrayed by the media? Are you comfortable with that?

How does that differ from who you feel you really are?

How do you think that portrayal by the media shaped public perceptions or public opinion of you?

How did feedback from others – negative or positive - about how you were portrayed by the media influence the way you felt about the experience?

What have been some of the most common phrases used by the media to describe you or your traumatic situation?

What did you think of those?

How would you prefer to be framed – as a survivor or victim?

Did you expect, or were you offered, the opportunity to check stories before they were printed or broadcast?

In the reporting or coverage of your traumatic event or situation, was there any apportioning of blame? If so, can you explain that?

What did you observe about whether competition between news outlets impacted on coverage of cases such as yours?

Regarding the use of images – stills or video – directly following your traumatic event:

- What was your reaction to images of you published or broadcast in the media?
- What was the reaction of your family and friends?
- What was the public's reaction?

- What was your reaction to images of the event itself or images of other people who were involved?

Tell me about any approaches that were made for you to supply images or pose for images?

How did you, or would you, have viewed re-enactments?

How much of the reporting, do you think, was to inform and how much to entertain? What is the right balance there?

How did you feel about the way your interviews were interpreted and used by the media when printed or broadcast?

What understanding did you have, when agreeing to an interview, that the story and/or images could appear in several newspapers or broadcast outlets, owned by the same organisation, or be sold to other outlets?

Did you or any of your family keep copies of newspaper articles or broadcast stories, and if so, why?

How much, if at all, have you been forced to relive your trauma event through continued or revived media interest?

SECOND SESSION:

FROM PRIVATE TO PUBLIC FIGURE

What do you think are a journalist's obligations when it comes to respecting privacy?

How was your right to privacy respected, or not?

Did you feel any obligation to speak because it was 'in the public interest'?

Did you feel you were speaking to a journalist or the public when you took part in an interview?

What do you think is the right balance between an individual's right to privacy and the public interest?

How much of a private life – in effect not open to reporting and therefore public scrutiny – have you retained?

How do you think you could go back to being anonymous – if at all - where your name and face are unrecognisable?

What have you liked about the media attention and what have you disliked?

What has been the public's response to you and is that ongoing?

How often does a stranger say they know you or appear to recognise you?

How 'special' did you feel or have you felt when in the media spotlight?

Have you ever experienced a feeling of being a 'celebrity'?

Did you at any time feel that to the media you were a 'commodity'?

At any point do you consider you were used by the media? If so, how and why?

Have you ever been approached to participate in endorsements or advertising?

What requests, if any, did you make of media? If you did make requests, what was the response?

If payments, or other inducements or incentives were offered for you to speak to the media, can you tell me about those?

What impact did that have, or do you think it would have had, on whether you participated in the interview or answered questions?

Did it, or could it, have affected the way you responded to questions and the details/information you made public?

Were those payments disclosed to the general public? If so, how?

What ongoing attention have you received from the non-news media (such as popular magazines, film, books) as a result of having a public profile?

What has that experience been like, particularly in comparison with dealing with news outlets?

Have you sought to tell your story your own way? If so, why and how?

If/when the 'media spotlight' shifted away from you, what impact did that have?

How did your family and friends respond to the attention subsiding?

A LASTING IMPACT

What degree of trauma, if any, do you feel you are still experiencing?

Has media exposure/attention, as opposed to the trauma, changed your life? If so, how?

What is your understanding today of the phrase 'in the media spotlight'?

What contribution do you think media made, if any, to the trauma you experienced?

How did interacting with media help you, if at all, in dealing with your traumatic situation?

Did your interaction with media meet your initial expectations?

As far as treatment of you, your family and friends, how would you rate media out of 10 in ... print, television news, radio news, tabloid television and radio, online, popular magazines? And why?

What form of media – print, television news, radio news, tabloid television and radio, online, popular magazines – would you now trust most and why?

Please list the top five positives of dealing with the media?

Please list the top five negatives of dealing with the media?

Can you please describe whether the nature of your relationship with media and your impressions of media changed? If so, at what point and why?

How do you respond to approaches from media now and under what circumstances will you deal with media again?

Is there anyone in the media you would no longer speak with?

Have you established any lasting or positive relationships with organisations or individuals in the media?

Regarding the use of images – stills or video – today:

- What is your reaction to images of you published or broadcast in the media?
- What is the reaction of your family and friends?
- What is the public's reaction?
- What is your reaction to images of the event itself or images of other people who were involved?

There is a phrase: which came first, the chicken or the egg. Bearing that in mind, do you think the public interest or right to know influences media coverage or media coverage influences or creates public interest?

How much do you think media shapes public opinion? Do you have any examples?

Do you feel your personality or nature has changed in any way as a direct result of media contact?

What negative impact, if any, has speaking with media had on your life?

What personal good, if any, has come from your involvement with the media (having a public profile)? Has it led to employment or other opportunities?

What community good, if any, has come from public awareness (through media attention) of your trauma situation or event?

What lasting impact, if any, has media contact had on you?

What lasting impact has it had on your family and friends?

What lasting impact has the 'media spotlight' had on your relationships with other people?

What did you observe about the impact the traumatic event had on individual journalists or interviewers?

Do you currently have a publisher, agent or other third party assisting you in dealing with the media now?

When you see others facing trauma in the 'media spotlight', what do you think and feel?

What is your understanding now of the term 'tabloid journalism'?

What do you now think is the role of the media in society? Is that being fulfilled?

How do you view media in general now?

What one word would you use to describe media?

REFLECTIONS AND ADVICE

If you could go back and change something about the way you responded to or interacted with the media, what would it be?

If you could go back, what would you do the same in responding to or interacting with media?

For you, what could have made the process of responding to or dealing with media easier?

What would your expectations be when dealing with the media now?

What would be your advice for journalists when approaching or dealing with people who have experienced trauma?

What advice do you have for news editors and media managers?

What training should journalists or news managers undertake on how to deal with trauma survivors?

What would you say to someone facing a situation of trauma when it comes to dealing with the media?

MEDIA ETHICS AND GUIDELINES

Prior to your involvement with media, what was your understanding of the role of the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, the Australian Communications and Media Authority and the Australian Press Council?

What was your understanding of the Journalists Code of Ethics, the Australian Communications and Media Authority Guidelines or the Press Council Principles?

What did you know about the complaints handling processes of these bodies?

If you consider you had cause to make a complaint to the Australian Communications and Media Authority or the Press Council, what happened?

Journalists, under their Code of Ethics, commit themselves to acting with honesty, fairness, independence and with respect for the rights of others. What do you think of those principles? (Code of Ethics supplied)

What was your experience with those principles?

Can you provide any examples of where the Code of Ethics was breached in your case?

What do you think it means when it is said that someone has been misrepresented in the media?

Do you feel you were ever misrepresented in the media? If so, how?

What corrective action was taken by the media, if any? How did that, or could that, have eased your concern?

If you ever had cause to feel misled or deceived by a journalist or news organisation, can you tell me about that?

What is your understanding of the difference between news reporting and opinion?

Was that line maintained or blurred by news organisations in the reporting on your traumatic event?

How would you define 'fair' reporting?

How do you respond to the term 'journalistic integrity'?

Are there any matters or comments that have appeared in media coverage of your traumatic event which you would today like to correct because they were inaccurate or distorted?

Are there any examples of facts being omitted or suppressed that concerned you?

Can you give me any examples of where – in your case – facts were exaggerated or false information spread through media coverage, from one outlet to another, without correction?

If so:

- How did that impact the way your story was told?
- How do you think the public understanding or perception of your situation could have been impacted?
- What impact did that have on you?

What about the disclosure, by the media, of information or comments you understood to be 'off the record' and therefore not for publication or broadcast?

Are there any obvious gaps in the Code of Ethics as far as you can see?

What about the Press Council guidelines? (Press Council Statement of Principles supplied)

Do those guidelines satisfactorily cover experiences such as yours?

The Dart Centre for News Media & Trauma (Australasia) has suggested ways news personnel can minimise further harm when working with victims and survivors. Can you

give me your impressions of those guidelines/suggestions? (Dart Centre suggestions paper supplied)

How do codes of practice or ethics work to protect the interests of trauma survivors?

How could they work better?

Are there any issues the Press Council, ACMA or the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (which is the journalists' union) should consider?

NB: Supplementary questions may be required in follow-up to answers given.

Appendix E

INTERVIEW DATES AND LOCATIONS

Participant	Date of interview	Location of interview
Stuart Diver	13 February 2012	Thredbo, New South Wales
Todd Russell	17 February 2012	Beaconsfield, Tasmania
Bruce and Denise Morcombe	24 February 2012	Gordon, Tasmania
Douglas Wood	12 March 2012	Melbourne, Victoria
Kay Danes	22 March 2012	By telephone from Saudi Arabia
Michael Chamberlain	24 March 2012	Cooranbong, New South Wales
Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton	26 March 2012 and 3 April 2012	Sydney, New South Wales, with follow-up by telephone from Cooranbong
Ron Delezio	28 March 2012	Sydney, New South Wales
Jacqueline Pascarl	29 March 2012	Melbourne, Victoria
Jandamarra O'Shane and Jenni Begg	3 May 2012	Cairns, Queensland
Mercedes Corby	16 May 2012	By telephone from Bali, Indonesia
James Scott	19 June 2012	Brisbane, Queensland

Appendix F

SECONDARY SOURCE MATERIAL

Australian Newspapers

The Australian	Sydney, New South Wales
The Sydney Morning Herald	Sydney, New South Wales
The Sun	Sydney, New South Wales
The Sun-Herald	Sydney, New South Wales
The Daily Telegraph	Sydney. New South Wales
The Sunday Telegraph	Sydney, New South Wales
The Australian Financial Review	Sydney, New South Wales
Manly Daily	Sydney, New South Wales
The Age	Melbourne, Victoria
The Sunday Age	Melbourne, Victoria
Herald Sun	Melbourne, Victoria
Sunday Herald Sun	Melbourne, Victoria
Geelong Advertiser	Geelong, Victoria
The Courier-Mail	Brisbane, Queensland
The Sunday Mail	Brisbane, Queensland

The Cairns Post	Cairns, Queensland
Gold Coast Bulletin	Gold Coast, Queensland
Sunshine Coast Daily	Sunshine Coast, Queensland
Bayside Bulletin	Brisbane, Queensland
The Mercury	Hobart, Tasmania
Sunday Tasmanian	Hobart, Tasmania
The Examiner	Launceston, Tasmania
The Sunday Examiner	Launceston, Tasmania
The Advertiser	Adelaide, South Australia
The Northern Territory News	Darwin, Northern Territory
The Canberra Times	Canberra, Australian Capital Territory
The Sunday Times	Perth, Western Australia

Australian (National) Magazines

Grazia

New Idea

Ralph

The Bulletin

The Australian Women's Weekly

Woman's Day

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