

**Desensitization in Local Broadcast Television:
An ethnographic study on three television stations in South Florida**

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Abstract

This ethnographic research study aims to investigate the phenomenon of desensitization among broadcast media workers in South Florida. Specifically, the study will be conducted at three television stations in the region. The objective is to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences, coping mechanisms, and potential consequences of continuous exposure to traumatic events in the broadcast media industry. Through participant observation and in-depth, focused interviews, the study will explore the extent of desensitization among media workers, the factors contributing to its development or mitigation, and the impact on emotional well-being and professional attitudes. Additionally, the research will examine the role of organizational support systems, workplace culture, and individual coping strategies in relation to desensitization. Findings from this study will provide valuable insights into the experiences of media professionals in South Florida, contribute to the existing literature on desensitization in broadcast media, and inform interventions and strategies to support the well-being and ethical practices of media workers in similar contexts.

Key Words: Desensitization, Traumatic Events, Media, News, Mass School Shootings, Journalists

1. Introduction

During my five years (2017-2022) working in the news industry as a camera operator, floor director, and content coordinator, there have been numerous tragic events that have been covered by the news station at which I worked but the most outstanding by far frequent were the mass and school shootings that occurred. By the end of my quinquennium at *WPTV News Channel 5*, I became desensitized to the school shootings¹ and they become just numbers, faces, and content. This led me to asking: Am I the only one in the station feeling desensitized to this overwhelming amount of content about people dying?

Unlike the general audience that can detach from the news whenever they want (Skovsgaard & Andersen, 2020; Edgerly, 2022), the workers at the news station are being exposed to this content anywhere from eight to eleven hours a day depending on the nature of the news.

The current nature of broadcast television operates 24/7 (Stainback *et al*, 2020; Guthrie, 2021), providing a range of programming. News coverage often includes traumatic events, such as school shootings and mass shootings (Stainback *et al*, 2020; Guthrie, 2021; Holody & Shaughnessy, 2022). Broadcasters strive to balance informing the public while ensuring well-being. In summary, broadcast television runs around the clock, covering traumatic events that may lead to desensitization.

This is critical because research on the topic of desensitization within broadcast journalism hasn't been done in over a decade, most of the research in the past decade has been focused on desensitization in the music or video game industry (Scharrer, 2008; Breuer *et al*, 2014; Jabr *et al*, 2018; Oredein *et al*, 2020; Kersten & Greitemeyer, 2022). Although there has been research done about the Coronavirus epidemic and media desensitization about Covid-19 news reporting, this study does not wish to delve into Covid-19 research as it is a convoluted subject that does not pertain to mass and school shootings (Stevens *et al*, 2021). Moreover, the aforementioned research included three different mediums entertainment television, local newspaper, and local television news (Scharrer, 2008).

¹ The two most notable mass school shootings during my time at WPTV News Channel 5 were the Majory Stoneman Douglas Shooting on February 14, 2018, when 17 people died and 17 people were injured (*The Washington Post*, 2018). The Second notable shooting occurred on May 24, 2022, where 21 people died and 12 people were injured (*The Washington Post*, 2022). In my five years at WPTV, there were a total of 149 shootings (September 2017 to September 2022).

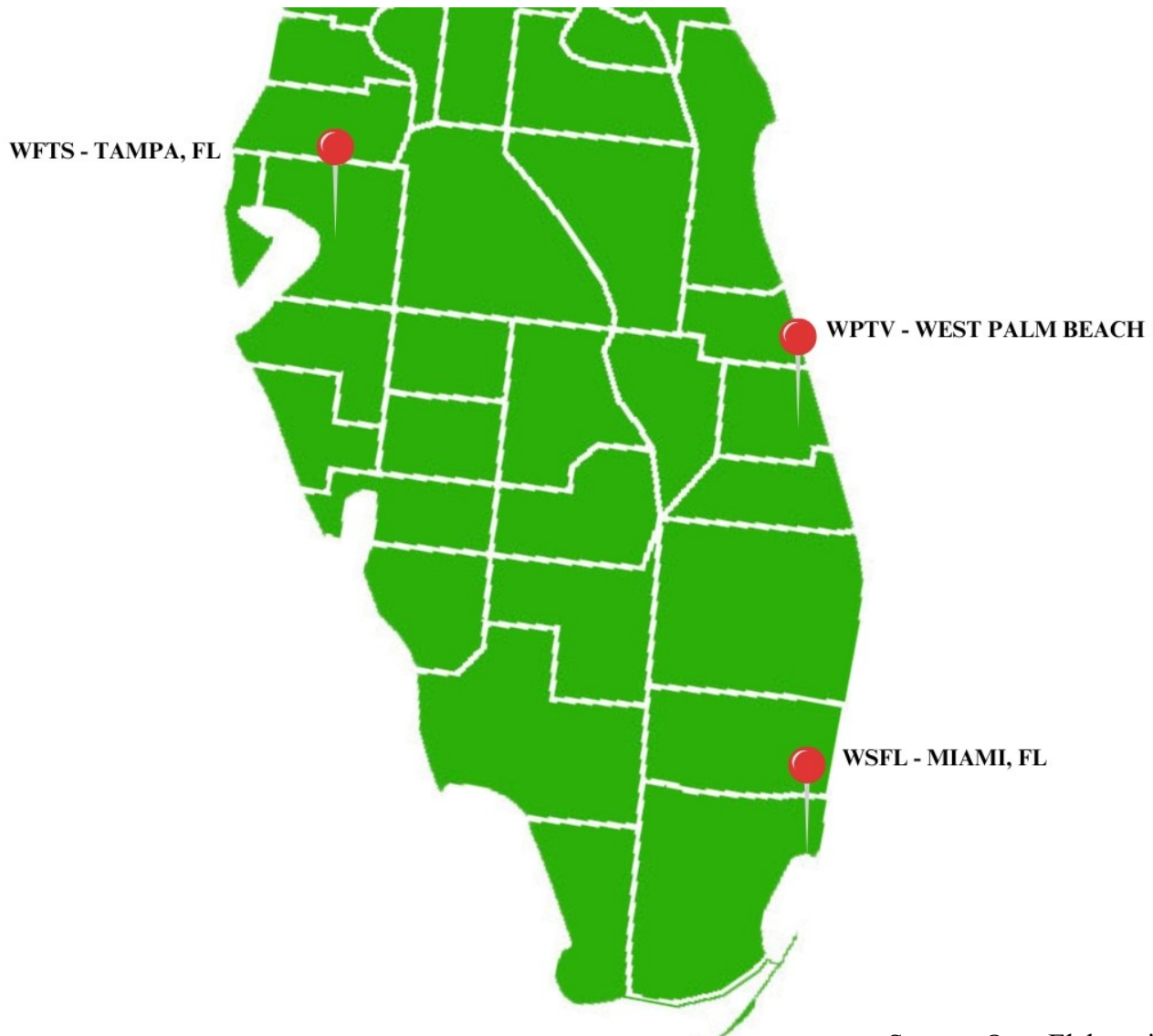
My contribution to this field of research will focus solely on the television station workers and how the elongated periods of coverage could potentially lead to becoming desensitized towards a particular type of news coverage such as mass and school shootings.

The coverage of mass school shootings in news media serves a crucial role in society by shedding light on these tragic events and their aftermath (Dahmen, 2018; Fox *et al*, 2019). It brings public attention to the magnitude of the issue, fostering conversations about gun violence, mental health, and school safety (Kambam *et al*, 2020; Pallin *et al*, 2021). However, the extensive and repetitive nature of such coverage has raised concerns about desensitization in broadcast journalism (Kambam *et al*, 2020). When these horrific incidents are sensationalized or excessively repeated, there is a risk of desensitizing viewers and diminishing the emotional impact of these tragedies (Kambam *et al*, 2020; Fox *et al*, 2021). It is essential for media outlets to strike a delicate balance in their coverage, ensuring that they inform the public while being mindful of the potential psychological effects and avoiding glorification of the perpetrators (Lankford & Madfis, 2018; Langman, 2018; Levin & Wiest, 2018; Silva & Greene-Colozzi, 2019).

This research aims to study practitioners in the broadcast media industry within the region of South Florida (United States of America). Some potential promises to this research is that three stations in the South Florida region (Tampa, West Palm Beach, and Miami, Table 1) will participate in this study, allowing workers of various profiles, including anchors, producers, video editors, the web team, and marketing division (Table 2) to be studied. This will be used to gain a multi-layered ethnographic approach which will provide a richer data pool and better understanding of the topic of desensitization in the newsroom.

Some limitations to this research could include how deep the practitioners of each profile would be willing to divulge during the course of the study (Iannuzzi, 2017; Ivask *et al*, 2023). It will be paramount to rely upon transparency and trust that their personal anecdotes and experiences will remain confidential to create an atmosphere comfortable for the participants (Leask *et al*, 2010; Ivask *et al*, 2023).

Finally, It should be noted that the terms ‘violent event/s or tragic event/s’ are herein used to refer specifically to mass shootings and school shootings, for the sake of concision and to avoid redundancy.

TABLE 1 - MAP OF TELEVISION STATIONS

Source: Own Elaboration

TABLE 2 - Description of Profiles at a Television Station

Profiles	Description
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Manager: Oversees the overall operations of the television station, including programming, finance, personnel, and strategic planning. • News Director: Responsible for selecting and scheduling programs, managing the station's programming grid, and ensuring a balanced and engaging content lineup.
Talent (Reporter/Anchors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News Anchor: Presents news stories and information to viewers, often serving as the face of the station's news programs. • Reporter/Journalist: Investigates and gathers news stories, conducts interviews, writes news articles, and reports on local, national, or international events.
Producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News Producer: Coordinates news coverage, assigns reporters to stories, edits news scripts, and manages the overall production of news programs.
Content Coordinators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content Coordinator: Handles video-related operations, such as video switching, video signal routing, and monitoring video quality during live broadcasts or recorded programs. As well as, edits raw footage into a cohesive and visually appealing final product, incorporating visual effects, sound effects, music, and graphics as necessary.
Photographers/MMJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photographer: Operates video cameras to capture live or recorded footage of news events, interviews, and other program content. • Multimedia journalists in broadcast media cover news stories using various media forms, engaging and informing audiences across multiple platforms.

Source: Own Elaboration

2. Research Design

The main objective of this research is to figure out whether or not broadcast media employees are being desensitized due to the repeated violent events that the workers are subjected to in those times of airing. In the lens of the audience, it can be argued that trust in the media (Englund *et al*, 2022; Knudsen *et al*, 2022), incidental news exposure (Goyanes & Demeter, 2022) and news avoidance (Skovsgaard & Andersen, 2020; Scherr & Leiner, 2021; Edgerly, 2022) are factors of becoming desensitized due to the current nature of the news (Holody & Shaughnessy, 2022; Koo, 2023). Juxtaposing the audience, the workers in the broadcast news industry can't detach. Due to the number of traumatic events happening in the United States², it is paramount to understand what journalists and people working behind the scenes are going thru. Relevant questions to ask about this are: *RQ1* Are the workers in broadcast media being desensitized, if so, *RQ 1.1* what are they doing to cope with this struggle? As well as, *RQ2* To which extent does desensitization affect their work? The best way to reach these results would be through an ethnographic research study.

RQ1 → *M1* → *Results*

RQ1 → *M2* → *Results*

Furthermore, three sub-topics can help to analyze this issue further: *SQ1* What role does news avoidance play in desensitizing the workforce? *SQ2* How does lack of trust in the media lead to the desensitization of the workforce and what is the opinion of the journalists on this issue? *SQ3* How does incidental news exposure (within social media, television, etc.) contribute to the desensitization of the general audience from the media practitioners' point of view? In addition to *SQ1-3*, how do broadcast television employees perceive that desensitization may be a factor of incidental news exposure, news avoidance, and trustworthiness in the media? In other words, desensitization in the media can lead to news avoidance and the loss of trust in media while also being influenced by these factors in a two-way communications flow (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). These questions highlight the

² As of June 21, 2023, There has been 386 School Shooting incidents in the United States of America since 1999 (Cox *et al*, 2023) As for mass shootings, there have been 4,243 mass shootings (where four or more people die) in the United States of America since 2014, with already 203 occurring in 2023 (BBC, 2023). Because of the length of the timeline please refer to (Link: <https://www.security.org/blog/a-timeline-of-school-shootings-since-columbine/>) for a complete breakdown of school shootings in the United States of America since 1999.

importance of understanding the different factors that contribute to desensitization and how they affect broadcast television workers. Additionally, it is crucial to examine *SQ4* how gender, race, sexual orientation, social class and education impact the desensitization of television workers.

SQ1-4 → *MI* → *Results*

By considering these various factors, we researchers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of how desensitization manifests within broadcast media and what steps can be taken to address this issue. This method will provide a deeper understand of the social and cultural practices that occur during a tragic event coverage such as mass and school shootings. This will be carried out using several techniques including but not limited to interviews and

TABLE 3 - RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Questions
RQ 1: Are the workers in broadcast media being desensitized RQ 1.1: What are they doing to cope with this struggle?
RQ 2: To which extent does desensitization affect their work?
Research Questions - Sub Questions
SQ 1: What role does news avoidance play in desensitizing the workforce?
SQ 2: How does lack of trust in the media lead to the desensitization of the workforce and what is the opinion of the journalists on this issue?
SQ 3: How does incidental news exposure (within social media, television, etc.) contribute to the desensitization of the general audience from the media practitioners' point of view?
SQ 1-3: How do broadcast television employees perceive that desensitization may be a factor of incidental news exposure, news avoidance, and trustworthiness in the media?
SQ 4: How does gender, race, sexual orientation, social class and education impact the desensitization of television workers?

Source: Own Elaboration

participant observation.

Using this ethnographic approach will allow us to have a better and more comprehensive understanding of what the workers go through during these events and coverage.

3. State of the question / Literature Review

In recent years there has been an increasing number of traumatic events that has encapsulated the news industry in the United States of America. The market of Florida has been flooded with stories about mass and school shootings. In the past ten years there have been two of the most deadly shootings in the United States occurred in Florida (Shields, 2017; Guthrie, 2021; Holody & Shaughnessy, 2022). One of them was the Pulse Nightclub³ shooting and the other was the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting⁴. In Florida alone, there have been 29 school shootings since 2000 (Cox, 2023). This leads to the topic of whether broadcast media workers are becoming desensitized due to the numerous traumatic events they are subjected to cover. This approach is a complex one that requires a multi-layered approach, meaning that every level of the Television station will be studied (Anchors, Producers, Video Editors, Web Team, Marketing Etc.) To understand this phenomenon, it is essential to consider how each contributes to the desensitization of workers.

³ The Pulse nightclub shooting occurred on June 12, 2016, in Orlando, Florida. It was a devastating mass shooting at a popular LGBTQ+ venue during a Latin-themed night. The attacker, Omar Mateen, armed with firearms, opened fire inside the club, killing 49 people and injuring over 50 others. Mateen expressed allegiance to ISIS during the attack, and his motive involved a mix of personal beliefs and potential extremist ideology. The incident sparked discussions on gun control, terrorism, hate crimes, and the safety of marginalized communities. It had a profound impact on the LGBTQ+ community, leading to calls for greater acceptance and protection for individuals regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

⁴ The Parkland shooting took place on February 14, 2018, at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. It was a tragic school shooting that claimed the lives of 17 people and left numerous others injured. The perpetrator, a former student named Nikolas Cruz, entered the school armed with a semi-automatic rifle and opened fire on students and staff. The incident sparked nationwide outrage and renewed debates on issues such as gun control, school safety, and mental health. Survivors of the shooting became vocal advocates for stricter gun laws and initiated the March for Our Lives movement, demanding action to prevent further acts of gun violence. The Parkland shooting had a significant impact on the community and the nation, inspiring calls for change and increased efforts to address the complex issues surrounding school shootings.

4. Theoretical Background

To understand the issue of desensitization, it must be broken down chronologically through the lens of 4 works that help develop this idea. Desensitization relates to media, whether it is cinema, video games, or the news industry, desensitization has existed for a long time. It is important to understand desensitization from the media's perspective because of the current culture in the United States where traumatic events are becoming far too common.

This review will be broken down chronologically from the earliest signs of desensitization in United States media (in 1948) to a more contemporary outlook. Four papers will be used to break down the term of desensitization in the eyes of media. The first paper that links to desensitization in the United States media comes from Paul F. Lazarsfeld's research in 1948 *Communication Research and Social Psychology*, which delves into concepts that link together with the theory of distrust in media. The second is *Personal Influence* by Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld (1955), which has connections that link to news avoidance. The third and final papers are E. Katz's paper *On conceptualizing media effects (1980)* and the catharsis theory by Sonja Glabb and Wolfgang Donsbach (2008) which are the forebearers of the whole concept of desensitization among media workers.

4.1 *Communication Research and Social Psychology*

In Lazarsfeld's 1948 article, he focuses on the "effects" media (newspaper, magazines, mass media) plays in influencing perception. While this study isn't focused on the polarizing news that is so frequent now a days, it shows the early signs that media played a role in shaping the public's perception and the long term effects it can hold on human. This links back to desensitization because desensitization in the terms of media is rooted in media's effect on the individual (whether it is a member of the workforce or the audience). Lazarsfeld goes on to talk about the long-term effects that media may cause on a person's social psychology, "the commercial organization of mass media is supposed by many to have contributed to a general feeling of distrust. As people become more and more bombarded with advertisements and propaganda they indeed ask themselves whether there is anything left in which they can believe. There is no concrete evidence on this point, but several studies have at least shown

how widespread the desire for “sincerity” is among people” (Lazarsfeld, 1948). The way in which advertisements and propaganda has caused distrust back in the 40s can be juxtaposed with the Covid-19 news coverage which lasted in heavy flow for a two year period and still lingers till this day. Both have the similarity that they caused distrust in the media and at the same time might have led to news avoidance. The way the media is studied is evolving year by year if not month by month and Lazarsfeld understood the importance of keeping up to date with communication (media) research, “Industrial civilization which led to the development of mass media has also developed new ways of life. The mass media thus would be at the same time products and intervening agents in this development.” (Lazarsfeld, 1948). Lazarsfeld understood that media is forever changing and that its development is rooted in that of our lives.

4.2 Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in th Flow of Mass Communications

Moving onto the Elihu Katz and Lazarfelds paper *Personal Influence*, they suggest a “two-step flow of communication” which states, “that ideas, often, seem to flow from radio and print to opinion leaders and from them to less active sections of the population”(Katz & Lazarsfeld, p.32, 1955). If viewed in a contemporary lens, the “opinion leaders” Katz and Lazarsfeld describe, can be seen today as social media influencers or mass media networks that have a set agenda on what content they are producing. Katz and Lazarsfeld expand this thought by suggesting that “all interpersonal relations are potential networks of communication and that an opinion leader can best be thought of as a group member playing a key communications role” (Katz & Lazarsfeld, p.33, 1955). In a real time juxtaposition them group member playing the key role would be a friend or associate that influences your opinion by information they received either from social media or current mass media conglomerates. This is important to understand desensitization because in media today it is the constant flow of information from social media and television that becomes topics of discussion or debate among your friends and family, which ultimately leads to either becoming polarized or avoiding (news avoidance) the topic all together

4.3 *On Conceptualizing Media Effects*

In Katz's paper *On Conceptualizing Media Effects* he brings up terms such as "selectivity" and "interpersonal relations"; selectivity meaning the sociopsychological processes which guide individual exposure, perception, and recall of the media and their messages; by interpersonal relations he refers to membership and conversation in social networks which intervene in the flow of mass communications (Katz, 1980). This is important due to the fact that desensitization with media is both built on a sociopsychological process that deals with interpersonal relations. Meaning that when a audience member or broadcast media worker reports/views the news, they undergo a sociopsychological process that is usually nurtured through communication with their friends, colleagues, or relatives. This is further developed in an approach where Katz tries to define the "balance of power" between mass media and their audiences; he attempts to demonstrate the power of media through eight early and still-current (for its time) works, I will only be focusing on cognitive processing of communications.

4.4 *Catharsis Theory in context of Media*

The Catharsis Theory is rooted in the effects of violence in mass media. The Catharsis Theory implies that the execution of an aggressive action under certain conditions diminishes the aggressive drive and therefore reduces the likelihood of further aggressive actions. Meaning, in the sense of desensitization, after repeated exposure to aggressive acts such as mass or school shootings, it reduces the emotional process one experiences when viewing or covering repeated violent acts. The Catharsis Theory is tied in with the frustration aggression theory which is the reduction of aggression caused by the expression of any act of aggression. Although "the reduction of aggression" is the main emotion of this theory, it can also be argued that emotions in general are effected during violent or aggressive acts and act as a tool for desensitizing a workforce or an audience. Furthermore it has been argued by Glaab, that "catharsis could occur only if the recipient was emotionally aroused or aggressive" which I

think occurs much more frequently in today's current climate of media. Although the Catharsis theory provided substantial evidence towards media desensitization, "one of the main critics of the catharsis theory, state the existence of 'results which definitely suggest that catharsis process has occurred – under limited circumstances'" (Berkowitz 1993, 348; Glabb, 2008).

Moreover, the catharsis theory and desensitization in broadcast media are related in their examination of the emotional effects of media exposure, albeit from contrasting angles. Catharsis theory suggests that media consumption, particularly of violent or disturbing content, can provide a cathartic release of negative emotions and potentially reduce aggression (Glaab, 2008). In contrast, desensitization theory highlights the potential for continuous exposure to distressing media content to lead to a diminished emotional responsiveness and a blunting of empathetic reactions (Oxford University Press, 2020). While catharsis theory emphasizes the purging of negative emotions, desensitization theory points to a numbing or detachment that may occur over time (Bushman *et al*, 1999). Both concepts highlight the influence of media exposure on emotional states, but with different implications for individuals and their responses to media content. Further research is necessary to fully understand the complex interplay between catharsis and desensitization in the context of broadcast media.

5. Methods

An ethnographic research study is necessary for this proposal to better understand the media employees that will be participating in this study. Qualitative methods and ethnographic research, such as interviewing and participant observation are essential for this proposal on desensitization in broadcast television due to their distinct advantages in capturing rich, nuanced, and context-dependent data. Desensitization is a complex process that involves psychological, social, and cultural factors, which cannot be adequately understood through quantitative measures alone.

By employing qualitative methods, the study can delve deep into the subjective experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of the workers who are exposed to televised

content. Through interviews, we can gain valuable insights into viewers' emotional responses, attitudes, and cognitive processes, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the desensitization phenomenon. Participant observation, on the other hand, allows us to be immersed in the natural settings where desensitization occurs, such as TV production studios and newsrooms. This approach enables us to observe and understand the social interactions, contextual factors, and behavioral patterns that shape desensitization.

Ethnographic research, combining both interviewing and participant observation, provides a holistic understanding of the cultural and social contexts in which desensitization in broadcast television takes place. It allows us to uncover hidden meanings, cultural norms, and power dynamics that influence desensitization processes (Leask *et al*, 2010; Ivask *et al*, 2023). By employing qualitative methods and adopting an ethnographic approach, it will help produce deep insights into the complexities of desensitization in broadcast television, facilitating a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of this phenomenon.

5.1 Interviews

The incorporation of In-depth interviews in this study will focus on the issue of mass and school shootings. The interview questions will be formulated to hone in on how severe or inconsequential covering these topics are to people who work in broadcast journalism. Moreover, in-depth interviews provide an entrance into the mind and lets the researcher understand the motivations, emotions, and reasoning attached to behavior or actions (Spradley, 1979; Freedman, 2004; Besley & Roberts, 2010; Ferrucci & Taylor, 2019). In doing so, they can lead to responses such as those found in the research done by Ivask *et al* on journalists routines and desicion-making in gathering and publishing death-related visuals. A reporter (Reisenbuk) covering one of the cases studied, explains the way in which they cope with a situation and avoid the emotional stress, “I do not treat them as people; I treat them as units. I switch off my mind because otherwise, you will not be able to do this job” (Ivask *et al*, 2023). Responses such as the one stated above is raw, real evidence of the harsh realities of being a journalist and is what this research aims to seek in the pursuit of studying the desensitization of broadcast media workers. This study seeks to utilize the techniques and

methodology of the in-depth interviews used in Marques-Hayasaki *et al*'s 2016 study on *New Professional Profiles and Skills in the Journalistic Field*. More specifically, the study aims to delve into the organization and formatting of the interview script utilized in this study. While in-depth interviews serve as a valuable technique in research, it is also important to acknowledge the significance of incorporating semi-structured interviews into the research methodology.

The purpose of incorporating semi-structured interviews is to focus on desensitization and the issue of mass / school shootings but allowing for flexibility, allowing follow-up questions and enabling unexpected topics to arise during the course of the interview. This will help assist on

exploring the culture of the newsroom and gaining a deeper understanding of the participants experiences. By humanizing with the participants will allow for a more comprehensive and malleable approach. In a study conducted about media's coverage of health issues that included 16 semi-structured interviews, a radio news reported was quoted, "just as a joke, the chief of staff will go [say], 'now i'd like you to create bit of fear and panic out there, there are some storms coming in'" (Leask *et al*, 2010). While this quote seems inconsequential to the work, "there is still a sense of truth" (Leask *et al*, 2010) in the statement and the semi-structured interview creates a comforting atmosphere to allow participants to generate responses such as the one above. Another study that had an enriching methodology was a German research done on trauma journalism and disaster resilience (Verhovnik, 2018). This study conducted 30 semi-structured interviews and was impactful in the guidelines it set during the interviews (Verhovnik, 2018). The questions during the interviews that were most crucial were questions such as: the number of incidents that journalists remembered memories and images in their minds?. what the individual reporting on the crises and disasters looked like?, which problems the journalist were confronted by at the scene and in the aftermath?, what individual feelings and thoughts the journalist had, and if they were prepared for those incidents as well as which consequences resulted from their reporting – for themselves and their work? (Verhovnik, 2018). These questions were enlightening and provide a great basis to structure this study and can be used for the semi-structured interviews about desensitization in the broadcast media industry. Similarly to a study conducted in 2023 by Beard *et al* on the

perspectives of news media reporting about firearm violence, this study aim to thematically analyze the interviews to indentify discriptive thematic frameworks from the interviews preferably using NVivo or another computer-aided qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) software (Beard *et al*, 2023). This is important because of it will help identify themes and observations this study did not seek out to find.

5.2 Participant Observation

Finally, participant observation study of each of the three television stations included in this proposal is necessary. Through participant observation it would be possible to inspect and experience the work environment and practices of journalists during their coverage of mass and school shootings first hand. This will help with gaining a deeper understanding of the social and cultural context of the three television station, including their norms, values, and practices that

shape the production of each news department being studied. The goal of this participant observation is to gather a diverse group of journalists, which includes men and women in profiles that range from anchors, producers, video editors, floor crew, that will help “produce a single, unified and complete description of the world” (Longino, 1999: 339; Charles, 2021), the world in question would be that of the newsroom during a traumatic event. The participant observation will serve as a detour from the interviews and provide raw data that can only be obtained through the viewing of a traumatic event coverage in real time. Moreover, it is precisely within the distinctive characteristics of a particular standpoint, or through the uniqueness of a particular experience, that participant observation hopes to find and generate new knowledge (McCarl Nielson, 1990; Longino, 1999; Brooks 2007; Charles, 2021). In a study done by Buchanan and Keats, they found that “journalists and photojournalists have devised direct and indirect strategies to safeguard against reactivating their stress” (Buchanan & Keats, 2011) which stems from the Avoidance of reminders of the event, as described in the DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) as one of the key defense mechanisms used by people to prevent against being retraumatized or retriggered. This participant observation study is based on interpretation and positionality rather than replicability (Charles, 2022). Along with the observation of the workers, their will be

observation done of the frequency of traumatic event coverage in real time, similar to a study done by Mark Fishman. Fishman examined the individual patterns of coverage for each news organization (Fishman, 1978), which lines up with the ideals of this study on the desensitization of broadcast media workers. By studying the individual patterns of each traumatic event and what goes on during the coverage, it is believable to conceive that substantial data would be drawn from this part of the method. All in all, the use of participant observation provides an authentic approach in real time that interviews do not provide.

6. Timeline

The timeline for this study will be over an estimated four-year span. It will include the research preparation, planning, methodology, analysis, and results. The timelines will be broken down as such: Research Preparation will take around 6 months to complete. The Planning will take approximately 6 months to complete. The methodology, which includes interviews and participant observation will take approximately 2 years to complete. Finally, reporting, analysis, results will take approximately a year. The timeline is shown down below.

TABLE 4 - TIMELINE OF STUDY

Process	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Research Preparation	█															
Planning		█														
Interviews				█												
Observation				█												
Reporting									█							
Analysis											█					
Results													█			

Source: Own Elaboration

7. Limitations

Trying to conduct an ethnographic research on the desensitization of broadcast media workers in three television stations across South Florida can face several limitations. Although this study currently has access to three television stations and potential interviews set up in South Florida, accessing and gaining cooperation from television stations can be difficult due to their protective nature. Ethical concerns arise when observing distressing situations, as this could exacerbate trauma from both journalists and those affected by those traumatic experiences. This study will fall under *Pompeu Fabra Universidad* code of ethics as well as adhere to *American Sociological Association's (ASA)* code of ethics.

The sample size of the study may be limited by focusing on only three television stations although this study can be conceived as a case study. Generalizing the findings to all broadcast media television stations in the United States becomes difficult due to the potential variations in workplace environments, organizational cultures, and journalistic practices.

Subjectivity and bias are inherent in ethnographic research, as it heavily relies on the researcher's interpretation and subjective analysis of observed behaviors and interactions (Hermann, 2016). Researchers must be aware of their biases and preconceived notions, which can influence data collection, analysis, and final findings (Hermann, 2016).

Conducting ethnographic research requires significant time and resources. Prolonged fieldwork, establishing rapport with participants, and analyzing collected data are time-consuming and demanding tasks.

Another limitation lies in the generalizability of findings. Ethnographic research aims to provide an in-depth understanding of specific contexts, but its focus on particular settings and populations makes it challenging to generalize the results to broader contexts. Although, the findings of this study will be useful for local markets within the United States and particularly useful for South Florida TV stations, and can make everyday practice better. So this research study can have, and we hope it will have, a social implication. Ensuring validity and reliability in ethnographic research can be challenging due to its qualitative nature. Researchers must employ rigorous data collection methods, utilize member checks, and use triangulation techniques to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. In summary, conducting ethnographic research on the desensitization of workers in broadcast

media television stations regarding traumatic event coverage in the United States faces limitations. These include challenges in gaining access and cooperation, ethical concerns related to distressing situations, limited sample size and representativeness, subjectivity and bias, time and resource constraints, difficulty in generalizing findings, and ensuring validity and reliability. Researchers must carefully consider these limitations when designing the methodology, interpreting the findings, and acknowledging the specific context of the three television stations under study.

8. Expected Results

This ethnographic study aims to uncover insights into desensitization among workers in broadcast media television stations. Anticipated results include identifying desensitization as a coping mechanism employed by workers to handle distressing news stories. Variations in desensitization levels are expected across different stations, influenced by factors such as organizational culture and support systems. The study also anticipates documenting the emotional impact on workers, including stress, compassion fatigue, and burnout. It aims to explore the role of organizational support in mitigating negative effects, uncover individual coping strategies, and examine how desensitization influences professional attitudes and ethical considerations in journalism. The findings may have implications for industry practices, informing policies, guidelines, and interventions to support workers' mental health and promote ethical reporting. Overall, the study seeks to contribute to understanding the experiences and well-being of media workers in the context of traumatic event coverage.

9. Further Research

Further research is needed to enhance our understanding of desensitization among broadcast media workers. Longitudinal studies can provide insights into the long-term effects of desensitization, its impact on mental health, and the factors influencing its development or mitigation. Comparative analysis across different media outlets, such as television, online platforms, and print media, can identify variations in desensitization levels and assess the influence of technological advancements.

Exploring the intersectionality of desensitization and its effects on diverse groups within the industry, considering factors like gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by media professionals. Evaluating the effectiveness of organizational interventions, such as trauma-informed training or mindfulness-based approaches, can help reduce desensitization and promote well-being. Comparative studies across countries and media systems can shed light on how different practices and cultural factors affect desensitization. Gathering perspectives from stakeholders like journalists, managers, and industry professionals can offer valuable insights and strategies to address desensitization.

Additionally, investigating the impact of emerging media formats, like social media and podcasts, can help media professionals navigate the evolving landscape while maintaining emotional well-being. By pursuing these research avenues, we can deepen our knowledge, inform evidence-based interventions, and support the well-being of media professionals.

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Appendix A.

Interview Questionnaire: Desensitization within Broadcast Television - General Questions

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of this research is to explore the topic of desensitization within broadcast media, specifically focusing on the experiences and perspectives of employees in the field of broadcast journalism. Your insights will be valuable in understanding the impact of traumatic event coverage on journalists and the potential desensitization that may occur. Please note that all information provided will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only.

1. Background Information:
 - a. Name:
 - b. Role/Position in Broadcast Journalism:
 - c. Number of years of experience in broadcast journalism:
 - d. Can you briefly describe your typical responsibilities and tasks in the field?
2. Understanding Traumatic Event Coverage:
 - a. How do you define a traumatic event in the context of broadcast journalism?
 - b. Have you covered traumatic events in your career? If yes, could you provide some examples?
 - c. How would you describe the emotional impact of covering traumatic events?
3. School and Mass Shooting Coverage in the United States/ Florida
 - a. Can you describe your experiences in covering school shootings or mass shootings in America/Florida? How did these events impact you personally and professionally?
 - b. How do you approach the ethical considerations of covering school shootings and mass shootings, particularly in terms of respecting the privacy of victims and their families?

- c. In your opinion, how has the coverage of school shootings and mass shootings evolved over the years? Have there been any notable changes in how these events are reported?
- d. What challenges do journalists face when covering school shootings and mass shootings, both in terms of gathering accurate information and maintaining sensitivity to the victims and their communities?
- e. Do you believe that the extensive media coverage of school shootings and mass shootings contributes to a desensitization among the audience? If so, how do you see this desensitization manifesting?
- f. How do you personally manage the emotional toll of covering school shootings and mass shootings, and what support systems or resources are available to you within your organization?
- g. Have you noticed any differences in the coverage of school shootings and mass shootings between national and local news outlets? If yes, what are some key distinctions you have observed?
- h. How do you balance the responsibility to report on these tragic events and inform the public with the potential negative impact that sensationalized coverage can have on vulnerable individuals, such as survivors and their families?
- i. Are there any specific guidelines or best practices that your organization follows when reporting on school shootings and mass shootings? How do these guidelines help maintain journalistic integrity and sensitivity?
- j. From your perspective, what improvements or changes could be made in the media coverage of school shootings and mass shootings to better serve the public interest while minimizing potential harm?

4. Desensitization and Its Effects:

- a. In your opinion, what is desensitization, particularly in the context of broadcast journalism?
- b. Do you believe desensitization is a common occurrence among journalists who cover traumatic events? Why or why not?

- c. Have you personally experienced any signs of desensitization as a result of your work? If yes, could you provide examples?

5. Coping Mechanisms and Support Systems:

- a. What strategies or coping mechanisms do you employ to deal with the emotional challenges of covering traumatic events?
- b. Is there a support system or resources available to you within your organization to address the emotional impact of traumatic event coverage? If yes, how effective do you find them?

6. Professional Ethics and Boundaries:

- a. How do you balance the ethical responsibility to report news accurately and objectively with the potential emotional toll it may have on you as a journalist?
- b. Have you ever felt conflicted about covering certain traumatic events due to the potential harm it might cause to the viewers or yourself? If yes, please explain.

7. Long-Term Effects and Personal Well-being:

- a. In your experience, what are some potential long-term effects of covering traumatic events?
- b. How do you maintain your personal well-being and mental health while working in a demanding field like broadcast journalism?

8. Media Industry Perspective:

- a. Do you believe that the desensitization of journalists has any impact on the quality of news reporting? If yes, in what ways?
- b. In your opinion, should news organizations implement measures to address desensitization among their employees? If yes, what kind of measures would you suggest?

9. Closing Thoughts:

- a. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences or thoughts on desensitization in broadcast journalism?

Thank you for your participation in this interview. Your insights will contribute significantly to our understanding of desensitization within broadcast media.

Ethnographic Interview Questionnaire: Desensitization in Broadcast Television - Management Profile

Introduction: Thank you for participating in this ethnographic interview. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather insights into the experiences and perspectives of management personnel within television stations regarding desensitization among broadcast media workers. Your input will contribute to our understanding of the phenomenon and inform strategies to support the well-being of media professionals. Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge and experiences. All responses will be kept confidential.

1. Can you briefly describe your role and responsibilities within the television station?
2. In your experience, how would you define desensitization among broadcast media workers? How have you observed or encountered instances of desensitization in your role?
3. What are the potential effects of desensitization on the emotional well-being and performance of broadcast media workers?
4. How do you perceive the role of management in addressing and mitigating desensitization among media workers? What strategies or initiatives have been implemented within the television station to support their well-being?
5. Can you describe the organizational culture and work environment within the television station? How do you think these factors may contribute to or help alleviate desensitization?
6. Have you noticed any variations in the levels of desensitization among different departments or teams within the television station? If so, what factors do you believe contribute to these variations?

7. What resources or support systems are available to media workers to cope with the emotional challenges associated with their work? Are there any specific training programs, debriefing sessions, or mental health support initiatives in place?
8. How do you assess the impact of desensitization on the ethical considerations and decision-making processes of media workers? Are there any measures or guidelines in place to ensure responsible and sensitive reporting?
9. From your perspective, what are the key challenges faced by management in addressing desensitization and promoting the well-being of media workers? How do you envision overcoming these challenges?
10. In your opinion, what additional measures or interventions could be implemented to better support media professionals and mitigate the effects of desensitization within the television station?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. Your insights are greatly appreciated and will contribute to our research on desensitization in broadcast television.

Ethnographic Interview Questionnaire: Desensitization in Broadcast Television - Talent Profile

Introduction: Thank you for participating in this ethnographic interview. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather insights into the experiences and perspectives of talent (reporters and anchors) within television stations regarding desensitization in the broadcast media industry. Your input will contribute to our understanding of the phenomenon and inform strategies to support the well-being of media professionals. Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge and experiences. All responses will be kept confidential.

1. Can you briefly describe your role as a reporter/anchor within the television station? What are your primary responsibilities and the types of news stories you cover?
2. Based on your experience, how would you define desensitization in the context of broadcast media? Have you personally observed or encountered instances of desensitization among yourself or your colleagues?
3. What are the potential effects of desensitization on your emotional well-being and professional performance? How do you think it impacts your ability to connect with the audience and report on sensitive or traumatic events?
4. How do you perceive the role of talent in addressing and mitigating desensitization among media workers? What personal strategies or coping mechanisms have you employed to navigate the emotional challenges of your work?
5. How do you think the organizational culture and work environment within the television station influence desensitization among talent? Are there any specific practices or support systems in place to address the emotional well-being of media professionals?

6. Have you noticed any variations in the levels of desensitization among different talent within the television station? If so, what factors do you believe contribute to these variations?
7. What resources or support systems are available to you and your colleagues to cope with the emotional challenges associated with reporting on traumatic events? Are there any specific training programs, debriefing sessions, or mental health support initiatives in place?
8. How do you perceive the impact of desensitization on your ethical considerations and decision-making processes as a reporter/anchor? Are there any measures or guidelines in place to ensure responsible and sensitive reporting?
9. From your perspective, what are the key challenges faced by talent in addressing desensitization and maintaining their well-being? How do you envision overcoming these challenges?
10. In your opinion, what additional measures or interventions could be implemented to better support talent and mitigate the effects of desensitization within the television station?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. Your insights are greatly appreciated and will contribute to our research on desensitization in broadcast television.

Ethnographic Interview Questionnaire: Desensitization in Broadcast Television -
Producers' Profile

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this ethnographic interview. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gain insights into the experiences and perspectives of producers within television stations regarding desensitization in the broadcast media industry. Your valuable input will contribute to our understanding of the phenomenon and inform strategies to support the well-being of media professionals. Please answer the following questions based on your knowledge and experiences. All responses will be kept confidential.

1. Can you provide a brief overview of your role as a producer within the television station? What are your primary responsibilities and the types of news stories you oversee?
2. In your understanding, how would you define desensitization within the context of broadcast media? Have you observed instances of desensitization among yourself or your colleagues in the industry?
3. How do you perceive the potential effects of desensitization on the emotional well-being and professional performance of producers? How does it impact the overall quality and tone of news content produced?
4. What role do you believe producers play in addressing and mitigating desensitization among media workers? Are there any specific strategies or practices that you have implemented to support the emotional well-being of your team?
5. From your perspective, how does the organizational culture and work environment within the television station influence desensitization among producers? Are there any measures in place to address the emotional challenges faced by media professionals?

6. Have you noticed any variations in the levels of desensitization among different producers within the television station? If so, what factors do you believe contribute to these variations?
7. What resources or support systems are available to you and your colleagues to cope with the emotional challenges associated with producing content on sensitive or traumatic events? Are there any specific training programs, debriefing sessions, or mental health support initiatives provided?
8. How do you perceive the impact of desensitization on ethical considerations and decision-making processes within the production team? Are there any guidelines or protocols in place to ensure responsible and sensitive storytelling?
9. What do you consider as the main challenges faced by producers in addressing desensitization and maintaining their well-being in the fast-paced broadcast television industry? How do you envision overcoming these challenges?
10. In your opinion, what additional measures or interventions could be implemented to better support producers and mitigate the effects of desensitization within the television station?

Thank you for your participation in this interview. Your insights will contribute significantly to our research on desensitization in broadcast television, and we greatly appreciate your time and contributions.

Ethnographic Interview Questionnaire: Desensitization in Broadcast Television -
Content Coordinators' Profile

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this ethnographic interview. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gain insights into the experiences and perspectives of content coordinators (sometimes known as video editors) within television stations regarding desensitization in the broadcast media industry. Your valuable input will contribute to our understanding of the phenomenon and inform strategies to support the well-being of media professionals. Please answer the following questions based on your knowledge and experiences. All responses will be kept confidential.

1. Can you provide a brief overview of your role as a content coordinator within the television station? What are your primary responsibilities and the types of news stories you work on?
2. In your understanding, how would you define desensitization within the context of broadcast media? Have you observed instances of desensitization among yourself or your colleagues in the industry?
3. How do you perceive the potential effects of desensitization on the emotional well-being and professional performance of content coordinators? How does it impact the overall quality and tone of the news content you work on?
4. What role do you believe content coordinators play in addressing and mitigating desensitization among media workers? Are there any specific strategies or practices that you have implemented to support the emotional well-being of your team?
5. From your perspective, how does the organizational culture and work environment within the television station influence desensitization among content coordinators? Are there any measures in place to address the emotional challenges faced by media professionals?

6. Have you noticed any variations in the levels of desensitization among different content coordinators within the television station? If so, what factors do you believe contribute to these variations?
7. What resources or support systems are available to you and your colleagues to cope with the emotional challenges associated with working on sensitive or traumatic news content? Are there any specific training programs, debriefing sessions, or mental health support initiatives provided?
8. How do you perceive the impact of desensitization on ethical considerations and decision-making processes within the content coordination team? Are there any guidelines or protocols in place to ensure responsible and sensitive content editing?
9. What do you consider as the main challenges faced by content coordinators in addressing desensitization and maintaining their well-being in the fast-paced broadcast television industry? How do you envision overcoming these challenges?
10. In your opinion, what additional measures or interventions could be implemented to better support content coordinators and mitigate the effects of desensitization within the television station?

Thank you for your participation in this interview. Your insights will contribute significantly to our research on desensitization in broadcast television, and we greatly appreciate your time and contributions.

Ethnographic Interview Questionnaire: Desensitization in Broadcast Television -
Photographers and Multimedia Journalists' Profile

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this ethnographic interview. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gain insights into the experiences and perspectives of photographers and multimedia journalists within television stations regarding desensitization in the broadcast media industry. Your valuable input will contribute to our understanding of the phenomenon and inform strategies to support the well-being of media professionals. Please answer the following questions based on your knowledge and experiences. All responses will be kept confidential.

1. Can you provide a brief overview of your role as a photographer/multimedia journalist within the television station? What are your primary responsibilities and the types of news stories you typically cover?
2. In your understanding, how would you define desensitization within the context of broadcast media? Have you observed instances of desensitization among yourself or your colleagues in the industry?
3. As a photographer/multimedia journalist, how do you perceive the potential effects of desensitization on your emotional well-being and professional performance? How does it impact your approach to capturing and documenting sensitive or traumatic events?
4. How do you manage the emotional challenges associated with covering distressing news stories? Are there any specific strategies or coping mechanisms you have developed to protect your well-being while still fulfilling your job responsibilities?
5. From your perspective, how does the organizational culture and work environment within the television station influence desensitization among photographers and

multimedia journalists? Are there any measures in place to address the emotional challenges faced by media professionals in your role?

6. Have you noticed any variations in the levels of desensitization among different photographers and multimedia journalists within the television station? If so, what factors do you believe contribute to these variations?
7. What resources or support systems are available to you and your colleagues to cope with the emotional challenges associated with covering sensitive or traumatic news content? Are there any specific training programs, debriefing sessions, or mental health support initiatives provided?
8. How do you perceive the impact of desensitization on ethical considerations and decision-making processes within your role as a photographer/multimedia journalist? Are there any guidelines or protocols in place to ensure responsible and sensitive reporting?
9. What do you consider as the main challenges faced by photographers and multimedia journalists in addressing desensitization and maintaining their well-being in the fast-paced broadcast television industry? How do you envision overcoming these challenges?
10. In your opinion, what additional measures or interventions could be implemented to better support photographers and multimedia journalists and mitigate the effects of desensitization within the television station?

Thank you for your participation in this interview. Your insights will contribute significantly to our research on desensitization in broadcast television, and we greatly appreciate your time and contributions.