WRITING TO INSPIRE

Determining which stories prompt a hierarchy of social activism response

A professional project

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By

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I chose to research the effects of narrative journalism in feature stories on social activism as part of my effort to wed the two forms of textual communication I attempt to practice professionally, creative writing and journalism. I want to help myself and other practitioners of the craft of narrative journalism create work that benefits the public good by sharing the stories of those who experience the events of the world we live in.

In the future, I hope to find work for a news outlet writing long-form investigative pieces using narrative tools to make the information more relatable, memorable and relevant to a general audience. In creating these stories, I want to promote public participation and inspire others to be involved in their communities, government and general well-being of people around the world.

Narrative journalism, in my opinion, creates a greater emotional experience for the reader, as readers empathize with the characters’ experiences through such tools as active description, details and dialogue. The greater the emotional experience in the story, the more connected I feel to the events covered in the news and the more inspired I am to want to get involved in the issues. I feel that many other people share this opinion, and I set out to do research to understand why this occurs and how journalists can best use narrative elements to report the news in a vital, relevant manner.
CHAPTER TWO

FIELD NOTES

8/29/16

Seminar

Mike McCurry visited us in class Friday to discuss what it was like to work under Bill Clinton during a time of great turmoil, along with what he thinks about the coming election and presidential debates. In my opinion, Mike was rather pleasant and informal during the discussion, despite allowing us to put him on the record throughout the seminar.

I was especially interested in his thoughts on how his theological professorship informs his thoughts on politics, how he handled the Bill Clinton scandal and whether the debates will decide who wins the presidential elections. In particular, I thought it was good to hear that he doesn’t believe the coming debates will decide the presidential elections, which is in contrast with some of the readings we had for class. McCurry thought the debates come too late in the season to have such a major impact on the race. They are more so to reaffirm what people already believe. I would have liked to ask what it means for people who didn't get their beliefs reaffirmed, because if that happened enough, wouldn’t that greatly alter the outcome of the election? Unfortunately I didn’t get a chance to follow up with that question.

On the more religious side of things, it was interesting to hear how he believed the church serves as a place of community outside of politics that can still inform how politicians act within their jobs. In simplified terms, the golden rule of
do unto others as you would have them do unto you always applies. I would have liked to ask him where he thinks the line between the separation of church and state is now that he is working in religious studies, but again, there was not the time.

Field notes

I’m in the midst of working on a story for Youth Today and JJIE about how advocacy organizations are preparing for the coming Congressional session to begin. These organizations are really going to be against the grindstone, since the election has the coming session cut pretty short. Bills like the Family First Act and Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention Reauthorization Act are two of the biggest things that a lot of these organizations would like to see through before a new administration comes to power. One group told me that they are hoping to see it before Obama leaves office, but they expect to be able to get things through fairly well if Hillary Clinton is elected, because she is the only candidate who has put any of her time into talking about youth justice issues. So far, I’ve had four phone interviews and one email interview on the story and think I’ve got enough to get the write up done.

Research notes

I’m almost done with my first interview transcription, which is taking much longer than I expected. The person I interviewed talked really fast, so I’m finding myself rewinding quite a bit to get it all typed up, which is extending my work time. I really hope I can get faster on the transcription, because I feel like I’ll be able to move forward quickly once that is complete.
9/5/2016

Seminar

I greatly enjoyed the Newseum. It is definitely one of my favorite places that I've been in DC thus far. Our meeting with Gene Policinski was interesting, and I was pleasantly surprised at how much the Newseum does to promote journalism, from hosting the Pear vs. United States mock case to student video competitions on free speech. I bet the back and forth between Policinski and two students was intriguing, albeit a little tense for a second there. I'm not a supporter of the corporate personhood idea, but I also didn't expect a particular student to be so aggressive in speaking out on his views on it either.

The Newseum itself is fantastic. The Berlin Wall exhibit taught me a lot about the time period right before my birth. The 9/11 and Vietnam videos were also especially well done.

There was one video I watched on bias in journalism that was entertaining in a way that I don't know the museum intended. Brian Williams at one point said he wants to be fact-checked, which in light of the not so recent developments in his honest news reporting was very surprising to see, as well as ironically humorous. I wonder when they produced that video.

I also really enjoyed the displays on journalism during the revolution, especially the article covering the Boston Tea Party. The font was really hard to read, though. My appreciation for modern computers increased while trying to squint at that type.
Field notes

I’ve got a lot of eggs in the pan right now at Youth Today and JJIE. I’m waiting for a call back from a source who I’m hoping will be able to introduce me to a person who was formerly underrepresented in the juvenile court system for a story to highlight the Gault at 50 campaign. I’m also trying to get a contact set up for a video project they would like me to do on the life of a D.C. teenager to go with the other videos being made across the nation.

While I wait for callbacks on those issues, I’m researching a story about our presidential candidate’s stances on child welfare programs and juvenile justice. I’m also researching a story on what after school programs are doing to prevent students from getting involved with street gangs, which should be timely in light of the four recent stabbings that were linked to MS-13.

Project notes

I have completed two interview transcriptions and am moving on to a third later this evening. I look forward to having enough data compiled to begin taking a hard look at possible findings, though I have a few in mind already based on my memory of the interviews.

9/12/16

Seminar

This week’s seminar offered a very interesting insight into the behind the scenes of congressional press teams and into how a young journalist can learn the
basics of DC news, gain experience at different publications and eventually find a solid place at a major outlet, such as CNN.

Our meeting with Claire McCaskill’s communications director, John LaBombard, and press secretary, Sarah Feldman, offered some key tips as to how to best communicate and continue relations with an elected official's press staff.

Number one, have an honest communication regarding what the story is about, what you would like to know and when your deadline is.

Number two, don’t be scared to call and ask questions about a confusing issue, and don’t run with something critical without calling to circle around to the press staff if you don’t fully understand the issue.

Number three is that deadlines set priorities for which journalists to get back to and when, followed by how large or Missouri-oriented the publication is.

Number four is that persistence is important, so do not forget to call back if it’s been a few days since someone from the office has been in touch with you.

Follow up is crucial.

Number five, come to events and ask members of Congress what you want to know about, even if it doesn’t relate directly with what the event is about.

Number six is that the press team appreciates a heads up before a reporter goes for an ambush interview with an official. If nothing else, it’s nice for them to understand what they are about to have to try and play clean up on if perhaps a senator gets a little off the cuff with their comments.

One of the most interesting parts of our lunch with CNN’s editor, Juana Summers, was how she was able to quickly bounce back from being laid off at
Mashable, because of her close connections with other journalists. Having a strong reputation and large network to fall back on made it much easier for her to not only bounce back, but advance her career to a point that lowly journalism students salivate over. Her career is very close to something I’m sure I will strive for my entire life.

I also enjoyed her appreciation for in-depth on the ground reporting to create full and enriching stories of real people and the lives they lead. That is exactly the kind of work I would like to be doing.

Field notes

I have been working hard on two large projects, as well as a smaller story on an interesting report. I feel like I could go on about these for far too long, so I’ll keep it brief.

I got a story published on a report finding that free summer learning programs can help bridge the gap between low-income and high-income students, if they regularly attend classes.

I’ve been blowing up judges’ and experts’ phones looking for comment on the Emotional Judges and Unlucky Juveniles report that recently came out which found that judges who graduated from LSU unfairly levy longer sentences for juvenile defendants after LSU has lost an upset football game. Needless to say, the judges haven’t been too excited to talk to me about it, but I’ve got one more day until deadline.

I’ve made some progress on the story regarding MS-13’s presence in DC and what youth organizations are doing to keep kids away from the gang. I’ve got one
interview in the bag, and I’ll be going to visit the teachers of a gang prevention class Friday in one of the most troubled areas to get a first-hand perspective of the situation.

I met with foster care expert Derrick Riggins at a congressional briefing forum today called Children’s Right to Counsel. Riggins said he would be able to put me in touch with a few sources for the profile on a former juvenile defendant who was inadequately legally represented in the courts. This will be part of our Gault at 50 coverage.

I’ve also made a few more connections that will be able to help me find a source for our Life in an American Teen video project. Fingers crossed they come through for me.

**Project notes**

I have found time transcribe four of the ten interviews so far and look forward to beginning to evaluate my data. Things seem to be coming along as well as I could have hoped, thus far.

**9/19/16**

**Seminar**

We had a brief but informative seminar this week. Politifact’s Louis Jacobson was in the office to discuss fact checking a politics with us. One of my favorite quotes from Jacobson was, “We’ve never had more access to information, but few credible filters.” That summed up why organizations like Politifact are a crucial part of the modern fourth estate. It was pretty amusing to hear Jacobson talk about trying to
balance checking Trump and Clinton during this election. I really feel for them on that chore. They could practically start a different arm of the publication to check on Trump, alone. I’m also looking forward to readingPolitifact’s post-election take on how many of Obama’s campaign promises became reality.

Field notes

I’m in the midst of one of my least favorite parts of being an intern journalist, waiting for people with very important things to do to call me back. I probably have four different stories that are stuck in this limbo. I’m struggling to find the balance between being persistent and annoying, because I really need to be able to work with these sources for future projects, as well. I was supposed to have an interview today to get one of the stories moving, but never heard back from my source, and the communication director is off work today. That’s just my luck, I suppose.

Project notes

I have begun transcribing my eighth interview. After this one, there are only two more to go before I can put together my findings and start writing. Luckily, I’m transcribing Eleanor Murphy’s interview right now. She was one of my favorite research participants, because she is an adorable 91-year-old who was once one of the most beloved postmasters on Mount Desert Island.

9/26/2016

Seminar

Our visit to Bloomberg, one of the biggest news outlets in DC, was fantastic. I really enjoyed seeing what a big time newsroom, such as Bloomberg’s, looks like.
That place has more amenities than a nice hotel. Our talk with Mike Dorning was equally interesting. His low-key take on covering Obama since he was in the Senate all the way through his presidency was great. He seemed far past the point of awestruck star-gazing at the President, which I’m sure makes for easier interview sessions.

His take on covering the Iraq was perhaps the most intriguing part of the discussion to our student group. You don’t often get to hear a war correspondent talk so casually and forthrightly about their field experiences. I liked how hands-on the news gathering process was. He said he and his interpreter would just hit the town looking for a story, all the while dodging possible assassins. His story of pursuing stories is just awesome.

As someone who came from a small newspaper, his take on how community newspapers are no longer the journalistic jumping-off point they once were was a little sad, but not surprising. I hope that this experience in DC can give me that leg up to make it to the next level. I love community newspapers, but I don’t want to be stuck in that venue, either. As Doring said, sometimes people just get stuck in the vacuum of community news, and I’d like to write about the bigger picture, eventually. Maybe, even get scouted out by a big timer like Bloomberg one of these days.

**Field notes**

I’m in the thick of reporting on a story about how the Latin American Youth Center is attempting to deal with the increasing gang problem in DC, and how it relates to communities around the world. It’s turning into a really big, complicated
piece, and I hope my editors don’t mind that I may turn in upwards of 3,000 words. I’m sure we’ll be working on some trimming and restructuring, but a lot of this stuff is too good for me to not at least put in front of my editors.

**Project notes**

I’ve begun the analysis portion of my research, and my results are working in favor of my hypothesis for the most part. The raw numbers are definitely working out in my favor, but I have also found some interesting counterpoints and methods that can make feature writing and narrative journalism more effective for readers. I look forward to being able to begin my first draft soon.

**10/3/16**

**Seminar**

We had a late but very pleasant seminar this week with special guest John Cochran of ABC and NBC news acclaim. I greatly enjoyed hearing his stories about the various presidents he served, especially the one about Lyndon B. Johnson demanding a microphone be placed in front of him without minding that the device wasn’t operational. His insights on the debate were also interesting. John gave Donald Trump more credit on his performance than I expected, though I think we all agreed that his claims of victory were far exaggerated. The group made some very good points about the debate, like who appeared more rehearsed and controlled, and who fell prey to whose traps. I just wish Clinton and Trump had discussed more issues regarding children, so I could have had something to go on for a story about the candidates stances on those areas. I also wish I would have had a bit more time
to talk with John during the famous Friday taco night and ask him about what
qualities he thinks are most valuable for a reporter into today's industry for my own
use while navigating the job market.

**Field notes**

I've had my head down on this gang prevention story for more than a couple
weeks now and I have a second draft put together that I’m starting to feel happy
about, even though it’s going to be almost 5,000 words when everything is said and
done. I wonder what my editors will think about that word count, but I think they
will be very pleased with the content. There are several interesting stories to be told
here. I’m attending a Club meeting tomorrow evening, and after I interview Officer
Medina, I think I’ll have all of my reporting taken care of.

**Project notes**

I have begun writing my rough draft and the data seems to support my
hypothesis rather well, and I’m confident in answering my three research questions.
I’m struggling to relay the information in an entertaining way, but that will come
with more drafts, I hope. By the end of this month, I intend to have this thing just
about put together and ready to defend for graduation.

10/10/16

**Seminar**

This week’s seminar at Covington and Burling with Kurt Wimmer, Steve
Weiswasser and Hannah Lepow was a flash back to my communications law class
with Sandy Davidson, but in a much nicer classroom, serving way better food. It was
very interesting to hear from lawyers representing so many different media outlets. Hearing about their various problems was something I doubt many people get to experience. A lot of the things I already knew at least a little bit about, but it was great to know more about copyright law and confidential sources. I’m glad Brittany was able to ask so many questions regarding the story she has been working on, as well. She and I had been going over those issues, but Lepow was much more helpful than I’m sure I’ll ever be.

**Field notes**

I wrote this story about children’s issues in the presidential campaigns of Clinton and Trump, as well of the seemingly lack of microphone time they’ve been getting at their recent public appearances, such as the debates. The story came out just before the second presidential debate, so that worked out pretty well. I’m currently finishing up my edits for the LAYC Club video, beginning story edits for the LAYC gang prevention story and waiting to hear which photos my editor is going to want to use so I can start writing captions. I’ve also been researching and reaching out to possible sources for the Gault at 50 campaign story.

**Project notes**

I have completed the majority of my data analysis and have most of my first story draft written, though I’m still a little under the desired word count. I’ve found no correlation between age or education that a particular type of news story garners specific social actions, other than that most people responded more heavily to the feature story. Soon, I will begin compiling my final packet with my field notes and transcriptions included.
10/18/16

Seminar

Our seminar with Donna Leinwand of USA Today was one of my favorites of the semester. She was funny, but also levied the weight of her experiences reporting on natural disasters to the class very well. I really enjoyed hearing about all the things she had to do just to get to the scene to report on a story. It really let me know just how easy I have it in my own reporting in comparison to the difficulties I could still face in my career, hopefully. She had some great reporter survival tips, too, like see a bathroom, use a bathroom.

Field notes

I had an interesting week, with lots of background conversations and reporting for stories I will hopefully be able to finish up in the next week or two. I didn’t have any published stories this week, but I feel pretty good about what will be coming up. I just did an interview with two former juvenile defendants who went through into the adult system when the aged out. We did a video and I’ll be starting to edit it and write the story bright and early tomorrow.

Project notes

I think I should be able to have my first rough draft done by this time next week. I’m putting everything in order now and will write up the table of contents soon. Hopefully, everyone is ready to see this monster.

10/23/16
Seminar

I expected NPR to have a very nice newsroom, but I was pleasantly surprised at just how much so. Walking among the crew of the mother ship was very exciting. My aunt saw the pictures and has already expressed jealously via social media. Keith Woods talk on diversity within the organization offered an inside look at the inner workings of NPR’s management, and gave me a better sense of what it may be like to work for the organization. The idea that they are short on employees who are religious definitely gave me a sense of my distance from Martinsburg, where atheists are fairly few and far between. It made me think that I should probably put my first-through-eighth grade St. Joseph Catholic School in my resume. I will absolutely be applying there for the digital reporting team. Plus, Tiny Desk Concert Series live-viewing opportunities would be a dream. They really do a good job of making the office look comparatively small and cozy in the videos.

Our seminar with Peter Hart was very informative. His remarks on the election were direct and certain, even when he was talking about one of Missouri’s down-ballot elections. Mr. Hart managed to mix a polling 101 lecture with a candid discussion of the current election in an enjoyable fashion. Lessons about representative cross-section methodology to the electability of Bernie Sanders bounced about the table, keeping everyone in the group rather intrigued, it seemed. I was definitely interested in the pollster’s take on a certain Donald Trump victory over a hypothetical Democratic nominee Sanders. It was also good to here his experienced view of how this year's election has and will impact children. Hopefully, he was correct in saying that kids will learn the dos and don’ts in politics from this
political process, but I’m afraid it could also possibly create precedence for additional absurdity.

**Field notes**

I have two stories to edit Monday morning. One of them needs a lot of trimming, and the other needs rewriting. I feel pretty good about the trim victim, but the rewrite is not something that is helping my sleep quality. I’m afraid it is trying to do too much at once, but I feel like I need to tie multiple things together to make it work. I’ve got an interview with two formerly incarcerated juveniles to talk about their experiences and how it relates to some of the major issues at the heart of juvenile justice reform, and legislation going through the D.C. Council that could improve some of these issues, but the editor says it’s all loose and doesn’t like my delivery, so I’ll have to come up with something else entirely.

**Project notes**

Today, I intend to complete my first draft to submit to the committee. I have put together most of all the sections and just need to edit, for the most part. There are various ways to make a mess of the project layout, so I’m going to try to go over structure and other things with another grad student later this evening. After all this, I get to begin seriously thinking about my defense.

11/7/16

**Seminar**

It was very interesting to get inside my first opinion publication. Fred Barnes was a frank man who had a different insight on the election than we’ve heard before,
but not as much as I expected as a founder of the only conservative outlet we visited. Other than calling Hillary Clinton a week candidate several times, his outlook on the state of the election and the root causes for such were fairly online with other seminar leaders. In some way or another, everyone agrees Donald Trump ran his campaign for most sound bites, not most votes.

It was also interesting to learn about how an opinion outlet operates. The news structure was much looser than anything I've heard of before for a reputable publication. It seems like a fun place to work if you're into that sort of writing. It definitely seemed like more of an ask for forgiveness before permission situation when it comes to your angle and delivery.

Project notes

I have sent my first draft to my committee and am awaiting feedback, while making minor edits of my own.

Field notes

I published a story about juvenile justice reform and what two former incarcerated youth feel about the issues in a multimedia package. Today, we edited a story about the Comprehensive Youth Justice Amendment Act of 2016, which should be online tomorrow morning. I’m also working on a longer piece about the youth poetry movement and prepared a video for that package today.

11/13/2016

Seminar
We wrapped up the semester with our most powerful discussion together. The emotional weight of the prior days added to serious reflection and sharing that I think everyone in the class benefited from. I think Major Garrett’s honesty and transparency opened up the rest of the class. It was saddening and yet oddly reassuring that even the most successful journalists are sharing the feelings of futility with many other people in the industry after this election. We began talking about the future of journalism, and where we go from here. I hope that major outlets and local publications alike will seriously consider how this election was covered and how we can move forward as better civil servants of the fourth estate.

Field notes

There were some long work nights this week. Covering the youth-led Trump protest was exciting. It’s been a long time since I’ve had that much adrenaline pumping while on an assignment. I filmed a video and wrote a story about the event, which published shortly after another story I wrote about how most of the youth vote went for Hillary Clinton, despite the fact that more white youth voted for Trump.

Research notes

My committee chair has sent me edits to my project draft, and I will be sending back the corrected version this afternoon.

11/22/2016

Project notes
I am in the final editing phases with professor Jeanne Abbott. My final draft will be sent to the committee members very soon.

**Field notes**

Two of my stories were published in the past week, with two more to finish up from Columbia. Oddly enough, both of the latest stories happened to be about award ceremonies. The first was a multimedia package on my trip in the White House for Michelle Obama’s award ceremony for creative programs for kids. The second was the Campaign for Juvenile Justices’ awards for advocates fighting to end juvenile life without parole sentencing.
CHAPTER THREE

EVALUATION

Through this research, I learned that narrative elements of stories could cause an emotional reaction in readers, which makes them feel more deeply impacted by a story. This sense of impact can be important to prompt the readers to be socially active in issues being covered in the news.

Most people participating in this research reacted positively to the narrative elements — particularly the quotes and personal outlooks on the disastrous situations described in the stories — and were less or even negatively affected by the data-driven aspects of the stories. However, two people out of the ten participating in the study said they preferred the figures and other factual information, and one expressed a dislike of emotionally driven, narrative elements in any news story.

Like most things in life, people's own life experiences affect the way they empathize with the experiences of others. It's not just the way in which the story is told that makes it impactful, but what it is being told about that can make people more socially active. For example, people who are emotionally connected with children in their own lives can feel strongly impacted by news stories simply because they include information regarding children.
Quarterbacking From the Bench: LSU-fan Judges Increase Sentences
When Tigers Lose, Study Shows

THE JUVENILE JUSTICE INFORMATION EXCHANGE

By Allen Fennewald | September 14, 2016

Judges in Louisiana have levied longer punishments for juvenile defendants unlucky enough to appear on trial the week after Louisiana State University (LSU) loses a football game in an upset, a new study finds. And defendants who are black have shouldered the brunt of this football mania bias. “Emotional Judges and Unlucky Juveniles” concludes that some judges who received bachelor’s degrees from LSU have an emotional connection to the football team that affects how severely they sentence juvenile defendants the week after the Tigers lost a game it was expected to win.

“This study has wide-ranging implications on the juvenile justice system, especially giving hard evidence in support of why every system should adopt objective detention decision instruments at the front door, and risk and needs instruments at disposition hearings,” said Steven Teske, chief juvenile court judge of the Clayton Judicial Circuit in Georgia.

When LSU lost an upset game, incarceration and probation sentencing lengths increased about 35 days per juvenile defendant who appeared in court the following workweek, regardless of the type of offense the juvenile was accused of. These findings were based on 8,228 unique juvenile cases presided over by 207 Louisiana judges from 1996-2012.
The more important the game lost, the longer the punishments. If LSU happened to be in the Associated Press’ Top 10 rankings, a loss resulted in sentences of an additional 63 days, on average. This had a major effect on overall sentencing, because the team was in the Top 10 in 48 percent of its Saturday games.

 Defendants had no way to avoid the high-risk workweeks after big games. A computer randomly sets the court schedule.

 LSU economics professor Ozkan Eren, who wrote the study with fellow LSU professor Naci Mocan, said he was inspired to study this issue by the strong ties LSU fans and surrounding communities have to the football team.

 “Devotion to LSU football is deeply ingrained into the culture of the state,” he said. “As such, weddings are scheduled based on LSU games, convention halls and similar organizations are besieged by phone calls the moment the LSU schedule for the following football season is finalized, and charitable organizations have their fundraising events scheduled on the nongame weeks.”

 Plus, Eren has “always believed in the fact that emotions in one domain can potentially influence emotions, judgments and decisions in a completely unrelated domain.” When a person’s perception of well-being is diminished, they spend more time focusing on negatives in others, which can intensify into moral condemnation, the study said.

 But there are some things avid football fandom can’t account for. When a black defendant appeared in court the week after an LSU upset, punishments increased 46 days. When it was a white defendant, only eight days.
Judges were not deliberately handing down harsher punishments, the study said, because the bias was triggered by “emotional shock.” They did find evidence that black defendants “bear much of the burden of judges’ wrath due to this emotional shock, which hints at a negative predisposition towards black defendants.”

“Judges are not immune to emotions, whether happy, sad, scared or whatever,” Teske said. “No training in law school gives us emotional immunity, but unfortunately it can create in us the self-perception that we are immune. We are trained in a skill that requires us to be objective, think on our feet and reason with logic; all those things that Spock on ‘Star Trek’ did well.

I am sure none of these judges were aware that LSU losing a game would affect their decisions that week in court. If it can happen with a football game, imagine the implications of implicit bias in our decisions? Or better yet, especially white judges, the implication of ‘white privilege’ in decision making?”

Professor Andy Billings at the University of Alabama's College of Communication and Information Sciences said football works its way into the personal lives of fans throughout the Southeastern Conference. This is especially true in states without professional football teams. There, fans place all of their hopes and enthusiasm on their college team's weekly game, in a sport where a major upset could decide the outcome of an entire season.

"It's football culture combined with emergency," Billings said. "Because of that, you live and die on every weekend. You have people that can’t show up to church the next day or can’t show up for schools two days later, because they are still recovering from a loss."
Billings said SEC fans build their identities around their favorite team, so when that team loses, the fan also feels defeated. It is common for people to look for something else to out their frustrations on.

"You want to have something to blame that doesn’t hinder your own identity," Billings said. "The most common trope we have is blaming the officials ... but there are other ways of mitigating that, as well."

Billings said he thinks these personal connections to football teams are becoming stronger in the SEC, as the football coaches' salaries increase into the multi-millions. The more money people spend, the more invested they feel in the team's performance.

"It is a core part of who you are," Billings said. "You choose a camp, you stick with it, and it's part of your DNA. You will see people whose household income is $30,000 or less, but do they have season tickets for Alabama, yes. Any disposable income many people have is being directly invested in the football team. Especially in Alabama, they want to be connected to a successful football program. SEC football has always been big, but never have we poured this amount of resources [in to] college football as we have at this state in time."

Teske and Rachel Gassert, policy director at the Louisiana Center for Children’s Rights, agreed that the study shows why a more involved, regulated oversight system is necessary to ensure juvenile defendants are not being unfairly punished.

“We see the effects of bias — especially unconscious bias — in many aspects of the juvenile justice system,” Gassert said. “That’s why it’s essential that
we create fair and objective processes and establish sufficient checks and balances, including training and robust funding for juvenile public defense.”

**Kids in the Presidential Campaigns: How the Front-runners Stack Up on Children’s Issues**

*YOUTH TODAY*

By Allen Fennewald | **October 7, 2016**

James Steyer, CEO and founder of Common Sense Media, sent a letter Wednesday to CNN's Anderson Cooper and ABC News’ Martha Raddatz imploring the moderators to place more emphasis on kids in their questions during the next presidential debate this Sunday. Steyer wrote that kids were hardly mentioned in the debates thus far, and said candidates should be more sensitive when speaking on issues like racism and sexism, because children are tuning in to the events.

In the first presidential and vice presidential debates, little was said about what the campaigns will do for children, adolescents and young adults. The word child was only uttered twice. Both candidates briefly agreed that affordable child care is an important issue, which they would confront differently if elected.

“As far as child care is concerned and so many other things, I think Hillary [Clinton] and I agree on that,” Donald Trump said during the first presidential debate. “We probably disagree a little bit as to numbers and amounts and what we're going to do, but perhaps we'll be talking about that later.”

In the vice presidential debate, the only topics concerning young people centered on abortion rights and the 100,000 kids in danger in war-torn Aleppo.
“The kids are watching — and it is important for our candidates to think about that every time they speak,” Steyer stated in the letter. “On October 9, let’s talk about real issues that impact families and our kids. Not only that, let’s force candidates to be respectful — not just toward each other but to the issues they are discussing, from immigration to foreign policy.”

He asked the debate moderators for three things:

- Invite kids to watch the debate in person;
- Begin the debate with a statement that kids and families are watching and the candidates should respect that and interrupt candidates if they make inappropriate remarks;
- Ask the candidates questions about what message they intend to send the children who are watching the debate.

The absence of children’s issues in the debates could be because people typically don’t base their votes on youth policy, said Shay Bilchik, director of the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at the McCourt School of Public Policy in Georgetown University. “It doesn’t surprise me that the issue has not come up in the debates. Generally, what we know from research that’s been done is that while people in this country value very highly the well-being of our children, it generally is not an issue they vote on directly.”

**The campaigns**

Though Clinton hasn’t spoken about these topics in the debates, Bilchik said, her campaign has focused on children’s issues in many ways, such as on her website and during her speech at the Democratic National Convention.
Trump has only a “shell” of a policy plan regarding youth issues, Bilchik said. “It’s not about are you a Republican or a Democrat, it is about [if] children’s issues [will] rise to a high level of priority within an administration.”

Trump’s child care proposal is the only policy stance he has directly addressed on children’s issues in a campaign focused heavily on subjects such as border security and economic growth. Hillary Clinton, the 1977 co-founder of Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, has unveiled several positions regarding children’s issues: child care, expanding early childhood education, dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline and eliminating college student debt.

“There are political campaigns that go by where we don’t even hear mention of kids,” said Bruce Lesley, president of First Focus, a nonpartisan advocacy organization working to make children and families the priority in federal policy and budget decisions. Clinton “really injected those issues into her campaign, and we are seeing kids’ issues discussed during this campaign. Hopefully during the debates, there is at least one question pertaining to 25 percent of the population.”

**Child care**

The Republican nominee’s child care proposal would allow parents to deduct child care expenses from their income taxes and enroll in a tax-free dependent care savings account, up to $2,000 per year; provide low-income households a child care rebate and matching $500 contribution to their savings; give employers incentives to offer child care services at the workplace, and provide six weeks of paid work leave to new mothers “only when employers don’t offer paid maternity leave,” according to the Trump Campaign website.
The proposal has been criticized for excluding fathers in paid paternity leave. The policy’s champion, daughter Ivanka Trump, said the plan was intended to help mothers recuperate after childbirth, but it also includes adopted mothers, who don’t require physical recuperation from bearing a baby.

Trump claimed that Clinton lacked a child care plan during a Sept. 13 speech in Aston, Pennsylvania. “Yet very little meaningful policy work has been done in this area, and my opponent has no child care plan. She never will and if it ever evolves into a plan it’ll never get done anyway. All talk. No action,” FactCheck.org reported.

However, fact-checkers ruled that Clinton displayed her child care and early childhood education plan months before Trump’s statement. Clinton’s proposal calls for 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave, funded by increasing taxes on wealthy Americans. Her plan also includes universal access to preschool for 4-year olds and doubling federal funding to Early Head Start and the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership program, along with child development and support programs for children younger than age 3 and pregnant women. Clinton’s plan would increase child care on college campuses to take care of an additional 250,000 kids. The goal is for no American family to expend more than 10 percent of its income on child care.

Juvenile justice reform

Clinton has also proposed dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline. Students who are suspended or expelled are more likely to end up in the adult criminal system. She proposes providing $2 billion in support to schools to reform punishment-focused disciplinary policies. States would be called on to
reform school disturbance laws and states encouraged to use federal education funding for social and emotional support interventions.

“We are very excited to see Secretary Clinton on her website calling for reforms particularly focused on ending the school-to-prison pipeline,” said Geoff Foster, director of organizing and policymaking at UTEC, a center for disconnected teenagers in Lowell, Massachusetts. “That’s something that we are very supportive of, and we are excited about the policy opportunities that could be built up to include young adults, as well.”

UTEC focuses on young adult justice reform, arguing that young people are disproportionately represented in adult corrective facilities, partially due to their incomplete brain development. Foster said he was excited to hear the candidates talk about racial and criminal justice reform in the first debate, though he wants more detailed discussion on those issues.

“We’ve heard from both the Trump campaign and the Clinton campaign that there is an appetite for criminal justice reform, but we think there is more opportunity for — and we haven’t heard it yet in the debates, but we think there’s a good opportunity for this to come up — this conversation about how we are treating young adults that are aging out of the juvenile justice system, ending up in the adult system, and recidivating at a high rate,” Foster said.

**Higher education**

On the topic of older adolescents, Clinton also proposes making college debt-free for students attending their in-state public universities. All community colleges would offer free tuition under her proposal. People currently paying back student loans would be allowed to refinance loans at current rates, interest rates
for student loans would be cut and states would have to more heavily invest in higher education. Limiting certain tax expenditures for high-income taxpayers would pay for these policies.

Trump’s campaign national co-chair and policy advisor Sam Clovis told Inside Higher Ed the Republican nominee believes the government should stay out of the student loan system in favor of private banks, but agrees with Clinton that colleges should share a greater financial risk in unpaid student loans. Clovis said Trump is against debt-free public universities and free community college proposals.

Also affecting college students is the issue of campus sexual assault. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, women ages 18 to 24 are at the highest risk of sexual assault compared to all other age groups. Clinton is in favor of campuses offering comprehensive support to sexual abuse survivors, such as counseling and critical health care that is confidential, comprehensive and coordinated. Her proposal calls for increasing prevention efforts by offering sexual violence prevention education programs in colleges and secondary schools.

Trump supports the Republican Party platform on this issue, which was approved during the Republican convention in Cleveland. It states that sexual assault reports should be investigated by civil authorities and prosecuted in court, rather than by school officials.

VP nominees on children’s issues

Republican vice presidential nominee Mike Pence, the almost four-year Indiana governor, negotiated the state’s On My Way Pre-K pilot program. Later
in 2014 he barred Indiana from applying for $80 million in federal funding to expand its effect. **Pence said then** that he was preventing federal intrusion from entering the program. He altered course on this issue in June, writing a letter to the Department of Health and Human Services expressing interest in federal funding to expand the program. Pence authorized the hiring of **113 new Indiana Department of Child Services** (DCS) caseworkers in 2016, after the American Civil Liberties Union sued DCS on behalf of overloaded caseworkers. One case manager was representing 43 abused children, when the state law set a maximum of 17, according to ACLU.

Democratic vice presidential nominee Tim Kaine helped expand state preschool programs when he was governor of Virginia. As a current Virginia senator, he introduced a bill in 2015 to **expand nationwide access** to pre-kindergarten programs and supported the **Every Student Succeeds Act**, which decreased focus on standardized testing and allowed states more room to set educational policies and authorizes federal funding of out-of-school-time programming through the Department of Education's **21st Century Community Learning Centers**.

No matter who is elected, John Gomperts, **America's Promise Alliance** president and CEO, hopes the next president will work across political lines to address issues such as the need to increase high school graduation rates. “Whatever is said and not said in course of this campaign, I hope that whoever becomes president will work to bring everyone together to try to create the conditions under which every young person in America has a real chance to
“We need to provide support for young people, especially young people who find themselves in troubling circumstances.”

‘Expansive’ Juvenile Justice Reform Bill Close to Law in DC

THE JUVENILE JUSTICE INFORMATION EXCHANGE

By Allen Fennewald | November 8, 2016

WASHINGTON — Legislation called cutting edge by national experts on juvenile justice reform has been unanimously passed by the Council of the District of Columbia.

“We looked at best practices from across the country and really pulled together what we think is going to transform our juvenile justice system,” said Democratic councilmember Kenyan McDuffie, who sponsored the bill along with seven other councilmembers. “More importantly, it’s going to modernize the juvenile justice system to hold young people accountable for their actions, but it’s also going to give them an opportunity for rehabilitation.”

The Comprehensive Youth Justice Amendment Act of 2016 now goes to Mayor Muriel Bowser and then Congress for consideration, respectively. If Congress does nothing within 60 days, it will automatically become law. The mayor is expected to sign the bill, said Nicole Chapple, assistant director for external affairs of the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency.

The bill bars detaining juveniles for status offenses (such as running away or underage drinking), putting juveniles in adult facilities and putting unsupervised children into detention facilities before fact-finding or dispositional hearings. Legal
custody of a child younger than age 10 could not be transferred from parents or
guardians to the government. Minors will no longer be placed in solitary
confinement unless it's to protect their safety or that of others, or for disrupting a
formal investigation.

The bill would also give juveniles charged as adults the opportunity for
release after 20 years and limits the restraints allowed for young women who are
pregnant.

“I think it is a fantastic codification of the science around adolescent brain
development,” said Daniel Okonkwo, the executive director of DC Lawyers for Youth.
“It recognizes that children are children and have this incredible capacity to change,
and that it recognizes that we can do some things for young people who are already
in the system that set them up to succeed when they transition out of it.”

DC Lawyers for Youth have been working with McDuffie on juvenile justice
reform issues since he became chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary. The
group plus 27 other advocacy organizations testified in support of the legislation.
Marc Schindler, the executive director of the Justice Policy Institute, praised
McDuffie as a strong leader in juvenile justice reform. “I think he is a champion on
these issues,” he said.

The legislation is part of a national trend in state systems, said Sarah Bryer,
the executive director of the National Juvenile Justice Network. In the past year,
several states including California, Louisiana and Delaware have undertaken
juvenile justice reform legislation. Numerous states passed multiple bills addressing
individual issues, but the District's is one of the widest reaching of any single bill.
“From a national perspective, D.C. is a great example of a really good trend of what we’ve been seeing around the country in terms of state legislatures recognizing that if we want to have good public safety and we want to have good outcomes for kids, we have to take some of these measures to make sure that we are treating them right, that we are holding them accountable in our communities and we are treating them humanely in all parts throughout the system,” Bryer said.

Schindler lauded the bill for limiting the use of solitary confinement for juveniles. “It puts D.C. as part of a larger trend nationally and hopefully part of a movement to end solitary confinement for a lot of young people,” he said. “This is part of a larger movement that includes the president speaking out this past year banning the use of solitary for young people in federal facilities.”

Jenny Lutz, the staff attorney and campaign manager for the Center for Children’s Law and Policy, said the bill was on the cutting edge of juvenile justice because it prohibits the use of solitary confinement for punishment, limits the amount of time it can be used for safety measures and increases accountability and data collection through required reporting when solitary is used. Forty percent of incarcerated juveniles experience solitary confinement, according to federal data from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, she said.

“It’s great that it involves … consulting with mental health professionals,” Lutz said. “What we’ve seen in many jurisdictions is that involving mental health staff is one of the key components to reducing room confinement, because it targets a lot of the reasons kids are in room confinement to begin with … I think it’s fair to
say it will be hundreds of young people that will be impacted by reforming the practices in D.C.”

McDuffie said the next step is finding budget funding for the policies and procedures the bill would put in place if approved by the mayor and Congress, but he is confident.

And he plans to keep working with advocates and stakeholders to improve other areas of the juvenile justice system. “While this [bill] is a very important measure, it is by no means exhaustive. There are things that are going to be improved drastically once it’s implemented ... but I’m a firm believer that there is always room for progress.”

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Youth Vote Still Divided by Race, Report Finds

**YOUTH TODAY**

By Allen Fennewald | **November 10, 2016**

New data looking at the youth vote in the 2016 presidential race found they are also divided by race, and that a higher percentage of them vote Democratic than older voters.

Much of Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton's support came from Latinos and African Americans. Eighty-three percent of young African-American voters selected her, along with 70 percent of young Latinos, according to [research](#) published Wednesday.

However, 43 percent of young white voters favored Clinton, compared to 48 percent for Republican President-elect Donald Trump, the report said. This support
might have been key for Trump in heavily white states like Iowa and Ohio, according to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE).

“There was a big deep cliff between different [young] people of racial backgrounds and educational backgrounds,” said Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg, director of CIRCLE. The racial division among young voters is contrary to the popular belief that the millennial generation is less politically divided along racial lines than previous generations, she said. This election shows how much young white men can affect elections when politically motivated: “Young middle-class white men decided this was the time to become politically active,” she said.

Lori Kaplan, president and CEO of the Latin American Youth Center in Washington, District of Columbia, called the election results a major setback for racial and ethnic equality efforts in the United States.

“I think what this election has done is blow the lid off any perception that we may have had that we have addressed some racial issues in the past, and that we were somehow changed or better,” she said. “I think the issues around immigration have seemingly divided people. We have certainly seen that white people in rural areas seem to have spoken about their not being able to reach their fullest potential in the current system. That’s something black and Latino kids have had to deal with for years.”

Fifty-five percent of voters ages 18 through 29 voted for Clinton, CIRCLE said. Trump received 37 percent of this youth vote, as did Mitt Romney in 2012. This age group makes up one-fifth of the electorate.
Support for Donald Trump consistently increased with age, CIRCLE found, with 53 percent of voters 45 and older voting for Trump.

Young people began protesting the election results early Wednesday morning in cities and on college campuses, including the University of California, Berkeley and the University of Pittsburgh. In the nation’s capital, people demonstrated in front of the new Trump International Hotel and in front of the White House.

“Young people voted drastically different from older [voters], a trend that people can no doubt compare to BREXIT,” said Abbie Kiesa, CIRCLE’s director of impact.

Clinton addressed young voters specifically in part of her Wednesday morning concession speech: “To all of us, and to the young people in particular, I hope you will hear this: I have, as Tim said, I have spent my entire life fighting for what I believe in,” she said.

“I’ve had successes and setbacks and sometimes painful ones. Many of you are at the beginning of your professional, public and political careers — you will have successes and setbacks, too.

“This loss hurts,” Clinton said, “but please never stop believing that fighting for what’s right is worth it.”

Clinton did better with African-American and Latino youth because she promoted issues that were important to them, like the cost of higher education and pro-immigration policy, Kaplan said.
This year saw the third-most young voters a Democratic candidate has received since 1972, falling behind only President Barack Obama’s elections both times. Clinton attracted 5 percent fewer youth votes than Obama did in 2012, according to CIRCLE. Young African-American voter support for Clinton was down from 95 percent for Obama in 2008, and from 76 percent among young Latino voters. Fifty-four percent of young white voters supported Obama in 2008, but only 45 percent in his 2012 re-election.

The percentage of youth who voted for someone other than a major party candidate increased to 8 percent from 3 percent during the last presidential election.

This election is not likely indicative of how millennials will vote in future elections, because partisan affiliation is not as important to the younger generation as with older voters, said Peter Levine, associate dean of research at Tisch College and former director of CIRCLE. “Traditional wisdom says once they vote for one party a few times, they tend to [keep voting] for that party, but young people aren’t showing this party loyalty,” he said.

**Young People Protest U.S. Election in Washington, New York, Nationwide**

**YOUTH TODAY**

*By Youth Today Staff | November 10, 2016*

WASHINGTON — Young people came out in force Wednesday night to protest the election of Donald Trump.
More than 200 people, the vast majority of whom were young, pounded the pavement in front of Trump International Hotel, less than a mile from the White House on Pennsylvania Avenue. They chanted, waved signs and lit cigarettes from the flames of a burning American flag before rambunctiously calling out the chorus: “Ain’t no power like the power of the people, because the power of the people don’t stop!”

A gray-haired man in a sports coat called “lock her up,” as he entered the luxury hotel, and the young people retorted from the sidewalk.

Sarah Lorentzen, 19, said she was there to protest Trump’s racist and anti-immigrant comments. “The youth stand for Clinton, because I feel like the youth is a much more progressive demographic, and mindful of minority issues,” she said. “It shows where our future stands to know so many youth stand with Clinton.”

Nick Garcia, 25, came to speak out against what he called the white nationalist alt-right movement, especially its immigration policies. “Our country has come too far with social progressivism to go back at this point, and I’m really worried what a Republican [dominated] government is going to do,” he said. “Hopefully as this generation gets older, we will start to really influence policy.”

Eighteen-year-old Caterra Thompson said the only way for the country to move forward from this election is to bring more awareness of social issues to conservative communities in the United States. “Especially with the younger generation, we are a more liberal generation, so I think it’s moving in the right direction.”
Just as the group began to dwindle, a mass of several hundred more protesters carrying signs like “Not MY President” came marching down historic Pennsylvania Avenue, where Trump will walk in his inaugural parade. The group had walked about two miles from the U Street Metro station with a full police escort, and called out to the group at the hotel to join them in proceeding toward the White House. A few young men flung metal newspaper stands into the street, but other marchers called for a peaceful and damage-free protest.

Relative calm took over when the group gathered behind the White House north lawn, crowding between statues of American revolutionary generals. There, Lance Fisher sang a Lakota prayer song that seemed to soothe the crowd into a moment of reflection. They listened as Gustavo Diaz began playing his clarinet beneath the prayer, with the White House before them on the other side of a chain-link fence.

The youth-led protest in Washington was among many throughout the country in the wake of the surprise election results. Protesters spoke out in cities like New York, Los Angeles and Chicago, as well as college campuses across the nation.

—Allen Fennewald
INTRODUCTION

Beauty is found in the eyes of the beholder, and sometimes the most beautiful stories are told through the eyes of those who originally beheld the events people read about in the news.

One of the things journalists must consider when deciding what events to cover is the amount of impact they anticipate the information will have on readers. Practitioners of the craft also have to decide how to best relay that information so the public can understand and potentially act upon it, in accordance with journalism’s purpose of aiding in a functional democratic society. For example, in covering natural disasters journalists often inform the public of what the people on the ground are experiencing. In dire straights, these disaster victims could be greatly helped by the outreach of unaffected members of the public.

With this in mind, journalists could benefit from having insight on how news stories impact the reader in a way that inspires them to get involved in the news and become socially active in the situations being covered. Does greater emotional connection to a certain type of news story increase the social activity, and does a particular type of news story correspond to a particular degree of social action? According to a series of interviews with ten news consumers, feature stories may be more likely to prompt social activism in readers, as long as the story also provides the information necessary for them to help.

Telling the news through a narrative can allow the reader to experience the story through characters’ eyes using tools such as descriptive details, unique
characters and dialogue. Narrative theory, which is regularly implemented in feature news stories, states that this causes people to more deeply empathize with the characters in a story. Research shows that this sense of empathy can increase a reader’s desire to aid in disastrous situations covered by news outlets.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

My research questions:

1. Does an emotional connection to a news story trigger social action?
2. Does greater emotional connection to a type of news story increase the degree of personal involvement in a social action?
3. Does a particular type of news story correspond to a particular degree of social action?

METHODOLOGY

This research implemented semi-structured interviews as the method of obtaining information about how readers react to a feature story, institutional story and an economic story, all covering the Joplin Tornado of 2011. This was used to garner the full emotional responses of the reader, in words, cadence and body language.

An effort was made the represent the level of diversity in the population. The participants of this study ranged from ages 25-91 and all lived in the area of Downeast, Maine, but grew up in a variety of locations. Only three of the participants grew up in the state. Maine is 77 percent white, according the Census data, and 80
percent of the research participants were white. Two of these participants were of Jewish descent, and one participant was partially Native American. Another member of the study was of Indian descent. One participant identified as Hispanic. The Hispanic population makes up 18 percent of Maine's population.

**PARTICIPANTS**


April Canavan: 25-year-old from Needles, California.

Bonnie Stewart: 45-year-old from Baileyville, Maine.

Eleanor Murphy: 91-year-old from Mount Desert Island, Maine.

Joseph Huber: 60-year-old from Jersey Shore, New Jersey.


Steven Fuller: 34-year-old from Stockton Springs, Maine.


Teresa Montague: 64-year-old from Mexico City, Mexico.

Tim Suellentrop: 26-year-old from St. Peters, Missouri.

The research participants were asked to read three news stories, a feature story, an economic story and an institutional story. After reading each story, they were asked to order a list of nine social actions from most to least likely for them to do after reading the story. Each response required a different level of social action from the participant. The more likely the participant was to have a highly active response, the more social action the individual story was deemed to have caused.

**POSSIBLE RESPONSES**

1. I would do nothing.
2. I would seek out more information on the topic.
3. I would share this story on social media.
4. I would recommend this story directly to a friend.
5. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue.
6. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue.
7. I would charitably contribute to this issue.
8. I would participate in a support event.
9. I would volunteer in relief efforts.

The list of responses was adapted from The Participant Index’s Social Actions Scale developed by Participant Media to quantify the social impact of documentaries, television programs on viral videos.

All of the stories were included the Joplin Globe coverage of the 2011 Joplin tornado, which the Missouri Press Association’s Better Newspaper Contest recognized with 22 awards in 2012.

The feature story centered on the experiences of a young mother whose home was destroyed by the tornado. It was written through her experience, describing what it was like to ride out the tornado in her bathroom and emerge to find a devastated community.

The economic story covered the damage done to small businesses. It made heavy use of numbers and data, though it did include coverage of a small business owner and his situation.

The institutional article centered on the Joplin school system struggling to
resume classes after the storm. It had scenic elements such as descriptive detail and
dialogue it was more informational than the feature story and did not focus
specifically on a core character.

Each interview took about 45 minutes and took place in the setting of the
participant’s choice. Some of the interviews took place in their homes, while others
occurred at cafes and restaurants. The interviewees were asked to read each story
and then list their responses in order of likelihood on a separate sheet.

After all of the interviews were completed, I compiled the data into an Excel file
and scored the social action of each participant based on their top three responses.
The top three responses were added together to show which participants were the
likely to be the most socially active for each story. The story that received the
highest scores on each participant’s top three responses was judged to be the one
that caused the greatest social action response. The feature story received the
highest scores on six out of the 10 participants’ top three responses, and therefore it
prompted the highest level of activism.

The institutional story caused the second most social action in research
participants, and it also used the second most narrative tools, such as detail, plot
and dialogue, throughout the story. Many participants felt connected to the school
children in the story, which positively affected their social action responses.

The participants gave the economic story the lowest social action scores. It was
deemed the most straight-forward and informative of the three. It offered the most
information about the overall damage and how readers could help in disaster relief efforts.

“It was good that it gave information about where people go to get assistance, and that’s all good stuff,” said Unvala, who scored the economic and feature stories equally on creating social action.

Canavan said during the interview that she really appreciated the economic story for it’s hard news-style writing. “I am 100 percent a numbers type of person, so I want all of the facts and figures,” she said. “They gave me just enough emotionally to keep me interested, and then they would give me the numbers on it. And they would bring up another — not emotional — but situational aspect and then it would give you the numbers on it to support it. It was very give and take, and I think it was well put together for such a long article.”

Despite the high praise, Canavan scored the feature story the highest in creating social action and the economic second.

The economic story failed to create an emotional response in many of the readers. Participants did not feel a need to be socially active to help businesses, especially the large corporations listed in the article.

“When I think about the charity, I think about the jar that goes up on the counter at the gas station here,” Huber said. “When someone gets burned out or something like that, there’s a jar on the counter. The [feature and institutional] stories, if there’s a jar sitting there on the counter saying, help rebuild Joplin schools, I’m putting something in there. Help rebuild Joplin residents’ homes. Help rebuild Joplin's businesses doesn’t have me reaching much to put something in the jar.”
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Feature stories can cause a sense of empathy, which can in turn increase the desire to be socially active.

Feature stories caused more empathy in readers for the characters in a story, and that sense of empathy can likely increase their desire to be socially active in getting involved with the characters’ situations. Research participants scored the feature story highest in promoting social activism 60 percent of the time, and ranked it most impactful 70 percent of the time. Participants ages 25-73 of multiple races and educational backgrounds selected more socially active options as their top three responses after reading the feature story in their top three responses.

“It was moving,” sports reporter Taylor Vortherms said about the feature story. “I thought that it of the three stories that was the one that would be the most influential one, just because of the personal angle there.” Vortherms’ top three responses scored the feature story 58 percent more effective in prompting social action than her next highest, the institutional story. This was the largest difference between stories in all of the participants’ social action responses.

Bonnie Stewart, who scored equally on her social action responses to the feature and economic story, said it was the empathy she felt to the characters that would prompt social activism. “I’m one of those people that like to know all of the people’s stories,” said Stewart, an unemployed pixie house artist. “I like the individual people’s stories.”
Music therapist Alan Wittenberg said he was impacted by the empathy he felt for the main character’s emotional scarring. “It gives me a little bump, you know. I mean we are talking about feelings, emotions.”

2. **Narrative elements within feature stories can add to sense of empathy.**

Narrative elements in feature stories can be used to increase this sense of empathy and social action, because they give the reader a sense of being part of the situations depicted.

Four of the five research participants who scored the feature story indisputably highest in prompting social activism said they felt emotionally connected to the story’s main character, because the scenic description, details and dialogue allowed them to have a better sense of what she experienced.

Tim Suellentrop, a web designer, said the most impactful part of the feature story was the use of action and detail during a scene of the tornado, when the doors were blown off the house. He said these elements allowed him to mentally establish himself in the situation. “After reading that story, I can picture her standing there with her dogs in just this rubble, and how this has affected this singular person, and knowing that there is so many people affected just like her,” he said.

3. **Social activity can also be affected by preexisting relationships and opinions.**

Outside factors can also increase a sense of empathy and therefore increase a desire to be socially active. The three participants who scored the institutional story the highest in prompting social action said they felt connected to the young students in the story due to emotional connections they have with other children.
Steven Fuller said he felt emotionally connected to the character because the background information provided in the story allowed him to relate to her life as a young working person trying to obtain a foundation in her life. “I thought it really resonated with me,” the news reporter said. “Right off the bat, you feel like you’re connected with this person. You are getting a sense of who this person is.”

Distaste for certain subjects can have a similar effect. Bonnie Stewart and several other participants said they did not feel as great a desire to be socially active after reading the economic story because it dealt with businesses, and they don’t feel any desire to help big corporations like Walmart, even though small businesses were also included in the story.

4. The level of social action decreased when not enough information was given to prompt a direct response.

Lacking information was the major folly of the feature story. “I would seek out more information on the issue” was the number one response to the feature story with 50 percent of the participants. Many research participants said they wanted to help the people who experienced the tornado, but they didn’t know how to best do so. “There’s nothing said about what’s being done for anyone in her place,” said Teresa Montague, a Maine House of Representatives candidate. “Without that in place, there’s a lot left of that story untold. What are the resources for her? Where can she go? What are the local charities?

It is important that news story include where assistance is most needed, which organizations are working in those areas and how people can best offer aid. “If I
donated to a charity, I would want to know where the money was going, like what it was going to,” nurse Sheila Unvala said.

4. Proximity affects the level of social action.

A few research participants said they would have been more likely to be socially active if the new stories used in the research weren’t based in Joplin, Missouri, far away from Downeast, Maine. They may have cared about the tornado victims but were too far away to help. Wittenberg felt disabled by the distance, despite the ability to donate money and other methods of assisting from elsewhere. “I’m not going to go there,” Wittenberg said. “I’m not going to leave Maine and volunteer.”

5. Those who preferred economic and institutional stories disliked the emotional or patronizing nature of feature stories.

Teresa Montague, who said she likes concise informational delivery in the news, said the number of businesses lost was the most important detail in the story. “This [economic] story was a little more clear, a little more obvious,” she said. “You know, it said exactly that it estimated about 300 businesses, from big box to small mom and pop and all that, how many employees and that sort of thing. It was more clear to me what had been lost.”

Montague said she likes personal, emotional stories, as long as the necessary information is readily available, but other participants generally disliked emotional appeal in their news.

April Canavan, a young Hispanic advertising support coordinator, said she thinks attempts at emotional appeal in the news are distracting at best and patronizing at
worst. “I don’t like narratives in news, because a third-party narrative in a news article is not going to make you feel engaged,” she said. It may be worth noting that Canavan also felt inclined to dislike the feature story, because, as a single mother, she didn’t like some of the parenting skills displayed by the main character in the story.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research indicate that an emotional connection to a news story triggers social action. Participants with a greater emotional connection to stories with relatable characters and descriptive writing, such as the feature story, increased their degree of personal involvement in social action. The feature story increased the degree of personal involvement in most of the participants’ social action responses. More participants were willing to volunteer, participate in a support event or give to charity with the feature story than the economic or institutional.

Feature stories that use narrative tools can increase the sense of empathy a reader feels toward characters in the news. Telling a story through using narrative elements can give the reader a sense of being within the story and more easily place themselves within the lives of those who are going through the situations being covered in the news. This sense of empathy can increase the likelihood that a reader will be socially active after reading the story.

However, this is not applicable to all people. A couple research participants preferred to be given the information in a direct and orderly fashion to save time and increase the sense of objectivity they get from the news stories. Therefore,
journalists could benefit from offering information in a more concise way, as well. Perhaps, both feature and hard news elements can be obtained through a putting a hard news-style sidebar in a feature story.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research with many more participants will be necessary to statistically confirm the validity of this study’s findings. This study was limited to interviews with people from only one small portion of the United States that is largely populated by white people. Additional research should include a wider variety of participants from different locations and ethnicities.

Future research should include different stories of the same respective news genres to establish whether or not the findings of this study were dependent on these three specific news stories. Several participants said they were largely affected by personal connections they felt with character types used in the stories of this research, such as children, mothers and young struggling adults. It is possible that if different types of people were characterized in the story that results could have differed. It will be interesting to see how research participant’s responses would differ if the news covered less relatable characters to the participants.
APPENDIX

This proposal was altered from its original form to replace the professional experience obtained at *The Ellsworth American* with that of *Youth Today* and the Juvenile Justice Information Exchange.

Allen Fennewald

Draft of final proposal

8098 with Prof. Moen

**Introduction**

As an MU English, creative writing graduate, I came into the masters of arts in journalism program with the idea that I wanted to tell true and impactful stories, that were by no means less enjoyable to read than a good work of fiction. I have maintained this goal throughout my three semesters in the program thus far.

I was a member of the public life beat as a new Missourian reporter, where I tried to tell the news of the city and the people in it the way I would want it told to me.

One of my favorite stories that I wrote for this class was a semi-narrative piece covering a massive earthquake in Nepal, and how students from the area were working to raise money to send to the relief effort back home. I hope that the story made it easier for Missourians to feel the deep need that those natural disaster victims across the world experienced at that time.
The following semester I wrote a piece for Vox Magazine for my intermediate writing class about the low-income housing crisis in Columbia. I wanted the piece to let those who have never been branded “low-income” to have a sense of the struggles the people who have been faced, not only in affording a place to live, but being accepted by potential landlords.

As an advanced reporter, I wrote two longform pieces. One covered the scientific advances in treating premature birth, and the other covers a local group who is attempting to save a species of tomato from extinction to promote biodiversity and local food movements.

I want all of my stories to have deep impact on readers. Otherwise, what’s the point of this journalism practice in the first place? I believe that narrative elements in news stories help the reader get a full sense of the situations reported upon, and therefore increase impact.

I’ve learned that impact is increased by emotional reactions to information, and the goal of narrative is to facilitate for these emotional experiences. Through narrative, journalists can take the reader along for the ride, so they can get a better sense of why the destination matters.

I want to continue practicing these concepts as I further my career as a journalist and writer. I will be spending the summer writing feature pieces in Maine for Out and About Magazine, where I will be able to keep exercising my narrative abilities on a daily basis. From there, I will be headed to Washington D.C., destination to be determined. I think these two experiences will help me do the kind of work I ultimately would like to be able to hang my hat on. Deeply impactful,
emotional and moving pieces that make people want to do something about changing the world for the better.

**Professional Skills Component**

During the fall of 2016, I will be working as a reporter for Youth Today and Juvenile Justice Information Exchange covering legislation regarding young people the communities affected by such in Washington D.C.

I will be focused on writing narrative journalism stories during my time working for the Youth Today, which publishes many scene-driven stories and has a dedicated online presence, which allows for longform pieces. Working for these publications will allow me to write impactful stories that bridge the gap between hard news and narrative styling.

My time reporting for the public life beat as an introductory reporter and on the community beat as an advanced reporter at the Missourian has helped to prepare me for the position in D.C. As an intermediate writing student and staff reporter for the Mexico Ledger, I've grown comfortable meeting new people and deriving stories from their lives. Throughout my time as a professional and student journalist, I've covered a wide variety of beats and topics, which has prepared me for the wide subject matter these publications may assign me to report on.

My first day at Youth Today and Juvenile Justice Information Exchange will be August 25, and my last day will at approximately December 9. I will be working slightly less than a full 40 hours per week, which will put me at roughly 390 hours of work for the fall, without factoring in potential overtime.
Youth Today and Juvenile Justice Information Exchange are intended for professionals who work in youth services and other youth oriented fields. According to Youth Today, it is the only independent, nationally distributed newspaper read by thousands of youth service professionals. Its funding comes from subscriptions and grants from foundations. Some of the topics their regularly cover are youth development, juvenile justice, gang and violence prevention, adolescent health, teen pregnancy and parenting. Juvenile Justice Information Exchange is a national publication focused on exchanging ideas that will offer a better understanding of youth-related issues. The publication is based out of Kennesaw State University out of the non-profit Center for Sustainable Journalism.

**ANALYSIS COMPONENT**

**Research question**

When a major event occurs, it affects various people in different ways and society as a whole on multiple levels. When something extremely consequential occurs, such as a major tornado in a densely populated area, the journalists from every sector of news must evaluate and report on the topic within the frame of their beat. A catastrophic tornado, for example, will have economic, governmental and social consequences. Companies will be scrambling to reestablish business, government institutions will be scrambling to provide aid and people’s lives will be changed forever. The impact on the subjects is apparent, but which of these sectors of news and writing styles have the greatest impact on readers and provoke social action, especially those who may not be directly involved with the events of the day?
Journalists could use research on this topic to better understand how readers gain full understanding of a crisis, how newsrooms can strategically report on these subjects to provide a deeper understanding of a crisis and how different types of stories affect the ways in which readers respond empathetically to coverage of disasters and other tragic or catastrophic events.

My research questions:

1. Does an emotional connection to a news story trigger social action?
2. Does greater emotional connection to a type of news story increase the degree of personal involvement in a social action?
3. Does a particular type of news story correspond to a particular degree of social action?

My hypothesis: Narrative human-interest stories will have greater impact than other types of news stories as measured on a social action scale.

**Narrative Theory and Storytelling**

At its base, narrative theory is implemented in simply telling a story (O’Neill, 1994).

Narrative theory is defined as a linked sequence of events in written form, which is multidimensional in its levels of communicating between the teller and audience. It is interested in providing both experience and meaning through the written word. It is concerned with the effect, ethics and aesthetics of the story and how they interact with the narrator’s theme and meaning (Herman, 2012).
Narrative stories are usually based around the personal and situational struggles of the characters in order to stimulate strong emotional reactions, such as feelings of empathy within the reader (Craig, 2006).

Narratives enable journalists to convey complex materials in an accessible and comprehensible format, by showing rather than telling about the situations at hand (Roeh, 1989). This is accomplished in news by implementing literary strategies, such as angle, point of closure, individualization and focalization in order to represent actual lived experiences to the reader (Fulton, 2005).

The dawn of narrative theory is attributed to Aristotle, who defined narrative as a lifelike representation or imitation of human behavior, known as mimesis. This form of the theory held for several centuries. Renaissance theorists believed that narrative held a mirror to nature. The 20th century academics also thought of narrative as mimetic of reality. In the 21st century, postmodern narrative theory was developed to include literature that does not attempt to precisely mirror reality, but heavily embellish and expand upon it, such as sci-fi and fantasy novels (Herman, 2012).

Philosopher Noel Carrol believed narrative stories had the power to regulate readers’ emotions. The aspects of a story that draw the most emotional reactions will likely consider the most relevant (Hogan, 2003).

Research done by a team including Steen Larsen and Janos Laszlo used narrative theory and other communication theories to conclude that stories cause the reader to remember personal experiences, which causes the story to seem more engaging. The study’s key variable was point of view. The team studied how a
story’s impact was affected by the reader’s cultural background and the content of
the story. They found that members of a certain nation were more emotionally
impacted by a story than those of another nation based on how their background
was better represented by aspects of the story (Laszlo-Larsen, 1991).

F.C. Bartlett implemented narrative theory to study how war stories caused
intense emotional responses in those who were anxious about going to war, had
family members who could or have gone to war or could have or had personal war
experiences (Hogan, 2003).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since even before the dawn of New Journalism in the 1960s, narrative
writing has been praised for levying the emotional weight of the reality behind
stories upon readers, creating more vivid, moving media (Roeh, 1989).

The form has also been criticized for over-telling the news, bogging down the
important information with the unnecessary and diminishing readers’ recollection
(Fulton, 2005).

Narrative storytelling is used today to improve news coverage and gain a
greater readership by implementing the techniques of novels to both satisfy and
entertain readers (Wolfe and Johnson, 1973). This process requires more thorough
reporting, deeper understanding of the people and issues and a more descriptive
writer than hard news (Kramer, 2000).

Rather than directly deliver information to the reader by order of
importance, narrative journalism delivers information through the experiences of
its characters and the guidance of a narrator. Sometimes the most important
information may be left to near the end of a story for climactic effect (O’Neill, 1994), such as how many people lived or died in Times-Picayune’s “For Dear Life” (Meitrodt, 2006).

Narrative lets the reader learn along with the characters as they go through their personal struggles. This writing technique is meant to stimulate strong emotional reactions such as feelings of empathy (Craig, 2006). Readers of narrative have fluid feelings, multifaceted comprehension and a vivid presence in the world of the story. These feelings are held within the reader, affecting self-perception and beliefs, which shows the impact of narrative stories (Louwerse-Kuiken, 2004).

**Empathy and Narrative Theory**

The term empathy means to feel with another person (Oxley, 2011). The use of character development and detail allow readers to be able to identify with the people written about in narrative stories. The scenic imagery puts readers within the moment, so that they may imagine themselves within the story (Herman, 2012).

A former executive editor of *The Atlantic*, Richard Todd, said this literary journalism “holds the promise of taking us to worlds we don’t ordinarily visit and to make them real.” (Sims, 2007, p. 3)

According to Oxley, Psychologist C. Daniel Batson found that feeling empathy causes increased altruism, motivating people to increase the welfare of someone in need. In affirming his empathy-altruism hypothesis, Batson found that empathy tends to generate altruistic emotions and direction that motivate even strangers to want to help the people they empathize with (Oxley, 2011).

Critics of narrative argue that these stories bog down the factual and crucial
information. For those of this opinion that hard news is unnecessarily scattered throughout the text, and the person cannot simply scan the article to find the news they desire before moving on (Fulton, 2005).

Zerba studied the tendency for lesser-educated readers to prefer narrative news stories to hard news style stories. She found that it is likely the readability of narrative and the expectation of a positive reading experience that causes this inclination (Zerba, 2007).

She examined young adults' expectations of hard news stories and if it influenced their comprehension, learning, interest and enjoyment. The young adults reported that they had more profound expectations and reading experiences from narrative journalism stories. Reading narrative journalism resulted increased understanding and interest verses inverted pyramid in a story about the Iraq war. Reading a narrative murder story caused greater interest and enjoyment than inverted pyramid readers, who thought reading the hard news version of the story resulted in less learning and decreased interest. Zerba concluded narrative journalism could positively affect reading experiences of typically hard news-related subjects (Zerba, 2007).

**The Tools of Narrative Theory and Scenic Storytelling**

In narrative, both written and oral, meaning is offered to the reader through two lenses. There is the story, which is made up of thought and actions, and meaning is derived from discourse, which is made up of syntax, tense, etc. (Barthes, 1975).

Barthes stated that there are three levels of narrative: function, including correlation, foreshadowing and other plot devices; action, which is how characters
react to the plot; and narration, which is how the story is being communicated (Barthes, 1975).

Aristotle attributed six constituents of tragedy: plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle and song (Herman, 2012). These constituents are similar to Tom Wolfe’s four basic devices of narrative journalism, which are scene, dialogue, perspective and character (Wolfe, 1974).

If narrative theory is simply a linked sequence of events to communicate an idea, these devices are crucial aspects of how that message is delivered and are partially the cause of narrative multidimensionality. Plot determines when and how information is relayed to the reader in narrative stories (Herman, 2012). The inverted pyramid places information in order of importance, the greatest being at the foremost and descending in order of relevance and consequence (Pottker, 2003). However, narrative journalists withhold crucial information until near the end of a story, creating the sense of suspense and mystery along with the use of foreshadowing. These methods are intended to entertain and spur the reader through the text to a fulfilling and rewarding conclusion (O’Neill, 1994).

The use of character introduces the reader to a person within the story, whose development will help guide the plot (Craig, 2006). Most narrative writing depends on character to guide the story and allow the reader to relate to the information provided in the text (Herman, 2012). It is through the character’s wants and needs that the feeling of empathy and experience arises. Stories about reality, whether in history or news coverage are generally stories of desire (Roeh, 1989).
Dialogue, written interpretation of actual conversation, is used in journalism in the same way as novels to offer information and insight. The characters’ personalities can be examined through the way in which the characters speak, which increases the reader’s sense of knowing, relation and potentially the empathy felt toward the character. How the writer renders these methods within the narrative plays an important role in the quality of the story and representation of truth (Craig, 2008).

Descriptive details are used through metaphor or symbolism to communicate important ideas without necessarily stating them outright. This is an artistic quality of narrative journalism that explores the meaning of situation, rather than the occurrences of an event. This strategy offers a way to divulge information to the reader that can be perceived as subjective, intuitive, self-conscious and romantic (Aucoin, 2001). If verifiably true, the use of detail can be used in foreshadowing and other plot devices that add to the reading experience (Fulton, 2012). No detail, if properly implemented, is too small for narrative journalism. Everything even merely mentioned in a narrative story should be significant in some way to offer insight of move the plot forward (Barthes, 1975).

**Prior Research**

Studies have found the act of showing rather than telling in narrative journalism has been found to cause stories to be more interesting and engaging to readers. Journalism students were given packets of showing and telling sentences and asked to measure their responses on six differential scales. It was found that
telling rather than showing can cause the reader to feel distanced from the subject of the story. Telling generally presents conclusions, where showing offers observed detail and leaves the reader to draw their own conclusion. By showing and describing the situation with specificity and concrete detail, the journalist allows the reader to feel within the story, which creates a more informative reading experience for the reader (Tankard-Hendrickson, 1996).

A study of 58 college students found that young adults have more fulfilling reading experiences from narrative journalism than hard news stories. Pairs of narrative and hard news stories were coupled together on three subjects: murder, Iraq and a trial. Although there were mixed results with comprehension and learning, leaning more so to hard news stories, participants reported that interest and enjoyment were consistently greater with narrative stories (Zerba, 2008).

Through framing, foreshadowing, narration and symbolism — considered a part of the other two levels within narrative writing (Barthes, 1975) — narrative stories can take on a mythic-like nature, as well, making the stories potentially feel all the more powerful to readers who connect with the myths. “For Dear Life” (Meitrodt, 2006) evokes the biblical story of Noah’s flood, an act of God against human society. It also was reminiscent of the biblical idea of a promised land where suffering and fear would be relieved (Robinson, 2009).

**METHODOLOGY**

**Introduction**

This summer, I will be interning as a features writer for the Ellsworth American’s Out and About magazine, a community newspaper insert. While
reporting in Maine, I will also study the effects of various forms of news coverage on a set of readers. Specifically, I will research whether different types of news coverage of the Joplin tornado prompt different levels of emotional involvement that, in turn, motivate different kinds of social action.

I will hold 10 individual, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with people from the area of Ellsworth, Maine. I am curious to see whether this set of readers feels more compelled to engage in social action by reading a certain kind of story.

I also plan to interview the research participants about the framing of each story, as well as its point of view, organization and narrative qualities. I want to determine which elements in each type of story contributed to their responses in the form of social action.

**Selection of news stories**

I will select three types stories to represent human-interest, economic and institutional approaches. Three different types of stories will be a manageable set for participants to read within a reasonable time frame and still provide enough contrast to provide meaningful comparison.

The stories will be selected for their distinct characteristics, as well as journalistic merit and story-telling proficiency. All will be taken from the Joplin Globe’s award-winning coverage of the May 22, 2011, tornado.

I will textually analyze each piece to determine the individual framing and various story-telling elements in each story. This will allow the research to more clearly determine and distinguish how a chosen news approach affects social reactions.
Participants

My position at the Ellsworth American will allow me access to members of the readership from which I can select appropriate research participants.

The participants will be selected from the pool of regular readers as examples of news consumers likely to encounter the types of news stories in the study, whether in print or online.

These research participants will be selected from a variety of generational, cultural, racial and economic backgrounds. This research is intended to reflect news consumers in general, but differences and similarities among members of different groups of people will be noted. Due to the size and lack of randomness in the sample, the results cannot be generalized.

The Participant Index

Participant Media, in conjunction with the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Knight Foundation, has created a social actions scale to measure response by viewers and readers to specific content they read or see. The index was primarily created to analyze the impact by viewers of a documentary film about a social issue on viewers, but in this study, I will use it to measure the response by readers to coverage of a recent disaster.

The social action scale ranges from no action to minimal social action (sharing on social media) to direct participation (making a monetary contribution or volunteering to help a cause or effort).
I will modify The Participant Index’s Social Actions Scale to measure the extent of a participant’s desire to actively respond after reading different types of stories about a disaster. The scale will go from no action at all on one end to volunteering in disaster relief efforts at the other end.

**Interviews**

How researchers prepare and practice their questions determines what type of interview is being performed. There are structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews, depending on how outlined and preplanned the questioning takes place within an interview (Ryan, 2009).

The method by which the questions are asked forms another variety of interviews. One-to-one interviews leave the researcher and participant alone to discuss topics, whereas focus groups bring together groups of people to discuss subjects together with the researcher. Surveys and other forms of gathering information from participants through the mail or Internet are also another form of interviewing. This method lacks the ability for researchers to discuss the subjects’ answers in more detail, but responses can be obtained quickly and efficiently (Lindlof, 2011).

One-to-one interviews are social interactions generally conducted in-person, allowing the researcher to assess non-verbal cues such as body language, facial expression and eye contact. A more complete understanding of what the research participant is saying can be gained from these cues by delving into hidden meanings and understanding (Ryan, 2009).
The interviews will be one-to-one and are intended to be semi-structured, fluid and conversational, but will be directed by the interviewer to remain on the topic of the stories and how reading them affected the research participant. The research participant and I will sit facing each other in a location that is comfortable to him or her, but is also reasonably private for the sake of not interrupting the interview and so I can achieve the best recorded audio quality possible for transcription.

Interviews will be based around a broad and flexible outline of questions, and move into more precise questioning depending on the participant’s responses. I’ll check off as the points either naturally come up in the conversation or I will bring them up before the end of the interview.

The relationship between the two people in the conversation is paramount to the results of the conversation and the information the researcher can gain from the interview. Although it is a conversation, the goals of the interview do not allow the conversation to be an equal one, which makes trust and a good rapport between the interviewer and research participants crucial. A relaxed, attentive and confident interviewer will likely lead a better conversation and gain more useful information from the participant. This is also why a comfortable environment for both researcher and research participant can be worthwhile. A research participant’s responses to questioning could be shaped by the influence of the interviewer and their surroundings, and it is important for the researcher to be aware of this and convey a non-judgmental disposition throughout the conversation (Ryan, 2009).

**Study Format**
In this study, participants will start by getting an identical set of cards for each of three different stories with nine options adapted from The Participant Index. The cards will describe social actions in response to a particular story on a scale from minimum intervention to personal intervention:

1. I would do nothing.
2. I would seek out more information on the topic.
3. I would share this story on social media.
4. I would recommend this story directly to a friend.
5. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue.
6. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue.
7. I would charitably contribute to this issue.
8. I would participate in a support event.
9. I would volunteer in relief efforts.

The participants will select from the cards all that they feel are applicable to their reaction to each story and order them from most likely to least likely to be an active social response in their real lives. If they are equally likely to do multiple things, I will ask them to order the cards based on which ones they feel most compelled to do. If a participant feels equally likely to perform the tasks on two cards, the participant will indicate so by placing the cards side-by-side.

From there, I will attempt to elaborate on the reasons for their responses through interviews. I will begin my interviews by talking about their general impressions of the stories: What did they like and what they didn’t they like, as well
as other things that made an impression. This will be intended to make the participant comfortable with the interview and subject matter.

After general impressions, I’ll ask them to describe in detail how each of the stories made them feel. I will follow up by asking what elements in the story prompted them to feel this way, which story had the greatest impact, and how did one, if any, prompted the desire to act on the situation in a particular way.

I will ask the participant, “What in this story that caused you to place the cards the way you did?” “Can you point to particular sentences in the story that prompted you to choose your leading social action?” “Can you tell me why you put the reactions in the order you did?”

After the interview has concluded, I will assess the results and develop findings. Documentation of the interview through transcription and/or recording and documenting the way each participant ordered the cards will be crucial to obtaining a complete and accurate conclusion. There are three levels of analyzing interview results. During data reduction, interview results are transcribed, simplified and focused. Then, results are displayed on a graph or chart to show possible relationships. Lastly, verification takes place, and possible conclusions and explanations are made (Ryan, 2009).

My results will be two-fold, both resulting from the interview and the Participant Index cards. I will base what I learned from the interviews in an attempt to make more sense of why each participant measured each story the way he or she did on the index.
If consistencies occur within my results, such as confirmation of my hypothesis that the human-interest narrative will correlate to the most emotional connection and therefore the most personally involved social action, I will study how these consistencies could be reflective of the news reading public. If there are outliers or a lack of consistency, I will study whether outliers or other factors unrelated to the stories could have caused these inconsistencies. If my hypothesis is not confirmed, the answer to the research questions would be negative and I would try to determine what other elements of the stories could have led to the results.

Story selection from the Joplin Globe:

Young Joplin woman: Starting over is ‘very overwhelming’
http://www.joplinglobe.com/news/local_news/young-joplin-woman-starting-over-very-overwhelming/article_fd786982-9195-55c0-a0a3-1f7c3e77ca2b.html

District begins work toward rebuilding damaged schools

Chamber official: 4,000 jobs affected by Sunday’s tornado

Bibliography


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**RESEARCH INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS**

1. Interview with April Canavan

Age: 25

Race: Hispanic

Education: high school diploma

Occupation: advertising support coordinator

Raised: California, Nevada, Arizona and Alaska.

Resides: Eastbrook, Maine

Impact ranking: 1. Institutional story 2. Economic story 3. Feature story

Feature story

1. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2

2. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9

3. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6

4. I would participate in a support event. 8

5. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5

6. I would share this story on social media. 3
7. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4

8. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7

9. I would do nothing. 1

Fennewald: What did you think about this story in general?

Canavan: I couldn't figure out if it was supposed to be a story about the Joplin tornado, or a story about this woman asking for help, because it is essentially a narrative and not a nonfiction about what happened during the tornado. It's her particular story. And then, the second to last paragraph is her only requirement for temporary housing is that it has a basement, and I get that was added in as a sort of funny play on words that the author was using, but I didn't really dig that at all. And also, I didn't understand why their first stop would not be to check on her boyfriend's child, instead of going to the school to lay low. That made me not like her at all.

Fennewald: What about it made your order things the way you did with seek more info, volunteer and contact a local representative as your top three?

Canavan: I would seek out more information to find out if it really was an E5 (tornado). Obviously, knowing what happened here, I know that it was an E5 tornado during Joplin. I would find out if her story was even true, because essentially a 24-year-old having a brand new vehicle and a brand new house is kind of outlandish. I could believe that she was renting a house and leasing a vehicle, but I’m not going to throw money at somebody if I don’t have all the information. So, that’s why I went to “get more information”.
I would volunteer if I then saw that I was in the area and able to assist in all of the clean up effort, not just with one particular thing. I had to thing about it in both ways. But, if she needed help cleaning the property, I would be that person to help. I don't care what kind of stranger it is, obviously that house that they lived in was wrecked by a tornado and we need to help clean up the mess, somehow.

(I would contact my local representative) because they are probably getting tons of phone calls already and getting inundated, but I feel like one more phone call wouldn't hurt to make sure that Congress, or even the president or somebody had declared it a national emergency where an entire community was dislocated from their homes due to a natural phenomenon.

Fennewald: And then you have support event next.

Canavan: Well, yeah. I kind of explained that.

Fennewald: Then, persuade others to help.

Canavan: Which is why I would persuade others to help, because if it is a natural phenomenon which national crisis we've all got to help and work together.

Fennewald: So then share on social and recommend to a friend are together there.

Canavan: Yeah, they are pretty close. I'm more likely to email somebody then post on social media, because I use social media for things like— most of my social media is about my child, so if I'm going to post on social media it is going to be for things that are significant.
Fennewald: Okay, so then you have charitably contribute and do nothing.

Canavan: Again, I’m not going to give money to something that I don’t know it’s going to benefit. I don’t necessarily believe that someone who has a new house and car doesn’t have full coverage insurance that is going to replace that financially. I’m not about to contribute financially when I could contribute in the clean up effort, which would be more effective, because essentially my $100 is going to be dinner for two people. And then, do nothing, because nobody does nothing. Anytime someone’s hurt, that’s not what I do.

Fennewald: You said that you noticed it was a narrative and not more of a hard new story. How did that affect your general impression on the topic?

Canavan: It told me that it wasn’t about the actual tornado and all the damage that it did. It told me that it’s supposed to be a tearjerker. It’s a piece that the author wrote to try to get attention emotionally rather than attention logically. So, I would get a sense that there were other stories. This wouldn’t be the front page story in the series, but more so to garner more national news. We all know the facts that there was an E5 tornado, but there are going to be people that are so drawn in by this one person’s story that they are more likely to contribute financially and to the clean up effort, which is essentially the goal here. That’s why she spoke up.

Fennewald: How do you think that effected how you ordered the responses?

Canavan: If it were more logical, I would have shared it more. Essentially it would be reversed, except for the do nothing. Because, if it’s logical of the facts, I’m going to share it on social media and recommend it to my friends...
immediately, so they can see the facts and know that something crazy happened, not just an emotional story. And then, of course, I would volunteer, assist and do those types of things.

Lastly would be a charitable type of thing, because no information would be given about if you want to contribute. We all know that you can contribute to the Red Cross to help in those types of situations, because in emergency situations, the Red Cross comes in and supports things. So, in that kind of instance, I would support it, because there’s a national effort to assist, but I would support it individually. In a more logical piece, it's not going to have an individual story, so I would (also) be more likely to contribute financially that way.

Lastly, I don’t think I’d have to seek out more information or contact and government representative if it were a nonfiction news story, because 99 percent of the information is going to be right there, and it is going to have those numbers that tells you it's an E5 tornado, this many people lost their homes, this many people died, etcetera, etcetera. So, you have the cold hard facts.

Fennewald: So, you pretty much answered my other questions, which is what you would do differently with this story.

Canavan: Yeah.

Fennewald: What detail stood out to you the most in this story?

Canavan: The fact that they left to go to the school before they went after her boyfriend’s child. That tells me they don’t care for a child more than they care for themselves. I want to know who the child was with instead of being with his father. If the child was with his mother, I feel that should have been mentioned,
because immediately I don’t give a crap about the 24-year-old, or her boyfriend, or her dogs. I care about this child and who was taking care of it during this tornado.

Institutional story

1. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2
2. I would share this story on social media. 3
3. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4
4. I would participate in a support event. 8
5. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9
6. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5
7. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6
8. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7
9. I would do nothing. 1

Fennewald: What were your general impressions of this story?

Canavan: That I liked it. It was very fact-based about rebuilding after the tornado. Instead of appealing emotionally, it provided all of the facts.

Fennewald: How did it affect the way that you ordered your responses?

Canavan: Because it provided most of the information, I started out with seek more information and immediately went to sharing it, because I feel like it needs attention, based on the fact that it is pure information.
Fennewald: If there is one thing that impacted you the most on this one, what would it be? What moment or a detail?

Canavan: Probably the quote by the superintendent, “This year’s summer school is the first of many opportunities to begin the healing process and resume a sense of normalcy,” because it’s true that any time you get broken out of your routine, clinging to those situations that can bring you a sense of normalcy, that’s kind of what you have to do, and that’s how you heal.

Fennewald: How do you think that affected the way you ordered the responses?

Canavan: Because it made me care more. It made me want to get involved, because anybody who has ever had a type of struggle in their life or something they have to overcome, I think it would bring them in. I know the sense of loss and trying to regain normalcy, but it did it in a way that isn’t emotionally based. Yes, it touched me emotionally, but because of all of the information that it provided. It wasn’t geared specifically toward an emotional reaction.

Fennewald: I see that volunteering went down quite a bit from the last one.

Canavan: It isn’t that I would be less inclined to volunteer. Getting more information, sharing and recommending directly to a friend would happen immediately and simultaneously, so those are the first three. And then participating in a support event I feel counts as volunteering, but I would be more inclined to help if they were raising money in a bake sale or something like that to raise money, and then volunteer and relief efforts if they are going to be building a building or something like that. And then persuading others to get involved I feel like would be
right in there. I would be like, “hey come help me.” I feel like those are clumped together.

Then it would be contacting one of my local representative to encourage the support, because, obviously they are going to have some kind of support. It talks about them using emergency management agency buildings, so that’s some support from local governments, but I would be like, “Hey, is there anyway we can use the library for classes to be used.” And then I would contribute charity if they needed additional funding, because sometimes it’s not that they need money for it. It’s just the process of getting it done.

Fennewald: So, your desire to volunteer wasn’t decreased. If anything it was increased, but your likelihood of sharing just went up so drastically that it surpassed that.

Canavan: Yes, that’s what it is, because I know I’ll be volunteering, but it’s the order in which I would do it.

Fennewald: Did your desire to volunteer increase?

Canavan: Oh yes, everything. My participation in this story increased drastically, by wanting to give a shit about anything to do with this tornado. They didn’t use the children to try to appeal to you emotionally. They use the rebuilding of schools to identify the problem and they’re focus of rebuilding. No one is going to pay attention when you’re rebuilding the mom and pop store that got knocked down, because that affects a small amount of people. Rebuilding the schools affects not only students, but teachers, the teacher’s families, the old lady that volunteers as a crossing guard, the parent teacher association. It impacts the entire community.
Fennewald: Is there anything you would do to make it better?

Canavan: I think that possibly providing the back story of the tornado, essentially just stating the detail that on such and such date an E5 tornado struck this area and destroyed it, because this article kind of assumes that you know exactly what happened when it’s possible that you may not know. Clearly this isn’t the first article that’s been written about what had occurred. It’s the latest in a long line, but I feel that anytime you write a news article you should summarize what happened, even if it is just like two lines. I think of it like a long research essay. Obviously in a 12-page research paper you aren’t going to remember your beginning thesis, so you should touch on it at the start of every new topic in that paper. It’s the same thing with a series of news article. The first article should give you the facts, and then every article after that should give you a little bit of those facts as a reminder to anchor you back in. I’m sure that’s not how journalism works, but as a reader, that is what would draw me in.

Economic story

1. I would share this story on social media. 3

2. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4

3. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6

4. I would do nothing. 1

5. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2

6. I would participate in a support event. 8
7. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9
8. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5
9. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7

Fennewald: What did you think overall of this one?
Canavan: I thought that it was entirely factually based. They used an interview with a female to get your attention, and then they provided you with all of the facts and numbers.

Fennewald: That is something that you appreciated, right?
Canavan: I am 100 percent a numbers type of person, so I want all of the facts and figures. They gave me just enough emotionally to keep me interested, and then they would give me the numbers on it. And they would bring up another — not emotional — but situational aspect and then it would give you the numbers on it to support it. It was very give and take, and I think it was well put together for such a long article. It kept you interested for the whole thing.

Fennewald: What was the most impactful detail of the entire thing?
Canavan: I think it was the quote from Dillan’s, “There has been no decision made at this time. Our main priority is caring for our associates and caring for our community.”

Fennewald: The first thing that jumps out to me is that do nothing went way up. Why is that?
Canavan: There’s nothing you can do. This is facts and information based on local businesses. So I can’t charitably contribute to Walmart to get them built back
up. It’s a decision that has to come from corporate. What I could potentially do is
share the information, because sharing the information is what is going to get
attention paid to it, and the more people that pay attention to it if it goes viral, then
that’s something that will help and be handled.

Fennewald: So, in relation to your other responses of volunteering or
charitably contributing or support relief efforts, do you feel like it is more or less
likely on that one?

Canavan: Less likely. There’s only so much you can do to help a business. If
they are sponsoring a bake sale and you are trying to rebuild, you can participate by
buying something. If they are trying to rebuild the building, you can participate with
that. But, the article talks about small business loans to help financially, so there’s
not a whole lot that you can do to help out, because they are going to pay a company
to come clean up. They are going to take that money out and put it where it needs to
go most effectively. So it doesn’t call for financial assistance. This is more giving
information to people that might have been affected, saying “Hey, you might qualify
for this. Go check it out.” So, it’s not necessarily anything that I’m going to have to do
or anybody would be drawn to help. It’s fact-based.

I think it was well written, and I don’t think there is very much I would
change about it either — about this piece. I feel like it is exactly the way that an
article should be written when it comes to a natural disaster or any kind of a
realistic situation, because it offers for people who look for emotional heart
wrenchers in a story, it offers facts for people who are only interested in the facts,
and it offers assistance for people who are reading the newspaper because they
need help and are looking for that information. They are getting that information. So, I think it covers your three basic audiences, and it just draws you in.

**Overall**

Fennewald: How would you rate these stories on a measure of overall impact?

Canavan: Overall impact as a reader that would be interested?

Fennewald: After you read them, on your feeling of impact towards social action.

Canavan: Oh, the school article, the chamber article and then the young Joplin woman, because let’s face it, reading that they didn’t go after that kid, I just hate that lady. I would never help.

Fennewald: So if (the young Joplin woman) story were about a different person, but through a similar lense—

Canavan: It would probably be down there. It would still be at the bottom. I’m more geared toward assisting if you can provide me the information in the article that can make me interested, and then looking at the facts of an article, like, these businesses need assistance or they are having trouble rebuilding and having a bake sale. I’m going to contribute to that because they aren’t looking for handouts. They are trying to get themselves back on their feet. Lastly, if you try to appeal to me only emotionally with a narrative that didn’t draw you in, you didn’t feel like you were there during the tornado. You are just listening to someone retell, not drawing you in. It’s like a third party story.
I don’t like narratives in news, because a third party narrative in a news article is not going to make you feel engaged. A second party, like let’s say the author is writing either from the point of view or having been involved or maybe they themselves were involved, that has the potential to draw you in and make you feel like that.

In the article, it talks about how a monstrous tornado ripped through — blah, blah, blah — as talk across Joplin turns to rebuilding, Hill and others pick up the pieces. It doesn’t give you a story. If it had been, ‘At 6:44 at night the entire neighborhood was silent. All of the sudden you hear a crash of thunder and then thousands upon thousands of rocks are dropped on the roof of your house, and then silence breaks only to be torn apart by whatever sound,’ that would immediately draw you in instead of the way you have presented it.

Fennewald: So, you prefer second person to third person?

Canavan: Yeah, or even first person narrative to third person in an article where there is a narrative being told.

Fennewald: Okay. Let’s say there was a first person or second person narrative being told in a news magazine, or newspaper or what have you, but was a similar type of hands on perspective attempt like this—

Canavan: Would they still be asking for assistance, almost? If this article had been written as a second or first party story, and they had omitted the tasteless joke about having the temporary housing having a location with a basement, if they had taken that out, it would have made me want to get involved. It would have been number two, instead of number three, because I’m still going to help in a community
effort first, but I would feel more inclined to help the first or second party if I had been involved emotionally. If they were able to provide a story of the detail of what happened during the tornado that would draw you in. Saying ‘as loud as ten trains’ doesn’t draw you in.

Fennewald: So, if it weren’t a few specific things in this story that turned you off to this story other than a second person narrative, would that affect it?

Canavan: It definitely affected it. So, I guess in that sense, I’m less likely to be inclined to help anyway if it is just an emotional story with no fact. But, the fact that it didn’t even have detail that would draw me in put it at the bottom.

Fennewald: Okay. Is there anything else you want to add on about these three and how it affected your responses?

Canavan: Yeah, I guess the fact that this article about the young Joplin woman, I think that I will be majorly opposed to any type of story that has children in it that I feel like aren’t being taken care of, because I’m a single parent, and I approach articles that way. I approach reading anything that way, anything that is going to get me involved. If the article had focused more on the child, if it had been a story about the child, I would have immediately donated money and shared it with everyone. If there had been a story in here that had a child needing assistance or a family with a child that needed assistance, I would be all over that like me on cake.

Fennewald: Would that be true if it were written in this style narrative, but focusing on the kid?

Canavan: Yeah, anything like that, and I think that’s because I’m a parent. I feel inclined to assist more with children. Note to self, if you are ever going to be a
journalist helping people, and you feel the need to help raise money with something, include a kid. Get that child an interview about how badly they want something.

2. Interview with Steven Fuller

Age: 34
Race: white
Occupation: news reporter
Education: bachelor’s degree
Raised: Stockton Springs, Maine
Resides: Orland, Maine

Institutional story
1. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2
2. I would share this story on social media. 3
3. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4
4. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6
5. I would do nothing. 1
6. I would participate in a support event. 8
7. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5
8. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7
9. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9
Fennewald: What were your general opinions and thoughts on this story?

Fuller: I just thought it was helpful, as far as providing, if I’m remembering correctly, a timeframe. It was a helpful overview of how things had gone, since the tornado, and what the timeline looked like going forward. So, I thought it was very helpful as far as establishing a timeline and what a parent, or if I know someone who is in the school system, this is kind of a helpful overview, for me, as far as what’s going on and what I need to know.

Fennewald: How did you feel about ranging your sense of impact and social action?

Fuller: I didn’t feel super connected, if that’s the right way to phrase it. I felt that I was interested, but maybe not invested personally. It didn’t prompt me to think, how can I help out with this, or here’s what’s being done by others, and here’s what I need to know. For me at least, the initial instinct or initial reaction was not what can I do or what should I do here. It was, again, an overview being presented to me, if that makes sense.

Fennewald: And is that why you have kind of what I could consider the big three more towards the bottom [of your responses].

Fuller: Yes, for that article, yeah. Nothing really jumped out and spoke to me and say, yeah this makes me want to go grab a shovel and dig something. Those were lower down there for that reason, because it didn’t resonate on that level with me, that article.

Fennewald: Okay, you have seek more information at the top. Why is that?
Fuller: Nothing spoke to me that said, this makes me want to help. Part of me in the back of my mind was really wondering, do they need help? It seems like they’ve got it kind of under control, so to speak, but part of me was wondering, are there things that they might need help with. I guess, that’s why [I’d] seek more information, because if I had more information that said teachers need help moving equipment into their classrooms or something, and here’s a day it’s going to be done, that made have prompted a different reaction. I think that’s why [I put] seek out more information. Are there opportunities?

Fennewald: On the bright note, what was the big thing about this story, even if it was a particular detail or sentence, that prompted the most impact?

Fuller: I think it was the American flag piece at the end. As a visual it’s like, you know, I picture that in my head, and I see all this chaos and destruction and toppled buildings, but here is a sign that people are moving forward, people are taking a step to kind of take back their communities. So, that resonated with me. I would say that was the particular detail that kind of stuck out to me. That kind of made me feel a little more connected on a personal level, because I could visualize that.

Fennewald: What could this story have done better?

Fuller: In terms of impact?

Fennewald: Yeah, that made you feel like you need to act more.

Fuller: I think maybe there weren’t any opportunities, but if there were, just to kind of say— In my head I was kind of imagining there must be someway that people could help out here, whether it’s moving stuff into classrooms or lifting
something from one building to another, or even helping to put out more flags. I think that’s the thing that came to mind most. Maybe that wasn’t the point of the article, but if there was a way to incorporate, here are some ways you could personally or interested citizens could get involved. That’s what comes to mind for me.

Feature story

1. I would participate in a support event.
2. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue.
3. I would share this story on social media.
4. I would recommend this story directly to a friend.
5. I would volunteer in relief efforts.
6. I would charitably contribute to this issue.
7. I would seek out more information on the topic.
8. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue.
9. I would do nothing.

Fennewald: What are your general takes on this?

Fuller: I thought it really resonated with me. Right off the bat, you feel like you’re connected with this person. You are getting a sense of who this person is. You’re probably able to relate to this person on, you know, some level of thinking. I remember when I was starting out and just got my first house, and just got my first
car. So I thought right off the bat, as a reader, I was invested here, because this is a real person. This is a real situation that she was going through, and immediately as soon as she has all of those things she worked for, they’re gone. And so, I felt like the personal connection was very strong, right off the bat, and continued throughout the story.

Fennewald: If you could point to a single instant or detail that was the most impactful, what would that be?

Fuller: I think it’s the part where they go back and find her dogs, just because, again, I’m borrowing a phrase from the article, they had just been through this terror and seen everything get destroyed and going to school and seeing other parts of the community destroyed, and then they find that the young child is safe, and they went back to the house. To me, it’s like, not everything is lost. Here’s at least something that we have that we had before, that we still have, and now we can use that as a starting point to go forward. We can see what is lost, but not everything is lost.

Fennewald: Did that sense of hope give make you feel more compelled that you could also help?

Fuller: Yeah, I think so. Even though it was clearly a bright spot, it didn’t diminish or take away from the fact that they had still lost an awful lot. You know, and then it goes on later, where it talks about finding temporary housing, you know. And, yeah, again I was thinking these people must need some help, and I would want to help more so in that article, because it was such a personal connection. It was a real person, I can relate to this person, because I’ve been, you know, if not having
gone through a tornado, I’ve been in her shoes of starting out. I can imagine in my head what it would be like to have almost everything, you know, taken away and torn up.

Fennewald: So, you have participate in a support event as [response] number one. Why did you put that as number one?

Fuller: Again, I’m thinking whether it’s to help her personally or just anyone in that situation, whether it’s helping them go through a house to say what’s salvageable, what’s not, whether it’s providing if I have a truck or something to help move people from point A to point B, you know. So, if there were events going on, yeah, the second one made me feel like I needed to help, I think.

Fennewald: Did you think of participate in a support event as actively being a part of the effort.

Fuller: Yeah, I guess, you’re seeing volunteering as down further. I think I was conflicted with the two.

Fennewald: Yeah, I should have explained it more like a fundraiser or something.

Fuller: Then I would probably move up the volunteering, because I guess I was probably thinking of fundraiser of a dinner or something like that, but I was also thinking of an actual physical [help], and that was my interpretation.

Fennewald: Okay, so with that in mind, why is that number seven?

Fuller: It is one of those things where I could probably go back and move. I was also thinking with sharing on social media and recommending it to a friend, I was thinking of it as a way to encourage others as a way to do this with me or do this
separately. Even though there are four numbers between share on social media as number three and volunteer on social media as number seven, it was just that I had to pick one. To me, they are actually pretty close. I guess I was picking some of the sharing and recommending to friends ahead of volunteering in an effort to probably— I think sometimes it’s nicer to do those with other people.

Fennewald: So, then what did you think of when you thought of the volunteer part, with the fact that [support event] involved some actual action? With that in mind, do you think you should move [volunteer] anywhere?

Fuller: I think I would move it up some. Is that an option at this point? I think I would probably put that [at response number five] with the explanation that I gave a minute ago with why I thought these were important, as far as sharing and attempting to persuade others. I think that if you get a critical mass of people that you can accomplish more than if one person goes out on their own. They can certainly do something, but if you get a group of five or six people, you can affect more change, so that’s the reason I put some of those ahead of that.

Fennewald: What could this particular story have done better to make it more impactful?

Fuller: I’m not trying to sound like a broken record, but again, maybe if there was a sidebar as far as giving people specific examples, as far as ways they could help out. I’ll include myself in this. I think people need to be told very specifically what are ways you can help out. If you rely on them to try and take it upon themselves to find this information, to Google, how can I help tornado victims, it’s just one more step for them. I think that any way that you can give people
information, like saying, here’s the number to contact The Red Cross, here are some local churches that are helping relocate people or helping people pick up the pieces, they are going to be meeting at such and such a place at nine o’clock on Saturday morning. To me, if you do something like that, put it right out there for people as far as exactly how they can help, where’s a place that I can drop off clothing for people who have lost their clothing, that kind of thing. That’s what came to my mind, as far as giving specific information about how they can help.

Economic story

1. I would share this story on social media. 3
2. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6
3. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4
4. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2
5. I would participate in a support event. 8
6. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5
7. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9
8. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7
9. I would do nothing. 1

Fennewald: General impressions?

Fuller: Kind of like the first one, I thought it was a good, very fact-filled overview, as far as clearly this affected 4,000 people. Even in a community of
50,000, 4,000 people, 10 percent of the population has been directly affected by this. They’ve lost their job or their not sure what’s going to happen to their job, you know. And so, as a read I’m thinking either I’m going to be one of those 4,000 or my parents are going to be one of those 4,000. If this is about people that I know and care about, it’s of interest to me because I want to know what different companies or organizations, like the hospital, what are they doing to help? What can they do? So, I thought it was a good job of really reaching out to Walmart, reaching out to Home Depot, all of these different companies. Even if they didn’t have all the answers yet, because it was still early on, it was trying to give people an overview as far as what was happening on the employment front.

I don’t know if this is the right time to say this or not, but this article does include some specifics. I’ve said this for the past couple articles, but this article says the center will be open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. or it gives the hours, or it gives the locations. I think that’s really helpful for someone who needs to take advantage of this, whether it’s the SBA assistance. So, I thought it was very helpful, as far as being informative.

Fennewald: So, what was the one detail or aspect that made it the most impactful?

Fuller: Kind of like the last one, I would say it’s this [character] at the very beginning. This is leading into the larger topic of thousands of jobs, but it’s leading off by talking about one family’s business and five, six, seven people that are employed. So, you’re starting at this kind of micro level. Walmart is kind of a faceless thing, but this is a family business. So to me, I think starting out with this personal
story into the whole region, I thought that was impactful, rather than just starting out by saying there are 4,000 jobs [lost]. I think starting out with that pulled me in as a reader.

Fennewald: As far as your responses go, you have kind of the big three a lot lower down than the prior one. Why is that?

Fuller: I guess because my sense was there was less opportunity [to help] for those [people]. Walmart, for example, is not going to need volunteer efforts, because they have an infrastructure in place, a national infrastructure, a regional infrastructure. They can give employees different opportunities at different stores. I feel like me as a private citizen, as one person, wasn’t going to be able to do a whole lot to help the Home Depots or the Walmarts, or even the towing company. From a business perspective, I didn’t feel like there was a whole lot of opportunity for me to volunteer or that kind of thing. Rightly or wrongly, that’s what I felt.

Fennewald: So why did you put share on social and contact local representative as [responses] number one and two.

Fuller: Share on social, because again, this is going to be affecting a lot of people. Social media is going to be able to let people know what is going to be happening, as far as the jobs are concerned. And, I thought contact local representative, because there are several different government or quasi-governmental, like the chamber of commerce, or more specifically this business recovery center, just to really reach out and say, this seems like a very important piece of the recovery. Given that I can’t help out on an individual level, the business recovery center, which is done under the umbrella of the government, that I want
my representative supporting that program, and making sure that it doesn’t get reduced.

Fennewald: Okay, so what do you feel like this piece did [well]. What aspects of it were the best?

Fuller: It felt like a very comprehensive overview of the employment issue. It covered employers, it covered — I think in a sense — employees, because Peggy Baker is both an employer and an employee, it seems to me. There are businesses, themselves. There’s the chamber, which can kind of give a snap shot overview. There’s another small business, the storage and space center. To me, it felt like a very comprehensive overview. I felt well informed while reading it.

Fennewald: What could this piece have done better, in a sense that you would have felt more need to do something?

Fuller: That one, nothing is jumping to mind right off the bat on that one. That’s a good question. All I can think of, and it may be a bit of a stretch, if there were a way for other employers who weren’t affected by the tornado, or they weren’t shut down, or their business wasn’t damaged by the tornado, if they had any kind of job openings, is there a way to kind of connect them with people who may be seeking jobs now that they have lost one, or that their employment future is uncertain. It may be a bit of a reach, but that’s about all that I can come up with. That’s kind of the role of the business recovery center, or part of it. But, is there a good way for undamaged businesses who may be hiring to [reach out].

Fennewald: Does that affect your personal need to do anything?
Fuller: I guess if it depends if I’m a business owner, but if I’m just a private citizen, no, not specifically. I don’t know what could have. That’s a tough one for me to answer, as far as what could make me want to help out. I guess, maybe if I think about it a bit more, I’m thinking that if people have lost their jobs or aren’t sure what is going to happen with their jobs, there may be more insecurity as far as where their food is going to come from. If I as a private citizen can donate to a food bank or clothing to a Good Will store, or something like that. As far as a personal level, that would resonate with me. Is there a way to help these employees that are facing an uncertain future.

Overall

Fennewald: With all of these together, based on your idea of impact and desire to be socially active, how would you order them?

Fuller: As far as which one really spoke most directly to my desire to be impactful? From most to least, I would say the young Joplin woman [feature] is the most. I would say that the chamber and the jobs [economic story] is the middle one, and the school [institutional] one is the least.

Fennewald: Could you provide a brief idea of why you ordered them that way?

Fuller: I think, in a general sense, from the young woman, that one spoke to me most personally. I felt most connected to her. I felt that was the one that promoted the most what can I do to help kind of response out of me. Where as the school one, just because it was more of an overview, and it wasn’t about the
students whose artwork got destroyed in a classroom, or something. That’s why the [feature] spoke most to me, because I felt so connected to her, and again, it made me think, what can I do to help.

3. Interview with Joseph Huber
Age: 60
Race: white
Occupation: carpenter
Education: high school diploma
Raised: Jersey Shore
Resides: Steuben, Maine


Institutional story
10. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9
11. I would participate in a support event. 8
12. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7
13. I would do nothing. 1
14. I would share this story on social media. 3
15. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4
16. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2
17. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5
18. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6

Fennewald: In general, why did you order these things the way you did?

Huber: I tried to do a pragmatic approach, taking the question at face value, what I actually might do. And, there could be a little fudge there. I would do nothing might have nudged a little higher if I was really honestly looking at myself. But, of the first three, volunteer in an event, or participate in an event, or throw some money at some event or charity that was working to do the project in the story, those are possible. Doing nothing is also a distinct possibility. It’s nothing much to push a story on Facebook, but I don’t know if it pushed me enough that I would.

I tried to imagine that Joplin was my community, as I did it, because I otherwise I probably wouldn’t engage at all. It would be like, oh yeah, they had a tornado go through Joplin. I didn’t hardly know that. But, had in been in our community, then I’d try to order them like that, how I might react to a story like that.

Fennewald: What was it about the story that made you put the more personally committed stuff at the top, verses the stuff more involved with communication at the bottom.

Huber: I think it has more to do with my knowledge of myself and what I would do then it does how the story put it out. I’ve got six children who have all been through schools, so schools are important. So, this story automatically engaged me by what it was about.

Fennewald: What about this story was the biggest impact?
Huber: The biggest impact is the fact that the school district had sustained such catastrophic damage. I didn’t even know as news that a tornado had gone through and that the schools had been heavily damaged. So, that was the thing for me.

Fennewald: How did the story get that across?

Huber: Just explaining in the first three or four paragraphs. It explained what had happened in the first four paragraphs. Well, it’s the second paragraph really that explains what is going on.

Fennewald: Is there one detail or sentence within that paragraph that hit you the hardest?

Huber: Tornado struck, but salvageable.

Fennewald: Okay. Is there anything that this story could have done better, in your opinion, that would have made you more impacted?

Huber: I think it’s a pretty good story. I was utterly amazed that summer school students were provided with free transportation to and from classes, along with breakfast and lunch. That was very impressive to me.

Feature story

1. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9

2. I would participate in a support event. 8

3. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6

4. I would do nothing. 1
5. I would recommend this story directly to a friend.  
6. I would charitably contribute to this issue.  
7. I would seek out more information on the topic.  
8. I would share this story on social media.  
9. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue.  

Fennewald: What made you order [the responses] the way you did on this one?

Huber: Once again, I try to look at it as how I would actually react to reading a story like that, and again, I imagine myself living geographically close to Joplin, if an event like that was happening, because once again, it shocked me. I’m assuming this is referring to a real event, which I didn’t even know about. We hear about tornados in the Mid-West, and it sounds awful, but it goes out of your mind pretty quick, because it is so far removed from us. So, I ordered them the way I thought I would pragmatically react, and from the other one, the one that made the biggest jump is would I talk to someone in state government or representative about that. The way that one was written much more made me feel like people need help, and they need a way to get started again.

Fennewald: And, when you said how it was written, what did you mean by that?

Huber: Coming with a personal account of the actual event, compared to the other one, [which] seemed some time after. The only thing it mentioned was a devastating tornado in one sentence. That was the only way I knew what had gone
on. Where as this one, the whole drama of the experience of the tornado gets through.

Fennewald: Do you feel like that was legitimately a more impactful way to go about the story?

Huber: Well, it depends on the purpose of the story. If the story’s purpose is to engage people to help around the issue or the event, then yes, I think that’s a more impactful way. The first one read more like a local informational story, like you would see in The Ellsworth American. This is what’s happening, and they are going to try to rebuild these three schools, just as a matter of fact. The second one is showing what the impact was like on a specific individual. It was much more dramatic.

Fennewald: Is there one instance or one sentence that you thought was the most impactful?

Huber: I think it’s either— they are kind of way different, but the two things that are— An EF5 tornado, when the talk about the scars that remain from surviving the worst that an EF5 tornado unleashed, because, once again, it’s informational for me. I didn’t even know about the tornado, but it was a 5 that went through.

And, the other one was what they did when the decided to run to the school, and the school was down. They ran two and a half miles to check on his son. Just in terms of drama and putting yourself in someone else’s shoes, it was pretty engaging.

Fennewald: So, if you had to do anything different with this story, what would you do to make it more impactful?
Huber: It’s pretty good for what the way it’s gone about it. It tells the story pretty well, and it doesn’t seem like there’s a lot in there that I would. What I would sort of look for in that question is there anything that can be cut out. Does it ramble on that isn’t important to get it done? Most of it deserved to be there, I think. It’s pretty good. It’s pretty well written.

Fennewald: So, you were most compelled by the detail of the situation? You said the EF5 tornado as an informational thing. But the running to the school part is more of narrative thing. Which gave you the most impact and charge for social activity? What would you pick, more narrative description, or more of that hard information?

Huber: The narrative makes it more engaging to read. The first one is more like The Ellsworth American. I might kind of drowsily read passed that.

Economic story
1. I would do nothing. 1
2. I would participate in a support event. 8
3. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6
4. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9
5. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4
6. I would share this story on social media. 3
7. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2
8. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7
9. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5

Fennewald: This one definitely stands out as the most different of the three on your responses. So, do nothing is up at number one. What made that up there, where as [compared] to the other ones?

Huber: There’s a scale implied in this that makes me feel less likely that there’s anything meaningful I can do.

Fennewald: What do you mean by scale?

Huber: The whole event was bigger. It’s more than anyone person can really have an impact with. It’s way beyond my means of either money, time or energy to be able to make a significant impact.

Fennewald: So, you have the support event and local representative is [responses] two and three. Then you have volunteer as four and charity down at eight. So, why did those go in that order, then?

Huber: When I think about the charity, I think about the jar that goes up on the counter at the gas station here. When someone gets burned out or something like that, there’s a jar on the counter. The first two stories, if there’s a jar sitting there on the counter saying, help rebuild Joplin schools, I’m putting something in there. Help rebuild Joplin residents homes. Help rebuild Joplin’s businesses doesn’t have me reaching much to put something in the jar.

Fennewald: So why is support event and local representative high up still?

Huber: Contact local representative, obviously the government needs to help out in a meaningful way. The government has the resources to do that. As a
taxpayer, that’s what I want my government for, to help out in a situation like this.

In the participating in an event or volunteering, those are always sort of up there, I think, in all three surveys. The most meaningful way I can see myself helping out is to— like people who were boiling lobsters there were raising money for the library, so I could see doing that kind of thing. I think you find one of those sort of in the top four of all three story responses. Once again, it has just as much to do with what I can realistically imagine myself doing. I was trying to be realistic about all of them. Persuade something that they need to do something is pretty close to the bottom on all of my surveys, because it’s not my style. I don’t do that. Push on social media, forward the story on social media is also not much my style. I’m actually more pragmatic about that as I went through the three stories. I actually don’t share things on social media. It’s really rare. I almost never. Enough stuff comes through on social media. I don’t do that.

Fennewald: What were your overall impressions of the story?

Huber: This one, let’s see, this one gave me the sense that things are— where’s the line about Joplin’s down and not out. Rumors of Joplin’s demise are greatly exaggerated. Yeah, this one I had already got to the conclusion by the time I got to that line. When you think about people whose towing business or storage business was wiped out, they’ve talked to the insurance people and they’re going to rebuild. So, it’s calamitous and it’s bad, but it’s all functioning the way it should. People’s insurance is likely going to cover it, and they’re going to be back up in no time. So, that was the sense that this story gave me.
Fennewald: You said that one line. Is that the line that had the greatest impact that really hit home the hardest?

Huber: Yeah, I think that line sums up this approach to me. Because it’s right in there. They’re talking about 300 businesses have been lost, but they’re not really lost, they’ve been damaged. When you get to that line, there’s 2000 businesses in the community and 15,000 people, so it’s a big hit, there’s no doubt. But, it’s not anywhere near wiped out the whole community or half the community even. It’s one-seventh of the community is affected and will have to work hard to get back where they were.

Fennewald: So, in this story, what gave you the most sense of impact? Was it the data or more details outside of the numbers and facts?

Huber: This one, the number and facts were— there was more to be gleaned from it.

Overall

Fennewald: In your own opinion, if you had to order these on the greatest sense of impact you got from each story, what would it be?

Huber: I would probably go the most dramatic. That’s the most impact. That [feature] story. This [institutional] would be second, just because, like I said, I am a father, so a peace I can meaningfully understand is the second. This [economic] thing is the third, because it’s too big a view of the whole event. It’s more like leading general-purpose news. That’s what’s happening with the business and this is how they are dealing with it. But it has less impact than the other two.
4. Interview with Teresa Montague

Age: 64

Race: European Jewish, white

Education: bachelors’ degree

Occupation: Maine House of Representatives candidate

Raised: Kansas City, Missouri

Resides: Clifton, Maine


Economic story

1. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2

2. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5

3. I would share this story on social media. 3

4. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4

5. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6

6. I would participate in a support event. 8

7. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9

8. I would do nothing. 1

9. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7

Fennewald: So, why did you have your top response as seek more information?
Montague: To verify.

Fennewald: Is there any particular reason that you feel that desire most strongly?

Montague: A person is only as good as their word. I don't want to pass on information that is incorrect, to the best of my knowledge. We can later, when there is new information.

Fennewald: Okay, and then next you have attempt to persuade others next?

Montague: Once you find out what the information is, I think we have to spread the word.

Fennewald: Do you have a reason why you have down towards the bottom here [the responses] support event, volunteer and charitably contribute as last?

Montague: Because, it's a lot easier to get on the phone or email somebody than contact your representative or do all of the social things. You can do that right away. So, an event has to fit into a calendar, has to be something you can afford to get to for transportation. Events, I'd love to support, but can't get there from here.

Fennewald: As far as the story itself, what did you appreciate the most about it?

Montague: The very most?

Fennewald: Yeah, what did you like about it?

Montague: It was nice that it had a human touch at the beginning. It's nice that they remind folks that there's a silver lining. Not everybody is affected. Obviously, access and when they can get resources ready to go is the most important part.

Fennewald: Okay. Is there anything that they story could have done differently or better to have made you feel more of a call to action or more impacted by it?
Montague: Yeah, if I was in a local community, I would probably be the first person out there.

Fennewald: Outside of your geographical location, more of what the story could have done from a story-telling perspective.

Montague: You know, as an environmental scientist, you can elaborate on the frequency of tornados and severity of tornados, the importance of engineering and public safety, so that you’ve got warning systems and shelters, and you’re thinking ahead of the game.

Fennewald: Okay, so you want more background info on the topic and the infrastructure around it?

Montague: Yeah, this is a tragedy, but can we avoid it. Let’s face it, as climate change comes, this is going to be more frequent, so what do we do about it?

Fennewald: And, is there a particular detail within the story that was the most impactful for you?

Montague: Yeah, it was probably the amount of businesses that were lost, I think. That’s a big chunk, even for residents. There’s a lot of people out of work, a lot of people are going to be hungry, a lot of people needing drink, a lot of people needing assistance.

Fennewald: Okay.

Institutional story

1. I would seek out more information on the topic.
2. I would share this story on social media.
3. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4

4. I would participate in a support event. 8

5. I would do nothing. 1

6. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6

7. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5

8. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9

9. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7

Fennewald: What about this story caused them to order [your responses] the way you did, this time?

Montague: I usually try to verify. There is some reassuring information in this story that I wouldn’t mind sharing with folks in the community, or with relatives that are in that area.

Fennewald: What kind of info?

Montague: The schools are being rebuilt and there’s regeneration, and there’s something being done to address a little bit of the trauma, especially for the kids. It didn’t say anything about offering counseling, but often some form of healing to community, and it puts the kids in a place where the parents get to work rebuilding and get jobs, and doing whatever the hell it is they need to do. Hopefully, they are feeding them there, too. Schools are a big thing to get going, so I would support events that would help bring attention to that or fund that, or something. I would probably participate physically somehow on that one. And, beyond that, unless it’s
to encourage my representatives to encourage counseling for the trauma, because it causes permanent damage.

Fennewald: So, what about the story made you move up the support event, in comparison to the other one?

Montague: Oh, I don’t remember. I couldn’t tell you.

Fennewald: Okay. Well, what do you like most about this story?

Montague: It’s informational. It’s pertinent to families and property owners that pay the property taxes to the schools.

Fennewald: Are there any particular details or single sentences that struck you the most?

Montague: Well, the quotes really good. The detail is when classes will begin.

Fennewald: Okay, and how do you feel the story could have been more impactful for you?

Montague: Either reassurances or that those therapy counselors are coming, or that there is going to be a movement for that to be addressed and a call for that to be done.

Feature story

1. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2

2. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5

3. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6

4. I would share this story on social media. 3
5. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4
6. I would participate in a support event. 8
7. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9
8. I would do nothing. 1
9. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7

Fennewald: So, what made you order [the responses] this way for this story?
Montague: This is a great human story, personal, you get it where she’s at. But, there’s nothing said about what’s being done for anyone in her place. Without that in place, there’s a lot left of that story untold.
Fennewald: Okay. So, I take it that something that it could do better is have more background information on improvement efforts.
Montague: What are the resources for her? Where can she go? What are the local charities, you know? Who out of the government is responsible, whether its FEMA or NEMA, or MIMA in Maine, or MOMA? Is it the Maine Emergency Management situation, or is it the Red Cross? Where are her resources? She’s out there, in between finding out what’s going on with her insurance and having immediate Maslow Hierarchy of needs being met; food, shelter.
Fennewald: And sense you don’t have this great of an idea about those things, you’re not as compelled to get involved, because you don’t know how to get involved?
Montague: I’m more compelled, actually. Someone fucked up, including the media. So, I’m more compelled to get involved, because it’s not there in the story,
and people need to know about it, so that’s why I’d be reminding the media and my local representatives of this, and getting the word out that there are things available, and this is where you can go and what you can do. The communication is lacking here for anyone who is like this person, and if it was Joplin, and there’s 4,000 people that could be the bulk of them.

Fennewald: So your more compelled to try to correct the informational outlet then to tried to get involved with the relief efforts of this individual situation.

Montague: One, I don’t know where to go to offer my relief. So, I have to search that out. So yes, I’m more inclined to work on something that shows to me that no one is working on, and I will say the well-being, because if you say well-fare, you’re screwed. So, for the well-being of community, for the well-being of the citizens.

Fennewald: What did you like about this one?

Montague: It puts you right there were she’s at. Like I said, it was very personal, it was very clear. With me, I got two emotional support animals, and I know that they are literally life-giving, as well as medicine for people. And I mean that in a legal term. ESAs are medicine.

Fennewald: Okay, so is there one detail or thing about this story that stuck out to you the most?

Montague: What was the question again, say it again?

Fennewald: What was one element or detail that was the most impactful for you?

Montague: There were quite a few.

Fennewald: One that hit you the hardest, I guess.

Montague: They were just waiting for us to get back to them.
Fennewald: What about it caused that?

Montague: Loyalty.

Fennewald: You got a sense of loyal from it?

Montague: You can see the loyalty between the animal and the [owner]. Between those two, and between both of them is quite an extraordinary thing between species.

Overall

Fennewald: All right, with all the stories overall, how would rank them from most impactful too least impactful? How would you do that?

Montague: What do you mean by define impact?

Fennewald: What made you feel the greatest need to be socially active out of reading them?

Montague: Probably this last [feature] one.

Fennewald: Okay, and then the second one?

Montague: I think it was the first [economic] one I read.

Fennewald: Okay, so the jobs.

Montague: Jobs lost, destruction, how many people affected.

Fennewald: Okay, and then the last one being the one about the school.

Montague: The school, yeah, it kind of follows, I think.

Fennewald: So, based on the stories themselves, was there one specific thing about the Joplin woman story that made it most impactful?

Montague: Yeah, it was triage.
Fennewald: What do you mean by that?

Montague: There was not a fucking thing being done for her. Triage, you deal with what needs to be dealt with the most, triage.

Fennewald: And it gave you a greater sense, because she needed more help.

Montague: It was obvious, because she was standing there with nothing, saying, what am I going to do.

Fennewald: Did the way that it was written compel that more than the quote?

Montague: If things are being done, you've got to step up. There were things being done in the other situations. If I roll as committee one, when I see something that’s not being done, I've got to step up.

Fennewald: Did the way that it was written, like the first person verses the information stuff do anything to affect your decision?

Montague: No, it could have been third person. It was the fact that nothing was being done. There was no alternative, there was nothing happening to this person. This person is sitting there in need of help, and no one is responding. At least, that's how I read it.

Fennewald: And then, why the schools one last?

Montague: Because things were being done, and there’s the healing process. If it wasn’t that urgent, not that it wasn’t important, it just did not have the urgency.

Fennewald: Okay, and then if there was one thing throughout these stories that you wish could have been done to make the perfect story for you to feel the most impacted and the most desire to be socially active, what would that be?
Montague: Well, I don’t want to be falsely led on to believe that she isn’t getting any help, so don’t do that. If they do, I’ll be really pissed, and you’ll lose all your credibility. So, that’s where that comes in.

Fennewald: Some more overall background on the situation?

Montague: Explaining how limited those resources are, what she does have available, doesn’t meet the need. Is she still up shit creek? That’s what I do for veteran widows, because we are up shit creek. What’s being offered isn’t adequate, so yeah.

Fennewald: All right, I think that’s about it. Is there anything else you want to add on there?

Montague: Up shit creek is my last quote. No.

5. Interview with Eleanor Murphy

Age: 91
Race: white
Occupation: retired post master
Education: high school diploma
Raised: Mount Desert Island
Resides: Tremont, Maine

Feature story

10. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2
11. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6
12. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5
13. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7
14. I would share this story on social media. 3
15. I would participate in a support event. 8
16. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9
17. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4
18. I would do nothing. 1

Murphy: I was thinking about the sound of that thing; my granddaughter in Maryland was talking about the first one she ever had, that first tornado, she said it sounded just like that, a train was coming.

Fennewald: Now we’ve just got to talk about what it is about the story made you put [the responses] in this order. So, seek more information is because you didn’t feel completely informed about the situation?

Murphy: Well, the thing is I’d like to know more about what happened to the people in the end.

Fennewald: Okay, and then your next one was contact a local representative. Why did you put that one there?

Murphy: I think you need to get people to get help to these people, so you contact them and to get the ball going and start finding help for people.
Fennewald: Okay, and then [response] number three is [attempt to] persuade others. Why did you put that as number three?

Murphy: I think it’s best when you can get other people involved to help.

Fennewald: Okay, and then contribute to charity is [response] four.

Murphy: Yeah, because you know they always need to have money, and whatever else they need that you should give to help.

Fennewald: Okay, so it seems like your reasoning on this one is that your local representative will provide the most help, persuading others will provide the next most help, and contributing to charity yourself would be the third amount.

Murphy: Right.

Fennewald: Okay, and then share on social [media] is [response] five. Why did you put share on social ahead of participate in a support event?

Murphy: Because, that means you would share with other people, I would think, to get them interested, so you get other people to help and support.

Fennewald: Okay, and then participate in a support event. Why did you put that one at number six?

Murphy: I figured these all come first, and then that I would be there to help to do.

Fennewald: Okay, and the volunteer is [response] seven. Is that there because of the idea that you would be one person verses trying to get more people?

Murphy: Right, after you get everyone else going then you volunteer to help.

Fennewald: Okay, and then recommend to friend is [response] number eight.

Murphy: Right, get other people to help, too.
Fennewald: That’s just one to one.

Murphy: Right.

Fennewald: And then, do nothing is [response] nine.

Murphy: Yeah. I don’t believe people. They do do nothing, but I can’t believe it.

Fennewald: So, what did you like most about this story?

Murphy: For one thing, this is all what I read and heard. It was something that I knew all about all this information, because I have seen it and read about it. And then, my granddaughter, because she experienced something similar to this. So, you know, it was a true thing that happens.

Fennewald: Okay. Is there one part of the story that caused the greatest sense that you needed to help to do something?

Murphy: When they had lost everything. Then, they really needed help.

Fennewald: Okay. And then, how was the story written to cause that to feel impactful?

Murphy: The thing is, in reading it, it was almost like you were there. And you know the thing you’ve got to do is get in there and help people.

Fennewald: Okay. So, how much do you feel like the way that it was written to cause you to make you feel like you were there impacted the way you feel to help?

Murphy: You can almost see what is going on as your reading it. You picture it in your mind.

Fennewald: Do you feel like that greatly caused you to want to help, more so?

Murphy: Definitely, definitely. It’s almost like you can get involved when you’re reading about what they were going through.
Fennewald: Okay. And then, if you had to pick one sentence or one detail that was your favorite part, what would that be?

Murphy: Because I’m a great believer, and when they realized they had another day to live and so forth, and they were going to live one day at a time and thank God for a second chance, because I’m a great believer that he’s there and you should be thankful that you’ve lived through something like that.

Institutional story

1. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2
2. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6
3. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9
4. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5
5. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7
6. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4
7. I would participate in a support event. 8
8. I would share this story on social media. 3
9. I would do nothing. 1

Fennewald: All right, let’s just go through [the responses] as I write them down. So, the first one is seek more info on the topic. So, what more info would you want that you didn’t get from that article?
Murphy: Well, I would want to be sure just exactly how much help they are going to need.

Fennewald: Okay, and then the next one is contact local representative. Is that number two for the same reason it was before?

Murphy: Yeah, I think so. It’s to get them out there to get some help, and contact the Red Cross or whatever.

Fennewald: I noticed that volunteering is up a little higher this time. Why did you want to put volunteering as [response] number three?

Murphy: I think in a situation like this, if it’s possible, you should be willing to volunteer to do whatever you can to help. I know when I watch this on TV, it’s very devastating to see what happens to these people.

Fennewald: Is there any reason it’s up there on this one and it was lower down on the other one?

Murphy: No, it’s just the fact that I think they need the help right now, quick.

Fennewald: I noticed that [share on] social media has gone way down, but volunteer has gone up.

Murphy: Because, in a situation like this, I think you have to volunteer immediately. They need the hands on help at once.

Fennewald: What about the story caused you to feel more like they needed that hands on help at once?

Murphy: Well, I think it’s because I’ve seen so much of this one the news that I can almost picture these poor souls and what’s happening to them.
Fennewald: So, what about this story as compared to the last story made you feel like it was more urgent?

Murphy: Well, it’s because people just lose everything, you know. It’s just a sad thing. I think these tornados are one of the worst things that can happen to people.

Fennewald: Okay. Was there any difference because it didn’t focus on one person as much on this one as with the whole school?

Murphy: Yeah, I think so.

Fennewald: How much do you feel like that caused a change in your responses, to feel more urgent?

Murphy: Well, I think it’s here, because even though maybe here it doesn’t show all the people, but in my mind I picture all of the people involved in this.

Fennewald: You get a sense of there being more people involved in it?

Murphy: Right, it’s such a devastating thing. To me, it’s a scary thing. I can’t imagine.

Fennewald: So, what did you appreciate the most about this story? What made it the greatest impact?

Murphy: To think that they survived and they were back, and they found the dogs and were going to have a basement and something for shelter. From this, they learned they were going to be prepared for when this happens again.

Fennewald: Okay. If you could pick out one little portion of [the institutional story] that you thought was the most impactful, what would that be?

Murphy: I think it’s the fact that they planned on picking right up and starting to get everything going again. Like, they are going to have summer school and get all of
these kids ready to get right back in school, so they wouldn’t lose any of their education.

Fennewald: Does that sense that they were picking it right back up and getting right on it make you feel like you would have a better chance of being able to help, because there was already an effort going?

Murphy: Yeah, immediately they were going to try to get these kids back in school, so their lives will go on, you know, and continue on after what they go through. I just can’t imagine it.

Economic story

1. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2

2. I would share this story on social media. 3

3. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9

4. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6

5. I would participate in a support event. 8

6. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5

7. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4

8. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7

9. I would do nothing. 1
Fennewald: Okay, so the first [response] is, again, seek more info. Is there anything that this story could have done to make you feel like you— What do you feel like you’re missing from this story?

Murphy: They tell you what they’re going to do. But, on this one, are they really getting started and getting all of this done at once for these people. I know it takes time.

Fennewald: So, it was the amount of things that they threw at you.

Murphy: Right.

Fennewald: So, we have share on social [media] up even higher this time than the other stories.

Murphy: Because you know why, I think something like all this for people, because the others should be immediate, but what I think if you share this, more people will help.

Fennewald: Okay, and then you have volunteer in relief efforts as [response] number three. Any particular reason that’s number three, this time?

Murphy: Well, I think will all this going here, and because people are losing their jobs, because even though there are problems and all that, it’s trying to get out and help these people to see if there is any way that you can help them to get going quicker.

Fennewald: So, maybe people who are out of work, seeing what they need to be able to get themselves back on their feet?

Murphy: Yes, because maybe you can find something that can help them and carry the direction for them to go.
Fennewald: Okay. And then after that we have the local representative. That one is a little lower than usual on this one.

Murphy: Well, sometimes, you know, things have to get going before they’ll even pay enough attention to get in there and help.

Fennewald: Is there any reason that this one’s lower than the other two [stories]?

Murphy: No, just I feel that these things should be taken care of first, because sometimes, as I say, they know about this, but then more people contact them, then everything helps.

Fennewald: Is there anything to that being more major industry and big businesses involved that they’d be more likely to have heard about it already?

Murphy: It would, yes, definitely.

Fennewald: And then [participate in a] support event is next. Any thoughts on why you put that one there?

Murphy: Well, the thing is if there’s anyone like this family here, their business, if there’s any way that you can be there if they need help, not always with money, but if there’s anything you can do to help them on that path to get things right back where they should be. If they need a friend, sometimes it’s kind of nice.

Fennewald: And then attempt to persuade others is next, and then recommend to a friend. So, you try to get more people and then the one-on-one after that.

Murphy: Right.

Fennewald: Okay, and then charitably contribute is eighth. That one a little lower than the other [stories], I think. So why is this [response] down here on this one?
Murphy: It's because I think these people, these big stores, they do have a lot more back up, you know. They have more money standing behind them.

Fennewald: Okay, so the big businesses makes it feel like you're going to have less of a difference with whatever money you can provide.

Murphy: Right. You don't have the same sympathy as I had for that lady who had that towing business. We all know, anything to do with Walmart, they've got more money than they know what to do with.

Fennewald: Okay. So, what was it in this story that hit you the hardest? What was the biggest impact?

Murphy: Well, I think when you think of people like the people who had the towing business, you know, people like that to them, they probably worked hard to get the business and get more loans. And, goodness only knows how much, because they have children, and because the people to work for them probably have families.

Fennewald: Okay, so is there one line or one detail that did it for you the most?

Murphy: When she said something about her husband being gone seven and a half years and she's been trying to carry on the business, and then this happened to her. I think I feel worse for her, because, you know, she probably doesn't have the backing of the money that Walmart and those businesses have. She's going to be struggling more.

Fennewald: Do you feel in this story, and then we will talk about overall, but was it the numbers or the personal descriptions, like the characters or the information that was more impactful?
Murphy: Well I think what happened to this one was there was more involved. I mean, it tells us about all of the businesses and people that could lose their jobs, and all that. Trying to find jobs for them, it must be hard when you've lost everything. You look out there and you think, how am I going to get started again?

Fennewald: I think you were right that there was definitely a lot more involved and included in this one. So, do you feel like having more numbers and more of a broad perspective on the issue was beneficial, or did it make you feel more impacted on this one than the other [stories] that were maybe a bit more narrow focused, and didn't have quite all the numbers involved.

Murphy: Well, I think because this one where you've got all your businesses, so many people are going to be involved, you know. These people are going to lose their jobs, and people have mortgages, and if they can't pay their mortgages, I think there's more people getting involved in this one, by far.

Fennewald: Do you feel like you would have been as impacted if there was all that information, but it didn't include the description of this one small businesses, if you take that out and it was just the raw data?

Murphy: I think when I do this one, I have more sympathy because of the small business.

Fennewald: So, it definitely does have an impact?

Murphy: Yes, definitely.

Fennewald: If you took out all those numbers, and you just had the description of this small family, which one depending on the two options, the two hypotheticals there, which one do you think would have the most impact for you?
Murphy: As far as me having more feelings, more sympathy, more understanding, it would be for the small business. I feel these businesses, when it comes to if they did need to borrow the money and get loans, they have no problem, but the small business works hard to try to get help.

Fennewald: So, even if they took out the numbers, like the 4,000 jobs or the 2,000 people, take all that out and it’s just a story about this one business—

Murphy: Well, because I feel bad, because so many people involved in all this. You know what I mean. Because you see, my heart goes out to a small business.

Fennewald: If you had to pick one that you were more impacted by, which one would it be, the numbers or the sense of people?

Murphy: Well, let’s say it would be the sense of people.

Fennewald: Okay.

Murphy: I know you think of all the other people losing their jobs, but I have a lot of sympathy for somebody who is trying in a small business.

Overall

Fennewald: If you had to put them from greatest to least in the amount of impact that you felt, which [stories] would be number one, number two and number three?

Murphy: This [feature story] here pretty much, you know, it’s almost like you can be there with it.

Fennewald: So, that [feature story] is number one?

Murphy: Yeah.

Fennewald: And, what’s number two?
Murphy: Well, you need your jobs, on account of keeping your schools and things going.

Fennewald: So, [the economic story] and then [then institutional story]?

Murphy: [Yes], because if these people don't have money, they won't have money to keep these schools.

Fennewald: Okay, if you just had to pick one that you thought the writing was better or was a better read, what would the order be been.

Murphy: I really liked [the feature story]. This one, I could almost picture myself being there. Like how that train, how loud it sounded. This one you could picture it. It has more of an impact on me. Because, see, I’ve watched this much on TV, and I feel so bad for these people, and they look like they’ve lost everything. And then, some people say, I don’t think I can ever rebuild again. Then, others say we are going to build right back. It’s so sad.

Fennewald: In this [feature] story, what could be done better to make this even more impactful? Where is it lacking?

Murphy: Well, this one here pretty well covers it all. Because, she sat in the beginning with this taking place, and then she tells that if it ever happens again what she would do. This is the one that I can associate with more.

Fennewald: Okay, is there anything that you think would help it out? Maybe something like more numbers from the [economic story] or anything from the other two?
Murphy: I realize that the more numbers of people, the more homes they're losing is sad. But, when you have one family, sometimes I can associate with what would happen, what would it feel like if this were happening to me.

Fennewald: Okay, so having one family enhances your sense of connection with the people.

Murphy: It does, yes. When she says, all of it is gone now, it's sad.

Fennewald: In [the feature story], do you prefer the quotes or the details, or what is your favorite part about the way it’s written that made you feel impacted?

Murphy: Well, the thing is, this one I can almost feel like I’m there. I’m involved.

Fennewald: So, what out of all the ways that they do that is the most important? Is it the way they make the quotes or the way that they describe the scene?

Murphy: I think it was the way it was all described. The way they described it, I can almost relate like I’m going through this.

Fennewald: Okay.

6. Interview with Bonnie Stewart

Age: 45

Race: white, Native American from four generations back

Occupation: Unemployed, pixie house artist

Education: GED

Raised: Baileyville, Maine

Resides: Robbinston, Maine

Feature story

1. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2
2. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7
3. I would participate in a support event. 8
4. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9
5. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4
6. I would share this story on social media. 3
7. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5
8. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6
9. I would do nothing. 1

Institutional:

19. I would share this story on social media. 3
20. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2
21. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4
22. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5
23. I would participate in a support event. 8
24. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7
25. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9
26. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6
27. I would do nothing. 1

Economic story
1. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2
2. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7
3. I would participate in a support event. 8
4. I would share this story on social media. 3
5. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4
6. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9
7. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6
8. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5
9. I would do nothing. 1

Fennewald: What did you like about each story and what did you dislike about each story, and if you had a favorite, which one would it be?

Stewart: Probably the school one.

Fennewald: The school one is your favorite? Why’s that?

Stewart: Yeah, because it shows a lot of people they’ve got a plan, and schools are important. Yeah, they’ve got a plan and making sure that the kids are there, and I like the flag part.

Fennewald: So, what do you think was your middle one?

Stewart: The young Joplin woman.
Fennewald: And what was it about that story that you liked?

Stewart: I like that they jumped into the bathtub. They said a prayer.

Fennewald: So, kind of the scenic elements of it, the narrative elements of it?

Stewart: And it's personal. Thinking about those emotional scars and thinking about what they feel like, everything that they went through.

Fennewald: Did it cause you to relate maybe more than the other stories did to the characters?

Stewart: Yeah.

Fennewald: What else did you like about it?

Stewart: It is just the resiliency of people. It's nice just to have that much. “I have nothing, but I have a little.” I like that.

Fennewald: Okay, and then the third was more economic story. Was there anything you liked about it?

Stewart: I guess they were trying to figure out a way to help the people, but it's more corporate and money. That's not where I'm at, really.

Fennewald: Okay, on that point, let's move on to things you didn't like. One is too much about the numbers and the money and corporate losses and stuff.

Stewart: Yeah, that's just not where my head goes. I did like how they talked about what they had left, that they have resources left, and they have a lot of people.

Fennewald: Is there anything else you didn't like about it other than it's too much about the numbers and not enough about the people? That was the sense I was getting out of it anyway.

Stewart: Yeah.
Fennewald: Is there anything about the other two that you didn't like that you thought could have been done better, and what do you think about that last one, how they could've done that better, that would have made it more impactful for you?

Stewart: I don’t know maybe it’s just me, but they’re talking about all the big business, and they did mention some people in here, like the ones that have the family business. I think those are the ones that hold more impact than, which is strange to say, because the other ones are from much bigger places, like the Walmart, and you know, St. John’s. You know what I mean?

Fennewald: Does it lack a human element?

Stewart: Yeah, it lacks a human element. I just don’t like corporate America, I guess.

Fennewald: That’s fair enough. What about the Joplin woman story could have made it more impactful?

Stewart: I don’t know. I like it.

Fennewald: So, all and all you wouldn’t change much of it.

Stewart: Yeah, I like it. Maybe that should’ve been my first one, actually.

Fennewald: Okay, so the reason you chose the school one as your favorite is more because it is related to kids?

Stewart: Yeah, I worked at Head Start for a long time, you know. I’m like the school kind. Especially since we just lost our school. Yeah, I like the idea of rebuilding. I guess that’s just one of those soft spots for me.
Fennewald: As far as just the quality of the story, if you didn’t that background do you think you would still have made the decision just based on how the story is told?

Stewart: The way the story is told I probably would have gone with the young Joplin woman, and then the school, and then [economic] is the last.

Fennewald: How could they have made the school [story] better, more impactful for you, outside of the background?

Stewart: Well, if they had a personalized it more.

Fennewald: Okay.

Stewart: I’m one of those people that like to know all of the people’s stories. I like the individual people’s stories.

Fennewald: All right, and now we are going to go ahead and move on. Okay, what prompted you to order your reactions the way you did, to start off with, on the first story you read, what I call the narrative story?

Stewart: Okay, I think the ones where I would donate, I would share on social media, I would really get involved with the first one.

Fennewald: Okay, you have charitably contribute, support event and volunteer in relief effort, bang, bang, bang. So that takes a lot of effort to do. What was it about it that made those the big three outside of more info, on a natural level?

Stewart: Because it’s so personal. You feel more connected to the person in it.

Fennewald: So, did that lead you to want to help those people more?

Stewart: Yeah, I’m empathetic. I like those connections, and I like to help people.
Fennewald: You pretty well go down the list, other than contact [your representative]. You said you don’t really tend to put much faith in your representatives anyway.

Stewart: Look at our world. Look at our country.

Fennewald: So then, on the second story you have share on social, more info, recommend story, attempt to persuade [others], and then the big three don’t come until five, six, seven. So, what put those all the way down there on that story in comparison to the first story?

Stewart: Well, the first story was more personal. The second story, even though it was something that I’m very passionate about, I’m not much of a people person, and I would be more apt to do one of those active volunteering things if it was on that personal level. With this school, you know that there is going to be state and federal funds that are going to kick in and help with that educational system.

Fennewald: Okay, that’s fair enough. And then what caused you to choose to share on social first for the second story?

Stewart: For the second one, because I think that seeing what a community goes through for their school, it’s important for people to realize that it could happen to you. I guess it’s still more on a personal level. But, you know it could happen to you, and this is how they deal with it.

Fennewald: All right, and then the last story, you have contribute charitably, participate in an event, and then volunteer down at the sixth one. So what about that story put those two, contribute charitably and participate in an event up there and then volunteer down further?
Stewart: Again, because of the whole like, a bunch of people or whatever. So, if there were doing a big fundraiser, I’d probably buy something or donate money. But, as far as doing the volunteer thing, they are working for those bigger companies, those bigger companies should be helping their workers out.

Fennewald: So, you felt more apt to want to act with your physical help for the woman because she thought she was less likely to be given that aid, [based on] the story?

Stewart: Right.

Fennewald: Where as, when it was on this level you felt like the businesses should be held more responsible?

Stewart: Yeah.

Fennewald: All right. That’s a good point.

You have more info as number one on all of them but the educational institutional one. Do you feel like the education one was more informational, and therefore you were less apt to it, or did you just feel more strongly to share on social and it overpowered the more info?

Stewart: I don’t know. Probably because in my head that’s the one I’m more likely to share, like a school one just to put it out there.

Fennewald: Okay. Is that something you feel like the people on your social media account would be more interested in, or something that you felt related to you more?

Stewart: I think that the whole education thing is something that I have some opinions about, so I like to put it out there. Not necessarily that whoever is on my
friend list would be— Just to put it out there to get other people’s take on it, I guess. I don’t know why I put that before the info, because I usually would, but yeah, it’s something that I automatically would probably [share because] here’s the situation with the school community. Let’s put it out there.

Fennewald: Okay, that’s fair.

From each story, can you pick out a sentence or a detail that you feel like was the homerun of the story that prompted the most social action from you?

Stewart: [From the feature] I like “I have nothing but I have a little. It’s nice just to have that much. The things that money can’t replace.”

And the school is the last part, when the ROTC instructor rode in the bucket truck to tie the flag to the pole. “That was a proud moment for all of us.” I like that.

Fennewald: And the third one?

Stewart: “We have 2,000 businesses in our community and 50,000 people. The important thing for us to remember is that we have many resources left.”

Fennewald: Okay, is there anything else that you’d like to add based on those stories?

Stewart: No, I like them all.

7. Interview with Tim Suellentrop

Age: 26

Race: white

Occupation: web designer

Education: bachelors’ degree
Raised: St. Peters, Missouri.
Resides: Ellsworth, Maine.
Impact rating: 1. Institutional 2. Feature 3. Economic

Feature story

1. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9
2. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4
3. I would participate in a support event. 8
4. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5
5. I would share this story on social media. 3
6. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7
7. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2
8. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6
9. I would do nothing. 1

Fennewald: How did you feel after you read this story, in general?
Suellentrop: I think, one in the way it was told from their point of view, kind of experiencing it with them and being that it was someone who was 24 and kind of close to the same age, and you know, working hard to get these simple things, I could put myself in her shoes more. And, thinking that these are these very direct personable things happening to her made it very strong. I felt more wanting to immediately do what I can to help, because it felt like the individual
person in this sort could use the most direct help from, I guess, people in the
community over maybe some other options, as far as [contacting] a local
[representative] or go learn more. Enough was there to get me to ‘What can I do
to help?’ In a situation like that, your time and your energy seem to be the most
beneficial to that person at that time.

Fennewald: Okay, so you put recommend to a friend as [response] number
one, and then volunteer and relief effort after that. So, what made you put
recommend to a friend as number one?

Suellentrop: I don’t know, in a lot of these that I felt around the same in, as
far as I could may be in the nine options almost kind of group some together, and
if I didn't really have to put one ahead of the other I would [not].

Fennewald: Is that one of those instances?

Suellentrop: After doing the other two, I couldn’t probably tell you exactly the
order I had for the first one. I think they are so close, because in some I say
recommend and some I saw act first. I think some of it is the easy thing is to
always tell people and share it, and I think that sometimes you can feel like
you’ve done a lot just by getting it out there, but I also wouldn't want to
recommend someone else get involved if I wasn't willing to myself. I kind of had
that same feeling across all of the stories. I think that they were probably so
close. In general, how I felt with that one was, how can I help? Especially if I’m
willing to help, then ask others for help, the more people could do.

Fennewald: What in that story was the most impactful detail or thing about
it?
Suellentrop: One or two things. It was a first person point of view. It wasn’t this high level numbers, it was a personal and individual thing, I think is the big thing you can. After reading that story, I can picture her standing there with her dogs in just this rubble, and how this has affected this singular person, and knowing that there is so many people affected just like her.

Fennewald: Can you think of one sentence that detail that was the big one for you, or the biggest?

Suellentrop: I think when the front door came off, I think it’s that first sign that that’s really bad. We’ve all been in plenty of bad storms where there’s thunder and there’s lightening, and it can shake, and oh wow the rain’s hitting the window really hard. But, okay, this is taking off my front door. When you can really see that this damage is going to happen and it almost seems like in those cases once that first, you know, thing happens it makes everything else more vulnerable. Once the door is off, there’s no avoiding probably what is coming next.

Fennewald: What could it have done better?

Suellentrop: It definitely was the most impactful, because it did the things that a lot of the other two I thought could have done better. I might have missed it, but the only thing that I could think is that we get really deep into this individual person. I don’t know if they’re saying maybe— I picture this wreck, and I picture this wreck, but maybe some view of something telling me that this horrible thing, this bubble that she was in for this time was happening to so many other people around. You know it’s like if this was a photo or video where
they would show this crazy thing, then they would step back and see that someone a couple feet that way, and that way, and that way, and that way are dealing with the same thing. It was so impactful seeing it was something to this person, but maybe a little more on this horrible thing is happening to a lot of people.

Economic story

1. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9
2. I would participate in a support event. 8
3. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5
4. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4
5. I would share this story on social media. 3
6. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2
7. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7
8. I would do nothing. 1
9. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6

Fennewald: What is your general feedback on this story?

Suellentrop: While I am interested in numbers, and I understand, it wasn’t something that I just glazed over the numbers. I got that these were big things. I think something that because it was businesses, and while they did mention small businesses, and even starting with the small business, I didn’t see this as
much as the individual people. I know that one of these people in these jobs could be this woman that I just felt so strong for [from the feature story]. It didn’t hit me as much, because I so I guess maybe higher businesses. You know, Walmart, Home Depot, these bigger businesses that I know that it’s still these people, these same people that are living there. I think it was [that] we hear about how we have to rebuild our businesses, we have to do these things, I guess to me it didn’t get in to as much because our business is gone, these are the hard things. It’s we have to repair this business, we have to build it back up. I don’t think it was as personal into the because this building is no longer here, these people don’t have jobs, and then finally getting into that same thing, like the tough things that they will have to go through because of those. I think that it kind of took a step up, but it didn’t keep that level as deep as to the individual people’s impact, besides some of the smaller local businesses.

Fennewald: Okay, what aspects of it did impact you the most?

Suellentrop: Hearing about, I think, it was the things that got closest to that. Like, ‘if they are able to find work within the Kroger Company, their insurance will continue. If not, there insurance will end at the end of June.” It was the closest thing to they’ll be out of insurance, the real worst case scenario things to them.

And Kroger is a big company. The Walmart employees, they’re going to have more stores in the region. While in no means is it by any means pleasant, they might still have a job. But, really when you think of what we are going to try to do, here are the options. But, when they are saying, if they can’t find work, I think
it brings back that to the frame of mind that not everything is going to get
rebuilt, not everyone is going to, you know, maintain their way of life like they
were before the event.

Fennewald: You have this arrow [on your response sheet]. Does that mean
you switched contact a local representative?

Suellentrop: Yes. I have yet to contact a local representative for anything, and
I don't know why. I don't know if it's, are you a drop in the bucket? Does an
individual voice matter? Do I feel that way because no one has showed me it has
or hasn't? I think when it came to the business thing, when it comes to these
individual businesses, I feel like that's maybe more, as a business person you've
got to figure this out. As an individual, you are going to need some more help.
That's where I felt that I'd be more likely, even though contacting someone is low
on all of mine, because it's not something I've done nor have I been around
people who have influenced me who have done it. But, I think the fact that the
first one I connected more to this individual person. I felt like that would be of
more help than this business, where I felt, you know, even though these are
these individual people, it's kind of businesses, as when there's something tough,
how do you handle it? I think that was what was going through my mind when I
kind of flip-flopped those in between the first and second story.

Fennewald: Yeah, everything else I'm seeing is kind of fairly similar between
the two, other than that nothing is not the last likelihood, where as it's contact
representative here. Everything else seems to be pretty close to the same.
Suellentrop: And, there’s the fact of knowing what I’m doing here and trying not to let that influence, as well. A lot of thing felt the same. I didn’t feel too much of a difference in between. I think I would be more likely in all cases to physically go help, verses a support event felt like they were in spirit over actually getting something done. I think it most cases I would like to think I would get it done before I would ask. I would say I would do it myself before I would say, hey you come do it to.

Fennwald: With that in mind, should volunteer be in front here?

Suellentrop: Probably, yeah, after thinking more about it.

Fennwald: One thing that I do see is you have recommend to a friend very high up here and in the middle of the pack on this one. Is there any reason for that?

Suellentrop: I think it’s the same thing as the first one in seeing myself in others, at this person’s home and doing this thing specifically for this one person who needs it. I felt like that was more really like let’s get together and help this person out. I felt stronger in that for the individual than for the businesses.

Fennwald: So would you put recommend to a friend fairly high on your idea of social action in that you are trying to get other people involved in order to share in this?

Suellentrop: Right. I agree with you. It’s recommend to a friend, recommend to a friend. They recommend the article, the story over. I’m trying to think. I know I’d recommend that let’s go do this. I don’t know if I’d say, read this first, then let’s go do it. Just thinking of when I feel the need, it was a friend, that I read
that and I thought, this is something that we should act, that I would share with them to feel. I'm trying to think of why would I share it with them, because options being, I think that they would be interested in it in actually reading it, or I would think I need to convince before saying, let’s go do this. I'm not sure.

Fennewald: But with the first one, you would say that you thought that your friend would be more likely to want to read that story, verses the idea of your friend wanting to read this story.

Suellentrop: Right, I think that I know that someone can read that. I feel like the experience of the first one is something that someone who is possibly going to help can do a lot more for. I felt that there was something more of an experience over information in the second one. I felt like the second one was, I gathered this information, me telling you get’s it done, verses, wow you’ve got to read this powerful thing for yourself.

Fennewald: Okay. That makes sense.

Institutional Story
1. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9
2. I would participate in a support event. 8
3. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7
4. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5
5. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4
6. I would share this story on social media. 3
7. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2
8. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6

9. I would do nothing. 1

Fennewald: This one you have the big three all up top, according to the scale.

Suellentrop: Yeah.

Fennewald: So, let's go on the basics first. What was your general feeling toward this story.

Suellentrop: It definitely was, you know, thinking of schools and kids. I felt much closer to them than as I did with the first story, because I feel where it’s down to more of like these individual kids in this influential time where, you know, we want to get them in their best learning environment possible. It felt like while I maybe couldn’t help the individual student as much, I think that’s where I felt the most. Maybe that’s why charitable contribution whent up, because while any person, individual in this situation would of course love that.

I felt like when it came to the kids, I don’t know if I was in my mind thinking there’s a people connected that could do the best with that where I might be able to help the individual physically rebuild something. I think schools may be a bit more complicated in that they could have different types of issues. Hoping that there is an expert in hand that could take those contributions and really be able to know what’s the best thing to do with this, because I wouldn’t be able to. The reason that I felt that there would be someone on that level that could really do the most with the
contributions. I think that when it’s a business, money’s the end game, where more money to a school is education of kids.

Fennewald: Is that also why you put participate in a support event up there is because of trying to get more people backing the money to get the project?

Suellentrop: Yeah, and I think that with the school thing it’s because that’s what I felt needed, almost the most immediate help, because if it’s a kid, you know, or if it’s an individual there might have someone else to stay with, or someone else who could help them with those things, but every day that a kid, that a young student’s learning environment isn’t where it should be, that’s a day lost. These individual people could be out of work for a while, but then they get back to work, and then they have their whole working career. If these are kids whose schools are a wreck for a couple of years, they don’t get those years back. Your third grade and fourth grade were lower quality than they could have been, and you don’t get to get those back. I think that’s where I felt like, maybe the most willing to get something going right away.

Fennewald: Okay, what one line or detail really hit home for you the most?

Suellentrop: I think it was the resume a sense of normalcy, because, you know, it’s not like these kids their homes just fine and their school’s a wreck. They are leaving their probably wrecked home and go to school, and then go back to their wrecked home. And, there’s a lot of kids in the area before and all over that while their home life isn’t physically a wreck, it could be on other levels. My mom works at an elementary school and I think that hearing that with a lot of these kids, schools where they get food where they know they’ll have food, and they know they’ll have
other kids and they’re going to be safe. So, a lot of these kids that haven’t had their homes destroyed, I think they may need that sense of normalcy even a little more when they’re coming from rubble. Who knows if the bus even picks them up. But, I think getting back to that sense of normalcy is hard enough for a lot of kids when there hasn’t just been a crazy tornado, is the biggest thing.

Fennewald: So, what could this story could have done better and more impactful?

Suellentrop: I think while they do say, maybe getting a little more into the if these things don’t happen, here’s some of the specific things that are going to be tough. Right now, it’s they will have to quote, ‘get creative.’ Or, they’ll have to use another sort of structure. Well okay, it seemed like convenience over some of the more specific things that individual students would have, the real downsides. If funds have to go into rebuilding, where will that come from? What besides maybe having to be in a different building will be different for these kids? Right now, it seems like more of an inconvenience in where people will have class, verses anything else. And maybe for all I know that is the only thing.

Overall

Fennewald: So, if you had to order all of the stories based on impact and your desire to be socially active, how would you order them?

Suellentrop: Business would have been the third. And thinking more about it, it’s kind of close between the others. Maybe the school’s first. I don’t know any of these people, but I feel more connected with the students than, I don’t know, an individual.
I’m thinking of it now, after those, but that I think just the as soon as possible factor I think is most important for the students. So, if I could only help one of these three things tomorrow, I think I would go do what I could for the school.

Fennewald: Okay. Is that based on the way it was written or based on the subject matter, you feel like?

Suellentrop: I think mostly in this one it was the subject matter. I think if it was more, I’m trying to think of how it could be written in a different way to make it not so close with the first [feature story]. If this first person point of view was happening in a school, like you know, if this was going on and it wasn’t this 24-year-old woman, but these eight and nine-year-olds, that would have really done the most.

Fennewald: So, you think the writing style of the more narrative point of view is most powerful, but given the subject matter it caused it to be the second one.

Suellentrop: I think the point of view feeling it there, which certain subject matters will trump other factors.

8. Interview with Sheila Unvala

Age: 48

Race: Indian (India)

Occupation: nurse

Education: associates degree

Raised: Connecticut

Resides: Steuben, Maine

Institutional story

19. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2

20. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7

21. I would participate in a support event. 8

22. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9

23. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4

24. I would share this story on social media. 3

25. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6

26. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5

27. I would do nothing. 1

Fennewald: What about this story caused you to put seek more info as the number one [response]?

Unvala: See, what they really need, you know, if this were my town or my district, I would find out what do they need as far as getting creative to find places to hold classes. Could I help with that? Find out how I could help, I guess is why I would need to seek more info. And, if I donated to a charity, I would want to know where the money was going, like what it was going to.

Fennewald: After that you had charitably contribute, support event and then volunteer. What made you put them in that order, based on the story?
Unvala: Oh, I don’t know. That’s generally what I do. I will help out any way I can.

Support event, go play fiddle at a lobster boil.

Fennewald: And then, your bottom three are [contact] a local representative, persuade others and do nothing. So, is there any particular reason you put those as the bottom three?

Unvala: Yeah, I’m not good about making phone calls to my local representative, or things like that. I’ll do it once and a while, but come on. It’s not my thing usually.

Fennewald: And then, persuade others?

Unvala: Yeah, persuading others, and if they’re not persuaded to do stuff, I’m not arguing with them on getting them to do things.

Fennewald: All right. What was the main part of this story, what was the most impactful thing about this story to you?

Unvala: Just making sure kids have places to go to school. That’s really disruptive when their schools get destroyed or partially destroyed by things like that. Yeah, I guess that’s what it was, thinking about kids.

Fennewald: If you could pick out even a single detail that you thought when you read it that struck home the most, what would that be?

Unvala: Honestly, I didn’t find it written all that well.

Fennewald: Okay. What would you do to make it better?

Unvala: I guess partly it was a little confusing to me, because it’s somewhere I didn’t know anything about, so I don’t know which school is which, and oh, they are going to have school in the new middle school, because the old school was damaged,
or the old school’s not damaged. I was a little confused about which schools were which. Partly, that’s just because it’s not my town, so I wouldn’t know.

Fennewald: Okay. And, what were you more affected by, as far as in the writing? Was it more in the numbers and things we would consider data, or more of the description, the quotes, anything like that that you found most impactful?

Unvala: Yeah, it’s more of the data. I don’t really pay attention to the quotes all that much. People always usually say the same shit when they’re interviewed.

Economic story

1. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7
2. I would participate in a support event. 8
3. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4
4. I would share this story on social media. 3
5. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9
6. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2
7. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5
8. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6
9. I would do nothing. 1

Fennewald: So, the first thing I notice is more info being way further down, so is there any particular reason.

Unvala: It’s pretty obvious it’s a disaster. I don’t need to.
Fennewald: How does this story do things differently that caused that [response].

Unvala: It’s partly my lack of background knowledge with the first story. This story was a little more clear, a little more obvious. You know, it said exactly that it estimated about 300 businesses, from big box to small mom and pop and all that, how many employees and that sort of thing. It was more clear to me what had been lost, I guess.

Fennewald: What about it was the most impactful to you?

Unvala: I like the personal story of someone who has actually experienced it. It tugs at your heartstrings.

Fennewald: If you could pick out one detail or one sentence in the story that you thought hit the hardest, what would that be?

Unvala: I think when they talk about how many businesses that were lost and employees. That pretty much told the story there.

Fennewald: The numbers aspect of it?

Unvala: Yeah, that aspect.

Fennewald: And, you have charity, support event and recommend as one, two, three. Is there anything about the story that put those up high, like that? Volunteer is down at five.

Unvala: As to volunteering in that case, I wouldn’t be going out there with a shovel and digging through concrete debris.

Fennewald: Is there anything that made you put volunteer lower, as compared to the other one?
Unvala: Because, the first one was about kids and schooling. I felt like there might be more stuff that I could do to volunteer in the first one. I can’t operate a backhoe or anything.

Fennewald: Did you have any overall impressions of this story as a whole, how it was written?

Unvala: It was good. It was written well. It got the point across. It was good that it gave information about where people go to get assistance, and that’s all good stuff.

Fennewald: [Is there] anything that you feel like it’s missing, or that would have made it better for you?

Unvala: No, it pretty much got the point across.

Feature story

1. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7
2. I would participate in a support event. 8
3. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4
4. I would share this story on social media. 3
5. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9
6. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2
7. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5
8. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6
9. I would do nothing. 1
Fennewald: Is there any reason why you put seek more info further down than the very first one?

Unvala: Yeah, it’s pretty obvious they lost everything.

Fennewald: What parts of this story did you find the most compelling?

Unvala: The story about surviving. For somebody who has worked that hard to get a start in life, it sounds really hard.

Fennewald: What made you put charity and support event as [responses] number one and two on this one?

Unvala: That’s how I would help somebody like that. I wouldn’t know how else to help them.

Fennewald: Is that why volunteer is lower down?

Unvala: Yeah, I wouldn’t know what to do.

Fennewald: Your last ones were persuade others, [contact] local representative and do nothing, which seem fairly consistent throughout all of them.

Unvala: Yeah, that’s not usually my thing. I hope I wouldn’t have to persuade a local representative to help people in their district who had their homes and businesses destroyed.

Fennewald: Is there any particular detail or sentence that hit home the hardest on this one?

Unvala: I guess her part about her PTSD, the part about having survived that and having a hard time.

Fennewald: What would you do to make this story better, if anything?
Unvala: It would be good to add how people can help. You know, there’s a charitable fund set up, there’s a place you can donate clothes and household goods, or whatever. How can people do as much as they can do, because people will. People are good that way, so that would be good. And also, she obviously would be one of many. How many families lost their houses, you know. In the other one, they mentioned how many businesses and employees were affected, and this one was more personal. It was more about one person.

Overall

Fennewald: If you had to say what was more impactful about what motivated your social action, would it be more of those bigger numbers like that, or more of this detailed personal story?

Unvala: More of the detailed personal story, I guess, but it would be good to know how wide-ranging it all is. Even if it wasn’t in this story, it could be a link to another story about how many people are affected. A link to a page that tells you where you can go and what people need and where to drop things off, and things like that. A sidebar wouldn’t interfere with the actual story.

Fennewald: If you had to list then, number one, two and three, on the greatest feeling of impact and wanting to be active to the least amount, how would you order those three?

Unvala: All right, I guess the young woman, the school and then the business. I’ll put it that way, I guess.
Fennewald: Okay, so the only thing that I think that your answers on this line up with that pretty close, other than that school being number two, but you have seek more info as your first option. So, is there any reason that you have that as number two, but the seek more info was still [response] number one on that one?

Unvala: Because, it wasn’t clear from the article about exactly how much was damaged. It says a school was recently damaged and that all three were struck, but then what exactly do they need. I wasn’t clear on all that.

Fennewald: So, what made you [rank] that [story] as number two instead of number three, then? Was it the subject matter, or what was it that put it as number two over the 4,000 jobs one.

Unvala: Kids.

Fennewald: All right, any comments on all three of them as a whole, or anything that you think has been missing out on this interview so far?

Unvala: No, they were all good, and if you were having a whole big story on that, you’d have maps and pictures and all that kind of stuff, which would be helpful. Like I said, more info on how to help people. People get overwhelmed. I know I do get overwhelmed. There’s so many disasters in the world, so many places people need help, and it’s difficult.

9. Interview with Taylor Vortherms

Age: 25

Race: white

Occupation: sports editor
Fennewald: What were your first impressions of the young Joplin woman story?

Vortherms: Yeah, it was moving. I thought that it of the three stories that was the one that would be the most influential one, just because of the personal angle there.
Vortherms: Just obviously that she was starting over, and she kind of went into some detail about the challenges there, such as the things that money can’t replace. She says that that’s fine, but the scars from of that she was talking about.

Fennewald: If there was one instances or one thing that made you feel impacted, what was it?

Vortherms: I think also, just the details about how they were crouched in the bathtub, you know and jumping out of the rubble. I don’t know, that seems kind of dramatic, but I think that it puts you in their situation for a second, and that sounds terrifying. It was hard for me to kind of connect with the story, because of the multiple references to God and religion in the Bible, so I don’t know if I was fully invested, but that’s just my own personal thing.

I guess, picking up the pieces, that’s a main takeaway.

Fennewald: Why did you order [your responses] the way you did. You have seek out information at the top, and your last one is share on social, and you have the volunteer efforts or participate in an event as participate, two, volunteer, three. Why did you order them like that?

Vortherms: I don’t know. Obviously that one triggers something that makes you want to get involved, just because it was personal. I don’t share things on social media, but I think it was just because I wouldn’t share it, just because it seemed maybe not as, I don’t know. I’m just not a social media sharer in general, but this one is probably the one I ranked the highest, as far as getting involved.
Fennewald: When it came to your sense of, okay I actually need to go help, would you say volunteer and relief efforts or participate in a support event, what about it made you feel that desire?

Vortherms: Just that it was something that was someone's personal experience and it was very honed in on a couple people. It was honed in on one personal experience, which I think is more powerful that looking on things as a whole. It's kind of like statistics, that doesn't quite have the same effect as learning about an individual, and that's why.

Fennewald: Okay, and so then seek out more information is [response] number one. Why did you put that as number one?

Vortherms: I don't know, that was the first story I read and I feel like that was probably, I think that I would be interested in understanding the scope of what happened, you know. I would want to know more, you know, about the big picture after learning about, you know, this one person's experience.

Fennewald: Okay. What do you think this story could have done better to garner this social action?

Vortherms: Maybe just kind of explode the moments a bit more. Make it more compelling there.

Fennewald: Like, more in-depth with the moments?

Vortherms: Yeah, I think maybe if you, I don't know, some of the quotes were, I don't know. Just going a big more in depth.

Institutional story
1. I would do nothing. 1
2. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2
3. I would participate in a support event. 8
4. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9
5. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5
6. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4
7. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7
8. I would share this story on social media. 3
9. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6

Fennewald: Okay, again so, what is your general impressions?

Vortherms: This one was obviously a pretty hard news kind. Not at all what the other one was, but a necessary story. But, not something that is going to like tug at my heart, but it should. It's just human nature.

Fennewald: What were the best qualities of it?

Vortherms: That it was super informative, and it was necessary. People needed to know what was going on, so that was important.

Fennewald: If you get pick out a particular moment or detail that hit you the hardest, what would that be?

Vortherms: Like one specific part?

Fennewald: [Yes.]
Vortherms: To me, I thought the hanging American flags at every location. I thought that was kind of striking, but that’s not really as much informational. I don’t know, there’s kind of like a message there, an emotional thing there. I remember thinking it was just a small detail, but it says a lot.

Fennewald: So I see that you have [the responses] do nothing and seek out more information as the top two. Why are those higher up on this one?

Vortherms: I probably wouldn’t feel super emotionally compelled to go out and do something. I don’t even know what I could do, exactly. But, yeah, that’s it. It wouldn’t make me feel inclined to do much.

Fennewald: And, is there a reason [the response] contact local representative is at the bottom?

Vortherms: It definitely should be, other than that I can’t ever see myself doing that. That shouldn’t be at the bottom.

Fennewald: Well, if it’s honest, it’s fair.

Vortherms: Yeah, that’s honest.

Okay: All right. What could this have done better?

Vortherms: Maybe make it a little less hard newsy. Included some more, I don’t know. Yeah, make it a little less hard.

Fennewald: What do you mean by that, specifically?

Vortherms: I didn’t retain much of it, because it was just kind of not—

I don’t know, it is what it is.

Fennewald: [Would it have been more impactful] if it were more personable?
Vortherms: This serves a purpose. It’s obviously a necessary story. It’s just not one that is going to— It’s informative, but it’s not one that is going to get people super involved. It wouldn’t get me super involved or super emotionally driven.

Economic story
1. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2
2. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4
3. I would share this story on social media. 3
4. I would participate in a support event. 8
5. I would do nothing. 1
6. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5
7. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6
8. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9
9. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7

Fennewald: What were your overall impressions on this one?
Vortherms: I thought this one was really good. I thought it combined both the information, and it also provided personal accounts. It was kind of the best of both [of the other two] stories.

Fennewald: Okay, and what were your favorite aspects of it?
Vortherms: I like that they started with a lead that, again, honed in on somebody’s personal experience and how they were personally connected with the
tornado. And then, they expanded from there, and then, you know, talked about how
many people were going to be out of work and things like that. I thought that was an
easily consumable way to get across that information without making it so boring
that I couldn’t remember any of it.

Fennewald: So, if you had to pick a particular detail that you thought was the
most impactful, what would that be?

Vortherms: Well, even just the lead, this anecdote about, you know, that they
built this company in 1975, and then, I don’t know, now it’s gone. “Peggy Baker
sifted through what was left of her family’s business Thursday.” I don’t know, I like
those details.

Fennewald: I see you have the big three more at the bottom on this one [for
those that] require a lot of personal activity.

Vortherms: I think this is something that I would probably share on Facebook or
share with a friend, or something like that. So, I think that that’s why I did that. I
actually don’t remember doing that. Did I put [the response] do nothing before that?

Fennewald: I would do nothing is in the middle.

Vortherms: All right, that’s probably fair.

Fennewald: What is it about it?

Vortherms: I think this is just one that I would share. I would be more likely to
share this one than I would the other one, so I think that just bumped down the
others.

Fennewald: So, it’s not that you felt less compelled to help out. It’s that you felt
more compelled to share it.
Vortherms: Yeah, I thought it was an informative story.

Fennewald: Okay, is there anything that could have been done better to make that more impactful?

Vortherms: I think there were a couple of times where I was just kind of like— I think that it was good that they included quite a few people, but they didn’t develop, I think, the people enough where I could totally follow all of the characters involved in it. Because they use quite a few people or sources in this story, so maybe just develop them a little bit more.

Fennewald: Okay.

Overall

Fennewald: Okay. So, if you had to rank these, based on your desire to help and your sense of impact, what would those be?

Vortherms: So, when you say help, is it like help with these specific situations, or help just in general with the tornado?

Fennewald: To get involved. Just the raw urge.

Vortherms: I guess I would say the Joplin woman starting over. I think that even though it probably packs the least amount of information about how the community as a whole is effected, I think that’s the most powerful sort of way to tell a story. [The economic story] would be next, because this one was more informative, but it didn’t quite go into the detail that the young Joplin woman story did.

Fennewald: And then the last one being the one about the [institutional story]. [Is there] anything else that you can think of?
10. Interview with Alan Wittenburg

Age: 73

Occupation: music therapist

Race: white, Jewish

Education: masters’ degree

Raised: Long Island, New York

Resides: Surry, Maine


Economic story

1. I would do nothing. 1

2. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4

3. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2

4. I would share this story on social media. 3

5. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6

6. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5

7. I would participate in a support event. 8

8. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9

9. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7
Fennewald: What about the story made you do [put “do nothing” first]?

Wittenburg: First of all, it’s far away. It’s an act of nature. It’s like, I did nothing for Hurricane Katrina. I’m from New York and Hurricane Sandy wiped out the town where I lived. That hospital was never rebuilt, and I didn’t do anything. I’m overwhelmed and overloaded with what I have in hand here. It’s not that I don’t empathize.

Fennewald: So, is there anything that the story could have done better that would made your reaction different?

Wittenburg: Probably not. It’s not an issue of journalism. In my case, it’s an issue of my life situation at hand.

Fennewald: Okay, that’s fair enough. And, nothing in the story evoked that much of an emotional response?

Wittenburg shakes his head, no.

Fennewald: Okay, well that’s fair enough. It’s a numbers story.

Wittenburg: I mean, I did pick up some emotional interest with wife and husband built this place. Did you write this?

Fennewald: No, no. I’m not supposed to have written these stories.

Wittenburg flips through the pages, seeming to be confused on which side of the page he wants to look at.

Fennewald: That’s the story continued, right there.

Wittenburg: You see, it wouldn’t have mattered if I had read every damn word, in my case.
Note: (At this point, I was starting to worry the participant was going to refuseto continue the research)

Fennewald: Okay, so there’s only two more stories.

Wittenberg: Okay, are all of these stories—

Fennewald: They are all about the Joplin tornado.

Wittenberg: See, in my case. Okay, this one would be more likely to prompt action.

(Wittenberg begins to disorganize the response papers.)

Fennewald: I’ve got to have you order them or my professor is not going to be happy.

Feature story

10. I would do nothing. 1

11. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5

12. I would share this story on social media. 3

13. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2

14. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4

15. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6

16. I would participate in a support event. 8

17. I would charitably contribute to this issue. 7

18. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9
Fennewald: Okay, so what about that story has made you more likely to want to do something?

Wittenberg: I mean, there are the sort of subtitle of emotional scars. It gives me a little bump, you know. I mean, we are talking about feelings, emotions.

Fennewald: So, what’s attractive to you is the sense of emotional connection?

Wittenberg nods.

Fennewald: Okay. Is that the kind of story that you are generally more attracted to, the human element?

Wittenberg: Yes, in my case. I mean, not always, but these to me are call to action questions. You’re asking me what calls me more to action.

Fennewald: Exactly.

Wittenberg: I would say it would be identifying and empathy with the people.

Fennewald: Okay, and that’s an [acceptable response].

Institutional story

1. I would do nothing. 1
2. I would recommend this story directly to a friend. 4
3. I would seek out more information on the topic. 2
4. I would share this story on social media. 3
5. I would attempt to persuade others to get involved in this issue. 5
6. I would contact one of my local representatives to encourage increasing governmental support for this issue. 6
7. I would volunteer in relief efforts. 9
8. I would participate in a support event.  

9. I would charitably contribute to this issue.

Wittenberg: That’s sort of a patriotic call. I would do nothing, I would not contribute. I’m not going to support the event. I’m not going to volunteer. I would not contact anybody, and might recommend it to a friend. I doubt that’d I’d seek out more [information], but it’s much more likely than me doing something, paying money. I don’t think I’d share it. Would I attempt to persuade others, no. Tell your professor there is no hope for humanity with people like me.

Fennewald: Okay, fair enough. Is there anything about that story that did stand out to you?

Wittenberg: It had a patriotic kind of hook in it, but I am not that kind of a patriot where if I see a sergeant, or a lieutenant or a corporal in a bucket truck as they depicted at the end, that’s not one of the things that would get me to act upon it.

Fennewald: So, is there anything that the story could have done more so that would have made you more likely to be socially active?

Wittenberg: First of all, visuals.

Fennewald: This more just about the story telling.

Wittenberg: Okay. If it had cues, like how you can help, how you can donate or more quotes.

Fennewald: What would more quotes do for you?
Wittenberg: The boots on the ground impact of somebody in it, rather than somebody who, you know, I assume is an AP or whatever reporter. At least in part, to me it is a job.

Fennewald: There's one thing I'm noticing, just based on your responses. There's the big three in here that take a lot of effort. That's the volunteer, charity and support event, and you have volunteer for the first [story] as [response] number four, but it's the last one on [story] number two, but you said [story] number two was the most emotionally impactful. So, is there a reason why that comes up as number four on [story] one?

Wittenberg: Basically, I wasn't all that careful. I mean, volunteer, no, I'm not going to go there. I'm not going to leave Maine and volunteer. It would be near the bottom.

Fennewald: Okay, so that one should actually be further down.

Wittenberg: Yes, I'm sorry.

Fennewald: Would that be after support event or should that be at the very bottom?

Wittenberg: Volunteer and giving money are two at the very bottom.

Fennewald: Out of those you have persuade others as your biggest one on [story] number two, right?

Wittenberg: But, bringing it to the attention of others is within my grasp and easier.
Fennewald: Okay, as is contact your local representative [based on your responses], and you’ve got that one a little higher up on number one than number two. All and all you still think that the more narrative is the most impactful for you?

Wittenberg: The more narrative?

Fennewald: Yeah, the more humanized story.

Wittenberg: Yes.

Fennewald: All right, is there anything that connected with you the most out of any of the stories that really hit home for you?

Wittenberg: What stood out for me the most is that I could get sucked into an emotional story.

Fennewald: Is there anything else that could have been done differently to make the stories better?

Wittenberg: If there was a series of quotes or testimonials like, I almost died. I’m simply thankful to be alive, but the destruction around us is awesome quote. Those kinds of things, and when asked David Snider said, those sorts of things.

I don’t know if any of them said — you know, there are scales for hurricanes, and [and] I don’t know if there are for tornados — but I don’t recall glancing and seeing, you know, this was one of the ten worst tornados or something like that. So, I guess I’m on both sides of the fence. In one sense, I’m saying human interest, emotional hooks. The other side would be numbers, quantity.

Fennewald: So, do you want more about the tornado and less as far as the money, damage wise?
Wittenberg: No, that’s useful for me, too. The first one, four thousand jobs, how many business, how many homes, how many people were injured, how many people died, you know.

Fennewald: So, if you had to choose one, do you feel more impacted by the numbers or by the personal stories?

Wittenberg: I think the personal stories, for me.

Fennewald: Okay, all right.

Wittenberg: It’s not like numbers are meaningless, you know. If I had to put a value, it would more like 60/40 or 70/30. The quality of life, emotional impacts, what this did to people, families, dreams, what courage, what tragedy, you know.