MULTIMEDIA FOR RESEARCHERS: TECHNIQUES AND ETHICS

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This check sheet provides a quick guide for extreme events researchers on how to gather and share quality multimedia. The check sheet considers the pros, cons, and ethics of sharing multimedia from disasters. It concludes with tips for how researchers can ethically share their multimedia with the press.

USING MULTIMEDIA

☐ **What is multimedia?**

» Here multimedia is a broad term meant to refer to multiple media formats including, for example, audio, still photographic images, animation, and video.

☐ **Why use multimedia in my research?**

» Multimedia storytelling has a variety of benefits, as does sharing it with a broader community, including the media (Gubrium et al., 2014). Multimedia can be used to:

- Empower participants through personal reflection.
- Empower participants through development of new literacies.
- Raise awareness among viewing audiences.
- Inform public policy, advocacy, and movement building.
- Provide visual, narrative, and multisensory data to support research.

Quick Note: Scholars first started studying citizen photojournalism as a phenomenon after the South Asian Tsunami in 2004 (Brennen and Brennen, 2015). Since then, it has played a large role in news coverage during other disasters such as Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the 2008 Sichuan earthquake in southwestern China (Allan and Peters, 2005).

SHARING YOUR MULTIMEDIA RESEARCH WITH THE PRESS

☐ **Pros:**

» By contributing multimedia, researchers:

- Enhance research and outreach capabilities.
- Provide valuable and hard-to-access content for publications at a time of crisis.

☐ **Cons:**

» By contributing multimedia, researchers:

- Could harm their participants.
- Lose control over their images once accepted by a publication (Brennen and Brennen, 2015).

ETHICS: SHARING MULTIMEDIA FROM DISASTER EVENTS

☐ **Research Ethics**

» *The Belmont Report* helped establish the founding principles of research ethics involving human subjects (Office for Human Research Protections, 1979). The report outlines three important mandates to guide the ethical conduct of research:

- Informed consent is required.
- Researchers must "do no harm."
- Researchers must protect the vulnerable.

» Researchers can cause harm by:

- Conducting research that will not benefit the community involved in the research (Whiteford and Trotter, 2008).
- Deceiving participants during the informed consent process.
- Confusing participants or pressuring them to participate by not clearly setting expectations (Chung et al., 2008).
- Exacerbating family and community tensions through unequal reciprocation (Browne and Peek, 2014).
- Re-traumatizing participants by not accurately assessing their shifting vulnerability.

ETHICAL CONFLICTS

☐ **Confidentiality**

» Researchers protect participants' privacy through confidentiality (Newman and Shapiro, 2014).

- "The public's right to information should not outweigh the right of victims of natural disasters to privacy, confidentiality and dignity" (Calain, 2012, p.281).

☐ **Informed Consent**

» Researchers must obtain informed consent, as mandated by the Belmont Report.

- When discussing consent, Calain argues (2012, p. 282) "while having one's suffering body and death photographed can be part of a personal life project in a totally autonomous and organized way, it is doubtful if crisis situations can ever be conducive to free consent or consent at all."

TIPS FOR ETHICALLY SHARING MULTIMEDIA WITH THE PRESS

☐ Carefully assess whether or not you want to be a source, as researchers must be willing to operate within the framework of another profession while adhering to their own professional, legal, and ethical codes.

☐ Educate journalists about the finer points of your expertise, like working with vulnerable and traumatized populations. This is also a useful opportunity for journalists.

☐ Learn about how news works in your community.

☐ Build ongoing collaborations with journalists.

☐ Take a journalist out to lunch and suggest story ideas.

☐ Invite journalists to disaster drills and educational events.

☐ Compliment journalists who handle disaster stories well.

☐ If there's a perspective missing from news coverage, express your concern and encourage the reporter to consider pursuing another perspective.

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