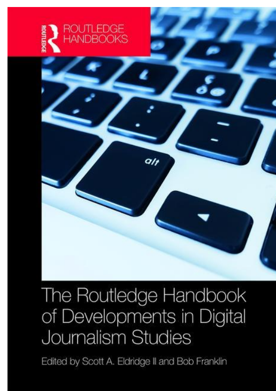
This article was downloaded by: *10.3.98.93*
On: 17 Jan 2019
Access details: *subscription number*
Publisher: *Routledge*
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



The Routledge Handbook of Developments in Digital Journalism Studies

Scott A. Eldridge, Bob Franklin

Social Media Livestreaming

Publication details
https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315270449-23
Claudette G. Artwick
Published online on: 30 Aug 2018

How to cite :- Claudette G. Artwick. 30 Aug 2018, *Social Media Livestreaming from:* The Routledge Handbook of Developments in Digital Journalism Studies Routledge
Accessed on: 17 Jan 2019
https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315270449-23

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

22
SOCIAL MEDIA LIVESTREAMING

Claudette G. Artwick

Downloaded By: 10.3.98.93 At: 07:34 17 Jan 2019; For: 9781315270449, chapter22, 10.4324/9781315270449-23

In tumultuous times, journalists turn to technology to tell stories as they unfold. With Facebook Live and Periscope, reporters are taking viewers to the heart of the action, through their own feeds and the livestreams of others. Going live was once a costly resource limited exclusively to television news stations. Today, livestreaming on social media has opened up this visual storytelling form to anyone with a smartphone and a Facebook or Twitter account.

What does social media livestreaming mean for journalism and the flow of information in society? How are journalists adapting to this form of reporting and storytelling? What is the role of the citizen livestreamer in this mix? And how do forces such as technological determinism and commercial interests drive its adoption and shape its use?

This chapter addresses these questions by exploring livestreams on Periscope and Facebook Live, interviewing journalists who have adopted livestreaming technology, and reviewing relevant research and milestones in live broadcasting.

Facebook Live for everyone[1]

Wearing his signature T-shirt and an impish grin, Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg leans against a computer desk in the "live video launch room". Flanked by screens and two dozen eager faces, he looks directly into the camera and utters his inaugural word on Facebook Live: "Everyone" (Zuckerberg, 2016). Intentional or not, unveiling this technology to *everyone* can be viewed as emblematic of its nature and scope, unleashing livestreaming to nearly 2 billion Facebook users – from protester to politician, reporter to rock star.

For journalists, it is a valuable tool with the promise of enhanced storytelling. But adding the layer of user-generated content opens up a Pandora's box of behaviors and effects, along with ethical and legal issues. While streams from the public can take viewers to exciting events and offer social witnessing, they can also be gruesome and violent. But Zuckerberg shows nothing but ebullient optimism in his Facebook Live launch. "We're psyched", he says, as he introduces the "core team" while the camera pans the room to smiles, waves and a few "whooos". After he chides, "That was pretty subdued", they burst into cheers and applause.

"The reason why we're so excited about this is that it's this new, really raw, personal, spontaneous way that people can share", he says. More than just posting a video, Facebook Live offers "new kinds of interactive and social experiences" (2016). Zuckerberg calls it the beginning of a

Downloaded By: 10.3.98.93 At: 07:34 17 Jan 2019; For: 9781315270449, chapter22, 10.4324/9781315270449-23

journey. And Facebook Live users have taken to its path with vigor. After just 12 months, one in five Facebook videos was a live broadcast, with the average watch time quadrupling (Simo, 2017). In its first year, those "raw" and "personal" livestreamed moments have ranged from the joy and silliness of "Chewbacca mom" (Lui, 2016) to the horror of a young man killing his baby daughter (Mozur, 2017).

Enter the "new golden age of video online" (Zuckerberg, 2016).

Early adopters: journalists on Periscope

Facebook Live came a full year after Twitter's Periscope, which launched in March 2015 (Weil, 2015). In its first 10 days, 1 million users joined Periscope (Rodriguez, 2015), among them journalists who soon incorporated the tool into their reporting. Paul Lewis of the *Guardian* was one of its earliest adopters, using the app in April 2015 to livestream perhaps the first interview with a presidential candidate on Periscope (Lewis, 2015a). Rand Paul abruptly ended their exchange by walking off camera as Lewis tried to ask about polling numbers. "It reflected somewhat badly on him", said Lewis (2017). The lights went out as Lewis wrapped up the livestream: "He wasn't treating it in the way he would a more conventional broadcast".

Later that month, when violence erupted in Baltimore following the death of Freddie Gray, Lewis 'Periscoped' live from the city's streets. As he walked along, Lewis narrated what he saw unfolding in his path. His senses guided his reporting, providing context to the visuals. One broadcast opens with music blaring in the street. "The Way You Make Me Feel", is playing on a loudspeaker, and Lewis names the singer as Michael Jackson. Bottles are smashing nearby as he says, "It's definitely not (pause) feeling very safe here right now". But he stays calm and holds steady during what sounds like a shot nearby (Lewis, 2015b).

Lewis talks with people he encounters along the way, and at one point, things get tense. As he begins an interview, his subject looks decidedly nervous. "Oh, oh, oh, oh", the man says as he pivots to protect two young girls in pink coats standing behind him. "Bring the girls back this way, bring the girls . . . come, come, come", you can hear Lewis as they turn to run, and the camera cuts out (Lewis, 2015b).

In another broadcast, amidst tear gas and sounds of bottles smashing, he senses it's time to stop livestreaming, and says, "I'm going to check out, this is getting really dangerous" (Lewis, 2015c).

Despite the hazards, Lewis says there's an advantage to working alone without bulky equipment and a crew. "You can kind of melt into the crowd" (2017). It allows you to give people an "unvarnished perspective on what's happening". This contrasts with the Baltimore crowd's reaction to Fox News correspondent Geraldo Rivera as he prepared to go live from the scene. One of the protesters confronted Rivera for hyping the violence and minimizing Freddie Gray's death (Bishop, 2015).

Core training and experience give journalists the foundation for livestreaming during a volatile situation. "You're applying the same journalistic principles to the new technology", said Lewis. As always, "the stories are about people" (2017).

But what's not part of that training is the rapidly swelling number of followers and a constant stream of unfiltered on-screen comments. Lewis said the "really inappropriate comments" were his biggest challenge. "You have people being extremely racist, using the fact that you have this audience to propagate fake news or false rumors. The bubbles of text were disappointing and alarming" (Lewis, 2017). He responded in his narration by calling out what he saw as inappropriate and warned viewers he would turn off the comments.

After Baltimore, Lewis relocated to San Francisco to become the *Guardian's* west coast bureau chief. He also moved away from Periscope: "I have not used it once since it happened". Having amassed more than 30,000 followers on the platform, he explains, "You need to be mindful of

Downloaded By: 10.3.98.93 At: 07:34 17 Jan 2019; For: 9781315270449, chapter22, 10.4324/9781315270449-23

what they may or may not want to see". And for Lewis, few stories have been "Periscope worthy" after the violence in Baltimore (2017).

But other journalists soon turned to the tool to cover a volatile situation emerging in Europe and the Middle East. After the body of a Syrian toddler washed ashore on a Turkish beach in September 2015, a burgeoning refugee crisis was becoming evident. As thousands fled Syria and other Middle Eastern countries, journalists walked alongside the migrants as they attempted to cross international borders. With their portable, relatively unobtrusive smartphones, correspondents could show the struggle with video and, when feasible, livestreams via Periscope. Among them was Paul Ronzheimer of the German newspaper *Bild*. As he traveled across Europe with a group of Syrian refugees – from the Greek Island of Kos to Germany – he used his iPhone to Periscope interviews and key moments throughout the journey (Dredge, 2015). He later created a documentary from the footage that he saved to his phone, which is posted on *Bild's* website (2017). *Al Jazeera English* (2015) livestreamed Q&As on Periscope with correspondent Mohammed Jamjoom. And photographer Patrick Witty (2015) Periscoped refugees landing in Lesbos, Greece, for BuzzFeed News. International video correspondent Adam Ellick (2015) of the *New York Times* finds the migrant story to be a "very smart example" for livestreaming because of its urgent and trending nature and its appeal to large audiences through personal, character-driven narratives.

New interactive storyforms

It's the day after the 2017 presidential inauguration, and women around the world are marching to protest against Donald Trump's election. Nearly 26,000 people watch Gloria Steinem on the *New York Times*' Facebook Live broadcast as she revs up the crowd at the rally in Washington, DC: "And remember the Constitution does not begin with 'I, the president'. It begins with . . ." and the crowd shouts, "We, the people!" But the *Times* is doing more than a one-way broadcast from the stage on the National Mall. Its journalists are using livestreaming to interact with people on the scene and with viewers worldwide. At 12:30 p.m., @nytimes tweets, "We're live from Women's Marches around the U.S. Have questions? Ask our reporters here. nyti.ms/2ijLQUZO # WomensMarch".

The link takes you to a page on the *Times*' website with the embedded livestream, where video journalist Deborah Acosta is interviewing a young woman from Seattle wearing a hot pink 'pussyhat', wide-rimmed glasses, and a lip piercing. They're on the perimeter of the D.C. rally, where Acosta can access internet service without losing the signal. She asks, "What prompted you to come all the way from Seattle to this march today in Washington, D.C.?"

"I'm a queer woman", the Seattleite responds. "Trump getting elected was one of the most terrifying things that's happened in my life" (*The New York Times*, 2017).

Back in the newsroom, Louise Story manages the *Times*' live interactive operation. She's the reporter "face" on the *Times*' website, where her photo, name, and title – Reporter and Executive Producer, Live Interactive Journalism – appear on the page. Story interacts with correspondents in the field around the country by text, email, and cell phone. A team of four people works in-house, in what Story likens to a scaled-back TV control room. But unlike TV news, the journalists are also communicating with viewers around the world who post their questions on the live comment section of the *Times'* website and via Facebook. The team had been covering the election for months, and is well-equipped to answer questions. "I think it's a pretty smooth experience", said Story (2017).

One technique that helps reporters in the field is the "pinning" feature. The person in the newsroom who is monitoring user comments can post a question at the top and keep it there by pinning it. That way, when reporters on the ground glance at their phones, they can see the question of interest right up top (Story, 2017). For example,

Downloaded By: 10.3.98.93 At: 07:34 17 Jan 2019; For: 9781315270449, chapter22, 10.4324/9781315270449-23

> *FROM A READER*
> *How do these women feel about*
> *the women who voted for Trump?*
>
> *J. Kane Austin, TX*

Story responds:

> J. Kane, good question. Our reporter in NYC, Paul Moon, will ask that question to the women there shortly. We are back in NYC now with the marchers there. We're asking them your questions, so ask away here and Paul Moon will ask some of them to the marchers.
>
> *(The New York Times, 2017)*

The video feed from New York City shows the crowd marching while Moon reads the question. He then looks for someone to answer it while continuing to point his camera at the general crowd. This technique affords privacy to people who may not want to appear in a close-up shot or be interviewed on a livestream.

"Hey guys, how's it going? I'm with the *New York Times*", says Moon. "I'm doing a live video right now. Do you mind if I ask you all some questions?" He has some takers, and only then does Moon point the camera at the source. He hands his ear buds to a man in a black baseball cap (to use as a microphone) and asks him to say and spell his name. You can barely hear Moon off mic as he asks the viewer's question. But before the man can answer, the woman he's with jumps in:

> I voted for Clinton, Hillary, and I'm very concerned and upset, and feel the women need their rights, and I'm very worried for the future, and I'm happy to see everybody out here marching and supporting women's rights.

Moon continues talking with the two marchers and then speaks to the viewers, "All right, so there you have an answer. Thank you for the question J. Kaine", says Moon. He then reiterates the exchange for people just joining in and references what he's showing on screen, "the parade is getting denser now".

When he sees another question, he reads it, and then asks, "Emma, if you could pin that question – OK, thanks". He lets the camera roll, as hundreds chant, drum, and march by. He keeps providing value to the livestream with informative bits – how the march has been set up by alphabetical order of last names, and reading signs as they parade by. Unlike TV news, where the reporter on the scene features prominently on camera, we can only hear Moon, not see him (*The New York Times*, 2017).

Hybridizing the TV live shot model

Social media livestreaming appears to be hybridizing the TV news live shot, keeping some of its characteristics, dropping others, and introducing new components. The metamorphosis started well before Facebook Live or Periscope, going back to the early days of Occupy Wall Street, when Tim Pool teamed up with Henry James Ferry to broadcast live on Ustream (Lenzner, 2014). Ferry appeared in the shot as Pool ran the camera. Viewers who were tuning in from all over the world were sending comments through a live chat function on the channel wearetheother99.com. But they didn't want or need to see Ferry on camera. Pool quipped in a published interview "that just presents the same old same old. Might as well be on CNN, if you're just going to watch some guy talk" (Pool, in Lenzner, 2014: 253). To Pool, the broadcast model – with a tower

Downloaded By: 10.3.98.93 At: 07:34 17 Jan 2019; For: 9781315270449, chapter22, 10.4324/9781315270449-23

sending a unidirectional signal to the audience – is "archaic" (Pool, in Lenzner, 2014: 257). In his streams, he says, "I'm taking direction, requests and corrections from people who are watching. So there is a return from the community" (Pool, in Lenzner, 2014: 257).

As today's social media livestreaming protocol develops, we see a mix of the traditional broadcast live shot and Pool's interactive livestream. Visit Facebook Live's map view during a news conference or event on a stage, and you'll often find major news organizations streaming the same shot. And when the feed gets embedded prominently on the news website, the traditional, unidirectional approach is transferred to the online product. For non-static events like festivals and protests, opportunities to get inside the action are sometimes passed over for the security of a static location with reliable internet service on the outskirts. It's a trade-off that risks missing a major development that might break in the thick of the crowd.

A modified mobile approach with reporter and camera team 'chasing' the action was used by BuzzFeed News (2017) with Periscope during the March for Science on Earth Day 2017. The stream opens with a shot of Bill Nye and a banner-carrying group leading the march. Off screen, a male voice welcomes viewers and references Nye, then lets the action unfold. The crowd volleys a chant, "Science . . . matters . . . science . . . matters". Unlike a TV live shot, the journalist does not identify himself on camera. Also unlike TV, the video is shot vertically.

About two minutes in, a female journalist enters the frame as they march, "Hello, I'm Nidhi Subbaraman, I'm a science reporter at BuzzFeed News". She narrates as they walk, providing background and context, and then when the crowd noise takes over, she lets it, and stops talking. A few minutes later a different reporter, Azeen Ghorayshi, enters the scene and introduces herself. The camera keeps her framed in a head-and-shoulder vertical shot and occasionally moves to the crowd and then back again to her as they march. The same male voice from the top of the stream can be heard toward the end, reminding viewers to post questions.

The BuzzFeed example illustrates an emerging, hybridized TV live shot model that goes beyond unidirectional broadcasting. It incorporates interactivity among the camera person/reporter team, viewers, and people on the scene, offers ample time to let the action unfold, and provides context through selective reporter narration.

Activists and citizen livestreams

After Donald Trump signed an Executive Order (2017) banning US entry from certain predominantly Muslim countries, documentary filmmaker Michael Moore headed to Twitter to spread the word about a protest forming at JFK airport:

> Everybody in NYC area – head to JFK Terminal 4 NOW! Big anti-Trump protest forming out of nowhere! Ppl mobilizing against Trump's Muslim ban.
>
> *(2017)*

As he continues tweeting, livestreams from protesters, organizations, and reporters show up on Periscope and Facebook Live. Nearly 3,000 viewers watch the ACLU's Facebook Live out of JFK, as the crowd chants, "No Trump, No KKK, no fascist USA, No Trump, No KKK, no fascist USA . . . ." Two accounts with Arab and English lettering – Community Organization and Said Abbasy – stream a similar scene (author notes; video clips and screenshots). CNN's Brian Stelter tweets, "Airport protest story getting bigger", embedding a video from BuzzFeed editor Tomi Obaro, and before that retweets Vox.com journalist Elizabeth Plank's photo from JFK. Both news organizations are livestreaming on Facebook (author notes via video clips and screenshots). Meanwhile, a citizen Periscope with 35 viewers is coming out of Dulles International Airport near Washington, DC. "There is free legal help available", says the young woman on camera

Downloaded By: 10.3.98.93 At: 07:34 17 Jan 2019; For: 9781315270449, chapter22, 10.4324/9781315270449-23

(Buchalter, 2017a). "They are by the phone in the welcome center, so please spread the word". Behind her, people are chanting, "No hate, no fear, refugees are welcome here". She continues,

> There are families who are being separated right now. They were on the plane when that order was put through, and they had no idea until they got here that they weren't going to be allowed off the plane – people who have lived here a really long time.
>
> *(Buchalter, 2017a)*

Her viewers are responding with messages on screen, "glad to see people stream this" and "SOLIDARITY" (Buchalter, 2017a). Reflecting on her livestream that day, Erin Buchalter said she didn't feel like a journalist or protester, but rather "a person with an amazing responsibility" (2017b). Her children, ages 7 and 10, had been there with her at the airport, and she said it allowed her to teach them "why and how their voices matter". After the first judge blocked the ban, she said, "we were able to show our kids, 'Look, you helped make that happen'" (2017b).

Buchalter notes that interacting with people who comment on her stream is important, "Even if they are rude I will respond kindly" (2017b). In addition to handling offensive comments, Buchalter says reliable internet service has been a challenge when livestreaming, and cites the "massive amounts of people" trying to use the network at the Women's March, which was "down completely" (2017b).

Issues with data networks aren't limited to major U.S. cities but can be an obstacle for livestreamers worldwide. And in some countries, citizens and journalists alike even risk having their phones stolen or confiscated by authorities (Linares, 2017). Online news source *Efecto Cocuyo* combats the problem by using older model Motorola phones for its livestreams on Periscope. The service formed on Twitter in early 2015 as an alternative to the mainstream news in Venezuela, even before it had its own website. When Periscope became available several months later, *Efecto Cocuyo* quickly adopted the tool to stream protests and political events (Linares, 2017.) Two years later, the livestreams continue and have been a solid presence for its 26,000 Periscope followers during months of anti-government protests (*Efecto Cocuyo*, 2017).

Innovative and resourceful activists have found ways to circumvent barriers and problem solve even before Periscope and Facebook Live. Occupy Wall Street's livestreaming operation began with just one roving camcorder, a laptop, and a 4G wireless card (Captain, 2011). The day before police raided its ad hoc media operation in Zuccotti Park, OWS moved to a rundown building in lower Manhattan, with "cobbled-together gear and a hint of body odor" (Captain, 2011). There, the team monitored hundreds of live feeds to select for broadcast on their globalrevolution.tv (Captain, 2011). From marches to arrests, the streams brought the movement to viewers worldwide.

But along with social witnessing, livestreaming can bring graphic and violent images.

Streaming violence and death

During its first year, Facebook Live streamed suicide, torture, rape, accidental death, and murder. Several instances involved young people in Chicago – the kidnapping and torture of a disabled teenager (Schmadeke, 2017) and a gang rape (Rosenberg-Douglas, 2017). Public outrage and criticism followed each horrific episode. Then, on Easter Sunday, a murderer took to the platform. He had just killed a man at random on a street in Cleveland and made a video of the murder. His victim was a 74-year-old grandfather. Robert Godwin Jr., "just happened to walk into the path of the deranged gunman", who posted the video to his Facebook page and then livestreamed himself talking about it (Morice, 2017). On the stream, the killer said, "I shamed myself. I snapped . . . I just killed 13 motherf★★★★★★, man . . . I'm about to keep killing until they catch me, f★★★ it" (Morice, 2017).

Downloaded By: 10.3.98.93 At: 07:34 17 Jan 2019; For: 9781315270449, chapter22, 10.4324/9781315270449-23

Just over a week later, a young man in Thailand broadcast a livestream as he killed his 11-month-old baby daughter. More than a quarter million people watched the video, which remained online for about 20 hours (Mozur, 2017). the *New York Times* reported: "The video showed Mr. Wongtalay fixing a noose around his daughter's neck and then dropping her off the side of a building. After a burst of crying, he climbed over the side to retrieve her body. His subsequent suicide was not shown online" (Mozur, 2017).

After the two killings Mark Zuckerberg posted to his Facebook page that seeing "people hurting themselves and others on Facebook" was "heartbreaking" and that the company was adding 3,000 people to its 4,500 already in place to monitor content. They were also working on tools to simplify the process for reporting problems, identifying violations, and for contacting police (2017).

Using the social media research tool twXplorer, a search for "Cleveland" conducted 24 hours after the shooting, returned a random "snapshot" of 500 tweets. The most common terms used in those tweets were "video" and "instead". The text of those tweets urged people to retweet photos of the victim and his family rather than the video showing Godwin's death and horror (2017).

Godwin's grandson had reached out on Twitter, pleading that people honor his grandfather's life instead of perpetuating the horror of his death. "Please please please stop retweeting that video and report anyone who has posted it! That is my grandfather show some respect #Cleveland" (Hurst, 2017). Among those who honored the request was Chris Hurst, a former anchorman, who several years earlier saw his girlfriend murdered on live television. He retweeted Ryan Godwin's message, adding, "I know that cry and hope more listen to you than they did to me" (Hurst, 2017).

Hurst was referencing the videos of his girlfriend's murder. One was from the live television news broadcast, and the other was made by the killer himself. Back in late August 2015, a former employee at WDBJ7 killed reporter Alison Parker and cameraman Adam Ward during an early morning live interview at Smith Mountain Lake in Virginia (Shear et al., 2015).

The killer videotaped the shooting and then posted it to his social media accounts. "I filmed the shooting see Facebook", he tweeted (archived in a screenshot of shooter's Twitter feed, 2015). The shooter fled the scene and continued posting to social media. Reporters tweeted the killer's account name and noted that he was tweeting (screenshots of author's Twitter feed, 2015). After responses such as "Dear. Lord" and "I want to vomit", reporters warned their Twitter followers to avoid the posts, "Don't watch it people, don't watch it". Some journalists posted visuals but then quickly changed their minds. Andy Carvin, known for tweeting the Arab Spring revolution, said the only tweet he ever deleted was a screenshot of that gunman. His response after tweeting it: "oh shit" (2015).

While some blame these incidents on livestreaming tools and the social media platforms that provide them, others would argue the news media are complicit in perpetuating these public acts of violence. Sensationalist headlines, repeated use of video clips in broadcast coverage, embedding images into web stories, and focusing on the perpetrator rather than the victim can almost glorify the violence. A number of news organizations referred to the perpetrator as the "Virginia Shooter" or the "WDBJ shooter". And in the Cleveland shooting, they used the moniker "Facebook Killer", which persisted through the month following the murder (Gingras, 2017; Remington, 2017). Media ethicist Kelly McBride at The Poynter Institute encourages journalists to resist and minimize using nicknames for notorious criminals, because those monikers can "cause harm" (2017). McBride says the harm can take the form of "contagion", as nicknames can increase the possibility of copycats in shootings as well as suicides (2017).

Downloaded By: 10.3.98.93 At: 07:34 17 Jan 2019; For: 9781315270449, chapter22, 10.4324/9781315270449-23

Meindl and Ivy (2017) also highlight practices used by media in covering mass shootings that may lead to what they call generalized imitation. They include naming and showing visuals of the killer and detailing the event and the life of the shooter, which may confer social status and notoriety (Meindl and Ivy, 2017). Research on mass shootings from 2000 through 2012 shows the time frame for contagion at about two weeks (Kissner, 2016). The researcher concluded that perhaps, "the spectacle of recent active shootings contributes to the tragic crystallization of long-simmering active shooting plans" (Kissner, 2016: 58). Another study found "significant evidence that mass killings involving firearms are incented by similar events in the immediate past" (Towers et al., 2015). The time period between incidents averaged 13 days.

One can imagine how livestreamed murders and other violent acts might complicate and exacerbate these issues. Not only are journalists and their news organizations faced with reporting the killings, but they must grapple with the additional layer of the act being broadcast by the killer on social media. How much of the video, if any, should news organizations use in their stories? Should they embed screenshots or clips onto their websites? What else should they report? This statement from the SPJ Code of Ethics is often tweeted when sensational news is breaking: "Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity, even if others do" (2014).

Some news organizations and even law enforcement agencies are moving away from naming the perpetrator. After the mass shooting in an Orlando nightclub in summer 2016, then-FBI director James Comey refused to speak the gunman's name during a live news conference. "'You will notice that I am not using the killer's name, and I will try not to do that,' Comey said during the live news conference", reported the Associated Press (Gurman, 2016). "'I don't want to be part of that for the sake of the victims and their families,' Comey said, 'and so that other twisted minds don't think that this is a path to fame and recognition'" (Gurman, 2016).

Potential effects of viewing nonfictional violent images

Choosing not to watch violent livestreams and video postings can be the first defense against their negative effects. But that may not be an option for journalists. Studies, however, suggest relationships between frequent and extensive viewing of graphic, violent nonfictional content and increased likelihood of psychological distress. Feinstein et al. (2014) studied journalists who worked with extremely violent user-generated images and found that frequency was more distressing than duration. The more frequently the journalists were exposed to the graphic images, the more likely they were to suffer from anxiety, depression, PTSD, or alcohol consumption.

Earlier research on viewing television coverage of the 9/11 World Trade Center terrorist attacks suggests a relationship between hours watched and greater likelihood of PTSD (Schlenger et al., 2002). Another study found similar results. Levels of PTSD and depression were higher among participants who repeatedly saw scenes of people falling or jumping from the towers (Ahern et al., 2002).

Another concern with viewing video violence is desensitization and diminished empathy. Exposure to violence in real life and knowing that the video violence is real appears to make a difference in viewers' reactions. College students with limited exposure to real-world violence had higher empathy, but higher exposure to violence in the real world was linked to "higher trauma symptoms, escape to fantasy, and reduced empathy" (Mrug et al., 2014: 1106). In another study, participants saw scenes of actual violence or fictional violence. Those who knew they were watching real people being harmed responded with higher empathy than those who saw the fictional scenes (Ramos et al., 2013). Taken together, these studies suggest that frequency and time spent viewing images of real-world violence can relate to empathy levels as well as negative psychological effects, including PTSD, depression, and anxiety.

Downloaded By: 10.3.98.93 At: 07:34 17 Jan 2019; For: 9781315270449, chapter22, 10.4324/9781315270449-23

When working with graphic images, experts recommend being mindful of your exposure "load," reducing unnecessary viewing, and building distance by avoiding faces and directing attention to other elements of the scene (Dart Center, 2014).

Special considerations on covering livestreamed suicide

When a man pulled his truck over on a Los Angeles freeway in 1998 and began shooting into the air, police closed the road, traffic backed up, and TV news choppers went live with the story. Six L.A. stations and MSNBC stayed live as the man set his truck on fire and shot himself in the head (Rogers, 1998). *Los Angeles Times* media columnist Howard Rosenberg called the live broadcasts a "total abrogation of journalistic responsibility" (1998). This was nearly two decades before mobile livestreaming, but concerns about volatility during live broadcasts ending in gruesome acts existed then and are magnified today. At least six suicides have been livestreamed on social media between May 2016 and May 2017. They included adolescent girls who interacted with viewers before killing themselves (Miller and Burch, 2017) and a man with bipolar disorder who set himself on fire (McCausland, 2017). The interactivity of social media livestreaming adds new considerations and complexity to an already difficult situation. While people watching the stream could potentially help by alerting authorities or simply by being there to listen, they could instead exacerbate the situation. Intentionally goading the person to "do it" or inadvertently saying the wrong thing could push the person closer to ending her life.

Livestreaming suicides has become a newsworthy issue. In the past, policy at many news organizations had been to simply refuse to cover suicides, for both privacy and concerns about contagion. But today, with people making their own livestreams, the images and events are thrust into the public view. And with each new suicide attempt on Periscope or Facebook Live, reporters and news organizations are confronted with questions on how to tell the story. The website reporting on suicide.org warns that stories that use graphic images, explicitly describe the suicide method, or sensationalize or glamorize death increase risk for additional suicides (2015).

But Facebook is unlikely to stop these livestreams. The *Guardian* reports suicide attempts are permitted on the platform (Hopkins, 2017).

> Facebook will allow users to livestream attempts to self-harm because it "doesn't want to censor or punish people in distress who are attempting suicide", according to leaked documents. However, the footage will be removed "once there's no longer an opportunity to help the person" – unless the incident is particularly newsworthy.
>
> *(Hopkins, 2017)*

Periscope's community guidelines tell users not to post self-harm or suicide but also say the organization may reach out to help people who do (2017).

It appears that neither Facebook nor Periscope will automatically shut down livestreams while people are broadcasting suicidal thoughts or preparing to take their own lives. And the Facebook policy of removing the stream after there's "no longer an opportunity to help the person" suggests that could mean the person was rescued, had a change of heart, or died during the livestream.

If and when the next suicide is streamed live on social media, journalists could help minimize harm by avoiding sensationalizing the suicide, using family photos rather than images of the scene, and including resource information (reporting on suicide.org, 2015).

Downloaded By: 10.3.98.93 At: 07:34 17 Jan 2019; For: 9781315270449, chapter22, 10.4324/9781315270449-23

Privacy

With social media livestreaming, does anyone any longer have any right to privacy? Stewart and Littau say that mobile streaming video technologies could potentially reshape how we think about privacy and the right to record in public (2016). The pervasiveness of video recording may have moved into the realm of what Nissenbaum calls "the tyranny of the normal" because they are so commonplace, and he says that objections are difficult to pursue "against the force of reasonable expectation" (2009: 161). In addition, collecting and disseminating information had previously been separate actions that could potentially affect privacy. Today, social media livestreaming allows these activities to take place concurrently, increasing "the potential for harm that cannot be undone" (Stewart and Littau, 2016: 317).

There's also another layer, the commenting function, which allows the livestreamer to interact with viewers in real time. Section 230 of the U.S. Communications Decency Act has provided protection against defamation for reader comments posted to news stories (Reporters Committee, undated). It's unclear, however, if that protection would carry over to comments during livestreamed content. Individual state laws regulating recording and eavesdropping may be used against reporters livestreaming (Stewart and Littau, 2016). Corporations may also dictate their own policies for privacy and use of service. For example, United Airlines states online, "Photographing or recording other customers or airline personnel without their express consent is prohibited" (2017). However, it's unclear whether permission had been granted to passengers who made videos of a man being forcibly removed from a United plane for refusing to give up his seat on an overbooked flight. The videos spread virally on social media and attracted mainstream news attention. Following the incident, United settled with the injured man and has agreed to pay passengers up to $10,000 for giving up their seats on overbooked flights (Zumbach and Byrne, 2017).

Technological determinism and livestreaming: 'a force for good' or profit and material power?

Taken with the idea of progress, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin embraced technology as a form of human betterment. Franklin even refused to patent his inventions, seeing them as a way to serve others rather than enriching himself (Smith and Marx, 1994). Recognizing technology as a key driving force in society, critics, however, feared it would sacrifice moral progress for material power. Some viewed technology as autonomous and "out of control", following "its own course, independent of human direction" (Winner, 1977, in Smith and Marx, 1994: 31).

Social media livestreaming might reveal a bit of truth in both views. Media columnist Margaret Sullivan, while calling out Facebook for being "better at making money and capturing eyeballs than at owning its equally huge power and responsibilities", acknowledged livestreaming as "a force for good, too" (2017). She was referring to Diamond Reynolds, who livestreamed her boyfriend Philando Castile dying after police shot him near Minneapolis. Sullivan called it an "important piece of bearing witness" (2017). The video went viral, protests against excessive force by police – especially against black men – ensued, and the officer went to trial for manslaughter (Horner, 2017). The officer was acquitted 16 June 2017.

On the other side are material power and the profit motive in livestreaming. In its report, "What is happening to television news?" the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism notes that livestreaming presents not only editorial challenges but "questions around what kind of business private news providers can build around them" (Nielsen and Sambrook, 2016: 20). Social media companies are now selling ads in their livestreams. Pre-roll ads became available on

Downloaded By: 10.3.98.93 At: 07:34 17 Jan 2019; For: 9781315270449, chapter22, 10.4324/9781315270449-23

Periscope to "select advertisers" in late March of 2017 (Folgner, 2017), and Facebook is beta testing ad breaks in livestreams (Boland and Angelidou-Smith, 2017).

But the desire for profit in broadcasting is not limited to corporate interests, and it's not new. A Microsoft Research report explores motivations for livestreaming among popular streamers on Periscope and then-Meerkat, and personal branding was the most common response. This appeared motivated by income through creating a fan base, integrating work-related goals with their streams, and "driving traffic toward their monetized online resources" (Tang et al., 2016). Reaching back in time, when live broadcasting was first developing nearly a century ago, the profit motive drove the U.S. commercial radio model (Barnouw, 1966). And over the years, a quest for the dollar has gone hand in hand with advances in technology – from its creation to adoption.

Conclusion

Coming full circle to the Facebook Live launch, when Mark Zuckerberg exuded enthusiasm for the technology, "It's like having a TV camera in your pocket all the time", he said. "And we're excited to bring this superpower to everyone in our community" (2016). This "superpower" has shown itself to be a force for good, while at the same time presenting challenges and ethical dilemmas for those who create, watch, and report on the streams, as well as creating possible harm. Being mindful of social media livestreaming's potential impact, journalists and the public can take steps toward using it wisely, avoiding, as Thoreau wrote in *Walden*, becoming "tools of their tools" (Thoreau, 1854, cited in Smith and Marx, 1994: 26).

Further reading

The Online News Association has been at the forefront of digital journalism since its inception in 1999 and offers a wealth of resources and opportunities. For guidance on working with graphic and distressing images, the Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma provides tip sheets and other useful materials. And Reporting on Suicide.org offers guidelines to help minimize harm when covering livestreamed suicides.

Note

1 While Periscope and Meerkat apps predate the Facebook release, its availability to nearly 2 billion users makes this a notable historic marker (Facebook Newsroom 2017). And because YouTube limits mobile livestreaming to accounts with more than 1,000 users, it is not included in this chapter (Google 2017).

References

Ahern, J., Galea, S., Resnick, H., Kilpatrick, D., Bucuvalas, M., Gold, J. and Vlahov, D. (2002) "Television images and psychological symptoms after the September 11 terrorist attacks." *Psychiatry: Interpersonal and Biological Processes*, 65(4), 289–300. Retrieved from http://guilfordjournals.com/doi/abs/10.1521/psyc.65.4.289.20240

Al Jazeera English. (2015, October 9) *Facebook*. Retrieved from www.facebook.com/aljazeera/photos/a.10150243828793690.369310.7382473689/10153781845613690/

Barnouw, E. (1966) *A Tower in Babel*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bild. (2017) "Video diary of the *Bild* reporter: Live transfer of an escape from hell." *Bild*. Retrieved from www.bild.de/politik/ausland/zuwanderung/flucht-aus-der-hoelle-das-video-42352374.bild.html

Bishop, T. (2015, April 29) "Watch a Baltimore resident confront Geraldo Rivera over Fox News' irresponsible coverage." *Media Matters for America*. Retrieved from www.mediamatters.org/blog/2015/04/29/watch-a-baltimore-resident-confront-geraldo-riv/203475

Downloaded By: 10.3.98.93 At: 07:34 17 Jan 2019; For: 9781315270449, chapter22, 10.4324/9781315270449-23

Boland, B. and Angelidou-Smith, M. (2017, February 23) "An update on video monetization." *Facebook*. Retrieved from https://media.fb.com/2017/02/23/update-on-video-monetization/

Buchalter, E. (2017a) *Periscope Livestream Recorded by Author*.

Buchalter, E. (2017b) *Email Interview*.

BuzzFeed News. (2017, April 22) *Periscope livestream recording on Twitter*. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/BuzzFeedNews/status/855849076985708544

Captain, S. (2011, November 16) "Inside Occupy Wall Street's (kinda) secret media HQ." *Wired*. Retrieved from www.wired.com/2011/11/inside-ows-media-hq/

Carvin, A. (2015, September 26) "Online News Association Annual Conference." *Author's Notes From Panel*.

Dart Center. (2014, August 12) "Working with traumatic imagery." *Dart Center*. Retrieved from https://dartcenter.org/content/working-with-traumatic-imagery

Dredge, S. (2015, September 13) "How live video on Periscope helped 'get inside' the Syrian refugees story." *The Guardian*. Retrieved from www.theguardian.com/media/2015/sep/13/periscope-app-syrian-refugees-bild

Efecto Cocuyo. (2017) *Periscope*. Retrieved from www.periscope.tv/EfectoCocuyo/1gqGvbXlQanGB

Ellick, A. (2015) "Online News Association Annual Conference Table Talk Session." *Author's Notes*.

Executive Order. (2017, January 27) *Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States*. Retrieved from www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/27/executive-order-protecting-nation-foreign-terrorist-entry-united-states

Facebook Newsroom. (2017) *Statistics*. Retrieved from https://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/

Feinstein, A., Audet, B. and Waknine, E. (2014) "Witnessing images of extreme violence: A psychological study of journalists in the newsroom." *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine Open*, 5(8), 1–7. doi:10.1177/2054270414533323

Folgner, M. (2017, March 28) "Expanding pre-roll ads to Periscope video." *Twitter Marketing*. Retrieved from https://blog.twitter.com/2017/expanding-pre-roll-ads-to-periscope-video

Gingras, B. (2017, May 12) "Pennsylvania police open up about catching the 'Facebook killer.'" *CNN*. Retrieved from www.cnn.com/2017/05/12/us/beyond-the-call-pennsylvania-police-catch-facebook-killer/

Google. (2017) "Introduction to live streaming." *YouTube Help*. Retrieved from https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2474026?hl=en

Gurman, S. (2016, June 28) "Terror talk changes as Comey refuses to name gunman." *Associated Press*. Retrieved from https://apnews.com/67d4fe9a88884794a79ffd464a8edc0b/terror-talk-changes-comey-refuses-name-gunman

Hopkins, N. (2017, May 21) "Facebook will let users livestream self-harm, leaked documents show." *The Guardian*. Retrieved from www.theguardian.com/news/2017/may/21/facebook-users-livestream-self-harm-leaked-documents

Horner, S. (2017, June 6) "Jury sees squad car video in opening day of Philando Castile shooting trial." *Twin Cities.com Pioneer Press*. Retrieved from www.twincities.com/2017/06/05/latest-from-yanez-trial-opening-arguments-and-officers-side-of-story-could-come-monday/

Hurst, C. (2017, April 16) "I know that cry and hope more listen to you than they did to me." *Twitter*. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/ChrisHurstVA/status/853795288305328128

Kissner, J. (2016) "Are active shootings temporally contagious? An empirical assessment." *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, 31(1), 48–58. doi:10.1007/s11896-015-9163-8

Lenzner, B. (2014) "The emergence of Occupy Wall Street and digital video practices: Tim Pool, live streaming and experimentations in citizen journalism." *Studies in Documentary Film*, 8(3), 251–266.

Lewis, P. (2015a, April 9) *Rand Paul: The Guardian Interview on Periscope*. Retrieved from www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/apr/09/ask-rand-paul-periscope-guardian-conversation

Lewis, P. (2015b, April 28) "The Baltimore riots: The night on Periscope – Video." *The Guardian*. Retrieved from www.theguardian.com/us-news/video/2015/apr/28/the-baltimore-riots-the-night-on-periscope-video

Lewis, P. (2015c, April 29) "Baltimore unrest: Periscope captures tense build-up to curfew – Video." *The Guardian*. Retrieved from www.theguardian.com/us-news/video/2015/apr/29/baltimore-riots-periscope-captures-tense-build-up-to-curfew-video

Lewis, P. (2017, May 5) *Telephone Interview With Author*.

Linares, C. (2017, April 12) "Independent Venezuelan news site triumphs with live video on Periscope while many move to Facebook Live." *Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas*. Retrieved from https://knightcenter.utexas.edu/blog/00-18222-independent-venezuelan-news-site-triumphs-live-video-periscope-while-many-move-faceboo

Downloaded By: 10.3.98.93 At: 07:34 17 Jan 2019; For: 9781315270449, chapter22, 10.4324/9781315270449-23

Lui, K. (2016, December 11) "This is Facebook's most watched live video of 2016." *Fortune*. Retrieved from http://fortune.com/2016/12/12/facebook-most-watched-live-video-2016/

McBride, K. (2017, April 21) "Don't call Steve Stephens 'the Facebook killer.'" *Poynter*. Retrieved from www.poynter.org/2017/dont-call-steve-stephens-the-facebook-killer/456868/

McCausland, P. (2017, May 14) "Memphis, Tennessee, man fatally sets himself on fire on Facebook Live." *NBC News*. Retrieved from www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/memphis-tennessee-man-fatally-sets-himself-fire-facebook-live-n759366

Meindl, J. and Ivy, J. (2017) "Mass shootings: The role of the media in promoting generalized imitation." *American Journal of Public Health*, 107(3), 368–370. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2016.303611

Miller, C. and Burch, A. (2017, January 24) "Another girl hangs herself while streaming it live – This time in Miami." *Miami Herald*. Retrieved from www.miamiherald.com/news/local/article128563889.html

Moore, M. (2017, January 28, 3:20 p.m) *Twitter*. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/MMFlint/status/825438373003280384

Morice, J. (2017, April 18) "Facebook killer chooses victim at random, laughs about killing in videos." *Cleveland.com*. Retrieved from www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2017/04/accused_facebook_live_killer_c.html

Mozur, P. (2017, April 25) "Father in Thailand kills 11-month-old daughter live on Facebook." *The New York Times*. Retrieved from www.nytimes.com/2017/04/25/world/asia/thailand-phuket-facebook-killing-daughter.html

Mrug, S., Madan, A., Cook III, E. and Wright, R. (2014) "Emotional and physiological desensitization to real-life and movie violence." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 44(5), 1092–1108. Retrieved from https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10964-014-0202-z

The New York Times. (2017, January 21) "Women's March highlights: Viewer questions." *The New York Times*. Retrieved from www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/01/21/us/questions-march-live.html?_r=0

Nielsen, R. and Sambrook, R. (2016) *What Is Happening to Television News?* Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Retrieved from http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/What%20is%20Happening%20to%20Television%20News.pdf

Nissenbaum, H. (2009) *Privacy in Context: Technology, Policy, and the Integrity of Social Life*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Periscope. (2017) *Community Guidelines*. Retrieved from www.periscope.tv/content

Ramos, R., Ferguson, C., Frailing, K. and Romero-Ramirez, M. (2013) "Comfortably numb or just yet another movie? Media violence exposure does not reduce viewer empathy for victims of real violence among primarily Hispanic viewers." *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 2(1), 2–10. Retrieved from http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/ppm/2/1/2/

Remington, K. (2017, May 13) "Pennsylvania State Police talk about catching Cleveland Facebook killer." *Cleveland.com*. www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2017/05/pennsylvania_state_police_talk_1.html

Reporters Committee, undated. "Immunity for reader comments under Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act." Retrieved from www.rcfp.org/browse-media-law-resources/digital-journalists-legal-guide/immunity-reader-comments-under-section-23

Reporting on suicide.org. (2015) *Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide*. Retrieved from http://reportingonsuicide.org/recommendations/#important

Rodriguez, R. (2015, May 26) "Periscope: Four ways it's shaking up media." *CNN*. Retrieved from www.cnn.com/2015/05/26/tech/periscope-android-media/

Rogers, P. (1998, June) "L.A.'s TV news: Pulling away from live shots?" *AJR*. Retrieved from http://ajrarchive.org/article.asp?id=2318

Rosenberg, H. (1998, May 2) "The Russian Roulette of live news coverage." *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from http://articles.latimes.com/1998/may/02/entertainment/ca-45412

Rosenberg-Douglas, K. (2017, March 22) "Facebook Live assault of girl, 15: 'No one human deserves what happened to her'." *Chicago Tribune*. Retrieved from www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-teen-girl-missing-from-lawndale-20170321-story.html

Schlenger, W., Caddell, J., Ebert, L., Jordan, B., Rourke, K., Wilson, D., Thalji, L., Dennis, J., Fairbank, J. and Kulka, R. (2002) "Psychological reactions to terrorist attacks findings from the national study of Americans' reactions to September 11." *JAMA*, 288(5), 581–588. Retrieved from http://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/195165

Schmadeke, S. (2017, January 27) "Teens in Facebook Live attack indicted, lawyers call case 'sensationalized.'" *Chicago Tribune*. Retrieved from www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-facebook-live-attack-court-met-20170127-story.html

Downloaded By: 10.3.98.93 At: 07:34 17 Jan 2019; For: 9781315270449, chapter22, 10.4324/9781315270449-23

Shear, M., Perez-Pena, R. and Blinder, A. (2015, August 26) "Ex-broadcaster kills 2 on air in Virginia shooting: Takes own life." *The New York Times*. Retrieved from www.nytimes.com/2015/08/27/us/wdbj7-virginia-journalists-shot-during-live-broadcast.html

Simo, F. (2017, April 6) *Facebook*. Retrieved from www.facebook.com/fidji.simo/videos/vb.576027062/10154258738027063/

Smith, M. and Marx, L. (1994) *Does Technology Drive History? The Dilemma of Technological Determinism*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

SPJ. (2014, September 6) "Code of ethics." *Society of Professional Journalists*. Retrieved from www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp

Stewart, D. and Littau, J. (2016) "Up, periscope: Mobile streaming video technologies, privacy in public, and the right to record." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 93(2), 312–331. doi:10.1177/1077699016637106

Story, L. (2017, February 6) *Telephone Interview With Author*.

Sullivan, M. (2017, April 18) "Facebook still denies what it is. The Cleveland murder shows how." *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/mark-zuckerberg-has-vowed-to-limit-live-streamed-depravity-so-far-its-an-empty-promise/2017/04/18/d44de158–243c-11e7-b503-9d616bd5a305_story.html?tid=ss_tw&utm_term=.93e690747c01

Tang, J., Venolia, G. and Inkpen, K. (2016) "Meerkat and periscope: I stream, you stream, apps stream for live streams." *Microsoft Research, CHI'16*, 7–12 May, San Jose, CA. Retrieved from https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/4501/613e3be5b0f9b4a5bda22c1ead846b111957.pdf

Towers, S., Gomez-Lievano, A., Khan, M., Mubayi, A. and Castillo-Chavez, C. (2015) "Contagion in mass killings and school shootings." *PLoS ONE*, 10(7), e0117259. Retrieved from http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0117259

twXplorer. (2017) *Knight Lab*. Retrieved from https://twxplorer.knightlab.com/

United Airlines. (2017) *Electronic Device Policies*. Retrieved from www.united.com/web/en-US/content/travel/inflight/devices.aspx

Weil, K. (2015, March 26) "Introducing Periscope." *Twitter*. Retrieved from https://blog.twitter.com/2015/introducing-periscope

Witty, P. (2015, September 26, 2:37 p.m) *Twitter*. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/patrickwitty/status/647842356922871808

Zuckerberg, M. (2016, April 6) "Live video launch." *Facebook Live*. Retrieved from www.facebook.com/zuck/videos/vb.4/10102764535989511

Zuckerberg, M. (2017, May 3) *Facebook*. Retrieved from www.facebook.com/zuck/posts/10103695315624661

Zumbach, L. and Byrne, J. (2017, April 27) "Passenger dragged from United plane at O'Hare reaches settlement with airline." *Chicago Tribune*. Retrieved from www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-united-passenger-dragging-settlement-0428-biz-20170427-story.html