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It Does Become Personal: Lessons From a News Organisation's #Metoo Campaign

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ABSTRACT
This paper reports on a #metoo campaign by a mainstream news organisation. The campaign generated a high number of disclosures from survivors and was notable for its adoption of a survivor-led approach, in its efforts to minimise potential harm to survivors. It offers lessons for reporting on #metoo issues, including the best practice for dealing with survivors, campaign management and ultimately the implications for shifting editorial news values. Journalists demonstrated a heightened awareness of source subjectivity and were able to reconcile this with traditional journalistic norms.

KEYWORDS
#metoo; journalism; sexual abuse survivor; campaign; whistle-blower; subjectivity; emotion; objectivity

Introduction

> A newspaper campaign has to be prolonged, because the forces of rigidity are strong, particularly in bureaucracies, and because it takes time for the penny to drop … The moment a newspaperman is tired of his campaign, is the moment the public is just beginning to notice it,

the doyen of newspaper campaigns, Harold Evans once said (Morris and Morris 2014). He was speaking in a film about *The Sunday Times'* decades-long battle against thalidomide, but the lesson applies to many journalistic endeavours. Despite their difficulties, campaigns, or their less overt cousins, the "project" or "investigation" can add significantly to a news organisation's prestige, brand value, and ultimately readership: think how *The Guardian* has leveraged The Panama Papers, Wikileaks and Snowden revelations into an international brand. The #metoo movement would, on the face of it, be a natural topic for a news campaign. Founded in 2006, its primary aim was to "help survivors of sexual violence, particularly Black women and girls, and other young women of color from low wealth communities, find pathways to healing"(metoo 2019). Since then, similar movements have emerged in many countries, such as Time's Up, sharing the aim of empowering women to speak out against abusers. News stories about sexual abuse, particularly by prominent figures, have become a staple of the news media in recent years, but while news stories are now common, and often curated into their own news section, actual investigative campaigns by journalists into this topical issue are rare. This paper reports on a #metoo campaign by a news organisation in New Zealand.

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Literature Review

Several issues have emerged out of the reporting on the #metoo movement, ranging from how journalists should interact with abuse survivors, how they should manage their own subjective responses, how news organisations should manage their journalists, even whether journalism can ever address structural power imbalances within its current paradigms of what news is and how it should be reported.

In journalism studies, there is an emerging literature suggesting that interaction with journalists, and publication of their story, is not necessarily good nor bad of itself for the survivor, but that their experience depends more on the way the process is managed (Foster and Minwalla 2018). There is an abundance of literature on best practice for those interacting with sexual abuse survivors. For example, the UN's Media Guidelines for Reporting on Gender-based Violence in Humanitarian Contexts suggests four priorities; avoiding judgmental language, consulting local gender-based violence experts, providing information on gender-based violence support services, and never reporting details that could put others at risk. For interviewing, it recommends a safe and secure setting, treating survivors with respect, avoiding questions insensitive to cultural values, or probing for details that reactivate pain, securing proper informed consent, care around use of images, and special rules for interviewing children (Global Protections Cluster 2013). This advice reflects broad awareness in the wider investigative field, such as policing, of good practice: building rapport, a good description of the interviewer's needs, an open-ended questioning style and a willingness to explore alternative hypotheses (see Powell, Fisher, and Wright 2005).

Despite this growing awareness of the benefits of careful journalism for survivors, there is still clearly widespread breach of these guidelines in practice. For example, a study of Yazidi survivors of ISIS sexual violence who interacted with journalists found several unethical practices. These included reporting of personal details likely to imperil those still held by ISIS, breaking promises not to take or publish photos and video without permission, pressuring survivors to be interviewed, poor or no consent protocols, lack of follow-up and keeping promises about help, and retraumatisation through interviewing (Foster and Minwalla 2018).

Beyond the individual issues relating to how journalists should deal with survivors, wider issues have emerged that raise questions about whether the news media, as currently organised, can ever confront deeply entrenched biases. For example, another problem with reporting #metoo issues has been found to be the objectivity norm, or issue dualism; the practice whereby journalists reduce an issue to two competing sides, to which they give similar weight (Blumell and Huemmer 2019). It has been much criticised for obscuring the subjectivity of much journalistic work, while simultaneously advancing journalists' own claim to neutrality and objectivity (Tuchman 1972; Terkildsen, Schnell, and Ling 1998). In #metoo reporting, it has been found to give more power to the accused by shifting focus away from the issue itself and its effect on the survivors, to the effect on the abusers (Blumell and Huemmer 2019). Issue dualism is a paradigm deeply entrenched in Western journalism. Even organisations that have attempted to move beyond it, such as the BBC (through its implementation of the Bridcut review's suggestion of a "wagon –wheel" approach of several alternative views on an issue) have found it difficult to do so in practice (Wahl-Jorgensen et al. 2017).

One way around some of these problems is to frame reporting on sexual abuse issues within the context of a campaign, with multiple stories on a similar topic. Sometimes confused with an investigation, or "project", Birks defines campaign journalism as journalism which "advocates or opposes particular policies and overtly expresses a substantive, value-oriented bias, with the purpose of influencing policy decisions" (Birks 2010, 209).

A campaign can be a powerful weapon. For its subjects, it raises overall awareness, and makes it more likely that stories will bring results, through the cumulative effect of several stories on the same theme. It also brings comfort in knowing they are not alone and puts them in contact with other survivors. The additive impact of recurring new allegations can also help redress systemic bias entrenched by issue dualism. While one person's case may be categorised as an outlier, or one-off, or minimised and weakened if enough doubt is cast on the motives of the accuser, a cascade of cases bearing strong similarities is much harder to ignore. The thalidomide campaign by *The Sunday Times* is a good example. When its campaign became bogged down in the courts, it switched tactics and began publishing more and more stories about victims. As the true number of victims and more information about the manufacturer and distributor's culpability for the disaster became known, public opinion swung firmly behind the victims and a consumer boycott forced a better compensation deal (Knightley 1997).

For journalists, a campaign allows for the development of expertise, contacts, and quickly increases the pool of survivor stories—otherwise a very time-consuming process to unearth. Also, the team approach can bring complementary skills to bear. From an organisational point of view, it can bring reputational advantage and efficient use of resources.

However, campaigns are fraught with reputational risk (what if it turns out to be a non-issue? What if our readers think we are biased and no longer objective?). They are also expensive (what if a team of reporters who could be producing other stories doesn't produce any stories?) and legally risky (what if we get sued?)

For survivors, the inherent subjectivity of a campaign, whilst supportive in terms of apparently advocating for an audience, can also rebound on them. One study found they can become a fig leaf for an editorial agenda, with little empowerment of citizens, little actual listening to their concerns, and active discouragement of their participation in political processes(Birks 2010). Even campaigns which describe themselves as "investigative" or projects may be less than honest about their subjectivity; one U.S. study of investigative projects found they "uses certain stylistic features of journalistic objectivity, but it does so in an effort to amplify the call for public indignation at the facts" (Ettema and Glasser 1998, 185 cited in (Birks 2010)).

For journalists, while exciting, they can raise uncomfortable questions about their own subjectivities: how close should I get to my sources, the survivors, in order to get their stories, and am I compromising my own professional norms (and potentially my career prospects) by doing so? The strategic rituals of newsmaking (Tuchman 1972) especially those aimed at buttressing objectivity, may not be adequate to uncover the extent of and nature of sexual abuse if power relations are loaded too heavily in favour of the abusers. To what extent should journalists sacrifice or adapt what has been described as one of the five pillars of journalistic identity (Deuze 2005) And to what extent does the experience of reporting on these issues affect journalists' notions of subjectivity and objectivity? As recent work has shown, journalists often outsource their own emotional

investment in an issue, performing "strategic rituals" of emotionality in the way they present their stories. (Wahl-Jorgensen 2013). Steensen has suggested this "byline" subjectivity is complemented by "source" subjectivity (subjectivity in the way sources are treated), and that these subjectivities essentially function as a prerequisite for objectivity. If so, how does that source subjectivity manifest? And in situations of competing, unreconcilable truth claims, how can journalists perform objectivity (Steensen 2017)? Do they even need to, and yet still satisfy their own professional sense of professional identity? One study found journalists may justify their subjectivity differently depending on their tabloid or broadsheet origins, either as by exemption from accuracy (tabloid) or by constraining overt advocacy (broadsheet) (Birks 2010). Birks argues campaigning needs a professional framework to accommodate it, characterised by "a coherent and consistent notion of objectivity and truth, an understanding of 'publics' as politically active, a commitment to discussing what should be done (not just finding fault), and to empowering publics (not speaking for them)" (Birks 2010, 221).

These concerns are very real, although some perhaps more than others. Take a reputational risk; as has been pointed out, journalism is now more complex than a simple dichotomy of objectivity versus advocacy. The issue is "not whether advocacy is present in journalism, but the extent and shape of its presence" (Charles 2019, 1–5).

More broadly, Bourdieu's field theory might raise questions of whether journalism can ever assert much change in societies where its autonomy is impinged upon or subsumed by the commercial, legal or political fields (Hilgers and Mangez 2014).

Materials and Methods

A #metoo campaign run in New Zealand by a mainstream news organisation was chosen as a case study, using news articles produced by and about the campaign, supplemented by interviews with journalists involved. Ten journalists worked on campaign stories, but usually only one or two journalists at any one time. Four of those most involved with the campaign, including leaders and rank-and-filers,were interviewed for between 20 and 90 min each. A news executive answered additional questions by email. All respondents were given anonymity, to ensure they answered as freely as possible. To ensure confidentiality, details of gender and rank are not given; all are referred to as a #metoo journalist. All were given the opportunity to review their comments before publication and advised they could withdraw from the research project at any time. None did. The 49 stories produced by the campaign up to that point were read and quoted from where relevant. Due to time constraints, survivors who participated in the campaign were not part of this research.

Results

The Campaign

Stuff is a privately owned nationwide news organisation with the largest online readership in New Zealand, supported by a stable of newspapers in most cities and towns. Its reporting has a reputation as responsible, accurate, and generally comprehensive, avoiding overt political support for left or right, and adhering to Western news traditions of balance,

neutrality and fairness. In recent years it has begun to devote more resources to investigative journalism. Alongside this, in February 2018, the company announced it was beginning an "investigation", #metooNZ, inspired by the #metoo movement, and by the NOW campaign in Australia (Stuff 2019). Fronted and led by a former television journalist, it described itself as an "investigation" and "project" and those involved also did not see it as a campaign. However, it was perceived and criticised as a campaign by critics (Hill-Cone 2018) and as it meets Birks' criteria of "a substantive, value-oriented bias, with the purpose of influencing policy decisions" (Birks 2010, 209) that word is used here. For example, while its reporting of its investigations appeared neutral, accompanying editorials pushed an agenda of legal reform to enhance protections against workplace abuse. As well as providing a conduit for survivors of sexual harassment or abuse to tell their stories, its stated goal was to "develop a broader discussion about the quality and effectiveness of sexual harassment policies and training in organisations"(Huffadine 2018). Another important goal was to "keep the issue of sexual harassment and its effects on the home pages of New Zealand news media for as long as we possibly could"(Anonymous 2019b).

Survivors were invited to contact a hotline, or email. After contact was made, in a practice copied from the "NOW Australia" campaign, participants were "triaged", or assessed as to whether there was an immediate ongoing risk or danger to themselves or others. If there was, they were offered contact and support with either police, if they wished to lay a complaint, or other support services, such as counselling. A story announcing the campaign and calling for survivors to come forward promised: "There's a level of care, specifically in place for this project. Even if people don't want to talk on the record … at least we will be able to point them in the right direction to find the help they need" (Huffadine 2018).

A weekly meeting decided which stories were priorities for follow-ups; priority was given to those stories that involved most risk to participants such as an ongoing situation. Otherwise, they were assessed according to normal news values such as prominence, unusualness, public interest, celebrity involvement, etc. Another factor was the difficulty of verifying the claims made; those which were relatively easy to "stand up" were also likely to be given priority. Once selected for follow-up, a case was assigned to one of Stuff's reporters (reporters were asked, but not required to work on these cases) (Anonymous 2019b). There was a commitment to being client-led; at all stages, the survivor was given control over whether the story would be pursued. If they wished to drop out at any time, that wish was respected. They were also assured of anonymity, if they wanted it (not all did). The reporter then followed normal journalistic process in investigating the claims made, verifying them, seeking proof where needed to defend against potential legal claims, and seeking comment from all relevant people or organisations, including the alleged perpetrator. While the story was being compiled, survivors were sometimes (depending on the reporter) given a chance to collaborate in how it was written, in the sense of deciding which aspects should be highlighted—again a variation from common journalistic practice. Once the story was completed, and editors were satisfied the story was legally safe, accurate, and balanced, it was published (Anonymous 2019b).

The campaign was unusual for a mainstream news organisation, in that it departed from some journalistic norms. As well as the triage system installed, it was announced

that there was a problem and called for evidence before "proving" there was one; more control was given to participants, promising them anonymity, and the ability to withdraw at any time. It was also not driven by commercial priorities; Stuff did not seek sponsorship or attempt to defray costs. As one manager said: "Between staffing, travel and legal bills, the cost was probably significant but we haven't tallied it, because that just wasn't the frame we saw this through." (Anonymous 2019b). However, it also raised accusations of being a witch-hunt, and that journalists did not have the training to deal with traumatised survivors (Hill-Cone 2018).

Survivor Response

Since its launch, the project has received about 400 disclosures, overwhelmingly, but not exclusively from women (Anonymous 2019b). Many of those came in early, but after the initial flood, the rate fell to about one a week. Of those, about 180 have so far been selected as worth following up. A further 110 were looked into, but a decision was made not to pursue them. This was usually because the story could not be stacked up; while all were pursued on the basis that the survivor was believed, normal investigative standards were applied, so corroborating evidence, such as documentary evidence, or witnesses, was needed in he said/she said situations. This meant that many stories simply did not meet the bar. Some of the 110 changed their mind, some were talked out of publication by family friends or workmates, some decided the process was not for them, some decided to seek justice in another manner. Some of these, it was felt, might change their minds later:

> "Many of the people we have talked to have diagnosed PTSD or trauma-related issues and often they have decided part-way through the investigative process that they would rather not go ahead," one journalist said. (Anonymous 2019b)

Within the 180 selected for follow-up, about 20 have so far been investigated, involving 10 reporters working at various times. So far, 49 separate stories have been published, both on the respondents, and wider systemic issues related to the campaign. Subjects included endemic sexual abuse in the Defence Force, at schools, universities, law firms, sport teams, in the horse-racing industry, in local body and national politics, in the film industry, and the national rail company.

Campaign Results and Reader Response

The campaign is notable for revealing the widespread, systematic, cover-up of abuse claims in New Zealand organisation. Most organisations' first response to complainants was to require complainants sign non-disclosure agreements (NDAs), and use the courts to enforce this. Even the Law Society, supposedly the guardian of legal ethics, gained a "super-injunction", very rarely issued in New Zealand, not just to prevent a 23-year-old law student disclosing harassment and bullying at the organisation, but to prevent any public disclosure of the injunction itself (it was later withdrawn after Stuff challenged it in court) (Anonymous 2019a). The Defence Force, schools and others were all found to have tried to minimise or ignore many serious complaints. The vindictiveness with which some complainants were treated clearly disturbed many. In one case, after the Prime Minister and Minister of Justice had expressed concern publicly, the Defence Force

agreed to abandon a claim for legal costs against an Air Force woman ogled, groped and locked in a cage in the 1980s, who had filed her claim too late. The Government's main watchdog, the Human Rights Commission, has struggled to assert moral leadership in this area, with a series of internal abuse complaints, and a review which found it failed in handling these. After its financial controller was only lightly disciplined for sexually harassing an intern, the Chief Human Rights Commissioner was forced to resign (Anthony 2018).

Another feature of the coverage has been the casual, off-hand approach by organisations to abuse complaints. The campaign initiated New Zealand's largest-ever Freedom of Information request, to around 3000 state organisations. Returns revealed that state sector abuse complaints had doubled since 2015, from around 50 to over 180 per year. Many state bodies had no, or lax policies for handling complaints. The Film Commission, a state body tasked with promoting New Zealand's Film Industry, treated "informally" complaints by four women against three men (out of a staff of just 40). Two of the country's top universities were found to have either not acted on repeated complaints about abusive staff or acted too late.

However, attempts to elicit responses to systemic issues raised have had mixed results. While the campaign prompted universities to institute policies for handling sexual abuse complaints, calls for a mandatory workplace sexual harassment policy and a national inquiry into workplace sexual harassment have so far been unsuccessful.

Nonetheless, those within the campaign reported satisfaction with progress. Several stories achieved 5–19 times the average page views for Stuff stories. Three of its biggest stories got 10, 15, and 19 times the average page views (Anonymous 2019b). It was considered a foundational part of Stuff winning the Best News website at the national media awards in 2018, and in one of its titles, *The Sunday Star-Times*, winning Best Weekly Newspaper and Newspaper of the Year.

> I'd consider the project a resounding success. We didn't get into it as a website traffic driver or to sell papers - we got into it because it fitted so well with our journalistic mission of holding power to account and giving voice to the voiceless … We're really proud of what it achieved. (Anonymous 2019b)

The Journalists' Experiences: Working with Survivors

For one journalist, who had been working on #metoo type stories already, the opportunity to be part of a team, to have a strong flow of leads and to have institutional support, was very attractive. "I soon realised [before joining the campaign] it would be really difficult to do it on my own. It was a lot of investment with not much support"(Anonymous 2019b).

But the journalists soon realised that the stakes were higher than they had anticipated. For a start, not everyone within the news industry, or even their own organisation, was supportive:

> We got a lot of kickback. [Some] people [within the news media] thought it was a terrible idea. I got bailed up by an old editor at the media awards who said: 'What are you doing, you don't announce an investigation before you do it.'(Anonymous 2019b)

Once the stories started coming in, journalists assigned to the stories realised they had much to learn about dealing with survivors, who could present as normal yet be quite

damaged beneath. Many had little or no knowledge of the news media, and often unclear or unrealistic expectations about what they hoped the process could achieve.

The journalists realised it was important to establish ground-rules upfront. Clear, honest communication was vital; at least weekly emails and face to face meetings. It was vital to explain that the journalistic verification process could involve their abuser being aware of the complaint, and that an investigation might not result in a story. They were also reminded that for survivors, getting details right was crucial; one survivor became very upset when an identifying detail was used inadvertently. "Even though I felt it was a minor thing, it was obviously a massive thing to her" (Anonymous 2019b).

For survivors, the publication was often an empowering experience. For example, one journalist noted two cases where survivors dropped their anonymity:

> Having someone listen to you, it can be an empowering thing, to be speaking out … In one case, the main complainant did not want to be named. The story was largely based on information from her but involved other women … who were willing to be named. A couple of stories later, she did want to be identified, so we did the story with her, with photos. (Anonymous 2019b)

But some also decided to drop out:

> You would go 50 percent of the way and they would decide they didn't want you to tell their story anymore. Sometimes it would be gutting, but you just have to be 'oh well', and let it go. At least it hadn't been a traumatising process for anyone. There's no pressuring anyone to continue, or deciding to tell their story anyway. (Anonymous 2019b)

Journalists' Experiences: Subjectivity, Objectivity, and Advocacy Journalism

For some of the journalists on this campaign, there were subtle shifts in their epistemic approach to journalism, to their notions of objectivity and subjectivity, and how to perform the strategic rituals of newsgathering. All those interviewed spontaneously brought up the "witch-hunt" criticism that the project was not "objective". They were acutely conscious of a need to retain journalistic credibility with the audience whilst also treating sources with sensitivity. They did the latter mainly by extending extra sensitivity to survivors, and the former through carefully scrutinising truth claims and being scrupulous about being "open-minded" about each case. For them, advocacy journalism did not include presenting a survivor's story if they were not convinced it was truthful. Yet they were clearly advocative in the sense that they sought survivor stories, rather than stories of wrongly accused perpetrators; they took it as a given, even the least subjective of them, that this issue was a problem that needed to be investigated; for them, it was well within the paradigm of journalistic practice to advocate for an issue as long as they were careful about the facts they chose to support it. All approached the project with the knowledge that this was a problem in society—thus, all were clearly on board when they started.

The journalists still maintained the strategic rituals of objectivity, such as seeking balance, and testing the truth claims where possible. But this new approach meant they decided to run stories where the allegations were not proven, with the perpetrator's response allowed equal weight—a kind of parallel subjectivity, rather than seeking one objective truth.

As one said, it was essentially a shift in news values; stories about abuse were now automatically news, in the same way as major crime, and the assignment of resources did not have to be argued each time. For a news organisation such as Stuff, the dominant mainstream news provider in the market, which positions itself as an authoritative, reliable voice, this was a subtle but significant shift.

Within that, they demonstrated different subjectivities, ranging from clearly subjectivist, to something closer to objectivist. These expressed themselves not only in how they approached source truth claims (Steensen's source subjectivity), but also in how they wrote their stories (Steensen's byline subjectivity).

Taking source subjectivity first, all journalists were highly conscious of the need to treat survivors with extra care. But two journalists were clearly very much on the survivor's side from the beginning; they approached survivors with an attitude that they were truthful, until proven otherwise.

For one journalist, this source subjectivity manifested in giving them as much control as possible:

> I established how much contact she wanted. You don't want to retraumatise them by just being in touch all the time. A lot of them have been completely disempowered. They've been disempowered by their perpetrator and whatever has happened to them, and they've often been, like, doubly let down by their workplace not believing them, or going through a traumatic investigation process. I think control is quite important for them, at this point. I think if I can be the person who is providing that to them, hopefully this can end up being a good experience for them. I have never had negative feedback once the story has been out there. (Anonymous 2019b)

For another journalist, there was open satisfaction with being able to advocate for survivors, for example in dealing with police, or in providing emotional support, but at the same time holding to a standard of truth when it came to publishing. For this journalist, it was crucial that they show empathy for the survivor, and that the survivor felt they were believed. This subjectivity was entirely compatible with their journalistic role, as they still did exercise scepticism towards survivors when their gut feeling indicated it was necessary. The key difference was that, as one put it: "I was objective at the point of publication." (Anonymous 2019b)

Another journalist observed an epistemic shift as the project developed. This journalist gradually changed their presumption of truth when interviewing survivors, from a quasi-legal approach to a more empathetic one. Previously, they approached survivors with a presumption that it was up to them to prove the truth of their story, and that the alleged perpetrator was guilty until proven innocent. After discussions with family and work colleagues, this journalist came to the view that that approach was part of the reason #metoo was necessary, because for too long survivors were simply not believed. So, this journalist began treating survivors from a premise that they were telling the truth:

> We need to get to the point we give some benefit of doubt and assume they are telling the truth until proven otherwise. (Anonymous 2019b)

Only one of the four journalists spoken to moderated this, by saying they still had a degree of scepticism in their mind while interviewing survivors, but also worked hard to show empathy.

> "I approached it as I would any other story, with an open mind and wanting to tell a story in a balanced way and an accurate way, and … I was very conscious of being quite sensitive in interviews.
>
> "It was balance in that I was conscious that I would be telling the survivor's side of the story, but I felt it was equally important to tell the other side of the story, which in my case was the business involved [or the employer of the alleged perpetrator] … but at the same time I was conscious that for many victims it can be quite an upsetting experience because there a tendency for their concerns to be brushed aside because it's a hard thing to establish evidence for.
>
> "I was probably more leaning towards the side of believing, but as a journalist there always the sceptic within that needs to ensure that you can never take what someone says as 100 percent fact without hard evidence but there's a degree of more empathy towards someone who's claiming sexual harassment because no one's listened to them in the past. (Anonymous 2019b)

None of the four journalists (which included news executives) were uncritically beholden to an "objectivity" paradigm of news reporting. Subjectivity, in the sense of empathy for their subjects, was a crucial requirement for effective journalism, it was encouraged and performed in interviews with sources, but the objective strategic rituals of objectivity were used to test truth claims. For example, one noted that objective evidence would include evidence that a claim had been lodged prior to contacting the journalist, such as evidence of mediation with an employer or sessions with a therapist. It also appeared to reflect Birks' notion of broadsheet campaigning as reflecting liberal norms, using the stylistic features of objectivity to amplify the call for public indignation. The journalists all felt it had done this successfully, citing the silencing of critics, while also shifting the news agenda.

It also aligns with Steensen's suggestion that subjectivity is often a prerequisite for objectivity, or perhaps more that the two are interdependent; source subjectivity was a means to an end, that of a kind of "objectivity", a way for journalists of retaining their moral authority and satisfying their own conscience, which did not conflict with the ultimate aim of some objective truth. Thus, subjectivity was not so much a prerequisite for objectivity, but something that co-existed with it. It was something journalists could rely on to justify scepticism.

Asked to define that objective truth, most of the journalists deferred to an essentially quasi-legal definition, one that would "get past the lawyers" and "stand up" in court (Anonymous 2019b). However, there was frustration with what one called the "draconian" defamation laws in New Zealand, which places the burden of proof of truth on the defendant, compared to the U.S. system, which essentially places the burden on the plaintiff to prove malice. While this was accepted as a useful check, it was also frustrating for them. One cited a story in which they felt very strongly the survivor was telling the truth, but the lawyers would not let them publish due to lack of objective evidence. In Bourdieu's terms, the autonomy of the journalistic field was ultimately constrained by the power of the legal/ justice field.

When it came to story-telling, or byline subjectivity, some journalists allowed more than others, in the form of collaboration over how the story should be told:

> "Everyone has a way of they how they want their story told. You can make sure they are happy with the story. But also make sure you are telling the best story. Make sure they are not

surprised by anything. Often, I find the parts I think are interesting, they do too. I would say it's been more collaborative than any of my other work has been."

It's their lives and it's taken up a lot of their life, and I thought that was fair. I wouldn't give them control over the story but give them as much detail as I could. (Anonymous 2019b)

As well as straightforward reports of investigations into survivors' abuse, the campaign website also featured opinion pieces by the journalists. One journalist described it as "switching hats"(Anonymous 2019b); the difference was the standard of proof. In an opinion piece, they would only have to prove something to their own satisfaction; in a news story, they felt obliged to prove it to a different standard; not just knowing it was true but being able to show it by some objective measures.

Lessons for #Metoo Type Campaigns

For the journalists, the intense nature of the subject and the extra demands of working with survivors had both challenges and rewards. It was considered a strength of the project that team members brought a mix of skills; the leader, a veteran broadcaster, was a confident public speaker who was an attractive, trusted public face for the campaign. Other journalists brought investigative skills needed on what were mostly difficult, legally risky stories. Data editors and web designers were brought in to package the material attractively.

While they were proud of the project's approach and achievements, there was disappointment that the campaign had not resulted in more systemic change. Journalists emphasised the need to be flexible about campaign aims. At first, they thought it would be about exposing celebrity predators, as had happened overseas. However, the journalists found that there were fewer big revelations than expected. They attributed this to the legal climate in New Zealand, with its strict defamation laws and the widespread use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) to shut down potentially damaging revelations. Also, the small village-like nature of New Zealand society, in which survivors were acutely aware of the employment consequences for them and their families of any publicity, made it relatively harder for people to come forward.

In New Zealand it has been less about the big 'gotcha' moment exposing famous people's predatory behaviour and more about the structural and organisational issues that prevent survivors getting justice, and organisations getting on top of the problem. (Anonymous 2019b)

Some felt this was an unexpected benefit of the campaign, questioning whether the big news splash was always in the best interests of the survivors, if it diminished the incentive for perpetrators to offer a private, sincere apology:

Our analysis shows that an apology is often all that a survivor wants. I believe that further study might show that the gotcha nature of much of the #metoo reporting overseas may have exacerbated this. Some local experts … have been open about the need to reduce the stigma on perpetrators. (Anonymous 2019b)

Those involved in managing the project emphasised the need for patience:

These are sensitive stories with enormous impact on the lives of those involved. Don't rush to publication because you've announced a project and feel obliged to deliver a hit. Be survivor-

> led at all times and be patient and persistent. Our experience shows the level of denial around sexual harassment means you must write multiple stories about the same group of entities before any change is even considered. (Anonymous 2019b)

Another lesson from managers was to get the right team in place, including a good lawyer:

> Do employ staff with experience reporting in the area, who know how to talk to (and listen to) survivors and grasp the legal and ethical landscape. Don't forget that reporting stories like this takes a toll on the journalists too. (Anonymous 2019b)

However, journalists questioned whether that toll was adequately acknowledged. Although the project had a total of 10 journalists in three centres, working on stories over the 16-month period, there were usually no more than two journalists working full-time, while most were fitting in #metoo stories around their existing rounds, or beats. Given the level of verification required, progress was much slower than desired. One said: "I was doing as many stories as I could, but we didn't have many other investigative reporters in the team. I was the only one who … wasn't doing many other [non-#metoo] stories" (Anonymous 2019b).

> Given the huge response, over 400, there should have been assistance for the project leader who took all the phone calls and emails and sorted all the initial contacts. (Anonymous 2019b)

Journalists noted symptoms of burn-out; heaviness, feeling over-burdened; resentment, tiredness. Despite the nature of the material, no plan for regular staff check-ups, or mentoring, or training, was put in place. One journalist needed counselling sessions when she found herself becoming affected by the work:

> I would say that's where we failed, we didn't really have anything in place for us. We made a big deal about how we had all these triage services for our survivors, and we did, but we never had anyone come and talk to us. I didn't have any concept of how it would affect me. (Anonymous 2019b)

> The thing about this work, you have all this hurt that you're listening to, but it brings up your own stuff. Especially as a woman who has had experiences potentially similar, it can bring that stuff to the surface. (Anonymous 2019b)

While that could be draining, it also had a positive effect:

> It definitely does have a motivating effect. I think it's a different form of reporting than anything I've done. It does become quite personal. Also, if you're a feminist, like I am, and you believe there is a patriarchy, and there is a system in which women operate which is unfair and discriminatory, then how can it not be personal? Because you see these things happening and you see these things happening over and over again, and it becomes something you want to change. Whereas I can write a news story and not really be drawn into that. (Anonymous 2019b)

Conclusion

The campaign concept appears to have got a lot of things right. Firstly, the survivor-led approach appears to have worked well both for survivors and journalists. The extra care (at least by the usual standards of journalism) taken to protect survivors and ensure

their safety appears to have worked reasonably well in terms of safeguarding their autonomy and minimising harm. The relatively high number of dropouts could be an indicator of dissatisfaction with the process but seems more likely an indicator of the autonomy survivors had within the process. Problems at the individual level should not be overemphasised in the context of the clearly affirming effect for these survivors of seeing their issue given the prominence of a campaign by the leading national news organisation. Clearly, many were also able to "bargain at the intersections of patriarchy" (Foster and Minwalla 2018) more effectively as a group than they had been able to at the individual level. Given the limited scope of this study, which did not measure survivor experience, this is only conjecture. Further research in this area would be useful.

For journalists, the survivor-led approach has enabled a more rewarding, albeit demanding relationship with sources. Their experience here affirms much of the research around dealing with survivors; being client-led, clear, honest, consistent communication, setting ground-rules early, being aware that the survivor's decision-making process is often a complex and lengthy one, and that each person is different and finds their own way (Global Protections Cluster 2013). This kind of journalism is a specialisation, requiring a mix of investigative skills and teamwork, and a degree of passion that can be both empowering and exhausting. They need to be patient, and develop perseverance, and be realistic about the time and effort required to get results. Those doing heavy lifting need to rest often, plan, and be prepared for the long haul.

For news organisations, the campaign has been successful at generating a steady flow of significant, newsworthy stories, with the potential risk (for the news organisation) of slow story turnover more than compensated for by the high number of disclosures and thus possible leads. For managers, it has potential as a way of sourcing powerful stories; the large number of disclosures meant journalists could allow survivors take their time, and still be sure of a steady flow of stories. There is a risk that the public would get bored with such stories, but this experience seems to show that each powerful story stood on its own merits and had enough intrinsic "newsiness" to make it well-read, even though it followed a theme. Clearly, such a campaign requires planning and support; training in dealing with survivors, management training in how to support journalists working in a challenging area, a regular "check in" programme, with mentors, as well as proper secretarial support. There should also be an explicit commitment to maintain the programme for the time necessary to process all disclosures.

The campaign concept can also avert some of the problems of issue dualism (Tuchman 1972, Wahl-Jorgensen et al. 2017, Blumell and Huemmer 2019). As this campaign seems to show, the road to truth of an issue is not always through over-analysis of one data point's validity, but through seeking more data points that appear to share the theme. Producing more examples of the issue is arguably more powerful than the "wagon wheel" approach, seeking many voices on one example. This campaign shows that in the current challenging journalism climate, mainstream news organisations as well as fringe ones can gain from experimenting with different news agendas/ values, such as controlled advocacy.

Responding to Birks' (2010) call for a professional framework that can have a positive democratic role, this study suggests it must be one that allows journalists to explore and express their own various subjectivities and reconcile this with their own and their news organisation's, and ultimately their audience's notions of objectivity. As Steensen

(2017) has pointed out, subjectivities can co-exist with and even be a prerequisite for objectivities. Yet this study also reveals the constraints on the development of such a framework; not until journalism can reassert its autonomy, particularly against the power of the legal field within democratic society, will it be able to find a framework that truly empowers survivors' truth claims.

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