

REPORTING BAD NEWS

The background of the cover is a dark, textured grey. In the lower half, there is a stylized, low-poly illustration of a bouquet of flowers. The bouquet is wrapped in white paper, with various colored flowers (red, yellow, green, purple) peeking out. The illustration has a geometric, faceted appearance.

Negotiating the Boundaries
Between Intrusion and
Fair Representation
in Media Coverage
of Death

SALLYANNE DUNCAN & JACKIE NEWTON

Sallyanne Duncan and Jackie Newton

Reporting Bad News

Negotiating the Boundaries Between
Intrusion and Fair Representation
in Media Coverage of Death



PETER LANG

New York • Bern • Frankfurt • Berlin
Brussels • Vienna • Oxford • Warsaw

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Duncan, Sallyanne, author. | Newton, Jackie, author.
Title: Reporting bad news: negotiating the boundaries between intrusion and fair representation in media coverage of death / Sallyanne Duncan and Jackie Newton.
Description: New York: Peter Lang, 2017.
Series: Mass communication and journalism; vol. 16 | ISSN 2153-2761
Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2017007744 | ISBN 978-1-4331-4297-0 (hardback: alk. paper)
ISBN 978-1-4331-2563-8 (paperback: alk. paper) | ISBN 978-1-4331-4298-7 (ebook pdf)
ISBN 978-1-4331-4299-4 (epub) | ISBN 978-1-4331-4300-7 (mobi)
Subjects: LCSH: Death—Press coverage. | Journalistic ethics.
Classification: LCC PN4784.D37 D86 2017 | DDC 070.4/493069—dc23
LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017007744>
DOI 10.3726/b11444

Bibliographic information published by **Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**.
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the "Deutsche Nationalbibliografie"; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de/>.

The paper in this book meets the guidelines for permanence and durability of the Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity of the Council of Library Resources.



© 2017 Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., New York
29 Broadway, 18th floor, New York, NY 10006
www.peterlang.com

All rights reserved.

Reprint or reproduction, even partially, in all forms such as microfilm, xerography, microfiche, microcard, and offset strictly prohibited.

Printed in the United States of America

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	ix
Acknowledgements	xi
Introduction	1
Chapter 1. The History and Context of Death in the News	9
Chapter 2. The Contemporary Context of Death Reporting	31
Chapter 3. Negotiating Ethical Boundaries	47
Chapter 4. Ethical Participation: A New Way Forward	69
Chapter 5. Knocking on the Door: Journalists' Experiences	91
Chapter 6. Encountering the Media: The Knock at the Door	107
Chapter 7. The Sensitive Interview	123
Chapter 8. Depicting Stories of Death: News Frames and Narratives	143
Chapter 9. Reporting Suicide: The Last Taboo?	161
Chapter 10. The Emotional Impact on Journalists	185
Chapter 11. Looking Forward	205
Index	211

Reporting Bad News addresses a gap in the literature concerning death reporting and stories of personal tragedy. Much has been written about disasters and large-scale tragedies, but this research concentrates on individual loss and the relationship between journalist and vulnerable interviewee. While much discussion in this area is negative, focusing on the ethics of intrusion and journalists who act insensitively under pressure, the authors' aim is to turn this focus around by looking at best practice in encounters between reporters and the bereaved, survivors and the vulnerable. It is hoped that by examining contemporary death reporting, explaining its public service role, proposing a new model of ethical participation and offering a structure for sensitive interviewing, the most harmful aspects of the process can be reduced for both the journalist and, more importantly, the grieving and the victims. The work is based on years of research by the authors, on interviews with journalists, journalism educators, bereaved families and support groups and is supplemented with a detailed analysis of the reporting of death across academic disciplines and perspectives.

"I am sure that Duncan and Newton's important, massively researched, theoretically rich and highly original text—fired by a clear commitment to ethical and responsible reporting—will prove an invaluable resource for students, teachers and practising journalists for many years to come."

Richard Lance Keeble, Professor of Journalism at the University of Lincoln
and Visiting Professor at Liverpool Hope University

"Whether the news is a motorway accident or an act of terrorism, journalists become central actors in communities of unexpected tragedy. Although much critical attention has been paid to their intrusiveness at times of personal grief, news media can also provide explanation, understanding, and healing. Duncan and Newton approach this challenge with sensitivity and hope, sharing the perspectives of reporters, ethicists, and bereaved family members in order to build a model of 'ethical participation'—a process that empowers journalists and their subjects, together, to tell the hardest story of all."

Carolyn Kitch, Professor of Journalism at Temple University
and co-author of *Journalism in a Culture of Grief*

Sallyanne Duncan is Programme Director of the MLitt Digital Journalism course at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland, and a former journalist. Her research focuses on reporting trauma, suicide and mental health, and bereavement, particularly concerning the individual family. **Jackie Newton** is Head of Journalism at Liverpool John Moores University and a former print reporter and editor. She is particularly interested in journalists' relations with the bereaved, associated sensitive interviewing and media representations of victims and families.

WWW.PETERLANG.COM

ISBN 978-1-4331-2563-8



9 781433 125638

3400

Mass
Communication
and
Journalism